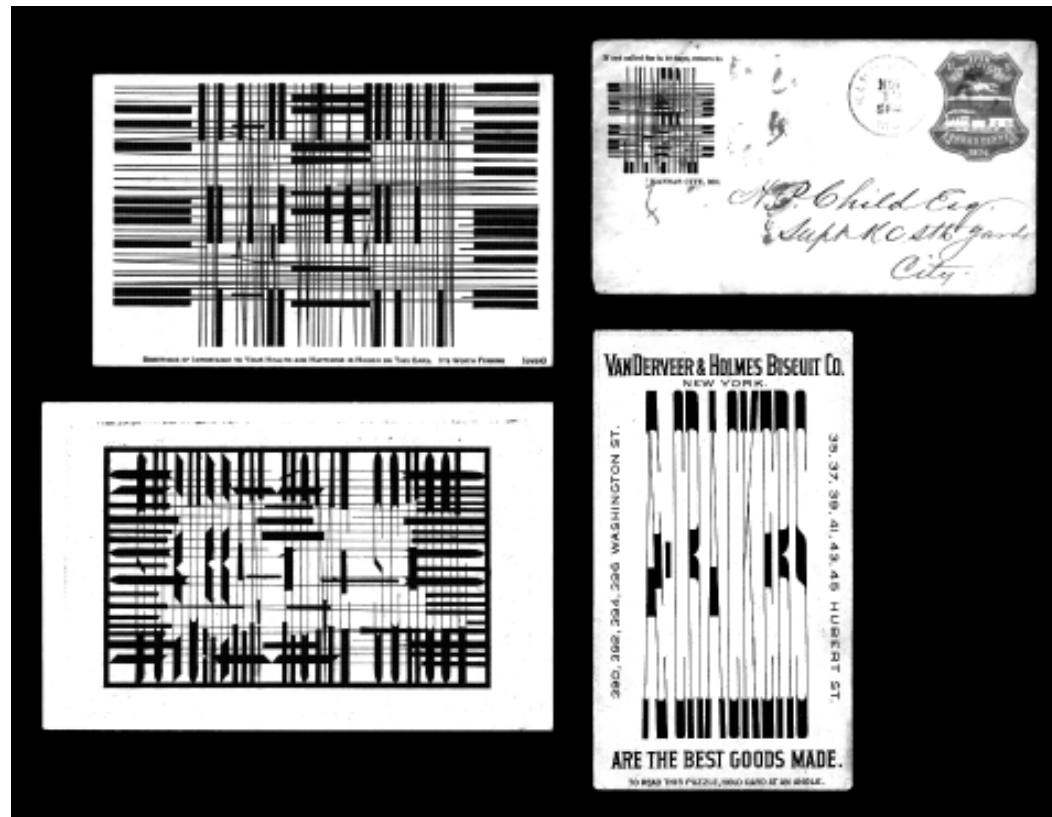


Samples of «Anamorphic Writing» gathered by ephemera collector Richard D. Sheaff. Since 2023 his extensive collection is housed at the [Letterform Archive](#). ↓



Together with its more pragmatic sibling [Manoeuvre](#), Anamorphe explores the perceptual phenomenon of perspective [anamorphosis](#).

Stretched out between graphic encryption, mannerist gimmickry and utilitarian necessity, these two families each indulges in their own aspect of intentional letter distortion.

Years ago I came across the [website](#) of avid ephemera collector Richard D. Sheaff. Amongst the many eccentric examples of 19th century artistic printing and lettering one category stood out for its visual and conceptual ingenuity. Filed under "[Anamorphic Writing](#)", Sheaff gathered samples of graphic riddles intriguing for their puzzling complexity.

A message hiding in plain sight, revealed only when tilted at an extreme angle and looked at with one eye closed. This hyper-stretched lettering style is intended not to elucidate but to obfuscate. The deciphering of the message calls for interaction with the medium, for an active engagement rather than a passive consumption.

Exactly when this effect was first employed in the lettering arts is hard to pinpoint. Knowledge of perspective distortion was applied to letterforms as early as ancient Rome. A prominent example is the [iconic inscription at the base of the Trajan column](#) showing significant difference in size between lines of text in order to compensate for the viewer's low position underneath the plaque. In his «[Vnderweysung der Messung...](#)» from MDXXV, Albrecht Dürer explicitly illustrates this practice amongst other geometric applications in the construction of letterforms.

The Renaissance, with its fusion of science and art, its fascination for perceptual phenomenon, optical devices and geometric laws was crucial in the conceptualization of central perspective;



↑ The «hidden» skull in Hans Holbein the Younger's «The Ambassadors», 1533. The National Gallery, London
 Google Arts & Culture, 2023 (PD)

the analysis of visual distortion from a subjective point-of-view.

Leonardo da Vinci (of course) is often claimed to be the first artist to indulge in deliberate deformation in [this sketch from 1515](#). Yet, it was the 1530s and the transition from the ideals of the High Renaissance to what was latter coined Mannerism that can be declared [the hey-days of artistic anamorphosis](#).

