

**Thesis Project Proposal**

**BRIAN PRINCE**

Today: 5 MAY 2009

Dept: *MFA Graphic Design*

Anticipated Graduation Date: Spring 2011

12 Courses Remaining: Fall 09 - ART 499, 500A, 503A

Spring 10 - ART 478, 500B, 503A

Fall 10 - ART 503A, 597, 599

Spring 11 - ART 503A, 597, 599

**Working Titles for Thesis Project.**

- Teaching Graphic Design with Principles of Poetry.
- Understanding Poetry to Teach Graphic Design.
- Poetry and Graphic Design: Different Media, Same Approach.
- Poetry's Principles Are Graphic Design's Process.
- Poetry's Principles Solve Graphic Design's Problems.

**Working Statements.**

- Overcoming graphic design problems with principles of poetry are specifically understood when the principles from the Imagism Literary Movement are used to create effective conceptual logos, the flow of Free Verse and Narrative Poetry are used to create technical and informational graphic layouts, and embracing Cut-Up Poetry leads to enhancing decorative graphic elements and montages.
- Many visual artists repel the power of words because they are blinded by image and therefore need to be taught the importance of the principles of poetry in order to identify their personal rhythm and intuition when creating successful conceptual, technical and artistic graphic design.

**Overview.**

Learning conceptual graphic design relies heavily on the students individual ability to translate ideas into graphic form with a sense that is pleasing to the viewer. Teaching it almost seems supernatural and unattainable. There is no formula that guarantees unique, creative conceptual results.

My plan is to improve graphic design instruction by creating methods that exercise a designer's rhythm and intuition. These methods are rooted in principles from poetry through its literary movements and the study of it as an art form. Many visual artists repel the power of words because they are blinded by image. Conceptual graphic design has much to learn from poetry, old and new. As the outcomes of each are usually different (and sometimes considered one in the same), the processes are remarkably similar.

I plan to prove the direct correlation in the processes of writing poetry and creating multiple graphic design solutions through specific experiments and continued research. This thesis project will specifically address the following:

- The process of creating a logo by explaining the foundation of the Imagism Literary Movement
- The process to clean, legible and organized information and communication layouts through Free Verse and Narrative Poetry principles
- The process of designing decorative and montage graphics dictated by Cut-Up Poetry

### **My Worth. The Subjects Worth.**

As I discover inspiration through poetry and find a personal desire to understand it better, my recent enthusiasm for works of literature trickles into my professional trade – graphic design and advertising, encouraging new methods and experiments for use in the design classroom.

The ideals mentioned in this thesis proposal are worthy of experimentation simply because they propose formulas for conceptual thinking. They have the potential to revolutionize the way graphic design is taught. In addition to teaching design students graphic design principles – type, image, color, scale, I believe it is important to teach a concrete method for developing rhythm and intuition. Rather than requesting students to just “come up with an idea,” relying on life’s rhythm, this alternative approach encourages them to see design in another light and enables experimentation like never before, manifesting conceptual thinking.

The future for applying poetry’s principles to graphic design is endless. This thesis will cover three (3) specific areas of application to get the connections started. Once the lineage is clear, many principles in poetry can be interchanged, overlapped and/or evolved to suit almost any graphic design problem.

When inspiration is lost and research is exhausted, the role of rhythm and intuition suffer. Applying poetry’s principles to graphic design problems opens new avenues to conceptual, technical, and artistic graphic design.

### **Strengths and Weaknesses.**

In order to articulate the benefits in this proposal, it demands an author who has an equal passion for both, poetry and graphic design. That is my main strength. With a background of experience in conceptual advertising and with corporate structure, I am able to visualize the big picture and organize creative mayhem.

As a young student to poetry and real graphic design, I will continue to research the processes of each, digesting their parallels and noting their differences.

Creating a curriculum for the design classroom should flow directly out of the relational studies between poetry’s principles and graphic design problems. This is an area that will take much focus as I fervently critique the three parts of this proposal.

### **The Goal.**

Opening the creative mind can be dangerous. It often leads to procrastination, misdirection and frustration. Learning poetry’s principles and applying them to graphic design problems is a guided process with a solid foundation.

Success will be determined when a design student who shuns the written word, finds and appreciates the process of poetry and understands its power in every individual’s rhythm and intuition. Over time, when there is a method to control conceptual design, this will have been proven and opened to further exploration of more principles and more problems.

