

Love Letters: The Intersection of Art & Design

Originally printed at <http://www.worcestermag.com/newsletter-stories/weekend/Love-Letters-The-Intersection-of-Art--Design-171375221.html>

By Stefanie Gough / photos by Steven King
September 27, 2012

Love letters bring to mind images of scarlet A's and handwritten professions of adoration. But, the premise of the show Love Letters opening at Clark University on October 3 conveys the appreciation graphic designers and fine artists share of language and letterform. Co-curated by Toby Sisson and Sara Raffo, this exhibit isn't about love letters; it's about the love of letters.

"These aren't just typographic artists. It's the intersection of design and fine art," explains Sisson. Raffo, elaborates saying the exhibit is about the different ways in which "visual people use the ideas of language and letters."

Margaret Suchland, one of the exhibiting artists, shares "I love letters and fonts, and enjoy incorporating them in my work." Suchland's work presented in this exhibit is part of an ongoing series dubbed "Lexicon," meaning the vocabulary of a particular language. "They reflect my interest in mark making, alphabetic characters, and the graphic quality of typography," she says.



Juliana Spahr, one of the interns working on the exhibit, along with Nicholas Hancock, says there's a subtlety about the work presented. "A recurring theme that I keep finding in the artists' work is that good typography you don't see, and bad typography you really see." Spahr also says the exhibit "opens students up to the idea that type isn't something you just use to text people with."

Sisson says the lure to participate in an academic gallery is "to create something challenging, and not necessarily commercially viable." She says while many graphic designers are not typically acknowledged for their work in products such as business logos, "this is an opportunity for them to show their creative work."

One such artist, Jessica Green, channels her creativity in typography through her experience with the human form. "When I draw letters, I find I employ a lot of the same shapes and curves that I learned drawing the human figure." A video "Side of a Waist" will feature Green talking about the relationship during the show.

The exhibit encompasses a wide array of methods and materials. Video animation, digital design, ceramic sculpture, and drawings are only some of the mediums that will be on display. "Any way you can think of words, letters, typeface, shape, form, anything, we tried to include it in the show," says Spahr.

A multiplicity of typographic forms will be accompanied by a poetry slam put on by four Clark University students with short performances inspired by the artwork. Raffo says it's fitting "because poetry is a great example of language existing in a space, just as typography can [be]. Certain parts can be more focused and communicate a particular message, and other parts are more abstract and playful. Poetry is typography's perfect counterpoint."

Love Letters is a show for both the community and students. "This exhibition is basically a place for the community to learn visual culture, and a place for students to learn about their role in making visual culture," Sisson relates.

Love Letters opens Wednesday, Oct. 3, and runs through Nov. 26 in the Schiltkamp Gallery in the Traina Center, 92 Downing St. Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.- 4 p.m. Be sure to stop by the opening reception on Wednesday from 5-7 p.m.