



Typography and Diversity

<http://www.typoday.in>

A diversified language of tools

A process of 'learning tools manipulations' to innovate letterform probabilities.

Kalpesh Gosavi, Sophia Polytechnic, Art & Design Department, Mumbai India, aksharkalp@gmail.com

Abstract: Tools, in another way, an extension of hands which gets drive and function through various manipulations, techniques and sensories.

Other than the conventional hand practices, there are limited techniques and manipulations have been discovered and parallel research have been tried which teaches and depart the systematic method of tool manipulation. This later develop a lack of understanding and weaker logical reasoning about several tools handling which also creates repetitiveness to the calligraphic creations and letterform possibilities.

By analyzing this issue, an 'upstroke' workshop was planned and conceptualized for visual communication and design students in order to experiment a manipulation methodology of tools with certain specified discipline and theoretical, through which innovative letterform development can be possible which can initiate 'a new logical thinking and understanding' towards the tools manipulation and can serve a 'definite structure or method for parallel experiments in the process of learning or teaching a diversified approach.

Key words: Tools, mannerisms, manipulations, methods and techniques for tools usage, probabilities of tools, experiments, innovative letterform development, stylization, calligraphy, new learning approach

Introduction

Tools, in another way, an extension of hands which gets drive and function through various manipulations, techniques and sensories. Within a calligraphy practice, it is the tool which offers visible visual differences to various strokes results in myriad letterforms and their

structures. Creative linear orders, division of spaces and a difference in weight of strokes, define a language of letterform up to some conclusiveness and thus it creates an overall impression about the calligraphic appearance.

Tool is something which helps in reflects an unseen bridge between hands and one's mind. Not being just a physical object or an apparatus, tool has an immense ability in itself to deliver infinite creative outcomes with utmost versatilities.

An overview

It is been observed and analyzed from the work of various western calligraphers, Indian calligraphers and trained practitioners across the country, while working with various scripts, they have been using various tools ranges from traditional reed pens to pointed flex to the modern metal tools (coit pens)to brush pens- foam brushes and so many. With the scenario of this wide range of tools, we all are aware with the fact that, other than what are available around, there are various tools derived and discovered by many calligraphers. Such tools with their physical properties and the way they have been crafted and intentionally made, offers an introspective areas to explore. Stroke variables and the linear differences through them measure the vitality or functionality of the tools. Some tools have an existing potential in itself that just with one-touched application, tools offers a very impressive results on surface on whichever it is being used, while some tools have been crafted in such a way that it even offers a freedom for handling for user or have manipulation scope from all possible way in terms of applying them.



Figure 1

There are several hands have been practiced by many calligraphers since ages, These hands are namely Carolingian, rotunda, uncial, half uncial, pointed flex, foundational, chancery and so on. Every hand demands a particular angle or writing mannerism to render it. May it a particular hand or style, it is the tool which needs to be function in a particular mannerism which offers a definite visual language to the letterform and fixes the overall structure of the letter. Other than existing conventional hands, tools manipulation often creates a visible role in making letterform innovative one and in creating various styles. The physical proportions and properties of the tool i.e. width, height, hardness/ softness, fineness in material etc. does perform within the entire scenario driven by any tool.

Perception

Specifying visual communication or design studies, the subject calligraphy has an immense importance as it provides a fundamental base to various type design practice to several graphic design implementations. The letterform stylization is therefore stands as a unique need which may turn into various visual and design solutions.

In the context of letter stylization, it's a humble observation that letter stylization have been practiced throughout many ways by various calligrapher to type designer. Within this, other than a self ability of visualizing the 'form' of letter, tool manipulation has a lot scope to offer some interesting letter structure. Through various ways, such as applying the tool on specific surface with a particular intensity of the medium, applying tool with difference in manipulations creates an interesting space and divisions combine as a form which always can be modified to generate innovative letter structure.

Other than this, in context of learning letterform stylization through tools manipulations, there are some studies had been put forward and several demonstrations had been documented through which visual communication- design students can generate visual understanding about tools manipulation which may results into a particular style and can be improvised later with a personalized skills and efforts.

Headed to this, While observing several studies which have been documented, there are bunch of information given about tools, their variability's and the specification of their physical structure which definitely enlighten one about knowing the tool in a better way and from all possible direction. The historical background of the tool, material execution and making within the tool and its physical properties has a lot to offer to one's mind.