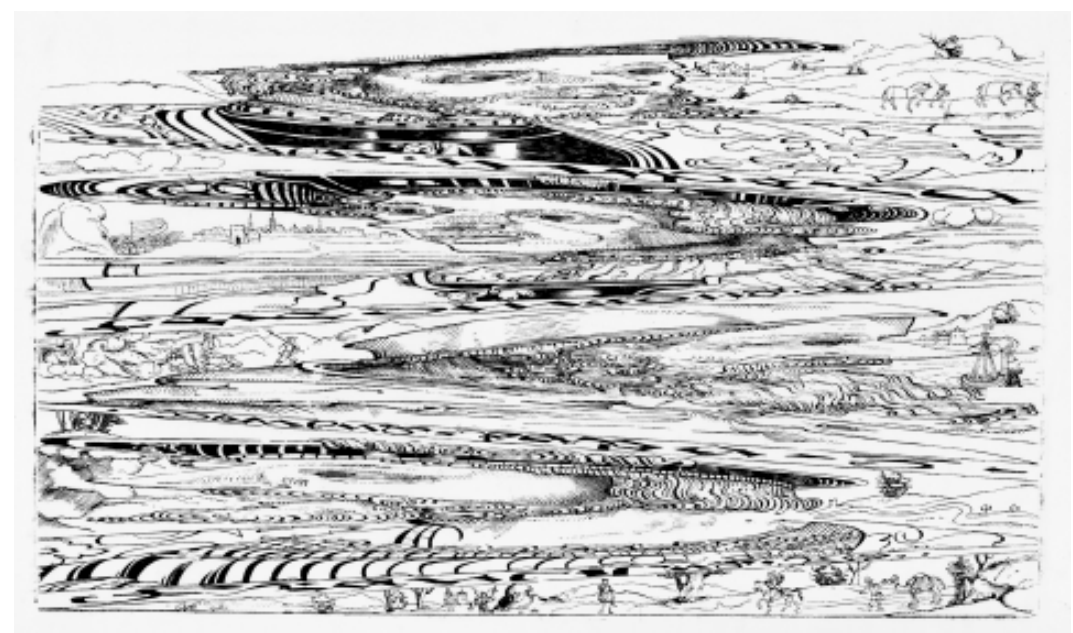
The most prominent example might be [Hans Holbein the Younger's](#) masterpiece «[The Ambassadors](#)» from 1533. Depicting two nobleman with their physical and metaphorical possessions, the painting also sports a diagonally anamorphized human

skull stretched over the lower quarter of the image.

Lesser known yet equally fascinating is the work of [Erhard Schön](#), a disciple of Albrecht Dürer. His «[Vexierbilder](#)» are a series of woodcut riddles to be deciphered only by the curiously inclined. As an extension of his mastery of geometry and perspective, Schön might be the first one to drastically distort letterforms in his work.

Besides their technical dexterity, these two examples also show the subversive potential of anamorphic disguise. By superimposing two images, a deeper psychological meaning or social commentary can be implied. In Holbein, the skull acts as [a reminder of the mortality](#) of the arro-

Erhard Schön's «[Vexierbild](#)» with four anamorphic portraits, ca. 1530. [Staatliches Museum zu Berlin](#). ↓



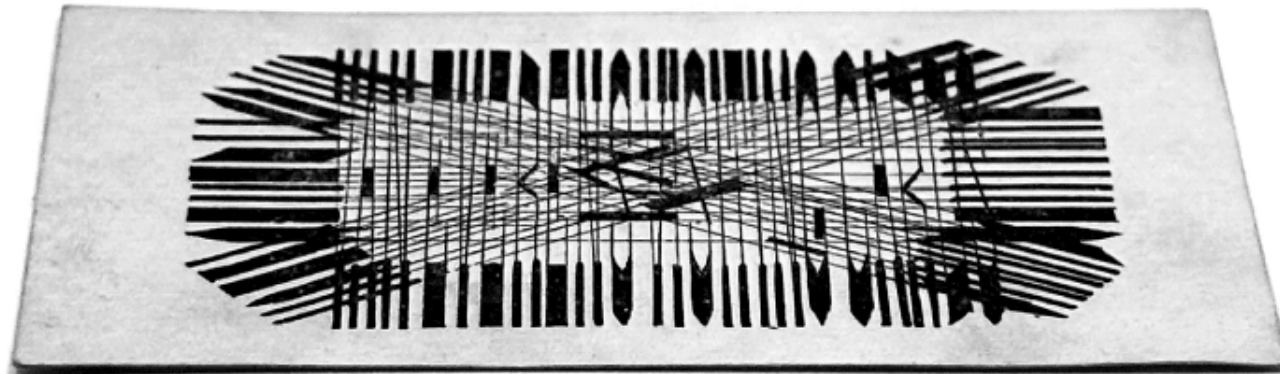
gantly wealthy; in Schön, a critique of the socio-economic system of catholic feudalism or sexually explicit imagery are profoundly embedded.

In the course of letterform history, anamorphosis remains a visual curiosities used for various reasons and effects. Examples range from the camouflaged lyrics of a patriotic song issued during the Nazi occupation of Norway to the outrageous signature of Bavarian comedian Karl Valentin. As this shows, perspective distorted letterforms might have been a common, yet not very common request from sign painters and lettering artists.

The eponymous Anamorphe typeface introduces this odd practice and the ability for cryptic obfuscation into the realm of digital typography. Variable font technology enables fine tuning of horizontal width and vertical weight to fit the to-be-disguised message at hand.

