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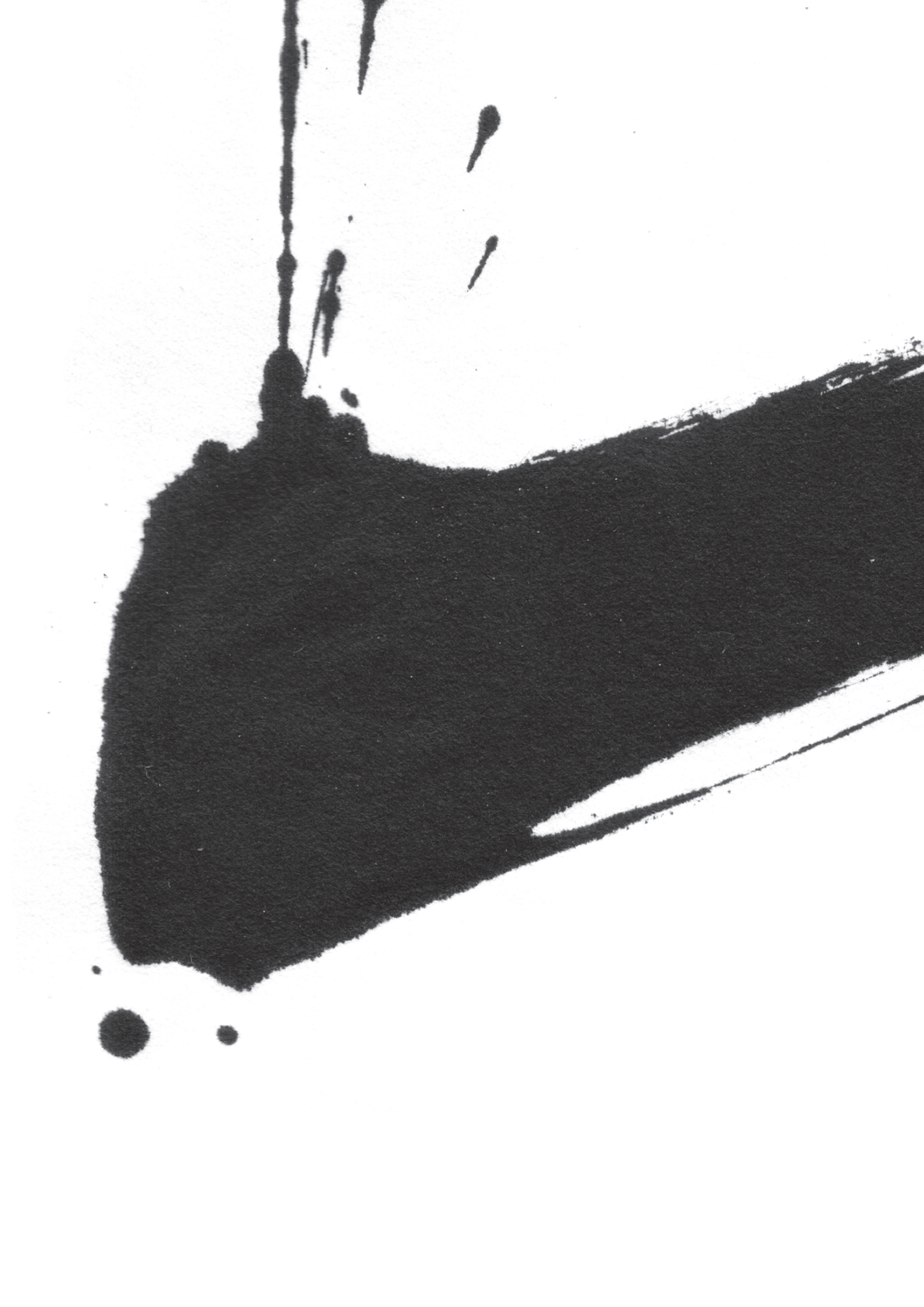
## From Western calligraphy tradition to extended gesture

Almila Yıldırım

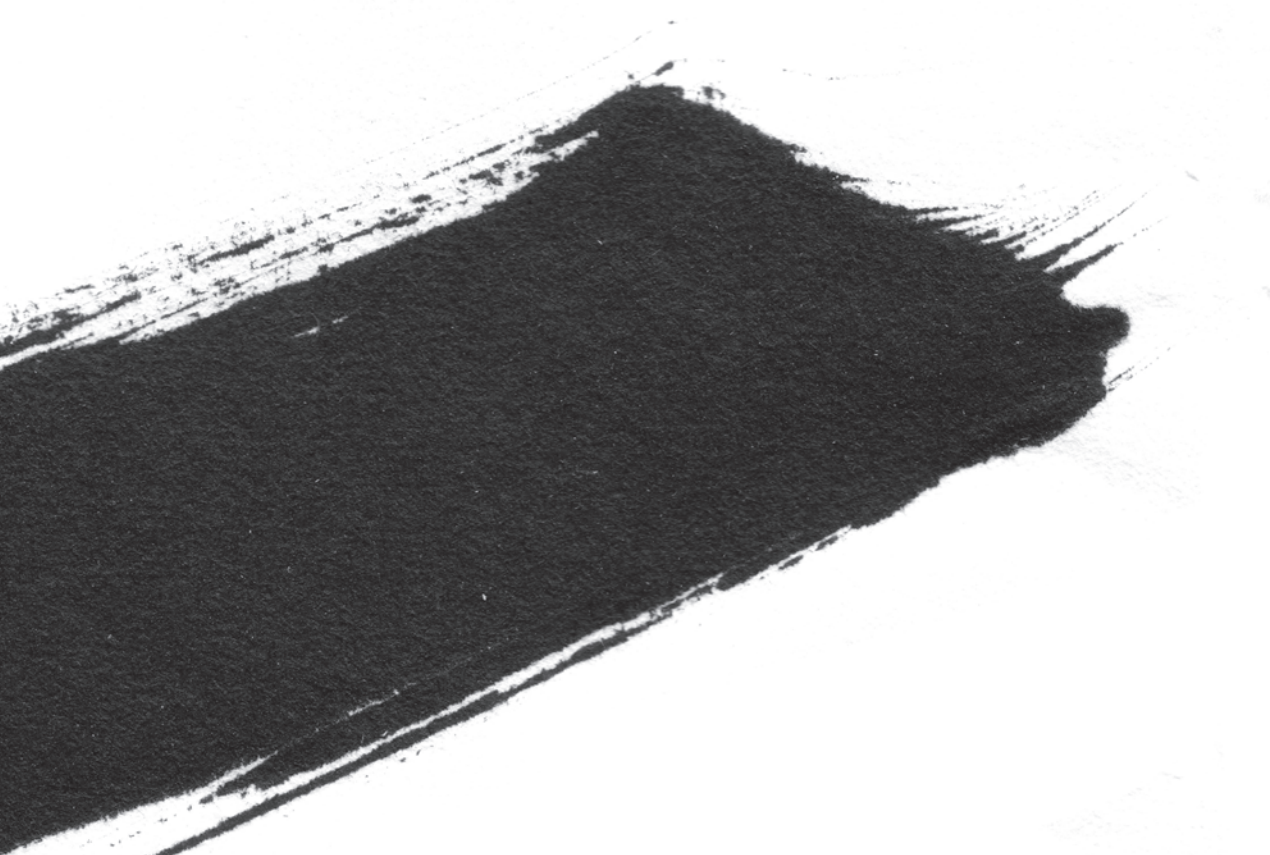
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FROM WESTERN CALLIGRAPHY TRADITION  
**TO EXTENDED GESTURE**

Doctoral Thesis presented by  
ALMILA YILDIRIM

Director and Tutor:  
DRA. RAQUEL PELTA RESANO



Programa de Doctorado  
Estudios Avanzados en Producciones Artísticas  
Línea de investigación en Imagen y Diseño

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*I dedicate this work to my lovely deceased father, Mansur Yıldırım. Without his support this thesis would not have been possible.*

*Dedico este trabajo a mi querido padre fallecido, Mansur Yıldırım. Sin su apoyo esta tesis no hubiera sido posible.*

*Canım babama...*





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## CONTENT

### I. INTRODUCCIÓN

1.1. Definición del objeto de estudio .....	13
1.2. Justificación .....	16
1.3. Preguntas, hipótesis y objetivos de investigación	
1.3.1. Preguntas de investigación .....	19
1.3.2. Hipótesis de investigación .....	20
1.3.3. Objetivos de investigación .....	21
1.4. Metodología .....	21
1.5. Marco teórico y referencial .....	23
1.6. Contenido .....	37

### I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Definition of the object of study .....	41
1.2. Justification .....	44
1.3. Research questions, hypotheses, and objectives	
1.3.1. Research questions .....	47
1.3.2. Research hypotheses .....	47
1.3.3. Research objectives .....	48
1.4. Methodology .....	49
1.5. Theoretical and referential framework .....	50
1.6. Content .....	63

### II. DEFINING THE TERMS: WRITING, LETTERING, TYPOGRAPHY AND CALLIGRAPHY .....

2.1. Writing: A brief tour of its origins and definitions of the term .....	68
2.2. Handwriting: A brief tour of its definitions as a term .....	80
2.3. Lettering: A brief tour of its definitions as a term .....	82
2.4. Typography: A brief tour of its origins and definitions of the term .....	86
2.5. Western calligraphy: A brief tour of its origins and definitions of the term .....	95
2.5.1. Western calligraphy definitions according to selected dictionaries and encyclopedias .....	96
2.5.2. Western calligraphy definitions according to calligraphers .....	109

### III. WESTERN CALLIGRAPHY TRADITION .....

3.1. Scribe and <i>scriptorium</i> .....	123
3.2. Mastering the skill of ancient writing in the middle ages .....	128

3.3. Making manuscript .....	134
3.4. Tools and materials of the Western traditional calligraphy .....	139
3.5. Ancient scripts of Western calligraphy .....	145
3.5.1. Roman Capitals ( <i>Capitalis Monumentalis, Classical Roman Capitals, Imperial Capitals</i> ) .....	147
3.5.2. Square Capitals ( <i>Capitalis Quadrata</i> ) .....	150
3.5.3. Rustic Capitals .....	152
3.5.4. Uncial ( <i>Littera Uncialis</i> ) .....	154
3.5.5. Half-Uncial ( <i>Semi-Uncial</i> ) .....	156
3.5.6. Insular Majuscule ( <i>Insular Half-Uncial</i> ) .....	158
3.5.7. Caroline Minuscule ( <i>Littera Minuscula Carolina</i> ) .....	164
3.5.8. The Gothic system of scripts .....	168
3.5.8.1. Formal Gothic ( <i>Littera Textualis, Textura</i> ) .....	169
3.5.8.1.1. Textualis Prescissa ( <i>Gothic Bookhand, Black Letter, Textura, Sine Pedibus</i> ) .....	171
3.5.8.1.2. Textualis Quadrata ( <i>Gothic Book-hand, Black Letter, Textura, Fracta, Grossa, Psalterialis</i> ).....	173
3.5.8.1.3. Textualis Semi-Quadrata ( <i>Gothic Bookhand, Black Letter, Textura</i> ) .....	175
3.5.8.1.4. Textualis Rotunda ( <i>Gothic Book-hand, Black Letter, Textura</i> ) .....	176
3.5.8.2. Gothic Cursive ( <i>Littera Gothica Cursiva</i> ) .....	178
3.5.8.3. Fraktur ( <i>Frakturschriften</i> ) .....	185
3.5.9. Italic Script ( <i>Cursive or Chancery letter, Cancellarescha</i> ) .....	187
3.6. Printing and scribe .....	190
3.7. Calligraphic revival .....	193
IV. CHINESE AND JAPANESE CALLIGRAPHY TRADITION: INFLUENCES ON THE WESTERN CONTEMPORARY CALLIGRAPHY .....	207
4.1. Chinese calligraphy .....	209
4.1.1. The Chinese writing system and its characteristics .....	211
4.1.2. The concept of the word <i>shufa</i> .....	217
4.1.3. Cultural mindset behind the Chinese calligraphy .....	223
4.1.4. Aesthetic considerations and the term beauty of Chinese calligraphy .....	227
4.1.5. Tools and materials of Far Eastern calligraphy practice .....	238
4.1.6. Script styles of Chinese calligraphy .....	242

4.1.7. Chinese contemporary calligraphy .....	247
4.1.7.1. Modernist approach of contemporary Chinese calligraphy .....	250
4.1.7.2. Avant-garde approach of contemporary Chinese calligraphy .....	255
4.1.8. The performative aspect of Chinese calligraphy: The analogy with dance and music .....	262
4.2. Japanese calligraphy .....	268
4.2.1. Concept of the word <i>shodo</i> .....	269
4.2.2. Writings of Zen monks and <i>bokuseki</i> .....	272
4.2.3. The avant-garde calligraphy of Japan .....	276
4.3. The impact of Western art on Far Eastern contemporary calligraphy .....	282
4.4. The impact of Far Eastern tradition on western abstract practices .....	293
4.4.1. <i>Dishu</i> : A Far Eastern calligraphy practice .....	304
V. CALLIGRAPHIC TRADITION OF THE ARABIC SCRIPT AND ISLAMIC CALLIGRAPHY: INFLUENCES ON CONTEMPORARY WESTERN CALLIGRAPHY .....	
5.1. Arabic writing system and its characteristics .....	312
5.2. The concept of the word <i>khatt</i> .....	317
5.3. The importance of writing to Islamic culture .....	321
5.4. The general concept of Islamic art .....	324
5.5. Mystical dimension of Islamic art .....	334
5.6. The development and spread of calligraphic styles .....	338
5.7. Tools and materials of Islamic calligraphy practice .....	348
5.8. <i>Siyah Mashq</i> (Black Writing) .....	351
5.9. Contemporary practices with Arabic script and Islamic calligraphy .....	356
5.9.1. The impact of Western art on the Middle Eastern calligraphy practices .....	360
5.9.2. <i>Hurufiyya</i> movement and its characteristics .....	361
VI. CURRENT PRACTICES IN REALM OF WESTERN CALLIGRAPHY .....	
6.1. "Word as an image" concept of the modern period related to contemporary Western calligraphy .....	380

6.2. The Western abstract painting related to contemporary Western calligraphy .....	390
6.3. The relation between postmodern condition with contemporary Western calligraphy .....	403
6.4. Asemic writing related to contemporary Western calligraphy .....	408
6.5. Niels "Shoe" Meulman .....	415
6.6. Pokras Lampas .....	444
6.7. Said Dokins .....	455
6.8. Denis Brown .....	466
6.9. Denise Lach .....	501
6.10. Loredana Zega .....	508
6.11. Thomas Ingmire .....	514
6.12. Viktor Kams .....	524
6.13. Characteristics of contemporary Western calligraphy .....	533
 VII. PERSONAL CALLIGRAPHY PRACTICES .....	 541
7.1. Earlier proximity to Western calligraphy .....	547
7.2. Choosing the materials for the personal practices .....	564
7.3. Calligraphic works created focused on the strokes and texture .....	579
7.3.1. The series of <i>Pen Testing</i> .....	582
7.3.2. The series of <i>Moments and Periods</i> .....	615
7.3.3. The series of <i>Strikes vs. Strokes</i> .....	629
 CONCLUSION .....	 648
 BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	 662
 FIGURES LIST .....	 672
 APPENDIXS	
Appendix A .....	676
Appendix B .....	681





## I. INTRODUCCIÓN

### 1.1. Definición del objeto de estudio

El sistema de escritura occidental se ha desarrollado y valorado por su funcionalidad. Se considera uno de los sistemas de escritura más avanzados del mundo y la caligrafía, con una tradición de más de dos mil años —que, al parecer, comenzó con las mayúsculas cuadradas romanas del siglo I hasta nuestros días— ha evolucionado bajo esa perspectiva. De hecho, la caligrafía se ha entendido y empleado como una entidad funcional para escribir, conservar, copiar y difundir el texto que se pretende leer.

Ese concepto de caligrafía, basado en la tradición, ha ido evolucionando en función de las posibilidades técnicas y de las diversas necesidades de cada época. La Edad Media se considera una de las etapas históricas en la que la caligrafía tuvo su apogeo. Por eso resulta crucial para la tradición caligráfica.

Los antiguos calígrafos/escribas eran una especie de artesanos que se dedicaban a la tarea de realizar textos legibles, principalmente manuscritos. Por eso, desde diferentes perspectivas, la tradición caligráfica occidental se entendió como un oficio alejado del mundo del arte.

Sin embargo, frente a esa idea, la caligrafía occidental contemporánea representa un cambio significativo, tanto técnica como conceptualmente. En estos momentos es un campo abierto en el que existen diferentes formas de entender las prácticas caligráficas.

El calígrafo occidental contemporáneo prefiere, mayoritariamente, eliminar un texto, una palabra, una letra o cualquier tipo de elemento escrito legible, incluso reconocible, para dar lugar a una imagen cercana a la abstracción, que puede definirse principalmente como caligrafía expresiva, experimental o abstracta. En lugar de centrarse en el texto legible con una perspectiva restringida por la tradición en la que el escriba es un servidor del texto, en esta otra manera de entender la caligrafía, el tema principal se convierte en un gesto y los movimientos de la mano —los denominados gestos similares a la escritura— se reivindican como caligrafía.

Lo que se encuentra principalmente tras dichas prácticas es el concepto de espontaneidad, junto con la inclinación pluralista y ecléctica que depende únicamente de los calígrafos y su percepción y comprensión de la escritura y de la caligrafía. Aquí, estas se utilizan como expresiones intercambiables. La razón es que las definiciones y descripciones específicas que apuntan a varios límites entre la escritura y la caligrafía —así como la pintura— han comenzado a disolverse con los cambios en las actitudes contemporáneas occidentales.

Es decir, técnicamente puede afirmarse que la actitud común es el empleo de una amplia gama de materiales que básicamente tienen la capacidad de dejar una huella, una mancha, una salpicadura, un trazo, una línea y el trazo general que una herramienta puede dejar en la superficie. Además, conceptualmente, el interés se ha centrado en generar alternativas que vayan más allá de la tradición. Por esta razón, la caligrafía occidental está lejos de ser una forma comprensible y definible de acuerdo con los parámetros caligráficos tradicionales conocidos, que están relacionados con el texto escrito legible, y la escritura de las letras del texto bien construidas y no sometidas a interpretación.

Tanto los profesionales como los calígrafos jóvenes interactúan con otras disciplinas y con otras tradiciones caligráficas para dar lugar a obras que son el resultado de una fusión entre los aspectos conceptuales y técnicos.

Este enfoque reciente invita a las interacciones. La complejidad y la ambigüedad son los términos más utilizados para hacer referencia a las prácticas actuales o a las intenciones de los calígrafos. Se puede decir, por tanto, que la caligrafía occidental está floreciendo a través de la interpretación que hacen de ella los calígrafos, que manifiestan una perspectiva diferente a la de la tradición pero, también, de algún modo y de diferentes maneras, derivada de ella.

Si bien algunas de las perspectivas actuales tienen raíces en la tradición occidental, varios calígrafos se inspiran en otras disciplinas, como la música, la danza o la poesía; algunos reflejan, de manera significativa, otras tradiciones caligráficas como son las de Extremo Oriente y Oriente Medio.

Además, dado que la apariencia visual de las obras se ha vuelto muy abstracta, los límites entre la caligrafía y la pintura se han hecho muy borrosos. Eso significa que las características y los criterios de la caligrafía occidental también han cambiado.

En resumen, cabe señalar que, a lo largo de la historia, mientras que la tradición caligráfica occidental ha evolucionado en torno a las posibilidades técnicas y a las necesidades funcionales, en las últimas décadas se han producido cambios muy significativos en la forma de entenderla y de ejecutarla.

Hoy en día, cada vez más personas entienden la caligrafía como forma de expresión abierta a la interpretación individual, de modo que están surgiendo estilos personales que derivan de diferentes motivaciones.

Sin embargo, a pesar de estos nuevos intereses, no existen estudios exhaustivos sobre el tema que ofrezcan diferentes perspectivas. Esto supone un vacío bibliográfico importante. Por eso, la investigación que aquí se presenta abre un camino a la hora de discutir y estudiar dicho tema.

El objeto de estudio de esta investigación es, por consiguiente, la caligrafía occidental contemporánea, entendida como expresión visual y como práctica que está expandiendo sus límites y las fronteras de la escritura —restringida por la necesidad de leerla semánticamente—. De este modo, podemos decir que la investigación se ha centrado en la caligrafía occidental contemporánea y sus prácticas y, también, en las posibles influencias que en ella ejercen las tradiciones caligráficas de Extremo Oriente y de Oriente Medio.

Basada en una interacción entre la teoría y la práctica, esta investigación ha tenido como fin conocer las características, dinámicas y las tendencias contemporáneas caligráficas occidentales.

La popularidad alcanzada en los últimos años por el *lettering*, por ejemplo, y la digitalización de caligrafías, ha dado lugar a cierta confusión a la hora de hablar de caligrafía pues, en ocasiones, se emplea el término para designar otras manifestaciones que no son caligráficas en sentido estricto. Además de la diversidad, —y debido a la tendencia contemporánea ecléctica y pluralista a la hora de crear obras caligráficas—, cuando, desde una perspectiva integral, se examina el significado literal del término caligrafía, puede apreciarse cómo, desde el primer momento, su percepción y uso apuntan a una falta de profundidad. Por eso, resulta fundamental definir a qué se refiere la palabra caligrafía pero, también, lo es delimitar lo que no es. En ese sentido, es necesario analizar diversas características mediante el examen de otras tradiciones caligráficas y, más concretamente, las de Extremo Oriente y las de Oriente Medio —a las que ya nos hemos referido anteriormente—, que permiten entender cuál es la interacción de la caligrafía occidental contemporánea con las de otras culturas, desde hace mucho tiempo.

Se ha realizado una aproximación general a la situación actual de la caligrafía occidental contemporánea y se han analizado los enfoques teóricos y críticos de las definiciones, los antecedentes históricos y la evolución de las percepciones y prácticas occidentales de Extremo Oriente y de Oriente Medio. Asimismo, se ha indagado sobre los calígrafos contemporáneos y sus obras para determinar cuáles son sus rasgos característicos. La intención ha sido proporcionar un conocimiento significativo y una visión desde múltiples perspectivas, necesarias para ubicar la caligrafía occidental contemporánea, con sus diversas dinámicas.

Es necesario reconocer que los antecedentes que se han extraído de las fuentes examinadas han tenido un papel importante en la apreciación de la caligrafía del pasado, presente y, posiblemente, del futuro. Al indagar sobre las prácticas de la caligrafía occidental, mi comprensión personal sobre esta se ha enmarcado en el punto de vista que he desarrollado en esta investigación. Puedo afirmar que es

un viaje que comenzó con varios desencadenantes e inspiraciones que se encuentran, principalmente, en las interpretaciones de la caligrafía occidental contemporánea. Al profundizar en la investigación teórica y práctica, mi percepción sobre el tema ha cambiado y ha transformado mi propia obra caligráfica, en sentido formal y conceptual. Esto me ha llevado a introducir valores estéticos y conceptuales en mis prácticas, más allá de la dimensión visual.

## 1.2. Justificación

Mi interés por la caligrafía comenzó con la tipografía, que tiene su base en mi interés por la literatura, así como también por las matemáticas. Desde 1999 hasta 2004 estudié estadística y trabajé exclusivamente con números y cálculos; además, para llegar a estos cálculos, trabajé con ecuaciones de formulaciones matemáticas sobre símbolos determinados con condiciones previas como una forma de lenguaje simbólico diferente, así como en la interpretación de investigaciones mediante el cálculo de estas ecuaciones.

Aunque estos dos temas, tipografía y estadística, pueden sonar muy diferentes, como diseñadora gráfica que busca la interpretación del problema en lugar de encontrar la solución, tenía muchas ganas de profundizar en los temas para correlacionar y encontrar los puentes o proximidades entre varias disciplinas.

Con mi segunda licenciatura —entre 2005-2009— cursada en el Departamento de Diseño Gráfico de la Facultad de Bellas Artes de la Universidad de Hacettepe de Turquía, mis intereses se trasladaron a la escritura alfabética, la rotulación, la tipografía del alfabeto latino —adoptado en mi país el primero de noviembre de 1928— como un sistema que consiste en signos abstractos o en formas de comunicación precondicionadas/preestablecidas. Es necesario subrayar aquí que, contrariamente a lo que muchas personas suponen, el sistema educativo turco no tiene relación con sistema de escritura árabe. La identidad y la cultura turcas y, por ende, el idioma, son independiente del Islam, de la cultura y del idioma árabes. Esta es la principal razón por la que me interesa la caligrafía latina y, en esta investigación, la caligrafía occidental.

Durante mis estudios en el Departamento de Diseño Gráfico de la Universidad, me llamaron la atención las prácticas de diseño gráfico posmoderno, que conocí a partir de la lectura de artículos y libros escritos por varios críticos, entre los que se puede mencionar a Rick Poyner. Tuve contacto, también, con el trabajo de diseñadores como, por ejemplo, Neville Brody, David Carson y Stefan Sagmeister, que me proporcionaron buenos ejemplos de tipografía y *lettering* occidentales.

Por lo tanto, la primera motivación de esta investigación surgió de mis estudios anteriores, así como de las exploraciones realizadas para mi proyecto final de máster titulado *The Changing Face of Typography; Posttypography and Designing Posttypographic Typeface*<sup>1</sup>, que se centró principalmente en la ruptura de las normas y de las percepciones en el ámbito de la tipografía.

<sup>1</sup>Defendida en julio de 2012 en la Universidad Hacettepe, Ankara, Turquía.



Durante la investigación para mi proyecto final de máster y para poder comprender las prácticas tipográficas del siglo XXI, fue indispensable comprender el espíritu de la época, primero a través de un acercamiento al Movimiento Moderno, que puso énfasis en las funciones del texto — legibilidad— y en el modo en que se forma su visibilidad y, después, en cómo se da en la caligrafía occidental tradicional y en cómo se percibe la escritura en Occidente.

Me interesó, especialmente, cómo la tipografía puede convertirse en un modo de experimentar con las formas de las letras y con la composición del texto, mediante la ruptura de normas, que realizaban algunos diseñadores. Me llamó la atención la evolución histórica de un sistema de escritura fonético que se considera uno de los más avanzados entre los que existen al servicio de la humanidad por su alta funcionalidad. Fue muy importante, también, comprender las distintas percepciones que tienen otras culturas sobre la escritura. Tratar de entender cómo funcionan sus sistemas pero, también, intentar profundizar en la comprensión conceptual que existe tras ellos, me proporcionó una perspectiva sobre cómo ubicar la escritura occidental, así como la tipografía/caligrafía.

En aquel momento, observar las prácticas tipográficas contemporáneas y desarrollar y explorar alternativas que sirvieran como medios de autoexpresión, se convirtió en uno de los objetivos principales para estructurar el proyecto artístico vinculado a mi proyecto final de máster. Además de mi posicionamiento personal sobre el tema, los proyectos realizados durante mis estudios de diseño gráfico, me condujeron a experimentar con el diseño digital y con las técnicas de dibujo manual en el ámbito de la tipografía occidental.

Durante aquella investigación, me di cuenta de que la clave para comprender la tipografía es entender la caligrafía o, al menos, ser consciente de varias cuestiones importantes, tales como la evolución de las formas de los estilos antiguos, en qué condiciones surgieron y se transformaron, dependiendo de las necesidades de la época, cuáles fueron las condiciones técnicas, prestando especial atención a la Edad Media Europea. Además, Mediavilla (1996: 268) señala que el conocimiento de la caligrafía no es solo crítico para la tipografía sino que es significativo para otras áreas de las artes gráficas tales como «el diseño, la autoedición, la gráfica por ordenador», por lo que subraya que la enseñanza de la caligrafía tiene un papel crucial en la educación tipográfica.

En este sentido, la percepción de la escritura —caligrafía y tipografía— se ha vinculado a la funcionalidad y al servicio de las necesidades del texto, escrito o impreso. Por ello, el punto de partida es que la forma se ha creado a partir de la función y que tiene sus raíces en los sistemas de escritura fonética, considerados, como ya he comentado anteriormente, como el sistema de escritura más avanzado del mundo.

Existen numerosos ejemplos que demuestran que los diseñadores respetan y reinterpretan los estilos antiguos. Este es el caso de las mayúsculas cuadradas romanas, la tipografía digital Trajan (1989) de Adobe, —una reinterpretación de las letras de la columna trajana—

o de las diversas tipografías digitales creadas por diseñadores como Jonathan Barnbrook —al que se debe la tipografía Bastard, que muestra una clara adaptación de los estilos *textualis* y *fraktur*, mayoritariamente, propios de la escritura gótica—. Estos son solo algunos casos que apuntan una relación con los estilos de escritura del pasado, —como ya he comentado—, el modo en que se vieron afectados por las herramientas y las técnicas de cada época y su significado para la caligrafía tradicional u occidental. Por lo tanto, se puede afirmar que el conocimiento de la caligrafía ha sido un elemento esencial para que la tipografía occidental sea significativa.

Me he referido hasta aquí a los que fueron los primeros impulsos para mi investigación, en un recorrido en el que cambió mi inclinación hacia la tipografía por el interés por la caligrafía, nacido de una evolución de mi trayectoria de doce años como diseñadora.

Por un lado, los ejemplos tradicionales de caligrafía y, por otro, las diferentes prácticas caligráficas contemporáneas occidentales revelan la significativa diferencia conceptual y visual que existe entre ellas. Desde que investigué sobre las tendencias tipográficas actuales durante mi máster, me encontré constantemente con las prácticas contemporáneas de la denominada caligrafía y, principalmente, con la abstracción de las letras, palabras o textos. Entonces me di cuenta de que, al igual que en el caso de la tipografía contemporánea, la caligrafía tiene su propia área autónoma que se ha visto afectada por diferentes dinámicas y factores, no solo relacionados con el presente sino, también, por las referencias que provienen de la tradición, así como de otras tradiciones caligráficas, principalmente de Extremo Oriente y de Oriente Medio.

Se puede afirmar que este brusco despegue de las prácticas contemporáneas, respecto a la tradición, crea un área gris en el sentido de que provoca conflicto entre los que practican la caligrafía apegados a una historia basada en necesidades funcionales tales como copiar el texto del periodo correspondiente —la Edad Media, una época de apogeo para la cultura de la caligrafía—. Las prácticas actuales se plantean como un alejamiento total, incluso como un rechazo de la tradición, a través de la eliminación del texto, de las palabras, letras o signos escritos reconocibles. Eso lleva a comparar las prácticas caligráficas contemporáneas y la pintura abstracta occidental, una comparación inapropiada si solo nos quedamos en el parecido visual, ya que, precisamente, es ese parecido visual el que las separa. Por eso, para identificar las diferencias, es necesario hacer una investigación en la caligrafía contemporánea, un tema sobre el que existe un vacío investigador importante.

Es evidente que la noción de escribir es distinta en la caligrafía occidental si la comparamos con las tendencias actuales en las que esta no se parece ni visual ni funcionalmente a las formas tradicionales, pero aun así, el calígrafo la define y la llama caligrafía.

Revisando las referencias y la bibliografía significativa en el ámbito de la caligrafía contemporánea (tal y como se indica en el apartado "1.5. Marco teórico y referencial"), las mencionadas áreas grises

existen debido a la falta de un estudio integral desde una perspectiva amplia para ubicar y enmarcar la caligrafía contemporánea. Es un área abierta que puede estar expuesta a diferentes definiciones, interpretaciones, comparaciones, delimitaciones y desvíos por parte, tanto de profesionales, como de noveles. Por esta razón, la caligrafía occidental contemporánea, como una forma autónoma de arte — que se ha convertido en un campo de amplio espectro— necesita un examen exhaustivo y una reevaluación de sus dinámicas, parámetros e influencias para evitar conflictos y malas interpretaciones sobre las tendencias actuales. La investigación que aquí se presenta se ha concebido como un examen amplio que contempla diferentes perspectivas. Su fin es proporcionar un análisis en profundidad sobre las posturas contemporáneas respecto a la caligrafía occidental, a partir de una exploración más rigurosa que la que habitualmente se encuentra en las fuentes existentes hasta el momento.

Dado que la caligrafía atrae a los artistas contemporáneos, su investigación es necesaria para identificar las interacciones entre esta y otras disciplinas y para diferenciarla. Esto puede proporcionar una delimitación esencial de sus prácticas, información crucial sobre fuentes de inspiración, así como una nueva ventana que permita valorarla desde una perspectiva diferente, situándola en un marco más adecuado para sus características. Desde mi punto de vista, esta investigación puede ser valiosa en la medida en que aporta un enfoque que contribuirá a conocer mejor el campo y que puede hacer que los calígrafos tomen conciencia de que están ante una forma autónoma de arte.

### **1.3. Preguntas, Hipótesis y Objetivos de Investigación**

#### **1.3.1. Preguntas de Investigación**

A la luz de la definición y justificación del objeto de estudio, se puede afirmar que es necesario plantear diversas cuestiones. Estas han dado lugar a las siguientes preguntas de investigación:

\*¿Cómo se puede definir o describir la caligrafía occidental contemporánea?

\*¿Cuáles son los criterios para definir lo que representa la caligrafía hoy en día?

\*Cuando la caligrafía explora y presenta la palabra como imagen, con un parecido visual con la pintura abstracta, ¿podemos seguir llamándola caligrafía?

\*Es posible evaluar la caligrafía occidental contemporánea con los parámetros occidentales estándar que son, básicamente, la funcionalidad y la necesidad de un texto legible?

\*¿Qué sucede con el papel del antiguo escriba y con el del calígrafo actual?  
¿Existen diferencias y transformaciones importantes que se puedan rastrear a través de las prácticas de los calígrafos contemporáneos?

\*Dentro del mundo del arte, ¿dónde se puede ubicar la caligrafía occidental contemporánea?

\*¿Qué tipo de influencias ha recibido y recibe la caligrafía occidental contemporánea? ¿Se pueden rastrear y separar conceptual y formalmente estas influencias?

\*¿Supone la caligrafía occidental contemporánea un alejamiento total de la tradición caligráfica occidental o todavía se toman referencias de la tradición? En otras palabras, ¿existe una relación de continuidad con el pasado? Si es así, ¿cuáles son esas influencias y de qué manera las refleja en su obra el calígrafo contemporáneo?

\*En la caligrafía occidental contemporánea, ¿hay alguna influencia técnica y conceptual de las culturas caligráficas de Extremo Oriente y de Oriente Medio? ¿Existe alguna interacción con ellas?

### **1.3.2. Hipótesis de Investigación**

Las preguntas de investigación, que acabo de mencionar, me han llevado a proponer las siguientes hipótesis:

\*Los límites tradicionales entre la caligrafía y ciertas manifestaciones artísticas se han disuelto gracias a las prácticas del calígrafo actual que han introducido la expresión como elemento importante. Esto supone para la caligrafía contemporánea una liberación respecto a las constricciones impuestas por los aspectos técnicos y conceptuales de la tradición.

\*La caligrafía contemporánea, incluso cuando se manifiesta a través de formas que se acercan considerablemente a la pintura abstracta, sigue tomando prestadas referencias e inspiraciones que proceden tanto de su tradición como de las de Extremo Oriente y Oriente Medio así como de otras disciplinas artísticas.

\*La caligrafía contemporánea se concibe como una disciplina autónoma que se puede considerar como un área abierta a la interpretación, dependiendo del calígrafo y en la que se incluye al lector/espectador. Esto puede exigirles distintos niveles de lectura a través de la imagen de la palabra. Representa una fusión ecléctica de múltiples capas de significados a través del concepto de obra abierta.

\*La caligrafía contemporánea se ha convertido en un arte que destaca por su aspecto performático, en el que el calígrafo se involucra personalmente en el proceso como figura activa que refleja sus sentimientos y emociones a través del gesto de su mano.

\*Como quiera que no existen criterios concretos, como sucedía en la caligrafía tradicional, la caligrafía contemporánea tiene los suyos propios tales como la habilidad de la mano, que debe ser capaz de conseguir la calidad del gesto.

### 1.3.3. Objetivos de Investigación

#### Objetivo General de Investigación:

\*Conocer las prácticas contemporáneas de la caligrafía occidental, sus tendencias y manifestaciones, con el fin de trazar un panorama de su situación anterior y así cubrir el vacío existente en la bibliografía actual.

#### Objetivos Específicos de Investigación:

\*Analizar la caligrafía occidental contemporánea, en sus aspectos técnicos y conceptuales, para determinar las dinámicas y características que permitan enmarcarla/definirla o describirla.

\*Determinar las influencias que ha recibido la perspectiva caligráfica contemporánea occidental de la caligrafía tradicional.

\*Conocer si hay referencias del pasado que los calígrafos contemporáneos adoptan o adaptan y si estas representan una completa desviación del pasado.

\*Realizar un acercamiento a las tradiciones caligráficas de Extremo Oriente y de Oriente Medio para precisar sus efectos y sus influencias en el enfoque contemporáneo de la caligrafía occidental.

\*Comprender las tradiciones caligráficas de las culturas de Oriente para entender las similitudes entre las distintas corrientes representadas por los calígrafos occidentales contemporáneos, así como las ideas subyacentes a sus prácticas, relacionadas con estas tradiciones.

\*Reflexionar sobre cómo las prácticas caligráficas contemporáneas han influido en mi trabajo como artista.

### 1.4. Metodología

Esta investigación se divide en dos partes: la primera es un recorrido por los aspectos técnicos y teóricos, así como históricos de la caligrafía occidental, de Extremo Oriente y de Oriente Medio y la segunda se centra en mis aportaciones como calígrafa. Es, por tanto, una investigación teórico-práctica en la que he recurrido a diferentes métodos que describiré brevemente a continuación.

Para la primera parte se ha llevado a cabo una investigación documental, a través de la localización, consulta y estudio en profundidad de fuentes secundarias, fundamentalmente libros y artículos sobre el objeto de estudio.

Por lo que se refiere a la segunda parte, presenta una reflexión sobre mi propia obra, en la que se refleja la influencia de la investigación documental que me ha proporcionado un conocimiento en profundidad de la caligrafía occidental, así como la de otras culturas. Ahora bien, desde una perspectiva metodológica ha sido esencial el hecho de que, durante el tiempo de investigación, me he formado en la práctica mediante la realización de diferentes cursos y talleres de diferente duración, a los que he asistido en España, Francia y Turquía (véase

Anexo B). A continuación, procederé a detallarlos:

- \*Copperplate con Amanda Adams, 04.09.2014, Barcelona.
- \*Art Nouveau Capitals con Keith Adams, 05.09.2014, Barcelona.
- \*Mayúsculas: Letras Capitales con Keith Adams, Visiones Ilustración y Caligrafía, 06.09-08.12.2014, Barcelona.
- \*Caligrafía Gótica Ornamentada con Keith Adams, Visiones Ilustración y Caligrafía, 16.02-04.05.2015, Barcelona.
- \*Caligrafía Expresiva con Oriol Miró Genovart, Visiones Ilustración y Caligrafía, 18.03-20.05.2015, Barcelona.
- \*Caligrafía con Góticas Potentes con Oriol Miró Genovart, Domestika.
- \*Caligrafía Cursiva, Histórica y Moderna con Keith Adams, 03-10.08.2015, Saint-Antoine L'Abbaye, Isere, France.
- \*Caligrafía para un Exlibris con Ricardo Rousselot Schmidt, Domestika.
- \*Escritura Insular y Decoración Celta con Amanda Adams, 10-17.08.2015, Saint-Antoine L'Abbaye, Isere, France,
- \*Caligrafía Expressiva amb Rodolfo Fernández Álvarez, 11-12.11.2016, Col·legi Oficial de Disseny Gràfic de Catalunya, Barcelona.
- \*Lettering y Rotulación a Pincel por Deletrista, Adrián Pérez, 28-29.01.2017, Martillo Fine Arts Workshop, Barcelona.
- \*Lettering Sobre Piedra con Stephen Watts, 11-12.02.2017, Visiones Ilustración y Caligrafía, Barcelona.
- \*Introducción a la Caligrafía China con Jenny Chih-Chieh, 02.03.2017, Espai Egg, Barcelona.
- \*Taller de Rotulación con Jakob Engberg, 03-04.03.2017, Visiones Ilustración y Caligrafía, Barcelona.
- \*Taller de pincelada con Luca Barcelona, 30-31.01.2020, Kaligrafist 2020, Istanbul.
- \*Caligrafía y Rock'n'Roll con Iván Castro, Domestika.
- \*Taller de Caligrafía Blackletter con Luca Barcellona, 01-02.02.2020 Kaligrafist 2020, Istanbul.

