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Photographic letterforms

Frank Argento

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PHOTOGRAPHIC LETTERFORMS

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July 13, 1970
Mr. Roger Remington
Associate Professor

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to design an alphabet of lower case display letterforms, and conform it for use with the Staromat Automatic Photo Type Setter.

This thesis attempts to accomplish the following:

OBJECTIVE

- To design a unique pliable and exciting alphabet.
- To design an alphabet possessing dynamic linearity.
- To design an alphabet to be used as a vehicle for creative expression through manipulation.

SUBJECTIVE

- To bring together graphic design with communication in concert with simplicity in appearance and complexity in design.
- This alphabet shall be known as Krisline.

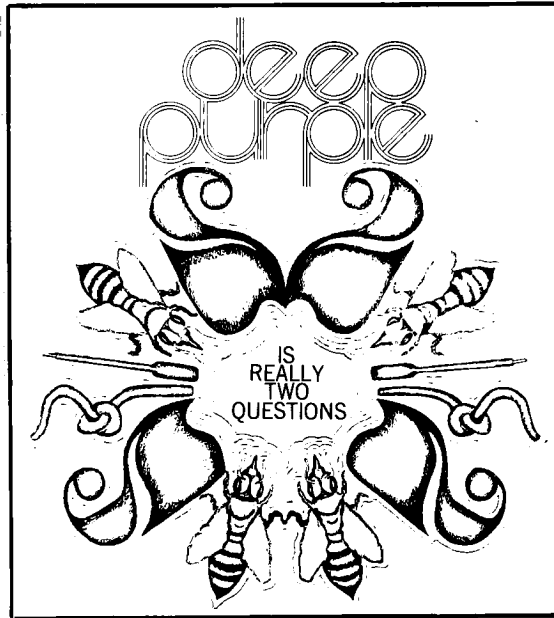
EXPOSITION

The following contains the calendar of procedures used to complete this project. Change and modification to each letterform is constant.

1. Rough Visualization
2. Letterform Development and Modification
3. Tests to Determine Weight of Letterform
4. Design Finished Letterforms and Develop Mechanicals
5. Photograph on Kodalith Film and Conform to Staromat Specifications
6. Alphabet Tests Using Staromat
7. Evaluation
8. Write and Compile Data for Thesis Book

HISTORY

Initially the concept for an entire alphabet manifested itself while I was solving a design problem. I was searching for a kind of linearity to integrate the name of a pop group "Deep Purple" with the illustration (A hokey client concept). "To Be or Not To Be is Really Two Questions."



Confidence and interest from Professor Remington encouraged my concentrated efforts toward designing an entire alphabet.

VISUALIZATION

In search for strong linearity the alphabet by Lance Wyman designed for the 1968 Mexican Olympics has had a great deal of influence on this project. The jamming or interlocking of letterforms provide infinite possibilities to the typographer.

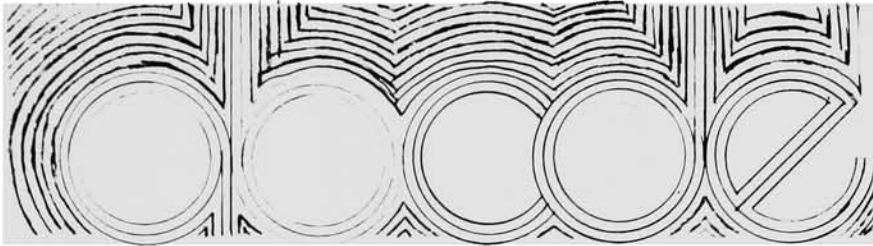
A B C D E F G H I J K L M
N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
\$? & 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

While researching letterforms, one of the most interesting findings was the work of Herbert Bayer. His universal alphabet designed at the Bauhaus in 1926 was also geometrically constructed. There are many similarities between those letterforms and this thesis.¹