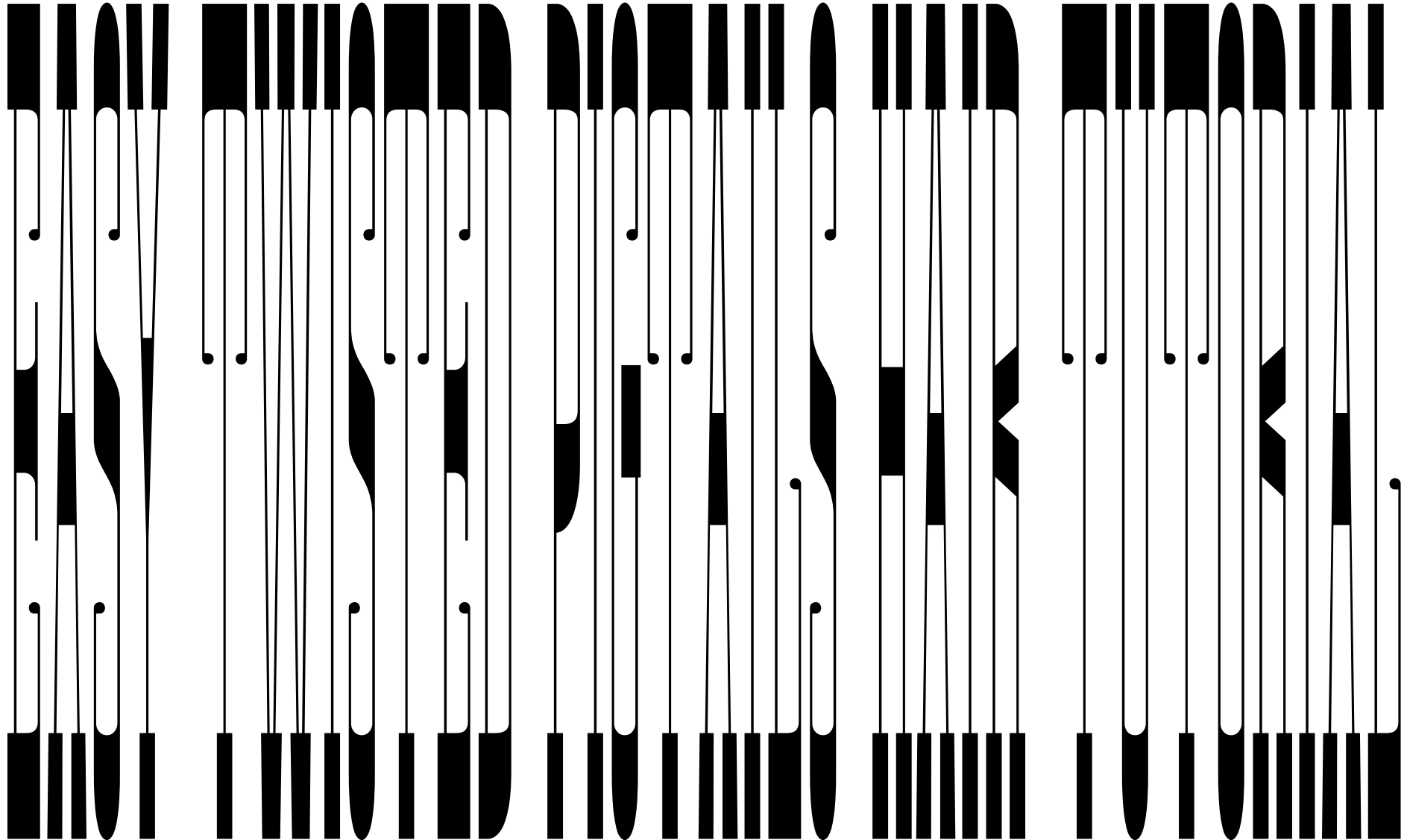
mation of conflicting desires. Angular details reside comfortably next to round features. What starts out as sans in the most condensed style successively grows serifs in order to maintain a picket-fence effect. The ball terminals found in some of the historical specimens are implemented as stylistic variants, adding an absurd, ornamental twist to the already puzzling mix.

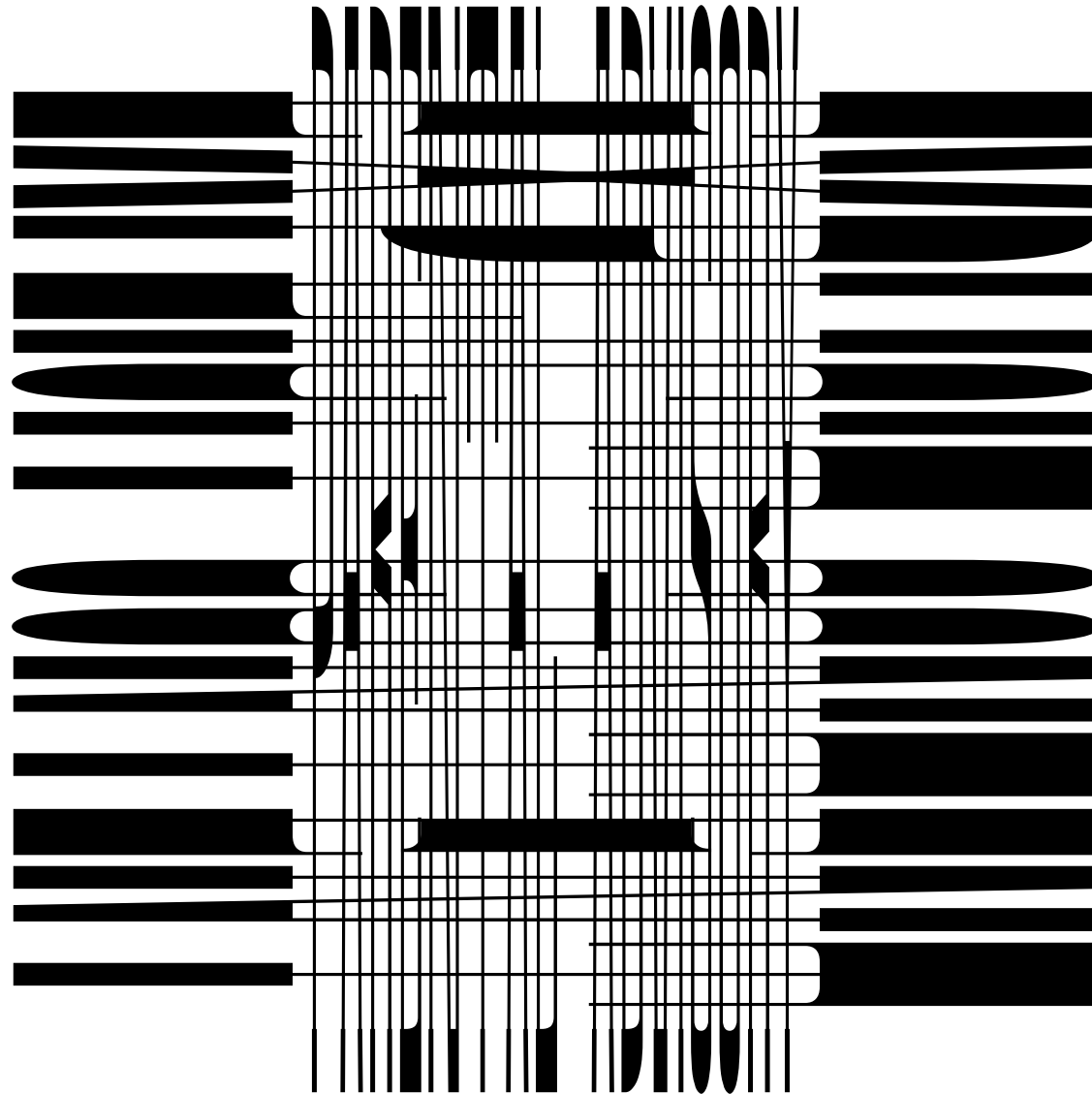
Van Everens Visiting Cards, ca. 1880.
Found, documented and sold by
Kate Hackman, [critical EYE finds](#). →

