



Andreas SCHEIGER

Words | Daniel Taveras

What if typography followed the same evolutionary course as birds, insects, and mankind? Andreas Scheiger answers this question in a provocative ongoing project titled, “Evolution of Type,” that sees letters studied and examined in true scientific fashion.

Evolution of Type: Exhibit Nr. 1 features a bold letter “S” carefully dissected, showcasing an interior lined with muscle and arteries. The exhibit places the letter on an operating table alongside scalpels and tweezers, with a surgeon and assistant aiding in the procedure. Scheiger’s letters are living organisms, with a path treaded by the history of typeface and printing processes. The “Evolution of Type” exhibits, along with the majority of Scheiger’s work, tell clear stories that grant an immediacy and accessibility to his pieces. Not much more than a glance is needed to get what Scheiger’s trying to tell, and that openness offers a boundary-less entrance to the artist. This is something that he does completely intentionally.

“When I work on the concept of a piece I always ask myself, how can I make that clearer, easier to understand?” says Scheiger, “Downsizing complexity is what I want. I also want people to like my work because it’s easy to understand.”

Stationed in an art world where the unapproachable is chic, Scheiger’s philosophy derives from his background in graphic design. In his works, graphic design and art come together in a pop-driven fusion that further blurs the nearly imperceptible divide between contemporary graphic design and

what’s considered art. To Scheiger, it’s really quite simple. “Modernism, Bauhaus, and Pop Art made it quite clear that there is no distinct line between art and graphic design. I think an academic distinction between graphic design and art is obsolete, but let me put it this way: I think of design as an art with a purpose. Graphic design approaches people without them noticing. It is rather inconspicuous and under-appreciated.”

Scheiger takes cues from Frederick W. Goudy and his book, *The Alphabet and Elements of Lettering* for his “Evolution of Type” series. According to Scheiger, Goudy states that letters themselves were a record of man’s history and development, and that each possessed an essential and organic form.

Evolution of Type: Exhibit 16 has Scheiger’s letters fossilized in amber. On display, they speak to the past of the letter, and its uncertain physical future.

“With the amber letters I want to signal the death of the physical printing letter,” Scheiger says, “With digital printing techniques, the letterpress letter became obsolete. Unnoticed by the public, the actual letter, the physical letter to be reproduced in the print process, died out. Now a letter is 1’s and 0’s.”

The Austrian-born Scheiger has worked as an illustrator for student papers and private businesses, and also works as an art director in advertising. He holds a great respect for the past, and marvels at the abilities of designers and typesetting in eras gone by. Victorian touches inform a great deal of his work.



Images provided by Andreas Scheiger

“I am fascinated and dumbstruck by the devotion and how technically refined the graphical work of this time was. It seems to me that when people did not have the means of digital reproduction, their way of publishing was far more delicate and sophisticated than today. When I look at a printed piece of that time, I hear the rattling of the printing machines, the clinking of the typesetters, and I can smell the ink.”

Scheiger’s stippled drawings refer back to the Victorian era in their actual physical creation as well as their appearance. The mechanical process of using dots and different lines of varying weight and scale are similar to the techniques an engraver would employ to simulate color, surface, and depth. Scheiger attempts to recreate that lost handcraft, generating exceptional portraits of pop significance using similar methods. Illustrations *The Quick Brown Fox* and *The Lazy Dog* greatly utilize these faux-engraving techniques. In another nod to his admiration for the alphabet, these pieces remind us of the popular English-language pangram, used in an uncomplicated and celebratory tone.

Despite the breadth of his work, Scheiger still has plenty of ideas he’s kicking around, and he’s not afraid to enlist the help of others for his “Evolution of Type” series. “I see myself cooperating with other artists on the topic of letter evolution,” says Scheiger, “I would love to see how others address the subject. It would be fun to physically work together on very big letters.” ■