### **Proposed Bibliography**

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## Principles of Poetry Exhibit No. 1 (Imagism)

From an *Imagist manifesto*:

1. To use the language of common speech, but to employ the exact word, not the nearly-exact, nor the merely decorative word.
2. We believe that the individuality of a poet may often be better expressed in free verse than in conventional forms. In poetry, a new cadence means a new idea.
3. Absolute freedom in the choice of subject.
4. To present an image. We are not a school of painters, but we believe that poetry should render particulars exactly and not deal in vague generalities, however magnificent and sonorous. It is for this reason that we oppose the cosmic poet, who seems to us to shirk the real difficulties of his art.
5. To produce a poetry that is hard and clear, never blurred nor indefinite.
6. Finally, most of us believe that concentration is of the very essence of poetry.

source — <http://www.writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/88/imagism-def.html>

**The Ideogrammic Method** was a technique expounded by Ezra Pound which allowed poetry to deal with abstract content through concrete images.

Pound explains his understanding of the way Chinese characters were formed, with the example of the character for ‘sunrise’ and ‘East’ being essentially a superposition of the characters for ‘tree’ and ‘sun’; that is, a picture of the sun tangled in a tree’s branches. He then suggests how, with such a system where concepts are built up from concrete instances, the (abstract) concept of ‘red’ might be presented by putting together the (concrete) pictures of:

ROSE            CHERRY  
IRON RUST    FLAMINGO

source — [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pound%27s\\_Ideogrammic\\_Method](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pound%27s_Ideogrammic_Method)

*The Red Wheelbarrow* is a poem by and often considered the magnum opus of American 20th-century writer William Carlos Williams. The 1923 poem exemplifies the Imagist-influenced philosophy of “no ideas but in things”. This provides another layer of meaning beneath the surface reading. The style of the poem forgoes traditional British stress patterns to create a typical “American” image.

so much depends  
upon

a red wheel  
barrow

glazed with rain  
water

beside the white  
chickens.

sources — [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Carlos\\_Williams#Poetry\\_2](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Carlos_Williams#Poetry_2) | [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Red\\_Wheelbarrow](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Red_Wheelbarrow)

## **Principles of Poetry Exhibit No. 2 (Free Verse)**

Interview with *Jack Henry*.

bp: A DJ puts records together to see his audience dance, a designer communicates information to offer the viewer a particular mood, then attempts to sell something. Why do you write poetry? Is poetry for the poet or its readers?"

jh: I write poetry because I have a very short attention span. Details need to be tight, taut and to the point, no time for luxury. In poetry I can convey something, a feeling, a thought, an ideal, a rant, in a very short amount of time. I don't think poetry as static or unfunctional, rather it has a much broader opportunity for communication. Some people tie it up in a singular form that exists on one simple plain and its value as communication is narrowly defined. I disagree. Poetry can sell soap, make someone fall in love, begin riots, destroy nations, or simply exist. I can do anything I want with poetry and I don't get bored half way through.

movie making. by jack henry

i remember walking  
down 6th in Los Angeles  
over near Spring Street

a movie crew stood around  
talking in walkie-talkie's about  
this and that

i stood and stared

an hour passed before  
a tall man w/thin eyes  
yelled, "action"

a car came around a corner  
smashed into another  
a guy jumped out  
and started to run  
before the director  
yelled, "cut"

everyone applauded

a homeless guy  
walked through  
the scene, stopped  
at a trash dumpster  
pulled out some cans  
kept moving

and no one said a word

*source — interview with author, Jack Henry*

### **Qualities of *Free Verse Poetry*.**

Controlling line breaks to create pauses and breathes. Content vs. White Space. Flow and Story Telling. Trimming the fat: condensed sentences for clear, quick read without losing the meat.

*source — interview with author, Jack Henry*

### Principles of Poetry Exhibit No. 3 (Cut-Up)

Interview with *Antony Hitchin*.

bp: A DJ puts records together to see his audience dance, a designer communicates information to offer the viewer a particular mood, then attempts to sell something. Why do you write poetry? Is poetry for the poet or its readers?"

ah: I would suggest both. However, I would state that I write poetry with or without a readership. I wrote poetry consistently privately between the ages of 16-29 before I was properly published. I desire to connect to readers and have readers connect to my work. I want to challenge both myself and the reader on a reciprocal basis.

I try not to consider the reader or their potential desires when actually writing pieces. However, I do consider them in the editing process. Also, I think all writers have sufficient ego to believe they have something so important to express that numerous people deserve to see it. If you want to make writing your professional vocation you are going to require readers. In addition, I think the time would arrive naturally where one would wish to share and communicate with others. Poetry is a solitary activity but we are ultimately social creatures searching for meaning.

sources — interview with author, Antony Hitchin (<http://antonyhitchin.blogspot.com/> | <http://blogs.myspace.com/76994832>)  
source — Hitchin will be featured in the upcoming exhibition *Textual Revolutions* <http://textualrevolutions.wikidot.com/>

Research on *Brion Gysin*.