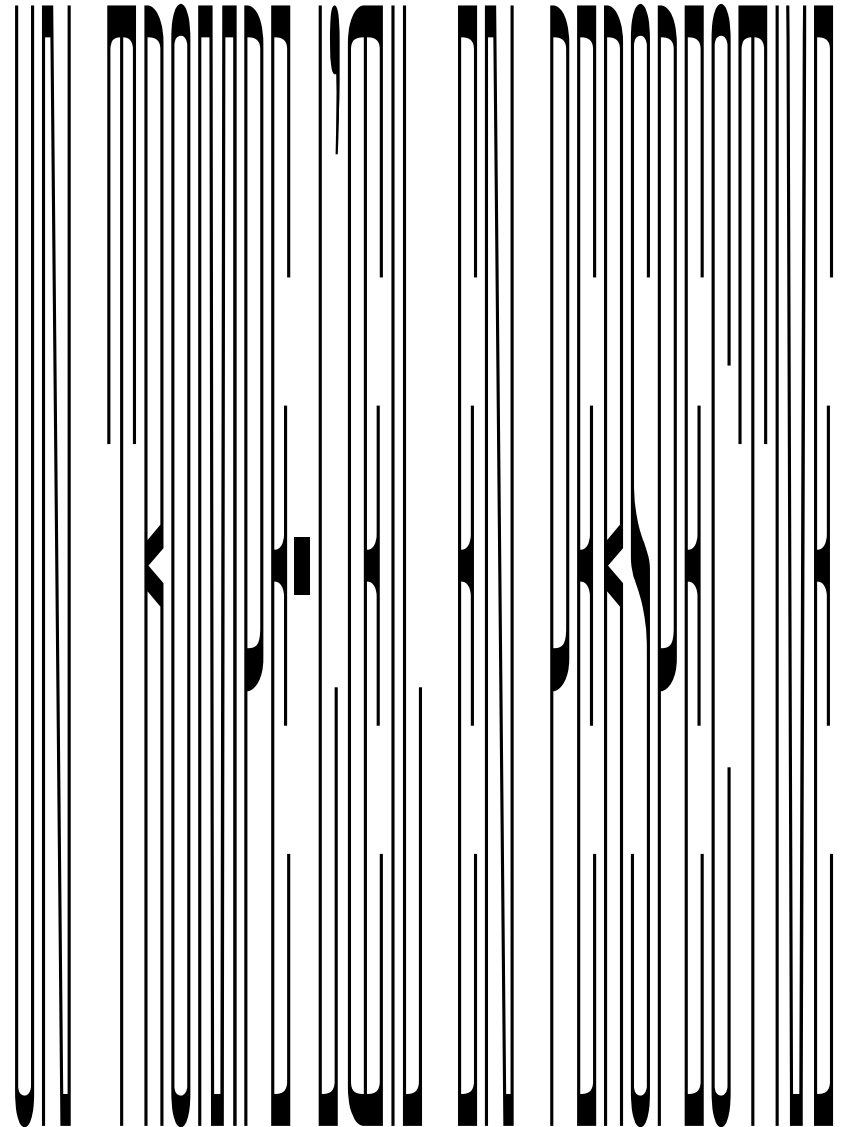
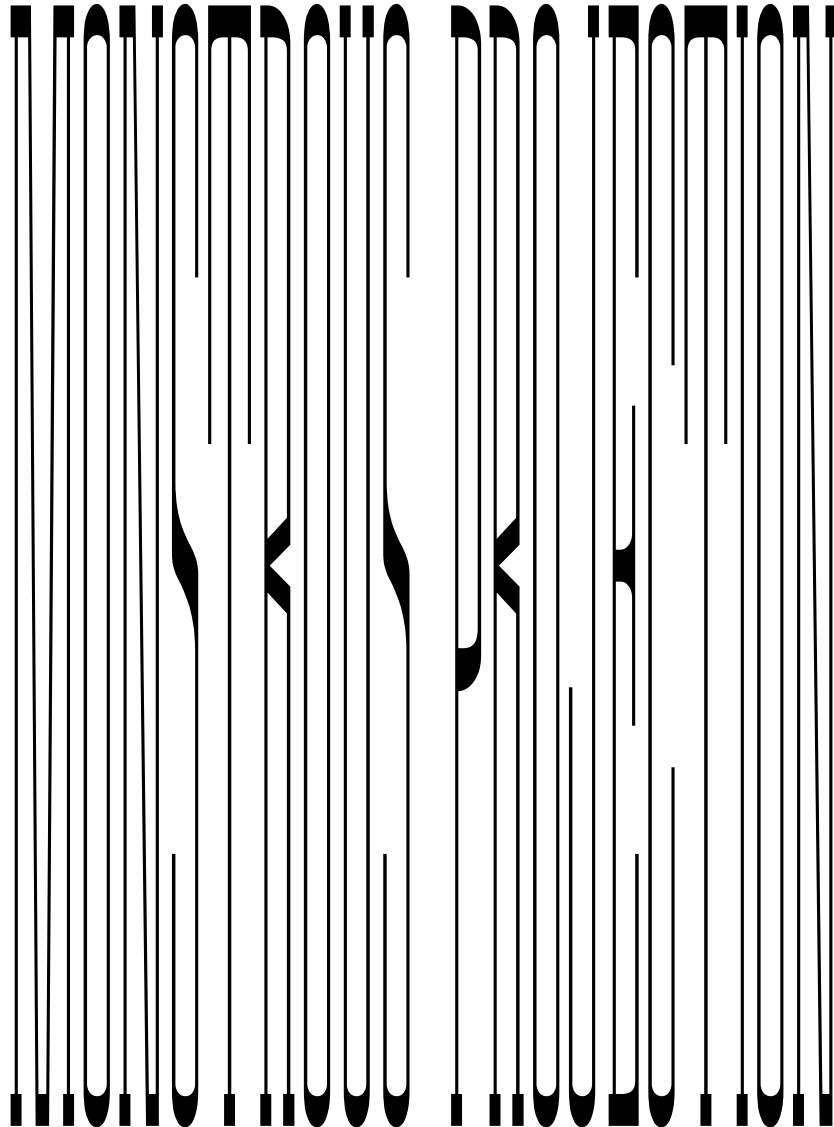