Many calligraphic documentations have put forward calligraphic work and a related tool and medium specifications with the same which upto some level unfolds an idea of the execution of the work but still falls limited to offer an actual process or result that has derived through tool in particular.

Current status

Right from Hermann Zapf to Arthur baker's booklets of calligraphic hands and alphabets, to many other renowned calligraphers- writers books and documentation's, unless some examples, many books does unfold a direct outcome of various tools and not a systematic development of tools manipulation in certain ways up to a formation of letterforms or a content development. While looking at the several documented demonstrations, students/ observers, people / learners from visual art domain or from design community though find it interesting or a visual treat to eyes, fall limited In order to grab and grasp the processing factors within it. Many demonstrators while giving the demonstrations, in whatever or however way they work, it moreover a resultant factor of the skill they have achieved over the years. It could be their natural hand skill or derived skill with efforts that make them good demonstrator that they possibly can come up with the eye pleasing calligraphic art pieces and can stand as a skilled calligraphers or craftsman's. Though it's always learning from looking at one's demonstrations but differs from individuals to individuals. Within such live or documented demonstrations, every individual tries to seek tools manipulations according to his/her individualistic ability of observation and tries to understand tool manipulations and formation in particular. There are very few demonstrations which reveal the systematic operation of tools manipulations.



Figure 2

Observations and analysis

Considering studying days of learning visual art, mainly calligraphy, it is the basic Balbodhi hand which teaches the dissection of letterforms with 45 degree angle when it is firmly about rendering the basic hand. Other than this, within a conventional calligraphy, the tool manipulations vary with several angles such as 90 degree, 180 degree etc. it is a very humble observation that except some cases and an individualistic teaching methodologies, the learning tool distortion/ manipulation is not different than this method in many visual art colleges where the calligraphy subject is being taught. Result to this, whatever printed or web material is available to students, students tends to learn through such available material according to their own grasping abilities and an ability of logical reasoning.

Printed calligraphic works or uploaded web works, unless some examples, doesn't depart a systematic pedagogy of how the work is been formed or the process and collective efforts of the tools and mediums. This in result adds just a visual knowledge and to an extent serves aesthetical ability to the student and as result of this, students try to imitate whatever is been seen or manipulated earlier in a particular way.

Problems and difficulties

As another observation, these days there are various tools available to the students which are more fascinating and attractive enough. There are some tool kits which with very less percentage provide primary information or visuals of the stroke variation that the tool offers which majorly act like a first guide to the students henceforth students whenever start practicing with such tools (Mainly coil pens/ metal tools) vary their performances and come to a weaker visual outputs and poor logical reasoning about tools manipulations to create well and aesthetically balanced letterform. A randomly done calligraphic work with rapid strokes by tools though looks promising sometimes; add no value in learning ability or within a logical ability of the students. Whatever diversified imbalanced strokes that the tools derivates sometime looks catchy or eye pleasing mainly because of the treatments that it gets (through surface, through mediums) which more of the time misguides students and viewer about the true ability of tools, its diverse functionality and the formation variety every tool has got.

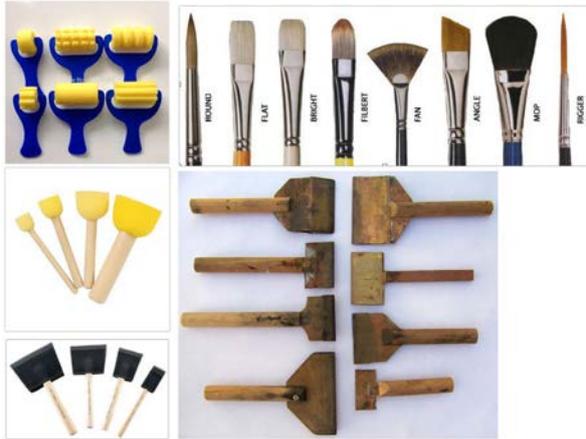


Figure 3

Other than the conventional hand practices, the visual documentation by many calligraphers we have as of now, there are limited techniques and manipulations have been discovered and parallel research have been tried which teaches and depart the systematic method of tool manipulation and help students build an ability of creating difference in letterform. This later develop a lack of understanding and weaker logical reasoning about several tools handling which also creates repetitiveness to the calligraphic creations and letterform possibilities.