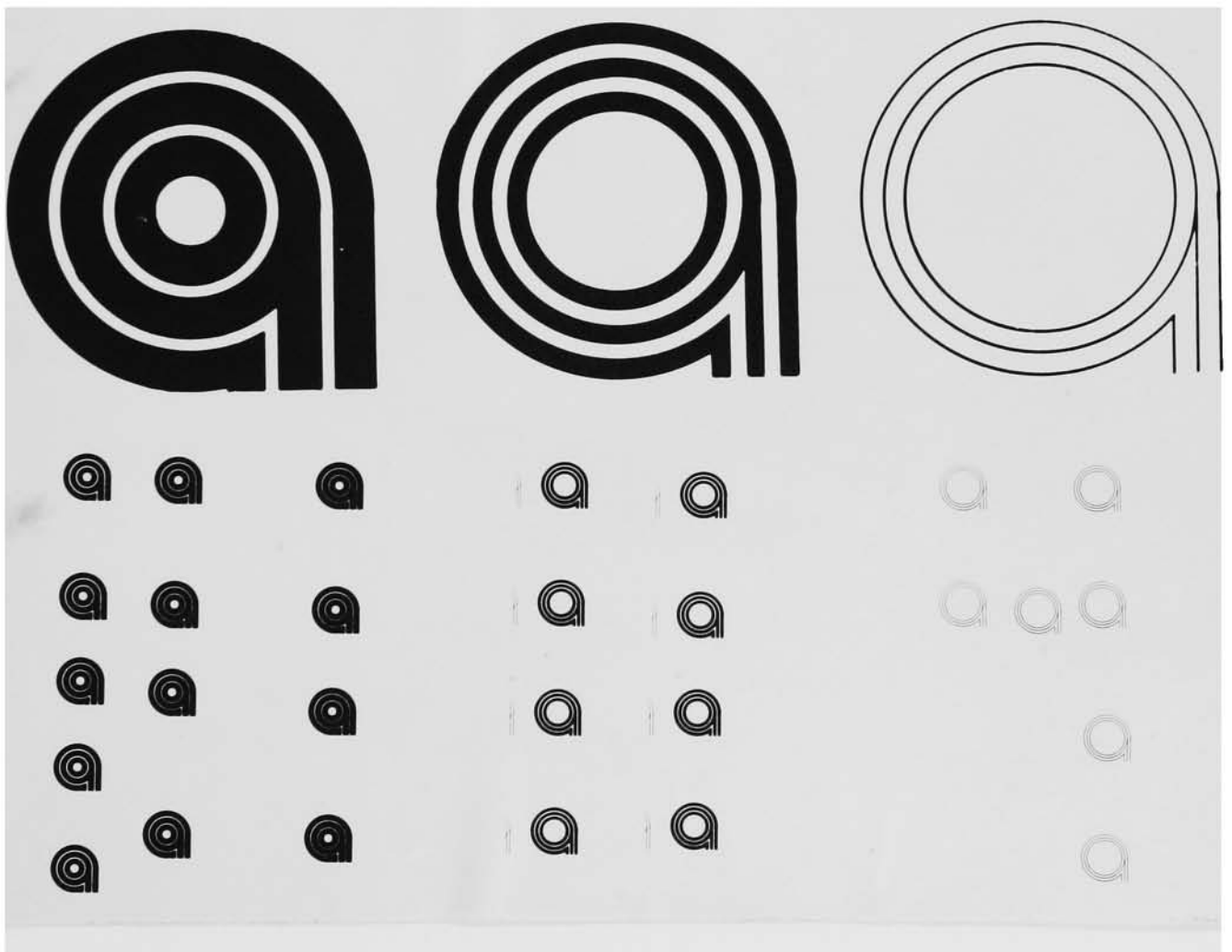
abc defghi
jklmnopqr
stuvwxyz
a d d

1. The Visible Word, by Spencer, Pg. 59.

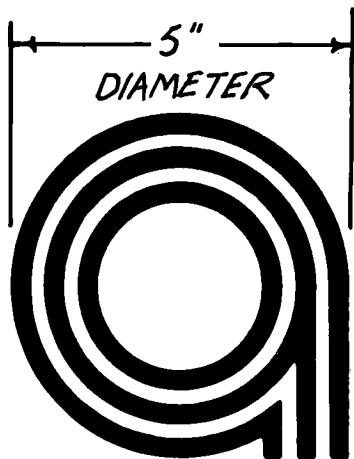
Work began by impulsively setting down many visual notes. One visual note concerned with the overall concept is the radiation of letterforms through a concentric relationship.



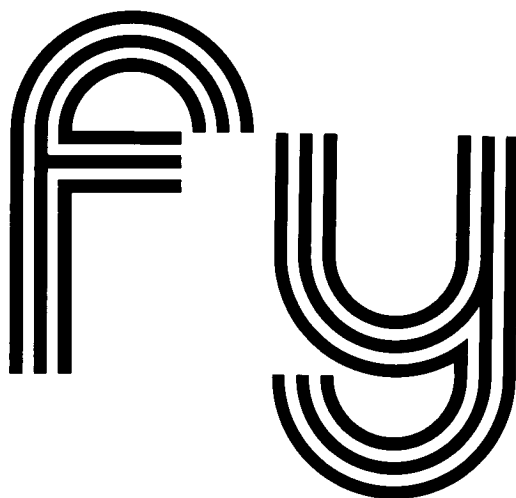
The decision was made to design a medium weight alphabet on the test letter "a" of light, medium and heavy.