Desde el punto de vista metodológico, estas prácticas me han proporcionado un amplio conocimiento técnico sobre la práctica de la caligrafía occidental, tanto tradicional como contemporánea, fundamentales para el desarrollo de mi propia obra.

## 1.5. Marco teórico y referencial

Como ya he comentado anteriormente, la caligrafía contemporánea occidental es un ámbito que demanda investigación. Sin embargo, en las últimas décadas ha crecido la cantidad de publicaciones dedicadas a ella debido, posiblemente, al creciente interés que suscita, tanto entre los profesionales como entre los *amateurs*.

Por eso, ahora, el número de obras sobre los sistemas de escritura occidentales, sus raíces y desarrollo, que incluyen o se centran únicamente en la caligrafía, es razonablemente grande. Mientras que algunas ofrecen antecedentes más o menos detallados sobre la historia y el desarrollo de las formas de las letras, otras presentan escrituras antiguas a modo de manuales para aprender a trazarlas.

A continuación analizaré y comentaré brevemente aquellos trabajos que han sido más relevantes para mi investigación.

En *The Story of Writing*, Jackson (1981) examina en detalle la evolución de la escritura y su desarrollo como sistema, incluyendo las antiguas prácticas occidentales, desde la Edad Media hasta la década de 1980. De este libro cabe destacar el apartado «Writing as Art», centrado en el siglo XIX, cuando según Jackson, comienzan a utilizarse las palabras caligrafía y calígrafo. Probablemente, esto pone de relieve la división entre los antiguos sistemas de escritura empleados con un fin práctico y las prácticas caligráficas con enfoques artísticos. Ahora bien, no se encuentra ninguna explicación detallada sobre la percepción occidental de la escritura o de la caligrafía.

Sin embargo, estamos ante una cuestión importante porque, además de conocer la evolución histórica de la escritura, es necesario tener en cuenta de qué manera la percepción que se tiene en Occidente sobre ella, afecta a la formación de la caligrafía. Desde mi punto de vista, para analizar la caligrafía occidental es, también, indispensable comprender otras tradiciones que han interactuado con ella, como es el caso de las que proceden de Extremo Oriente (caligrafía china y japonesa) y de Oriente Medio (caligrafía con escritura árabe y caligrafía islámica). Esta es, quizá, la principal carencia de la investigación de Jackson, ya que se sitúa la caligrafía occidental sin delimitar el alcance y la perspectiva en términos de culturas de la escritura. El autor tampoco define los puntos significativos que habría que subrayar en la bibliografía sobre caligrafía occidental. La obra es fruto de una mirada occidental sobre la escritura que la subordina a las necesidades funcionales y que responde a una concepción tradicional y limitada de la caligrafía.

Otras aportaciones a destacar son las de Drogin. Sus dos libros sobre caligrafía, titulados *Medieval Calligraphy. Its History and Techniques* (1980) y *Calligraphy of the Middle Ages and How to Do It* (1982) se enfocan principalmente en la caligrafía y la evolución histórica de la escritura en Occidente y, como puede observarse, prácticamente coinciden en fechas de publicación con la obra de Jackson (1981), mencionada anteriormente.



Drogin proporciona información detallada sobre las letras medievales y la evolución de la escritura hasta, principalmente, el período en que apareció y se difundió la imprenta. Incluye referencias al entorno y condiciones de trabajo de los escribas que sirven para entender la atmósfera general en que, en Occidente, estaban inmersos durante esa época. Esta parte ofrece elementos para establecer las similitudes y diferencias entre el escriba tradicional y el calígrafo contemporáneo quien, también, se inspira en los antiguos antecedentes y refleja su influencia en sus prácticas.

Los dos libros de Drogin sirven, asimismo, como manuales pues contienen información práctica sobre técnicas, —acompañadas de referencias visuales— e instrucciones sobre estilos que pueden seleccionar los posibles calígrafos, entre otros: Mayúsculas Cuadradas Romanas, Uncial, Minúsculas Carolingias, Escritura Gótica, Cursiva y Copperplate. Se anima al lector a practicar, —copiando el modelo de cada letra y siguiendo las instrucciones de Drogin—, para alcanzar habilidades, aprendiendo los trazos correctos de la pluma, con el ángulo adecuado y requerido para construir correctamente la estructura de cada letra.

Aunque las aportaciones de Drogin resultan útiles, hay que señalar que en sus libros no se refiere a la escritura ni proporciona un examen crítico de la percepción occidental en torno a ella. Solo pretende enmarcar la tradición caligráfica occidental. Desde mi punto de vista esto supone una carencia porque si no se reflexiona sobre el concepto occidental de escritura, la aproximación a la caligrafía se queda en un mero intento superficial de enmarcarla. Como ya se ha comentado, la caligrafía occidental no puede describirse únicamente desde la perspectiva occidental. Es necesario examinar qué características de otras caligrafías han podido afectar a su ejecución visual y a los conceptos que la constituyen. Por ello, se hace necesaria una investigación en profundidad sobre estos temas.

Un libro relativamente más reciente que los anteriores es *More Than Fine Writing: The Life and Calligraphy of Irene Wellington*, publicado por Child, Collins, Hechle y Jackson (1987). Los autores se refieren brevemente al renacimiento caligráfico del siglo XIX y abordan el trabajo de la calígrafa Irene Wellington (1904-1984). Según Child et al. (1987), la caligrafía moderna surge cuando algunos calígrafos y diseñadores comenzaron a revisar y practicar la escritura antigua. Sin embargo, destacan que la característica principal de la caligrafía occidental es el apego a la tradición: se trata de transmitir el mensaje a través del significado del texto, algo que mantienen los calígrafos modernos. Child et al. (1987) afirman que la escritura expresiva está presente en las obras de Wellington a través de composiciones caligráficas construidas con claridad y bien organizadas.

Lo que puede deducirse al examinar este libro es que, en los años ochenta, todavía se entendían las formas expresivas de la caligrafía como letras bien construidas y estrechamente conectadas con la literatura y con el significado occidental del texto. Por eso, se describen con sus formas ideales y la expresividad se vincula a la interpretación

de la escritura antigua que hace el calígrafo, una interpretación que no comprende los enfoques actuales de la caligrafía en los que se centra esta investigación doctoral. Los autores no aportan, por tanto, una valoración nueva, pero, al no hacerlo, ponen de relieve que es necesario profundizar en la caligrafía moderna y contemporánea para poder situar adecuadamente las prácticas actuales.

En 1988, vio la luz *Calligraphy Today: Twentieth Century Tradition and Practice*, que incluía textos de Child en el que se refirió a las letras y la caligrafía trazadas a mano, así como a la historia de las diversas escrituras medievales, incluyendo las prácticas caligráficas en Gran Bretaña, Europa y EE.UU. Aunque el trasfondo histórico está presente en el libro, no se analiza en detalle la transición de la tradición a la contemporaneidad. Esto me llevó a considerar que era necesario profundizar en la percepción de la caligrafía y a centrarme en la modernidad y la posmodernidad, como etapas que han podido suponer cambios en esa percepción.

Una idea sobre esa transición que, también se encuentra en otras fuentes, es que la tecnología de impresión liberó al escriba de su carga y dio lugar a un espacio para que este pudiera apreciar la caligrafía como una forma de arte. En ese sentido, el desarrollo tecnológico se percibe como la luz que alumbró la mente del escriba. Cabe, entonces, plantearse si la libertad del escriba occidental se debe a las técnicas de impresión o a las interacciones entre diferentes perspectivas caligráficas. Esto me ha llevado a reflexionar sobre si las restricciones, a la hora de valorar el potencial de interpretación de la caligrafía occidental, proceden de la caligrafía en sí misma o de la noción occidental sobre la funcionalidad de la escritura.

Respecto al papel de los avances tecnológicos, dado que, en Extremo Oriente, desde los orígenes de la caligrafía, esta se ha contemplado como arte, no pueden considerarse como elementos determinantes de la libertad de las mentes caligráficas. Sin embargo, la situación en Occidente es completamente diferente y la cuestión tecnológica se convierte en importante para la investigación a la hora de buscar el significado de la escritura y de la caligrafía en sus manifestaciones más antiguas y en las actuales.

Por otra parte, el libro de Child (1988), no examina la interacción entre las diversas culturas caligráficas a nivel artístico ni cuándo ni cómo se han podido influir mutuamente.

Dentro de esta obra me gustaría destacar el apartado titulado «Lettering as an Art», escrito por el calígrafo, diseñador editorial, educador y paleógrafo Villu Toots. Este autor subraya que diseñar letras con impacto estético significa ir más allá del valor comunicativo de la letra. Toots menciona que «la caligrafía abstracta contemporánea/caligrafía experimental/caligrafía sin palabras» (1988: 94) se inspira en la caligrafía oriental con pincel y que la intención de los artistas contemporáneos es la de «crear emociones que activen la vida interior» (1988: 94, 92).

Toots identifica tendencias contemporáneas de la caligrafía de Extremo Oriente, aunque no presenta información detallada sobre su tradición ni sobre la percepción que de esta se tiene en Occidente ni, tampoco, destaca las prácticas occidentales de *lettering* y de tipografía, —empleada como imagen—, modernas y posmodernas.

Es más, Toots (1988) subraya que algunos calígrafos occidentales buscan incorporar la perspectiva oriental pero no logran asimilarla. La razón, en su opinión, reside en que los alfabetos latinos son «demasiado simples para obtener formas interesantes y pintorescas con la ayuda de líneas juguetonas» (1988: 93). Es una crítica a tener en cuenta que, sin embargo, no se justifica ni apoya en información detallada. Esa carencia hace que no se entienda bien y que pueda causar algún malentendido o conflicto, pero, al menos, puede ser un punto de partida para abordar la caligrafía como tema, de una manera integral. En cualquier caso, se puede disfrutar de una obra caligráfica, —sin necesidad de leer el texto escrito (si lo hay)— por sus valores plásticos. El texto ilegible puede percibirse como un trabajo caligráfico abstracto, que se manifiesta a través de la calidad de la línea o del trazo. De ese modo, el espectador puede entender, apreciar e incluso interpretar la obra, ya que es un espacio abierto a través de los gestos de su autor. Una perspectiva más crítica y un examen de las tendencias seguidas por las obras de la mayoría de los artistas contemporáneos reflejan que existe una interpretación personal que puede ayudar a situar el marco general de la caligrafía occidental contemporánea. Por esta razón, este tema también se ha incluido en la parte teórica de la investigación realizada, ya que podía dar lugar a una discusión y a una valoración más adecuada.

El libro del diseñador francés Claude Mediavilla, *Calligraphy: From Calligraphy to Abstract Painting* (1996) es uno de los más respetados, recomendados y considerados como una referencia, no solo porque proporciona información teórica completa sino, también, porque aborda las tendencias contemporáneas con valoraciones significativas. Se puede afirmar que este autor es uno de los primeros que han observado críticamente los nuevos planteamientos caligráficos occidentales. Centrándose en las prácticas y la filosofía de esos planteamientos, Mediavilla hace un recorrido por la historia de la escritura para llegar a la situación actual, en la que la caligrafía se considera en Occidente una forma de arte gracias a unos aspectos gestuales que, progresivamente, se han ido volviendo dominantes mientras se separaban del significado literal de las palabras. La obra del autor francés aporta un análisis estético pero, también, es una guía práctica en la que se aborda el valor fonético de la letra en una búsqueda por reinventar la potencia expresiva del signo.

Parece que uno de los objetivos de este libro fue organizar y presentar diferentes temas con la finalidad de cubrir el vacío existente en la consideración y percepciones sobre la caligrafía. Mediavilla comenta que la caligrafía es una disciplina sobre la que existen prejuicios y malentendidos. Desde su punto de vista, es difícil de definir. Por ello, su punto de partida es la escritura, a la que atribuye características más semánticas que gráficas: «la escritura adquiere sentido a través de la legibilidad y el proceso de lectura alfabética. Por otro lado, la

caligrafía puede adquirir significado mediante el silencio ya que pretende ser expresiva y artística más que estrictamente utilitaria» (1996: 17). Desde su enfoque, es evidente que piensa que la escritura y la caligrafía son dos áreas de estudio distintas, aunque con una estrecha relación entre ellas. En mi opinión, es interesante que Mediavilla no se refiera a los límites del alfabeto latino occidental, como hace Toots. Considera la invención de la escritura como «una condición previa para el desarrollo de la caligrafía» (1996: 75) y comenta que, mientras que la escritura es un vehículo que satisface necesidades a través de sus rasgos funcionales, la caligrafía es una forma expresiva que el artista manifiesta en sus prácticas.

Resulta interesante que Mediavilla parezca ignorar las prácticas de la escritura que se llevan a cabo como una forma de arte más que como estrictamente relacionadas con el lenguaje hablado. En cambio, quiere trazar una línea precisa entre el término escritura y caligrafía, sin tener en cuenta las diferentes perspectivas de otros sistemas de escritura. Una de las principales brechas parece comenzar aquí porque en Extremo Oriente y en Oriente Medio la escritura y la caligrafía, no se separan de una manera tan pronunciada. Esto significa que para comprender el término escritura es indispensable conocer otros sistemas de escritura, cómo se aprecia esta y de qué manera se percibe la caligrafía. Solo en esas circunstancias la valoración puede ser más acertada. Por esta razón, en esta investigación se ha incluido esta cuestión ya que afecta a la comprensión y al empleo de la tradición caligráfica occidental.

Tras establecer la separación entre escritura y caligrafía, Mediavilla (1996) discute la definición literal de esta última que asume como crucial a pesar de que todas las fuentes y los artistas manifiestan consenso al respecto. Por ello, hay que subrayar que esta es una de las aportaciones más significativas del autor.

Caligrafía es una palabra griega que se traduce al español como «el arte de escribir con belleza» o «escribir bellamente». Sin embargo, Mediavilla afirma que se trata de una mala interpretación pues *kallos* puede referirse a la belleza en otro sentido. Describe la belleza artística como «un nivel muy alto que significa dimensiones completamente diferentes de fuerza y realización en las artes plásticas» (1996: 17). Otro punto que subraya es que *graphein*, etimológicamente, puede indicar no solo escritura sino, también, dibujo. El alcance cambia al separar el dibujo de la escritura, entendiendo este como un acto y como un concepto a la vez. De ahí que defina la caligrafía acudiendo al sentido expandido de *graphein* —escribir y dibujar—, no solo con letras sino con signos creados «de manera armoniosa y hábil» (1996: 18).

Pero no solo proporciona una definición, sino que, además, permite cuestionar cómo la traducción puede afectar al entendimiento del concepto y de las características de la caligrafía occidental. Este tema se trata en mi investigación y por eso la definición de caligrafía se incluye aquí para responder a las preguntas planteadas en torno a las prácticas occidentales contemporáneas y como un modo de evitar conflictos conceptuales.

Mediavilla (1996) incluye letras y todo tipo de trazos gestuales libres y considera, incluso, que las marcas pueden denominarse caligrafía, en el momento en que cuentan con determinadas características. Destaca parámetros que, en su opinión, son universales: la armonía, la proporción, el equilibrio formal, el ritmo y el contraste, términos que, desde su punto de vista, deben tener en cuenta los calígrafos. Pero, además, llaman la atención algunas de sus afirmaciones: «... al menos en mi opinión, la caligrafía es esencialmente una actividad espiritual, un medio para adquirir un autoconocimiento basado en valores que excluyen la idea misma de moda» (1996: 13), subrayando, también, que la importancia de la caligrafía radica más en cómo se escribe que en qué se escribe.

Parece evidente que Mediavilla define la caligrafía por los valores y características que tiene en Extremo Oriente: revelar las emociones como una actividad espiritual o, al menos, el autor apunta estos conceptos, aunque sin mencionarlos explícitamente. Esa es, quizá, una de las lagunas del libro. Por esa razón, en esta investigación se ha estimado importante observar y comparar las similitudes entre la caligrafía occidental y oriental. Esto ha ayudado a entender con mayor precisión la perspectiva contemporánea.

Por otra parte, Mediavilla afirma que «la caligrafía está más cerca de la pintura que de la literatura e incluso podría considerarse como la fuente de la pintura» (1996: 17). Esta puede ser una de las principales razones por las que ignora la escritura como forma de arte. En cambio, como ya se ha comentado anteriormente, denomina caligrafía a todo tipo de marcas expresivas, signos, trazos y líneas. Esto genera interrogantes sobre si, efectivamente, la caligrafía se acerca a la pintura más que a la escritura, sobre si esa comparación es apropiada ya que ambas se consideran como disciplinas diferentes. ¿Es necesario renombrar o clasificar la caligrafía a través de la consideración estética de la pintura?

La analogía entre caligrafía y pintura que establece Mediavilla (1996) en la última parte del libro es la de la caligrafía ilustrada sin palabras concretas y ni siquiera letras. Al reconsiderar el *graphein* —escritura y dibujo— y la actitud pictórica de un calígrafo contemporáneo que crea formas abstractas en sus prácticas, señala el vínculo significativo entre ambas disciplinas. Este tema ha dado lugar a varias preguntas y, también, a algunas hipótesis. Es un aspecto destacable que lleva a ampliar la perspectiva a la hora de abordar la actitud contemporánea desde finales del siglo XX y en el siglo XXI, ya que varios calígrafos contemporáneos prefieren identificarse como pintores en vez de calígrafos.

Sin embargo, las aportaciones de Mediavilla no resultan tan satisfactorias cuando se trata de comprender la percepción contemporánea de Extremo Oriente, donde pintura y caligrafía se asumen como artes hermanas, entremezcladas. Si bien las clasificaciones y divisiones son necesarias para entender la caligrafía occidental contemporánea, también resultan controvertidas cuando se realiza una investigación en profundidad sobre este tema. La inclusión de la abstracción como otro

de los aspectos a tener en cuenta, lleva a cuestionarse si la pintura y la caligrafía occidentales pueden valorarse como si fueran prácticas con actitudes similares.

Por otra parte, es necesario tener en cuenta el aspecto visual de los sistemas de escritura de Extremo Oriente, —basados en formas ideográficas y en los que cada carácter tiene un significado literal—, pues da lugar a diferencias entre los modos de entender la abstracción en relación con la concepción occidental de esta. Esto puede percibirse si observamos la escritura de Oriente Medio y las características gráficas y fonéticas de su alfabeto. Como ya se ha indicado anteriormente, las culturas de Extremo Oriente y de Oriente Medio no perciben la escritura y la caligrafía como dos disciplinas diferentes, aunque se considera que esta última transmite más que el significado literal del texto, ya sea en sus manifestaciones tradicionales o contemporáneas. Una vez más, nos encontramos con que, sin examinar esas culturas, no se puede tratar la caligrafía contemporánea de manera integral, así como con que es necesario entender el concepto occidental de escritura, por lo que estos asuntos se han tratado en la primera parte de la investigación que se recoge en esta memoria.

Otro aspecto a destacar del libro de Mediavilla, es que cuenta con el prólogo de Mark Van Stone, un experto especializado en caligrafía y jeroglíficos mayas. Este afirma que todavía se piensa que la caligrafía está relacionada con el lenguaje, de ahí que se conciba como algo utilitario. Evidentemente, el autor se refiere a aquellas prácticas caligráficas que aún se desarrollan en torno a formas definidas de letras y a composiciones cuya misión es transmitir los contenidos del mensaje a través de las palabras.

Van Stone clasifica las prácticas caligráficas en dos géneros principales: el primero que llama «caligrafía vehicular», que tiene poder comunicativo y parte de las inscripciones de la Roma imperial, así como de los manuscritos iluminados de la Edad Media e incluye los diseños tipográficos que son *letterings*, cuidadosamente elaborados, que pueden encontrarse en las cubiertas de libros, títulos de películas o publicidad corporativa. Este género, con su poder comunicativo, «invita, engatusa, exige ser leído, obedecido, creído o comprado» (Van Stone, 1996: 7).

El segundo género sería lo que denomina «arte abstracto», en el que el calígrafo, como cualquier otro artista, adquiere habilidades técnicas y formales para toda su vida y un lenguaje visual que despierta emociones. Todo ello se refleja en sus prácticas. Para apoyar sus argumentos, Van Stone usa citas del calígrafo chino Wang His-Chih (Wang Xizhi) (303-361) que ponen de relieve que la caligrafía se relaciona con el alma y los sentimientos y que eso constituye su esencia y poder. Según Van Stone, este tipo de calígrafo puede reflejar ese poder a través de un solo trazo, como si cantara, bailara o llorara.

Van Stone da un paso más cuando afirma que el calígrafo occidental moderno, al igual que sucede en la caligrafía japonesa, ejecuta su arte como un arte marcial, en el que una técnica meditativa de acción apunta a un *shodo* (el camino de un pincel), término utilizado en Japón



para referirse a la caligrafía. Según Van Stone, Mediavilla se fija en este tipo de práctica caligráfica. De ahí que se entienda, una vez más, que la caligrafía actual se asume como una forma de arte que tiene similitudes con la tradición caligráfica de Extremo Oriente, incluso equiparándose a esta, a través de la actitud abstracta (sin palabras o texto real).

Sin embargo, como ya se ha apuntado anteriormente, sin tener en cuenta el punto de vista de Extremo Oriente sobre la noción de abstracción, este análisis no puede ser preciso porque estamos ante maneras diferentes de entenderla. No obstante, las aportaciones mencionadas han suscitado varias preguntas de investigación e hipótesis sobre las influencias recibidas por la caligrafía occidental contemporánea que, como también hemos indicado, ha comenzado a tener una apariencia visual muy similar a la pintura abstracta o a las prácticas caligráficas de Extremo Oriente. Esto ha orientado mi investigación hacia la búsqueda de interacciones entre diferentes tradiciones caligráficas y entre los conceptos y maneras de entender la caligrafía de los calígrafos que tienden a crear una imagen en lugar de un texto.

La obra de Mediavilla —*Calligraphy: From Calligraphy to Abstract Painting*— cuenta, asimismo, con otro prólogo, escrito por Donald Jackson. Este describe las prácticas actuales como destinadas a alcanzar una especie de forma dinámica, equilibrada entre el caos y el orden. Para él, los saberes y las prácticas históricas son importantes para madurar y alcanzar una expresión precisa.

El conocimiento histórico y la práctica de la escritura resultan indispensables incluso para un calígrafo que crea una obra cercana a la abstracción. Ahora bien, desde mi punto de vista, la madurez del conocimiento y la habilidad no surgen solo del saber sobre el pasado, sino que, también, y como ya he ido diciendo a lo largo de estas páginas, radican en una toma de conciencia sobre cómo se perciben la escritura y otras tradiciones caligráficas. Esto proporciona una visión más abierta, pero, al mismo tiempo, más precisa, sobre la situación de la caligrafía contemporánea que, sin embargo, no está presente en las fuentes examinadas y que, nuevamente, demuestra la necesidad de la investigación que aquí se presenta.

En este análisis del marco teórico y de referencia, ha de incluirse el libro *Scribe: Artist of The Printed Word* (2013) del calígrafo y rotulista John Stevens, uno de los pocos autores que han contribuido a la comprensión de las percepciones de la caligrafía occidental. Esta obra presenta una recopilación de sus trabajos caligráficos y de *lettering* pero, además, ofrece su perspectiva sobre la caligrafía. Así, utiliza el vocablo *escriba* en lugar de *calígrafo* para referirse a un artista que trabaja con letras.

Su manejo del término resulta significativo porque la palabra *escriba* se empleaba principalmente antes de la imprenta para referirse a los escritores medievales, en su mayoría no profesionales, monjes e incluso esclavos que escribían para copiar textos. Stevens señala la confusión que se produce al aplicar ambas palabras, —*escriba* y *calígrafo*— ya que la diferencia no está claramente establecida ni explicada. Este es un aspecto que se ha incluido en la investigación porque puede aclarar



conceptos y evitar malos usos terminológicos. Invita, además, a la reflexión sobre los antiguos conceptos de escriba y calígrafo, sobre la artesanía y el arte caligráfico occidental.

Al igual que Mediavilla, Stevens (2013) señala que la palabra caligrafía no es representativa del arte de las letras que se practica en la actualidad. Por el contrario, para él, la palabra y su percepción están estancadas en una visión de la caligrafía que se refiere a la función de copiar y transmitir un mensaje. En su opinión: «La palabra "caligrafía" no es lo suficientemente amplia como para captar lo mejor de nuestro trabajo actual» (2013: 15). También añade que «la caligrafía está en proceso de redefinición» (2013: 21). El autor destaca que esta no se ejecuta dentro de los límites que se establecían en la antigüedad.

Sin embargo, parece más apropiado afirmar que el problema no está en la palabra caligrafía sino en su interpretación y conceptualización, que están conformadas por la idea occidental de la escritura. Por esta razón, la noción de caligrafía —referida a la práctica tradicional y a las prácticas contemporáneas— ha cambiado y pone en cuestión las características y el modo y criterios con que valorar la caligrafía occidental contemporánea.

Los comentarios y análisis sobre la definición de caligrafía occidental de Mediavilla (1996) y Stevens (2013) amplían el sentido del concepto y obligan a pensar si es necesario redefinir las tendencias actuales o renombrarlas para captar las diferentes actitudes y corrientes existentes. En lugar de cambiarles el nombre, es preciso examinar otras perspectivas para comprender su naturaleza. Esta idea ha orientado la investigación, haciéndola más integral, y ha influido en mis prácticas personales.

Por otro lado, Stevens analiza las prácticas caligráficas que ponen énfasis en la calidad de la línea —que él prefiere denominar «actitud» (2013: 71)—, en las letras «vivas» y en las relaciones meticulosamente equilibradas entre espacio positivo y negativo. Esto apunta a la inclusión del espacio circundante como un elemento a considerar. Afirma que la expresividad de la obra puede definirse por «la imaginación personal, el descubrimiento, la emoción y la excitación o energía visual» (2013: 25). Según este autor, todo puede ser expresivo y las prácticas tradicionales de la caligrafía también pueden serlo.

Sin embargo, la principal preocupación para él es que la calidad de la obra se pueda apreciar a través de una serie de rasgos como son el dinamismo, la vivacidad, la armonía, el ritmo y la sabiduría acumulada que se manifiestan a través de la línea, sin distinción de géneros, tendencias y estilos o al margen de que existan letras o palabras. Estos rasgos se convierten en elementos a considerar en esta investigación, pues el análisis de Stevens es muy limitado. Dinamismo, vivacidad, armonía y ritmo son conceptos difusos que obligan a preguntarse: ¿cómo distinguirlos en las prácticas contemporáneas? ¿Cuáles son los criterios y consideraciones estéticas de esas prácticas contemporáneas? ¿Cuál es el significado de la calidad de la línea en términos caligráficos? Para responder a estas cuestiones ha debido examinarse el trabajo de varios calígrafos contemporáneos notables, que abarcan una

amplia gama de prácticas representativas de diferentes actitudes técnicas y conceptuales. Esto ha sido especialmente relevante para esta investigación y se ha incluido en ella para poder comprender las tendencias actuales.

Por otro lado, Stevens (2013) afirma que la sensibilidad oriental, el *graffiti*, el garabato, la escritura a mano, la creación de marcas expresivas, el expresionismo abstracto, el dibujo y las estructuras de las formas de letras son parte del espíritu de la caligrafía y de las letras contemporáneas. Asimismo, propone ver el dinamismo como un elemento a añadir a la tradición más que como un reemplazo de esta (2013: 125). Este análisis proporciona un amplio apoyo para enmarcar el estado de las prácticas actuales y su examen y abre la pregunta sobre la relación e interacción entre la caligrafía occidental y oriental, tanto técnica como conceptualmente.

Stevens (2013) dice que la caligrafía se considera una señal que anuncia una idea mucho más amplia. El dibujo, la pintura, la escultura, el *graffiti* u otras formas de arte pueden ser caligrafía, a través de una calidad similar a la de una marca, en lugar de que se dibuje o se escriba mecánicamente. El autor repasa los nombres de varios artistas como Robert Motherwell, Jackson Pollock y Franz Kline, cuyas obras se basan en la sensibilidad de una línea que parece caligráfica. Aquí, el concepto de la palabra como imagen parece encontrarse en la similitud con las prácticas de la pintura abstracta y conduce a una reflexión sobre el concepto de la palabra como imagen en la caligrafía occidental contemporánea.

De ahí que, como Mediavilla (1996), Stevens describa su manera de comprender la caligrafía mediante varias nociones y rasgos que, en realidad, van más allá de la tradición. Incluye a los contemporáneos que todavía manejan la percepción antigua de caligrafía occidental. Nuevamente, esto hace que sea preciso estudiar de manera exhaustiva no solo el contexto occidental. A pesar de que aquí Stevens (2013) pone énfasis en puntos muy importantes, le falta examinar la perspectiva de Extremo Oriente, las interacciones y los efectos que puede tener en la práctica caligráfica de Occidente. Además, los artistas occidentales antes mencionados describen cómo recibieron la influencia del arte y de la caligrafía de Extremo Oriente y cómo esta constituyó su enfoque. Sin mencionar estas huellas caligráficas en sus obras no se puede explicar suficientemente el carácter de estas.

La observación de la obra de los pintores abstractos mencionados más arriba plantea una de las preguntas críticas, que comienzan con Mediavilla (1996) y la comparación que establece entre la caligrafía y la pintura; surge de la necesidad de averiguar si la caligrafía se convierte en otra forma de pintura abstracta o si es correcto describir las obras pictóricas abstractas como caligráficas. Estas cuestiones me han llevado a centrarme tanto en la caligrafía como en la escritura y, también, en la división de la pintura dentro de la perspectiva occidental. Por eso, la abstracción caligráfica ha sido un asunto esencial, a la hora de comprender si la caligrafía es, como se acaba de decir, una forma de pintura abstracta o si la palabra «abstracto» conlleva un concepto más

cercano a la caligrafía de Extremo Oriente que a la pintura occidental, con su eclecticismo, sus referencias al pasado y a otras culturas y disciplinas.

Otra contribución del texto de Stevens es la introducción del término «híbrido» que emplea para referirse a las prácticas contemporáneas realizadas con pincel y que ilustran la convergencia y la transición de la caligrafía hacia los movimientos expandidos del artista. Mientras que el pincel de borde ancho es el instrumento occidental y la caligrafía se orienta a producir un ritmo y un peso uniformes, el pincel puntiagudo se emplea en la caligrafía de Extremo Oriente, en la que se valoran mucho más los diferentes sistemas de ponderación y las variaciones dentro del propio trazo.

Las diferentes herramientas reflejan el carácter de la línea. Con el tiempo, este comenzó a cambiar debido a la actitud del calígrafo occidental y a su creciente interés en la caligrafía con pincel puntiagudo. Además, en algunos casos, las diferencias incluso comenzaron a desaparecer. Por lo tanto, la variedad de caracteres dentro del trazo se hizo deseable y visible para los calígrafos occidentales. Stevens lo describe con el término «híbrido» y sus formas como formas híbridas que representan la sensibilidad entre el pincel puntiagudo y el de bordes anchos.

¿Qué significa aquí sensibilidad? Stevens señala que los límites, entre la concepción de la caligrafía occidental y la de Extremo Oriente, desaparecen. Sin embargo, esto suscita otra pregunta sobre el cómo y con qué motivaciones comenzó la caligrafía occidental a pasar del texto escrito al gesto realizado. ¿Cuál es el concepto de gesto en caligrafía? Stevens no lo trata de manera profunda en su libro, de ahí que se haya considerado un tema apropiado para examinar en esta investigación.

Stevens (2013), también, manifiesta su preocupación por la cultura caligrafía occidental que no ha desarrollado la sensibilidad para que se la considere un arte. Afirma que Occidente, sin duda, carece de conciencia de la forma caligráfica que tienen las culturas de Oriente Medio. Afirma que «ciertamente Occidente carece de la conciencia y de la sensibilidad hacia la forma caligráfica que todavía tienen las culturas de Oriente Medio y Asia» (2013: 15). Es obvio que, en la Edad Media, la sociedad no podía comprender y asimilar la naturaleza de la palabra escrita, ya que servía únicamente para satisfacer necesidades funcionales y no contaba con ningún valor atribuido como sí sucedía en Extremo Oriente o en Oriente Medio. Esto, una vez más, obliga a indagar en profundidad sobre la valoración de la escritura y de la caligrafía. Aunque Stevens menciona puntos críticos, sus explicaciones no pueden considerarse completamente satisfactorias si no se realiza un análisis integral porque el concepto de escritura occidental ha afectado directamente a la comprensión de la caligrafía, incluyendo la forma en que se practica y se usa. Por lo tanto, es necesario conocer y comprender primero la evolución de la caligrafía tradicional occidental porque supone una toma de conciencia sobre las limitaciones del concepto de caligrafía que se está transformando en el presente.

Aparte de Mediavilla (1996) y de Stevens (2013), Brown —un reconocido calígrafo irlandés— en su libro *Brown Calligraphy, Denis Brown Discusses His Art* (2013), ofrece una visión sobre el enfoque de sus obras, con sus estilos y lenguajes únicos, en relación con las formas de las letras y la composición, la estructura y la fluidez, la disciplina y la libertad, incluyendo al *lettering* y al diseño en ámbitos más amplios de autoexpresión y comunicación artística con gestos cargados de expresividad.

Como Stevens (2013) y Mediavilla (1996), Brown (2017) describe la caligrafía examinando primero la traducción de *kallos* y *graphein*. Según Brown (2017) esta traducción etimológica se refiere a formas de letras y a caligrafías simplemente decoradas, que se reproducen conforme a los modos tradicionales. El autor se niega a someterse a las limitaciones de las nociones convencionales y del vocablo.

Aunque las aportaciones de Brown son de interés, se echa en falta información detallada sobre los términos y una mayor discusión que permita comprenderlos mejor. Es importante recalcar que hoy la interpretación de esos términos se ha convertido en un tema enteramente personal, no en cuanto a la terminología en sí misma sino sobre el modo de entenderla, de analizarla y de explicarla, de acuerdo con los valores del momento. Surge aquí, de nuevo, la necesidad de discutir la definición o descripción de la caligrafía contemporánea, tal y como se plantea en el subapartado en el que se recogen las preguntas de investigación.

Brown (2017) muestra sus prácticas tradicionales de caligrafía legible junto a sus otras obras, pero lo más destacable es cómo trata la creatividad, el contenido y el sentido del concepto, a la hora de representar los textos para dar lugar a su estilo propio, denominado «caligrafía polirrítmica» (2017: 112). Este término implica el empleo simultáneo de dos o más ritmos que el artista ha adaptado de la música y que ha aplicado a sus prácticas, de modo contrario a lo que hace la caligrafía tradicional, que se centra en el propio ritmo dentro del estilo y por razones funcionales. Es lo que Brown describe como trascender la tradición. Se hablará de ello en el capítulo VI, pero aquí es oportuno señalar que, sin dar muchos detalles al respecto, este calígrafo irlandés considera que, en lugar de emplear la caligrafía como mera servidora del texto, se debe ser un artista que experimenta y fusiona las técnicas con diferentes actitudes conceptuales. Esta idea me hizo pensar en la necesidad de discutir si la caligrafía contemporánea representa o no la completa salida de la tradición.

Es obvio que Brown no excluye la convención. Sin embargo, partiendo del concepto de caligrafía china y japonesa resumido en la frase «el espíritu en la caligrafía puede ser más importante que su legibilidad» (2017: 119), cree que la caligrafía occidental puede llegar a concebirse de la misma manera. No obstante, Brown no apoya su argumento porque en su libro falta un nivel de información más profundo sobre esas tradiciones caligráficas y resulta difícil de entender cuáles son las concepciones que hay detrás de ellas. Nuevamente, esto me llevó a considerar la necesidad de profundizar en el conocimiento de la

caligrafía de Extremo Oriente para poder determinar sus dinámicas e influencias en la caligrafía occidental contemporánea.

Asimismo, Brown (2017) acuña otro término: «caligrafía reduccionista», con el que se refiere a la abstracción en el ámbito caligráfico, que reduce la caligrafía a su «esencia» (2017: 235). Esto significa que no se escribe en el sentido tradicional. No hay letras, palabras o caracteres que actúen como material para crear una composición abstracta. Consiste en fotografiar imágenes de tinta dispersa en un líquido y escribir sobre ellas palabras legibles con su «caligrafía polirrítmica». Se entiende como un enfoque reduccionista que apunta, probablemente, a eliminar las limitaciones occidentales. Brown lo describe del siguiente modo: «la caligrafía como grabación en tinta de una representación de movimiento» (Brown, 2017: 88).

Es significativo cómo el autor explica sus acercamientos a la «caligrafía reduccionista» —a la que también llama «caligrafía pura»—, poniendo énfasis en el conceptualismo abstracto y en cómo la caligrafía ya no se usa por razones funcionales como sucedía en la Edad Media. No obstante, es discutible que esta caligrafía pueda llamarse reduccionista o pura, ya que Brown apoya las imágenes con palabras escritas que, se supone, deben leerse. Esto lleva a pensar que el autor entra en contradicción consigo mismo, además de que no defiende sus argumentos por completo. Esto nos encaminó, otra vez, a preguntarnos si la perspectiva contemporánea representa la desviación total de la tradición.

A medida que su caligrafía se volvía más gestual, Brown (2017) comenzó a estudiar la pintura de Pollock, Kline, Tobey o Motherwell, —también mencionados por Stevens (2013)— como fuente de inspiración para sus obras. No obstante, dejó de lado la influencia del arte y de las prácticas caligráficas de Extremo Oriente en estos pintores.

Volvemos, nuevamente, a encontrarnos en este libro con una falta de análisis de la interacción entre Occidente y Oriente que impide entender las referencias de los artistas abstractos y que subraya la necesidad de cuestionar la relación entre tradiciones caligráficas, inspiraciones y características visuales y conceptuales que parecen similares.

Sin ese análisis no se puede equiparar con exactitud la caligrafía contemporánea de formas muy abstractas con la pintura abstracta occidental. Hay una brecha significativa que tiene que considerarse y discutirse desde varias perspectivas. Por otro lado, examinar las interacciones entre Occidente y Oriente, tal y como ya se ha dicho antes, obliga a estudiar las influencias que han recibido los mencionados pintores que, a su vez, son una inspiración para los calígrafos occidentales contemporáneos. Asimismo, no hay que perder de vista que estos últimos también han recibido la influencia de la caligrafía de Extremo Oriente. Por todo esto, en la investigación que aquí se presenta, esa caligrafía ocupa un lugar importante pues es necesaria para comprender la caligrafía occidental contemporánea.