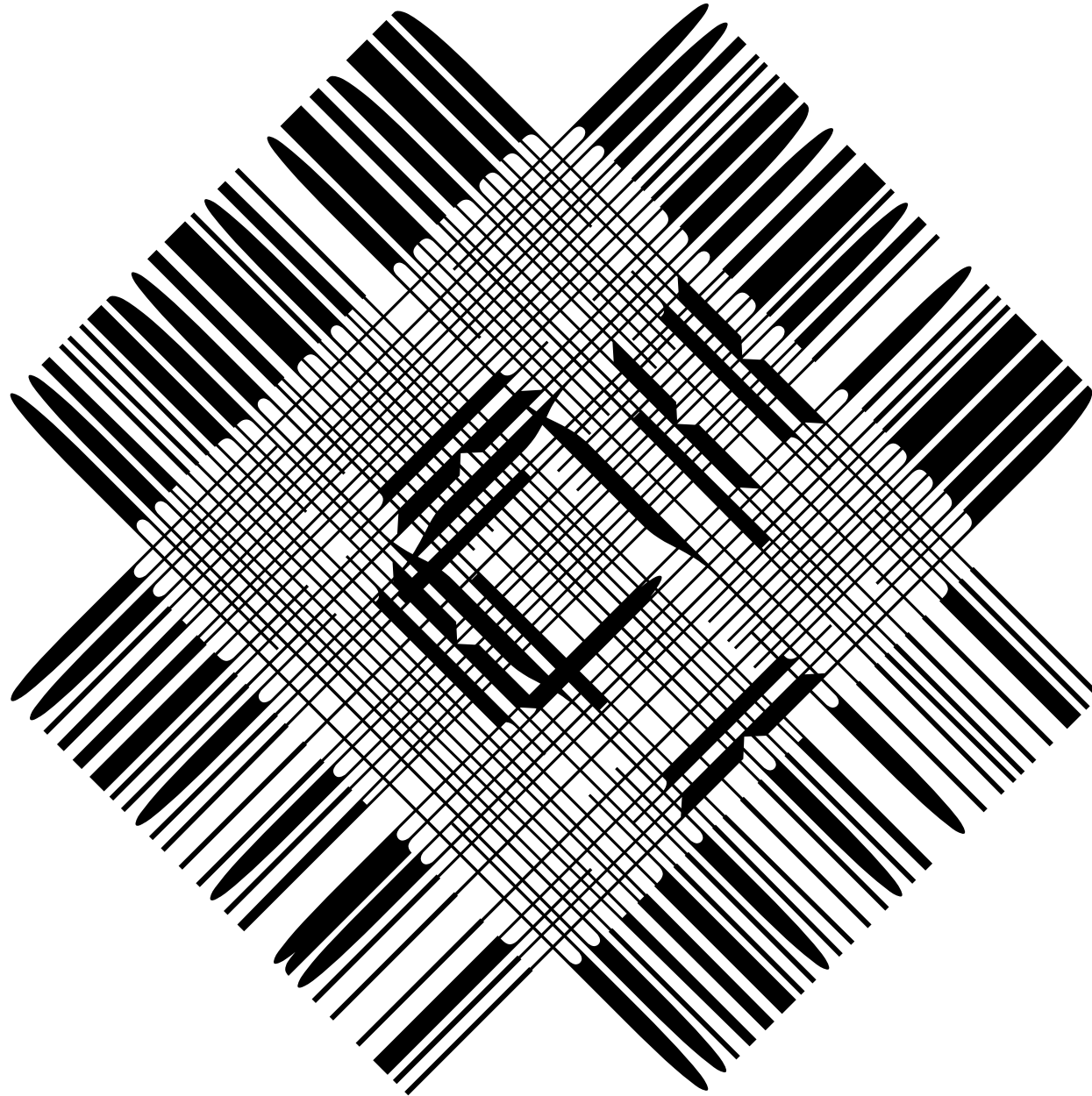
As shown in many of the historical samples, the effect is at its best when two or more words or phrases overlap in a grid like manner, to be read at an angle from their respective direction.