An approach

By analyzing this issue, an 'upstroke' workshop was planned and conceptualized for visual communication and design students in order to experiment a manipulation methodology of tools with certain specified discipline and theoretical, through which various letterform possibilities can be planned out for several design implementations.

The workshop had incorporated various tools mannerisms- distortions, tools variables and their usages, probabilities of tools and their linear orders with calligraphic content development.

The content of the workshop started with drill lessons and pattern making with tools for giving students, a hand on experience over the tool in order to improvise and freshen up their hand skills and manipulation ability. The session followed by discussion and interaction about overall tools functionality and working approach with problems and practical difficulties students usually encounter with.

Some of the practical queries are as followed

- 1) Other than rendering the basic Devnagari hand (Balbodhi hand) and within a roman conventional hands students become limited with the specification of angles when they wish to derive a difference in letter structure.
- 2) Tools manipulation methods have not been taught to students except some cases which results in departing a less knowledge to students about manipulating the tool to get an innovative structure.
- 3) Even if students somehow manage to get a variety in angles or a difference in structure, their overall letter form doesn't look structurally and aesthetically well balanced.
- 4) Just because student doesn't form a systematic approach about tools specification in terms of handling them, they randomly choose their tool while working, which often create repetitiveness in their creations and calligraphic content writing.
- 5) A less awareness in relation with certain techniques about tools handling, students cannot use tool beside their daily practice that they are comfortable with. This again makes them limited in terms of knowing the tools desire effect and about getting a wider exposure of respective tools functionality.
- 6) There are very limited mannerisms students are exposed to which also control their way of action when it comes to holding the tool in a specific way. They fail to generate a particular holding position just because it is neither well taught nor they have practiced it on a more frequent basis.
- 7) Whatever skill some students have developed, it's because of the visual exposure they have got through exhibitions and through demonstrations which also fall short to give them systematic hierarchy about step by step methods.

Processing

By over viewing these queries, the workshop got started with drill lessons like pattern making which had made students aware with several tools handling in versatile way and it had mainly made focus on how tools will be important in creating various structures which can be implemented as a good graphics. To understand the task on an equilibrium level, the tool was selected for primary processing was a 'metal tool' which also known as 'coit pen' and the language which was comfortable and convenient for everyone and decided on

unanimous level in terms of understanding the characters and identity was a 'Devnagari script'.

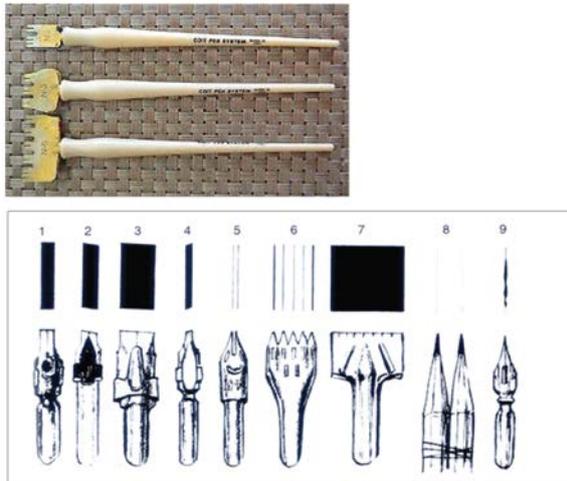


Figure 4

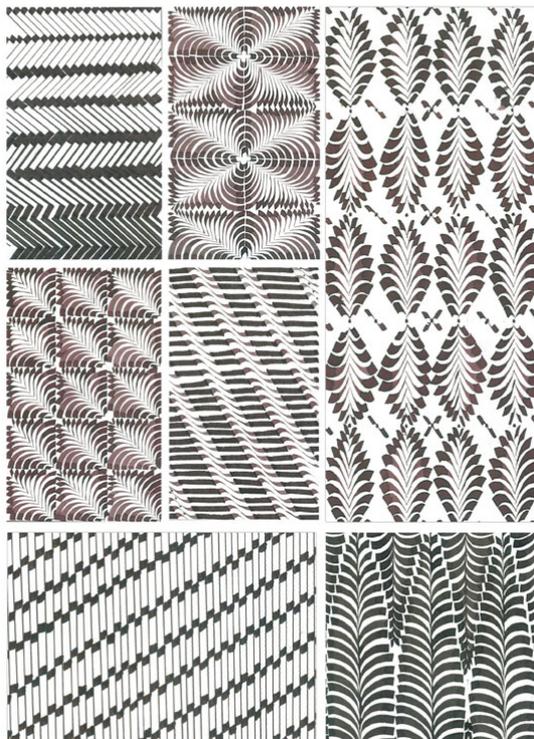


Figure 5

Students have got introduced with various methods of tool handling so that they can utilize same while working for several manipulations. Students had assigned for creating

