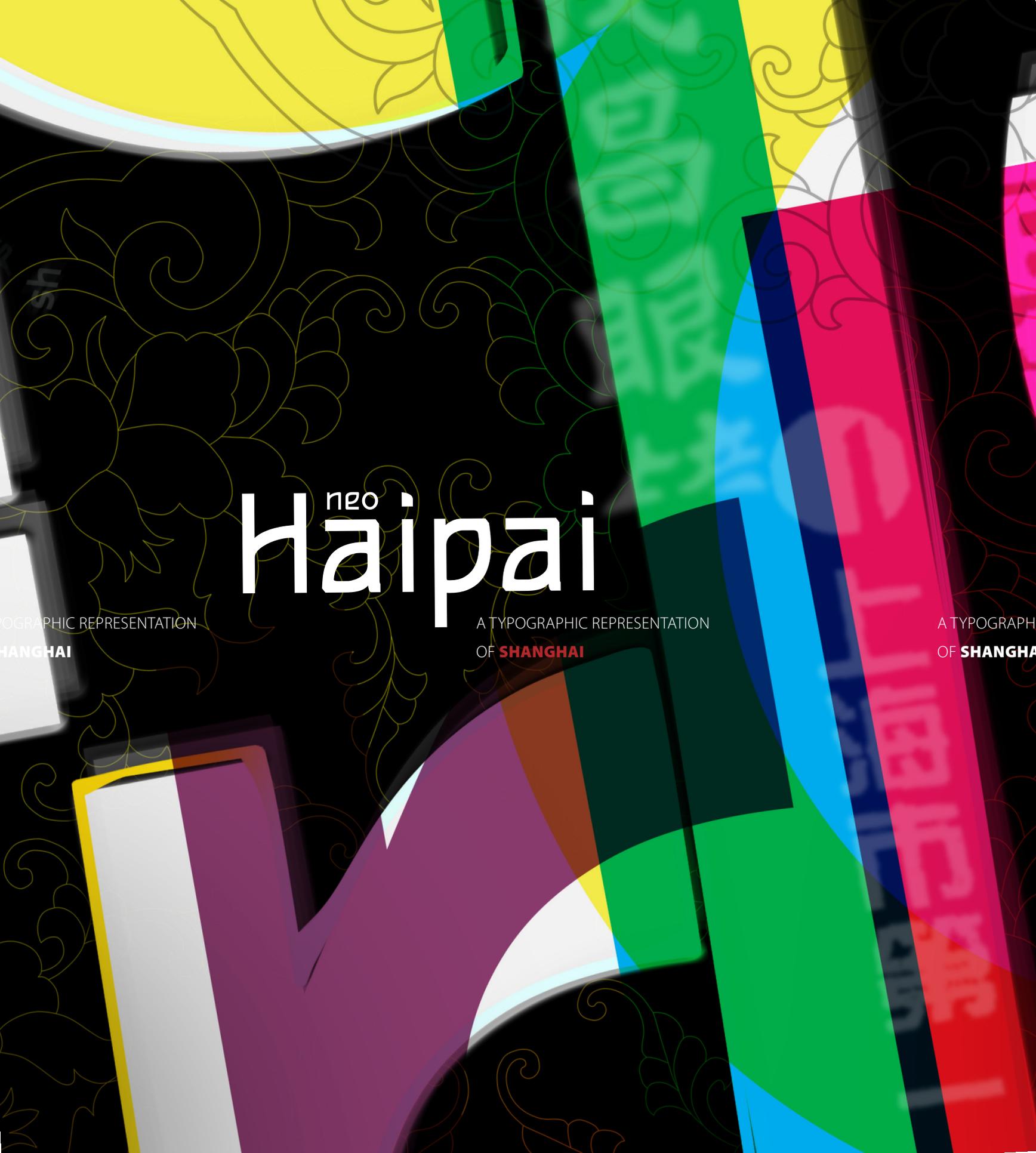


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neo  
**Haipai**

OGRAIC REPRESENTATION  
HANGHAI

A TYPOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION  
OF **SHANGHAI**

A TYPOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION  
OF **SHANGHAI**





A TYPOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF **SHANGHAI**



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2012

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**Xiang Qian**

# Neo-Haipai

A typographic representation  
of Shanghai

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A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the Master of Design at the College of Creative Arts, Massey University,  
Wellington, New Zealand.

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**MANY THANKS** to Dr Mike McAuley and Lee Jensen for all your invaluable patience, insight and guidance, Patricia Thomas for your knowledge and enthusiasm and my friends and family for all your support and encouragement throughout this project.

According to Webster's Dictionary, the meaning of essence is  
“ *something that constitutes the individual, real or ultimate nature of  
kind often as opposed to the existence of a being or thing....* ”

(Webster, 1986, p.777).

---

## **ABSTRACT**

**M**ANY people who are interested in the art of typography want to challenge the conventional understanding of type and express it in a distinctive way. This project examines the aesthetics behind the use of typefaces and typographic composition.

The focus of this study is on investigating how the essence of a physical location can be communicated through the medium of typography and other figurative language. It explores this through a typographic representation of the Chinese city of Shanghai. It will draw upon Shanghai's history and cultural values, and transform it into a distinctive letterform, then compound it with patterns and colours to illustrate the city through typographic expression. This project will be realised entirely with type, colour, texture, shape and abstract images.



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## INTRODUCTION



*Typography is an intrinsically visual language*

(Baines & Haslam, 2002, p.10).

It is now generally recognised that typography has been used over the centuries in order to visually transfer linguistic meaning. As one of the founding fathers of semiotics, Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure observed, “a sign consists of a ‘signifier’ and a ‘signified’. The image of an object, which we have in mind in connotation with the object itself, constitutes the first-order signifying system. The word that we attribute to the object in connotation with the image of the object constitutes the second-order signifying system” (Hillner, 2009, p.15). According to Saussure’s study, he set out to determine that the written word is a second order sign, the sole purpose of type being to convey linguistic meaning (Browine, 2011, p.6). In typography each letter of the alphabet in its purest form is a visual code for a phonetic value. Also, internationally renowned graphic designer and the professor of University of the Arts Bremen, Erik Spiekermann (2002, p.9) says type is a visual language, which is an everyday part of people’s lives, and plays a vitally important role particularly in the urban environment. People see it everywhere, for example, the text labels on maps, in newspapers, street signs, as well as business signage.

A considerable amount of literature has been published on definitions of the term typography that have been suggested through time. Traditionally, the study of typography has concerned the creation of typefaces and their arrangements to convey a message (Baines & Haslam, 2002). As academic researcher Sue Walker claims: “Typography is a means of visual communication, which is traditionally associated with design using type and the design and production of the type itself” (Walker, 2001, p.2).

It is necessary here to clarify exactly what is meant by the term typography. This project will use the definition first suggested by design educators Phil Baines and Andrew Haslam (2002) who described typography as “The mechanical notation and arrangement of language” (Baines & Haslam, 2002, p.7).

This project is focusing on a typeface and aesthetics which reflect the history, and cultural blendings that have made modern Shanghai, and how the culture of the city has influenced the typography in this project. It answers the research question from academic researcher Janet Abrams “Can a typeface effectively represent a city, or communicate what’s unique about a particular place?”

This study investigates typography from the past and present through a multidisciplinary viewpoint. As Canadian typographer and author Robert Bringhurst also says: “Every alphabet is a culture, every culture has its own version of history and its own accumulation of tradition” (Bringhurst, 2002, p.142). For this reason, this project starts by looking at Shanghai’s history and cultural values, and transforms this into letterform, patterns and compositions in order to challenge and explore the relationship between Eastern and Western typographical styles for inter-cultural communication.

Moreover, this study looks at how type can be read as an image to visually illustrate a city through the analysis of existing design precedents and practice-based research. It experiments with type and composition and incorporates traditional Chinese ornaments, and colours. In addition, this project is also strongly inspired by post-modern typographer David Carson with his deconstructionist style. It focuses on the expression through the letterforms themselves, as well as through their arrangement on the page to communicate with the audience.

As a Shanghai-born graphic designer who is studying and working in New Zealand, this research project also serves as a form of self-reflection in response to my personal cultural experiences and identity in between these two cultures.

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## Central Proposition

This project investigates the visual aspects of typography as a way of portraying the essence of Shanghai, and in particular the Shanghai style from the era of the 1930's, while looking at how to combine cultural cues into the type. The project will blur the boundary between type and image. The elements and principles of this design project will focus on a hierarchy being determined by type and supported by colour and other figurative elements. It examines how to incorporate urban culture into a distinctive letterform and use type and typographic compositions as the dominant design language to communicate to a more diverse audience.

---

## Research Question

The main question addressed in this study is

*'how can typography capture the essence of a city?'*

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## Thesis Objectives

This project aims to create expressive type designs translating the essence of Shanghai into concrete design works mainly through the medium of typography. The objectives of this research are:

- To challenge the divide between type and image and use typed characters in the construction of picture form to elucidate the character of Shanghai.
- To make a distinctive true typeface that blends old world/modern aesthetics in order to give voice to the content and add personality to the project.
- The typeface developed will be created from scratch. It aims to challenge and explore the relationship between the two visual languages system of English and Chinese and to also look at how they can influence each other, within the field of design and typography, in order to provide a visual narrative focusing on Shanghai's unique characteristics.

---

## Wider Significance of Project

The idea of calling this project Neo-Haipai is derived from the Shanghai style 'Hai Pai' which was first introduced in the earlier 20th century. Neo-Haipai is not only the name of a self-designed font family, but is also a result of the formal investigation and a new style into typography in response to original 'Hai Pai', which I will introduce in the chapter of the historical background on page 22.

Neo-Haipai is an opportunity to celebrate Shanghai's cultural background. Not only will it be able to be used to brand the city itself, but it will be able to be used in the urban marketplace for groups such as tourists and corporate or 'creative class' migrants.

This project will contribute to the practice of typography by investigating the possibilities in new visual language forms, creating a synthesis of Western and Far-Eastern stylistic elements. It also can be used for many commercial areas such as international cultural exchange programs, travel agencies and contemporary typographic practices.

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## Audience

- People who are interested in Oriental culture, Chinese culture, Art Deco and Shanghai style.
- People interested in travelling and who want to have new cultural experiences.
- Well-educated people and people with broad horizons.

This project will be targeted at people who have an appreciation of all aspects of design, especially students of design, and typographic practitioners who are doing projects that need to attract and speak to both Chinese and English-speaking cultures. These people will appreciate the opportunity of seeing a new version of East-West blending in typographical form.

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## METHODOLOGY

### Research Methods

#### Research into Design

*(Historical investigation into 'Hai Pai'-Shanghai Style)*

The focus of this historical investigation sets out to research the social values and city culture of Shanghai. It attempts to establish the role of the Western influence, especially Art Deco in 1920's-1930. This method helps me to improve my understanding on what is the essence of Shanghai in the cultural area and the visual aesthetic of Art Deco in order to develop the concept behind the Neo-Haipai face.

#### Mind Mapping

The visual mind mapping is based on related descriptive key words about my project. It defines all the essential research areas, which helps me understand more about the central ideas around my project while showing the relationship between theory and practice in general. The details of the mind map are attached in appendix (i).

## Qualitative Interview

The focus on qualitative research is on understanding the depth and details of experience. My potential project and research was shown to two local Shanghai designers this academic year. The data and feedback was collected from them during a short trip to Shanghai. Direct feedback gleaned from interviews also informed the process of developing and supporting the text for my argument. This method is an effective and relatively easy way for me to look at the implications for the city's identity, coming from my own position as a 'local' designer. Details of the interviews are recorded in appendix (ii).

## Semiotics

It is widely accepted that semiotics is a study of the general science of signs and symbols. (Crow, 2003). Semiotics works as an adjustable spanner to pull apart how meaning is formed. The theory of semiotics provides a foundation of research methodology to explore how the visual aspects of typography can be read as a sign.