The basic structure of the letterforms are mechanical. They were designed around the square body format.



The ascenders and descenders are designed to maintain uniformity.



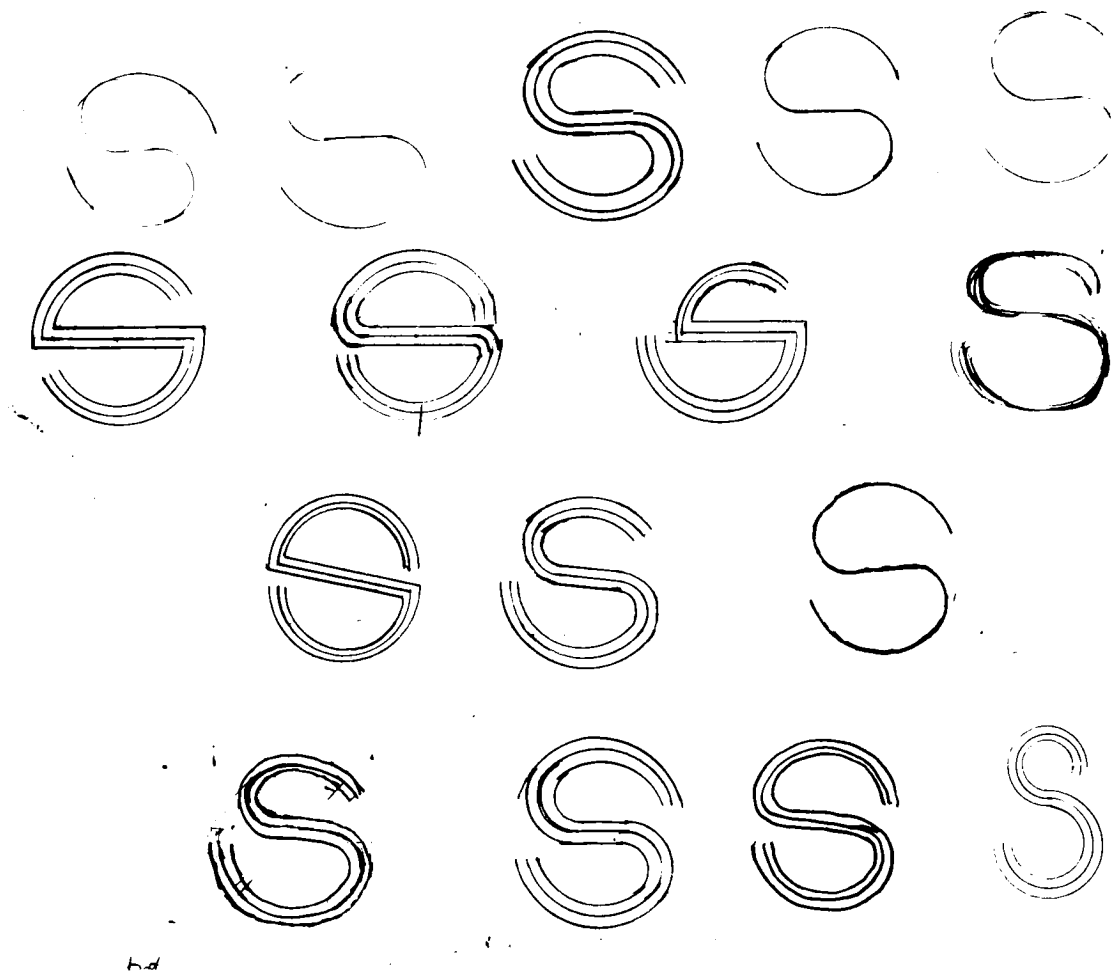
Inconsistency is deliberately designed into the letters "t" and "k". Here in contrast to the letter "f" they have an optical departure. These letters are slightly shorter in height to optically make up for the heaviness of their bottoms.