Nicholas Zurbrugg makes great sense of Gysin's Cut Up philosophies. In reaction to Gysin's famous words, "Writing is fifty years behind painting," and "I propose to apply the painter's techniques to writing, things as simple and immediate as collage or montage," he explains *Cut-Ups Self-Explained*, (fig. 4) Gysin's manifesto, as both an aesthetic calling for language's semantic, mixing grammatical test-based codes with compositional art-based codes, or in the straightforward insights of avant garde modernists and postmodern experimentation in which I would equate to the relation I found with Deconstruction.

This manifesto, to me, is a way for Gysin to validate an experiment, not for any other reason but to feed his ever-curious drive for more experimentation and perhaps, even a for ultimate purity.

source — Brion Gysin: *Tuning in to the Multimedia Age*

### *The Cut-Up Method of Thinking (A Brief History)*

"Words don't have brands on them the way cattle do" said Burroughs as he sipped his Martini. Beckett scoffed as Burroughs went on, "Shakespeare, Rimbaud, newspapers, magazines, conversations, letters..." He rambled on in his slow drawn out way: "I've used them all."

Tristan Tzara was expelled from the Surrealists after he made a poem from words pulled from scraps of paper in a hat. Brion Gysin was the first to really develop the technique of cut-ups. He saw it as a way of writing with no need for rearranging what was scrambled.

Burroughs was greatly influenced by Gysin but he was able to take it one step further: He considered it only one of his writing tools along with newspaper articles, his dreams, seemingly random thoughts and any kind of word in his immediate vicinity. He took the scrambled text and reworked it until he felt it said something. Burroughs believed that he was not the writer but a transcriber of what was already written. It was no trouble if the words he wrote weren't his, since no words belonged to any writer, just like colours don't belong to painters.

### Principles of Poetry Exhibit No. 3 (Cut-Up) *continued*

There are people who would disagree. There are people who would think Klein Blue is not an absurd concept. We already have trademarked phrases like “Do it” and songs we cannot sing without paying royalties like “Happy Birthday.” We accept our limits in human expression to protect profits and keep society under control. The cut-up, fold-in or any form of scrambling these and other words destroys their ownership and any conscious intent from the “writer”. This is not a modernist idea.

This is an idea from people who wanted to destroy the agents of control. Burroughs called the word a virus, something which infects us and duplicates itself. Certain words have strong effects on us. These are either seen as holy or obscene. Other words can change our consciousness like a chant or song. By cutting these words up Burroughs believed that he could become free from their effects.

**Fold-in:** taking the text of one page and cutting it into quarters -The quarters are switched around to combine columns in a new order. For example q.1 switched with q. 4. This method was used by Burroughs.

**Cut-up:** a general term for scrambled writing - A technique invented by Brion Gysin in the 1950s but also used before this time as an experimental method.

sources — *interview with author, Antony Hitchin* (<http://antonyhitchin.blogspot.com/> | <http://blogs.myspace.com/6994832>)

fig. 4

**CUT-UPS SELF-EXPLAINED**

*The poets are supposed to liberate the*

Writing is fifty years behind painting. I propose to apply the painters' techniques to writing; things as simple and immediate as collage or montage. Cut right through the pages of any book or newspaper . . . lengthwise, for example, and shuffle the columns of text. Put them together at hazard and read the newly constituted message. Do it for yourself. Use any system which suggests itself to you. Take your own words or the words said to be "the very own words" of anyone else living or dead. You'll soon see that words don't belong to anyone. Words have a vitality of their own and you or anybody can make them gush into action.

The permuted poems set the words spinning off on their own; echoing out as the words of a potent phrase are permuted into an expanding ripple of meanings which they did not seem to be capable of when they were struck and then stuck into that phrase.

The poets are supposed to liberate the words — not to chain them in phrases. Who told poets they were supposed to think? Poets are meant to sing and to make words sing. Poets have no words "of their very own." Writers don't own their words. Since when do words belong to anybody. "Your very own words," indeed! And who are you?

**CUT THE TEXT INTO THREE COLUMNS:**

A	B	C
Writing is fifty years behind painting. I propose to apply the painters' techniques to writing; things as simple and immediate as collage or montage. Cut right through the pages of any book or newspaper . . . lengthwise, for example, and shuffle the columns of text. Put them together at hazard and read the newly constituted message. Do it for yourself. Use any system which suggests itself to you. Take your own words or the words said to be "the very own words" of anyone else living or dead. You'll soon see that words don't belong to anyone. Words have a vitality of their own and you or anybody can make them gush into action.	Writing is fifty years behind painting; use to writing; things as simple and immediate as collage or montage. Cut right through the pages of any book or newspaper . . . lengthwise, for example, and shuffle the columns of text. Put them together at hazard and read the newly constituted message. Do it for yourself. Use any system which suggests itself to you. Take your own words or the words said to be "the very own words" of anyone else living or dead. You'll soon see that words don't belong to anyone. Words have a vitality of their own and you or anybody can make them gush into action.	I propose to apply as simple and immediate as collage or montage. Cut right through the pages of any book or newspaper . . . lengthwise, for example, and shuffle the columns of text. Put them together at hazard and read the newly constituted message. Do it for yourself. Use any system which suggests itself to you. Take your own words or the words said to be "the very own words" of anyone else living or dead. You'll soon see that words don't belong to anyone. Words have a vitality of their own and you or anybody can make them gush into action.
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[The letters in italics were those sliced by my scissors. Now, permute the columns to form the text text.]