This masters project incorporates the two schools of thought of semiotics, which are defined by Saussure and Barthes respectively. The concept of signifier and signified was first developed by French linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, who said "the signified is something which has to do with the mental activity of anybody receiving a signifier" (Eco, 1976). As Crow says, it was generally accepted that graphic design could be viewed from as much of a structuralist perspective as of a language system. All that was needed was to extend our understanding of language from a system of spoken and written signs through to all manner of visual signals. It had been recognised that designers were playing a part in reinventing and redefining the signs and symbols, which form language in its broadest sense. (Crow, 2003, p.54-57).

In order to explain the idea that the essence of a city can indeed be captured or represented through 'visual language' of typographic form, this thesis also incorporates the theory of Roland Barthes, who is regarded as another pioneer in the study of semiotics theory. He said "we shall take language, discourse, speech, etc., to mean any significant unit or synthesis, whether verbal or visual: a photograph will be a kind of speech for us in the same way as a newspaper article; even objects will become speech, if they mean something" (Barthes, 1993, p.111).

The theories of Barthes have helped me understand how an audience could interpret or "read" the ideas which form the project, and how the images contained within it affect them.

However, I have to say the level of awareness among people may be different, but people will always try to interpret things we understand as signs, because people try to figure out the meaning. This method supports my research question about whether the essence of a city can be captured by typography in theory.

## **Visual Metaphor**

Metaphors are the use of a word or image to suggest comparison to another object or concept. The key metaphors appearing in this project are the Neo-haipai face, Chinese ornaments and the typographic map, which become a vehicle for revealing a deeper meaning and understanding of complex or abstract concepts of Shanghai. As John Bowers point out "...a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity between dissimilar things. Some shapes or colours can assume meaning beyond their primary or literal appearance. Whether abstract or literal, the elements carry references to other events or meanings that enrich the overall message (1999, p.29). For this thesis, the metaphor of the project creates some new visual ideas that have layers of depth and meaning. Incorporating this idea with typography we find that letters are derived from symbols, In this case, they were metaphors. They're a visual analogy between similar objects and letterforms.

*Doing design as a part of doing research.*

## **Design Methods**

### **Photo Documentation and Image Collecting**

This method is to collect as many as photos which are relevant to Shanghai so I can get a visual impression of the city. Data was gathered from multiple sources at various time points during the 2011–2012 academic year. Travelling back to Shanghai helped me collect many images by taking photos, scanning other images from books in Shanghai's library and from books and postcards I have purchased about the city. These provide very useful visual resources for the final outcome and gave me a huge amount of visual material to analyse and to get a sense of the essence of the city. A visual table for analysis of the photography is created which is attached in appendix (iii).

### **Reflective Practice**

The design process undertaken in this project is based on the reflective practices method identified by Donald Schon in his book *The Reflective Practitioner* (1991).

Schön developed an overall epistemology of professional practice, based on the concept of knowledge-in-action. He describes it as reflection-in-action, which professionals bring to their everyday practices, while operating under conditions of intricateness, uncertainty, uniqueness, and value conflict.

As Schon states "Research is an activity of practitioners. It is triggered by features of the practice situation, undertaken on the spot, and immediately linked to action. There is no question of an 'exchange' between research and practice or the 'implementation' of research results, when the frame or theory-testing experiments of the practitioner at the same time transform the practice situation. Here the exchange between research and practice is immediate, and reflection-in-action is its own implementation" (Schon, 1983, p.308-309).

**FIGURE 01:** Panoramic View of the Bund, 20. 4. 1925, photograph, 15.5 x 29 cm, Shanghai Museum. Source: Shanghai modern 1919-1945. p.342.



**FIGURE 02:** Shanghai billboard advertisements in 1930's-40's



## Historical Background

THE focus of this historical investigation is to gather background information about Shanghai in order to address the essence of Shanghai in both its social and cultural areas.

As Academic Researcher Campbell Kurt observes: "All typography, when viewed in a critical light, engages culture and history to greater or lesser extents"(Campbell, 2009, p. 39). Therefore, a good understanding of the historical and cultural background of Shanghai is crucial to this project to show the trends and cultural mixings that make up the unique environment in Shanghai, and which form an integral part of my Neo Haipai face and style.

A Chinese saying goes "you can understand 2000 years of China's history by studying Xian, 1000 years' history by studying Beijing and 100 years' history from Shanghai."

This masters thesis investigates my hometown city of Shanghai, which is one of the fastest-growing metropolitan cities in China. According to Neil Karhow, the head of research in Asia for financial services analyst Celent: "I think even in five years time, if regulators open it up, Shanghai could easily be the biggest cash equities market in the world" (Karhow cited in Cheng, 2010, p52-57). The rapid urban and economic development means Shanghai is once



*you can understand 2000 years of China's history  
by studying Xian, 1000 years' history by studying Beijing and 100  
years' history from Shanghai.*

Chinese saying

again becoming one of the world's largest global cities (Chen, 2009, p.15). Its attraction is not only its economic success, but also its unique characteristics which date back to the early 20th century.

Located at the mouth of the Yangtze River on China's east coast, Shanghai is also the country's most heavily populated city with more than 20 million people, and it is a microcosm of modern China.

Historically, Shanghai was the most important "bridge" between China and the rest of the world in the beginning of the 20th century and was a colonial city even before Hong Kong. As Chinese culture and art theorist Earl Tai observes, "Shanghai is one of China's main ports of business and cultural exchange with Western nations" (Tai, 2009). The rise of Shanghai was a unique phenomenon in the history of international urban development. After the Opium Wars (1839-1842) between China under the Qing Dynasty and the British Empire, the city was forcibly opened up to foreign settlement as a treaty port. (Benton, C., Benton, T. & Wood, G., 2003, p377). Britain, France, German and the United States were given rights to reside and trade, and they built 'stately temples' of commerce devoted to foreign businesses along the Bund (Fig. 1). (Patricia, 2008, p7-8). These changes happened rapidly, and according to Time magazine reporter Ramzy's article, "the population of foreigners grew to nearly 70,000 in 1932 and more than doubled over the next decade as Russians fleeing Stalin's purges and Jews escaping the Nazis found sanctuary in the city. Because of these influxes, old Shanghai was known as the 'Paris of the East' "(Ramzy, 2010) and the 'Pearl of the Orient' (Cheng, A. T. 2010, p52-57) due to its cosmopolitan nature.

In the modern era, British philosopher Nick Land, in his blog called Urban Future, looks closely at the topic of the intersection of cities with the future. He aims to foster discussion about cities as engines of the future, and about futurism as a dynamic influence on the shape, character, and development of cities. Land says Shanghai is definitely the city of the future.

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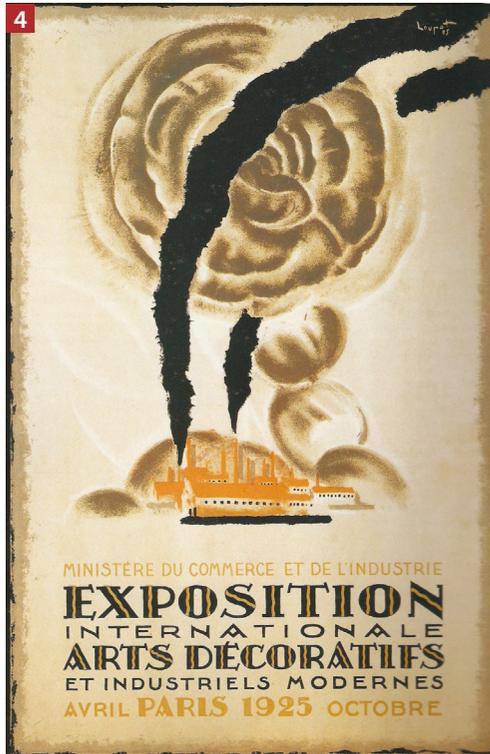
**FIGURE 03:** Tamara de Lempicka (born in Poland), Jeune fille en vert. Oil on panel. Around 1927. Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. MNAM. © Photo : CNAC/MNAM - Dist. RMN. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London



### Mixing Cultures: Art Deco and Chinese art

During the period of 1930s and 40s, the diversity of the cultural influence, especially the Art Deco movement, had a major impact on Shanghai's cultural values. Professional photographer and Shanghai Art Deco collector Deke Erh is an expert on the topic of Art Deco style (Fig. 3, 4 & 5) in Shanghai and why it

**FIGURE 04:** Charles Loupot, poster for the Paris 1925 Exhibition. colour lithograph, French, 1925. V&A: E.1201-1925



**FIGURE 05:** La Croisière noire au Louvre, exhibition poster. Colour lithograph, French, 1926. Musee des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie. © Photo: RMN - J. G. Berzzi



had such a significant impact on the cultural life of the city. Part of Art Deco's appeal to Shanghai designers was most likely due to a degree of Oriental design influences in Art Deco which they in turn used in their own interpretation to create Shanghai's own Hai Pai style.

He gives this definition of Art Deco in his book *Shanghai Art Deco*. He says:

Art Deco grew out of Art Nouveau, a school popular at the 20th Century. It made its full-fledged appearance in Paris in the 1925 'Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes.' Drawing for its inspiration from primitive African arts as well as those of the Orient, Art Deco made its headway while incorporating elements of other contemporary schools Cubism, Bauhaus, and Futurism.

(Erh, 2006, p.14)

However, there is evidence that the traditional Chinese arts also made their own impression going in the opposite direction. Art historian Charlotte Benton says in the book *Art Deco 1910-1939* that "Art Deco had a special resonance in Shanghai ... had a particular relevance and developed in a distinctive way" (Benton, C., Benton, T. & Wood, G., 2003, p371).

It appears that Art Deco represented elegance, glamour, functionality and modernity to local Shanghainese. But although they were interested in the foreign style, local artists incorporated traditional Chinese elements in order to create something their own. Charlotte Benton (2003) also makes clear that "The stylistic roots of Art Deco lay, in part, in traditional Chinese, and its absorption into contemporary practices in China was quite a natural evolution. Patterns and motifs from Chinese art were combined with Deco-inspired imagery to create a new, dynamic visual vocabulary" (Benton, C., Benton, T. & Wood, G., 2003, p380).

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**FIGURE 06:** Xiu Tang A Prosperous City That Never Sleeps, 1930s/1930er Jahre, poster/Plakat, 46.5 x 73 cm, Shanghai History Museum.



### **Hai Pai Culture:**

#### **The historical root of Shanghai style**

The purpose of this chapter is to define one of the key concepts and terminology that sustain the central proposition of this research, that of Hai Pai culture, and what it means.

The city culture in Shanghai is a mixture of different influences. If you ask native people from Shanghai what words they use to describe their own city, they will tell you 海纳百川 (Hai Na Bai Chuan) which translates as 'the ocean can hold the water from thousands of rivers' or in other words, it's big

because of its capacity. 'Thousands of rivers' signify the diversity of the cultures in the city. Being 'mixed up' became a Shanghai condition, particularly in periods when there was a dynamic cultural exchange-taking place between it and the rest of the world. By the time of Shanghai's urban development under the West's influence in the 1920's, the city developed rapidly into the national commercial and cultural centre of China. When the old Chinese traditions meet modern Western fashions it is likely that something new will emerge. The blending of Western and Oriental influences gave birth to the city culture of Shanghai which was also known as Hai Pai culture which literally 'Shanghai Style'. (Fig. 6 & 7)

There has been little discussion about 'Shanghai style', because it was not appreciated by all Chinese at the time, particularly the traditionalists who looked down on this modern fusion. In fact, "Hai Pai" culture was actually a derogatory term for this Shanghai blend, and was first given by Beijing artists. They called their own style 'Jing Pai' which meant the culture of Beijing. They saw 'Beijing style' as being traditional and looked down on Shanghai style as being a more commercialised, decorative and certainly less discreet style. On the other hand, Shanghai native designer Haiming Ma (16 June, 2011) touches on the negative realities of this position in a private interview and proudly acknowledges that Hai Pai culture is a more inclusive one. He points out that "... Western culture had a powerful impact on the local traditional culture ... fortunately, not like other places in China, local Shanghai society didn't refuse the new elements; instead foreign culture is well combined and absorbed by Chinese culture."