various vertical and horizontal linear orders with the metal tool in which they had started experimenting various lines with creative outcome. A Liberty has offered about angles such as 90 degree or 45 degree but kept it fixed throughout. These lines were planes, wavy, zig-zag in motion and some were more than a normal distortion that anybody could



create otherwise.

Figure 6

Besides this session, students had asked to create innovative strokes with many assorted forms with the similar tool and medium which was normal fountain ink. As a result to this exercise, they had receive various forms when they had started experimenting with different assorted forms by turning tool in various angle and with no restriction on manipulations. These forms got segregated after their selection by according to their appropriateness in aesthetical and structural balance.

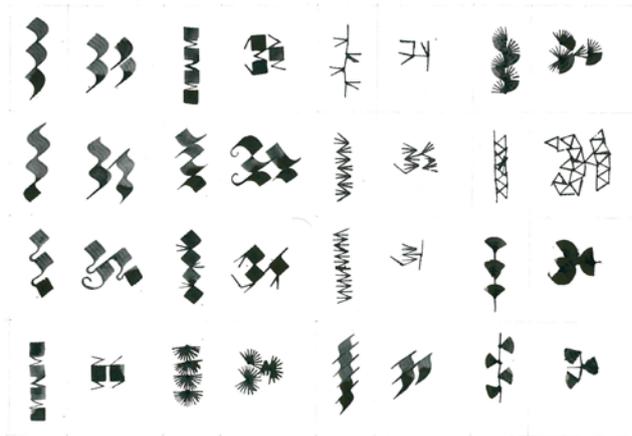


Figure 7

The theory has got allotted to the students of workshop about creating a linear body (various letter organs) other than the stroke that they had derived from the above process. The theory contains,

- 1) Either students can treat innovative form as one of the organ of the letterform and can create another relative body (construction of other organs) according to the overall form or construction of the form they are working with. The created body should be visually equivalent with the innovative derived form.
- 2) Other than this, students can create linear modulation which will not follow the exact structure of the innovative form but any creative modulation can be attached to the form to create a difference in letter structure. Only the concern was that creative modulation and earlier derived innovative form should form a resemblance with each other and should make visually balanced letter structure.
- 3) Students can follow the angle of the innovative form if it has any, and can form rest letter body with exactly the similar angle and weight as of the earlier form.

After receiving a visually and structurally well balanced letterform, students had started developing a whole character set including all vowels and consonants of Devnagari script which later they had utilized to form several layouts with content implementations. There was an another theory and methods allotted to the students to form various layouts so that they could get a systematic approach about creating layouts with the utilization of the strokes they had received by usage of various tools. This even served them an eye towards using tools manipulation in structuring the layouts which can also offer a diversified language to the layouts which makes layouts look impressive and different.