PROBLEM LETTERS

While developing the letterforms, problems arose. There were inconsistencies between ascenders and descenders, (When to stop the stroke of the "c" "s" "e" "f" and "t".) Some letters looked right, but did not integrate well with others.

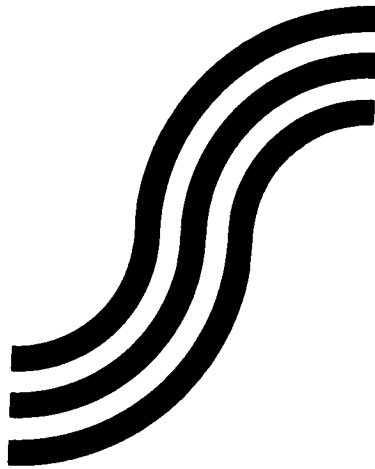
The "s" took many directions, and when it finally looked good it would not fit into the normal proportionment. There was not enough room to keep the top stroke smaller than the bottom. The proportionate thickness of line made it impossible.



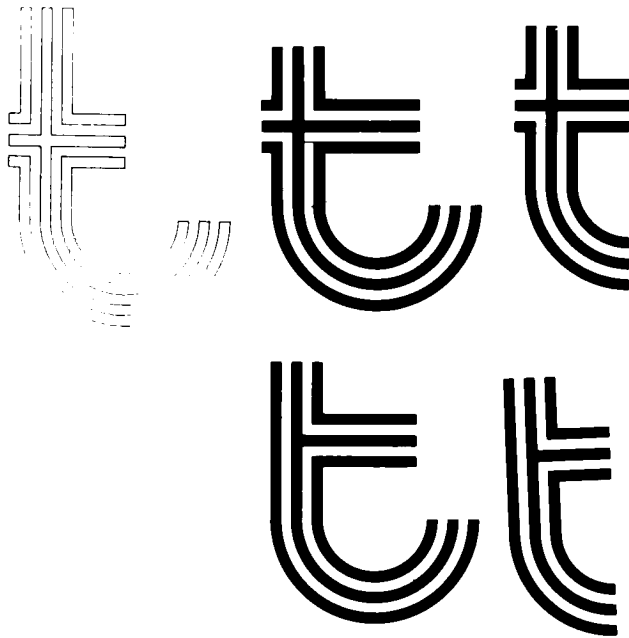
Finally, the balanced "s" was completed.