People are always comparing modern Shanghai with the traditional nature of Beijing and give their own definition about 'Hai Pai' culture. Author Cao Juren described the different styles between these two cities in his article Jing Pai and Hai Pai by saying "Jing Pai is like a fair lady, while Hai Pai is like a modern babe" (Xu, 2009).

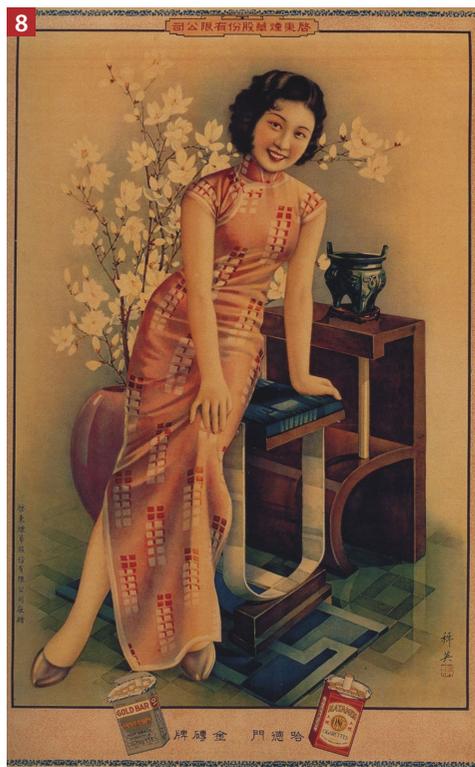
It has been widely accepted that 'Shanghai style' has played a vital part in the development of Chinese Modern Art, which brings with it a new language of design. The city became the home and headquarters of Chinese modern arts in 1920s and it especially made a deep impression on visual communication

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**FIGURE 07:** A Great Love, c.1930. Designer: Qian Jun-tao.  
Publisher: Shanghai Kaiming Book store.



**FIGURE 08:** Hang Zhi-ying, poster for the Qicong Tobacco Company. Colour lithograph. Chinese, Later 1930s. Powerhouse Museum, Sydney. Photo: Penelop Clay.



design in term of posters, book jackets and magazine designs. Pioneering Shanghai graphic designers were inspired by Western designs, particularly the Art Deco and Cubist movements, and this showed up very strongly. In 1990, cultural theorists Minick and Ping published a book in which they said: “The roots of the Shanghai style, in particular, can be traced in part to imported designs of American and European Art Deco of the Twenties” (Minick, S. & Ping, J., 1990, p.44).

At its best, Art Deco style was embodied in the creation of the Shanghai calendar posters used to show off elegance, glamour and modernity with a strong touch of tradition. For example, the Hang Zhi-ying poster (Fig. 8) uses the image of a sophisticated Chinese woman to advertise cigarettes, while posing in Art Deco settings but dressed in the Chinese traditional qipao garment.

In pertaining to typography, a deep understanding of letterform and knowledge of the effective use of Art Deco style in design became a new trend for Shanghai designers in the early 20th century. It has been stated by Charlotte Benton (2003) that Chinese typography was also influenced by Art Deco. “Chinese characters had always lent themselves to expressive manipulation, but in the 1920s and 1930s creative distortion produced extremely stylized characters” (Benton, C., Benton, T. & Wood, G., 2003, p.380).

To demonstrate this, the aesthetic (Fig. 9 & 13) was modified to represent the East-meets-West style and the geometrical shape of the characters shows the clear influence of the modern Art Deco. The evidence for this can be found in Erh’s (2006) research findings. He points out that: “The design of publications provided another platform for Art Deco exuberance. Geometric elements abound in their cover designs; even the Chinese characters reflect an Art Deco influence” (Erh, 2006, p.311). As a result, the incorporation of the Western style into modern Chinese design led to the creation of something native rather than foreign. Thus it could be concluded that Shanghai style acts as a stylistic mediator between concepts of traditional and modern, Western-Eastern mixing. It is a stylistic cross between China and the West.

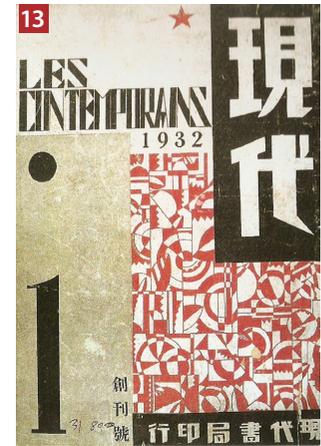
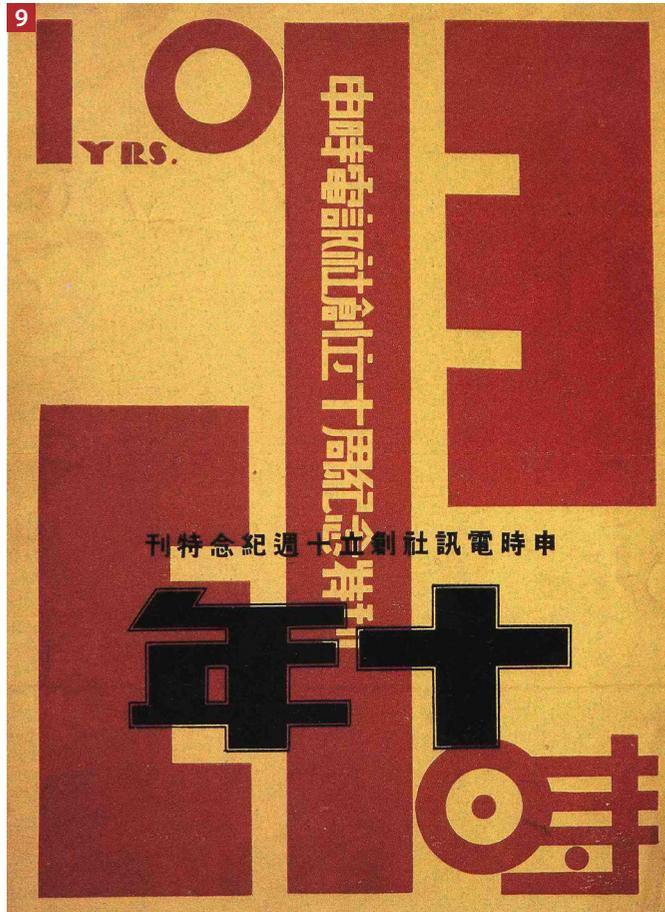
**FIGURE 09:** Poster Ten years of Shenshi Telegraphic Dispatch Agency, Shanghai, 1930. Designer: Qian Jun-tao. Publisher: Shanghai Sisbe Press.

**FIGURE 10:** Shanghai Private Kaiming Correspondence School, Members' Club Quarterly, No. 6, c. 1930. Designer: Qian Jun-tao. publisher: Shanghai Kaiming Book Store.

**FIGURE 11:** Literature Weekly, undated special issue on Russian short stories. Designer: Qian Jun-tao. Publisher: Shanghai Kaiming Book store.

**FIGURE 12:** The Muddy Stream, 1934. Designer: Qian Jun-tao. Publisher: Zhuo Press.

**FIGURE 13:** Les Contemporains Magazine, 1930s, Shanghai.



My analysis of the Western-Eastern mix of styles begins with the study of bilingual typography about Shanghai. The evidence of bilingual typography can be clearly seen in the case 'I Love Shanghai' photo (Fig. 14), the Chinese character in the 'I 囍 SH' photo, which means double happiness has become the visible sign which signified as part of a universal language to explain and transform the ideas to the audience. Even if you know nothing about the Chinese character, you still can guess the meaning.

Taken together, these findings in this chapter go toward enhancing our understanding that Hai Pai culture is always open and generous, fusing some elements of Western cultures with the ancient Chinese cultures in order to make them a truly Shanghainese style.

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FIGURE 14: A photograph of bilingual design 'I love Shanghai' in a Shanghai alleyway.



## DESIGN PRECEDENTS

FIGURE 15: Twin Cities Font in Headlines, full paragraphs and various text sizes.

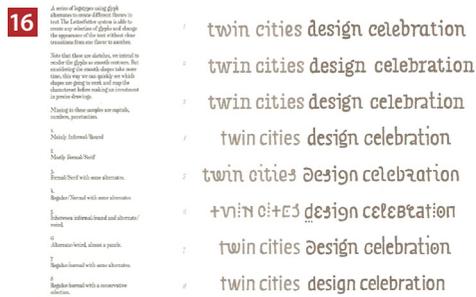


### Typographic design in relation to a city

In recent years there has been an increasing interest in the study of the relationships between type and cities. It has become a popular topic to contemporary designers. The focus of this chapter is on analysis based on existing design precedents including ones from the book *Metro Letters: A typeface for the Twin Cities*. It will also look at how to capture the essence of a city by different applications. Furthermore, the study of Helvetica benefits this project by illuminating the stages of font design and the theoretical underpinnings that goes into the development of a font, in this case my Neo-Haipai.

First of all, this Master's thesis is a response to the director of the University of Minnesota's Design Institute's Janet Abrams' research question "Can a typeface effectively represent a city, or communicate what's unique about a particular place?" (Littlejohn, 2003, p.10). In her study of *Metro Letter*

**FIGURE 16:** Logotype studies revealed the wide range of possibilities for setting “Twin Cities Design Celebration” in the typeface.



(Fig. 15&16), she thought of the idea of commissioning a typeface for the city as kind of a research experiment on the relationship between typography and urban identity - a form of cultural mapping. Along with the Deborah Littlejon, they invited six type design studios to work on this concept for the typeface ‘Twin City’ and came up with a family of ten print alphabets.

So far, however, there has been little discussion about the points raised by Abrams’ research question, which highlights a knowledge gap in the field of typography. It’s an exciting topic but slightly difficult to achieve. For instance, the Metro Letters book has been reviewed by Mathew Soar in the academic magazine Design Issues. He addresses the difficulty of Abrams’ project by saying: “The book makes it abundantly clear that the organizers, entrants, and jurors found reason to suggest that this was a dubious, if not plain impossible, design brief. Indeed, Metro Letters firmly underscores the difficulty of capturing the essence of a city in one typeface...” (Soar, M., 2006, p.97).

One question that needs to be asked, however, is whether the Twin Cities typeface really can represent what is truly special about a city. In Metro Letters, Janet Abrams didn’t give a complete answer to her research question. She said the answer is uncertain and suggested that more investigation would be required.

Having looked at the issue, it is my opinion the main weakness of the study is that it is not possible to represent a place purely through the use of a typeface by itself. But Abrams’ study addresses a design method, which can be treated as a starting point for my project. For this reason I decided to take the similar path to design a live typeface for my project as well, but I designed my typeface from a different direction. This masters project can be seen as a continuation of this Abrams’ process and a development of the discussion.

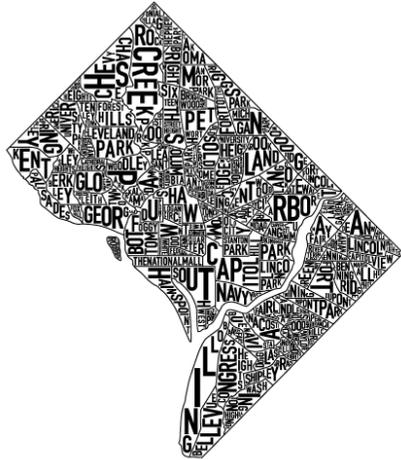
## Capturing the essence of cities

“When we communicate, we cannot be certain that the message of a sign is understood, especially when communicating to persons from other cultures. We each have our own biases, experiences, and knowledge that influence how we process and act upon messages.” (Bowers, 1999, P17).

**FIGURE 17:** Typographic Match making in the city



18



**WASHINGTON D.C.**

FIGURE 18: City Neighbourhood Poster 2007, Ork Inc.