Otro autor importante para esta investigación ha sido Umberto Eco, con sus libros *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages* (1986), *The Open Work* (1989) y *On Beauty: A History of a Western Idea* (2004). La primera y tercera de estas obras se centran en los conceptos de arte y belleza en la Edad Media y me han ayudado a profundizar en estos dos conceptos dentro del ámbito de la tradición caligráfica que, precisamente, tuvo su apogeo en aquella etapa de la historia. Así, respecto a la pregunta de investigación sobre si la caligrafía contemporánea tiene huellas y referencias de la tradición, Eco (1986, 2004) me ha proporcionado elementos para poder comparar y encontrar respuestas. Por otra parte, *The Open Work* (1989) me ha aportado una perspectiva que ha resultado crucial para evaluar las características de la caligrafía contemporánea y describirlas.

Gracias a la revisión bibliográfica, he podido localizar los vacíos de conocimiento que existen en el tema en el que se centra mi investigación. Me he dado cuenta, además, de que no se había realizado una indagación exhaustiva sobre la caligrafía occidental contemporánea relacionada con sus características e influencias y, en particular, con la tradición de la caligrafía occidental, la caligrafía de Extremo Oriente y de Oriente Medio y la pintura abstracta occidental. Como ya he ido comentando a lo largo de estas páginas, se dan confusiones y una de las mayores es la definición y descripción de la caligrafía occidental a través del término caligrafía, algo que interfiere en la comprensión de la escritura occidental, que ha evolucionado en torno a la funcionalidad y al alfabeto fonético. Pero esta perspectiva no solo impulsa la idea de escritura sino, también, la percepción de la caligrafía, que también se emplea por razones funcionales.

Cuando se comparan la tradición y las prácticas contemporáneas surge una gran diferencia que se entiende como producto de una marcada desviación de la tradición por parte de las corrientes contemporáneas. Sin embargo, una investigación en profundidad, desde diferentes perspectivas, demuestra que la caligrafía occidental es de naturaleza acumulativa, lo que significa que se aprecia la tradición, el conocimiento artesanal, la interpretación personal y los sentimientos del calígrafo, que está dispuesto a practicar la caligrafía como una forma de arte expresivo. Por todo esto, es importante revisar todas estas características para ubicar y apreciar las tendencias actuales.

La consulta de las fuentes aquí comentadas ha servido de base para plantear todos los objetivos, interrogantes e hipótesis de esta investigación y —recogidos en el apartado 1.3 («Preguntas, hipótesis y objetivos de investigación») — de esta introducción y me permitió, además, identificar las lagunas de existentes.



## 1.6. Contenido

Esta memoria se divide en siete capítulos. Incluye, además, las conclusiones, la bibliografía y dos anexos.

El capítulo I se corresponde con esta introducción, pero el capítulo II entra ya en las definiciones de escritura, *lettering*, tipografía y caligrafía. Se examinan en detalle para poder proporcionar información general sobre cómo distintos autores y fuentes describen y entienden estos términos.

Aunque el foco se pone en la caligrafía, para comprender su significado con mayor precisión es indispensable discutir los términos que acabo de mencionar unas líneas más atrás: escritura, escritura a mano, *lettering* y tipografía y cómo se entienden en Occidente. Examinar el significado de escritura tiene una especial importancia porque, en Occidente, se considera un vehículo del lenguaje hablado, en lugar de una entidad autónoma, tal y como se manifiesta en las prácticas actuales. Con este examen en profundidad se busca ubicar y enmarcar la palabra, pero, también, proporcionar una mejor comprensión de la perspectiva occidental sobre la escritura y la caligrafía. Se considera que las discusiones en torno al término son significativas para que los artistas que practican la escritura como una forma de arte, puedan percibirla y valorarla. Se trata, además, de aportar una parte teórica que los autores o artistas habitualmente no discuten en la bibliografía existente.

Con esta toma de conciencia sobre la cuestión, la definición de caligrafía sigue siendo clave y problemática. Esto también se examina en este capítulo, a partir de las aportaciones de diccionarios, enciclopedias o declaraciones de autores o escritores significativos. Aquí, en lugar de dar una descripción completa de caligrafía parece más crucial discutir las explicaciones de las distintas fuentes, desde varios enfoques, que ayuden a describir las características de la tradición caligráfica occidental y las de la situación actual.

El capítulo III se centra en la tradición caligráfica occidental a través de diversas escrituras significativas y sus características para así poder aportar conocimientos sobre la evolución de las letras en la caligrafía occidental desde la Edad Media hasta los primeros años de la imprenta en el siglo XVI. Se incluye, también, el renacimiento de la caligrafía occidental en el periodo «moderno». Además, se estudia los cambios en la percepción de la caligrafía de los escribas/calígrafos/artistas. Esto ayuda a comprender mejor la caligrafía occidental contemporánea en comparación con la tradición.

El capítulo IV está dedicado a la caligrafía del Extremo Oriente o, más concretamente, a las caligrafías china y japonesa. Comienza con un breve recorrido por unos sistemas de escritura que difieren de los occidentales. Se realiza, también, una referencia al taoísmo, el confucianismo y el budismo porque para entender esas caligrafías es necesario conocer, aunque sea de manera básica, la perspectiva cultural vinculada a estas religiones. Además de las herramientas y

materiales que emplean los calígrafos de Extremo Oriente, se examinan los términos *shufa* (para la caligrafía china) y *shodo* (para la caligrafía japonesa), usados para referirse a la palabra caligrafía.

En este capítulo también se estudia la evolución de varias escrituras antiguas hasta las prácticas modernas y contemporáneas. Se ofrece, por tanto, una visión integral de la caligrafía de Extremo Oriente, las influencias mutuas, con sus particulares características y las dinámicas.

El capítulo V está dedicado a la caligrafía de Oriente Medio y se refiere a las prácticas caligráficas con la escritura árabe y a la caligrafía islámica. Su estructura es similar a la del capítulo anterior. En primer lugar, se menciona brevemente el sistema de escritura árabe para profundizar, después, en el concepto de *khatt*, término utilizado para referirse a la palabra caligrafía. Para comprenderlo en profundidad es indispensable referirse a la cultura islámica, puesto que afecta a la formación y a la percepción de la escritura en Oriente Medio. No puede perderse de vista, tampoco, la importancia de la escritura para el Islam, en cuanto a concepto general pero, también, en relación con la dimensión mística del arte y con la caligrafía islámica. Además de las principales herramientas empleadas, se examina la evolución de varias escrituras, incluyendo las interpretaciones contemporáneas de la caligrafía. Esto proporciona una visión general que permite reflexionar sobre las influencias en las prácticas caligráficas occidentales contemporáneas.

El capítulo VI se enfoca en la caligrafía occidental contemporánea. Comienza haciendo un recorrido por las aportaciones de distintos autores sobre la palabra como imagen y su relación con la pintura abstracta occidental. Asimismo, se abordan las aportaciones del pensamiento posmoderno. Todo ello ayuda a comprender las características de la caligrafía contemporánea y sus raíces históricas, así como distintos ejemplos de la obra producida por una serie de calígrafos actuales que son una referencia en Occidente.

La caligrafía occidental asume nuevas dimensiones que se extienden a varias capas, marcadas por una rica multiplicidad de formas y una perspectiva contemporánea. A través de las prácticas de los artistas puede observarse una considerable toma de conciencia de que se está produciendo un despertar de la caligrafía occidental de diversas maneras. Este es el punto central del capítulo VI, en el que se analiza la obra de varios artistas: Niels "Shoe" Meulman, Pokras Lampas, Said Dokins, Denise Brown, Denis Lach, Loredana Zega, Thomas Ingmire y Viktor Kams, que trabajan de manera interdisciplinaria y en colaboraciones que reflejan en sus prácticas una variedad de motivaciones e influencias. El examen de su obra permite enmarcar y ubicar las tendencias contemporáneas, definir sus rasgos distintivos y conocer las características de las prácticas caligráficas actuales en comparación con las tradiciones caligráficas tradicionales, así como con las de Extremo Oriente y Oriente Medio.

Por último, el capítulo VII presenta mi interpretación personal, a través de mi propia obra, de la caligrafía y sus prácticas, a partir del conocimiento y de las experiencias que he ido adquiriendo a lo largo



del proceso de esta investigación. Gracias a ello he podido establecer una relación significativa entre la teoría, mi percepción y la práctica de la caligrafía contemporánea occidental. He de señalar que esa interpretación se ha ido transformando a medida que profundizaba en la teoría, la práctica, la historia, las técnicas y su evolución, tanto formal como conceptualmente.

Esta memoria de investigación se cierra con unas conclusiones y una bibliografía. También se incluyen dos anexos. El primero (A) contiene información sobre términos relacionados con la caligrafía y el segundo (B) recopila varias conferencias y talleres en los que participé en España, Francia y Turquía, que han contribuido notablemente a mi adquisición de habilidades caligráficas técnicas y prácticas.



## I. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Definition of the object of study

The Western writing system developed and appreciated through its functional ease. It is assessed as one of the most advanced writing systems in the World, and western calligraphy -more than a two-thousand-year-old tradition that is said to begin with the Roman Capitals of the first century until now- was formed around this mindset. In other words, western calligraphy has been utilized as a functional entity, which refers to writing, preserving, copying, and spreading the text meant to be read.

The core idea of the western calligraphy tradition evolved depending on the technical possibilities and various vernacular needs of the time. Since the Medieval period is assessed as one of the significant times that western calligraphy tradition was its heyday, it points to the manuscript culture in which used materials, familiarities with these materials, and manipulations of these available materials to write ancient scripts were highly crucial for calligraphy tradition and assessed as an indispensable part of western calligraphy.

Ancient calligraphers/scribes were a kind of craftsman that scribes assigned to fulfill their works, to write legible text, primarily for manuscripts. Hence, from various perspectives, western calligraphy tradition was executed as a craft far from the perception of art form back then.

On the other hand, contemporary western calligraphy represents a significant shift from the tradition of the west, both technically and conceptually. It started to be performed as an open field in which different ways of understanding western calligraphy practices began to be encountered.

Contemporary western calligrapher mostly prefers to eliminate a text, a word, a letter, or any kind of readable, even recognizable written entities, which come out with visual image close to abstraction that is primarily defined as expressive, experimental, or abstract calligraphy. Instead of focusing on the readable text with a restricted mindset of the tradition and their boundaries stuck scribe is a servant of the text; the main theme became a gesture and the moves of the hand -so-called writing-like gestures- that are claimed as calligraphy.

What is mainly encountered through the current practices is the concept of spontaneity, pluralistic and eclectic inclination that depend solely on the calligraphers and their perception and understanding of writing, hence calligraphy. Here, writing and calligraphy are used as interchangeable expressions. The reason is that the specific definitions and descriptions that point to various boundaries between writing and calligraphy -as well as painting- started to dissolve with the West's contemporary attitudes.

In other words, technically, the common attitude can be stated as employing a wide range of materials that basically have the capacity to make a trace, stain, splash, a stroke, a line, and the overall gesture that a tool can leave on the surface. Furthermore, conceptually, the concern became to reach alternative ideas that reach far beyond the tradition. For this reason, Western calligraphy is far from being an understandable, definable form according to known traditional calligraphy parameters, which are related to written, legible text and writing well-constructed letterforms of the script without any type of interpretation.

Both professionals' and young calligraphers' interests interact with other disciplines and other calligraphy traditions to create fusion works that melt into each other technically and conceptually. The recent attempt invites interactions, mostly the interlaced complexity and ambiguity in terms primarily used to refer to practices or intentions. Hence, western calligraphy is flourished through the interpretation of the western contemporary calligraphers, who reveal the contemporary mindset that differentiates itself from the tradition, also derived from it in various ways. While some of the current perspectives have roots in the western tradition, various calligraphers take inspiration from other disciplines, such as music, dance, or poetry; some reflect the significant features of other calligraphy traditions, namely Far Eastern and Middle Eastern calligraphy.

Furthermore, since the visual appearance of the calligraphic work became highly abstract, the boundaries of writing, calligraphy, and painting became highly blurry. That means the features and the criteria of western calligraphy have shifted as well.

To sum up, it should be stated that, throughout history, while western calligraphy tradition has evolved around the technical possibilities and functional needs, in recent decades, there have been highly significant changes in the way of understanding, defining, and executing western calligraphy.

Today, more and more people practice calligraphy in the form of expression by individual interpretations and create personal styles with various motivations. Despite these interests, there are not many comprehensive studies about contemporary western calligraphy from various perspectives, which can be stated as a significant gap in western calligraphy literature. For this reason, contemporary western calligraphy is a theme that is interested in this research to discuss and study broadly to present and clarify with all clearance, and various perspectives can be described.

The object of this study is to examine western contemporary calligraphy, which puts forward the perception and understanding of western calligraphy as a visual expression by utilizing the possibilities with progressive expansion of the limits and boundaries of writing that is stuck to be read semantically. It has been focused on contemporary western calligraphy, contemporary practices, and possible influences of the Far Eastern and Middle Eastern calligraphy traditions. It is grounded on an interaction between theory and practice as its reflection. This research aims to focus on contemporary western practices to locate the various features and dynamics that affect the contemporary tendencies in the West.

With the appearance of lettering, for example, and the digitization of calligraphic works, confusion has arisen, and sometimes calligraphy is spoken of to designate other manifestations that are not calligraphic in a strict sense. Apart from the diversity, because of the eclectic and pluralistic contemporary tendency of creating calligraphic work, when examining the literal meaning of the term calligraphy from a comprehensive perspective, it is seen that from the first moment, the perception and using the term calligraphy is not well thought that also points to the lack of examination the theme comprehensively. For this reason, apart from discussing what calligraphy refers to, it is also indispensable to hold what western calligraphy is not. Identifying various features through examining other calligraphy traditions, namely the Far Eastern and the Middle East, within the limitations, it will be much more appropriate to mention the contemporary tendencies formed by interaction with other mindsets for many years.

With the overall assessment of the current situation of contemporary western calligraphy, theoretical and critical examinations of the definitions, traditional background, and the evolution of the Western, Far Eastern, and Middle Eastern perceptions and practices in the realm of calligraphy; examining the various contemporary calligraphers and their works to determine the features and influences, the focus is on providing significant knowledge and multiple perspectives that are needed to be considered to locate and percept in the realm of contemporary western calligraphy with its various dynamics.

It is a must to give these backgrounds extracted from the examined sources claimed to have significant roles in appreciating calligraphy of the past, present, and possibly the future. Furthermore, by presenting practices of western calligraphy, my personal understanding of calligraphy will be framed to reveal the point of view I gained with this research. It can be claimed that it is a journey that starts with various triggers and inspirations mostly encountered with contemporary western calligraphy interpretations. However, with a deeper level of investigation and the period that has been experienced at a theoretical and practical level, the overall understanding and attitude within the realm of writing hence calligraphy in western culture, started to shift in my mind, reflected in my works mine as well. The comprehensive survey on this theme transformed my calligraphy works in a visual and conceptual sense. That means I started attributing the aesthetic and conceptual values to my practices beyond the visual dimension.

## 1.2. Justification

My interest in calligraphy started with typography, which has its ground in my interest in literature, also mathematics. From 1999 through 2004, I studied Statistics and worked exclusively on numbers and calculations; moreover, for reaching these calculations, equations of mathematical formulations over symbols determined with preconditions as a way of different language with symbols, and also, interpretation of researches by calculating these equations.

Although these two topics, Typography and Statistics, may sound highly different, as a graphic designer searching for the interpretation of the problem rather than finding the solution for the problem, I am keen to delve into the topics to correlate and find the bridges or proximities between various disciplines.

With my second bachelor's during 2005-2009, Faculty of Fine Arts, Graphic Design Department, these interests shifted to alphabetic writings -lettering and typography with the Latin alphabet, which was adopted in November, the first, 1928 in Turkey, as a system that consists of highly abstract signs, preconditioned/prefabricated forms of communication. It may be needed to be underlined here that contrary to what many people assume, the education system in Turkey has nothing to do with the Arabic writing system. The Turkish identity and culture, hence language, are independent of Islam, Arabic culture, and the Arabic language. It is the main reason I am interested in Latin typography and, in this research, Western calligraphy.

During my study in Graphic Design Department, the postmodern graphic design practices, mainly following the articles and books of various critics, namely Rick Poynor and various graphic designers, took my attention, namely Neville Brody, David Carson, and Stefan Sagmeister, who gave extreme examples of Typography and Lettering as images of their own time, especially in the western world. Hence, the very first motivation of this research first represented itself through the former studies in the following years, the period of my master thesis, entitled *The Changing Face of Typography; Posttypography and Designing Posttypographic Typeface*<sup>1</sup>, which mainly focused on the impulse of being out of rules and perceptions through the realm of typography.

During the research of my master thesis, in order to apprehend practices of the twenty-first century, it was indispensable to comprehend the spirit of the time, first through modernism, in which the first objective is to underline the functions of the text -legibility- as its visibility is formed, as in the case of traditional western calligraphy and the perception of the writing of the Western mentality.

How typography becomes a way to experience letterforms and text within the compositions for particular designers through breaking the rules fascinated me when looking through the historical evolution and shifting meaning and concept of writing in the West, where the phonetic writing system is assumed as one of the most advanced

<sup>1</sup>It was defended in July 2012 at Hacettepe University, Ankara, Turkey.

systems that are served for humanity with its highly functional formation. It was highly significant to understand the perception of the writing of different cultures, not just how their systems work, but trying to delve into the conceptual understanding behind them, provided immense insight into how to locate western writing and hence typography/calligraphy.

Observing the contemporary typography practices at that time, developing and exploring alternative media as platforms of self-expression within the concept was one of the main aims of structuring my master thesis's artistic project. Apart from my general attitude about creating the concept and designing typographic projects during my graphic design education, I was inclined to experiment with digital designing and manual drawing techniques in the realm of Western Typography.

During that research, one of the significant realizations is that the key to understanding typography is to understand calligraphy, at least being aware of various significant issues, such as how the form of the ancient styles evolved, under what conditions they emerged and transformed depending on the needs of the era, also the technical possibilities, mostly pointing at the Medieval era of Europe. Moreover, Mediavilla (1996: 268) claims that knowledge of calligraphy is not just critical for typography; it is significant for other areas of graphic arts, such as "layout, desktop publishing, computer graphics," hence, he underlines that education of calligraphy has a crucial role in the education of typography.

In this sense, the perception of writing -calligraphy and typography- has always emerged with functional intentions to serve particular needs with its pure and direct expression of the content, whatever was written or printed. For this reason, it can be said that this assumption of form is supposed to be created out of function and has its roots that start with the phonetic writing systems that are assessed as the most advanced system of writing in the world.

Moreover, there are numerous examples that designers greatly respect and reinterpret ancient styles, such as Roman Capitals as digital typeface Trajan (1989) from Adobe, which is directly reinterpreted of the letters on Trajan's column, or various digital typefaces of designer, such as Jonathan Barnbrook and his typeface named Bastard which carries clear adaption of mostly *textualis* and *fraktur* styles of Gothic writing systems. These are just a few pointing at the ancient writing styles and their forms and how they were affected by the tools and techniques of the time, which means traditional or western calligraphy. Hence, it can be claimed that knowledge of western calligraphy has been the essential element that makes western typography meaningful.

These features mentioned above can be assessed as the first impulses to research western calligraphy for my doctoral research, as a journey that shifts interest from typography to calligraphy through the fundamentals with the very basic impulse and needs toward sensuality of the twelve-year career as a designer.

On one side the traditional examples of western calligraphy; on the other side various contemporary western calligraphy practices reveal the

significant difference from the tradition in conceptual and visual ways. Since I investigated the current trends of typography during my master's, I constantly encountered contemporary practices of so-called calligraphy as well, mostly with the abstraction of the letters, words, or text. Hence, I realized that, as in the case of contemporary typography, contemporary western calligraphy has its own autonomous area that has been affected by various dynamics and factors, not just related to the present, but also inspirations come from the tradition, as well as other calligraphy traditions, mainly Far Eastern and Middle Eastern calligraphy.

It can be claimed that this sharp departure of the contemporary practices from the tradition creates a gray area in the sense of conflict between practitioners in terms of western calligraphy tradition, which is grounded on the functional necessities such as copying the text of the corresponding period -the Middle Ages, the period when the calligraphy culture peaked. Current practices are assessed as total departure, even the rejection of the tradition because of the elimination of the text, words, letters, or recognizable written signs. That causes us to compare contemporary western calligraphy practices with the abstract painting of the West, which is an inappropriate comparison just through the visual resemblance since the similarity between contemporary calligraphy and abstract painting of the West can be detached through visual appearance. This assessment is needed to be revealed and presented through a broad investigation of contemporary calligraphy, which is observed as a significant gap in the area.

It is evident that the concept of writing, calligraphy of the West, compared with the current tendencies in which calligraphy is visually and functionally not similar to traditional forms, but it is still defined or called calligraphy by the calligrapher.

Looking through the significant references and works of literature in the realm of contemporary calligraphy, as mentioned in part entitled "1.5. Theoretical and referential framework," these mentioned gray areas still exist due to a lack of comprehensive survey from a broad perspective to locate and frame the contemporary calligraphy. It is an open area that can be exposed to various not very appropriate definitions, interpretations, comparisons, determinations, and misdirection between both professionals and newbies. For this reason, contemporary western calligraphy, as an autonomous art form that has become a field performed in a wide range, it is needed to comprehensive examination and reassessment of the dynamics, parameters, and influences to avoid the confusions and misinterpretations of western calligraphy with the current tendencies. This study promises to present a crucial broad evaluation through different perspectives and also provides significant assessments of the contemporary mindset of western calligraphy with a more rigorous knowledge and examinations that the existing sources have not presented so far.

Since contemporary calligraphy is an autonomous area that attracts the artists to employ calligraphy, the comprehensive investigation and examination are significant and needed to identify the interactions between both interdisciplinary and different calligraphy cultures,



which will provide essential determinations of the practices, crucial information on sources of inspiration and dynamics, and open a new window to evaluate it from a different perspective by placing it in a more appropriate framework. I sincerely believe this research will be valuable and bring a perspective that may significantly contribute to the field and give a valuable perspective and awareness to the calligrapher as an autonomous art form.

### **1.3. Research questions, hypotheses, and objectives**

#### **1.3.1. Research questions**

In light of the definition of this study's object and justification, it can be claimed that several questions need to be discussed. These questions can be ranked as follows:

- \*How can contemporary western calligraphy be defined or described?
- \*What are the criteria to define what calligraphy represents today?
- \*When calligraphy explores and presents the image of the word, which takes visual resemblance with abstract painting, can it still be called calligraphy in the Western realm?
- \*Is it possible to assess contemporary western calligraphy within the standard parameters of the West, which are basically the functionality and necessity of legible text?
- \*What about the role of the ancient scribe and today's calligrapher? Are there any major difference and shifts that can be traced through the contemporary calligraphers' practices?
- \*Where can contemporary western calligraphy be located in the art world?
- \*What kind of influences does contemporary western calligraphy receive? Can these influences be traced or detached conceptually and visually?
- \*Does contemporary western calligraphy represent the total departure from the tradition of western calligraphy, or does it still contain references from the tradition? In other words, is there a continuity relationship with the past? If so, what are these influences, and how does the contemporary calligrapher reflect these influences?
- \*Are there any influences of the Far Eastern and the Middle Eastern calligraphy cultures technically and conceptually? Or are there any interactions that contemporary calligraphers have inspired by them?

#### **1.3.2. Research hypotheses**

These research questions have given rise to the following hypotheses:

- \*The boundaries between calligraphy and artistic practices have dissolved by the practices of the current calligrapher, who reflect

the expression through calligraphic practices. That means the contemporary calligraphy mindset represents freedom from its traditional limitations of technical and conceptual burdens.

\*Contemporary calligraphy, even with its highly abstract forms that are close to the abstract painting visually, still takes its references and inspirations from its traditions, also the Far Eastern and Middle Eastern calligraphy traditions and interactions with the other art discipline.

\*Contemporary calligraphy is accepted as an autonomous discipline that can be assessed as an open area to interpret depending on the calligrapher, including the reader/viewer, demand from them a different level of reading through the image of the word. It represents an eclectic fusion of multi-layer meanings through the open work concept.

\*Contemporary calligraphy has become an art form that stands out with its performance aspect, in which the process and its calligrapher are personally involved in this process as active figures who reflect the feeling and emotion through the gesture of the hand.

\*Since there are no concrete criteria as in the case of traditional calligraphy, contemporary calligraphy has its own genuine criteria that can be ranked as the skill of the hand, which can be able to perform the quality of the gesture.

### **1.3.3. Research objectives**

#### **The general research objectives:**

\*The objective is to know the contemporary practices of Western calligraphy, its trends and manifestations in order to draw an overview of its current situation and thus fill the existing gap in current literature.

#### **The specific research objectives:**

\*Analyze the contemporary western calligraphy conceptually and technically to determine the dynamics and features of the contemporary western calligraphy to frame/define or describe,

\*Designate the influences behind the contemporary western mindset in respect of traditional western calligraphy,

\*Detach whether there are references from the past that contemporary calligraphers adopt and adapt, or does it represent a total departure from the past,

\*Study the Far Eastern and Middle Eastern calligraphy traditions to locate the effects and influences on the contemporary mindset of calligraphy,

\*Comprehend the Far Eastern and Middle Eastern calligraphy traditions to understand the similarities between the contemporary western calligraphers' tendencies and mindset behind their practices related to these traditions,

\*Analyze how contemporary practices are influencing my work as an artist.

## 1.4. Methodology

This research has two parts: The first is that the documentary research has been carried out through the location of the relevant bibliography. This part has relied on secondary sources extracted from the existing bibliography, studying and analyzing them.

The other part is in which it is carried out my personal calligraphy work that is represented and discussed in the light of the information accumulated through the documentary research of the first part.

All lead to the generating of new ideas led by a process-oriented approach that heralds the calligraphic works reflected the unique understanding of contemporary western calligraphy, which puts value on the process consists of planning the materials and knowing how they react; hence anticipating provides to establish a quality of planned/unplanned gestures and combinations that emerged through the process of creating the calligraphic work. Moreover, in order to gather the various technical, practical, and conceptual information first-hand, various long and short-term courses and workshops in Spain, France, and Turkey -added as Appendix B- are ranked as in follows:

- \*Copperplate with Amanda Adams, 04.09.2014, Barcelona,
- \*Art Nouveau Capitals with Keith Adams, 05.09.2014, Barcelona,
- \*Mañusculas. Letras Captales with Keith Adams, Visions Ilustración y Caligrafía, 06.09-08.12.2014, Barcelona,
- \*Caligrafía Gotica Ornamentada with Keith Adams, Visions Ilustración y Caligrafía, 16.02-04.05.2015, Barcelona,
- \*Caligrafía Expresiva with Oriol Miró Genovart, Visions Ilustración y Caligrafía, 18.03-20.05.2015, Barcelona,
- \*Italic Calligraphy, Historical & Modern with Keith Adams, 03-10.08.2015, Saint-Antoine L'Abbaye, Isere, France,
- \*Insular Script & Celtic Decoration with Amanda Adams, 10-17.08.2015, Saint-Antoine L'Abbaye, Isere, France,
- \*Calligrafía Expressiva with Rodolfo Fernández Álvarez, 11-12.11.2016, Col·legi Oficial de Disseny Gràfic de Catalunya, Barcelona,
- \*Caligrafía con Goticas Potentes with Oriol Miró Genovart, Domestika.
- \*Caligrafía para un Exlibris with Ricardo Rousselot Schmidt, Domestika,
- \*Lettering y Rotulacion a Pincel por Deletrista, Adrián Pérez, 28-29.01.2017, Martillo Fine Arts Workshop, Barcelona,
- \*Lettering Sobre Piedra with Stephen Watts, 11-12.02.2017, Visions Ilustración y Caligrafía, Barcelona,
- \*Introduccion de la Caligrafía China with Jenny Chih-Chieh, 02.03.2017, Espai Egg, Barcelona,
- \*Taller de Rotulacion with Jakob Engberg, 03-04.03.2017, Visions Ilustración y Caligrafía, Barcelona,

\*Brushwriting workshop with Luca Barcellona, 30-31.01.2020,  
Kaligrafist 2020, Istanbul,

\*Caligrafía y Rock'n'Roll with Ivan Castro, Domestika,

\*Blackletter, calligraphy workshop with Luca Barcellona, 01-02.02.2020  
Kaligrafist 2020, Istanbul.

From the methodological point of view, these practices provide a broad technical and practical knowledge about traditional and contemporary western calligraphy that my current calligraphy understanding and practices are grounded on as fundamental insights technically and conceptually.

## 1.5. Theoretical and referential framework

Western contemporary calligraphy requires a wide range of investigation. Consequently, within years, a considerable amount of literature has been published about western calligraphy, particularly in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, probably due to the rising trend towards calligraphy, ancient manuscripts, and handwritten texts at both professional and amateur levels.

The number of books that deal with western writing systems with their roots and developments, including or solely focusing on calligraphy, is now reasonably large. While some give more or less detailed background about the history and the development of letterforms, others present various ancient scripts serving as instruction manuals promising to teach. All that large number of works that have been found relevant for this research are going to comment below.

Jackson (1981), in his book entitled *The Story of Writing*, detailedly examined the evolution of writing and its development as a system, including ancient western practices with scripts in the Middle Ages until the current situation of the 1980s. The book takes attention, particularly with the part entitled "Writing as Art" (1981: 154), which focuses on the development that begins with the nineteenth century when Jackson also started to use the word calligraphy and calligrapher. It probably indicates the division between the ancient writing systems used for necessity and calligraphy practices with artistic approaches. This issue is significant; however, the reader does not encounter any detailed explanation of the West's perception of writing or calligraphy. Either writing or calligraphy, as a term, are examined detailly in that sense.

Apart from the historical evolutions of the writing, it is definitely needed to be considered how the perception of writing in the West affects the formation of calligraphy if the book includes western calligraphy in its content. Moreover, even though the scope is solely western; it is sincerely believed that to examine western calligraphy, it is indispensable to consider to apprehend other traditions that have been interacting, namely the Far Eastern (Chinese and Japanese calligraphy) and the Middle East (calligraphy with Arabic script and Islamic calligraphy) basically. This is the main subtraction that is distilled with this research. For this reason, it is a massive gap for the

book that wants to frame western calligraphy without enhancing the scope and perspective in terms of writing cultures; at least pointing or framing the concept in a general sense will be much more appropriate for the reader. And what has not been investigated in this book is to locate the significant points that need to be underlined in the literature on Western calligraphy. Apart from that, this book presents the western mindset of writing that is bounded to the functional necessities, which is the idea that is pointed out in this research. That means, it provides limited information within the limitations of western writing and calligraphy related to traditional mindset of calligraphy.

Drogin, with his two books written about calligraphy, entitled *Medieval Calligraphy Its History and Techniques* (1980) and *Calligraphy of the Middle Ages and How to Do It* (1982), takes attention by mostly focusing on calligraphy and the historical evolution of writing in the West belongs to the same time that Jackson (1981) published his above-mentioned book. Drogin provides detailed information about the medieval scripts, the evolution of the script until the printing period mostly, including the working environment and conditions of the scribes to frame the general atmosphere in the West at that time period. This is the significant part that provide information to detach the similarities and differences between the traditional scribe and contemporary calligrapher, who also inspires by these ancient writers and reflected these influences to their practices. For this reason, these books provide support information as a secondary source.

Moreover, Drogin's two books serve as manuals that consist mostly of more practical information about techniques relatively accompanied by visual references by offering instructions on selecting styles to the practitioners, namely Roman Capitals, Uncial, Carolingian, Gothic Hands, Italic, and Copperplate. Hence, the reader is encouraged to practice by copying each script's model by following Drogin's instructions to acquire the skill by learning the correct pen strokes with the proper angle required to correctly build the letterform structure. In addition to this, Drogin omits writing as a part of his books without giving any critical assessment of Western perception in terms of writing. He only intends to frame the western calligraphy tradition; however, it is believed that without giving a significant point about the writing concept of the West, it will be just a superficial attempt to frame Western calligraphy. Moreover, he does not mention the other calligraphy tradition. As stated earlier, western calligraphy cannot be described solely from a western perspective; particularly, it has to be considered whether there may be various features apart from the West that has affected the visual execution and conceptual point of view of contemporary western calligraphy. For this reason, it reveals the necessity of a detailed research and evaluation on these issues that are considered incomplete.

A relatively more recent published book than its predecessors, *More Than Fine Writing: The Life and Calligraphy of Irene Wellington* (1987) by Child, first slightly informs the reader with a little background about calligraphy's revival in the nineteenth century and introduce calligrapher Irene Wellington's (1904-1984) approach to calligraphy. Revival of western calligraphy is called modern calligraphy when the ancient script started to be reassessed and re-practiced by

various calligraphers and designers, but the main feature of western calligraphy of tradition; conveying the message through the meaning of the text, preserved mainly by these modernist calligraphers. Child (1987) states that fine and expressive writing manifests itself through Wellington's works, clearly constructed and well-organized calligraphy compositions. What can be understood here by examining the work included in this book, in the 1980s, expressive forms of calligraphy were still comprehended through well-constructed letterforms closely connected to literature and the meaning of the text in the West. Fine letters were described with their ideal forms, and expressiveness stepped in with the calligrapher's interpretation of the exact style of ancient script, which did not cover the current approaches to calligraphy, that will be illustrated in this doctoral research. For this present book, it can be claimed that the writer does not point at any fresh assessments. It is one of the significant contributions to the research topic that is needed to be discussed the modern and contemporary calligraphy with their features in order to frame the current practices appropriately.

Another book published the following year, entitled *Calligraphy Today: Twentieth Century Tradition and Practice* (1988) by Child concerns handmade lettering and calligraphy with a historical background of the various medieval script, including various calligraphy practices in Britain, Europe, and the USA. Even though the historical background is included in this book, this change does not appear to be fully discussed in detail about the transition from tradition to contemporary. One assumption about this transition, also mostly encountered in several other books, is thought as printing technology leads the scribe free from his burden, and it causes a space for him to start to appreciate calligraphy as a form of art. Technological development is considered the light of awareness in the scribe's mind. This statement raises a question during this research whether the restriction comes with the calligraphy itself or the perception of the West in terms of functionality of the writing causes to be blind to the potential of western calligraphy that can be interpreted through the gesture of the hand. Since technology is just a tool that does not directly affect the mindset of the contemporary calligrapher and determine the classifications, this statement of Child leads me to consider the perception of calligraphy and to write in the modern and postmodern period.

On the other hand, this book lacks an examination of the interaction between different calligraphy cultures on an artistic level and when and how they influence each other. It will then make critics whether the main reason for the Western scribe's freedom is the printing technics or interactions of different calligraphy perceptions. Since calligraphy has been assessed as art from the beginning in the Far East, technological advances are not criteria to determine the freedom of the calligraphic minds. Why this situation is totally different in the West becomes a relevant question that leads to a search for the meaning of the writing and calligraphy before and now for this research.

Furthermore, the part entitled "Lettering as an Art" (1988: 94) written by calligrapher, book designer, educator, paleographer, and author Villu Toots takes attention here. Toots himself underlines that designing



letters with an aesthetic impact means going beyond the letter's communicative value. Toots (1988) mentions that "contemporary abstract calligraphy/experimental calligraphy/calligraphy without words" (1988: 94) is inspired by oriental brush calligraphy, and the notion of the contemporary artists is "to create emotions that activate inner life" (1988: 94, 92). Obviously, Toots identified contemporary tendencies through the Far Eastern calligraphy without detailed information about the Far Eastern calligraphy tradition or Western perception, or without underlining the western practices of lettering and typography as an image in the modern and postmodern period. Hence, it is once again underlined through this book that these issues are needed to be examined.

In addition, Toots (1988) underlines that some Westerners are in the quest for an oriental mindset but fail to assimilate it. The reason is shown as Latin alphabets, which are "too simple for obtaining interesting and picturesque from with the help of playful lines" (1988: 93). These are highly noteworthy critics; however, it has to be expressed by justifying it by detailed information and outlining it. Without any detailed information, it cannot be well-understood and also may cause misunderstandings or conflicts, but at least it can be claimed that western calligraphy as a subject may be started to be held comprehensively by this type of critic. Furthermore, without being able to read the written text, if there is any, one can enjoy the work through its' plastic values. Unreadable text may be perceived as abstract calligraphic work, and through various features, such as the quality of the line or a stroke, the work can be understood, appreciated, and even interpreted by the viewer since the work promises the open space through its gestures. A more critical perspective and theoretical assessment of the tendency of most contemporary artists' work reflect personal interpretation that may help capture the contemporary Western calligraphy's general frame. For this reason, this issue is also included in the theoretical part of the research, which will lead to more appropriate discussion and assessment in the realm of contemporary calligraphy.

French type designer and calligrapher Mediavilla's book entitled *Calligraphy: From Calligraphy to Abstract Painting* (1996) is one of the highly respected, recommended, and considered a reference not because it provides comprehensive theoretical information but also because it addresses the contemporary tendencies with significant assessments. It can be claimed that Mediavilla is one of the first that look critically at that range from the viewpoint of the new calligraphic approaches of the West. Revealing his practices and philosophy of Western calligraphy, Mediavilla starts with writing until the current calligraphy practices, which are assessed as a form of art in the West through gestural aspects that become gradually dominant instead of the literal meaning of the words. He promises his readers a book that serves aesthetical and practical ways by providing analysis and a practical guide of the subject by peeling the letter's phonetic value in the search for reinventing an expressive power of a sign.

It seems one of the aims of this book is organized and present subjects to fill various gaps in the assessments and perceptions of calligraphy. Looking at the statement of Mediavilla in his book, he

starts with the introductory notion that he discussed the definition and description of calligraphy as a discipline in which various prejudices and misunderstandings exist. He thinks that calligraphy is difficult to define and it is the object of so many prejudices. First, he begins with the emphasis on writing, which is mostly considered a semantic feature rather than a graphic. According to him, "Writing acquires meaning through legibility and the process of alphabetic reading. On the other hand, Calligraphy can acquire meaning through silence since it is intended to be expressive and artistic rather than strictly utilitarian" (1996: 17). Based on this assessment, it is evident that he believes writing and calligraphy are two distinct areas to study with closely linked each other. It is interesting that Mediavilla here does not mention anything about the western limit of the Latin alphabet as Toots does. He considers the invention of writing as a "precondition for the development of calligraphy" (1996: 75). While writing is assessed as a vehicle here that serves needs through his functional features, calligraphy is expected to be assessed here as an expressive form that the artist manifests himself through his calligraphic practices.

It is highly interesting that Mediavilla seems to ignore writing practices that are executed as a form of art rather than strictly related to spoken language. Instead, he wants to draw a strict line between the term writing and calligraphy. One of the main gaps seems to start here. First, He doesn't mention the perception of the writing in the West and the different perspectives of other writing systems, namely the Far East and the Middle East, in which writing and calligraphy actually do not separate each other that sharp. That means to comprehend the term writing; it is indispensable to know about other writing systems, how they appreciate writing, and in what way calligraphy and writing are perceived. Only in these circumstances does it seem that this assessment will be more accurate. For this reason, this issue is included in this research to know the comprehension of western writing and how it is appreciated in the West. It also affects the understanding and employs the western calligraphy tradition.