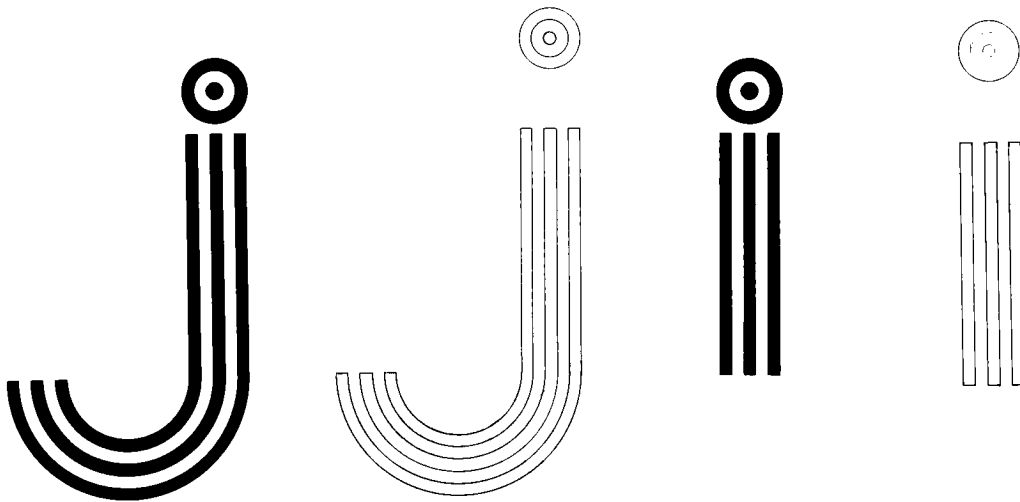
An alternate "s" was then designed having a fluid character in keeping with the overall movements, and similar to contemporary styles like Germanic Sans or Burko.



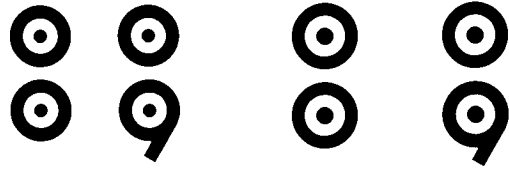
The letter "t" was quite elusive. The straight letter was not dynamic enough. The cross stroke was not allowed to cut through the vertical stroke. Now other letterforms interlock cleanly into it.



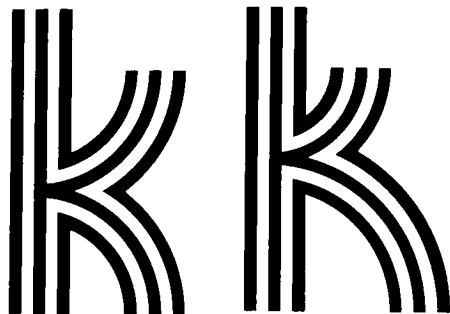
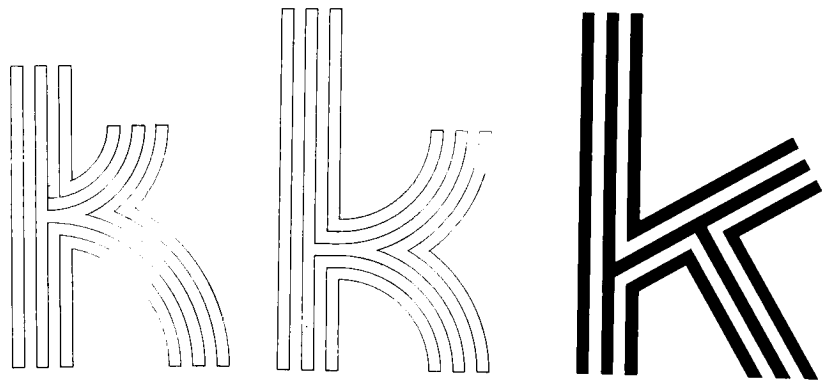
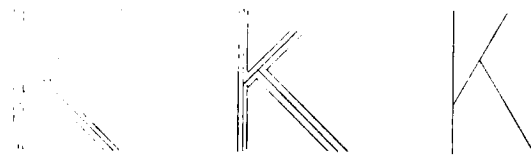
The dots over the "i" and "j" were brought down for tightness.