Nowadays, type can communicate not only linguistically but also pictorially. Many contemporary designers have experimented with different ways to refine a landscape and are turning the letters into abstract images to capture the essence of a place. For instance, another evocative typographic portrayal of the city are the series of posters City Neighbourhood (Fig. 19) designed by Ork Inc which removed all graphical forms on the map and replaced them with the type. The map features cities by scale and rotated letters, forcing them to fit into the space that represents the various districts of each city. In this case, the name of each district becomes the most vital information contained within the poster.

FIGURE 19: Horizon., Each letter letterform plays the role of an entire building. 2007

19



FIGURE 20: The iconic Marina Bay Sands structure in Singapore, which is said to have captured the essence of Singapore.

20



This study also looks at how design can be used to capture the essence of a city, by using architecture instead of typography. By way of illustration, Canadian architect Moshe Safdie created the iconic Marina Bay Sands structure (Fig. 20) in Singapore, which is said to have captured the essence of Singapore. It is a 38-acre waterfront development that includes a luxury hotel, mixed-use resort, theatres and a waterfront plaza.

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FIGURE 21: Helvetica bold letters in Composition, Xiang Qian, 2011



## Helvetica Study

The focus of this section is to use Helvetica as a design precedent to show the processes and the design theories that go into the creation and use of a font, and which were also considerations when it came to developing my Neo Haipai face.

There was a time when typography consisted primarily of typefaces designed by technicians and cast in metal. The single purpose of type was to visually transfer the linguistic meaning (Browine, 2011, p.6). Since the development of technology and the arrival of digitized and computer generated typefaces, people have become familiar with using fonts and working with type. It's a definitive tool for graphic designers.

Fonts can cause a surprising amount of debate within design circles. As Baines and Haslam said "There are very few designers who believe that one single typeface family - however extensive and versatile - can be used for every job" (2002, p.96). An example of this is Helvetica. It was developed in 1957 by Max Miedinger and Eduard Hoffmann at Haas'sche Schriftgiesserei (Haas type foundry) Munchenstein, Switzerland and was a very successful typeface. Nowadays, it is described by some people as 'the king of fonts'. Most studies in the field of design show it was an impersonal typeface that had great clarity and no intrinsic meaning in its form so it could be used in a wide variety of situations. Many corporations use Helvetica as their corporate font such as 3M, American Airlines, BMW, Microsoft, Motorola and Panasonic. Apple Inc. has used Helvetica widely in iOS (previously iPhone OS), and the iPod. The iPhone 4 uses Neue Helvetica. Brownie (2011) cited Jan Tschichold's *The New Typography* (1928) and said "A good typeface has no purpose beyond being of the highest clarity. It should be simple, clear, and above all, should not distract from linguistic signification. All personal expression should be removed, and any element of decoration eliminated" (Brownie, 2011, p.6).

To date there have been many arguments about Helvetica - some people love it and others hate it. In Victor Malsy & Lars Muller's book *Helvetica Forever: story of a typeface* (2009) they point out "Helvetica is reliable, safe, practical, friendly, and extremely tidy. It was designed for everyday use and, in the world

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**FIGURE 22:** Linotype Helvetica® (DLH) traditional Chinese combines the Latin alphabet with a Chinese font in one package



of typography, it has become synonymous with its own characteristic” (P.127). Designers often use it as a default font and as a graphic designer I use Helvetica quite often for my design projects. It’s fast and safe to use especially when you don’t have much time to select a font. However, in my opinion it is a font, which has been over-used in the graphic design field, because it helps sell that idea of sleek, clean looking minimalistic design. It is all depends on how you use it. As a superstar font, Helvetica’s solution brings an interesting viewpoint to my own project in relation the usability of the font.

As an example of this Linotype Helvetica® (DLH) Simplified Chinese (Fig.22) and Linotype offer a number of Chinese fonts such as DE Hei that can be matched with Helvetica. However Helvetica® (DLH) Simplified Chinese just combines the Latin alphabet with a Chinese font in one package but does not really provide an Oriental aesthetic in the Latin part of the letterform. This is quite distinct from the Neo HaiPai form I have developed which mixes up cultural influences. [On page 39, I discuss the development of my Neo-HaiPai font and how it was similar in character to a font Hei, which can be described as the Helvetica of Chinese fonts.]

People always ask why we need more fonts as we already have thousands of them. To me it’s a kind of self-expression. I have read an interesting blog by typeface designer Dave Crossland (2011), who cited Victor Gaultney, the designer of the Libre font family Gentium. Gaultney is also a trained musician and he said simply, “Why make new fonts? Why make new music?” From my point of view, people use music to express a feeling, to tell a story or for a special occasion. By the same way, a new font does the same thing. It’s the ‘music notes’ created by a graphic designer for a special occasion.

In short, the results of this study indicate that letterforms have tone, timbre, character, just as words and sentences do. In order to give voice to the content and add personality and specifically for this project, the new font Neo-Haipai provides opportunities to create an appropriate typeface that helps express the characteristics of Shanghai.

**FIGURE 23:** The Book of Durrow, opening page, the Gospel of Saint Mark, C.A.D. 680. Linked into ligature, an I and an N aesthetic form of interlaced threads and coiling spiral motifs.



**FIGURE 24:** Incense burner with a painted design of a floral scroll.



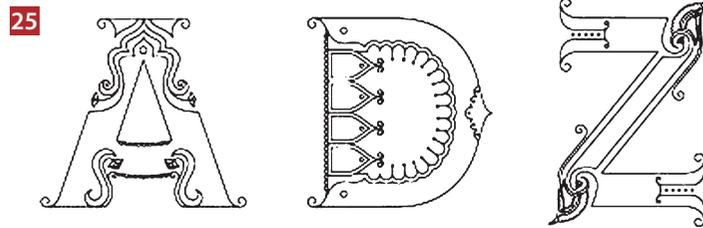
## Font combined with ornaments

While there are difficulties in representing a city via fonts alone, supplementing the font with other elements such as ornaments to reinforce the font design elements is an old, but very useful design tool.

The concepts and aesthetics behind the type ornaments are crucial to this project. Type ornaments have been used in conjunction with type for literally hundreds of years. 'Fleurons' is the generic name given to non-alphabetic decorative material. These pre-date printing and were originally derived from the flourishes of those copying manuscripts. (Fig. 23) In the work, typographical elements are quite significant in written communication. It has the potential to refer to a specific value system and thus can be used to express values, attitudes, associations, etc. In other words: typographic elements might be used as signs.

For instance, in China, a circular ornamental pattern is called 'tuan' (Fig. 24) which is a continuous repetition of pattern representing eternity, family heredity, and posterity. These unique Chinese frame patterns, which produce a continuous circular design, are symbols of everlasting fortune to the Chinese people (Nakamura, 2008, p.9).

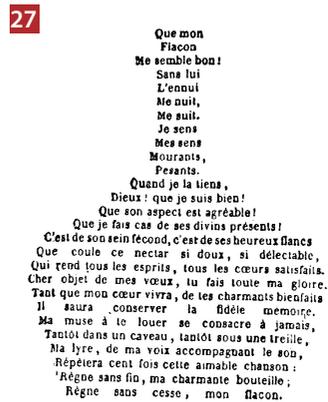
**FIGURE 25:** A Cross Cultural Font Display font: The Kalakari was designed by Beth Shirrell which combined the culture of India



Another perfect example to show how a font can be combined with ornaments is the cross-cultural font 'Kalakari' designed by Beth Shirrell which combined the culture of India. (Fig. 25)

FIGURE 26: Visual Poetry: Il pleut - Guillaume Apollinaire

FIGURE 27: Babelais Bottle - This typographic arrangement by Charles-Francois Panard (1694-1765)



## Typographic expression - visual poetry

The focus of this chapter reviews the issues that play a dominant part in typography, which forms a contextual background to the central themes of this project.

Typography is a very important communication tool for graphic design. Given this evidence, it can be seen that as Matthias Hillner (2009) states "Typography can be understood as the visual interpretation of the verbal language" (Hillner, p.9). This view is supported by Noble & Bestley (2004) who write: "Type carries a resonance with its intended audience – not only does it carry meaning through the content of the written words themselves, it also communicates through composition and the semiotic reading of type as image" (Noble & Bestley, 2004, p.63). Prerequisites have to apply in order to make communication possible.

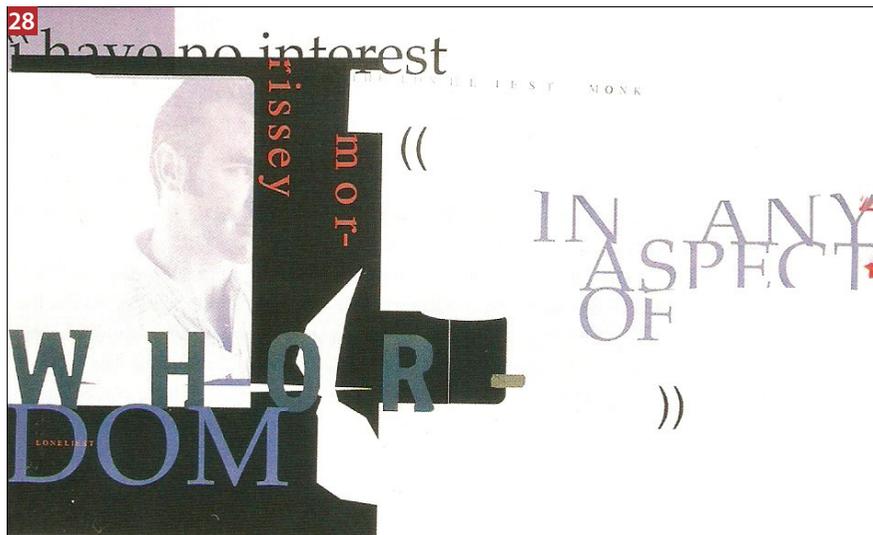
It is generally recognised that typography is the visual representation of text information. One could argue that every typographic arrangement constitutes the image of a text, however abstract this image may be. Johannes Gutenberg's method of printing with movable type in the fifteenth century reinforced the convention of typesetting in straight lines, from top left to bottom right. It was not until the turn of the nineteenth century that artists began to rebel against those rules. Alongside the likes of Christian Morgenstern and Stephane Mallarme, Guillaume Apollinaire introduced the revolutionary idea of visualising poetic writing. This attempt to 'fuse' text and image into visual challenging typographic compositions inspired many forms of typographic art, including futurism, Dadaism and even constructivism. (Hillner, 2009, p.13)

My concept of communication and linguistic signs is based on the instructive semiotic theory of visual poetry, which is elaborated in the poster Il Pleut (Fig. 26) , which is one of the best-known poems from Apollinaire. In his work, the letters were laid vertically to reflect the pattern of falling rain. As Hillner (2009) makes clear that "visual poetry reverses this relationship by translating the written word back into an image. The written word here becomes the first-order signifying system, and the image becomes the second-order signifying system." (Hillner, 2009, p. 14). (Fig.27)

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**FIGURE 28:** Morrissey, The Loneliest Monk, Rau Gun, 1994. The unusual photographic cropping and deconstructed headline convey the musician's romanticism and mystery. David Carson

Taken together, these results suggest that visual poetry is a good example for employing the semiotics theory of typography and of how type can be transferred onto the image on the page. Indeed, in some instances the appearance of the type can matter as much as the words it forms.

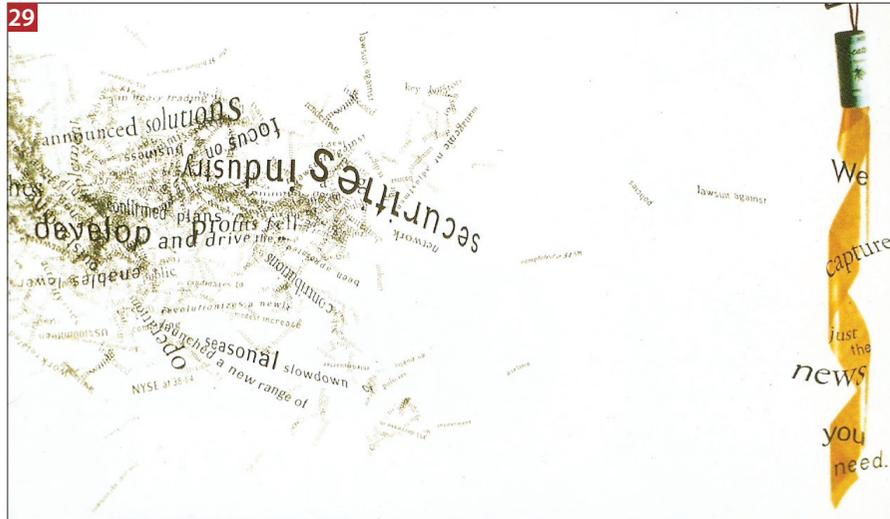


### **Typographic Expression: post-alphabetic aesthetic**

Currently, the alphabetic keyboard has become a tool for image making. Alphabetic characters are now not only considered in terms of their potential to display linguistic information, but also their potential as an artists' mark. (Brownie, B., 2011, p.3).