After making this division between writing and calligraphy, Mediavilla (1996) discusses the literal definition of calligraphy, which can be assumed as crucial even though all sources and artists have a consensus about it. For this reason, it can be underlined that this issue is probably one of his significant contributions.

Calligraphy is a Greek word that translates to English as "the art of beautiful writing" or "writing beautifully." However, Mediavilla claims that it is the misinterpretation of the word *kallos* that may refer to beauty in a different sense. He points at artistic beauty described as "a very high-level signifying altogether different dimensions of strength and fulfillment in the plastic arts" (1996: 17). Another point that he underlines is that *graphein*, etymologically, may indicate not just writing but also drawing. So, its range is changing when considering drawing apart from writing as an act and as a concept; hence he defines calligraphy with the expended nature of *graphein* -writing and drawing, not just with letters but signs created "in an expressive, harmonious and skillful manner" (1996: 18). It does not just provide the definition but also lets to question how translation may affect judging the concept and characteristics of



western calligraphy. This issue is found essential in my research before trying to describe contemporary calligraphy; hence the definition of calligraphy is included in this research to answer the raised questions in terms of contemporary western practices and avoid conflicts.

Mediavilla (1996) also seems to include letters and all sorts of free gestural strokes; even marks may be called calligraphy as soon as they carry various features in them. He highlights the universal parameters, namely harmony, proportion, formal balance, rhythm and contrast, as terms that calligraphers have to consider. He also takes attention to these statements that define calligraphy: "...to my mind at least, calligraphy is essentially a spiritual activity, a means of acquiring self-knowledge based on values which exclude the very idea of fashion" (1996: 13) -underlining that the importance of calligraphy lies in how written, rather than what is written. It is evident that Mediavilla defined calligraphy by the values and features of Far Eastern calligraphy, namely revealing emotions as a spiritual activity, or at least he points at similarities between these concepts without mentioning them. It is another gap in his assessment in this book. For this reason, the Far Eastern calligraphy traditions, with their mindset and practices, it is included in this research to detach the features of the contemporary practices through observing and comparing the similarities between west and east, which will help contemporary western mindset more accurately understand.

In this respect, considering the features that he underlines, Mediavilla reaches his claim that "calligraphy is closer to painting than to literature and even could be considered as the source of painting" (1996: 17). It may be one of the main reasons he ignores writing as a form of art; instead, he calls all sorts of expressive marks, signs, strokes, and lines calligraphy. Here, another question raised about calligraphy is whether closer to painting than writing or whether this comparison is appropriate since the west's painting and writing are assessed as two different disciplines. Is it referring that calligraphy is needed to be renamed or qualified through the aesthetic consideration of painting?

Besides, the analogy between calligraphy and painting here that manifests itself in the last part of Mediavilla's book, illustrated calligraphy without exact words or even letters. By reconsidering *graphein* -writing and drawing and the painterly attitude of a contemporary calligrapher who creates abstract forms in their practices, Mediavilla (1996) points out the significant link between calligraphy and abstract painting. This issue has given rise to several research questions and, also, to some hypotheses that are stated before. It is a noteworthy aspect that he points out that leads to opening an additional perspective in the quest to observe and address the contemporary attitude that emerged mostly in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries, since various contemporary calligraphers prefers to identify themselves as a painter rather than a calligrapher.

However, it is not that explanatory and satisfactory without intensely dealing with the understanding of the Far East contemporary perception and understandings, in which painting and calligraphy are assumed as sister art, intermingled each other. Also, if this type of

division or classifications are necessary or accurately reflect the feature and dynamics of contemporary western calligraphy is controversial, which can be discussed after detailed research about these issues. Another question is here raised through the abstraction, whether abstraction of the western painting and western calligraphy can be assessed as if they are both practices with similar attitudes.

Moreover, the visual aspect of the Far Eastern writing systems is needed to be considered here that are based on ideographic forms also consists more than the literal meaning of the character, which leads to dividing the comprehension of the issue of abstraction between the Far Eastern and the Western concepts. This issue can be seen in the Middle East, a graphical feature through their alphabet, even with a phonetic feature. Far Eastern and Middle Eastern cultures do not consider writing and calligraphy as two different disciplines, and calligraphy is considered to convey more than the literal meaning of the text in both a traditional and contemporary manner. Without examining them, once again, it cannot be claimed that the issue is considered comprehensively. That means, as mentioned earlier, the writing concept of the West is needed to be understood, so it is included in the first part of this research.

Another thing that takes attention in Mediavilla's book is a foreword written by a Maya expert specializing in Maya Hieroglyphs and calligraphy, Mark Van Stone, who stated that calligraphy is still thought that related to language; hence it is assessed as something utilitarian. It refers to calligraphy practices still consisting of clear letterforms and text with the anxiety of message through written words. Van Stone divides calligraphic practices into two main genres. First is called "vehicular calligraphy," which has a communicative power consisting of Imperial Rome's inscription and illuminated manuscripts of medieval times, including type designs that are carefully crafted letterings that can be encountered on book jackets, movie titles, or corporate advertising. This genre, according to Van Stone, with its communicative power, "invites, cajoles, demands to be read, obeyed, believed, or bought" (1996: 7). The second genre of Van Stone's division is called "abstract art," in which calligrapher as any other artists, acquiring the skills for a lifetime in techniques, forms, and the visual language that evoke emotions, reflects all to his practices. Van Stone quotes from the Chinese calligrapher Wang His-Chih (Wang Xizhi) (303–361) point at calligraphy relate to the soul and feelings by distilling the essence of power calligraphy. According to him, this kind of calligrapher can reflect this power through a single stroke, as if singing, dancing, or crying.

Interestingly, Van Stone takes it one step further and claims that modern western calligrapher, just like Japanese calligraphy, executes their art as a martial art in which a meditative technique of action points at *shodo* (the way of a brush), the term used in Japan to refer calligraphy. According to Van Stone, Mediavilla, with his book, pays attention to that kind of calligraphy practice. Hence, it is understood once again that calligraphy today is assumed to be an art form that takes similarities with the Far Eastern calligraphy tradition, even equating each other through the abstract attitude that means without actual word or text. Without considering the abstraction as a concept from the Far Eastern point of view, this assessment cannot be accurate, while the perception of the

abstract form of calligraphy is comprehended highly differently from the Western, which takes its roots and references from its tradition without claiming being formless. This issue also raises various research questions and hypotheses related to the influences on contemporary western calligraphy, which started to reflect a highly similar visual appearance to abstract painting or Far Eastern calligraphy practices. Hence, it directs to search for interactions between these calligraphy traditions, also relations between the concepts and mindsets of the calligraphers with the tendency to create a written image rather than a written text.

The other foreword is written by Donald Jackson, who describes current practices aimed at reaching a sort of dynamic shape balanced between chaos and calm. According to him, historical knowledge and practices are also significant to mature and reach accurate expression. What is understood up until now is that the historical knowledge and practice of the historical script are assessed as indispensable, and the first phase of calligraphy practices even for a calligrapher who creates a work that is close to abstraction. Maturing the knowledge and the skill of western calligraphy cannot solely provide the knowledge of western calligraphy history with its evolution; it also lies in an awareness of how writing is perceived and also other main calligraphy traditions comprehensively. It will provide an open and more accurate apprehension of the situation here. How calligraphy is understood and appreciated there is indispensable to question. Only the knowledge of the western calligraphy perception, along with the path of abstraction in the realm of calligraphy, will be highly superficial to deal with it in one dimension and to a one-sided understanding of the essence of the issue. It is observed that this issue is not voiced, depicted at all, or not enough from the right angle in the above-mentioned books. Hence, once more, it points at the necessity to comprehensive survey in contemporary calligraphy.

Another important book entitled, *Scribe: Artist of The Written Word* (2013), was written by calligrapher and lettering artist John Stevens, one of the few who contributed to the understanding of the perceptions of calligraphy in the West. Apart from presenting a retrospective of his work with letterforms in the realm of calligraphy and lettering both in a conventional and contemporary manner, he draws attention to his thought and approach, first through his book's title, which takes attention in the first place. He prefers the word "scribe" that is described with the phrase "artist of the written word," reflects his perspective on calligraphy. He uses the word scribe rather than a calligrapher to indicate an artist who practiced with letters. It is highly considered because one can claim that the word scribe was mostly used before the printing period and refers to medieval writers, mostly not professionals, monks, or even enslaved people who wrote to copy the text. It seems Stevens points at that confusion in using the scribe and calligrapher, which is not clearly stated or explained. It is the issue that is believed to include in this research to be understood the concept of the scribe/calligrapher to avoid misuse. This issue raises a question to discuss the role of ancient scribe and calligrapher concept that points at the craft and art concept of the western calligraphy.

Like Mediavilla, Stevens (2013) criticizes the word calligraphy, which is not representative of letter art that is practiced today; on the contrary,

according to him, the word and its perception are stuck in penmanship, which refers to the function of copying and conveying the message. He explains it through the statement: "The word "calligraphy" is not big enough to capture the best of our work today" (2013: 15). He also adds that "calligraphy is in the process of redefining itself" (2013: 21). Stevens stresses that calligraphy is not executed within the boundaries as in ancient times. However, it seems more appropriate to claim that not the word itself but the interpretation and conceptualizing of the word calligraphy, which is formed by the Western idea of writing, can be held responsible for it. For this reason, the concept of calligraphy, which refers to the traditional practice and contemporary practices, shifted, then it raises questions about the features of contemporary western calligraphy and how it can be assessed, and by what criteria it can be discussed.

With the guidance of Mediavilla (1996) and Stevens (2013), criticizing and analyzing the definition of calligraphy in the West, the calligraphy concept is included in a broad sense through its definitions and descriptions to determine whether the current tendencies are needed to be redefined, or renamed to capture the whole contemporary attitudes and tendencies. Instead of renaming it, it is decided to look and examine another perspective to see the nature and the core of the writing and calligraphy that is independent from the boundaries of the artists' mind, but it has a potential to discover as in the case of the Far Eastern. This affected my perception of writing and calligraphy, which gave a direction to this research and influenced my personal practices within their conceptual interpretation and presentation. The terminology becomes clearer and more accurate with the detailed examination of the definitions and the concept of western, eastern, and middle eastern concepts of writing and calligraphy. That also leads to a detailed examination of the interaction between these calligraphy cultures that makes this research comprehensive and presents a significant perspective to understanding contemporary western calligraphy.

Stevens criticizes calligraphic practices as stressing the quality of line -he prefers to call "attitude" (2013: 71), living letters, finely balanced relationships between positive and negative space, which points to the consideration of the space around as a real matter. He claims that the expressiveness of the work can be defined by "personal imagery, discovery, emotion and visual excitement or energy" (2013: 25). According to him, everything can be expressive as long as it expresses something, and traditional calligraphy practices can be expressive as well.

However, the main concern for him is that the quality of the work may be appreciated through various features, such as dynamism, being alive, harmony, rhythm, and accumulated wisdom that manifest itself through the line without distinction between the genres, trends, styles, or whether there exist letters or words. These terms become issues that need to be considered and evaluated in more detail due to the discussion that is made highly limited by Stevens to examine concretely. These concepts of dynamism, being alive, harmony, and rhythm sound nonphysical, so how do detach them through contemporary practices? And what are the criteria and aesthetic considerations of contemporary practices? What is the meaning of

the quality of the line in terms of calligraphy? They must examine various significant contemporary calligraphers with their wide range of calligraphy practices representing different technical and conceptual attitudes. This is the significant part of this research that must be included in this investigation to understand the current tendencies.

On the other hand, Stevens (2013) claims that Eastern sensibility, graffiti, scribbling, handwriting, expressive mark-making, abstract expressionism, drawing, and letterform structures are part of the spirit of contemporary calligraphy and letter arts, and he offers us to see this dynamism as an addition to the tradition, rather than as a replacement of it (2013: 125). This is a highly crucial critique and analysis that provide ample support to frame the state of current practices and their analysis that raises a question about the relation and interaction between the western and eastern calligraphy practices technically and conceptually.

Moreover, according to Stevens (2013), calligraphy is supposed to be considered a signpost that heralds a much larger idea. Hence, drawing, painting, sculpture, graffiti, or other art forms can be calligraphy through mark-like quality rather than mechanically drawn or written. He even passes the names of various artists such as Robert Motherwell, Jackson Pollock, and Franz Kline, whose works consist of the sensibility of a line that looks calligraphic. Here, the concept of the word as an image seems to find itself through the similarity with the abstract painting practices that raises a question in discussing the word as an image concept in contemporary western calligraphy.

Hence, as Mediavilla (1996), Stevens describes his understanding of calligraphy through various notions and features that are actually larger than tradition, even contemporary that still hanging around the ancient perception of western calligraphy. That makes it necessary for a comprehensive survey, not just in the content of the West. Even though Stevens (2013) stresses highly considerable points here, it still does not fill this gap enough because he does not examine the Far Eastern mentality, the interaction, and effects on calligraphy practice in the West. Moreover, the aforementioned western artists talk about how they were influenced by Far Eastern art and calligraphy in shaping their understanding. It would not be sufficiently explanatory to mention the calligraphic traces in their work without addressing these issues.

Furthermore, considering the western abstract painters that are mentioned above, it raised one of the critical questions that start with Mediavilla (1996) and his comparison of calligraphy with painting, whether calligraphy becomes another form of abstract painting or is it accurate to describe these abstract painters' work as calligraphic? These questions lead to focus on calligraphy and writing, the division of painting in the western mentality. Also, the abstraction of calligraphy becomes an essential part of the first part of this research to understand whether calligraphy becomes an abstract painting or the word abstract carries a closer conceptual mindset to Far Eastern calligraphy rather than western painting with its references from the past, other cultures, and disciplines with its eclectic feature.



One contribution of Steven is the term "hybrid," which is used by him to refer to contemporary calligraphy practices produced by brush that illustrate the convergence and transition of calligraphy to expanded artist's moves. While the broad edge is the instrument of the West, and Western calligraphy was inclined to produce even rhythm and weight, the pointed brush is used for Far Eastern calligraphy, in which different weighting systems and variations within the stroke itself are highly valued. The different feature of the tools reflects the character of the line. With time, the lines' character started to change through the attitude of the calligrapher due to the rising interest of the West to brush calligraphy. Furthermore, in some cases, the differences even started to be disappeared. Hence, the variety of characters within the stroke became desirable and visible to western calligraphers. Stevens describes this with the term hybrid and the forms as hybrid forms representing the sensibility between the pointed brush and broad-edged brush. Here what does the sensibility mean? Stevens points at the disappearing boundaries between the Western and Far Eastern thought of calligraphy. However, here, another question arises in how and with which motivations western calligraphy started to transform from the written text to performed gesture. What is the concept of the gesture in calligraphy? It is evidently not considered at the deepest level in Steven's book; for this reason, it is appropriate to include these issues in this research.

Stevens (2013) also states his concern about the western calligraphy culture, which had not evolved the sensibility to be considered an art. He claims that the West undoubtedly lacks awareness of the calligraphic form as in the Middle East cultures. He states that "Certainly the west lacks the awareness and sensibility to the calligraphic form that middle Eastern and Asian cultures still have" (2013: 15). It is obvious back then; medieval might not understand and assimilated the nature of the written word, which was solely served for functional needs and did not consist of any attributed values as in the Far Eastern or the Middle Eastern writing. Here, there needs to be a comprehensive search of how writing and calligraphy are appreciated once again. Even though Stevens mentions critical points here, it is believed that his explanations in his book are not that satisfactory without a comprehensive assessment of this genre. The writing concept of the west directly affected the understanding of calligraphy, how to employ and practice included. Hence, the traditional western calligraphy becomes an issue that is first needed to be known to be comprehend, which create awareness of the limitations of the concept of the traditional mindset that has been transformed in present.

Apart from Mediavilla (1996) and Stevens (2013), a renowned Irish calligrapher Brown, in his book entitled *Brown Calligraphy, Denis Brown Discusses His Art* (2017), offers a great insight to his readers about his approaches to his works with his unique styles and idioms by discussing every phase, regarding letterforms and composition, structure and fluency, discipline and freedom, including the transcends of lettering and design to broader realms of self-expression and artistic communication with loaded expressive gestures.

As Stevens (2013) and Mediavilla (1996), Brown (2017) describes calligraphy by first criticizing the translation of *kallos* and *graphein*.

According to Brown (2017), this etymological translation reflects simply decorated letterforms and calligraphy, which reproduce to conform to traditional modes. Thus, he refuses to be limited by conventional notions and by this term as well. However, here, it would be more appropriate to give detailed information in the sense of the terms, and discussing it from various aspects is very important in terms of being understandable. It is important to emphasize that the perception that is transformed today is an entirely personal issue, not through the term but understanding and making the analyzes and explanations according to the values of the period. This discussion raises a question about how the contemporary calligraphy can be defined or described, as it is stated in the section dedicated to research questions. This issue is included in the first part of this research, which led to reconsidering the term appropriate to define to avoid the conflicts.

While Brown (2017) represents his traditional legible calligraphy practices alongside work, what is highly considerable is how he examines creativity with content and conceptual sense in responding to texts by representing and identifying his unique style called *polyrhythmic calligraphy* (2017: 112). It is the term that implies the simultaneous utilization of two or more rhythms that he adapted from the music and applied to his practices, contrary to traditional calligraphy, which focuses on the same rhythm within the style due to the functional reasons. This is what he called transcending tradition, which will be mentioned in Chapter VI. For these reasons, without giving much detail about it, focusing his perception of calligraphy, what he believes is as an artist, who experiments, rather than employing calligraphy as a servant of the text, but fusing the techniques with the conceptual attitude is the aim tendency of him. This practices points at the question to discuss about contemporary calligraphy whether it represent the total departure of the tradition or not.

It is obvious that he does not exclude the convention; however, recognizing the concept of Chinese and Japanese calligraphy, summarized as "spirit in calligraphy that may be more important than its legibility" (2017: 119). He believes western calligraphy can be assessed in the same way. This explanation is worth to be discussed on a deeper level with the critical information about Chinese and Japanese calligraphy, which is absent in Brown's book. For this reason, it is difficult to understand the mindset behind these calligraphy traditions. Hence, framing contemporary western calligraphy becomes challenging to appreciate. That points to the importance of gaining insight into Far Eastern calligraphy to determine the various dynamics and influences of contemporary western calligraphy.

Another term Brown (2017) coins is *reductionist calligraphy*, which refers to abstraction in the realm of calligraphy for Brown by reducing calligraphy to its "essential" (2017: 235). That means he does not write as he does in the traditional sense. There are no letters, words, or characters just performing with the material in his reductionist attitude, representing abstract calligraphy for him. It consists of photographing images of ink dispersed in a liquid and writing legible words on it with his polyrhythmic calligraphy. It is assessed as a reductionist approach that is aimed probably to distill the western limitations and is explained by Brown as "calligraphy as a recording in ink of a performance of movement" (2017: 88).



During the explanation of his approaches to reductionist calligraphy -he also called it pure calligraphy while explaining the process in which he stresses the abstract conceptualism and how calligraphy is no longer serves for any functional reasons as it was at medieval times is significant; however, it is questionable to call it reductionist or pure, while Brown supported these images with the written words that are supposed to be read. It can be said that it creates a question of whether it is in a contradiction within itself, together with not being able to stand in its claim fully. This issue points at the discussion whether contemporary mindset represent the total departure from the tradition.

Furthermore, as calligraphy became more gestural, Brown (2017) states that he started to look at the painting of Pollock, Kline, Tobey, or Motherwell, as Stevens (2013) mentions, as a source of inspiration for his works, without considering how these painters were influenced by the Far Eastern art and calligraphy practices. That means, without mentioning the mutual interaction between the West and East, the references and concepts of the abstract painters cannot be fully understood from the abstract concept of Far Eastern calligraphy, which is different from the western abstraction concept. This issue underlines the need to question the relation between these calligraphy traditions, inspirations and similar features that is traced visually and conceptually.

At that point, without gaining this insight, assessing contemporary calligraphy with highly abstract forms as liken to abstract paintings of western is not accurate. It means there is a considerable gap to be considered and discussed from various perspectives. The interactions between the east and west, as mentioned earlier, included a detailed examination of the influences on these mentioned painters, who are also pointed to as inspirations by contemporary western calligraphers, without mentioning the effect of the Far Eastern calligraphy and painting on them. It is seen as significant to underline the inspiration and features that are highly dominantly employed by contemporary western calligraphers and have their roots in the Far East. For this reason, Far Eastern calligraphy, with its tradition, mindset, aesthetic considerations, and abstraction concept, takes immense place in this research for the sake of answering the research questions and understanding contemporary western calligraphy.

Another significant writer, Eco, with his books *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages* (1986), *The Open Work* (1989), and *On Beauty: A History of a Western Idea* (2004), is highly significant. *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages* (1986) and *On Beauty: A History of a Western Idea* (2004) provide fundamental knowledge about the concept of art and beauty of the Middle Ages, which let me discuss these two concepts in the realm of traditional calligraphy, which was in its heyday in the Middle Ages. As stated in the research question about contemporary calligraphy, whether it carries traces and references from the tradition, Eco (1986, 2004) provides insight to compare and find the answers in terms of art-craft and beauty concepts. Furthermore, with his book *The Open Work* (1989), the phenomenon of open work gives a crucial perspective to assess the contemporary calligraphy features and describe various features that are aimed to frame in this research.

As a result of the current literature review and the data obtained from the research, the significant gaps in this issue, as stated above, are located. There is no comprehensive research on contemporary western calligraphy related to its features and influences, particularly the tradition of western calligraphy, Far Eastern and Middle Eastern calligraphy, including the abstract painting of the western. One of the biggest confusions seems about the definition and description of western calligraphy through the term calligraphy that is interfered with the writing understanding of the West, which has evolved around the functional reason and the phonetic alphabet. This mindset seems to drive a corner of the idea of writing, as well as the perception of calligraphy, which is also employed for the same functional reasons.

When comparing the tradition and the contemporary practices, there is a huge difference that is understood as if contemporary tendencies represent a sharp departure from the tradition. However, comprehensive research from various perspectives shows that western calligraphy has an accumulated nature, which means cherishing the tradition, craft knowledge, and the personal interpretation and feelings of the calligrapher, who is willing to perform calligraphy as an expressive art form. It is significant to reassess all these features to locate and appreciate contemporary tendencies.

It can be claimed that all the objectives, questions and hypothesis of this research that are mentioned in part "1.3. Research questions, hypothesis, and objectives," are formed around these literature review and the gaps that are claimed as detached here.

## **1.6. Content**

The document presented here is divided into seven chapters, including a conclusion part and two appendices.

While Chapter I covers the introduction of the research, chapter II covers the definitions of the terms, namely writing, lettering, typography, and calligraphy, which are examined comprehensively to provide general information about how these terms are described and understood based on various information extracted from dictionaries, books, articles and statements of various authors and artists. The focus is on the term calligraphy here; however, to comprehend it more accurately, it is indispensable to discuss other terms –writing, handwriting, lettering, and typography, and how they are perceived in the West. Here, emphasizing the term writing carries particular importance that will reveal the western evolution of writing and how it is perceived as a vehicle of spoken language rather than an autonomous entity as can be encountered among current practices. Under the comprehensive examination first about the writing here, the quest of locating and framing the term in the realm of the Western world provides a better understanding of the western mindset about writing and calligraphy. It is believed that the discussions below are highly significant for artists who practice writing as an art form to view and assess writing from these perspectives and surrogate its theoretical part that authors or artists do not generally discuss in mentioned literature.

With this awareness of the issue, the definition of calligraphy is still crucial and problematic, which is also examined in this chapter regarding various dictionaries, encyclopedias, or statements of significant authors or writers. Here, rather than giving a complete description of calligraphy, it seems more crucial to discuss these sources' explanations from various perspectives that will help to describe the features of the western calligraphy tradition and today's situation.

In Chapter III, the aim is mainly to focus on the Western calligraphy tradition through various significant scripts and their characteristics to provide knowledge about the evolution of scripts of Western Calligraphy from the Middle Ages to the early years of the printing period in the sixteenth century, including the revival of western calligraphy, the period that is called modern. This information gives inside about the voyage of the perception of the scribes/calligraphers/artists in the realm of calligraphy that will also support a better understanding of contemporary western calligraphy in comparison to the western calligraphy tradition.

Chapter IV focuses on Far Eastern calligraphy, mainly Chinese and Japanese calligraphy, starting with brief information about the writing systems that differ from Western. Moreover, to comprehend the calligraphy tradition of the Far East, it is indispensable to consider the cultural mindset behind it, namely Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism, that will provide insight into terms aesthetic consideration of Far Eastern calligraphy. Apart from the tools and materials employed, the terms *shufa* (for Chinese calligraphy) and *shodo* (for Japanese calligraphy) used to refer to the word calligraphy will be examined. The evolution of various ancient scripts until modern and contemporary practices within the realm is also included in this part. With this comprehensive insight into the Far Eastern calligraphy practices, the mutual influences with their features and dynamics are located between Far Eastern calligraphy and Western art; also, between the calligraphy practices.

Chapter V focuses on Middle Eastern calligraphy and refers to calligraphy practices with the Arabic script and Islamic calligraphy. The general approach to this part is similar to the previous chapter. First, the Arabic writing system is mentioned briefly, then delving into the concept of *khatt*, a term used to refer to the word calligraphy. To comprehend it deeply, it is also indispensable to mention the Islamic culture, which mostly affects the formation and conception of Middle Eastern perception of writing, such as the importance of writing for Islam, the general concept, and the mystical dimension of Islamic art and calligraphy. Besides the main tools employed, the evolution of various scripts, including the contemporary interpretations in the realm of Middle Eastern calligraphy, will provide insight into general appreciation. Hence, the influences on contemporary western calligraphy practices will be discussed.

Chapter VI focuses on contemporary western calligraphy, starting with the various information about the word as an image concept also its' relation to the western abstract painting and the postmodern

condition, which will help to understand various features of contemporary calligraphy with its historical roots, similar examples, and points to be evaluated that will be observed through the current practices of Western calligraphers to frame the general tendency of various selected noteworthy calligraphers of the West. Western Calligraphy undertakes new dimensions with various layers marked by a rich multiplicity of forms in a contemporary mindset. Considerable awareness of Western calligraphy as awakening interest in various manners can be observed through the practices of the contemporary artists, which is a focus point in Chapter VI. Several artists, namely Niels "Shoe" Meulman, Pokras Lampas, Said Dokins, Denise Brown, Denis Lach, Loredana Zega, Thomas Ingmire and Viktor Kams who work in an interdisciplinary way and collaborations reflect various motivations and influences on their Western calligraphy practices will be perused in detail. By examining these selected western calligraphers and their practices, their statements, and various literature examined comprehensively; the influences can be generally ranked as western calligraphy tradition with its history in its form and concept. Also, other calligraphy traditions, mostly Far Eastern and Middle Eastern calligraphy, with their aesthetic considerations both consciously and unconsciously, current tendencies are framed. Their perception provides ample support to locate contemporary tendencies and illustrate the dynamics, features, and characteristics of Western calligraphy practices today compared to the tradition, Far Eastern, and Middle Eastern calligraphy traditions.

At last, Chapter VII presents my personal calligraphy interpretation and practices that have embodied by accumulated knowledge and experiences. They gave a chance to build a significant relationship between the theory, my perception. My practice of western calligraphy has been transformed by visually and conceptually by acquiring theoretical and practical knowledge about its history, techniques, and evolution visually and conceptually.

Moreover, this doctoral research closes with conclusions and a bibliography. In addition, two appendices are included. Appendix A covers technical information about calligraphy, and Appendix B exhibits various lectures and workshops that I participated in Spain, France, and Turkey, which have contributed immensely to acquiring the calligraphic skill technically and practically.



## II. DEFINING THE TERMS:

### WRITING, LETTERING, TYPOGRAPHY AND CALLIGRAPHY

More and more people practice calligraphy to explore more expressive and individual approaches and create personal styles and languages with various motivations. Both professionals' and pupils' interests interact with other disciplines and create fusion works that melt in each other. These interactions mainly invite the interlaced complexity and ambiguity in terms primarily used to refer to practices or intentions.

What calligraphy is and which practice can be called a calligraphy piece or not even if it cause problematic assessments and localizations between the professionals and forces to create classifications or invent new terms. It seems to evoke confusion and create a grey area as a highly open discipline to certain prejudices and misunderstandings in the current state. Under these circumstances, Western Calligraphy is not that easy to define traditionally and contemporarily.

In particular, it may be claimed that it is not solely an issue of the history of the writing nor particularly calligraphy itself that requires reconsidering; on the contrary, as a whole, from different perspectives, it is significant to observe and discuss to frame and locate the contemporary calligraphy practices, the dynamics behinds them. Before discussing the salient points about contemporary western calligraphy, some remarks connected with terminology and definitions should be made. For this reason, it is necessary to examine the terms of writing, handwriting, lettering, and typography; how to define them and how to define calligraphy in a literal and practical sense can be discussed in detail. These are large areas to examine. Considering the limitations, it will be in search of raising questions from various perspectives and inviting closer attention.

In this chapter, by collecting the various and significant definitions and descriptions extracted from different sources, such as dictionaries, books, articles, and statements of some critics and artists, the discussion will be held surrounding the term writing, lettering, typography, and calligraphy, since it is necessary to clarify in the first place to locate and frame the contemporary western calligraphy itself.

## 2.1. Writing: A brief tour of its origins and definitions of the term

This part will examine the meaning of the term writing literally and observe the possible motivation behind the evolution of writing; also, some discussions and conflicts will be mentioned here by examining various authors who have studied this genre. The comprehensive examination first of the writing here, in the quest of locating and framing the term in the realm of the Western world, will provide a better understanding of the western mindset starting with writing. It is believed that the discussions below are highly significant for artists who practice writing as an art form to view and assess writing from these perspectives and surrogate its theoretical part that the authors discussed here.

It could be claimed that understanding the term writing is the primer point of the formation of existing perceptions in the western world about calligraphy and has a direct impact and reflections on the current contemporary calligraphy practices.

According to Ong (2002), writing, especially alphabetic writing, is among the most drastic of the three technology, and it started with what print and computers merely continue, which means "reduction of dynamic sound to quiescent space, the separation of the word from the living present, where alone spoken words can exist" (Ong, 2002: 80).

Writing has gone through many stages. It can be observed through the cave of Altamira (c. 21,000 to 17,000 BC), the cuneiform tablets of Mesopotamia (c. 3500-3000 BC), Egyptian hieroglyphics (c. 3000 BC), the first alphabets in Syria (c. 1300 BC), hence the development of printing (the eleventh century in China and the fifteenth century in Europe) as a visible mark that has passed on to generations.

According to *Online Etymology Dictionary*, the word writing is explained as "to score, outline, draw the figure of" in Old English (*written*). It continues to illustrate in various languages, namely in Proto-Germanic (*written*) refers "to tear, scratch," in Old High German (*rizan*) refers "to write, scratch, tear," in German (*reißen*) refers "to tear, pull, tug, sketch, draw, design," and in most Indo-European languages the word "to write" refers "to carve, scratch, cut." Considering the languages mentioned here, the word "to write," as claimed here, as a verb has a broad sense of various types of activities, namely "tearing, scratching, sketching, drawing, carving, cutting, pulling, tugging," which points to the various stages that writing gone through in respect of tools and techniques that used in a particular time.

Looking to the definition of *Online Cambridge Dictionary*, the word "to write" is explained as "to make marks that represent letters, words, or numbers on a surface, such as paper or a computer screen, using a pen, pencil, or keyboard, or to use this method to record thoughts, facts, or messages." In this definition, as the previous definition also consists, writing is an act that is executed in various ways. Moreover, it is summed up as a method with a specific function, to record. As an act, with various tools, including a primitive form of material to



digital platforms, the features of marks here specified as letters, words, or numbers that probably means recognizable by either side used for various purposes. It also points to the units of a language system, namely letters, words, or numbers, that are assumed as vehicles of the act of writing. A general initiation to this definition began with mark-making as representative of thoughts, facts, or messages. Overall, it will not be wrong to claim that writing is accepted as a practical method to communicate in a broad sense. At this point, it would be useful to provide some knowledge about the term writing through significant authors that study the realm of writing.

Davy (1772) starts his book with the following statements: "Writing, in the earliest ages of the world, was a delineation of the outlines of those things men wanted to remember, rudely graven either upon shells or stones, or marked upon the leaves or bark of trees" (Davy, 1772: 1). A memory aid is stressed here as the origin or trigger necessity of writing by Davy. The motivation behind writing at an early age is assumed to be its function.

On the other hand, British linguist, palaeographer, and writer David Diringer (1962) defines writing as follows; "the graphic counterpart of speech, the fixing of spoken language in a permanent or semi-permanent form" (Diringer, 1962: 13) in which he points to bound of writing to speech, and he continuous as "writing presupposes the existence of spoken language" (Diringer, 1962: 14). He underlines the relationship between speech and writing as many other authors, namely Gelb (1963) and Avrin (1991), mentioned in the following pages.

Moreover, Diringer (1962) assesses writing as a conscious activity and has inseparably bound up with man's conscious intellect. That may be considered his idea about writing closely related to language itself and the established stabilized system. Here, it may become blurry whether he accepted the primitive forms as writing or not.

About the description of writing, Ong (2002) states in a strict sense of the word; that it is a technology that has shaped and heightened modern man's intellectual level and activity. For this reason, he assumes it as a very late development in human history, especially considering *homo sapiens* who have been on earth for nearly 50.000 years. In contrast, the first known script as true writing -which will be mentioned in following pages, was developed around the year 3500 DC in Mesopotamia. Here, with these statements of Ong (2002), it is understood that before the first script, any type of scratch on a rock or a stick may not be assumed as writing because, according to him, the critical breakthrough is the knowledge that brought into the word was achieved with human consciousness, not with simple semiotic marking was performed. He continues, "when a coded system of visible marks was invented whereby a writer could determine the exact words that the reader would generate from the text. This is what we usually mean today by writing in its sharply focused sense" (Ong, 2002: 83).

Followed by ancient historian Ignace Jay Gelb (1963) examined the scientific study of writing systems, for which he coined the term grammatology. Gelb (1963) examines writing evolution. He starts with brief information about the motives that lie based on all human intercommunications. He mentions communication as one of human behavior's most significant external features. Gelb mentions the types

of communication: vision, audition, and the sense of touch. Visual communication can be achieved through gestures and mimicry, which can be assessed as companions of speech. As an example of this genre, he gives the Australian aborigines who often use the gestural language system, particularly by widows prohibited to utter a word, instead utilize visual expressions when they are in the period of mourning. The other simplest form is auditory communication, such as whistling to call someone. Gelb stresses auditory communications in his book as one of the most effective systems achieved by spoken language directed to the ear of the person targeted to communicate. The other simplest way of communication is the sense of touch by feeling, such as the handclasp, the back slap, or hand stroking, which is used by a blind deaf-mute and accepted as a fully developed communication system.

As Gelb (1963) claims, the communication types mentioned here have two common features: time and space. All are assessed as momentary; that is why they are restricted by time, and all are actualized between people in proximity to each other, hence restricted by space. At this point, Gelb connects his above explanation about the types of communication with writing, and he claims that time and space are two values that cannot be limited in terms of communication of thoughts and feelings. For these reasons, he believes the new communication method is not bound to time and space; it was needed rather than merely marking on objects or any solid material.

After mentioning communication, Gelb (1963) searches for the definition of writing, which is not that easy, contrary to what was expected. It may help observe the dynamics and possible origin, historical evolution, and motivation behind the writing to frame and locate it.

According to Gelb (1963), writing as an act started when man learned and used various communication methods to convey his thoughts and feelings with visible marks. It is an action that is executed "by means of motor action of the hands in drawing, painting, scratching, or incising" (Gelb, 1963: 6). He stresses how it is expressed not just by objects themselves but by leaving marks on any other materials. It could be achieved just with a particular system.

One point also highlighted here is that writing is executed as a system for him. Gelb (1963) states that a conventional system of signs or symbols is supposed to be developed to communicate in terms of thoughts and feelings. Through that system, both sides -the sender and the receiver- are supposed to understand each other. In terms of writing systems, it is probably supposed to be considered the requirement of setting up the rules and actual learning of the forms and principles of writing. Developing the writing as a system also indicates that the character marked on any surface that lost its being as an individual and independent expression, hence becoming a tool of communication of human beings (Gelb, 1963). With this statement, it turns out to be contentious whether he still leaves space for the non-linguistic function of writing or not, as Coulmas (2002) claims. Hence, Gelb (1963) seems to divide the writing that had been executed throughout its history, and not all were performed in respect of the system, and not all have the same level in respect of intercommunication of a human being. According to these divisions, Gelb (1963) prefers to create a hierarchical development ranking between the writing systems.

Before mentioning writing systems, it is necessary to look back to earlier examples in order to observe the historical evolution briefly and the discussion among some authors on whether the earlier examples of writing can be accepted as writing or not. These early forms are called primitive or embryo writing, first used in the Stone Age (Avrin, 1991) as scratches, drawn or painted on the walls of caves, and accepted as the very first precursor of writing. Avrin (1991) states that embryo writing consists of signs that were merely invented by their writer and probably represented an idea that can be deciphered only by people who belong to the same frame of reference. Memory devices can be shown as an example, such as tying a knot around the finger that serves as a reminder, or *quipu*, the pre-Columbian Peruvian form made of knotted cords with various colors and lengths that mark out numerical values. In Europe, particularly in Southern France and Northern Spain, embryo writing with marks and signs was painted on the cave walls and scratched on stones and bones between 30.000 to 9000 BC. She underlines that the exact message of this pre or proto-writing is still not certain. Without any knowledge about the context and any information about how to reveal or decipher the signs, the interpretation of these writings might be inaccurate. At least it is valid for these signs on the caves, but for modern signs, the knowledge or information is not limited and accessible, verified by various media.

Logograms are assessed as the first stage of true writing, as Avrin (1991) and Diringer (1962) credit. Logographic writing, also called picture writing, has two types of signs, namely pictographs and ideographs. While in pictographic writing, signs are used as graphic representations of objects, in ideographic writing, signs are used as representations of concepts associated with the picture. Since ideographic writing and the interpretations of the signs are closely linked to culture and oral communication, it is supposed to be taught to people; for this reason, it is accepted as less international than pictographic writing. Ideographic writing is described as an improved kind of picture writing that is an initial step in rendering a script capable of consisting of abstractions and subtleties. It means they represent not just merely the things but connate the idea or concept that is bound up. The trademarks, international road signs, and fabric cleaning instructions can be used as examples of logograms (embryo writing). However, it is still not regarded as a complete system of writing.

The next phase that Avrin (1991) mentions is phonograms of phonographic writing, in which the sign or unit represents the sound of the object's name rather than the object itself or the idea connected with it. Phonographic writing is closely tied to the specific spoken language and how the reader pronounces the picture itself. The hybrid systems that consist of logograms and phonograms also exist in the history of writing, such as in ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt. Also, the Chinese system, which is fully developed by 1200 BC, consists of logograms and phonograms.

