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The Art of Lettering

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THE ART OF LETTERING

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for graduation with Honors in the Art, Studio

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Thesis Mentor

Spring 2019

All requirements for graduation with Honors in the
Art, Studio have been completed.

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The subject of my research project is learning how to hand letter. As a graphic designer, I have always had an interest in learning how to incorporate this skill into my work. I often find myself using script fonts, rather than creating my own. I think it is important to explore new skills and work outside of my comfort zone, which is very digital. Compared to script fonts, hand lettering is very unique and personable, something that cannot easily be digitally recreated. For this research project I will be studying the difference between hand lettering and calligraphy, then applying the knowledge to the creation of my own hand lettering style. I will be attempting to create wedding stationary with the knowledge of what I have learned.

To begin this research, I spent several hours seeking what would be the best way to learn hand lettering. I decided to sign up for a website called Skillshare. This site offered over 800 different videos teaching hand lettering. Many of these courses were set up with step by step instructions on how to learn the techniques. In order to follow along I had to purchase the right materials. This took some more research. People all over the world have different ideas of what they consider to be best markers, pens, and paper for this skill. I tried to compile all of this information and ended up making my purchases. During this research project I was working with Tombow dual brush markers, Tombow soft/hard tip fudenosuke brush pens, and a Rhodia dotted notebook. I spent several days practicing writing out the alphabet over and over. One of the most important techniques I was taught was to put hard pressure on the markers when making a down stroke, and lighter pressure when the stroke moves upwards. After I continued to practice individual letterforms, I moved on to combining them into actual words. During this process I also did some research on the difference between hand lettering and calligraphy. I learned that hand lettering is the art of drawing letters and calligraphy is the art of writing letters. Both skills take a lot of discipline to learn. I also spent some time looking at different styles of hand lettering and figuring out which I liked best. The next step in my process was to begin working on the final project that would be showcasing all of the research I had done. I wanted to create a set of wedding stationary. This included invitations, rsvp cards, thank you cards, and envelopes. There are many different styles of hand lettering. I began to look on Pinterest and Instagram for some inspiration of the type of style I wanted my work to have for this specific project. I ended up creating my own decorative script which integrates a “bounce” style. This involves the letters moving around the typical baseline and x-height. After my research I went to Michaels and purchased blank black, white, and kraft stationary cards and envelopes. Once I was ready to start the hand lettering process, I began by drawing guide lines in pencil. Then I worked with the pens and markers to complete hand lettering my stationary materials. After experimentation, I realized using the black Tombow soft/hard tip fudenosuke brush pens worked best. This was due to the level of control they provided. I also used gold and white pens to achieve the aesthetic I wanted for my wedding stationary. In order to be satisfied with my final hand lettering pieces, I had to continue to try several different times. It took a lot of patience, practice, and a steady hand.

Overall I enjoyed the experience of learning about hand lettering and calligraphy. It gave me a greater appreciation for the amount of time people have to spend in order to become talented at this skill. It was something that I always thought would be easy but never realized how many different elements went into it. Hand lettering takes a lot of practice and patience to master the skill. The few months I had to learn it was not enough time to reach the level of expertise that I had originally hoped for. In the future, I plan to continue to learn and grow with this practice while also incorporating it into my graphic design work.