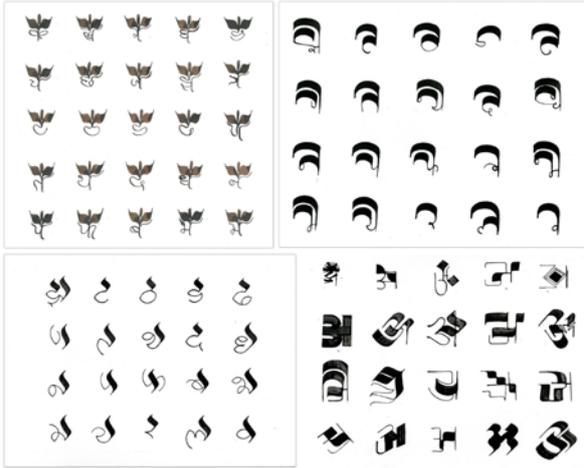


Figure 7



Figure 8

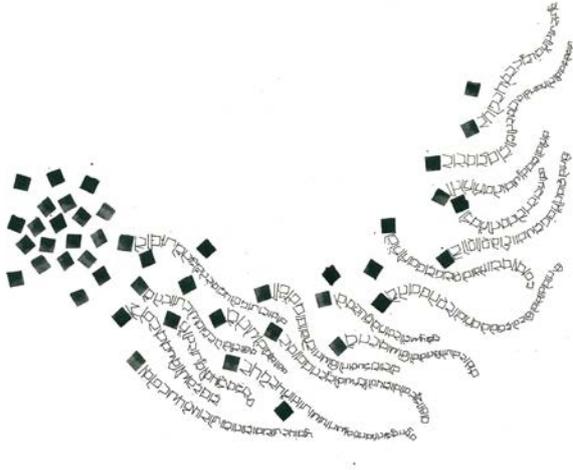


Figure 9

Rest workshop had covered several methods about visual opacities that students can work upon by experimenting with different mediums in a particular /specific way. With every session of the workshop, students were exposed to a different treatments by changing the tool, material and mediums which had made them aware about how tools changes their impression and visual language when they get used differently in a diversified way.

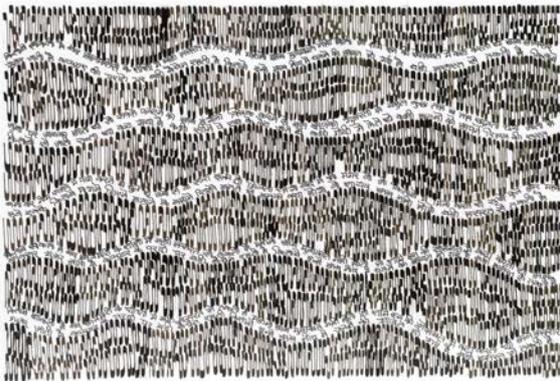


Figure 10

Conclusion:

Some of the observation and analysis students had made regarding the entire planned exercise were:

- 1) They were unaware about the hierarchy given to them about rendering the strokes horizontally and vertically, which had made them surprise about knowing the tool in a more new way, they hadn't used the tool before with so much of versatilities.
- 2) Unawareness about the strokes further implementation was a surprising element in the primary session which has unknowingly lead students in creating more creative strokes as they were not known with the facts that they are going to use the strokes to create a letter bodies or various organs of the letterform as a second part.
- 3) Various methods of handling of tools had also enlightened students about tools usages in a more prominent ways through which they could receive a difference in their visual language of calligraphy.
- 4) Students were exposed to make their own handmade tools, through which they acted upon 'tools making' by undertaking core functional value of tool which also departed practical knowledge of 'physicality of the tools' to the students. Later when they used similar tool to check their visual results, they formed a different kind of sensitivity about how tools have made and how diversified way they can be used on a surface.



Figure 11

- 5) The theory about forming innovative letter structure stood as a very easy and clear method for students that they could relate to it and formed a sensible and sensitive approach towards it in a totality.
- 6) Segregated layouts teaching strategies have taught students about using the tools resultant outputs for constructing diversified layouts which was a new knowledge for students and they found it very challenging and helpful too.
- 7) In totality, students had received an ability of logical thinking and understanding about how different and diverse letterform structures can be made and develop which can offer a diversified visual language to the creation they will deal with after the workshop.

The significance of this experimental calligraphy workshop was to propagate a 'disciplinary approach about 'manipulation of tools' through which innovative letterform development can be possible which can initiate 'a new logical thinking and understanding' towards the tools manipulation with their probabilities and can serve a 'definite structure or method for parallel experiments in the process of learning or teaching a diversified approach.

Acknowledgement:

I thank immensely, the entire batch and every individual of Upstroke workshop for their fruitful working results and for sharing their work for this research contribution.

I would like to thank my esteemed institute, Sophia Polytechnic; and the Principal, Art & design dpt. Even my all supportive colleagues from Sophia, for encouraging educators like me for such research contributions.

I extend my deep respect and thanks to my Guru, Prof. Vinay Saynekar, ex. faculty at the Sir J. J. Institute of Applied Art, Mumbai; And Prof. Santosh Kshirsagar, Dean, Sir J. J. Institute of Applied Art, Mumbai, India for their motivation towards research and writing and for always being to me a philosopher & guide.

I thanks to my Alma-institute, Sir JJ institute of Applied Art, Mumbai.

References

<http://calligraphymasters.com>

<http://calligraphy-expo.com/en/cognitivecalligraphy/tools-and-materials>