The last step, considered the most advanced stage of writing by Avrin (1991) and Gelb (1963), is entirely phonetic, in which elements of speech, namely consonants and vowels, are represented by abstract signs. Even though it is viewed as evolved from phonograms, the reference

of the object here is no longer necessary. It is a system that a syllabic or alphabetic script can accomplish. Syllabic writing is a system in which each unit represents a consonant and vowel combination. While hundreds of signs are necessary for pictograms, ideograms, and phonograms, fewer signs are enough to represent the possible combinations of consonants and vowels in speech. For example, the Japanese have two syllabi systems used since the ninth century CE: *katagana* and *hiragana*. While *katagana* is preferred mainly for scientific literature and public documents, *hiragana* is used as a daily script found in newspapers and general literature.

Last, the alphabetic system is a reduced system, consisting mainly of between twenty-two and thirty signs in theory. It is based on the approach that one sign represents one sound (Avrin, 1991). Avrin explained this phase as the most crucial development in writing history, as mentioned before, such as Gelb (1963) and Diringner (1962).

In the phonetic writing system, each unit corresponds to a sound or sounds in a language, which means the direct relationship between written and spoken language. The form of a symbol and the sound it represents are not necessarily connected; any shape can represent them. Moreover, the last division of this classification is alphabetic writing; even technically, it can be accepted as a subdivision of phonetic writing. Using the letter as a representative of certain sounds is considered by Diringner (1962), which has enormous advantages rather than previous systems such as ideograms or even if syllables that refer to the Japanese writing system. Diringner claims, "The alphabet is the most flexible and useful method of writing ever invented, and from its origins in the Near East, has become the nearly universal basis for the scripts employed by civilized peoples, passing from language to language with a minimum of difficulty. No other system of writing has had so extensive, so intricate and so interesting a history" (Diringner, 1962: 23).

Gelb (1963) mentions three main writing stages; no writing, forerunners, and full writing. Pictures even used for communication needs fall under the first category of no writing that had their origin in simple pictures such as caves' walls. The category of forerunners of writing consists of all various devices that man used for the first time to express thoughts and feelings, which refers to the primitive writing of Avrin's description. Last, Gelb used the term full writing as "a device for expressing linguistic elements by means of conventional visible marks" (Gelb, 1963: 24). Diringner (1962) credits the term true writing for the same category. Full writing refers to the alphabetic system, which means for him, the single sounds of a language are expressed by it.

Gelb (1963) claims that the full vocal system was achieved by the Greeks, who evolved a system of vowels and the overall form of the alphabet. For sure, utilizing consonants and vowels was not the only thing, but it also focused on the question of how to represent spoken language by visible marks, which the Greeks considered. In other words, the Greeks transformed the alphabet into a phonemic notation (Harris, 1989).

To sum up, the evolution that started here with primitive logograms until the alphabet is accepted as an improvement. Alphabetic writing

as a communication system is the most improved version of the history of writing. As if the description of Gelb (1963) here is getting closer to being related to the language itself. As mentioned before, this is the actual linear single direction that Gelb (1963) advocates. He assesses it as progression, which means the alphabetic system is sufficient enough then its predecessors to serve human communication, which is assessed as the main aim of writing.

Hence, even though they call all phases writing, full writing -an alphabetic system- is actually accepted as a true writing system that is efficient and the most improved form in writing history. However, some authors criticize this assumption, such as Coulmas (2003) and Harris (1989, 1995a, and 2000).

Before mentioning these opposing opinions, another point of Gelb's (1963) statements takes attention is the artistic perspective of writing. He claims that this issue has been neglected generally. Considering the time his book was published in 1963, this claim may not be surprising. It is highly respectable that Gelb (1963) mentions the artistic notion of writing. However, closely examining his statements, what he refers to with artistic perception in the realm of writing is actually a general form of a script with aesthetic value at all times, as he claims.

According to Gelb (1963), if they are formed clearly to serve their main aim, which means to be read, a script will have that artistic value, which points to eliminating all unnecessary ornamentation or exaggerated forms that may prevent writing from being legible. It is understood that the representation forms of "practical recording and transmission of communication" (Gelb, 1963: 229) are still the initial concern. However, it is highly interesting when he gives examples about writing and its' aesthetic value; he points to calligraphic hands such as Carolingian and Gothic writing systems will be examined in Chapter III. Gelb (1963) compares them with the architecture of their own time and how they manifested themselves with parallel features.

As the round forms of letters of Carolingian handwriting can be observed in Romanesque architecture's roundness, or the Gothic writing systems and its dominant feature of angularity and pointedness manifest itself in Gothic architecture.

As Gelb (1963) claims, aesthetic features can be observed through the careful execution of the letterform that exists in formal writing, which is used for official purposes and executed rigorously. As an author, he mentions here an issue that the calligrapher also constantly discusses in the realm of calligraphy. It is highly considerable here since he mentions the term writing and points to the calligraphic script as writing. It could be understood from here; that there is a conflict between using these terms and what they are meant to be here. To divide writing and calligraphy as if they are totally or partially different disciplines is what one will encounter in most literature. By examining the definition of Gelb (1963), it will be clearer how the Westerner perceives the terms and how it affects the interpretations of the contemporary practices in calligraphy.



Gelb's (1963) approach here is assessed as belonging to a particularly Western mentality and contentious by Coulmas (2003), who examines the same issue. He first provides information about the intricate relation between written and spoken language, also significant knowledge engaging the history of writing, and hence about the human thoughts and literate society. His main concerns are the linguistic aspects of writing. What Coulmas (2003) means with Western mentality is the perception of writing that is being evolved in a particular direction from logograph to syllabaries and finally alphabets. This direction is accurate and heralds one particular goal; the Roman alphabet. He criticizes it as an overly simplistic perception and limited to fit the exact model; moreover, it carries a risk of disregarding the other writing systems.

Coulmas (2003) pays attention to Gelb (1963), who seems to assess that the rest of the writing systems are not mature enough to reflect the spoken language since Gelb (1963) profoundly believes it is the aim of writing; it means writing. However, Coulmas (2003) criticizes whether writing is merely a substitute for speech in the first place, apart from Gelb's (1963) hierarchical development ranking, which is also being criticized.

Moreover, Gelb (1963) seems satisfied with the assumption that writing reached its ultimate improvement with the alphabetic writing system. Conserving the culminated history of writing, Coulmas (2003) alienates this reductionist and grandiose perspective.

When Gelb (1963) compares the writing system of Egyptian picture writing and the Chinese system, which may be the most challenging in the world as he claims, it still may have the potential to be more expressive and beautiful, however complex and challenging to a vast majority of the populations. Whereas the alphabet writings obviously may be easier to learn and write, which is assessed as more valuable to Gelb (1963). Coulmas (2003) points to the Egyptians with a writing system consisting of twenty-four or twenty-six mono consonantal signs consisting of logograms, phonograms, and determinatives. Even if it was a complex system still assessed as close to being an alphabet. Under this condition, Egyptians still decided to be stuck with this complex system for centuries.

Coulmas (2003) explains that during the history of the Egyptian writing system, it grew more complicated with various changes without any progress in economizing effort or receding this complexity.

A similar issue can be considered about the Chinese and their characters, which means both sound and meaning. Instead of reducing the signs just representation of a single sound and drastically reducing their systems, they preferred to keep the system as it was. Considering the Japanese who reduced Chinese characters to a syllabary also did not utilize the alphabetic system. Coulmas (2003) asks whether it would be accepted as malformation or primitive psychology. On the contrary, he claims the Egyptian, Chinese and Japanese writing system might be more functional than it seems, and it might be the wrong perception that belongs to the alphabetic minds who might ever heard the Egyptian language spoken.

Coulmas (2003) takes attention to the assessments of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716), and as an alphabet of human thoughts, he states that Leibniz believed the ideas could be visualized, and the Chinese writing system actually is imperfect in the execution of a universal script that could directly convey the ideas. That means Chinese characters referring to things instead of words may provide a fundamental advantage due to his envisioned of the universal script, which would be a semantic script not dependent on a particular language; however, it could be pronounced in any language.

It may be claimed whether it is writing or not, maybe on the debate. However, Coulmas believes writing does not refer merely to thought or sound; also, the misleading assumption would be to consider it as pure semiography or pure phonography. Real writing, as he coins, is a compromise, historical, and pragmatic. Moreover, he claims all writing systems have both semantic and phonetic interpretations, but they all differ in the significance attached to one or the other (Coulmas, 2003).

On the other hand, the general emphasis on writing as a representation of speech (can be observed in Gelb's (1963), Diringer's (1962), and Avrin's (1991) statements) also offers a one-way execution. Coulmas (2003) points to the risk of attempting a single universal definition of writing. He claims that it would be either anachronistic or informed by cultural bias. To appreciate the difficulty of defining what writing means, he believes in reviewing some of the definitions that have been provided by those concerned themselves with the issue.

Coulmas (2003) gives some references to provide some information about various significant definitions of the historical characters. The first one is Aristotle.

According to Coulmas (2003), statements of Aristotle about writing had a huge impact on Western thinking about writing, which points to the alphabetic system (especially in the time of the Greeks and the invention of the vowels), the most improved system in the history of writing. He explains that Aristotle's main concern was not directly about writing. Instead, Aristotle explained things, concepts, and signs and how these linguistic entities would be related to the material world's ideas and things. He believes the words manifested themselves in two different forms: sounds of human-produced and letters. The central elements of Aristotle's definition of writing were determined by the function of writing, which is supposed to form signs as being a reference to other signs. Writing comes after the vocal speech as well as subordinate to it. Coulmas (2003) claims that this assumption reflects the Greek Antiquity's literacy practices. According to these assumptions, the primary system is vocal speech, and writing is accepted as secondary, which depends on speech. It leads to the assumption that the meaning of the writing is deserved only by means of analyzing speech. Coulmas (2003) summarizes Aristotle's definition is writing as such and claims that this treatise stayed in scholars' minds as a general statement and passed through to the present time in terms of Western mentality.

In his analysis, Coulmas (2003) also included Plato (c. 428 BC-348 BC), who reasoned that writing as a memory aid and could not substitute for speech because the speech is bound to a speaker. That means there is no clear reconciliation between text and discourse, speech, and speaker.



Coulmas (2003) also mentions Chinese literature and philosophy, particularly Liu Hsieh (465-522) and his book entitled *Literary Mind and Carving of the Literary Dragon* (2015), which is credited as a comprehensive literary criticism work in Chinese literature. The concepts and standards of writing as an art form are the focal point in terms of Chinese. As Coulmas states, there is a noteworthy element about the definition of Hsieh which is missing in Aristotle's statements. It is the potential of writing as a creative activity that is related to Tao.

In *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, Tao defines as (1) "the unconditional and unknowable source and guiding principle of all reality as conceived by Taoists," and (2) "the process of nature by which all things change and which is to be followed for a life of harmony." The creative potential of writing that Hsieh mentions actually illuminates Tao, and Tao inspires writing. The relationship between speech and writing is not necessarily direct here, and the ideas can be expressed poetically in writing or in speech form. The most significant part Coulmas (2003) stresses is that writing is not bound up with the language in China, which means that writing is not a mere substitute for speech. It is an autonomous act.

Moreover, Coulmas (2003) considers Zen and its protest, the distance between the message and the person who sends or receives it. According to Zen, writing is assumed as an essential practice, which means the performance of writing as a conscious act, the way, the path that cannot be stored in fixed signs. It can be observed through Chinese calligraphy assessed as one of the most highly valued art inspired by Buddhism, and as a word, *shodo* refers to the way of writing which is used for the term calligraphy in the Chinese language.

By briefly mentioning the mindset behind the Chinese culture and the calligraphy tradition in China, Coulmas (2003) points out the difference between the perception of the two mentalities. Writing and calligraphy in Chinese culture are not interchangeable terms. Calligraphy tradition means writing tradition, which will be mentioned in Chapter IV when examining the Far Eastern Calligraphy, Chinese and Japanese calligraphy traditions particularly, and their influences on contemporary Western Calligraphy. However, what Coulmas (2003) points out here is highly considered and one of the significant arguments about calligraphy perception in the West.

With overall examples of Coulmas (2003), he tries to show the distinction between the meaning of the speaker and the literal text, which occurs when one eliminates the act of the speaker and the interaction between speaker and listener. After all assessments, Coulmas (2003) suggests rethinking the conceptual model of Western thinking about writing. He offers an alternative view to conceptualizing the relationship between writing and speech and claims that written signs do not evolve for merely recording speech but rather as a system of communication. He states that speech is not the initial trigger for writing. Hence rather than merely depicting sounds, they are assessed as the phonetic interpretation of the written signs. Since interpretations may change according to various features and create perception, it is called Western thinking in this case.

With comprehensive examinations, Coulmas (2003) is not alone in his assessments of the necessity of rethinking the conceptual model of Western. Linguist Roy Harris united in some common denominators with Coulmas in his books *Sings of Writing* (1995) and *Rethinking Writing* (2000).

Harris (1995a) states that the Western academic tradition relied on writing extensively. As he claims, there has been no comprehensive theory on writing itself produced so far. Throughout the Western tradition, Harris believes that the discussion about writing science had two tendencies, potentially based on misunderstanding and oversimplification. One is the tendency "to identify writing with its physical execution, its material resources, and processes" (Harris, 1995a: 12), and the other is "the tendency to identify writing with various social or intellectual functions (whatever these are assumed to be)" (Ibid.). He claims that the philosophers such as Aristotle had identified writing with the second tendency, which is to form writing related to spoken language.

Through examining his other book, *Rethinking Writing* (2000), ironically, he offers an alternative title for this one as *The Tyranny of the Alphabet and How to Escape from it*, in which he sarcastically reveals his argument. He underlines the repeated explanation about the relationship between speech and writing as a traditional assumption, which is problematic. The main question of him is, why should there be any need to rethink writing at all? This is mainly the question of whom does not satisfy with the traditional perspective. He proposes "to treat writing as a function of the versatile human capacity for sign-making" (Harris, 2000: 4). His study analyzes the basic principles in writing as a complex form of communication without regarding the text, whether a sonnet, symphony or signature of a label. Description of Harris seems to consist of all types of systems that human leaves sing, which Gelb (1963) excludes.

Moreover, nor he does point at the alphabetic writing or the other systems to create a hierarchy. This is one of the points that Harris (2000) mentions and criticizes Gelb (1963). He assesses it as a failure because the book, according to Harris, turned out to be nothing but a classification of the writing systems rather than debating its foundations. In addition to this, he dwells on Gelb's (1963) consideration of writing that is evolved, and this evolution is considered an improvement. Gelb refers to it -as mentioned before, and Coulmas (2003) also criticizes it; early writing examples are considered primitive. Harris underlines Gelb's definition, which is "a system of human intercommunication by means of conventional visible marks" (Gelb, 1963: 12), which is a broad sense of definition that a wide variety of signs can consider under this definition of writing. Obviously, it reveals Gelb's contradiction in a sense, as he could not decide whether earlier forms could be called writing or not.

Harris (2000) offers to discuss whether writing was invented or merely evolved and whether this evolution refers to improvement, which means every writing system is better than the previous system. He finds that issue in the debate. According to him, if writing systems were invented, then no doubt they would serve a variety of purposes, such as "to record business transactions, to set down stories and musical compositions, to do complex mathematical calculations, to choreograph dances, to keep calendars and account, and to deal with

information of many different kinds" (Harris, 2000: 11). It is perfectly possible to use this system without understanding the basic principles of writing. He claims, "Understanding what writing makes possible is not at all the same thing as understanding what makes writing possible" (Ibid.), which is one of the primary focuses of attention in his study. What makes writing possible is the concern of the semiologist. However, there is no easy way to describe the writing or answer the question "what is writing" since the term writing has been applied to such a diverse variety of activities, which also can be examined from different perspectives that consist of different dynamics. As he claims, writing is not just a bunch of scripts; hieroglyphics, alphabetic, or technique; clay tablets, pen and ink, printing, etc., to study.

Overall examination, it is possible to say that writing is a concept that has undergone various transformations in the Western world on its historical and intellectual levels. There may be a debate regarding it as a mere substitute for speech, or just a functional way to preserve and convey knowledge; what Harris (2000) underlines in his statements is to consider writing as an active and influential cultural agency in its way.

On the other hand, a superiority mentality between primitive and current writing systems as a part of the traditional view of western writing thinking is no longer assessed as merely limited to the spoken word. Harris interprets the modern view as an essential innovation: writing brings no new mode of storing and conveying information but a new mentality (Harris, 1989). Finally, primitive drawings, whether they have no system or not, still may have an intention of writing or consist of writing gestures. It is not easy to ascertain the purpose or the urge what triggers to draw or incise a picture since the circumstances are still kind of unknown at a certain level that let the execution, whether they are manifested to carry a notion of magic, religious or aesthetic impulse.

It can be observed how delicate and intricate the matter of defining the terms that have been under debate for such a long time, and among the professionals, there are some contradictions that contemporary calligraphers have to be aware of. This is the main reason also the term writing is supposed to be examined in this chapter before the main focal point of this dissertation, which is contemporary calligraphy practices in the West. How prevalent western mentality distinguished writing and calligraphy from each other, on what bases, and how it gets blurry, especially considering the current practices, hybrid forms that influence each other start with the western perspective about the term writing, which is mostly concerned with the cognitive and linguistic aspect of it.

Right at this point, what contemporary calligrapher has to be considered is that, according to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, calligraphy as a term entered most European languages about the end of the sixteenth century. Until that time, the word calligraphy did not appear in western culture. Before that, Greek and Latin -derived alphabets and the spread of them had been executed by specific scripts that will be mentioned in Chapter III, which we are called after the sixteenth century as calligraphic script and accepted as a practice of calligraphy. With the printing period in Europe in the mid-fifteenth century, a clear division arose between handwriting and scripts with more elaborated

forms in the West (Nash, Barbour & others, 2019). The conflict and the division between writing and calligraphy may start right at that point. With printing technology, the scribe was no longer compelled to copy what was needed and had room for more individual practices. Hence, the division between calligraphy and writing, particularly handwriting, started to refer to the types of practices, whether writing was executed just for needs or not. This purpose also carried the role of the letterform, whether elaborated carefully or more freely. For these reasons, it needs to be considered whether writing and calligraphy are different disciplines or whether writing is an umbrella term that actually consists of calligraphy. This discussion will be examined in depth in part entitled "2.5. Western Calligraphy: a brief tour of its origins and definitions of the term of calligraphy," in which the term and the concept will also be discussed; however, it is so intricate subject that in order to build a link between the parts, it is unavoidable to repeat and remind some of these issues here.

As observed, and as Coulmas (2003) claims, the western approach divides writing, calligraphy, lettering, and typography in terms of how one executes it. Overall, it is offered here to be considered that writing as an umbrella term consists of all subgroups, namely lettering, calligraphy, and typography, that are performed for various reasons in various ways, as shown in Fig. 1.

Here, it is highly significant how the form is (re)produced, whether live or differed. As observed, while handwriting, lettering, or hand lettering, and calligraphy are directly executed, typography is deferred executed.

To sum up, looking in one direction, as indicated in the western mentality about writing, can be accepted as a starting point reflecting the perception and interpretation of calligraphy in the western world. It is not just its traditional sense but also reflects the current artistic expressions with this lack of knowledge and awareness about these discussions mentioned above. Giving autonomy to writing will throw light to contemporary calligraphers and help them understand first writing, then its subsection; calligraphy. It will assist the way one understands calligraphy and its dynamics that be worthy of examination.

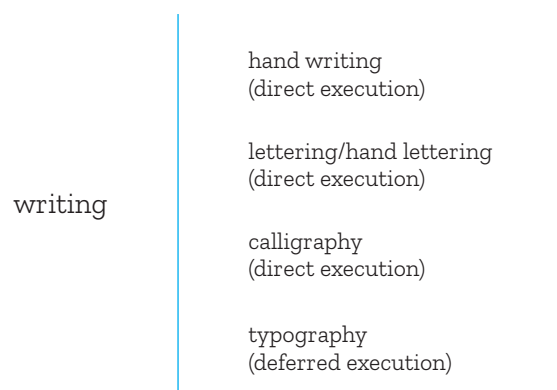


Fig. 1. A diagram that can be illustrated writing as an umbrella term, Image credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

These subgroups have some common features, as well as some differences, that provide essential information to identify and classify these terms. For these reasons, in the following, it is significant to identify them concerning explanations of some significant authors and artists to avoid confusion. Otherwise, it seems easy to lose the comprehensive perspective if one base a conclusion on a single observation and even neglects the significant features of specific inherent characteristics.

## **2.2. Handwriting: A brief tour of its definitions as a term**

Various uses of the term handwriting are occasionally used to refer to calligraphy practices, probably because the stress of the execution manually with the word hand here creates confusion. For this reason, it is necessary to mention handwriting to frame it.

British calligrapher and author on writing Alfred Fairbank (1975) put stress on the primal feature of handwriting as its function as follows: "Handwriting is a functional thing, intended for communicating and recording thoughts. It is to be read and therefore legibility is an essential virtue" (Fairbank, 1975: 13). Since the primary function is assessed as to be read from the Western perspective, which is discussed earlier, the letterform's legibility comes to the fore here. Hence, Fairbank seems to follow the functional notion of writing that is executed through the letters attributed to convey the message through semantic meaning. To accomplish that notion, handwriting -particularly the letterforms- is supposed to be clear and well-constructed without any doubt in its recognition.

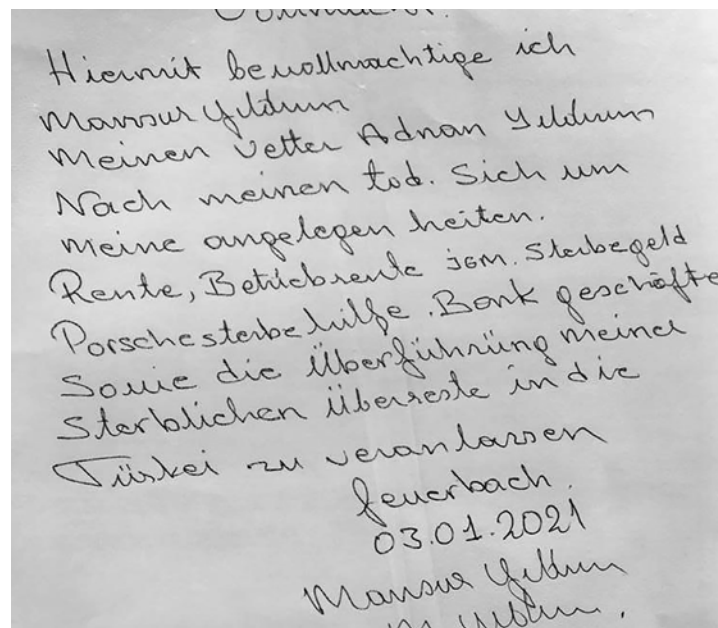
Fairbank (1975) also points out that handwriting and calligraphy differ from each other, as mentioned before, to distinguish between merely functional and the principles and methods of calligraphic scripts used conventionally, which are the features that distinguish handwriting from calligraphy. He stresses executed form that creates an exact shape of letterforms, assessed as beauty by itself, which may also partly lack in handwriting and poor guiding. It is significant to observe the separation of handwriting and calligraphy of Fairbank (1975) here due to the purposes they performed, such as for daily usage or more formal documents, and how they performed, whether the speed is an issue or not, since the speed of writing directly affects the form of letters that also affects the legibility of the text. Handwriting has been executed more freely than traditional calligraphy. Hence, it could be claimed that Fairbank's (1975) interpretation seems to refer to the current form of the division since the emergence of printing technology in the West, which seems to be one of the significant reasons the distinguish between handwriting and calligraphy.

Moreover, Dutch typographer and designer Gerrit Noordzij (2005) summarizes the term handwriting as "The first, initial, fundamental shape is the single track of a tool. Only handwriting preserves the characteristics of the single stroke. Handwriting is single-stroke writing" (Noordzij, 2005: 9). Here according to Noordzij, how one executes writing seems to be the essential feature in distinguishing what handwriting is and what is not. Single-stroke refers to the

hand forming the letter's fundamental shape without repeating or retouching to that single stroke; hence, the track of a tool on the surface can be easily observed, as he claims. If the form is constructed by more than one stroke as a drawing, it will easily lose track of that one stroke; instead, the overall composition of strokes can be observed. It has to be stated that it does not mean all drawing consists of retouching necessarily. In that case, as Noordzij (2005) claims, it could not be called handwriting anymore.

Hence, what is understood from his explanations can be seen in Fig. 2, the handwritten of my deceased father Mansur Yıldırım, written at once as an act of writing for specific purposes that are to take notes and leave his messages described as handwriting. It is his personal handwriting, highly individual and authentic, consisting of various types of marks, which belongs to the writer himself. As a result, handwriting can be explained as a subgroup of writing that is executed particularly by hand, without limitation by any writing systems, but the execution is precise by hand.

On the other hand, it is pretty common to observe that handwriting is used to refer to the calligraphy of ancient writing scripts of the West mostly. It is not that wrong as long as the execution is done by hand because traditional western calligraphy refers to manual writing (handwriting), which follows certain rules that traditionally construct ancient script styles. What calligraphy is will be examined on the following pages; however, using the term handwriting to refer to calligraphy is not that accurate and depends on the word calligraphy itself, how and from what perspective it is described. It should be noted that, as mentioned earlier, calligraphy as a term started to be used after the printing period to refer to a more elaborated and carefully executed version of writing by hand, so technically, it is handwriting in a sense, and the term calligraphy seems to invent to



Hiernit bevollmächte ich  
Mansur Yıldırım  
Meinen Vetter Adnan Yıldırım  
Nach meinem Tod. Sich um  
meine angelegten heiten.  
Rente, Betriebsrente iem. Sterbegeld  
Porschesterbekämpfung Bank geschäfte  
Sowie die Überführung meiner  
Sterblichen überreste in die  
Türkei zu veranlassen  
feuerbach.  
03.01.2021  
Mansur Yıldırım  
in Istanbul.

Fig. 2. An example of handwriting belongs to Mansur Yıldırım, 2021, Source: Personal archive.



create the classification between the handwritten and printed word. The calligraphic handwritten text started to be executed during the printing period without limits for functional reasons, which heralded various interpretations of the ancient scripts. That means scribes had room for individual touches. In that sense, even calligraphy is a kind of handwriting; only the term handwriting can refer to any type of writing executed by hand. Hence, one should remember that if someone practices traditional western calligraphy, it can be called practicing calligraphic handwriting or handwritten text in the realm of traditional western calligraphy. However, not all are supposed to know traditional western calligraphy to perform handwriting.

To sum up, it could be observed that during the course of the evolution and development of writing in different periods, the usage of the term handwriting also has shifted. Earlier times of writing systems all can be claimed as handwriting considering the meaning of the term writing consists of various types of actions, basically referring to mark-making. With the calligraphic practices, with the printing period, it is observed that handwriting started to refer to fast executed letterforms that are used for informal purposes such as daily needs, without retouch. That means it is literally written, not constructed, and in the realm of design, the term handwriting generally refers to freely executed letterforms without elaboration or not consist any unnecessary elements, just basics to shape that independently form.

### **2.3. Lettering: A brief tour of its definitions as a term**

Lettering is a method where every letter is drawn. The term lettering is also used to define an act, which illustrates a lettering artist's attitude and behavior who pays attention to each letter that is constructed and retouched in an arranged layout until the overall composition satisfies him.

Lettering can be performed in an analogical or digital way. If it is executed by hand specifically, the corresponding term would be "hand lettering" to emphasize it. Hand lettering, as a subset of lettering, is the active writing process done by hand by drawing the letters rather than typing.

As a vibrant force in graphic design, it has the potential as one of the significant methods to create typefaces that are digitalized. Unlike traditional calligraphy with a set of rules, such as how to manipulate the tool and how many strokes it will be constructed that may differ from each particular script, hand lettering provides ample space and total freedom of creating the shape or form that fits, which also is treated as an image by the lettering artist.

The lettering process can be observed here in Fig. 3, which illustrates three phases of the letter "n." One significant feature that differentiates lettering from calligraphy and handwriting is that each essential part consists of more than one stroke.

The lettering process can be observed in the following image (Fig. 4) that illustrates the word lettering, which is basically drawn as an outline first, then rough sketches inside of the letter. This is basically constructing a letter which is called lettering.





Fig. 3. The letter "n" with rough sketches with drawings and retouches, Image credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



Fig. 4. The hand lettering process, rough sketches with drawings and retouches, Image credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

According to British craftsman Edward Johnston (1917), legibility, beauty, and characters are the essential quality of lettering that can be observed through ancient inscriptions and writings. It seems he uses the term to refer to the general concept of writing and insists on observing these models execute "good" lettering, and the underlines feature of lettering -retouches and drawn- are not an issue here. The features of good lettering for him are ranked as simplicity, distinctiveness, proportion, the beauty of form, the beauty of uniformity, right arrangement, and well-organized spacing. *Simplicity* means simply arranged with necessary parts. *Distinctiveness* refers to each individual letter that has distinguished characteristics that are heavily recognizable. *Proportion* is achieved when all letters are proportionally arranged without any exaggerated or dwarfed part. *The beauty of form*, according to Johnston, "having beautiful shapes and constructions, so that each letter is an individual and living whole (not a mere collection of parts) fitted for the position, office, and material of the object bearing the inscription" (Johnston, 1917: 239).

These explanations here carry importance due to the term beauty that is repeatedly used to refer to calligraphy, both as the technical and literal meaning, which will be examined in part "2.5. Western Calligraphy: a brief tour of its definitions of the term." Johnston's other feature is *the beauty of uniformity* refers to the consistency between the corresponding parts of letters, namely bodies, limbs, heads, and family likeness of the different letters. *The beauty of arrangement* refers to how well the placing connecting, and spacing of letters, words, and lines fit; also, the overall proportion of every part of the letter and margins included in this feature. He also mentions that the essential quality of the work, i.e., hand and pen, is rightly made and handled skillfully with a distinguishing personal hand is desired as a right expression of character (1917: 239). Proper form, arrangement, and expression are actually not just for good lettering but also generally refer to other writing genres established as desired by the artist.

On the other hand, American printer and type designer Frederic W. Goudy (1963) explains that lettering is meant to be informal writing that is properly drawn, not written. Here, it takes attention that Goudy starts

to use the term to distinguish lettering based on its way of execution. According to him, lettering can be used for book covers, title pages, advertisements, and types in order to clear this; if the actual work of the artist is not reproduced or duplicated by a mechanical process, the lines of the text are supposed to be formed without any sketching, retouching or correcting. Hence, each letter written could be clear, simple, distinctive, and legible. One can observe the pen's touch and use through that written text. The process creates it as the actual forming. According to Goudy (1963), the only main reason to draw letters could be to decorate the page. He sees lettering as a lack of originality and personal quality due to the mechanical process of lettering and duplicated process by sketches over and over again and retouches.

It has to be considered that Fairbank (1975) and Goudy (1963) refer to lettering to form a letter in a general sense. Fairbank repeats the words "the art of lettering" and stresses the importance of spacing between letters and their pattern created by placing the letter units regularly and well organized. Moreover, Camp (1971) uses pen lettering to refer to formal writing that is more bound to the conventional sense of calligraphy due to its purpose, which is to be read. For this reason, a letter as a form is supposed to be recognizable and easily understood by her.

On the other hand, Noordzij explains the terms as "writing with built-up shapes" (Noordzij, 2005: 9), which means he still prefers to call it writing in which the letters are constructed. It is significant due to the different usage of the term writing and drawing that underlines the difference between lettering and writing. According to Noordzij, lettering is still writing, whether it is drawn or not. He states that comparing handwriting and lettering, a lettering artist is supposed to be more patient in building the shapes than handwriting due to the retouching process that gradually improves the shape quality. Hence, lettering is supposed to be organized or designed, while handwriting is more spontaneous. Here, unlike handwriting description that specifies basically single-stroke writing, lettering generally consists of various repeated strokes until the desired form is achieved. For this reason, the trace of that one stroke is unavoidably lost. This is considered one of the main differences in identifying writing as a lettering by Noordzij. However, according to lettering and calligrapher Ivan Castro (2016), the execution resembles drawing rather than writing (if it is assumed as one-single stroke), explains it clearly as follows:

When we create lettering, we're closer to the act of drawing than writing. We're building alphabetical signs with a drawing tool, using as many strokes as needed to get the exact shape we want. We can sketch, erase, correct, add, and try again to get that perfect letterform. Usually with lettering we'll pursue a more refined, studied result than in calligraphy, where we'll have created a rawer form. I say usually because there are always exceptions. If you compare a fine piece of English Cursive handwriting to your beloved's name scratched onto the bark of tree with your house keys, the former, being calligraphy, will look finer than the latter, which, according to our definition, would be lettering. (Castro, 2016: 12)

Here again, what is striking is that Castro divides lettering and writing due to the act used to execute lettering, basically to draw. Again, this assent depends on how one interprets the definition of writing or how he describes it.

Back to the definition of *Online Etymology Dictionary*, the word as a verb has a broad sense of various types of activities, namely "tearing, scratching, sketching, drawing, carving, cutting, pulling, tugging;" which actually points to the various stages that writing gone through in respect of tools and techniques that used in a particular time. It will not be wrong to claim that these types of definitions may be due to those, as mentioned earlier, western-oriented thinking that what Coulmas (2003) and Harris (2000) exactly take attention to in the realm of writing. Hence, all writing or lettering is a form of simple drawing in a sense, and determining to what genre it belongs through the execution may be considered an inevitable result of this western thought.

Right at this point, to explain the single-stroke theory mentioned above, it is significant to mention American Calligraphy artist Edward M. Catich, who is credited with developing a thesis about the inscribed Roman square capitals owed their form to the use of the flat brush. Catich describes the word "writing" from the perspective of how it is executed here. He explains it as "a method of making letters in which each essential part of the letter is made in one stroke" (Catich, 1991: 11).

As shown in Fig. 5, the first letter R is written in four strokes; the second one is in three, then two, and the last R is in one stroke. What is highlighted here is the method of creating each letter, which is all written. Neither the type of tool used nor the tool is lifted from the surface when constructing the essential parts affects the definition of the action here (Catich, 1991: 12).



Fig. 5. Four written R's, illustrated based on Catich's description and his image that used in the book (1991: 12), Image credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

Catich (1991) also directs us to the main point of how one can differ the form, whether written or drawn. Catich here actually does not include the lettering genre because it is evident that drawing and retouching are excluded from this description.

It seems like there is a distinction in using the term lettering of the above authors, which may depend on the time period; as mentioned by Johnston (1917), Goudy (1963), Camp (1971), Fairbank (1975), lettering is used to refer to the general act of constructing the letterforms, while Noordzij (2005), Catich (1991) and Castro (2016) start to make a clear distinction between the execution, whether written or drawn, which leads to calling the practice lettering.

## 2.4. Typography: A brief tour of its origins and definitions of the term

Etymologically speaking, the word typography comes from Medieval Latin *typografia*, from Greek *typos* "type" and *-grapheia* "writing" from *graphein* "to write," so it is literally translated as writing with type. Here, to write actually consists of various actions. According to Meirerding (2005: 135) "the root "gerbh-" means "scratch is the source of the Greek verb "graphein" meaning "to write" and the English words "carve," "crab," and "crawl."

On the other hand, *Online Etymology Dictionary* explains the term *type* (n.) late fifteenth century., "symbol, emblem," from Latin *typus* "figure, image, form, kind," from Greek *typos* "a blow, dent, impression, mark, the effect of a blow; a figure in relief, image, statue; anything wrought of metal or stone; general form, character; outline, sketch," from the root of *typtein* "to strike, beat."

Apart from the etymological explanation of the word typography, *Online Merriam-Webster Dictionary* describes typography as (1) "letterpress printing," (2) "the style, arrangement, or appearance of typeset matter" that points to the required skill of arranging and setting type which utilized repeatedly.

Typography is a subset of writing that serves the study of letters applied to typefaces. It has been developed and practiced since the printing press, and moveable type system, metal alloy, and casting methods Johannes Gensfleisch zur Laden zum Gutenberg (c. 1400-1468) built in the fifteenth century. The printing blocks of metal or wood with letters and characters were adapted to letterpress printing, and it gave rise to typography as a discipline that serves an efficient way in book printing.

In the history of civilization, certain inventions have undeniable importance for the progress of humanity. The invention of printing is one of them that can be appreciated because of the enormous effect on civilization.

Chappell and Bringhurst (2000) cite typographic printing as impressions from master sets of characters accurately composed into words, lines, and pages. Such printing has been the learning tool, the preserver of knowledge, and the medium of literature (Chappell & Bringhurst, 2000: 3). It is also called typographic printing that refers to "the process of duplicating images onto or into a base, usually paper, and usually through some mechanical means" (Ibid.: 6).

The epoch after the invention of printing technology has been called "modern times," as Steinberg (1961) emphasizes later, it became one of the principal instruments to convey ideas penetrating almost every human activity as an integral part of the history of civilization. It can even be claimed that the printing technology had caused to evoke an assumption about the time as before and after perception, which meant that something ended and something else began with its distinctive power and its effects on human life.

Printing technology has always been credited to Gutenberg, a member of the goldsmiths' guild in Mainz (Germany), the city where the

admirable art of typography was invented in 1450. It was subsequently improved and propagated for posterity by his associates, Peter Schoeffer (1425-1503), the very first designer of the graphic industry, and Johan Fust (1400-1466), generally considered as the inventor of movable type, besides credited with perfecting printing and casting process (Ullman, 1932).

Gutenberg merely signed his name to a single printed book. However, his name was first mentioned in the year 1471 in the book from the first printers of France: "There was near Mainz a certain Johann surnamed Gutenberg, who was the very first man to devise the art of printing by which books were not written, as they used to be, with a reed nor with a pen as we do now, but by metal characters, and that with speed, elegance and beauty" (Davies, 1996: 6).

On the other hand, another important detail, Steinberg (1961) mentions the misconception term related to the invention that "Gutenberg invented printing" is assumed by many as a shortened form of "Gutenberg invented the printing of books." Nevertheless, in light of the evidence, Steinberg emphasizes that books were printed even before Gutenberg. Thus, according to him, not the production of books revolutionized, but the use of movable types and its application to the machine-made edition. That means the epoch-making process of Gutenberg's invention was "the possibility of editing, sub-editing, and correcting a text which was -at least in theory- identical in every copy: in other words, the uniform edition preceded by critical proof-reading" (Steinberg, 1961: 22). Actually, the phase of printing assumed began in China and Korea around the eleventh century and then blossomed in Europe in the fifteenth century. Chappell and Bringhurst (2000) state that Gutenberg practiced this old Chinese technical advance to a far tinier character set. With his associates, Johan Fust (1400-1466) and Peter Schoeffer (1425-1503), Gutenberg developed the technique by combining the ideas from many contemporary or ancient sources to reproduce it (Jackson, 1981).

First, the invention spread to other German cities and then to other countries. For this reason, it can be claimed that all the printers were German at first (Ullman, 1932). Unsurprisingly, craftsmen were supposed to be trained in German printing shops to learn and improve their skills in other countries in the West because Germany's primary adopted feature was technology (Jackson, 1981).

The first example of a significant completed work produced with a moveable type is *The forty-two-line Mazarin Bible* (Fig. 6), also called *The Gutenberg Bible* or *Mazarin Bible*, printed around 1455 in Mainz.