As a visible language, typography is a powerful communication tool and sometimes it can be used as a means of expression by itself. This study is also initially inspired by the art director of Beach Culture and Ray Gun magazine

**FIGURE 29:** Typographic play for an internet search company, playing off the idea of extracting the right information. Designer: David Carson  
Agency: Mullen Advertising



David Carson. His unrestrained and deconstructionist style had a strong impact on contemporary graphic design which led him to become one of the leading avant-garde designers in the last decade of 20th century. The aesthetic created by Carson has been dubbed 'post-alphabetic aesthetic'. As an example (Fig. 28 & 29) use type pictorially as well as linguistically. In many cases the type was completely illegible, denying any linguistic interpretation, forcing the type to perform the role of pattern, texture or image. Carson says "one should not mistake legibility for communication because while many highly legible traditional printed messages offer little visual appeal to readers, more expressionist designs can attract and engage them" ( Meggs, P. B. 1998, P.463).

Above all, Carson's design approach of using type as an illustration has inspired my own use of Neo-Haipai in blurring the boundaries of text and image to capture the essence of Shanghai.

“ *Research is an intrinsic aspect of design practice and essential part of the activity of problem solving* ”

(Noble & Bestley, 2004, p18).

### Introduction

Specific to the definition addressed in the previous chapter, the principles of this research-through-design project are divided into two stages. The first is making the Neo Haipai typeface to reflect the city culture of Shanghai, and the second is a typographic expression of Shanghai in a series of posters.

### Stage One: Making Letter as form.

“Each letter is a shape unto itself, a shape that may serve as illustration, as an icon, as a vessel, or as a graphic focal point, apart from its meaning as an alphabetic unit...” (Saltz, 2009, p.8)

The concept of this step was explained through researching and analysing the previously-mentioned historical and contemporary design works. The principle design task in this stage was to explore how to use typography to capture the essence of Shanghai history and cultural values by making a self-designed font. The intention of the applied component of this research in this stage is to create a distinctive and functional typeface, Neo-Haipai, which recalls the historical roots of Hai Pai culture and carries with it the special characters of Shanghai style.

In creating the typeface, I am engaging the question posed by Abrams about whether a typeface can ever represent one place. By creating a specific typeface based on Shanghai’s culture, I wanted to see if I could develop such a recognisable face.

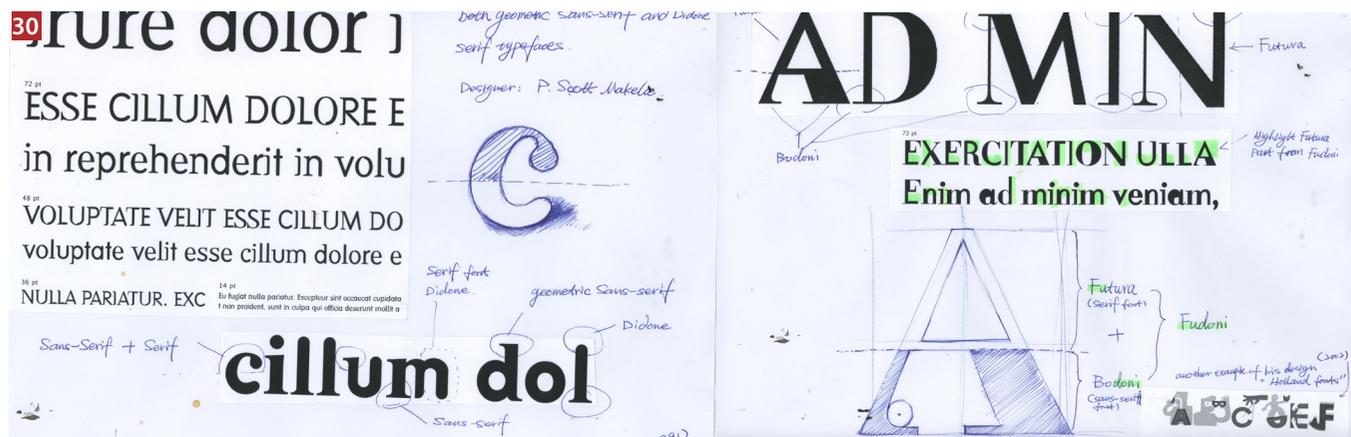
Based on the explanation of “Hai Pai” in the previous chapter, the key words for Shanghai style can be addressed as “fused” or “mixed up”. The indications are therefore that Hai Pai is the style of East meeting West. In this case, this project proposed that the final outcome of the alphabet may need to be in a multitude of forms, some of which are closer to East (Chinese characters) and others whose forms are Western (Art Deco).

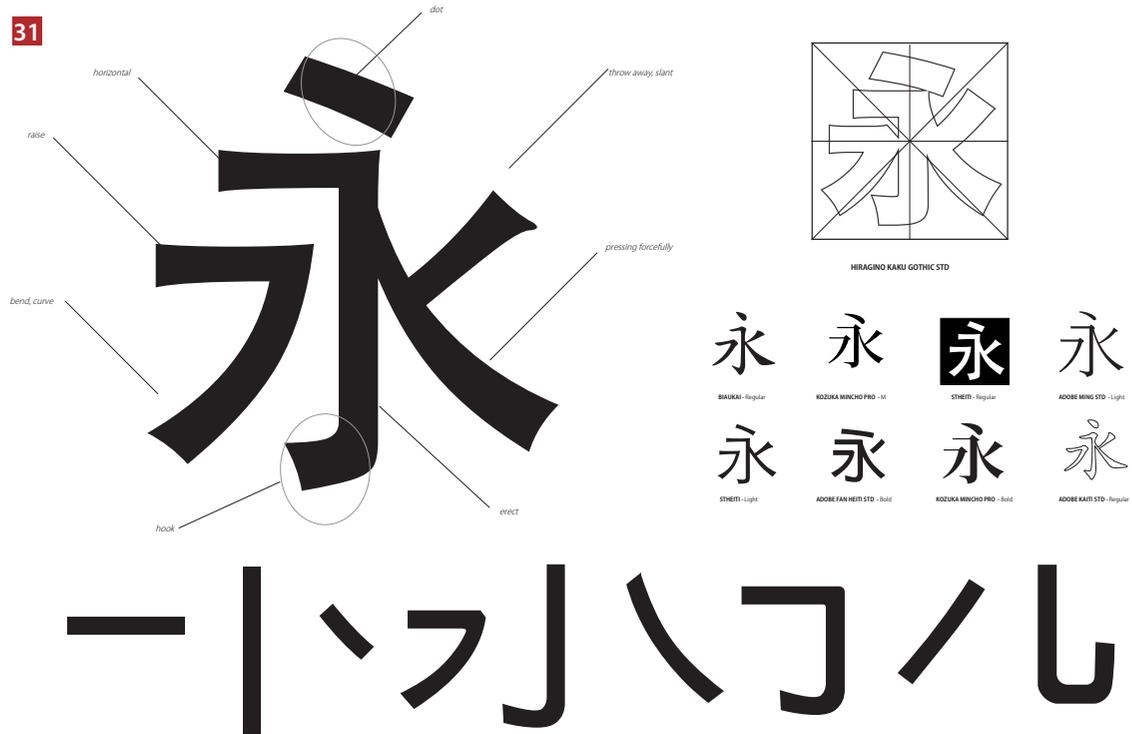
Before I started designing my font there was a decision I needed to make first – it is also a common decision for most typographic projects from the beginning - which is whether the font should be serif or sans serif. There is no agreement about which one is more legible, but I have opted for sans serif because of its geometric form. As a designer, I believe that sans serif fonts are more legible in most situations and sans serif fonts are easier to read in body copy. The other main reason behind choosing to design a sans serif font is the ‘clean’ and modern look of the sans serif. Plus it is easier for me to apply Art Deco style into the font design.

The other challenge for designing Neo-Haipai is that I don’t want this font looking too old fashioned. I want the font to carry both ‘old world’ and ‘modern today’ looks and to do this I analysed post-modernist fonts as design precedents.

The two post-modernism fonts which I chose to analyse in detail are Dead History and Fudoni. (Fig. 30) shows that the design principal of Dead History is a typeface that explores and combines structural elements of both geometric sans serif and Didone serif typefaces. Designed in 1990 by P. Scott Makela, the strokes of Dead History transit from un-bracketed serifs and contrasting stroke width on the left side of characters to a mono-weighted sans serif with soft, rounded terminals on the right. By the similar exploration, Max Kisman’s Fudoni was designed by a combination of Futura and Bodoni elements. The technique lead them both to the post-modernist ‘cut and paste’ in order to mix two fonts into one by deconstruction and reconstruction.

FIGURE 30: Analysing post-modernism fonts Dead History & Fudoni. Xiang Qian, 2011.





**FIGURE 31:** Chinese Font 'Hei' Style was described as the 'Helvetica' of Chinese. Xiang Qian. 2011.

It is widely accepted that fonts have 'feelings', that people learn to associate certain typefaces with certain emotional connotations. In order to employ this idea into my project, I applied the above technique on a Chinese font, which is called 'Hei' style (fig. 31) - a font, which I mentioned previously in the section on Helvetica. Unlike other script Chinese fonts, 'Hei' is a font style akin to sans serif styles in Western typography, and is a classic sans serif style font in Chinese as well, with the lines of the characters having squared ends. It's a type style characterised by reduced curves, and lack of decoration. Thus, in Western typography some people call it 'square san' - some people even characterise 'Hei' font as the 'Helvetica' of Chinese. That's why Linotype included 'Hei' with Helvetica in one package to target the Asian market. So, I think the Chinese font 'Hei' was a good starting point for this research project.

Firstly, I deconstructed the Chinese character into the basic strokes, and then reconstructed them into a Latin alphabet, hoping to bring a sense of cultural crossover to the outcome.

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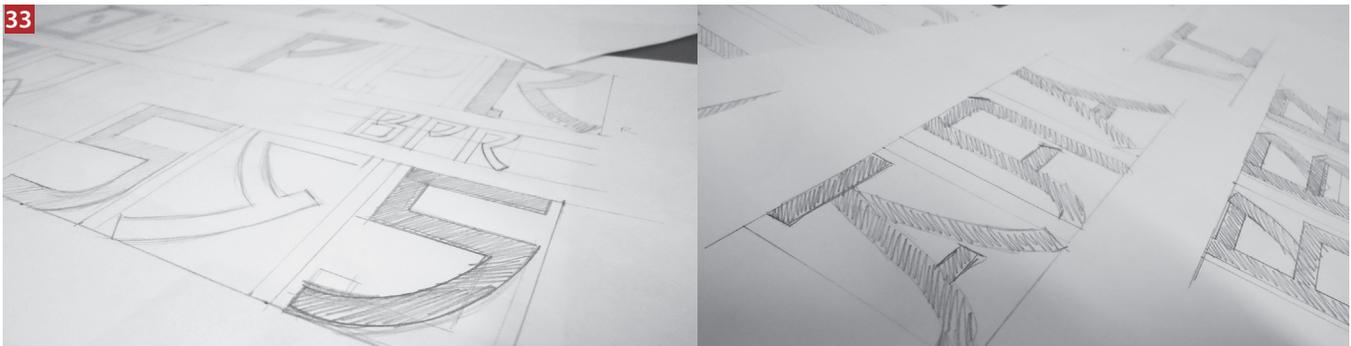
**FIGURE 32:** Deconstructing the Chinese character into the basic strokes, and then reconstructing them into a Latin alphabet. Xiang Qian, 2011.