All dots were enlarged slightly for an appealing optical look.



The letter "k" offered many problems toward its final completion. An alternate grew out of the normal letter development.



The final stage of visualization concerned the finished art. All the letterforms were first constructed in pencil within the five inch square format. They were then ruled and later filled in with ink. The next step was to conform them for photographic composition.

PHOTO COMPOSITION

1. Font tension control
2. Type font
3. Main operating control
4. Projection head
5. Upper and lower case control
6. Autofocus cam selector
7. Manual focus control
8. Electronic control
9. Horizontal stage control
10. Stage locking brake
11. Vertical stage control
12. Print stage



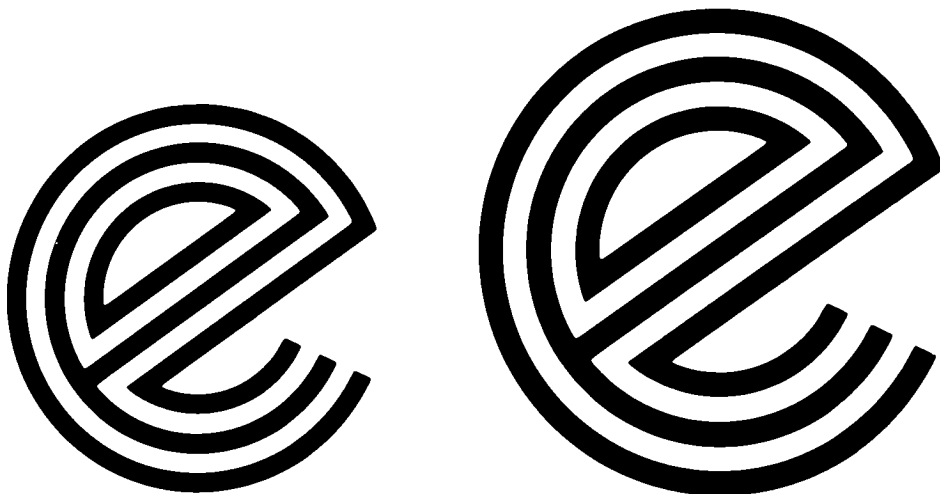
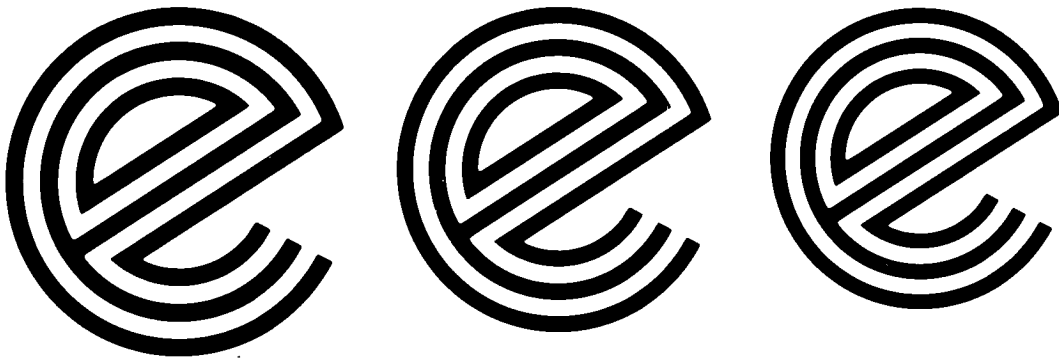
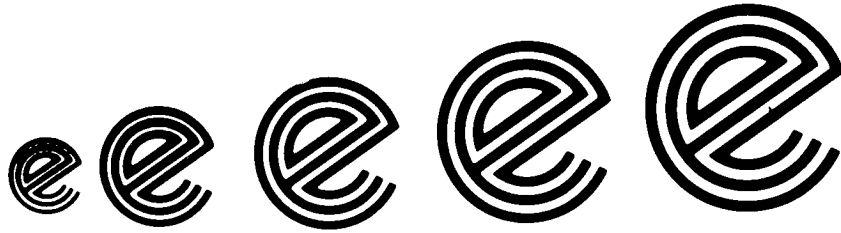
PHOTO COMPOSITION