On the left, the opening of the Keio University copy can be observed, illuminated in Mainz. St. Jerome's Prologue to the Bible, showing the first typesetting of the text and headings printed in red, and on the right the opening of the British Library paper copy, with Erfurt illumination, in the second typesetting with headings added by hand in red ink. Its' style and composition were produced by Gutenberg, as well, to attempt to simulate the formal manuscript style that was popular at that time. Davies (1996: 40) states in his book *The Gutenberg Bible*



about the high quality of the materials and explains that "...the columns are aligned to an even margin (hyphens were allowed to overhang), the words within the columns are evenly spaced out by constant adjustment of abbreviations, the type impressions are crisp, the ink with his high metallic content is very black and glossy, the paper, imported from Italy, is strong and white". Moreover, vellum had been preferred as a medium for a quarter of the extant copies, which means it costs about three times as much as paper.



Fig. 6. Two example pages from *The forty-two-line Mazarin Bible*, Source: Davies, (1996: 36-37).

The intriguing point is that the book printed in the second half of the fifteenth century and the following thirty years can be regarded as an imitation of actual models of that time, meaning the gothic scripts (Fig. 7); thus, as claimed, printed books were not distinguishable from the contemporary manuscripts in outward appearance.

Steinberg (1961) pays attention to the books printed between the years 1450 and 1480, which are hardly distinguishable from the manuscripts.

The printers took over virtually the whole range of scripts used in mid-fifteenth-century Europe: the *textura* of liturgical works, the *bastarda* of legal texts, the *rotunda*, and *gotico-antiqua*, both Italian compromises between Carolingian and late medieval *cancelleresca* favoured by Italian humanists, and so on. Neither manuscript nor printed book had a title-page or page-numbers; when colored initials and other illustrations were wanted, they had to be inserted by a specialist other than the scribe or printer. (Steinberg, 1961: 27-28)

This can be accepted as a piece of evidence, confirming Chappell and Bringhurst's notion about the purposed of the early printers that competed with a scribe and handwritten manuscript. As scribes modified existing hands or developed new scripts, the early printers were intended to reproduce it on the printed book's pages (Chappell & Bringhurst, 2000).

Gutenberg's approach was imitative as well as innovative, fulfilled the need of age at a lower cost; however, some good calligraphic models made him compete with the copyist of his time. The printer strove to create an almost similar appearance with the luxury editions' pages to compete with the attraction of handwritten pages, composed traditionally and emulated with the scribe's skill and dexterity. At that time, to compete with the scribe, the printer was supposed to follow the scribe so carefully. On this ground, there has been an inconclusive debate about whether the printer wished to deceive the public and to keep the familiarity as soon as possible between handwritten and printed pages. As Steinberg claims, the explanation is always parallel with the reader's attitude than the producer, and extreme conservatism has always been one of the reader's prominent features (Steinberg, 1961).

All explained above is ample support for the claim that had written scripts before the printing period is the original home of letters, which was also utilized by Gutenberg when he invented movable type printing.

Types are commonly accepted that based on the pen forms which were observed in handwritten books, then simplified these pen forms written by the scribe. Goudy (1963) explains the type composed in a simple corollary way of the written books which started to produce before them. Technical and mechanical limitations back then were primary concerns, but the expense of the beauty did not. Moreover, when the printing press came, the illuminated manuscript had already

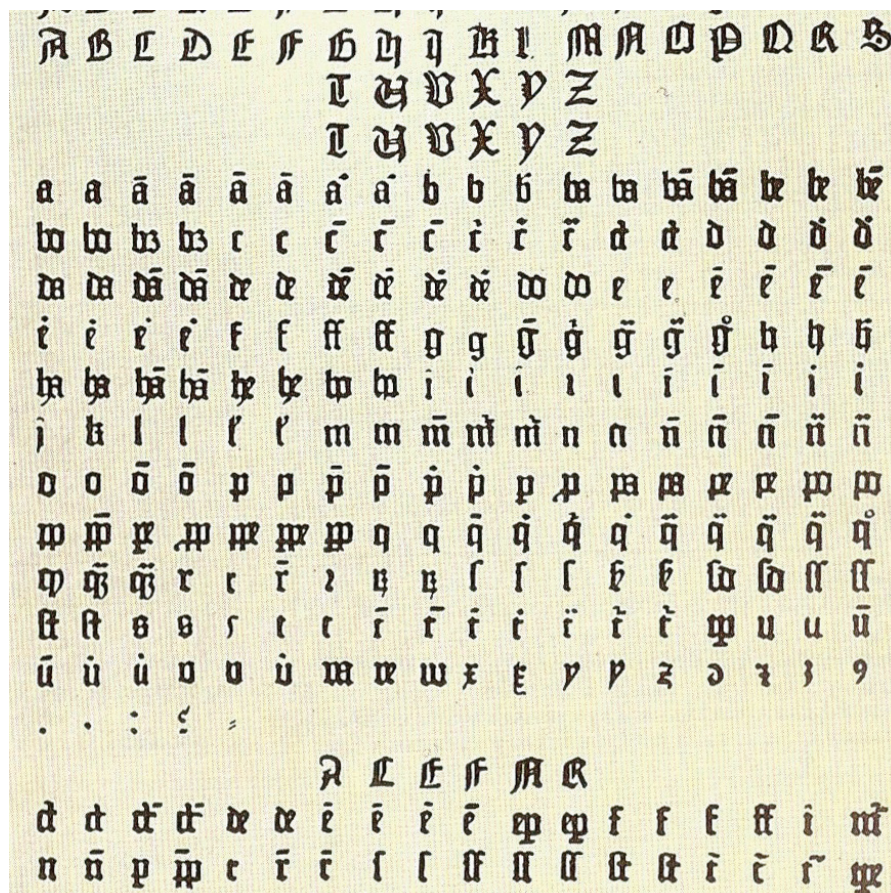


Fig. 7. A specimen conspectus of the types used in the Gutenberg Bible. Source: Davies, (1996: 32).



when the printing press came, the illuminated manuscript had already reached its highest, most significant period in terms of perfection, and they determined the book tradition of the fifteenth century. Printing was first used as an aid of the scribes, not function as an independent entity. At that time, printing meant using engraved blocks, not the printed pages from moveable types. However, the invention of movable types took the situation to a new level. There were two types of styles of writing that were generally in use: roman and gothic script, so-called black letter, particularly *textura*, which became styles of typefaces. Even a century after the movable type invention, the gothic style was in use not just in Germany but also in Holland, France, and Spain, and the roman type letters were in their crude form in the year 1464 that appeared in Germany (Goudy, 1963).

Apart from being the current script that scribes used to write manuals, the gothic script was more comfortable cast due to its heavy face and lack of fine lines. The compactness and boldness of it with familiar feelings that ordinary book buyers had, the black letter was the first typeface that molded. Because being recognizable back then, the reader also found it readable. With time, type forms itself, and when the printer discovers a more manageable shape to cast for printing, it heralds the revision of the form of the script for the sake of greater legibility (Goudy, 1963).

Typefaces are not bodily gestured as calligraphic scripts are, but they have manufactured images designed for infinite repetition on the surface. Graphic designer and educator Timothy Samara (2006) explains typography in Western cultures, which occurs simultaneously on two visual levels. One is the macro level of overall composition that leads the eye around the format; the other is the micro level that refers to the details that lead to the general perception of the overall composition. Samara underlines "the individual forms and interaction of alphabetic characters" as a key concept to appreciate and understand how to efficiently work with typography elements (Samara, 2006: 14).

One of the most quoted experts on typography is Noordzij (2005), saying that "the middle ages begin with the invention of the word and the middle ages come to a close with the invention of typography." He continues, "Typography is here understood: writing with prefabricated letters" (Noordzij, 2005: 49). Unlike the dictionary definition, Noordzij avoids correlating typography to a particular medium or material.

From a typographic point of view, type is a special branch of writing that differs essentially from lettering. The typographer can only work with writing that is arranged in a font. Since we learned to store typefaces in computers, we can imagine type as lettering reproduced in a database (the typographic "font") that makes the shapes of the original drawings available for composition. The lettering does not meet this typesetter's condition by itself. However, when it comes to the properties of the design, there is nothing that could distinguish type; it is impossible to tell typographic letters from other reproductions of lettering (Noordzij, 2005: 9-10).

Here, Noordzij (2005), through implying the prefabricated letters, creates a drastic distinction from other genres, namely lettering, handwriting, and calligraphy, as productions of a repeatable system

of setting letters. They can be stored in computers and reproduced whenever the designer needs them, and they are always ready for any type of composition. However, lettering, calligraphy, and handwriting are different in that sense. In Fig. 8, the word lettering is performed by pencil. First, the outlines are drawn and then sketched roughly to give color. Some parts of the letters are retouched, erased, and redrawn to correct the shapes. It can be preferred to utilize it manually or digitally without creating a type from each letter here. If one desires to create a font with this lettering style, one can design every letter of the alphabet, numbers, and other typographic elements, such as diacritical marks, etc., as a package, reflecting the identity of the exact design. Each letter can be molded as a type to set or digitally created for computer use.

Moreover, in Fig. 8, the word calligraphy is performed with a metal nib pen and walnut ink directly, without retouching. To select the desired form of writing, it is supposed to be written repeatedly to achieve the script's exact shape, which is called *italic* here. Once again, it can be used as a manually written or as a digitalized image. If one writes each of the letters in the same style and creates a font from it as a repeatable system, then it becomes typography; as shown in Fig. 8, the word typography is typed with the typeface Helvetica in the Adobe Illustrator program.

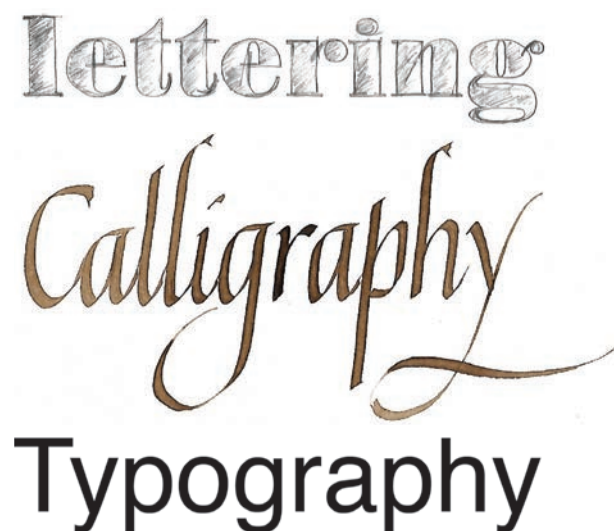


Fig. 8. Lettering, calligraphy, and typography are illustrated, Image credit: Almıla Yildirim.

In Fig. 9, it can be observed the logotype design of Laura Meseguer, a freelance graphic and type designer based in Barcelona, with the occasion of the memorial for the attack on August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017, at La Rambla.



Fig. 9. A logotype for the sentence "Barcelona, ciutat de pau" (Barcelona, city of peace), Laura Meseguer, Source: Laura Meseguer Official Website, [laurameseguer.com/project/ciutat-de-pau](http://laurameseguer.com/project/ciutat-de-pau), access: 11.03.2021.

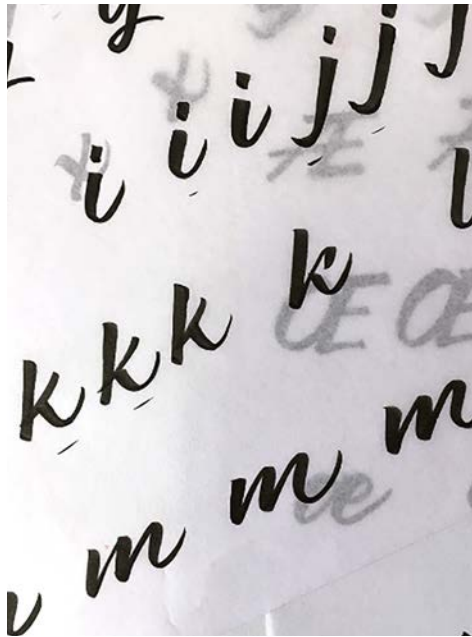
The design process was explained as that started by sketching the logotype and the symbol with a brush marker pen. Meseguer (n.d.) states that she prefers it to look like "simple casual writing," meaning it can be anyone's handwriting. She repeats writing the same sentence over and over again until she satisfies the final result to digitalize. The logotype pays attention to the transparency of the ink that led to observing the hand's touches. It is not typography because the logotype is utilized as a complete image, as shown above. It can be ranked as handwriting due to revealing the designer's own writing, but not executed at once, instead of repeating over and over again, which consists of the construction of the letters and words as a whole; however, it is not sure whether the process consists of retouches of Meseguer or not. Why not calling calligraphy is not debatable either, but it will be more understandable with the part "2.5. Western Calligraphy: a brief tour of its definitions of the term," where the term will be held in detail, from traditional and modern perspectives, and in Chapter VI from a contemporary point of view. However, it can be stated that traditional western calligraphy has certain rules in creating the letterforms that affect the type of employed materials; also, the time period will be mentioned in Chapter III, and calligraphy requires skills that can be acquired with practice and historical knowledge that is accumulated with time. For this reason, it is sincerely believed that calligraphy, even practiced by contemporary calligraphers, still carries its references from its roots and history. Hence, this logotype design, even written by hand with various aesthetic considerations of the designer, cannot be ranked as calligraphy. With its spontaneous-like writing, hand-lettering is more appropriate here.

On the other hand, the typeface can now be created as illustrated, hand-lettered, or inspired by calligraphy and then turned into a digital font file used in the repeatable system. That means lettering and calligraphy can inspire the creation of the type for typography.

Fig. 10 shows examples of how lettering can be utilized for creating a font. Meseguer decides to create a script typeface with a handwriting look, practices each letter with a brush pen on tracing paper, and then scans her letters to vectorization in Illustrator. Four different glyphs are also prepared for each character, including ligatures. Hence, it finalizes a text in a handwritten sense, and each letter becomes a type that can be rearranged and reused. For this reason, the Brushland Typeface is a hand-lettering-based design as a typeface, a part of the practice of typography.

Another issue actually mentioned earlier, while talking about Gutenberg and his first book typed with the imitation of the blackletter in the sixteenth century that ancient scripts can be an inspiration for type design. This attitude also can be observed when looking at the near history.

A German-based type designer and calligrapher, Hermann Zapf (1918-2015), can be pointed to exemplify this issue, inspired by Rudolf Koch (1876-1934) and Edward Johnston (1872-1944) -in terms of reviving calligraphy in the twentieth century. These artists will be mentioned on the following pages; for his reason showing the example of Zapf's typography inspired by calligraphy will be more appropriate here.



*Brushland*  
*Is a custom script typeface initially designed for a vineyard. Based on writing and with multiple variants per glyphs, that change automatically to give the sensation of a real handwritten text.*

Fig. 10. The sketching process of the Brushland Typeface, Laura Meseguer, Source: Laura Meseguer Official Website, [laurameseguer.com/project/brushland](http://laurameseguer.com/project/brushland), access: 11.03.2021.

Fig. 11 illustrates the Gilgengart alphabet of Zapf, influenced by the Gothic writing system and designed as a typeface. The Gothic writing system will be mentioned in Chapter III. However, it should be noted that Zapf seems to refine the drawings of this style, probably to make the letter more recognizable and the text more legible. To do so, he seems to rearrange the height of the letters in both majuscules and minuscules; also, with a narrower nib, he reduces the heavy appearance of this style. Hence, Zapf manages to interpret and transform this ancient script into a digital font.



Fig. 11. Gilgengart Typeface, Hermann Zapf, 1938-48, Source: Kelly, (2011: 22).



Such examples of this type can be increased, but at this point, it may be necessary to briefly address the question of how to determine if a typeface is calligraphic if it does not have a direct reference to the old script as in Zap's work.

Fig. 12 shows the Apple Chancery Typeface designed by Apple based on the *chancery hand*, a form of handwriting that belongs to the thirteenth century, which was used as a formal hand without linking the letters. It can be observed in the diagonal axis of the letter c, which is a cause of the broad nib that is cut with a certain angle and also held by a particular position of the tool, which are essential features that help to divide the typeface whether it is calligraphic or not. Moreover, the serifs of the letters are a typical feature of the chancery hand that is kept in its type version, created as a result of the same tool employed for calligraphy. Hence, the Apple Chancery is a typeface inspired by a calligraphic script, mostly imitation, and adaptations as a typeface can be called a calligraphic typeface.

Fig. 12. The Apple Chancery Typeface, Source: Fontmirror Website, fontmirror.com/apple-chancery, access: 27.04.2021.



On the other hand, in type classification, these features can be observed in *old styles*, *humanist* developed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries with the characterization of low contrast in stroke weight and angled serifs, such as Adobe Garamond (Fig. 13). Also, *transitional typefaces* are between old style and modern typefaces with a more vertical axis and sharper serifs such as Centaur (Fig. 14). Centaur is a serif typeface designed by Bruce Rogers (1870-1957) with the influence of the fifteenth century, reflects calligraphic features, such as low contrast between the stroke width and the diagonal axis of the letter. This research is also typed in Centaur typeface.

Fig. 13. The Garamond Typeface, Source: Adobe fonts website, fonts.adobe.com/fonts/adobe-garamond, access: 27.03.2021.



Fig. 14. The Centaur Typeface, Source: Fonts.com Website, fonts.com/font/monotype/centaur, access: 27.04.2021.



Keith Chi-Hang Tam (2002) explains the term calligraphic. The primary point mentioned here is how in the Western tradition, written scripts had been formed in respect of the used tools. When the traces of the tools are imitated or subverted, as shown in Figs. 12-14, the traces of the calligraphic feature appear in the letter through its form. Basically, establishing the ground on that, Tam (2002) determines the criteria for assessing the influence of calligraphic writing on typefaces; hence he claims that it is possible to determine whether that typeface is calligraphic or not. These criteria can be summarized as follows:

- \*examining the proportions of the letters -the majuscules and minuscules are constructed by the same proportion of the medieval scripts, being loyal to the proportion of the calligraphic form of the script,

- \*strokes -whether written with even width strokes or consists of thick-thin transitions which is affected by the tool that used,

- \*angles of stress or axis of contrast -if the axis of contrast is oblique that is reminiscent of the tool again and belongs to a medieval script if it is vertical, it belongs to modern Romans or a mixture of both which refers to transitional,

- \*accompanying italics or not-it points at the difference between the created form of italic and simply skewed form of roman; and terminals -whether they are angled, orthogonal, horizontal/vertical, or combination of these which again mostly created depending on the tool that used. Tam's overall explanations provide a general idea of how the term calligraphic is used in terms of calligraphy and typography.

## **2.5. Western calligraphy: A brief tour of its origins and definitions of the term**

This section will examine the etymological meaning of the word calligraphy, the general conception, and the perception of western calligraphy itself. In particular, considering the above discussion about the term writing, it will be discussed whether similar conflicts or misperception about western calligraphy also exists or not; how the term calligraphy is translated, understood, and conceptualized during the evolution of calligraphy in the West.

The particular aim is to provide ample support for locating the contemporary tendencies in the realm of western calligraphy by framing the general perception of the definition of calligraphy.

The word calligraphy is derived from Greek kaligraphia, from *kallos* meaning "beauty," and *-graphein* meaning "to write." In this sense, the combination of the word calligraphy occurring in loanwords from these two is commonly translated by *Online Etymology Dictionary* (n.d.) in the English language as "beautiful writing."

Moreover, *Online Encyclopedia Britannica* (n.d.) explains it as "the art of beautiful handwriting," considering the Greek word's same translation. It can be claimed that these are the only standard definitions that

one can encounter in any source about western calligraphy. It can be claimed that usage of the word "calligraphy" actually points to "the conventional writing in the west."

The word calligraphy, as mentioned before, with the printing period, started to use to refer to artistic practices, not to functional usage of writing. Considering this knowledge, when calligraphy is used to refer to the conventional scripts, these scripts are practiced by artistic urge; however, there was no concept of calligraphy in the West before the printing period as it exists today. Hence, calling these scripts calligraphy is the debate in this sense, and this usage of the word calligraphy is misused, leading to false perceptions. It also reflects the perception of other calligraphy traditions, such as Far Eastern and Arabic Calligraphy, and created other genres in the realm of contemporary calligraphy and various adjectives such as tradition, modern, abstract, expressive, or experimental urged to identify that styles in the realm of western calligraphy.

To frame all, first, the definitions of the selected dictionaries and encyclopedias will be included in this discussion. Afterward, a general evaluation of their definitions and descriptions will be carried out to avoid repeating the same criticism, as the general evaluation is mostly parallel to each other in the literature discussed here. After dictionaries and encyclopedias, various selected literature in the realm of calligraphy will be observed, focusing on the definitions and descriptions of calligraphy. Moreover, through assessing the words *kallos* and *graphein*, it aims to state what the word calligraphy means according to these sources and calligraphers, whether the meaning and the perception of calligraphy in the West are parallel to each other, what actually refers to them, also whether there are some contradictions to discuss as in the case of writing.

### **2.5.1. Western calligraphy definitions according to selected dictionaries and encyclopedias**

According to *Oxford English Dictionary* (n.d.), there are three definitions for the word calligraphy: (1) "the practice, art, or profession of producing beautiful, ornamental, precise, or formal lettering with a pen or brush; beautiful, ornamental, or formal handwriting or hand lettering;" (2) "a person's handwriting; a particular style or example of handwriting;" and (3) "Fine Art, a particular style of brushwork or line work."<sup>1</sup> It is observed that *Oxford English Dictionary* (n.d.) repeats the so-called literal translation of the words *kallos* and *graphos*, and it defines western calligraphy in the statues of art as well as a craft through underlining the act of practicing and producing by hand particularly. Moreover, *Oxford English Dictionary* even limits the material with a pen or brush used to achieve the precise form of the letter. Under these limitations, it is not very clear to claim that practice is an art.

<sup>1</sup> While the very first citation dates back to 1590 that the term first appears in the sense of (1) "in the book of writing master and calligrapher Peter Bales (1547–1610?), entitled the *Writing Schoolemaster*, the second earlier citation dates back to 1645 in the sense of definition" (2) "appears in the first edition of *Colasterion* written by poet and polemicist John Milton. Finally, for the" (3) "definition, British newspaper *The Observed* published 1928 gives as the earliest citation" (*Oxford English Dictionary*, n.d.).



Considering the mentioned explanation of the word *graphos* and writing as a concept, limiting the calligraphy, which can just be practiced by pen and steel nib, can be claimed as a false assessment here due to Roman Capital script, which was practiced in the first century with a brush on the stone, before incised it (Catich, 1991). It will be mentioned in detail in Chapter III. Hence, the statement that conventional Western writing is merely practiced by pen or steel nib is inaccurate.

According to Catich's (1991) explanation, it can be claimed that it had started with a flat tip brush. Through manipulating the brush, the form of a letter of Roman Capital could be established. This may be on the debate, whether the Roman Capital can be accepted as a calligraphic script by whom sees calligraphic script is merely practiced by steel nib in the West. However, almost every piece of literature, which will also be observed in this part, starts with the Roman Capitals to the historical evolutions in the realm of calligraphy.

*Online Merriam-Webster's Dictionary* (n.d.) repeats slightly similar definitions: (1) "(a) artistic, stylized or elegant handwriting or lettering," (b) "the art of producing such writing; (2) penmanship;" (3) "an ornamental line in drawing or painting." The similarity in the explanations, as can be observed here, manifests itself in repeated words and indicates that calligraphy is an art and produces handwritten letters by not just writing but also by drawing or painting. It may refer to other communication elements apart from the letters, such as punctuation marks, numbers, and even any standardized signs used in the text. It is highly significant because, at first, it seems to embrace other writing systems not consists phonetical signs; however, drawing and painting here refer to the ornamental elements that were used in order to elaborate the style, which may also be perceived as calligraphic beauty of that time. The perception of the beauty of the Greek and medieval times can be claimed as not that parallel with that, particularly in terms of writing. About the beauty concept, it will be examined in this part on the following pages.

Moreover, *Online Merriam-Webster's Dictionary* (n.d.) explains the term penmanship that refers to two definitions: (1) "the art or practice of writing with the pen;" and (2) "quality or style of handwriting." Penmanship as a term is strictly bound to the perfection of technically well-proportioned letterforms with their sturdy structure and well-organized compositions on the page that can be perceived through high technical skills with exertion. The beauty referred to in terms of writing just points to these features: well-proportioned letterforms, good structure, and well-organized compositions. It is a hint that beauty consists of a functional notion that is charged due to the needs of that time. Also, it seems that *Online Merriam-Webster's Dictionary* assesses calligraphy, handwriting, and lettering are pretty much the same practices as long as they are executed with artistic tendencies.

Looking at the noun *calligrafia* in the *Diccionario de la Lengua Catalana* (n.d.), the word is defined as the art of writing the letters of an alphabet artificially, according to a model, with an aesthetic intent and writing made in accordance with this art. What could be understood here is that Catalan Dictionary also puts calligraphy to the art statues and the

genre of writing that follows the model, which refers to the script used before the printing period. It draws attention to the rules that Western Calligraphy consists of. According to the definition, these rules, such as how to manipulate the material, how many strokes are supposed to be employed, and in what order they have to be executed, are supposed to be followed if one wants to perform calligraphy.

On the other hand, looking for the Spanish noun *caligrafía*, the *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española* (n.d.) gives two definitions for it; the art of writing with beautiful and correctly formed letters, according to different styles and set of features that characterize the writing of a person, of a document, etc. It is once again underlined as an art form, executed with beautiful and correctly formed letterforms in various styles. One of the features of the conventional sense of calligraphy, the correct form, takes attention here, which refers to the perception of Greek mentality, which will be mentioned on the following page.

Continuing with another Catalan reference, *Gran Enciclopèdia Catalana* (1986) describes the word *cal·ligrafia* as the art of writing the letters of an alphabet in an artificial way, according to a model, with aesthetic intent, which is opposed to spontaneous writing. Due to its relative speed, it tends to be cursive forms, which give a personal stamp to the writing. It is also explained that in some Eastern cultures, calligraphy has traditionally been highly regarded; thus, in China, it has been considered an art, even superior to painting, and in Persia and among the Arabs, it has been a significant artistic and decorative element, whereas, in the West, calligraphy was cultivated mainly in the Middle Ages by copyists in monasteries. Moreover, the word *cal·lígraf -a* is defined as a person who writes with an artificially designed typeface, calligraphy, writing with an artificial letter, with aesthetic intent, or artificially crafted handwriting, with aesthetic intent, but without spontaneity. It continues that in ancient times, some pre-existing cursive handwriting was handwritten for use in luxury books or council documents. Calligraphic types without a previous cursive tradition have also been created in modern times.

*Gran Enciclopèdia Catalana* (1986) considers Western calligraphy as an art form in previous dictionaries written consistently and aesthetically and points to the feature of execution speed as a reference to distinguish calligraphy and spontaneous writing. Here, spontaneous writing may refer to handwriting used for informal purposes, namely daily needs, in which the form of the letter is not of primal importance; hence it could be executed fast rather than formal writing. To give an example of formal writing, luxury books or council documents can be shown, in which the form of the letter was supposed to be created carefully in respect of the accurate script. *Gran Enciclopèdia Catalana* (1986) slightly mentions how calligraphy is perceived in the other traditions, namely in the Far East, in particular China, and in the Middle East in Persia, where calligraphy is considered and practiced as one of the most significant art forms. It takes attention to consider other calligraphy conventions apart from Western and leads to comparing these traditions; however, it may not be appropriate to compare them with western tradition due to the conflict and misuse of the terms

from the beginning without any background about these traditions. Also, calligraphy as a word is picked up by Westerners to refer to the writing traditions of these cultures. As mentioned in Chapter IV, in Far East, *shufa* is used for the calligraphy of China and *shodo* for Japan, also mentioned in Chapter V for the Middle East *khatt* is used to refer to the Islamic culture of calligraphy. Moreover, there are no specific boundaries between calligraphy and writing in these cultures as it exists in the West. For this reason, without these considerations, directly pointing at other traditions is not a good explanation in terms of calligraphy.

Looking at the definition of *Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrada Europeo-Americana* (1911) defines *calligrafia* as the art of beautiful writing, the art of writing correctly. Furthermore, it is explained as the art of representing oral sounds with beauty by means of graphic signs. Here, it is underlined that the term beauty refers to the graphic elements of writing. According to its explanations, due to the material medium it uses and its power of representation, calligraphy occupies a pre-eminent position among the plastic arts, having all the excellence of the arts of the word. As graphic art, it can be called a freehand drawing in short. It is explained that calligraphy consists of two parts: theoretical and practical; theory is what teaches us to write by means of rules, and practice is the application of these rules to writing. In the study of calligraphy, it is claimed that theory and practice always go together: each rule must be applied to a particular case. Just as each written exercise must be related to the rule to which it must be subject.

As in the case of previous dictionaries, *Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrada Europeo-Americana* (1911) repeats the same notions. Here it is obviously explained beauty with the features of "well, correctly constructed letterforms" came into prominence as an art form. One significant part is mentioned here as slightly that calligraphy consists of theoretical and practical parts related to how it is executed. It probably underlines the history of calligraphy and the evolution of the scripts that transformed bound to the social, political, cultural, and technological circumstances. The history of calligraphy is assumed as cumulative knowledge that one has to be considered while practicing. Apart from that, it explains the term beauty under the title of qualities of the calligraphic work, in which it determines the elements of a calligraphic piece, such as "unity, goodness," and "perfection" (1911: 781-789).

Moreover, it explains the qualities of calligraphic work through the attributed notions such as beauty which refers the unity, truth, goodness, and perfection. In addition to beauty, calligraphic Works are assessed through the following qualities: clarity, equality, proportion, symmetry, parallelism, cleanliness, elegance, and correctness. Clarity consists in the distinction of parts, so that it can be easily read; equality, in which the signs of the same species have the same form and magnitude and in which the distances are the same in analogous cases; the proportion is the relation that there must be between the width and height of the letters in the writings and between the upper and lower case letters; the symmetry of a writing is the harmony of the position of the letters with each other; parallelism is the uniform distance

that must exist between all the points of the thick inclined sticks of the letters and between some lines and others of the calligraphic production; cleanliness, in which, in addition to the signs being well drawn and in the corresponding place, the calligraphic work is exempt from pencil marks, emendations, scratches, pen scratches, stains, blots, etc.; elegance is the pleasant distinction that expresses the good taste of the calligrapher and is manifested by the timeliness of the decorations and the care and delicacy in the execution of details; correction, since any lack of spelling in beautifully drawn writings is highly objectionable (*Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrada Europeo-Americana*, 1911).

Here the detailed description of beauty seems to refer to the Greeks' perception in terms of writing. It is not surprising that writing in the 1920s was supposed to be clear and reflect the quality of the letterforms, which is determined by the notions of equality, proportion, symmetry, elegance, and correction for such, as mentioned. Overall notions here refer to the primer and the only aim of the writing in the West in a conventional sense, which is charged writing with conveying the message. The description seems rather broad here, compared with the previous dictionaries; however, the perspective is pretty much the same with them.

As mentioned before in part "2.1. Writing: a brief tour of its origins and definitions of the term calligraphy" of this chapter, as a term was first used in the West about the end of the sixteenth century. Up until that time, copying the text or manuscript handwritten books with Greek and Latin-derived alphabets had executed by specific hands (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, n.d.), which will be mentioned in Chapter III that starts with the Roman Capitals of the first century BC till printing period of the fifteenth century. These sources and significant literature use the term calligraphy to refer to these ancient writing styles; however, during that time, these hands were not called as calligraphy nor calligraphic script.

The word calligrapher was not used in order to refer to scribe as well. Especially by the mid-fifteenth century, with the printing period in Europe, a clear division arose between hand (handwriting) and scripts (Nash, Barbour, & others, 2019). The conflict and the division between writing and calligraphy may start right at that point. It seems that the dictionaries and encyclopedias mentioned above referred to the ancient writing styles and called them calligraphy, which is a word that started to use to highlight the difference between artistic practice and writing that serves accurate needs such as copying and conveying the message of a text. It can be claimed that this usage of the word calligraphy in that sense has to be reconsidered, and it has to state after what point the term calligraphy has started to use.

The other repeated statement that is used mostly is "the art of calligraphy" or "the art of beautiful handwriting," which has to be reconsidered, whether it is problematic or not. It also appears as a title of various literature that is highly respected and most quoted, such as Harris (1995b) *The Art of Calligraphy: A Practical Guide to the Skills and Techniques*; Ferraro, Metcalf, and others (2011) *The Art of Calligraphy & Lettering* (2011). It will also be mentioned about these books and their descriptions of calligraphy on the following pages.

The conception of art in a modern sense is highly comprehensive to define, moreover to decide what art is and what is not is out of scope here; however, it is significant to frame the concept of art in ancient Greek and also medieval times when writing was used for functional reasons, in order to understand what calligraphy may refer, even it is claimed that calligraphy did not use back then to point at ancient writing styles. It will lead to locating misuses and underlining the chain reaction that has started with the perception of writing and continued with the calligraphy in terms of the Western world.

Eco (1986) examines the theory of the art of Medievals and "how far they were from any conception of art as a creative force" (1986: 95). He claims that there was no conception of art in the modern sense that may point at the primary function of the constructed object, which is not meant to be enjoyed aesthetically in the first place. He also underlines that the theory of art is actually based on two basic elements: one is knowledge (*ratio, cogitation*), and the other is production (*faciendi, factibilium*). These two elements frame this act as "a knowledge of the rules for making things" (Eco, 1986: 92). Eco's explanation is highly direct and understandable in the Middle Ages, when the ancient writing systems that were now called the art of writing, calligraphy, was actually neither assessed nor practices as art by them, or at least, it can be claimed that the idea of art was not the same as today back then.

On the other hand, the word art is a Greek word related to *aretas*, which means "a capacity for making something," also "a power of the practical intellect" (Eco, 1986: 92). Eco mentions another well-known feature of the medieval theory of art is the word *ars*, which was a concept with a broad sense that refers to technology and artisanry in a modern sense. Hence, art was not accepted as an expression; it aimed to construct an object in respect of its own rule at that time. These constructions could be a ship, a sword, a building, or a painting.

Shiner (2001) also mentions this concept, starting with the etymological explanations of the word art, derived from the Latin word *ars* and Greek language *techne*. These terms consisted of things that were considered as a craft. What one calls craft has a broad sense of the answer, such as "carpentry, and poetry, shoemaking and medicine, sculpture and horse breaking" (2001: 20). It can be understood that the word actually refers to the ability to make or perform the object rather than the object itself, as Shiner claims. All human activity seems to be performed with skill. Hence, he claims that the ancient Greeks and Romans back then had no fine art category as in the sense of modern ideas and practices of art.

Shiner (2001) states that the division between human activity as fine arts and craft occurred in the eighteenth century in Europe, whereas Risatti (2013) states fine art, with its relatively recent origin, started to separate itself from craft in the sixteenth century, that means the concept of fine art started to be distinguished itself associated with the realm of beauty and aesthetic in the late eighteenth century.

In the eighteenth century, also pleasure in the arts was distinguished due to refined or ordinary. Refined pleasure is claimed to be appropriate to the fine arts, whereas ordinary pleasures are useful or entertaining.



The refined pleasure here became to be called "aesthetic." After the nineteenth century, the word "fine" dropped, and only art versus craft started to be discussed (Shiner, 2001).

Namely, poetry, painting, sculpture, architecture, and music are not considered the same as shoemaking, embroidery, and storytelling, also called craft. Fine art is explained here as "a matter of inspiration and genius and meant to be enjoyed for themselves in moments of refined pleasure" (Shiner, 2001: 5), whereas craft is "required only skill and rules and meant for mere use or entertainment" (Ibid.). Hence, what can be understood here, the perception of calligraphy as an art with the current understanding has only been possible in the eighteenth century. That means, even if the word calligraphy was started to be used in the sixteenth century, it might take two more centuries for the art approach to form in terms of western calligraphy. Hence, it may not be that accurate to accept that with the printing technology of the fifteenth century, scribes started to perform calligraphy as an art.

On the other hand, while the term *artista* (artist) was coined in the Middle Ages with roots in *ars*, was refers to craftsmen or the students of the liberal arts (Risatti: 2013); later periods, the term "artist" and "artisan" were used to refer to a person who practices these activities, both terms were used interchangeably. That means that the word "artist" could refer not only to a shoemaker but also to a painter. By the eighteenth century, these terms were divided and became opposites. "Artist" started to be used as the creator of works of fine art, "artisan" or "craftsman" meant the mere maker of useful things (Shiner, 2001).

From the point of historical reference, it is highly noteworthy that the word scribe is used mostly in the period when the writer had only charged for copying the text; he was not defined as an artist or a calligrapher as in today. Also, they copied handwritten text by a script as a term, not calligraphic script, back then. Under these explanations, it is possible to understand the description of a scribe who was not assumed as an artist in the modern sense. It takes attention that in some of the literature in the realm of conventional writing, the word scribe and script are preferred use for the title, or even in the text, for example, Gullick and Rees, *Modern Scribes and Lettering Artists* (1980); Hamel, *Scribes, and Illuminators (Medieval Craftsmen)* (1992), Brown, *Western Historical Scripts from Antiquity to 1600* (1993); Avrin, *Scribes, Script, and Books* (1991) and Stevens, *Scribe: Artist of the Written Word* (2013).

At this point, it would be useful to look at what the words script, scribe, and hand mean. The word scribe as a verb literally refers to "to write" and comes from Latin *scribere*, and as a noun, Latin *scriba* means "keeper of accounts, secretary, writer." Moreover, *scribe* as a noun dates back to 1200, means "professional interpreter of the Jewish Law" (late 11c. as a surname), the word *scriba* from Church Latin means "teacher of Jewish law", in Latin, special use of *scriba* means "keeper of accounts, secretary, writer," from past participle stem of *scribere* means "to write," in English "one who writes, official or public writer." The word *scriber* in Latin, *graphein*, *glyphein* in Greek, is also supposed to be considered here (*Online Etymology Dictionary*, n.d).

Moreover, *graphein* is defined as the "process of writing or recording," or in modern use, "writing, recording, or description." It follows as "from French or German *-graphie*, from Greek *-graphia*" and explained as "write, express by written characters," earlier "to draw, represent by lines drawn," originally "to scrape, scratch" (on clay tablets with a stylus). The key point about the word *graphein* is considered in the broad sense as an act. On the other hand, the word *script* as a noun means "something written," earlier *script* dates back to c. 1300, *escrit* from Old French means "piece of writing, written paper; credit note" (Modern French *écrit*), *scriptum* from Latin means "writing, book; law, line, mark." Moreover, the word used to refer to "write" derives from *scribere scriber* (French *écrire*, Irish *scriobhaim*, Welsh *ysgrifennu*, German *schreiben*) in Celtic and Germanic, as well as Romanic languages. *Scrifan* from the Old cognate English means "to allot, assign, decree," and in modern English, the word *written* as a verb is used to express this action (*Online Etymological Dictionary*, n.d.).