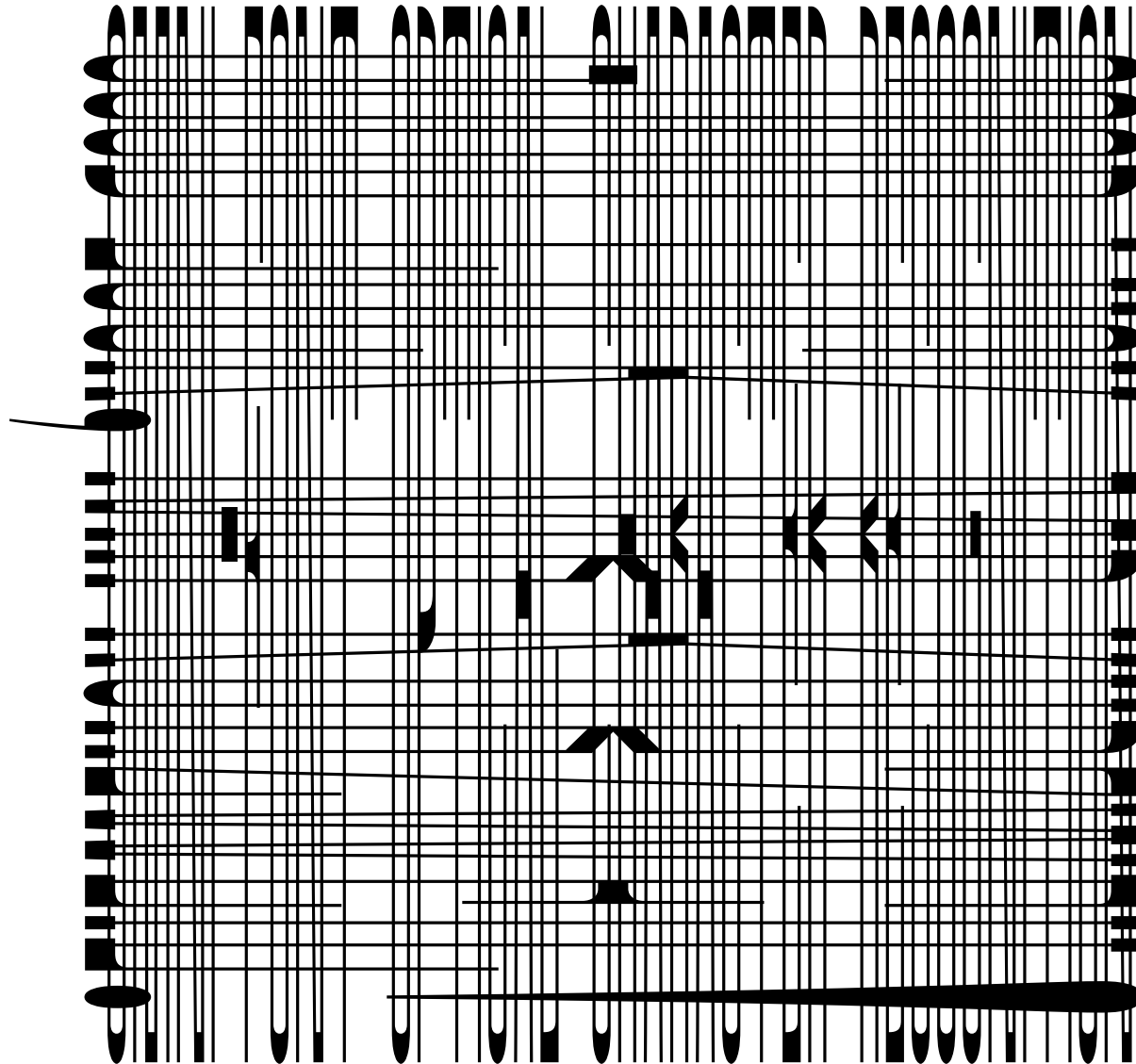
Anamorphe cites a manifold of the encountered examples resulting in an amalga-