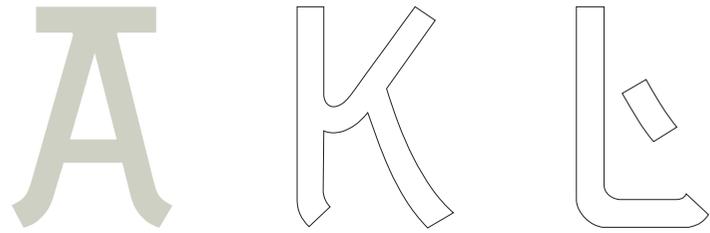
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Figures 32 show the design process of creating the upper case letter, through reconstruction of the Chinese strokes. The font legibility was a problem at this stage with the letters being hard to recognize, and less than pleasing to look at. In this case, if the font is not legible, it is going to be difficult for the reader to comprehend the meaning and tiring to read within a body text solution. Drawing and sketching the letters helped to solve this problem.

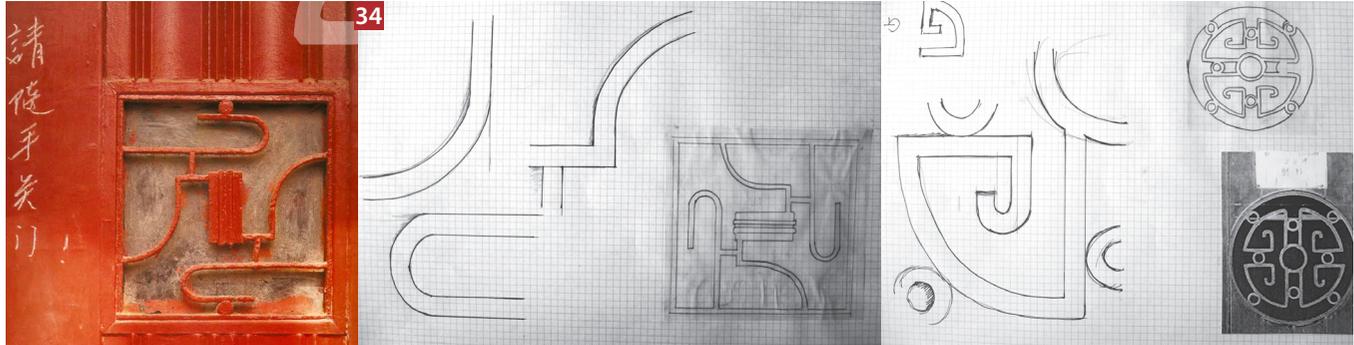
**FIGURE 33:** Pencil sketch of the letters. Xiang Qian, 2011

The design process at this stage was a highly iterative approach and involved drawing most letters many times in the search for an appropriate outcome. Many developmental drawings were produced during the first stage. By looking at the font (fig. 33) at this point, they looked much better than previous ones, and have a sense of East meet West. Several letters became key in showing the design strategy. The capitals 'A' 'K' and 'L' were a case in point.





**FIGURE 34 & 35:** Development of designing lower case letters and getting Art Deco details from Shanghai's architecture. Xiang Qian, 2011



However, there was still something missing at this point, something visual, which I could incorporate into the letterform to reflect to 'Shanghai style'. Based on the early observations about the "Hai Pai" culture, the Western Art Deco style was core to 'Shanghai Style'. Figure 34 shows the design process of designing lower case letters and getting Art Deco details from Shanghai's architecture.

36

abcdefghijklmnop →

37

abcdefghijklmnop

The other intention of designing this typeface is the functional purpose. There are actually two kinds of type, text font and display font. Text font is designed to be legible and readable across a variety of sizes whereas display type is designed to attract attention and pull the reader into the text - it can be more elaborate and expressive, and have a stylish look. For this project, I am trying to create a font style in-between a text font and display typeface. So there is gradual changing from Fig. 36 to Fig. 37 when I traced the drawing into a detailed format and reproduced this into a true typeface.

Neo Haipai *regular*

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
 abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz  
 1234567890 & ~!@#\$%^\*()\_+; ,./

Neo Haipai **bold**

**ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ**  
**abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz**  
**1234567890 & ~!@#\$%^\*()\_+; ,./**

FIGURE 38 & 39: Typography kerning test. Xiang Qian, 2011.



A typeface is finished as it is used. As a fully charted typeface family, Neo-Haipai has included all numbers and other glyphs, with some letters being changed many times for consistency. Type design software enables me to create a digitalized font for this project. The new font Neo-Haipai has been tested in different font sizes to check the readability and legibility of the font in big and small point sizes. Paying attention to every detail can enhance the subconscious impact of the design. As a result, Neo-Haipai is more like a display type in upper case letters, and a text font for the lower case for use as a body text.

Furthermore, a bold version of Neo-Haipai face was also developed for more design applications and opportunities.

j	space	j	-104	Āa	A	a	-32
w	space	w	-10	Āc	A	c	-50
”	quotesingle	quotesingle	-32	Āe	A	e	-34
’d	quotesingle	d	-132	Āo	A	o	-52
’l	quotesingle	l	-32	Āp	A	p	-40
’r	quotesingle	r	-52	Āq	A	q	-38
’s	quotesingle	s	-78	Āt	A	t	-38
’v	quotesingle	v	-20	Āu	A	u	-40
Ā’	A	quotesingle	-80	Āv	A	v	-62
ĀĀ	A	A	-21	Āw	A	w	-74
ĀC	A	C	-54	Āy	A	y	-60
ĀG	A	G	-58	B,	B	comma	-68
ĀO	A	O	-56	B.	B	period	-68
ĀQ	A	Q	-52	BĀ	B	A	-42
ĀT	A	T	-30	BĈ	B	C	-20
ĀU	A	U	-58	BH	B	H	-41
ĀV	A	V	-50	BO	B	O	-73
ĀW	A	W	-66	Ĉ,	C	comma	-44
ĀY	A	Y	-24	Ĉ.	C	period	-44

FIGURE 40: Neo- Haipai Bold. Poster.  
Xiang Qian. 2011.



## Stage Two: Expressive Typography - type as image

People used to capture the essence of the city through photography or words, but how about the typography? The questions this project sought to answer is whether typography as a design element can represent a city. Based on the early observations in case studies of visual poetry, and Carson's deconstructivist typography, the challenge was to visually represent a city by using Neo Haipai as a design element to capture the essence of Shanghai.

With this done, the next step was to 'fuse' Neo-Haipai with colours and ornaments to form visually interesting typographic compositions to capture the essence of Shanghai.

### Typographic map of Shanghai

The idea of this typographic map comes from the study of the series of posters City Neighbourhood. By definition, a map is a flat-surfaced pictorial presentation of a physical location. This work is using the idea of a map as a point of departure to Shanghai. In this case, it gives my audience the idea of a visual journey by using it as a graphic guide as it leads them to different areas of Shanghai. As Figure 41 shows that there are 17 district areas in Shanghai. In this case, five representational district posters will be made to capture the essence of Shanghai.

FIGURE 41: Detail of typographic map Shanghai. Xiang Qian. 2011.



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FIGURE 42: Traditional Chinese stamp & individual typographical district



Each typographical district in Shanghai, (Fig. 42) will be reduced in size and coloured in red and then placed at the corner of the poster in order to make it look like the Chinese traditional stamp (seal) while also appearing as a jigsaw piece to a whole series.

### Blurring the boundary of type and image

The process of designing the posters saw the blurring of the boundary between type and image. For examples, the photo of Nan Jing Road (fig. 43) and the poster of Sleepless City, provides a similar feeling to the audience. The hidden meaning behind this – what the structuralists would call ‘second order signifiers’ – can be seen in the poster Sleepless City as well, In this case, the images of Chinese characters in the neon light are being used as a metonym to signify an Asian city.

Using images and non-figurative elements as “codes” to express tangible meaning are another part of the project. Coded symbols are learned and understood through analysis of the visual context, such as in the photos and images, which I collected from around Shanghai. Being a tall city (fig. 44) and being very colourful at night it was useful to incorporate these elements into the design.

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FIGURE 43: Night view of Nan Jing Road in Shanghai.



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FIGURE 44: Detail of Sleepless City poster. Xiang Qian. 2011.



### Applying colours & ornaments with type

Colours have various associations and combinations that evoke personal feelings and common, emotional responses among cultures. The colours, which I use for the posters, were picked from the photos. For example, In the Sleepless City poster (fig. 45) these RGB colours capture the neon light in a night view of Shanghai's Nan Jing Road. In this poster the overlapping of the colour created the effects of neon lights.

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FIGURE 45: Detail of Sleepless City poster. Xiang Qian. 2011.

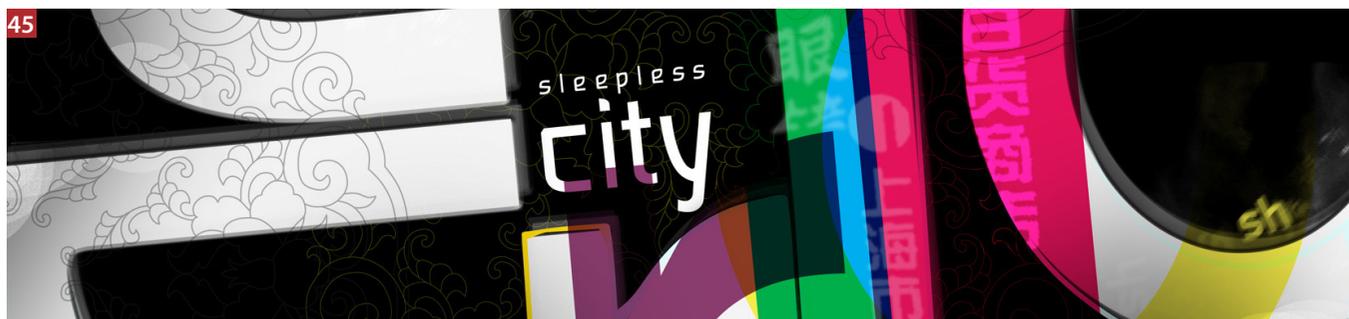


FIGURE 46: Detail of Tall City poster. Xiang Qian. 2011.



“Ornament is one of the metrics of design history. Like the rings of a tree trunk, it can often be used to accurately date a work, or at least signify its aesthetics pedigree” (Heller, S. & Anderson, G., 2010, p.10). The Chinese-style ornaments built into the font and the posters are a visual symbol of Chinese culture and by using the ornaments the work is infused with the older parts of traditional culture.

As an example, in Tall City poster (Fig. 46), typefaces have ornamentation and aesthetically added forms that can lead the viewer to see a letter as something outside of being just that letter. In this case, ornaments are a necessary element to construct my visual statement. Adding Chinese ornaments is a way to convey the message of old and traditional Chinese culture. By using Chinese patterns as a meaningful element of design and treating them as type ornaments in order

FIGURE 47, 48 & 49 : Detail of Tall City poster. Xiang Qian. 2011.