Back to the difference between the script and the hand is said to be based on what the text was written for; it also affected the overall appearance of the letter and the text. Scripts are divided into two subgroups, formal and informal. While a scribe is supposed to write clear, legible, well-made letters that favor the reader's need, he mostly concentrates on the shape or form. It is called a formal script, which takes more time to execute and is used for formal documents and luxury books. On the contrary, if a scribe writes hastily with speed, favoring the writer's need actually, he writes scribbled letters. The overall appearance of the letterform and the text were not the primal issue here. It is called informal scripts that are used for everyday use. While a script is a model that the scribe has trained and mounted in his eye before each letter, a hand is what a scribe puts down on a page without this envisagement. Hence, each scribe also has his own hand-embellished by his taste (Drogin, 1989). These divisions, as claimed, started to occur with the printing period. It is highly noteworthy that these notions, such as clear, legible, well-made letters, are used to refer to the beauty in the realm of writing in previous sources that were observed. For this reason, it is confusing whether informal writing, due to its sloppy, carelessly constructed letterforms, is not beautiful so is not calligraphy. Once again, here, it raises to query the terms.

For more knowledge about the scribe, whether it makes sense to use the word calligrapher to recall him as an artist is problematic or not, it would be helpful to mention slightly about the scribe in the medieval times when hand-copying was the only way of recording and transmitting relevant text; a large number of manuscripts written out by hand by (Walther & Wolf, 2014).

Considering ancient writing, mainly in the Middle Ages, is examined in Chapter III, had been practiced for functional reasons and also assumed as a craft skill that needed to be acquired and mastered. It had the function of recording, copying, and conveying text, booklets, notary documents, or manuscripts. For this reason, this period is assessed as a manuscript culture that required technical and practical skills, which means craftsmanship in terms of calligraphy. Considering the



production of the manuscript consists of preparation of the material and tools -parchment, vellum or paper, also quill pen, organizing the composition of the page -the text and illumination, and writing process, then gathering the pages of the manuscript, all preserve the technics before the industrial period that needed to be learned and transmitted.

For quite a time, the monk scribe was responsible for all book production phases in medieval times. During that time, with the need for copied handwritten text, professional practitioners, so-called lay scribes who were trained in a monastery, cathedral school, or scriptorium, appeared, and medieval monks had to work in collaboration with a lay scribe who was not an actual member of the guild (Drogin, 1989). Furthermore, in his book entitled *The Golden Tread: The Story of Writing* (2013), Clayton mentions the enslaved people involved in every aspect of the book production.

On the other hand, an ancient scribe, mostly a scribe monk, had a seven-years of training to learn the ancient styles and master them to get permission to write a manuscript, which will also be mentioned in detail in Chapter III. Hence, as a craftsman, an ancient scribe had to learn how to manipulate the material and could not be distinguished from the tools that he relied on and depended on for his service to others (Rowley, 1997).

The scribe was not allowed to reflect individual approaches to the handwritten text or manuals and was not allowed to use their acquired skill as a source of temptation to the pride, which means they were not encouraged to use their calligraphic skill as an expression of their individuality as well (Jackson, 1981). The book was not a medium for any personal expression or perspective on an artistic level. That means ancient writing practices -traditional calligraphy- were basically a craft that consists of tactile knowledge and requires acquiring technical and practical knowledge.

The spread of printing techniques puts numerous scribes out of work or forced to be retrained. Some kept surviving by working in printing shops. For medieval book producers, it meant adapting to the new medium and finding alternative ways to take the client's attention, such as developing an extravagant style alternatively. Conversely, some showed no consensus with the others who had tried to be adopted it, which meant not letting the machine surpass the hand. Technology may change the nature of culture, and scribe reflects the requirements of the time; thus, changing the assumption of the concept is inevitable. However, these terms refer to conventional practices of scribes who did not mean to create art. It has to be clarified the word calligraphy and, from which date and under what circumstances did the word calligraphy start to use in the West, even how it started to perceive as a concept of art.

Moreover, the statement "the art of calligraphy" is misused. If the term calligraphy refers to writing as an art form and divides itself from the writing performed purely for functional reasons, it makes no sense to use it as the art of calligraphy. It creates misconception and misperception, for sure. From the opposite perspective, if the medieval period's conventional writing styles are referred to as calligraphy, it means these styles are accepted as an art form performed because

of aesthetic feeling and in search of individual expressions, which is definitely not an issue in terms of traditional Western writing. In addition to this, if calligraphy started to use in the printing period and became a term that refers to artistic practices, particularly in the eighteenth century, it would not be wrong to assume that calligraphy covers both past and present, meaning tradition and contemporary.

With the misuse of the word calligraphy, the other issue that has to be handled here is comparing it with other calligraphy traditions, namely Far Eastern and Middle Eastern Calligraphy. While in the West, calligraphy as a term does not exist but conventional writing and certain script styles of the time were in use for the functional needs before the printing period, directly bound to the needs of that age; in Far Eastern culture, namely Chinese and Japanese for example, calligraphy has been assessed as a divine activity that a person perform not just as cultural attainment but also of one's internalized gestural alignment consists of universal sources of life and energy. For these reasons, written marks have been accepted as an expressive act that elevated the status of art from the beginning (Clayton, 2013). In terms of Middle Eastern Calligraphy, it is also assessed as a divine act that not every person has the capability to write and has the capacity to perform. Writing is directly related to religion and copying the holy book of the Qur'an. Also, the prohibition of visual depiction due to religion, writing, and ornamentation had escalated to a different level. These traditions will be examined in Chapters IV and V in search of the influences on the West's contemporary practices; however, it has to be rethought under these circumstances whether the Western tradition of writing can be judged by comparing with these mindsets. It may help to questionnaire the Westerner's mindset about writing from the beginning of the time that writing started used. However, it will not locate the idea of calligraphy, which appeared after the scribe's release from his burden, and the writing as an act started to be considered an autonomous medium in the Western world.

However, a highly significant point that is needed to be underlined here. It is not specified ancient writing practices -traditional calligraphy- as a craft to qualify it in the sense that it is less valuable than art practices. Especially considering the statements of Risatti (2013), who basically claims that craft is an art and developed the arguments discussing the dichotomies between function-nonfunction, craft-design, an artist as intellectual-the craftsperson as an object maker, including an artistic content-physical object in this topic. He challenges these issues, which point to a rejection of the degradation of the craft. Rather, Risatti (2013) prefers to underline the basic difference between fine art and craft, which is that fine art is related much to the viewer and continues as "fine art entails the making of symbols while craft entails the making of things" (Risatti, 2013: 89).

Instead, it is significant to be aware of the term calligraphy and its usage as "the art of calligraphy" while referring to ancient writing practices. Moreover, it should be mentioned as a much more critical issue: whether today's calligraphy practices still include craft knowledge, in other words, whether a contemporary calligrapher still needs to require the craft knowledge of ancient writing today. These questions

will be answered through this research, particularly in Chapter VI with the examination of the selected contemporary calligraphers and their practices, and also in Chapter VII while examining my personal calligraphy perception through my calligraphy practices. That leads us to arrive at the point that whether calligraphy is practiced with the concern of reflecting individual experiences and experimentations or merely serving for functional reasons, in both cases, calligraphy preserves its craft nature as an accumulated technical and practical also conceptual knowledge of the calligrapher.

Calligraphy itself has an intrinsic potential about being expressive, beyond the language barriers and beyond the forms of the letters literally, and this notion is not limited to the nations, nor the time, but to the minds and perceptions of the man. In medieval times, because of the lack of the idea of art in a modern sense, the writing was not charged with these values, not as in the Far East or Calligraphy with the Arabic alphabet and the Islamic Calligraphy. Hence, it is not bound to the idea of the writing itself, but it is directly bound to the mindset of the practitioner and the capacity to assess it. Writing in the West emerged depending on merely the needs of time and transformed, bounding to the perception of a man in the West. This does not mean that it indicates the lack of potential of writing or calligraphy itself. Being limited to the spoken word and language with specific aims, namely to be read and convey the text message, it is not surprising that the potential power of expression in the writing realm seems to be shadowed or kept in the background. This potential may be unaware or ignored due to the general perception of writing, especially after the invention of the phonetic alphabet. It also seems contemporary calligraphy still suffers from these ignorant minds that will be observed here while examining the authors' and calligraphy artists' descriptions.

In this context, while discussing other calligraphy practices, it is supposed to understand the fundamentals keenly and motives behind the other conventions in terms of writing and how it may lose some specific fine details because of the translation to the English language. At least, an artist should feel obliged to be aware of this.

Back to the etymological definitions of calligraphy, according to *Online Etymology Dictionary*, especially the word beauty that used in order to refer to calligraphy, words *kallos* (the noun beauty) and *kalos* or *kalon* (beautiful, the beautiful) expressed as "the (morally) beautiful, the idea goof," also neuter of Greek *kalos* means "beautiful, noble, good." Moreover, looking at the word *callisto*, it is explained as follows:

In classical mythology, a nymph, mother of Arcas by Zeus, turned into a bear by Hera, from Greek *kallistos*, superlative of *kalos* "beautiful, beauteous, noble, good," and its derived noun *kallos* "beauty," from *\*kal-wo-*, which is of uncertain origin, perhaps related to Sanskrit *kalyana* "beautiful." The usual combining form in Greek was *kalli-* "beautiful, fine, happy, favorable," *kalo-* was a later, rarer alternative form. Also, the name was given 17c. to the fourth moon of Jupiter. Feminized as proper name *Callista*. (*Online Etymology Dictionary*, nd.)

On the other hand, the modern equivalent of the word beauty is in *Online Cambridge Dictionary*, which is: (1) (n) "the quality of being pleasing, especially to look at, or someone or something that gives great pleasure, especially when you look at it;" (2) "the business of making

people look attractive, using make-up, treatments;" (3) "something that is an excellent example of its type;" (4) "a quality that makes something especially good or attractive;" (5) "an attractive quality that gives pleasure to those who experience it or think about it, or a person who has this attractive quality;" (6) "Beauty can also mean an attractive appearance." According to this definition, if it refers to the thing or a person, it is evident that it has to satisfy certain feelings, such as pleasure or attractiveness, due to some characteristics of the look of that thing or people that trigger these feelings. Not just the physical appearance, such as being attractive, but it may be related to the internal feature that a thing or person carries, such as being good or having quality. Hence, it may claim from these explanations that the word beauty generally is used to refer to the comprehensive notion that general assessment charges with values. To understand whether the word beauty has a similar concept to these modern descriptions and what the Greek word *kallos* refers to, it is supposed to look at the Greek perception of beauty and its probable implications in terms of writing.

Eco (1986) examines the term beauty and claims that the Medievals conceived of "beauty as purely intelligible as the beauty of moral harmony and metaphysical splendor" (Eco, 1986: 5). These statements, as he claims, one of the most profound understandings of their mentality and sensibility in terms of beauty. In the first place, they did not refer to something abstract and conceptual; on the contrary, it refers to everyday feelings related to lived experience (Eco, 1986: 4).

Eco (2004) also reviews the idea of beauty to provide ample support to understand the ideal of beauty, especially for Greeks. As he claims, beauty had no autonomous state in ancient Greece until the time of Pericles (?-429 BC), who was a prominent and influential general of Athens. His time is accepted as a golden age for Athens when military, economic, and cultural power arose. It is also assessed as a time that significant developments occurred in the arts, particularly in painting and sculpture. As Eco (2004) claims, the possible reason for this development may be the need to reconstruct the temples destroyed at that time because of the wars. Before that, Greeks did not have a real aesthetic and a theory of beauty. For these reasons, beauty is a term explained by associated with other qualities, such as moderation, harmony, and symmetry. The word *kalon*, assessed as improperly, may be translated by the term beautiful, which refers to pleasant feelings, raising admiration, or drawing attention. If something is beautiful, it may refer to that; it has a virtue that delights the senses, especially sight and hearing, as Eco (2004) claims. In the case of humans, these senses are not the only factors but also the qualities of the soul and the personality that perceives by the mind's eye more than the eye of the body.

Based on these explanations, Eco (2004) points to the term beauty bound up with the various arts, such as sculpture with the appropriate measure and symmetry of the parts, rhetoric with the right rhythm, in poetry with an enchantment, which makes the one delighted can be expressed. By examining the philosophers' perspectives, the former one takes attention is an ancient Greek historian, philosopher, and soldier Xenophon from Athens (c. 430 BC-354 BC). In his *Memorabilia* (c. 371 BC), he intended

to legitimize the artistic practice by mentioning at least three aesthetic categories: "*Ideal beauty*, which represents nature by means of a montage of the parts; *Spiritual Beauty*, which expresses the soul through the eye (as in the sculptures of Praxiteles, who painted the eyes to make them look more realistic); and *Useful, or Functional Beauty*" (Eco, 2004: 48).

On the other hand, both Plato (429?–347 BC) and Aristotle (384 BC–322 BC) associate harmony and proportion of the parts with beauty; also, the morally good soul is viewed as harmonious or well-proportioned (Asmis, 2010). For Plato, beauty is distinct from the physical medium with its autonomous existence and is not bound to a sensible object in particular. Hence, beauty does not relate to what the eye sees. The senses are supposed to be overcome by an intellectual sight that requires knowledge about arts and philosophy. For these reasons, beauty is not a term in that everyone has the capacity to be appreciated (Eco, 2004).

Assessments of Eco (2004) in terms of Greek perception of beauty seem not that different from the modern perception of beauty in a broad sense due to being charged with various values and not limited to one direct explanation. However, other significant points have to be considered here. What is essentially supposed to be discussed is the claim of beauty being a component feature of western calligraphy practice and how this reflects on its perception or definition.

Johnston (1917) mentions the beauty of form in terms of writing and lettering as having beautiful shapes and construction. Hence each letter as an individual and as a whole fitted perfectly to its position and the material of an object used bearing the inscription. Constructing beautiful forms, according to Johnston, requires "good taste, and that it turn requires cultivation, which comes from the observation of beautiful forms" (Johnston, 1917: 252). The craftsmen's point of view as Johnston also sees himself as "achieving beauty by taking pains means acquiring skill in a special craft and adapting that skill to a special piece of work and perhaps the surest way to learn is to let our tools and materials teach us and, as it were, make beautiful shapes for us" (Johnston, 1917: 252-253). Hence, Johnston uses the term beauty in terms of lettering, which is required to achieve the right form that belongs to the qualities of good writing.

Goudy (1963), on the other hand, also uses the word beauty when he mentions letter construction. According to him, various features needed to be considered while constructing a letter. First is the intrinsic shape of the model, i.e., the lines, curves, and angles or the direction of the lines that are used in order to compose it; the second is the form that consists of proportion and beauty, as Goudy states, whether the particular model fits the place and purpose of intention or not.

Goudy (1963) also highlights that it all depends on the ability and taste of the artist. These features are for so-called aesthetic quality, which is organic and essential for itself, neither with the addition to the fundamental form of the letter nor with meaningless variations. Here Goudy explains the desire for the beauty of the form; however, the readability of the letter is still a primary desired feature than beauty for him. Simplicity, dignity, harmony, proportion, and strength are also

characteristics that Goudy stresses, which host beauty in their nature. Hence, beauty in terms of writing and calligraphy is strictly bound to the construction of a letterform, the overall composition of a text, and the harmonious adaptation of each part, which is supposed to be created in a well-proportioned manner. By the way, it states that the aforementioned proportion is based on the Roman Capital letters as uppercase and Carolingian minuscule script as lowercase letters, which will be mentioned in Chapter III.

### **2.5.2. Western calligraphy definitions according to calligraphers**

In this part, the definitions and descriptions of calligraphy from various literature belong to calligraphers will be mentioned with the stated notions and features because it is significant to observe the perception of the contemporary western calligraphers that will show the understanding of western calligraphy and how they define, mostly describe the western calligraphy. It will provide insights into the similarities and differences between the tradition and the contemporary, mainly from the perspective of the artists who have been already practicing calligraphy, also discussing the term through history and today.

Calligrapher Drogin (1989) defines calligraphy as the art of writing beautifully employed in various styles for various purposes, as mentioned in various dictionaries previously held. He mentions well-constructed letters, balance, and personal attitude reflecting artistic expression in a general sense to elaborate on his description. Here the construction of the letters is assumed as a critical feature of performing calligraphy beautifully and helps to gain a balance within the written text. The personal attitude of the calligrapher steps in through creating and preserving these determined notions of Drogin without losing the functional feature of the letter that is needed to be recognized and legible. Hence, it can be stated that the description of Drogin is a highly strict and narrow description that ignores most of the practices of the contemporary calligraphers, who prefer to eliminate the letters and employs various strokes, lines, marks, or even stains, who will be observed in Chapter VII. As can be seen in many other books mentioned above, it cannot be said that he contributes to this issue from a new or different perspective.

On the other hand, French type designer and calligrapher Mediavilla (1996) pays attention to his critics of the term calligraphy as a misunderstood term because, according to him, calligraphy is difficult to define and it is the object of so many prejudices. First, he begins with the emphasis on writing, which is mostly considered a semantic feature rather than a graphic. According to him, "Writing acquires meaning through legibility and the process of alphabetic reading. On the other hand, calligraphy can acquire meaning through silence since it is intended to be expressive and artistic rather than strictly utilitarian" (Mediavilla, 1996: 17). Here, it should be kept in mind that calligraphy is a writing practice that has its own distinctive features as handwriting, lettering, and typography- also basically assessed as forms of writing. Hence, what Mediavilla probably refers to through his usage of the term writing refers to handwriting. However, without underlining this issue,



based on this assessment, it sounds like he believes writing and calligraphy are two distinct areas to study. This description of writing is related to the language and alphabetic reading reminds what was discussed in the first part earlier, entitled "2.1. Writing: a brief tour of its origins and definitions of the term" that Coulmas (2003) and Harris (1989, 1995a, and 2000) assess as a Western mentality, which is needed to be rethought.

Moreover, Mediavilla (1996) criticizes the term calligraphy, which derives from the Greek word *kallos* translated as beauty, and *graphein* translated as writing, the beautiful writing, and he states that he does not see it as a translation suitable for Greek origin. He claims the word *kallos* could express artistic beauty at a high level semantically, which signifies a different perspective of strength and fulfillment in plastic art. He keenly denies the connotation of "prettiness, frivolity, and mawkish decoration" (Mediavilla, 1996: 18), which has little in common with that beautiful writing. He calls it mistranslated; however, as discussed before, the concept of beauty and art in the Greek and medieval times will be more appropriate to call that misperception rather than a mistranslation. The translation may be called beautiful handwriting; however, how the terms beauty and writing were perceived at that time is the crucial point to discuss. With *kallos*, it is pretty obvious that they refer to neither prettiness, neither frivolity nor mawkish decoration. According to him, these misunderstandings surrounding calligraphy are due to an imprecise or ambiguous definition of a discipline.

Apart from the word *kallos*, Mediavilla (1996) surrogates the word *graphein*, which is ambiguous whether it indicates writing or drawing. According to him, the consequences of this ambiguity create incomplete and misleading interpretations in a sense.

As explained earlier, *graphein* contains a broad sense of mark-making due to the long history of the evolution of writing. Since writing is assessed as an umbrella term and consists of calligraphy, this wide range of execution, including drawing, mark-making, etc., also can be observed in the works of calligraphy. Hence, it seems not that accurate to expect calligraphy as an art form that reflects pure legibility and clear letterforms as can exist in conventional medieval writing and merely can be executed by writing in a literal sense.

As deeply believed, these perceptions in terms of literal translation of calligraphy actually started with the assessment of the writing in the West. When observing the contemporary western calligrapher practices in Chapter VI, it will be encountered how conventional perception of calligraphy is insufficient to cover those. Over and above, when perceiving the term writing with its broader sense of execution, it is possible to see the potential is not peculiar to contemporary tendencies; it already exists as an intrinsic feature of writing, hence in calligraphy. Employing writing as a functional entity is bound to the perception and does not reflect the nature of the writing itself. Being unaware of this potential makes it understandable to define calligraphy as a mysterious act, as Mediavilla does.

Overall, Mediavilla (1996: 18) suggests a definition of calligraphy as follows: "calligraphy is the art of giving form to signs in an expressive, harmonious and skillful manner." Here, as Mediavilla states, the word signs refer not just to letters but also to all sorts of elements of the alphabet (may cover all sorts, not just the Latin alphabet). After all, he points out that the letter is an abstract sign that attributes phonetic content, and without any need to be read, one can enjoy the bunch of text written in any other unfamiliar alphabet. According to him, a western calligrapher who does not know the Japanese language can still be impressed with Japanese calligraphy. It will be calligraphy work, even if it is illegible for a western calligrapher. Hence, discussing the word *grophein*, whether writing or drawing, is unnecessary because the definition actually contains the exact answer for it. It can be both written or drawn as soon as it contains elements of writing that are not limited to letters. However, it is not clear at what level the clarity of the form of the letter and legibility of the text Mediavilla (1996) demands calligraphy works. However, at least, it is for sure due to their resemblance of him to paint rather than literature; he seems to be convinced that the medieval perception of calligraphy (better stated as "ancient writing styles") as a functional entity is not capable of covering what Mediavilla perceps as calligraphy in general.

On the other hand, the statement of "the art of giving form to signs," according to Mediavilla, refers to certain knowledge of ancient inscriptions and their techniques, which reminds Johnston (1917), who believes beauty can be achieved by a laborious act of acquiring a skill, adapting that skill to work and create a special piece in terms of calligraphy. Here, once again, the craft nature of calligraphy seems to be underlined as an acquired skill; moreover, the competence to adapt this skill to work gives space to personal experiments to reflect individual experiences in calligraphy.

According to Mediavilla, learning the basic techniques is not enough due to universal parameters that he mentions as "harmony, proportion, formal balance and rhythmic contrast" (Mediavilla, 1996: 18). Moreover, he coins the term "true calligraphy," which is characterized by "harmony, proportions and the richness of its forms" (Ibid.).

The term true calligraphy reminds the term true writing, which is utilized to distinguish all writing practices and justify the phonetic alphabet as a real writing system. With true calligraphy, Mediavilla (1996) seems to distinguish all calligraphic works; some may be less calligraphic than others for him if they do not satisfy his determined key factors, such as harmony, proportions, and richness of the forms. Once again, it refers to the well-constructed signs that have balance within self. Moreover, after examining the statements of Eco (1986 and 2004), it could be understood that these parameters herald the beauty of the work in the realm of calligraphy in the calligrapher's mind. With the correct balance, a harmony of the styles, and the right proportions, the legibility of the style will arise, and it will satisfy the need of the text, and lack of these features, as he claims, reduces calligraphy to simple writing.

Meanwhile, Mediavilla (1996) never considers the potential of writing as an art form as in the Far Eastern or Islamic tradition, where there is no strict distinction between writing and calligraphy or the modernist movements of the twentieth century of Europe, such as Futurism or Dada. While typography started to be performed as an image, western calligraphy started to be reconsidered and restudied, but not as an expressive platform as today, rather reviving the notion of clear, legible, harmonic, and elegant interpretations of various ancient scripts. This issue will be mentioned in Chapter III while examining the historical evolution of Western calligraphy.

Another significant part mentioned that Mediavilla (1996) creates a hierarchical rank between the calligraphic styles and divides them into three categories. The first is called "the classic styles" (1996: 267), which follows the tradition basically, the second one is so-called more modern "based on cursive letterforms and gestural strokes" (Ibid.), and the last one is "the purely abstract styles which open up numerous new plastic possibilities" (Mediavilla, 1996: 268). It seems categories are not about the calligraphy itself. However, categories of approaches are strictly bound to the perception of writing, and these indications seem mostly to refer to the period of western calligraphy and how its' perception has shifted through its' history. For these reasons, mostly encountered adjectives such as tradition, modern, abstract, experimental, or expressive that are used to refer to calligraphy to identify it seem not that make sense while advocating the expressive potential as a nature of calligraphy that shelter itself.

What takes attention is that Mediavilla (1996) aims to focus on the ties between calligraphy and abstract painting by stressing the calligraphic act, which is determined by the mechanisms of perception, as he claims, in order to understand the process of abstraction and ability to evaluating of calligraphic forms by qualitative and expressive terms as a creative activity through the nature and role of form and rhythm. The rhythm in the calligraphy is explained through the human body. Certain harmony in the coordination of the body's movement is necessary to boost energy. With this harmony of movement, one can escalate the level rather than the one in an uncoordinated manner. Hence this form of harmony is assessed by Mediavilla (1996) as a form of rhythm. In terms of creative fields, these principles, as an operative source within oneself, lead the creative act.

Mediavilla (1996) comments too that the technical knowledge -the craft nature of calligraphy- about the ancient writing styles is necessary precisely at that point because one is expected to know how to manipulate signs of language, as he claims, which are assessed as "the most direct means of stimulating the mind and exciting the emotions" (Mediavilla, 1996: 275), hence provides to escalate their effects as abstract entities.

The relationship between writing and painting, as he claims, started with the pictographic elements that were employed in the earliest forms of writing. These forms of signs were very close to the pictorial representation of the object. Later these signs evolved into the phonetic alphabet, one of the abstraction forms that represent sounds. But

still, writing in a literal sense started to be seen as a platform that provides visual elements to adopt for an artist. Mediavilla (1996) does not claim that writing substitutes for painting; however, he claims that ambiguity arises when the artist employs elements of writing as the main component of his work. According to him, the artist is supposed to employ these elements in a convincing way that reflects beyond the literal meaning. He thinks the ambiguity just starts at this point due to these graphic aspects being developed and reaching the point "the writing becomes calligraphy" (Mediavilla, 1996: 292). Here he admits that calligraphic forms have a pure pictorial capacity through their lines. He assesses these lines are difficult to identify whether made through a calligraphic act or as an abstract painting. However, what can be identified are "the dynamics and impulses," he claims. Again, this perspective, analyzing the lines as an abstract entity, comes from realizing writing from its imperatives of communication, such as its legibility and conveying the speech, which is assessed as Western mentality.

As Mediavilla (1996) also mentions, looking at the Far East -China and Japan- it seems unnecessary to identify oneself as a painter or a calligrapher because both are closely related to each other. However, in the West, this situation is totally different due to the perception of the terms, writing, and calligraphy from the very beginning. He thinks the calligrapher remains obscure and misunderstood mainly due to these reasons.

By gaining autonomy as an art, calligraphy started to be seen in a different way. Mediavilla (1996) claims it happens in the course of the twentieth century. However, as stated before, writing, hence calligraphy, has that autonomous notion as an intrinsic entity that belongs to its nature. In the case of the West, the first step for the perception change was supposed to be started before the twentieth century with the evolution of writing. However, it is evident that the perception of a man still struggles, and the western mentality couldn't reach that capacity to understand yet. Hence, it reached a point where Mediavilla thinks calligraphy actually has freed itself from these burdens in the course of the twentieth century. It can be on debate and again seems to depend on how one sees and from what point looks and interprets it.

Mediavilla (1996) even mentions artists such as Hans Hartung (1904-1989), who renewed the overall composition principles through lines and harmony, and he thinks some calligraphers devoted themselves to "abstract" calligraphy, where these principles of lines and harmony also dominate. It is understandable at this point that Mediavilla, under the light of these explanations, uses the term abstract calligraphy; however, it may cause other ambiguity about how the one can differ work of calligraphy and abstract painting each other, or which is a determinative criterion that work is a calligraphic work or not. Is it supposed to look at the background of that artist, whether he has trained in ancient writing styles, i.e., traditional scripts of the West, or not? The personal answer will be given in Chapter VII with the examination of my calligraphic perception and attitude; however, it can be stated that this issue needs attention to be carefully thought out and discussed, also using the term abstract to not cause a different debate about it.

On the other hand, it has to be decided whether it is really necessary to divide disciplines that have practiced calligraphy in a hybrid way, fusing different styles without considering or avoiding the conventional rules in search of reflecting his own personal interpretation. Also, about the term abstract, it has to be considered carefully whether it is suitable with the calligraphic work that even just employs the stroke, lines, or ink splashes without actual style or letter; it seems abstract painting but carries references from its roots, tradition, and history.

This type of calligraphic work does not claim to deny the past necessarily or to get away from it completely. It does not claim to be formless. On the contrary, it embraces the past and produces itself as a focus beyond it and to live it. If it has a peculiar feature, the aim is not to completely remove itself from its history and development. What makes calligraphy is that it progresses by accumulation. It should not be a stance that rejects its historical reference in terms of being independent of form; on the contrary, it should be assessed as embracing these references through creating a personal attitude about it. It can be claimed that the quality of the line and stroke -which will be discussed in the following pages- can release itself under these conditions: acquiring the skill with technical and practical knowledge and the capacity to investigate, interrogate, and interpret it. It should be assessed as neither denial nor betrayal to tradition in a sense.

Calligrapher Shepherd (2001) describes writing as "an extension of gesture -a way to make a motion visible, memorable, and lasting" (2001: 9), and she defines calligraphy as among these ways that people find to make speech visible by pen. It seems that she describes calligraphy as a tool to record the speech with the potential to record this as a gesture. While she points to broad ways of making marks, she suddenly limits it to the alphabetic system and its conventional way of explaining and recording a speech as a tool. Many books have pretty much the same problematic conceptualizing attitude that exactly causes misunderstanding and lack of awareness about the nature of writing and calligraphy.

Calligrapher Vargas (2010) defines calligraphy with ductus, rhythm, and metric components. The ductus is explained as the relationship between the speed and direction of the stroke, while rhythm means the repetition of a part, and metric is the relationship between the parts of the letter. Parallel to the conventional sense of the definition, she assessed it as an art form with well-constructed letters in a particular and proper way of writing. It seems Vargas describes calligraphy by adhering to the traditional definition, providing space for personal attitude due to defining calligraphy as an act of art.

Chazal (2013), from his experience as a calligrapher, points to the human being's desire to leave a visible mark loaded with feelings by using the potential of expressiveness that one can leave on the surface. These marks, he believes, are an expression of speech. Hence, it is unavoidable that he charges calligraphy with a significant role in writing culture, development, and civilization. It is directly bound to literary culture. It means those who cannot read or write cannot appreciate a calligraphic work; however, calligraphy and writing may be read from an upper level through, not limited by the semantic meaning of the written text.

Another calligrapher and lettering artist Stevens (2013), starts with the phrase "Scribe: artist of the written word" in his book, reflects his perspective of calligraphy in the first place. He points to the terms "writing" and "artist" to refer to writing as an art form and the scribe as an artist of the written word. He criticizes the word calligraphy, and according to him, the term is not enough to represent letter art that is practiced today; on the contrary, the word and its perception are stuck in penmanship, which refers to the function of copying and conveying the message. He explains it by saying: "the word calligraphy is not big enough to capture the best of our work today" (Stevens, 2013: 15). However, it should be kept in mind that it is not the word itself but the interpretation of the word calligraphy, which is formed by the Western idea of writing, can be held responsible here, as mentioned above in depth.

Stevens describes calligraphy as "organizing marks" (2013: 100). With marks, he does not mean just ordinary spontaneous entities; on the contrary, he points to the calligraphic form's foundational units, which are basically a stroke, a line, and even maybe a trace of a tool. It again starts with the form of a letter, then transforms just a springboard to go beyond it. For these reasons, the culminated acquired technical and practical knowledge -a craft nature of calligraphy and skill- seems to release that mark that Stevens refers here.

Moreover, Stevens (2013) points to the idea that a calligrapher, even if it looks like spontaneous work, is supposed to think about where to put the next mark. With anticipating it, these marks are supposed to be organized on the surface, not just pre-prepared. However, it will happen as a reaction of the hand of a skilled calligrapher who has certain experiences, hence competent to act spontaneously. What actually becomes significant is the quality of the marks and character of the strokes that the calligrapher performs, which Stevens (2013) also assessed as an essential feature.

Stevens (2013) tries to frame his calligraphy perception, mostly focusing on a broad sense that embraces current expressive intentions but does not exclude the roots either. From these authors, like Stevens, and Mediavilla, it doesn't seem very easy to find a clear definition of calligraphy, instead of descriptions, by charging the artistic values in a general sense. It is not that surprising since there is no clear definition of calligraphy, as it exists for *shufa*, *shodo*, or *khatt*. Instead, artists and authors try to describe how they perceive and practice calligraphy and explain it from their point of view. It seems they do not stress enough about Westerners' superficial perspective in medieval times and how it reflects the word of calligraphy. Even today, what they complain or point at, seems not to clear the situation, and the main aim is the perception of the mind. Especially with a mentioned perception that for centuries westerner has, it seems not fair to expect to enhance these perspectives since western calligraphy is still identified with certain limited points of view. Not the meaning of the words, such as beauty and the writing, but the interpretation of the words probably causes that limited assessment in terms of writing and particularly calligraphy.

This interpretation mostly seems to feed the traditional parts that are strictly bound to the legibility of the letterform for the sake of conveying the message and text; copying without personal interpretations also



raises a dilemma. Stevens (2013) calls it dichotomies in thinking, such as traditional versus expressive, hand versus digital, and brush versus pen, which probably is not supposed to be the focal point. With the term expression, he is not just referring to the work with "strong emotion in a spontaneous stroke of pen or brush" (Sevens, 2013: 31) built in a painterly manner; rather, he states everything can be expressive because everything is expressive of something. Even traditional work with high legibility and well-organized text can be considered expressive. It is just authentic, at this point, maybe crucial about it. According to his assessments, he points to the current calligraphy practices and claims that "calligraphy is in the process of redefining itself" (Sevens, 2013: 12). He refers to contemporary tendencies that reflect different notions that the traditional aspect of writing that was limited to its accurate rules and mentality, merely Western, and scribe performs not as a servant of a text<sup>2</sup>, but as an artist that transcends basic functionalities. He advocates that every piece of calligraphic work, whether created in the historical sense, such as a manuscript accepted as a masterpiece or a beautifully written wedding invitation envelope, is supposed to transcend itself in respect of the term quality. Collaboration with the text, in some cases even eliminating the text and creating something beyond the letters and words, refers to redefining calligraphy. It is actually redefining the western calligraphy perception.

The overall explanation based on Stevens's contemporary calligraphy practices shows that whether it is created by written form, painted or drawn, the criteria transformed as well as the perception about writing and calligraphy. Classification or creating a hierarchy based on techniques seems to lose its validity. For this reason, calligraphy or calligraphic seems to consist of a much more expanded nature than it used to be.

On the other hand, Thorpe (2017), mostly focusing on the current practices, points at the attributed contemporary notion of calligraphy, such as more expressive, personal aesthetics that refer to experimenting with the letterforms, the compositional perception both technically and practically, also created the piece with innovative materials that refers the tool basically leave a mark, apart from the pen and metal nib, for the sake of seeking inspirations in everything around. She claims that criticizing the practices as a right or wrong way of writing letterforms is now outdated. Every experienced calligrapher with a well-trained eye already has the ability to experience it. What she basically points out is thinking beyond the conventional attitude. There is nothing new to offer here; she intends to illustrate the contemporary perception of calligraphy, which is mostly repeated.

Another calligrapher Brown (2017), as Stevens (2013) and Mediavilla (1996) do, describes calligraphy by first criticizing the translation

<sup>2</sup> The phrase "servant of the text" has been utilized by scribes because they had an obligation to put importance on clear communication over artistic aspiration. It had been perceived as a mere duty, not just for the calligrapher but also typographer that Johnston stated as a traditional view that assessed the text with its leading role and guided the calligrapher. Moreover, this issue was discussed in a book art symposium titled *Servi Textus: Servants of the Text*, held at Saint John's Abbey and University in Collegeville, Minnesota, in 1996. According to Brown (2017), this commission intends to preserve scriptural values above artistic concerns; however, it also discussed at the same time whether calligraphy should always be a servant of the text (Brown, 2017).

of *kallos* (beauty) and *graphein* (to write). According to him, this etymological translation reflects simply decorated letterforms and calligraphy, which reproduce to conform to traditional modes. Thus, he refuses to be limited by conventional notions and by this term as well. Once again, it is a matter of perception, and what he thinks about the translation of the terms *kallos* and *graphos* have to be better analyzed considering the possible broad expressions that may consist and possible shifting meaning due to the language.

His individual approach is called "polyrhythmic calligraphy," which he defines as "transcending tradition" (Brown, 2017: 112), which will be mentioned in Chapter VI, for these reasons without giving much detail about it, focusing on his perception of calligraphy, what he believes is as an artist studies not as a servant of the text, but fusing the techniques with the conceptual attitude is the aim tendency of him. It is obvious that he does not exclude the convention, however recognizing the concept of Chinese and Japanese calligraphy, which can be summarized as "spirit in calligraphy that may be more important than its legibility" (Brown, 2017: 119); he believes western calligraphy can be assessed in the same way.

Another term, Brown (2017) coins, is "reductionist calligraphy," which refers to abstraction in the realm of calligraphy for Brown, "calligraphy reduced to the essential" (Brown, 2017: 235). That means he does not write as he does in the traditional sense. There are no letters, no words, no characters, just performing with the material in his reductionist calligraphy. Suppose he refers to the "essentials" of the calligraphy by excluding the identified form such as letters, words, and characters. In that case, it seems that he actually points to the fundamental of the calligraphic form again, line, stroke, or even just an act of writing that exist in the nature of the calligraphy.

It can be said that Mediavilla (1996), Stevens (2013), and Brown (2017) actually try to rationalize their practices and perception of calligraphy in their current position considering contemporary tendencies and how it evolves back then. However, the point may be needed to be discussed here that even though all three seem to have a similar attitude using different terms, namely abstract or reductionist, still their overall assessment seems pretty much the same: going beyond the literal meaning of the writing in the West, freeing the calligraphy from the charged conventional values and features, not excluding the tradition, knowledge or demanding practices, on contrary embracing all and creating more individual authentic visual form. Hence, instead of giving names to it, it seems to make more sense to analyze the terms in Western mentality and consider the circumstances and how it evolves and interacts with various dynamics by questioning it, not the calligraphy itself but the perception of the mind.

It seems the term writing has not been discussed yet from the perspective mentioned above. It is deeply believed that in order to describe the term calligraphy comprehensively, the primary unavoidable focus is supposed to be on the term writing in Western thinking. Considering the evolution and dynamics, but most significantly, the possible perception of writing in the West will lead to a more fair discussion in terms of calligraphy.

The desire to divide writing and calligraphy while defining calligraphy as a form of writing is another issue that can be claimed as problematic. Since writing consists of various types of acts, such as scratching, etching, carving, etc., bounding, reducing the term writing that merely covers the alphabetic system seems to ignore or be unaware of the history and evolution of writing. Moreover, as mentioned in this part, while discussing Mediavilla and his definition of calligraphy, his usage of the term writing to divide calligraphy is worth underlining once again that what is needed to use is the term handwriting, rather than writing to distinguish from calligraphy, the wrong usage of the term unfortunately as in this case, makes it sound like calligraphy is not a form of writing.

The second significant part here is considering the time that the term calligraphy started to be used. The printing period was a key period that affected the perception of writing causes reassessed the needs, and created a breakpoint in writing history. Hence the term calligraphy started to be used to divide the practices for functional needs and created with an artistic urge that was independent of that limits. In light of this knowledge, while using calligraphy in order to refer to the art of writing, using the statement "the art of calligraphy" is something that does not go beyond a wrong dilemma and a wrong definition.

The other important part that has to be examined is the etymological meaning of calligraphy mentioned in almost every one of the literature in that realm. It is crucial to understand the perception of beauty and writing, what these terms refer to regarding the accurate time, what may consist of a concept, and when analyzing them from the current perspective, which may correspond in a contemporary sense. Overall, when being aware of the nature of writing and calligraphy, it can be claimed that the new terms or adjectives that are put in front of the word calligraphy, such as abstract, expressive, experimental, or modern, and even traditional, actually may create ambiguity and confusion itself, as most of the calligraphers also state, however still insisting on labeling it as such.

