

EL MITJÀ TIPOGRÀFIC

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KEY WORDS: LETTERPRESS TYPOGRAPHY, DESIGN, MEASURES.

El mitjà tipogràfic (“The typographic medium”) sets letterpress typography within the discipline of design. It tries to synthesise the “letterpress period” by organising a body of knowledge and disciplinary tools aside from the productive and material immediacy of the craft, so as to offer those guidelines to our period, or set links between both periods. Typography is taken as a medium, from the notion of measure. To design, letterpress typography is a referential point, a standard. As such, it contains all dimensions of measure and estimation: physical, relative, moral. All these values are embodied in the typographic pieces. Therefore, the view has to be opened up or re-placed: the thesis observes sizes, and measure, from such multiple aspects, both as a filter and object of study within a wide, general framework.

Letterpress typography is taken as a process that formalises written verbal language, a process composed of different phases, which are characterised by specific graphic configurations, instrumental, and aims. Therefore, though the deductive method was the basis for the study, it has been stretched and complemented by a new and specific system where letterpress typography is the subject and guide of the investigation.

The basic sources are the manuals and treatises on typography which have been published throughout the centuries; type specimens and catalogues; and contemporary books and documents which bear some kind of relation to the former sources. The analysis of such sources enables to show the different conceptions of measure throughout history and to relate them to craft uses and customs: bywhich the evolution of the concept of measure in typography can be drawn out, and shown as a “new” logical path.

The study follows three main ways of analysis.

The first one is a measures comparison, where, on top of specific links, proportions or equivalences, it draws the evolution of the typographic concept in relation to the production area: measures, sizes, surpass their sole sizes to become a syntactic system of organisation, both of the typographic mould or forme, and the graphic space.

The second one is focused on semantic values, on the verbal denominations used to designate type bodies and sizes. The noun is a recipient of the utility and use of typography measures; nouns are indicators of a particular kind of genealogy which is articulated, both in nominal and usual terms, within a wider significative verbal scheme, as actions in the printing craft reflect.

The third one refers to applications within the professional practice of letterpress printing, the “craft reasons”; together with them, the physical equipment and instrumental is considered, as they contain uses and working ways that are related to, and determine, the ultimate presentation of typographic letters.

The study is complemented by two appendices. Appendix I is a database, which aims at joining, linking and integrating the different notions of measure in typography. Appendix II is a practical application, a proposal of measurement of bibliographical products along criteria which have been set throughout the study.