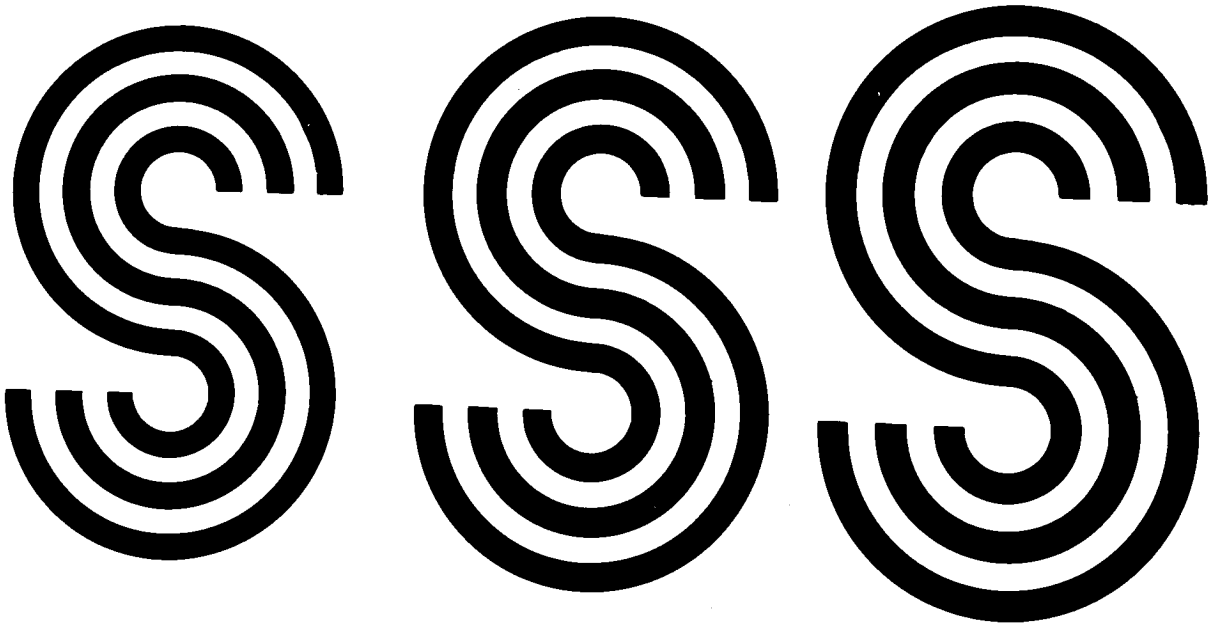
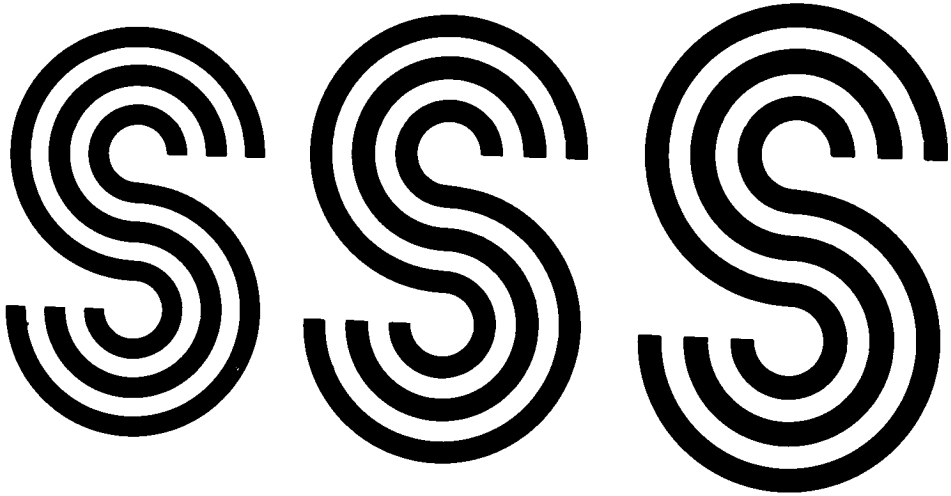
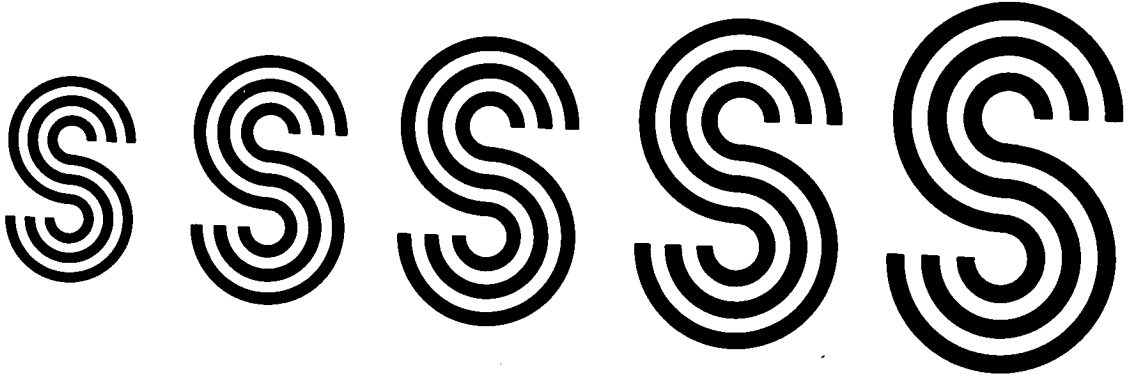
Photo composing machines "facilitate the arrangement of words with visual logic rather than as continuous prose."¹ Photo lettering machines are mostly small portable and light in weight. They are operated manually.