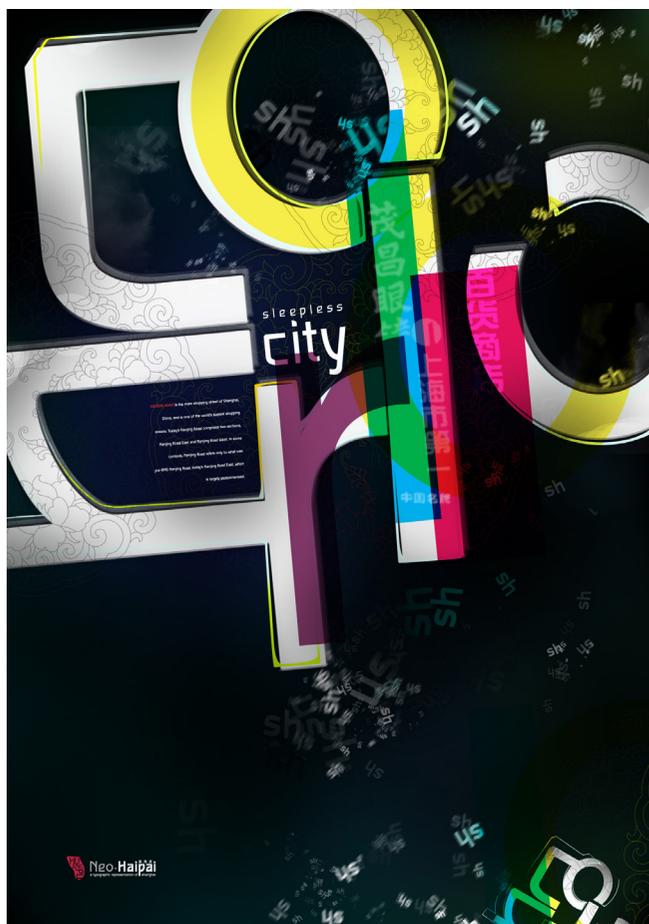
to bring a sense of Chinese aesthetic into the design project, it helps support the concept and is easier for people to access and understand.

Through the use of ornaments, and light areas against dark areas which impels the essence of Shanghai in terms of 'old inside new', it also possible to attract and maintain people's attention and move their eyes to specific areas.

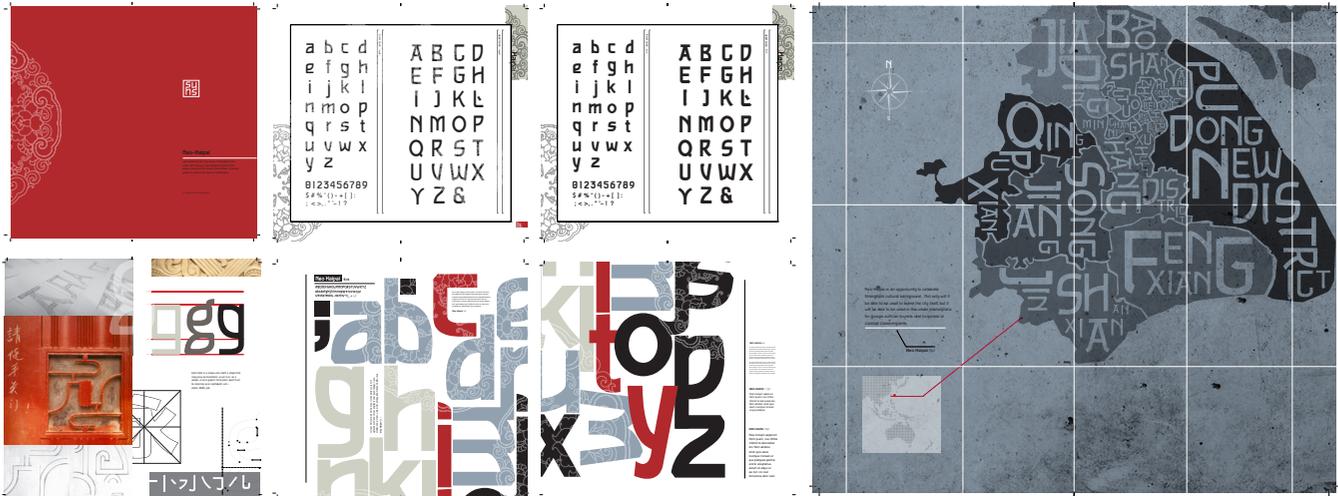
Moreover, the semiotics theory also can be found in the long black area in the poster 'Tall City' (fig. 44). The signifier is the word 'tall' which serves as a sign which points to high-rise buildings in Shanghai. (In this poster, it implies the Jinmao Tower and International Financial Centre). The signified is something that has been pointed out by its signifier, in this case, it can be referred to as the image (fig. 44) for the city landscape and each letter in the alphabet is a signifier.

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## FINISHED WORKS

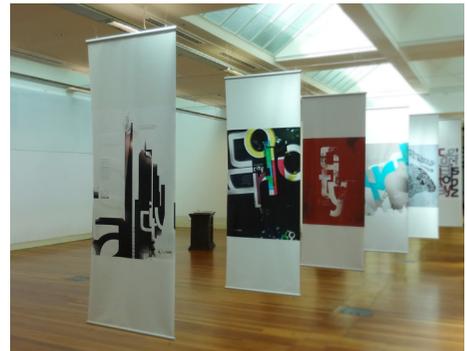






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FINAL EXHIBITION



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## CONCLUSION

The fundamental starting point with this study was to revisit Janet Abrams' question about whether a place can be represented typographically.

In order for a design like this to work for a specific city or place, there has to be recognisable aspects of the city which can be incorporated into the font to avoid it being just a generic design without enough visual clues that are needed to allow readers to decode the signs within the type project.

I have looked into the history of Shanghai, its own design culture during the early 1930s and 40s, and then reconfigured all these into a letterform as basic design elements. I have also included Shanghai's high-rise nature and commercial night views to produce something I believe reflects all aspects of the city.

My response to the principle challenge of trying to capture the essence of the city has been to develop a typeface and style - which I have called Neo-Haipai - as a way of testing whether this can be achieved. This has largely been done by looking at the design issues of representing somewhere mainly through typographic design. The aim of this study is also to address the inter-cultural typographic needs of contemporary design for an international metropolis.

There are limitations with pure typography, because a typeface can only provide so much information to the average reader. To get around this limitation of the basic font, I have further emphasised its Chinese nature through the use of ornamentation.

This ornamentation reinforces the cultural history of Shanghai in a way that many residents are likely to recognise. These visual signs and clues should trigger awareness amongst people who are familiar with the symbols and who will make the connection between them and the cultural and physical aspects of the city.

Through the application of the font in the series of posters, I have been able to test whether it matches the demands placed on it. The poster designs were inspired by post-modernist typographer David Carson who contends that

legibility isn't everything, and sometimes the composition of type actually carries more meaning for the reader. For example in one of the posters the arrangement of the typeface matches the vertical nature of Shanghai, giving more information to the reader that will help them recognise the essence of the city.

Perhaps the ultimate test of whether Neo-Haipai has successfully captured key characteristics of Shanghai is whether Shanghainese can see their city reflected in the designs and typography of the posters, or potential visitors can also make the link between the typeface and the physical and cultural characteristics of the city when they are in it.

The intention of this project has been to offer a deeply researched practical examination of this complex topic. This theoretical and applied research touched upon some issues that reflect my personal experience and perspective. I hope it also benefits other designers and typographic practitioners who wish to explore and create further works about their own cities.

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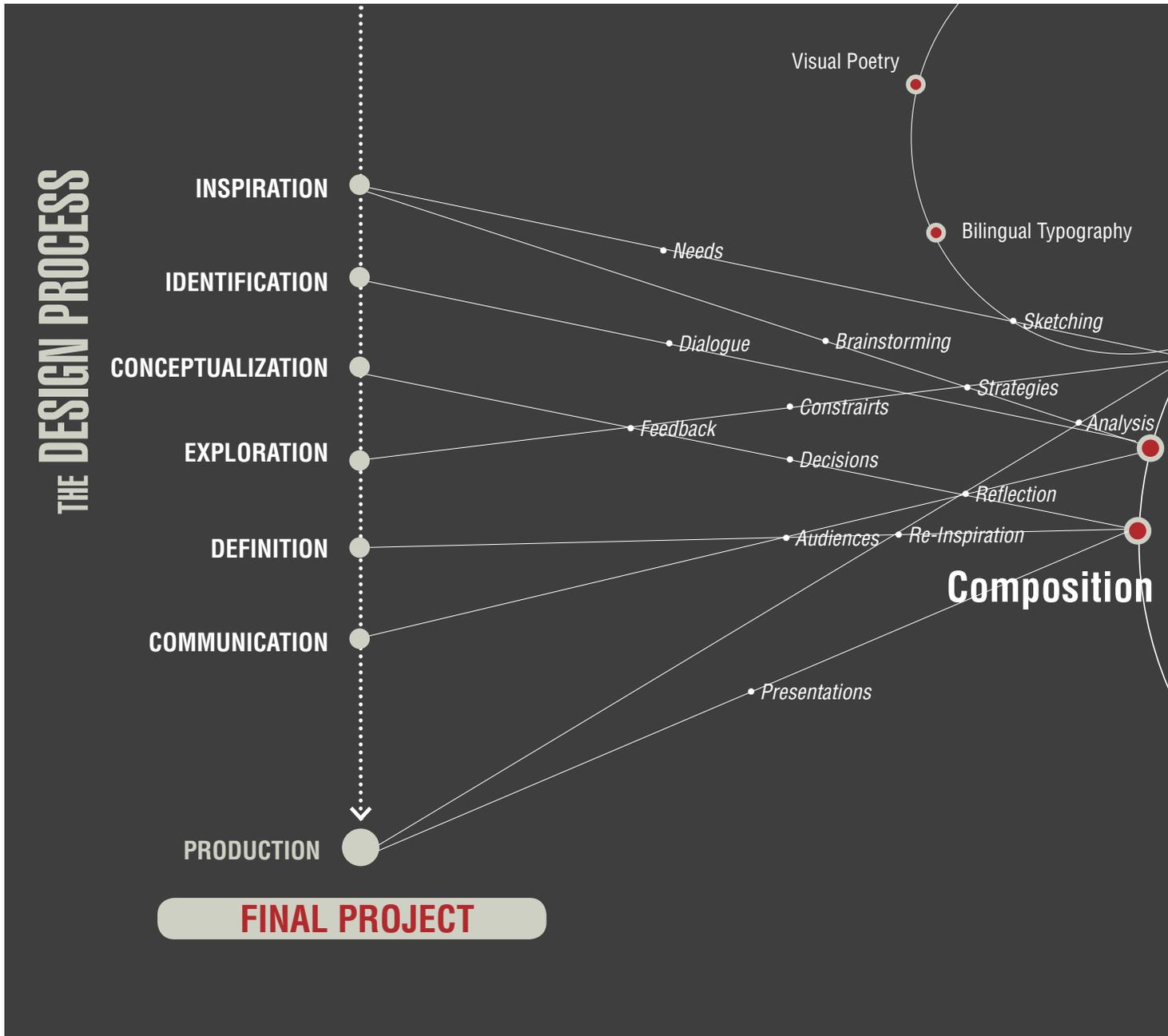
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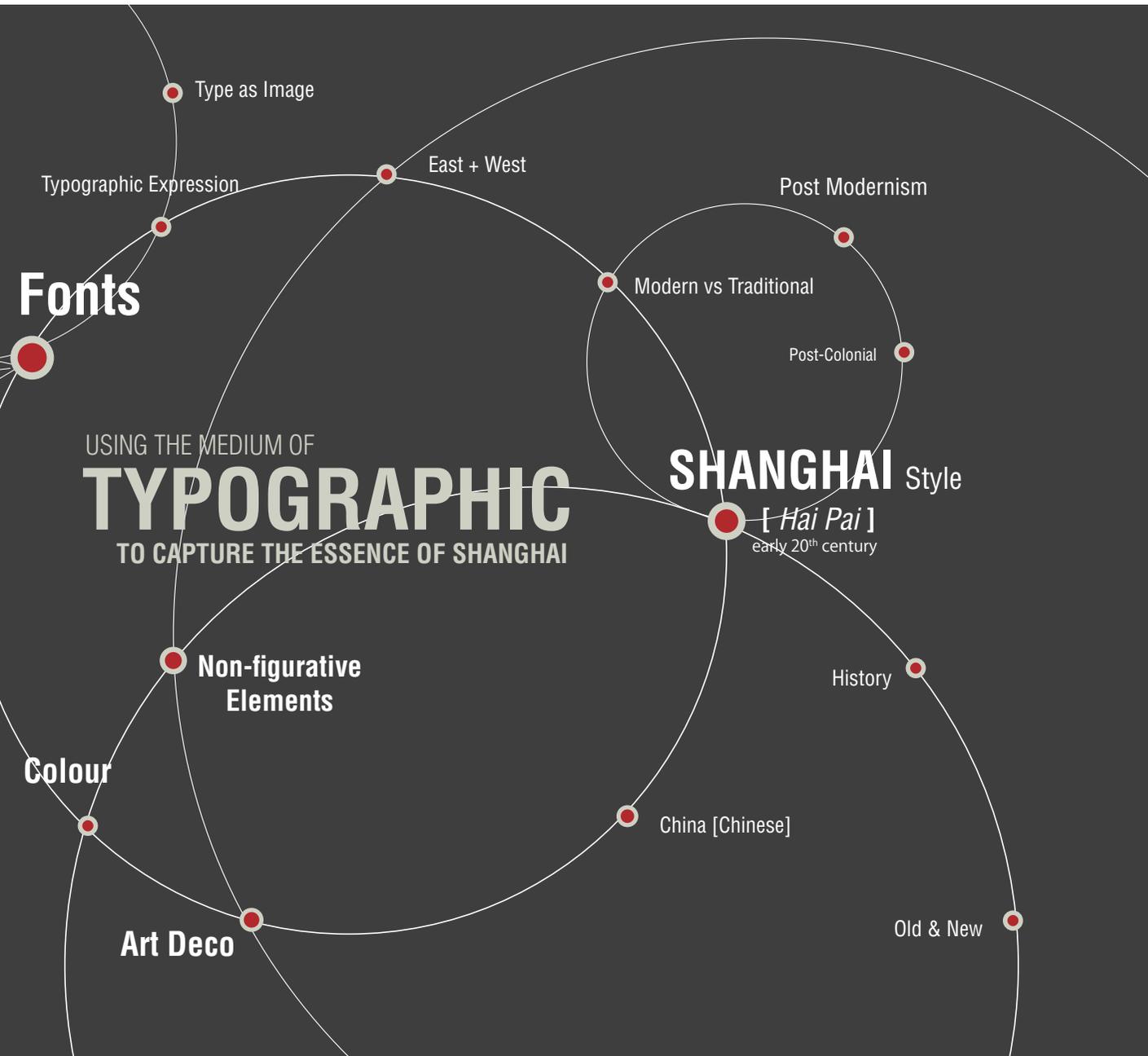
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**APPENDIX:**