*words—not to chain them in phrases.*

Now, I shall cut this text into three columns which I shall call A, B, and C. Then, I shall shuffle the columns and read across in the normal way, the text ACB; and it says:

**TEXT ACB**

Writing is fifty. I propose to apply the painters' techniques as simple and immediate as collage or montage. Cut right through the pages or newspaper example, and shuffle into . . . lengthwise, for the columns of text. Hazard and read them. Put them together are newly constituted itself. Use any system sage. Do it for yours which suggests itself, own words or the words to you. Take your own, said to be "the very own words" of anyone. You'll soon see that anyone. Words have words don't belong to a vitality of their own or anybody into action.

The permuted punning off on their own set the words spin own; echoing out as phrase are permuted be words of a potent ped into an expanding which they did not seem; ripple of meanings which to be capable of when then stuck into that they were struck and phrase.

The poets are supposed to liberate the words — not to chain posed to liberate the them in phrases. Who supposed to think? Told poets they were Poets are meant to sing. Poets have own and to make words snow words "of their own their words very own." Writers don't. Since when do words "of their very own words," belong to anybody. "Yo indeed! And who are you?

**TEXT A+B+C**

Writing is fifty the painters' technique, immediate as collage of any book or newspaper the columns of text. Newly constituted message which suggests itself said to be the very. You'll soon see that a vitality of their into action.

The permuted poem, echoing out as ted into an expanding to be capable of when phrases.

The poets are see them in phrases. Poets are meant to sing now words of their. Since when do words indeed! And who are I propose to apply ears behind painting, as simple as use to writing; things immediate as collage through the pages or montage. Cut right of any book or newspaper example, and shuffle into . . . lengthwise, for the columns of text. example, and shuffle. Put them together at newly constituted message and read the sage. Do it for yours which suggests itself elf. Use any system to you. Take your own said to be "the very own words" of anyone You'll soon see that else living or dead. words don't belong to a vitality of their own anyone. Words have own and you or anybody into action, can make them gush.

The permuted poems set the words spin own; echoing out as ting off on their be words of a potent ped into an expanding phrase are permuted-ripple of meanings which be capable of when then stuck into that they were struck and phrase, then stuck into that.

The poets are supposed to liberate the them in phrases. Who words—not to chain a told poets they were Poets are meant to sing supposed to think? Poets are meant to sing words snow words "of their own. Poets have own." Writers don't Since when do words "of their very own words," belong to anybody. "Yo indeed! And who are or very words," you?

*Since when do words belong to anybody.*

**TEXT BAC**

Writing is fifty years behind painting. I propose to apply us to writing; things immediate as collages as simple and or montage. Cut right of any book or newspaper through the pages into . . . lengthwise, for the columns of text. example, and shuffle. Put them together at newly constituted message and read the sage. Do it for yours which suggests itself elf. Use any system to you. Take your own said to be "the very own words" of anyone You'll soon see that else living or dead. words don't belong to a vitality of their own anyone. Words have own and you or anybody into action, can make them gush.

The permuted poems set the words spin own; echoing out as ting off on their be words of a potent ped into an expanding phrase are permuted-ripple of meanings which be capable of when then stuck into that they were struck and phrase, then stuck into that.

The poets are supposed to liberate the them in phrases. Who words—not to chain a told poets they were Poets are meant to sing supposed to think? Poets are meant to sing words snow words "of their own. Poets have own." Writers don't Since when do words "of their very own words," belong to anybody. "Yo indeed! And who are or very words," you?

**TEXT B+C+A**

Ears behind painting; use to writing; things immediate as collages as simple and or montage. Cut right of any book or newspaper through the pages into . . . lengthwise, for the columns of text. example, and shuffle. Put them together at newly constituted message and read the sage. Do it for yours which suggests itself elf. Use any system to you. Take your own said to be "the very own words" of anyone You'll soon see that else living or dead. words don't belong to a vitality of their own anyone. Words have own and you or anybody into action, can make them gush.

The permuted poems running off on their own; echoing out as the phrases are permuted into an expanding which they did not seem capable of when then stuck into that phrase.

The poets are supposed words—not to chain them in phrases. Who supposed to think? Poets are meant to sing. Poets have own words of their own words. Since when do words your very own words, indeed! And who are you?