Photo lettering is generally used for setting display lines and headings from individual letters. It is mostly produced on strips of photographic film or paper. One letter at a time is exposed in a machine either by contact or projection. Some machines can not only produce a contact print, but reproportion and italicize as well.² All work for this thesis was done with the Staromat Automatic Photo-Type Setter. The letterforms were conformed to Staromat Specifications by photographing them on Kodalith 35mm film. The height of the alphabet is approximately 5/16 of an inch.

The strip of 35mm film was then inserted between two strips of plastic. (The empty font carriage.)

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1. The Visible Word, by Spencer, (Introduction)
 2. Photo Composition, Methods and Equipment (Forward)





spacing

spacing

spacing

run

run

run

men

men

men

women

women

women

edit

edit

edit

museuM

museuM

museuM

phototype

phototype

phototype

design

design

design

letterforms

letterforms

letterforms

EVALUATION

OBJECTIVE

Each letterform interlocks easily creating a contrasting pattern. Surveying a sampling of professional designers, their reactions to the alphabet were of excitement and enthusiasm. When the letterforms are jammed together creating words, contrast in space or dynamic linearity occurs. With the addition of alternate characters much flexibility is available for creative expression.

SUBJECTIVE

Words created with Krisline have much graphic appeal with an exciting look. It reads well; therefore, Krisline tends to bring together a sense of graphic design within communicative parameters.