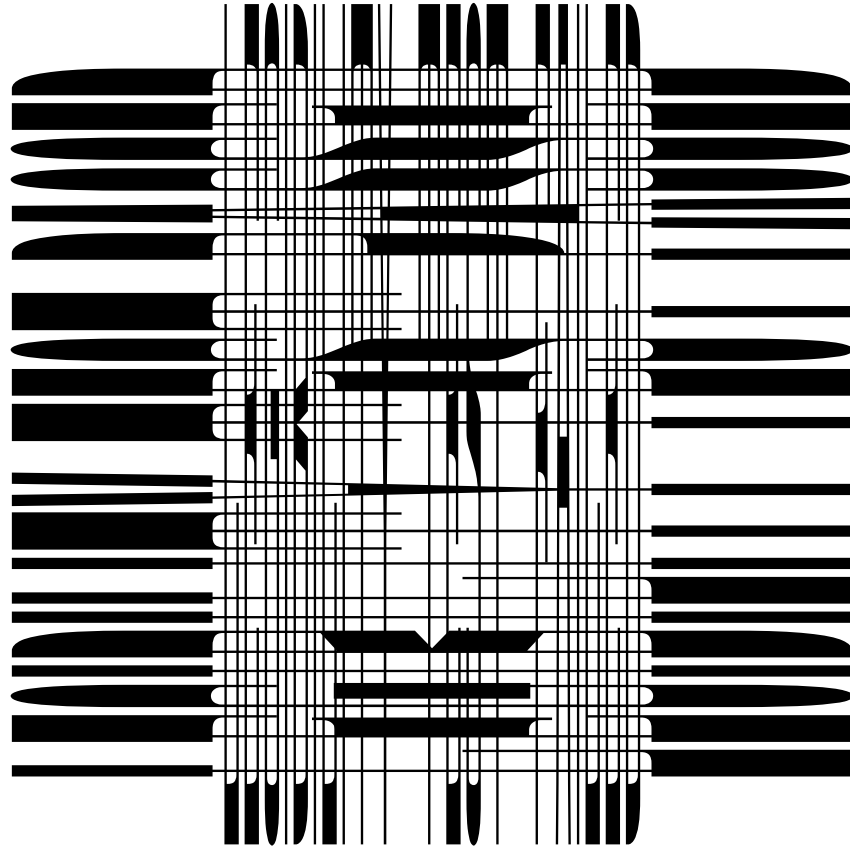




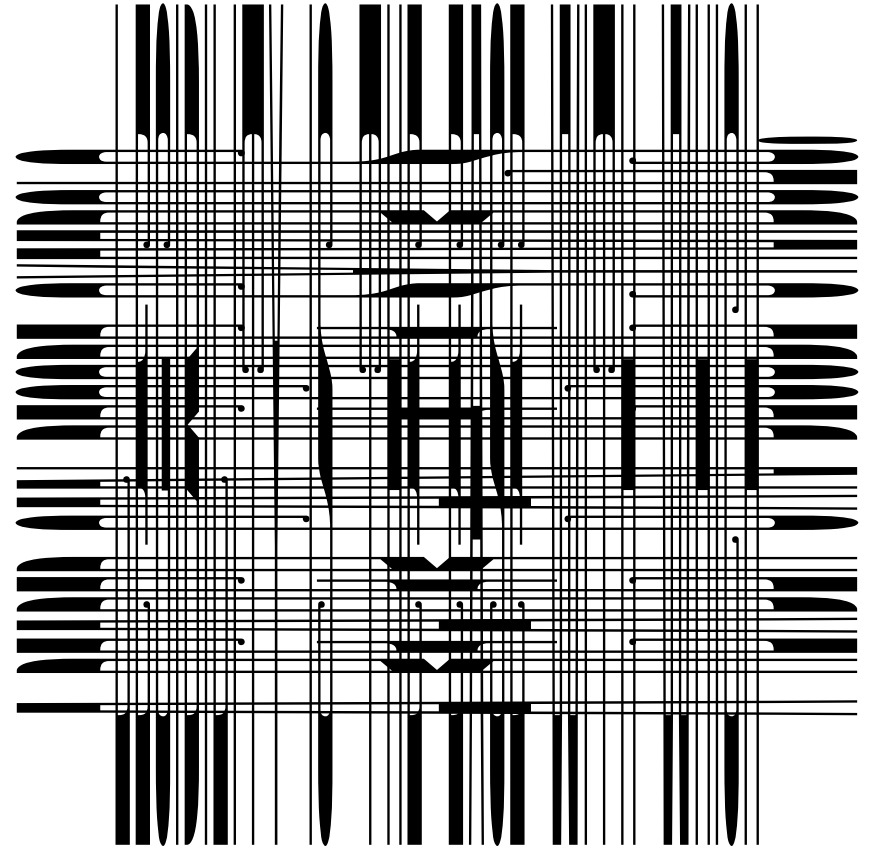




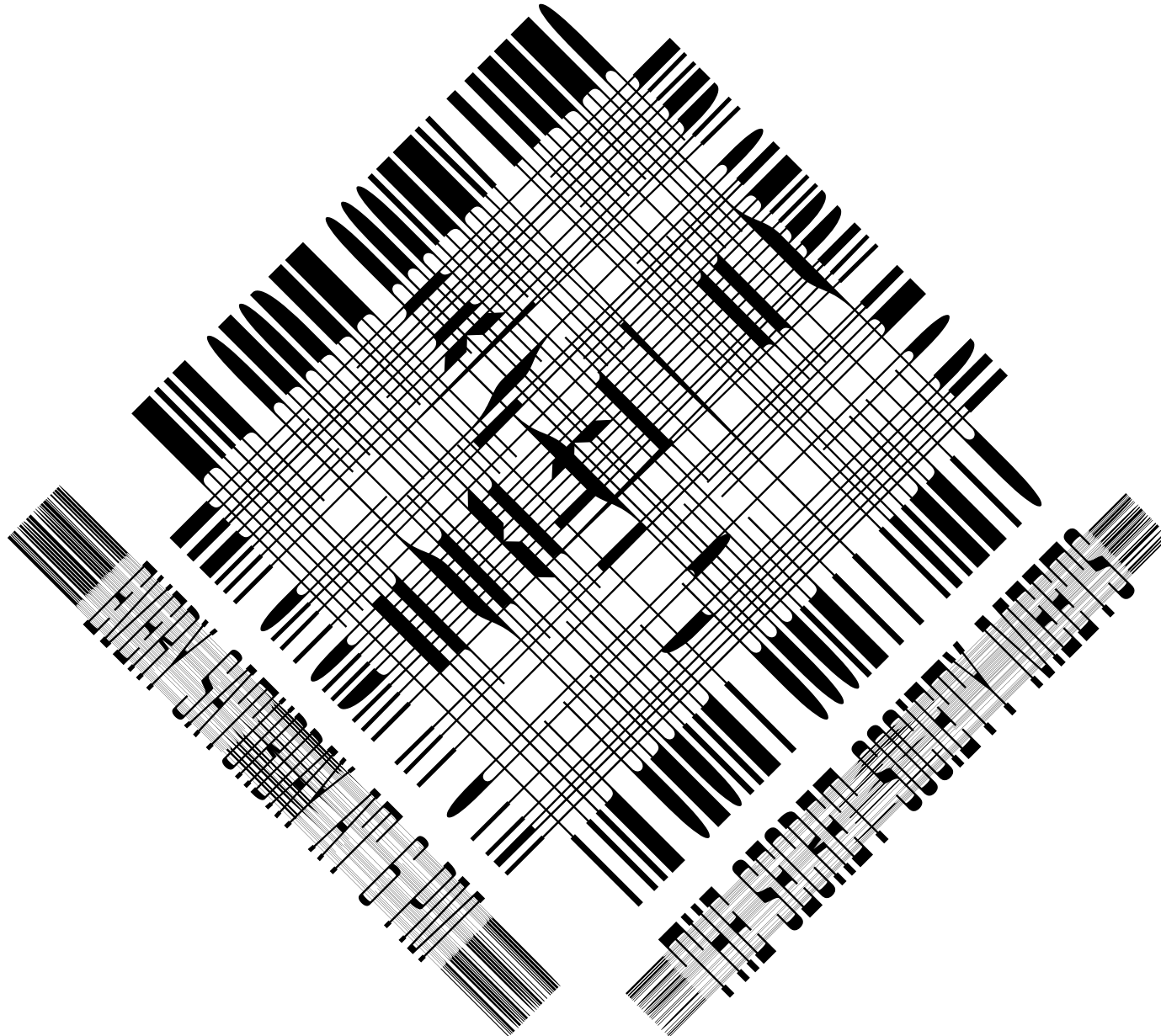


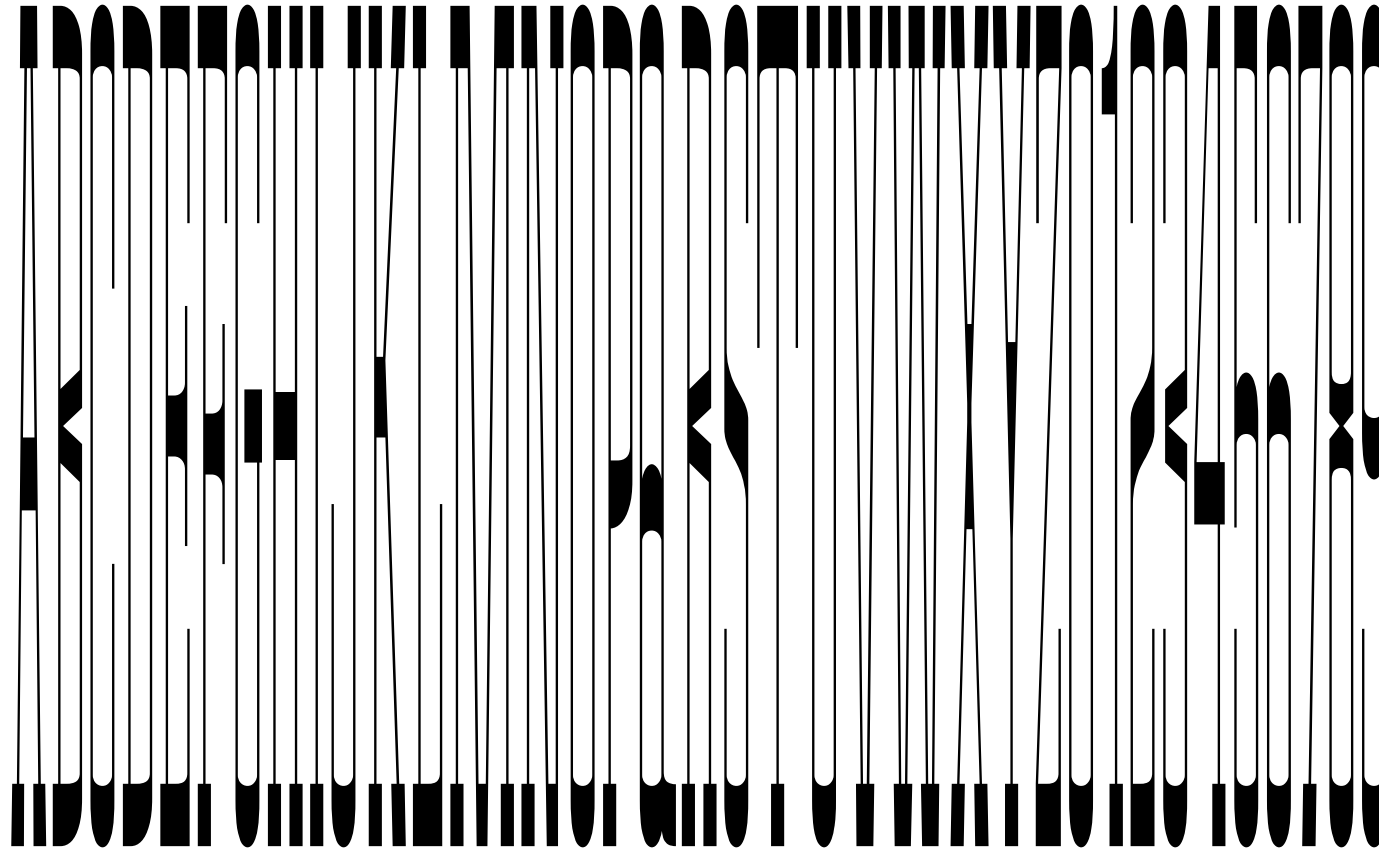


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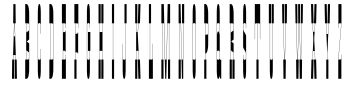


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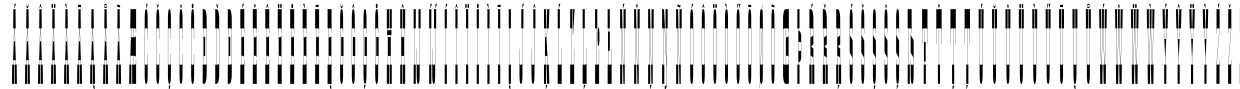




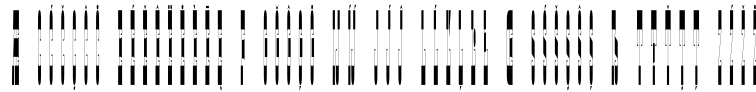
Uppercase



Extended Uppercase



Alternates



Punctuation

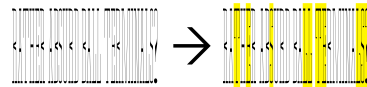


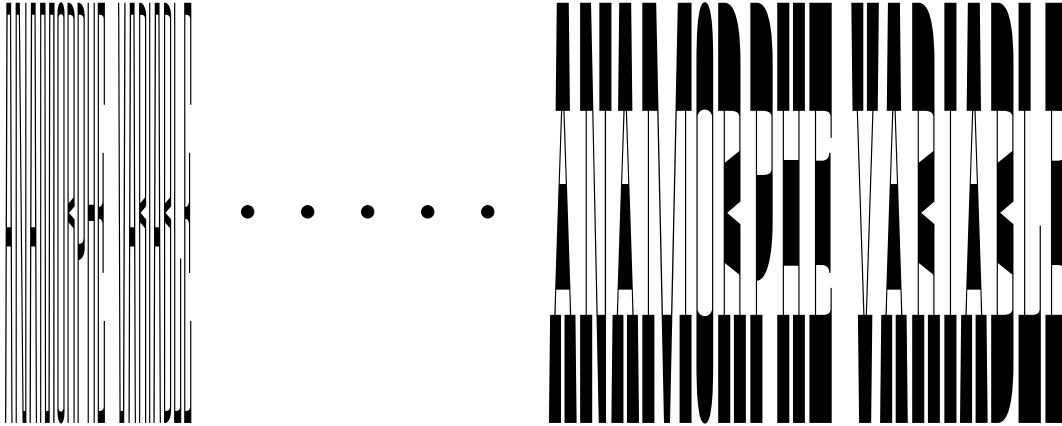
Numerals, Math, Currency, Symbols



OpenType Features

Ball Terminals (ss01)





Font formats

TTF (Variable)	TrueType / quadratic
WOFF2 (Variable)	TrueType / quadratic

Credits

Design	Anselm Felter
Mastering	Edgar Walther

History

Released	2026
Version	1.0 (20260219)

Licensing

The font files may only be used in accord with the licensing terms stated under:

www.thepytefoundry.net/information

www.thepytefoundry.net/EULA

Variable axes

Weight	wght	200							700
Width	wdth	100							300

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 0556 Oslo | Norway
mail@thepytefoundry.net

About The Pyte Foundry

The Pyte Foundry is an independent type design studio and home of the pytographic paroxysms of its founder Ellmer Stefan.

Alongside its offerings of custom letterforms, the foundry's slowly expanding catalogue of Plain and Ornamental Types seeks to balance functionality with idiosyncrasy, aiming to establish a space where quirks and quality contently coexist.

This document is for evaluation purpose only.

