

THE ART OF



AN EXPLORATION OF TYPOGRAPHY AND TIME WITH ALICIA EGGERT

BY TRACY YOUNG

A less-studied component of typography is that of temporal typography, and fewer contemporary artists have used it more than Alicia Eggert. Eggert is an American sculptor/ professor currently living in Portland, Maine who has showcased temporal typography in many of her sculptures. In her early thirties, she has created numerous unique fixtures of temporal typography that have been exhibited both nationally and internationally.

TIME AND TYPE

Temporal typography (also known as ‘transitional typography’) is typography or typographic work that changes over a period of time in a variety of ways (be it typeface, weight, position, motion, etc). This does not mean that the changes are from the natural flow of time/ changes in style, but a deliberate use of time that is integral to the consumption of the work itself. Temporal (or time-based) typography does not accelerate the process of reading: it usually slows it down. But we may ask ourselves if it is at all beneficial to read at a fast pace. If we can argue that the pace of reading relates to the reader’s memori[z]ation of text, then we may assume that reading at a slow pace makes text information more memorable. One of the key advantages of transitional typography is that emotive expression can be enhanced by the definition of the graphic transition.

ARTIST’S TAKE

Even upon opening the homepage of Alicia Eggert (aliciaeggert.com), her signature use of this temporal typography is evident with a whimsical spinning effect to spell her name, giving the user a glimpse into the style of her work. This is what is meant by needing time to allow the design to reveal

itself: what seems like lines and dashes that do not create coherent words/patterns move and rearrange themselves to create something new. A similar effect is used in her 2012 piece, NOW (displayed left). Eggert describes such works, and their influence in her TED blog: “Time is different, not just culturally, but for every single person. I really believe each person lives in a different time universe. I think of words as found objects, and I play with their forms... I began by giving words like “now” a physical form, and asking questions like, ‘How long is now?’” It is the influence of time not only in the concepts of her designs but in the execution (because the work changes over a period of time) that makes Alicia Eggert’s designs as fascinating as they are.

“How long
is now?”



NOW
2012

This kinetic sculpture’s motorized acrylic line segments spell the word NOW approximately once every second, but just like time itself, they never quite come to a complete stop. One moment is continuously and infinitely being replaced by another.