

Research Week Abstract

Title - London's Handwriting: The Typeface of Public Transportation

Program of Study – Graphic Design

Presentation Type – Juried Art

Subtype – Creative and Artistic

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Abstract:

The designer's deliverable examines the history, usage, and impact of the Johnston Font—the typeface utilized within the City of London's transportation system—and how typography can be employed in both technical and artistic situations. After spending six weeks in the heart of London, studying and researching typography in various museums and specifically the Library at the London Transport Museum, the designer narrowed in on the Johnston font. Discovering an affinity for public transportation, and the way the City of London relies on it, the designer focused on comparing reliance. In the same way, the City of London relies on public transportation, great design relies on great typography.

Beginning with the historical context of Edward Johnston, the font creator, the essay follows the beginning of his life up through the creation of the Johnston Font. After a brief history of Edward Johnston, the essay runs through the process of designing and analyzing fonts, as well as the technical, cultural, and communicational aspects of the Johnston font specifically. Technically, the Johnston Font is a heavy, bold, thick typeface with an all-capital punch. The typeface pulls references from Roman-style fonts while lacking serifs, giving the font a new-age feel while staying a humanist font. After researching, studying, and observing the font in both its natural environment and throughout the Library at the London Transport Museum, the designer chose to strip the font from its day job, and utilize it in an artistic way. The outcome was a postcard covered in the names of the different tube stations, in the color palette of the Underground, with the words "London's Handwriting," a nod to the reliance on both public transportation and great typography.