Appendix i: Mind Mapping



## Questions for the interview

**What does Shanghai Style means to you? How do you describe it?**

**Does Shanghai itself influence your work?**

Shanghai is the place I was born. I am living in here and I grown up in this city, Shanghai is not only a name of a city, but also a trendy symbol for many people in China. It used to be a semi-colonial area during the Second World War. Western culture became a powerful impact to the local traditional culture. But fortunately, not like other places in China, Shanghai local society didn't refuse the new elements; instead, foreign culture is well combined and is absorbed by Chinese Culture. In Shanghai, combination is very important. Shanghai Style is not a static description; just like Shanghai itself is always keep changing. Nowadays, most of the international companies have already set up branches in Shanghai, or even moved their headquarters to Shanghai. Design industry is also feel this change and many chances will be discovered in this energetic city.

To be a designer in Shanghai, Shanghai style is definitely a good communication tool to the customer. Because in the work, you will find the most trendy or fashionable elements, but also you can find the traditional root.

**How would you use the language of design to represent/express Shanghai visually?**

Shanghai has caught the eyesight from the world. You can say it is still a part of the developing country, but you can't deny its star position. It is hard to use one design language to describe Shanghai, because Shanghai is always changing, and it is seeking new developing directions. With the development of the Internet web 2.0 period, traditional design area, such as graphic design, advertising, illustration, photography, etc can not meet the requirement of Shanghai's development. New media is fast developing beyond our imagination. Social media network, digital practice and multimedia or cross media design method can help people understand Shanghai's essence.

**What is the difference between Shanghai and Beijing (Shanghai and Hong kong)?**

**Comparative: Can you see the city in the design?**

Shanghai has no historical background as long as Beijing has. Beijing has such a rich culture background and it is the political centre of China that traditional cultural design elements can be deeply dug up. But in Shanghai, due to long time culture fusion, it won't stay static. Spiritual words, such as new, innovative, creative, unique, fashion, trendy, cool...are injected into Shanghai people's blood. That's the reason why we can see the huge difference of the understanding of culture from art pieces between these cities.

Every city, like Shanghai, Beijing or Hong Kong is focusing on discovering Chinese cultural elements in design, but due to different historical background, diversified design ideas and methodologies are used to reflect the cities's spirit.

**How do you feel about this font? (Does it represent Shanghai?)**

**Any suggestions for improvement?**

I think this font is quite interesting and very distinctive. The style is fashionable but the lines, curves and even stokes are keeping traditional Chinese style. It's quite like old Shanghai poster style.

With the development of new design concepts, font design itself should not be stay still. It should not be only developed on paper media or screen media. How to use typeface in various platforms is much more important than designing it. Art pieces, paintings, sculpture, digital motion graphic, product design, T-shirt... All these design channels can be good representative forms to sale the typeface.



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## Questions for the interview

### 1. What does Shanghai Style mean to you? How do you describe it? Does Shanghai itself influence your work?

上海是个中国文字“融”。经济、人口、文化和物质不管是内地还是世界上的，都在不断地通过这个窗口城市流入流出，通过不断的融合。产生特殊的文化、经济、物质、人文传统观念。由于我是做广告的关系。客户主要是世界500强企业。属于经常碰到客户要求设计些中西能融合的设计要求。比如：画面需要西方的时尚的元素。同时也需要中国人能接收的图案、文字元素。以求达到画面的中西平衡。

### 2. How would you use the language of design to represent/express Shanghai visually?

上海是一个窗口城市，但也一中流入后的融合。所以用两条水墨的鲤鱼流入再交汇一起。

### 3. What is the different between Shanghai and Beijing (Shanghai and Hong Kong)? Comparative: Can you see the city in the design?

北京可以用古代的，严肃的元素来代表这个城市。因为这个城市是中国的古都，也是现代的首都城市。此外它还是北方的重要文化城市。所以给人在文化、经济、观念、人文习惯都是一种保守、严肃。

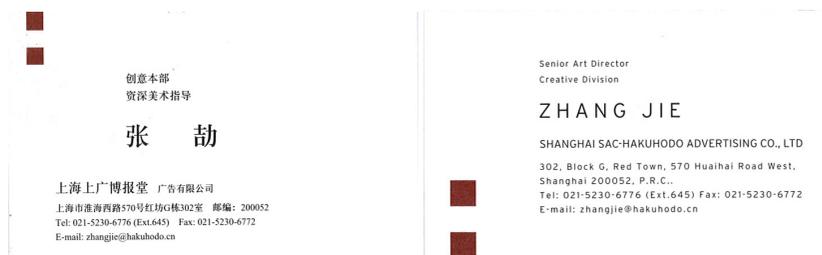
香港每一个角落留存了西式的文化、经济、人文观念的城市。因为香港因为历史原因，从一个小海岛到英殖民地的城市，大陆的分离。使得这个城市曾经是中国唯一和国外交流的窗口，让它不断的繁荣。。但随着回归，它的发展正在减慢。毕竟它已经不是中国对外的唯一缺口。现在只能是中国带动南方两广省市的经济、文化的龙头。

上海是一个新欣的，积极向上，流动的城市。它是中国的现代化建设的表现。因为对外发展时间上真正意义上只有100多年的历史。也是中国南方最具有代表性的城市。由于它处的地理位置是中国南北中线东边最边缘上，中国人把内地最好的物质、思想、人都集中在上海这个窗口，和国外流入的经济文化相融合在一起。所以在经济、文化、人文习惯上都在不断地快速地自我更新和吸收。

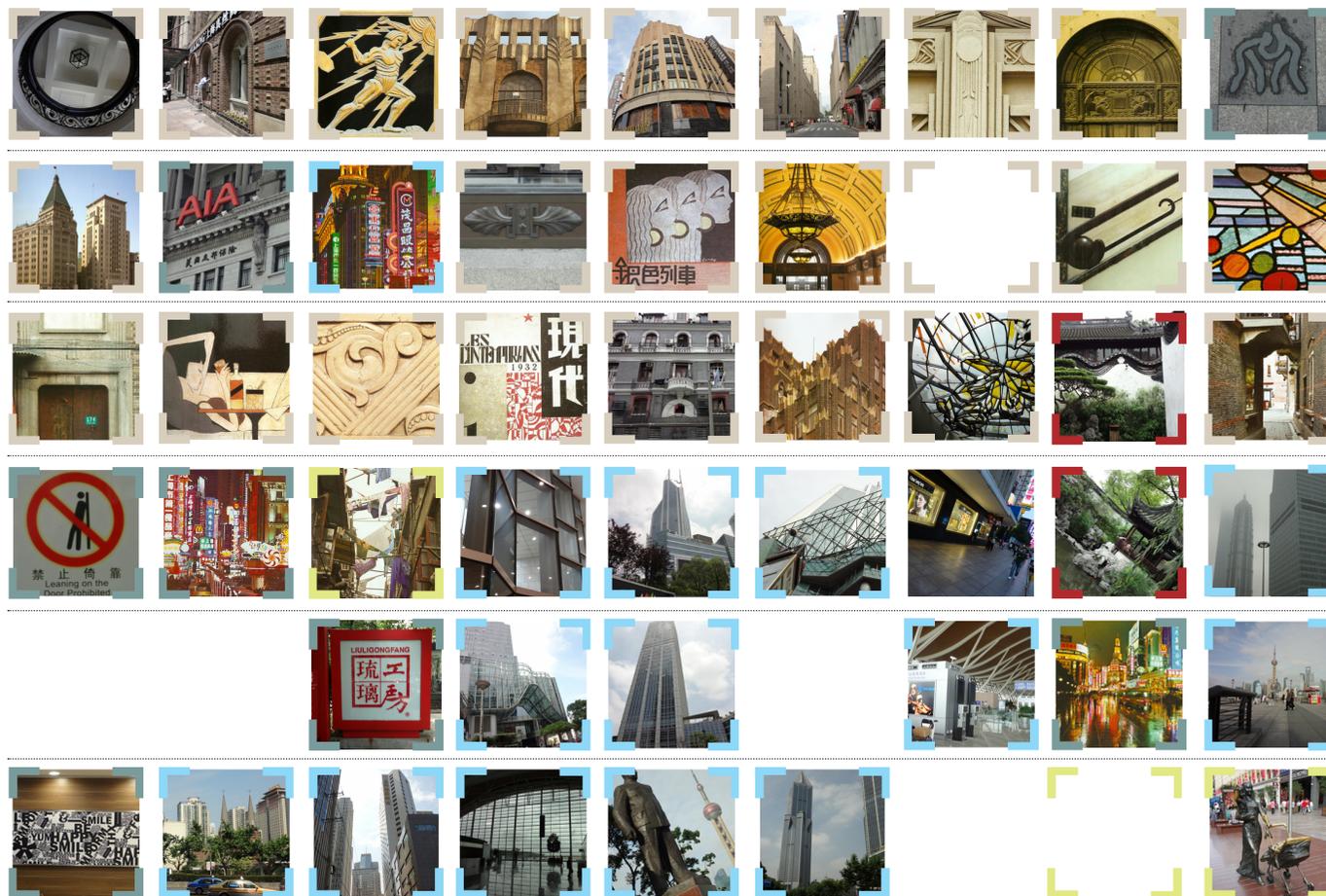
### 4. How do you feel about this font? (Does it represent Shanghai?) Any suggestions for improvement?

我觉得用字体来代表上海的话，应该是现代的，时尚式、中西式的元素字体。

比如字体的笔画和代表性的简单的图形来辅助。



### Appendix iii: Photo Documentation and Image Collecting



Art Deco

Contemporary Architecture

Ancient Chinese Building

Icons & Vernacular Sign

Others