To sum up, it can be claimed that what calligraphy means is not an easy question to answer in a western mentality as in the Far Eastern calligraphy that will be mentioned in Chapter IV or the Middle Eastern calligraphy that will be mentioned in Chapter V. What is meant here the word *shufa* used for Chinese calligraphy and literally describes in English language as "the art and the discipline of writing in respect of the word *shu* (writing or written text), and *fa* (law, method, and way) (Iezzi, 2013a: 159). *Shodo*, is a word used to refer to Japanese calligraphy, which means "the art of writing" or "a way of writing" (Tara, n.d.). Arabic term *khatt*, which refers to calligraphy in the Middle East, means the extended trace of a thing. The noun *khatt* also contains the idea of writing that can be understood from various translations as "line and stroke, stripe as well as handwriting, writing, script, calligraphy, penmanship" (Blair, 2006, xxv). However, describing calligraphy as beautiful handwriting, as explained here, is highly superficial and does not describe calligraphy in a conventional and contemporary sense.

On the other hand, if one mentions medieval times, it is not necessarily called with the word calligraphy; instead, it will be more appropriate

to call them the ancient writing styles/practices, which were employed for merely utilitarian concerns. As mentioned earlier, in the sixteenth century, the term calligraphy started to appear. It is evident that the direct translation of the word calligraphy creates misconception for one who perceives calligraphy in a wider sense, as in the case of contemporary western calligraphers, which will be well-understood with the closer examination in Chapter VI.

In the light of these considerations, does western calligraphy need a concrete definition?

Considering the ancient writing styles -medieval/traditional calligraphy-, it can be claimed that it is a way of recording, copying, and preserving the data or knowledge performed with tools and materials depending on the time and technology which affected the letter formulation, employed for practical reasons, seen as a type of craft that needed certain training to be acquired and mastered. Moreover, it is understandable through its recognizable letters; hence readable text (at least for familiar eyes) and appreciated with its understandable statements are key features of this kind. They are also appreciated through their techniques, dedication under limited conditions, and technical possibilities.

Looking at the current situation -will be well understood with the examination in Chapter VI; hence it will be more appropriate to describe the current situation and try to find a better way to define calligraphy after these examinations; however, it can be said that calligraphy cannot be limited by any type of materials or tools, also techniques, nor strictly limited with the written language concerning with the letters, words or texts. However, it can be claimed that calligraphy still preserves its craft nature, that means calligrapher requires to acquire a calligraphic skill that can be achieved with historical considerations, technical and practical knowledge of the ancient styles to reach the essence of its nature, which consists of accumulated data that has to be aware of and appreciated from the beginning of the history of writing, before organizing as a system.

As a word today, calligraphic rather than calligraphy seems to be employed commonly as an adjective that characterizes the intention and framework of a piece rather than being a name or a title. It evolved as a feature that can be identified with tendencies as calligraphic. That means it is not totally calligraphy as known or seen for centuries from the western perception (means something does not belong to tradition totally), and these features reveal themselves through lines, strokes, and stains that appear as marks and dominate the overall artwork, can be a paint, a sculptor or an ordinary page that still can be perceived as calligraphic. This issue will become more explicit first with the examination of the tradition in Chapter III, then observing and discussing the current situation of practices in Chapter VI, and at last, with my practices that are illustrated with their technical, and conceptual descriptions in Chapter VII that also reveals the personal understanding of western calligraphy today.



### III. WESTERN CALLIGRAPHY TRADITION

Western traditional calligraphy as a significant part of culture achieved its' highest degree during medieval times that began in the mid-400s with the departure of the Roman legions from Britain, signaling the twilight of an age dominated by ancient Rome to the end of the fifteenth century when the Renaissance blossomed (Drogin, 1989).

An appreciation of today's calligraphic interpretations is involved in understanding the meaning of the western calligraphy tradition, adaptations of its practices to circumstances, reflections of technological advances, and cultural shifts that point at the bounce from the medieval era through the twenty-first century. Moreover, ancient writing styles of medieval calligraphy are still taught today, and it can be claimed that most contemporary calligraphers employ it as a reference and utilize the theoretical and practical knowledge of traditional western calligraphy as inspiration or concept for experimentation. That means traditional calligraphy is still relevant and present and reflected and embodied through the calligraphic works today, which will be examined in Chapter VI. For this reason, it is decided to focus on Medieval western calligraphy to examine for this chapter, not to examine the historical evolution of the calligraphy but to have a significant insight to provide ample support and background about the tradition of western calligraphy. It will also provide the knowledge to locate and frame the traces of how tradition is still relevant and can be observed in contemporary attitudes. It also explains that, as we have seen in the previous chapter, there is no single definition of the term calligraphy and that, therefore, exploring its origins can allow us to understand better what has been the evolution of this field of arts and design.

When the time, hand-copying was the only way of recording and transmitting important text, which provided to preserve history as some repositories of ancient knowledge; apart from copying, ancient societies engaged with writing for various reasons, such as to predict the future or it served as "prognostication, identification, accountancy, and an almanac" (Robinson, 1995: 9). Here, it can be understood that writing and calligraphy were practiced to satisfy various needs, as discussed in Chapter II, which is stated as the general perception of writing in the West have been formed around this understanding, and this has become the primary determinant in the view of the calligraphy.



On the other hand, in the West, writing, particularly calligraphy, started to be employed as a form of devotion that serves religion in which scriptures have copied the sayings of God. It provided a different kind of dignity and mission to form holiness within the bookmaking activity (Clayton, 2013).

Clayton (2013) states that the interpretation of the shape and characters of letters as a tradition goes back as far as Plato, who mentions letters as a representation of different forces:

[...] the letter R stands for motion, the L for suppleness and smoothness... Allegory extended so far into the making of letters during the early Middle Ages that one tenth-century manuscript in the town library of Bern, Switzerland, shows novice monks being taught the shape of the letters by likening them to theological truths that are held in the mind as the letter is formed. The three strokes of A stand for the Trinity, the central cross bar representing the Holy Spirit that flows between Father and Son; the descending movement with which L is made recalls the birth of Christ who humbled himself by descending from Heaven to Earth to assume the condition of a servant. (Clayton, 2013: 51-52)

Moreover, Clayton (2013) mentions that scribes have attributed miracles to letters, and from the mid-sixth century, the jeweled treasure-bound scriptural book was started to be incorporated into Christian iconography. It is also stated that a significant influence on the new theology of the book was to learn "by naming the divine force and order behind creation as the Word or logos of God. "In the beginning was the word" (Clayton, 2013: 52). It is the opening of St John's Gospel. It is claimed that this situation gave the power to Christian scriptural text, which started to be assessed as a representation of the presence of the divine. It also provided an opportunity for a new kind of decoration under the Christian influence. With these features, western calligraphy seems to carry a similar point to Islamic calligraphy. However, various major differences distinguish the perception of writing and calligraphy between these traditions, which will be held in Chapter V.

It can be claimed that, in the West, calligraphy/ancient writing practices were still seen as a utilitarian process back then, embodied the form of the manuscript<sup>1</sup>, handwritten correspondences, and a written document that were copied and used throughout the medieval world during the pre-printing period. Traditional calligraphy was also a skill that had to be mastered how to construct various styles, learn how to manipulate a flat-edged tool (quill, reed, steel nib), to consider the composition as a whole to control the spacing not just between letters but also between words and lines.

Calligraphy, now, is assessed as a dynamic that has evolved, no longer merely a way of writing formal documents or certificates but also it started to be a means of expressing emotion, evoking the mood with even a single line or a word of a calligrapher on the contrast to its tradition. However, it can be claimed that calligraphy, whether conventional or contemporary, still requires historical knowledge, both technically and practically, because calligraphy has an accumulated discipline that is structured and transformed within this nature.

<sup>1</sup> Literally, *manu* means hand, written by hand by one or more scribe, in contrast to a printed book (Walther & Wolf, 2014: 494), and *script* means "a model which the scribe has in his mind's eye when he writes not a hand, what he actually puts down on the page" (Drogin, 1989: 3-4).

It is seen that calligraphy started to expand its limit with contemporary calligraphers, who experiment with a letter, a word, or a mark, also influenced by western tradition in various ways, interpreted the ancient scripts by creating individual styles, even if influenced by the anecdotes mentioned about some known ancient scribes or quite famous manuscripts, observed in Chapter VI. These influences are reflected in contemporary calligraphic works, also blending with other calligraphy traditions such as the Far East or the Middle East.

It is crucial to understand the Western calligraphy tradition to provide insight into the tradition with its history and techniques, including the evolution of scripts of Western calligraphy from the Middle Ages to the early years of the printing period in the sixteenth century. It will also be held how printing technology affected the ancient scribes and how ancient scripts were revived in the twentieth century because it should be bear in mind that calligraphy piles up by its nature and cannot be handled as stripped of its past.

Hence, this chapter aims to provide knowledge about the historical background of western calligraphy tradition, scribes, and their working conditions, which will be observed as references and inspire the contemporary calligraphers examined in Chapter VI. It will also be mentioned traditional materials and the evolution of the scripts from the Middle Ages to the early years of the printing period in the sixteenth century, which can be assessed as one of the significant breaking points in the realm of western calligraphy. With all these backgrounds, it aims to provide knowledge about the tradition of calligraphy and how it was perceived and practiced. It will provide an opportunity to locate and understand how the perception of western calligraphy has been formed and how the tradition is manifested itself through current western calligraphy practices.

On the other hand, a considerable period has to be mentioned here, which is called the reviving of calligraphy that was witnessed in the twentieth century. It will also provide a valuable assessment to understand while Europe was facing various modern movements that affected a large scale of cultural life, in what way did calligraphers interpret western calligraphy of the twentieth century. Apart from providing insight into these features, another critical significance of this chapter comes with the influences and contributions on my calligraphic perception and attitude that reflects my works, mentioned in Chapter VII, during this research period.

### **3.1. Scribe and scriptorium**

The history of western calligraphy is primarily related to the manuscripts, which were promoted mainly by the Christian Church throughout the middle age. These were the times assessed as a period of enormous growth and alterations in the Church and civilization as a whole in terms of how the scribes worked, their attitudes about the work, and also the tools, which changed relatively little (Drogin, 1980).

Clayton (2013) mentions that various aspects of the workday Roman literate world depended on enslaved people, such as keeping the records of mater's legal and financial transactions, educating their

children, and working as a manager or a secretary in the master's home and business. Clayton (2013) points to the letters of Marcus Tullius Cicero (106 BC- 43 BC), a Roman statesman, lawyer, and scholar who had a significant role in the late Roman Republic politics, in which he mentioned his African enslaved person, Tiro, who had performed these tasks mentioned above and freed in 53 BCE. Tiro used to take care of Cicero's taxes, look after his garden and copy Cicero's work because Cicero's handwriting was too challenging to read. It is even stated that Tiro invents a kind of shorthand, called Tironian notes, that helped him to record speeches verbatim. With this example, Clayton (2013) mentions that enslaved people were involved in every aspect of literary works production, including teaching, writing, copying books, and considering Rome, which was at the heart of the western writing tradition and calligraphy.

Moreover, Clayton (2013) states that the use of the enslaved people formatted even limited, which affected the development of the tradition; in contrast, the Chinese culture where writing is seen as an activity that reveals the demonstration of a writer that embodies bodily gesture with the universal source of life and energy. That means writing is assessed as a creative and expressive act. At the same time, most of the Roman republic and early Empire literature was copied by enslaved people instead of by scholars or authors themselves; most of the ordinary Roman citizens were literate. In the fourth century CE, by the time of Constantine, there were 29 public libraries in Rome (Clayton, 2013). However, Clayton (2013) does not give any detail about these enslaved people since slavery was a significant feature of the Roman World with many services, such as household, agriculture, mines, workshop, and construction, and embedded in Roman culture, justified as usual.

Even if a small minority had their freedom, if only others were already enslaved since they were assessed as a symbol of the status of the Roman elite, the more one had the wealthy accepted within the eye of the public (Cartwright, 2013). Hence, it can be claimed that monks did not produce all books, but some were written or copied by people who preserved their value as workers.

With Christianity advanced across pagan Europe in the Middle Ages, the Mediterranean skills of reading and writing were brought to these lands, and with the Rule of St Benedict<sup>2</sup>, monks and nuns were encouraged the use books, which created a need for libraries

<sup>2</sup> A monastic culture was explained by Benedict of Nursia (c.480-543), who had lived in the east of Rome after retiring from an education in the schools of rhetoric in Rome to live solitary. Soon, he attracted followers and wrote a little Rule of the monastic life for beginners. It was promoted by Charlemagne (Charles the Great) (d. 814), the King of the Franks, in his reforms of the monasteries in the ninth century. It provided the Rules of Benedict that became viable life for most of the monastic houses of the early Middle Ages. The attitude of these monastic scribes explains as follows: "If there be craftsmen in the monastery, let them carry on their craft in all humility, subject to the approval of the Abbot. But if any one of them become conceited because of his knowledge of his craft, which is apparently bringing profit to the monastery, he is to taken away from his craft; ...with regard to the prices charged, the sin of avarice must not creep in; but whatever is sold should be a little cheaper than is possible for lay-persons, so that God may be glorified in all things" (Clayton, 2013: 72). Moreover, Benedict reminds his monks and nuns "The monk is essentially God's workman, and if that character is imperiled, the craft may have to be suspended" (Ibid.).

in monasteries and religious communities. One of the duties of the Church was to teach children to read, and it is claimed that most of the literate people in the Middle Ages learned reading and received some or all their education from the Church (Hamel, 1992).

In the second quarter of the third century, monasticism became a way of life that began to appear in the Near East. A new life was built that had a complete commitment to God, followed the same rules, ate, and prayed together. In about the sixth century, these communities became an important place in book learning and literacy that became apparent. Clayton mentions *vivarium*, which means a "place for life" (Clayton, 2013: 49) in Latin, that beautifully sited place near the sea with channels running in from the ocean and providing a fishpond. This kind of monastery had a vital with its intellectual life, consisting of a well-equipped library and scriptorium.

One of the typically built scriptorium -a room in a monastery or Church reserved for the copying manuscript (Clemens & Graham, 2007), can be observed through *Távvara Apocalypse* (*The Tower of Távvara*) dated back to 970, preserved in Archivo Historico Nacional in Madrid (Fig. 1). It is illustrated in order to frame the one of the scriptorium with its' safeguarding monks, removable ladders, and small windows in order to protect the scriptorium as well as the meritorious handwritten book against any possible attack (Drogin, 1989) that all scribbling in one room with the dictation by most probably the author or one of monk engaged as a reader, all almost in silence. It was the only sound heard, "the humming of bees as the copying scribes mumbled to themselves the words of the texts lying in front of them" (Jackson, 1981: 66).



Fig. 1. *Távvara Apocalypse* (*The Tower of Távvara*), dated 970. Cod. 1240, Folio 139, Archivo Historico Nacional, Madrid, Source: Grabar & Nordenfalk (1957: 173).

Working in the scriptorium was a kind of obligation that also promoted education; hence manuscripts had to be produced with the growth of the Church, which led to establishing new monasteries, which created and raised a constant demand for the reproduction of various religious and classical works. Apart from the book being created as an original composition, a scribe needed the text as an exemplar to copy. Bearing in mind that a scribe didn't simply write, he had copied and was supposed to have an exemplar from which to produce the text again. When the exemplar did not exist in a monastic scriptorium, he had to find a way to provide one. The monastic scribe might travel from one monastery to another where they had that exemplar, whether copying there or might request to borrow. It sometimes meant crossing national boundaries (Drogin, 1980).

As emphasized before, copying text was laborious work that had lasted for a long time. In some cases, it took over years of occupation, depending on the length of the book and who was writing it. In both cases, time is a crucial element; even it was a work of a team of two or three scribes (Drogin, 1980) that also affected the formation of the scripts with the need to write fast.

Looking at the eleventh and twelfth century, most of the manuscripts were produced in monasteries. Monks devoted their spare time to acquiring that skill to study and copy the texts, and most religious communities produced these manuscripts simply for their own use because there were not many private owners of books back then. Hence, the manuscript production depended on their needs (Hamel, 1992); however, it was not only monks that were literate in different parts of Europe administrations, but it also began to transform to a more systematic scale that the growth of writing as an instrument of legal authority started to be mentioned (Clayton, 2013).

By the twelfth century, considering the growing demands for handwritten text, a medieval monk had to collaborate with a so-called lay scribe/layman (Drogin, 1989) who was not an actual guild member but trained in a monastery, cathedral school, or scriptorium. Monasteries began to employ secular scribes and illuminators to collaborate in manuscript production. Because the need for new text started to increase, monastic libraries had to keep their collections up to date. Moreover, the early universities of Paris and Bologna, which were more or less independent of the monasteries, began their education. That caused the number of authors' book writing to rise increasingly every decade. Hence, more and more people wanted to become book owners themselves, whether a student who searched for textbooks or a nobleman with the desire to own the beautifully illuminated Psalters. For this reason, by the thirteenth century, secular workshops started to produce both writing and decorating manuscripts for sale to the laity (Hamel, 1992).

Students demanded textbooks or royal, aristocratic, and middle-class owners, mostly noblewomen –it was observed that the majority of Book of Hours<sup>3</sup> demanded by the women owners- desiring to own a special book with lavish decoration caused that growing demand. In addition to this, usually with his scrapbook as a marketing strategy that demonstrates his capability as a master. On large sheets with short writing samples accompanied by the names of the scripts that



mastered hanging on the outside doors and walls of the city in order to take attention of the future client to remind us of what we know today as advertising, as can be seen in Fig. 2, which illustrates a specimen that shows various ancient scripts that a scribe is skilled and can serve for his client (Kwakkel, 2013).

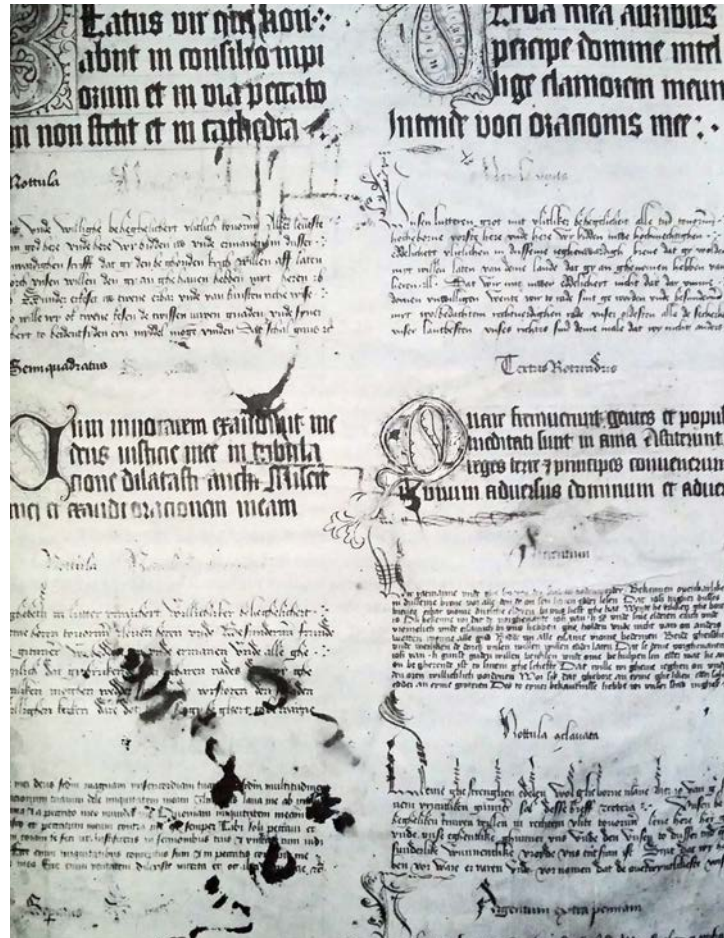


Fig. 2. Writing Master's Poster/Specimen Sheet, Source: Hamel, (1992: 138).

It should be noted that this kind of practice is slightly changed but still can be encountered today; a single page is written with several different script styles that reveal the skill and capacity of the calligrapher, how many styles he can practice, and how well he can execute them. Even though the reason or the motivation differs, it still carries a feeling of an ancient scribe who had eager to display his background on one single page. This issue will be mentioned in Chapter VI.

3 Book of Hours is a prayer book, among the most popular book around the middle of the thirteenth century and gaining popularity in the sixteenth century. It is one of the most common variations of surviving medieval illuminated manuscripts decorated and illuminated lavishly. They generally consist of a calendar with the feast of Christ and the Virgin Mary and a sub-regional and local feast, also readings from four Gospels, prayers, and psalms for Christian devotion. Considering their content, they were assessed as modest; however, they were often illustrated in the most exquisite fashion (Walter & Wolf, 2014). "Hours" was referred to as the hours of monastic Divine Office, which was the time of day that monks gathered in the Church to pray that made for laypeople in the thousands of royal, aristocratic, and middle-class owners, often treated as commemorative and handed down from one generation to the next (Clemens & Graham, 2007).



It is claimed that a few numbers of lay scribes, with their acquired skills, became well known with a good reputation and had a chance to work independently to answer the growing demand for textbooks for the universities of the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries (Drogin, 1989).

In the following times, highly skilled scribes, differentiated according to their expertise, namely, writing, drawing, coloring, and gilding, shared responsibilities in the monastic workshops while producing handwritten, illuminated texts (Stribley, 1986).

### **3.2. Mastering the skill of ancient writing in the middle ages**

Mastering the skill is meant to learn how to manipulate and control to organize the forms on the medium as a space between letters, words, and lines, which means the overall page of the manuscripts, not just for one script but all that is needed to write for exact document or book.

For centuries, calligraphy tradition has been transferred from master to apprentice who practices ancient scripts and bookmaking under the master's rules and methods developed by the master to convey the cumulated information about the craft based on person-to-person interaction.

In the course of the laborious journey, a scribe was supposed to practice and become a master by learning the basics of traditional styles and practicing different styles and hands that serve different purposes, that called apprenticeship training. The required skill was "working as clearly as a signature" (Jackson, 1981: 62). That means a scribe was supposed to establish basic letter shapes to produce a more easily read and understood a script.

Apart from training in the basics and the fundamentals of skills supposed to be acquired, the apprentice also had to be all aware of the importance of observation, self-discipline, and precision, in particular, essential features in the realm of character building; otherwise, it was assumed as if he could not go beyond than being a copyist (Ibid.). It looks like this is the part that separates an apprentice from an enslaved person mentioned earlier about the Roman literate World that depended on enslaved people, as claimed by Clayton (2013).

Fig. 3 illustrates a young apprentice Everwinus, one of the first known lay artists by his name of the medieval era, who lived around the twelfth century, studying under master Hildebert, another known medieval artist by his name. Everwinus was portrayed as if practicing arabesques with a brush, while his master scribe attempts to throw the stone or a sponge at a mouse due to disturbing his labor (Jackson, 1981), and it was summarized by inscribed the curse on the book on Hildebert's lectern that directed at an uninvited visitor: "*Pessime mus, sepius me prouocas ad iram; ut te deus perdat*" (you worst of mice, too often do you rouse me to anger; may God destroy you)" (Clemens & Graham, 2007: 99).



Fig. 3. Scribe Hildebert cursing the mouse, Source: Clemens & Graham, (2007: 98).

The education of apprentice Everwinus was the early craft education that had begun with the apprentice system, from the twelfth century, assumed as a model for formal craft education in Europe. It was established following the heritage of its ancestors. In a particular discipline, apprentices learn the skill from the master and simultaneously from each other because of the nature of the learning process passed down from one to another (Jackson, 1981).

This type of craft education began in the twelfth century with the apprentice system that was established as a model for formal craft education in Europe. In this apprentice system, a small number of apprentices were trained by masters in a particular craft discipline, and most crafts required a study of at least seven years in the field. During these seven years in the workshop of the master craftsman, after some specific training about the basics, much time was expected to be devoted to working on the best piece that was supposed to present to the master and a chief administrative officer of the guild in particular in the last year of this period. They produced a piece of a seven-year study that crowns their acquired high skill level. After the assessment of the whole by the masters, if it fulfilled all requirements, it was considered a "masterpiece," and the pupil became a journeyman (Wilcox & Clayton, 1999). By gaining a degree as a journeyman, they were supposed to settle down, work away from their master's workshop neighborhood, and employ others.

Looking at today, the various courses and workshops about calligraphy that I have participated in, both traditional and contemporary practices, seem to adapt various features from its ancestors for the sake of training the participants focusing on the determined theme or script that will be mentioned in Chapter VII. It is not surprising that the apprentice system is assessed as one of the effective ways to learn craft skills because learning through demonstrations, observation, and constant practice are ranked as key features of absorbing the craft knowledge. It can be claimed that lecturers put a significant emphasis on almost all the knowledge of the ancient scripts, their theory, and practices as the first step for calligraphy training. Various organizations, such as Class Calligraphy and Lettering Arts Society (clas.co.uk) in England, promote the study, practice, and teaching of western calligraphy and lettering while giving various certificates to validate the practitioner's skills in writing various scripts. Hence, whether it differs from each other, today's western calligraphy training is also based on practicing the ancient styles as a springboard to go beyond.

Turning back to the writing of the manuscript, writing back then is thought of like eating, which was a two-handed operation. It means both hands are occupied; thus, a scribe probably had difficulty following his place in the exemplar. On the other hand, steadying the page with a finger that may cover ink and grease may not sound appropriate; hence, it may cause unwanted dirt and mistakes. Instead, the knife tip helped to control (Hamel, 1992), which will be explained in the followings.

In Fig. 4, a highly-skilled monk scribe Eadwine, the prince of writers or scribes -*princeps scriptorum* (Eliot & Rose, 2009), who lived in the mid-twelfth century, is portrayed holding a knife with a moon-shaped knife, using for two reasons, sharpening the quill and erasing mistakes in his left hand. There is also a Latin text written around the illustrated portrayed as if one of the layers of its' frame. It is translated with these words: "He was the leading prince of scribes and that the glory of his manuscript was proof of his skill, assuring his fame forever" (Marcos, 2017).

Fig. 4. Self-Portrait of the scribe Eadwine, The "Prince of Writer" (c. 1140), Source: Jackson, (1981: 71).





If any mistakes occurred on the manuscript page, a scribe could quickly scrape them away from the vellum just before the ink soaked into the surface. The vellum that would let him erase as if there was no mistake at all. Because of the layered tissue of vellum, the scribe had room to undo when he encountered any accident during the copying, and he could intervene with the knife and had a chance to continue to write on the same page. Otherwise, he was supposed to write the whole page from the beginning, which would cost a considerable amount of time, and a considerable amount of money for the material would have cost (Hamel, 1992), contrary to today's situation in calligraphy, which will be observed in detail in Chapter VI, how contemporary calligrapher cherishes various accidents, such as ink drops, uncontrolled or unexpected scratches or marks, and assessed as a part of the composition, even complementary features that provide support to their calligraphic attitudes.

On the manuscripts, repeated accidents, errors of hand occurred during copying a line because, have a great resemblance to the present hand –that typing- such as missing words, missing out a line because of looking up at the wrong place in the original, repeating a word or a phrase that may have come at the end of a line, moreover, spelling mistakes added letters -duplicated syllables or adding irrelevant letters—observing the manuscript, claiming that one of the most common ones is caused by eye-skip due to Latin, as a language (Ibid.).

It can be observed in two examples in Fig. 5 that show the omission of one of a phrase mistakenly because of eye-skipping between two occurrences of the word *persecutionem*, later corrected by erasure and rewriting, and the other was committed an error of dittography<sup>4</sup>, means eye slipped from one occurrence of *mortem* back to a previous one, causing to repeat the phrase *dauid, sed post mortem*.

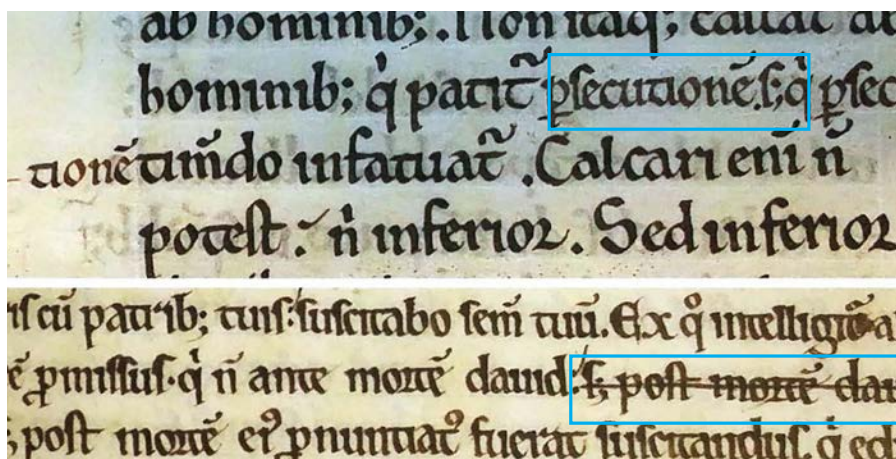


Fig. 5. above an error of eye-skipping,

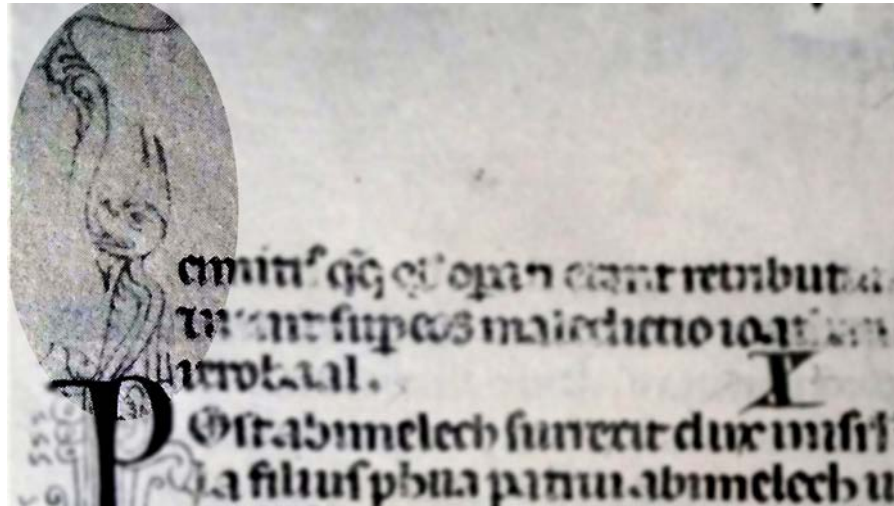
below an error of dittography, Source: Clemens & Graham, (2007: 35).

On the other hand, when the error or accident occurred on the pages of the manuscript, and if the scribe could not remove it from the page by scratch, it caused only be copied again (Drogin, 1989), and interestingly, it was claimed that a scribe was not responsible for his mistakes.

<sup>4</sup> Dittography is explained as "the unintentional repetition of letters or words in copying or printing" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Instead, a mystical figure, physically and imaginatively idiosyncratic, so-called *titivillus*, as illustrated on the manuscript page of the fifteenth century in Fig. 6, a creature of the imagination of a medieval monk, belongs to the medieval folklore, created to blame for scribe's own mistakes -a closer look at the horned demon who is reaching to the stylized marginal lead design. Hence, *titivillus* is a symbolic figure with the theme of good versus evil, and it is stated that when he sees or hears an error, he gives the scribe a demonic status as a "patron demon of calligraphy" (Drogin, 1989: 17). Under such a climate of medieval time, it might be created as a method to keep the scribe alert and make him concentrate on their challenging occupation.

Fig. 6. Detail of manuscript page demonstrate an appeared devil, *Titivillus*, early 15<sup>th</sup> century, Italy, Source: Drogin, (1989: 18).



What takes attention here is that scribes fulfilled all the requirements of monastic-book production, with no allowance to leave any type of personal mark and to make mistakes. As mentioned earlier, according to the Rules of Benedict, craftsmen were not allowed to show their skills as a source of temptation to pride, and being humble about it was a virtue. After all, they are the words of God, and the scribe, with his craft, serves God as God's workman. Jackson (1981) interprets this issue as "The artist, therefore, was encouraged not to develop his gifts as an expression of his own individuality but to put them to the service of God" (Jackson, 1981: 69).

This is a highly appealing point that has to be considered according to state the calligraphy tradition in western civilizations during the pre-printing period. As mentioned in Chapter II, calligraphy as a term under this interpretation cannot be interpreted as an art form if it refers to these ancient writing texts written under these circumstances. Still, various marks can be encountered written by a scribe for various reasons, and they can be assessed as the personal mark of a scribe who needs to express himself.

On the other hand, there are various marks and texts written by scribes, regardless of the manuscript and its theme. One example is the scribe's whining about the conditions to frame the climate of that laborious time deeply he was in or how hard his work was. On following, there are various examples of this issue:

New parchment, bad ink; I say nothing more.  
 I am very cold.  
 That's a hard page and a weary work to read it.  
 Let the reader's voice honor the writer's pen.  
 ...Thank God, it will soon be dark.  
 Oh, my hand.  
 ...While I wrote I froze, and what I could not write by the beams of the sun I finished by candlelight.  
 As the harbor is welcome to the sailor, so is the last line to the scribe... (Chaplain, 2012: 155)

Considering these statements of scribe bemoans on the pages of manuscripts, it is not up for discussion that the physical conditions in scriptorium as the workplace had challenging conditions. It made even harder the book-producing process in which scribes actively had a role, and through their expressions, they gave interesting details about western calligraphy tradition.

Another example that can be encountered on the margins of the manuscript pages -mostly on flyleaves in the back of the manuscripts- is called *probatio pennae*; a term literally means "pen test." These are described as spontaneous strokes executed by a scribe to control or verify a writing instrument, whether it works or not as he prefers. For example, the quill was supposed to be cut frequently to preserve the regularity and quality of the writing. Hence, a scribe tested a quill after cutting whether it was satisfactory enough to continue writing with it or not (Kwakkel, 2018). There are various types of pen tests. They can be figurative, as can be observed in Fig. 7 or can be calligraphic as in Fig. 8.

Fig. 7. *left* Doodle in the lower margin of a medieval page, Carpentras, Bibliothèque municipale, 368 (15<sup>th</sup> century), Source: *Initiale: Catalogue de manuscrits enluminés*, [initiale.irht.cnrs.fr/codex/1300](http://initiale.irht.cnrs.fr/codex/1300), access: 02.03.2019.

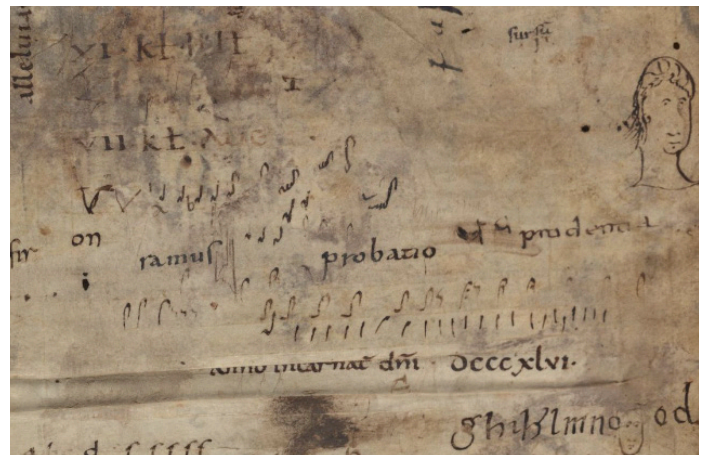


Fig. 8. *right* Pen trials by a high volume of individuals (Cambridge, Parker Library, MS 223, p. 338, twelfth century), Source: *Stanford Libraries*, [parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/th953kw1763](http://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/th953kw1763), access: 02.03.2019.

Here, especially scribbling takes attention. Scribe did not just write but also scribbling a single letter or various words. This type of pen test are also exists in the Middle East calligraphy tradition, particularly in Iran, which is called *siyah mashq* means "black writing;" which will be mentioned in Chapter V. It can also be encountered in the Western Islamic World and Ottoman Turkey. In Arabic, they were called *musawwada* (blackened); in Turkish, *karalama* is derived from the verbal noun *kara* (black). However, it should be stated that *siyah mashq*, in the nineteenth century, started to be executed as an independent art form in modern and contemporary Iranian art.



Looking at contemporary western calligraphy, this type of marks and pen testing is not precisely interpreted as in the case of Iran where, it is discussed in Chapter V, the figural representation of calligraphy, which is assessed as a figural interpretation of the written word, basically a poem, a phrase of a word or organized as a design that appears as an image of the text. However, it can be claimed that the experiences with various types of tools through focusing the repetition on the strokes -sometimes only the same stroke- over and over again remind the repeated practices of the scribe to learn the form, practicing and testing the material to understand and dominate while copying. It may also be interpreted as a kind of pen test of contemporary calligraphy, which will be mentioned in Chapter VI by examining various selected calligraphers who are thought to be good examples inspired by western calligrapher tradition in a conceptual, practical, and historical way. These practices point to the laborious feature of calligraphy training for both newbies and masters who had to keep their hand, muscle, and mind coordination alive. This is the process that seems to take attention by contemporary calligraphers to think and interpret through perceiving calligraphy as a performance, in which the performer starts to focus on his own practices as an artist rather than focusing on the result. This is a significant breakpoint that is worth mentioning and considering to frame the contemporary western calligraphy tendencies and attitudes under the influence of the traditional aspect of western calligraphy.

### 3.3. Making manuscript

Western calligraphy tradition cannot be separated from manuscripts and book production. During a period of about fifteen hundred years, between the late Roman Empire (the third-century CE-the fifth century CE) and the high Renaissance (which began around 1490), medieval manuscripts were produced at all times in every part of Europe under varied conditions (Hamel, 1992) that consist of its Essentials, which are the use of parchment, the privileging of the clergy, using the Latin language and Latin alphabetical script for vernacular language writing, illumination practice and the form of the codex in varied forms (Eliot & Rose, 2009).

Fig. 9 illustrates the process of the production of the medieval book.



Fig. 9. A Process of manuscript production, Source: Harris, (1995b: 9).

First, the parchment maker is supposed to prepare the parchment; he soaks the skin, stretches it into a wooden frame, and scrapes it with a half-moon knife. Next, the dried parchment cutting to size, trimmed and scored the lines for lettering in preparation for the scribe. A newly sharpened nib of the quill is prepared with a critical eye. When the bounded book is ready, the scribe starts to write. The text should be planned in detail, considering spaces left for the illustrator's work and illuminator. After completing the handwritten text, the manuscript leaves are placed to stitch together. Sewed pages are ready to prepare for its cover, then clasps and bindings are fixed; hence the book is ready to display (Jackson, 1981).

The manuscript's production takes quite a time, depending on the length of the book and who was making it. Suppose it was a monk, due to his other commitments apart from the book productions, such as attending chapel up to eight times a day and other tasks about the monastery's school, kitchen, guest house, or garden, manuscript making time extending over years. On the other hand, the eleventh-century monastic scribe, without any haste, might produce 3 or 4 moderate-size manuscripts a year, while a professional scribe who worked for commercial bookshops in the fifteenth century might work shorter period and pay by the job (Hamel, 1992).

The variety of manuscripts can be wide, including the thirteenth-century Codex of Stockholm, nearly a meter high, or the choir books of sixteenth-century Spain; also little jewel-like prayers book just half size of a matchbox. One of them that is needed to be mentioned is "illuminated" manuscripts which contain gold or silver on the pages. Even if the manuscripts are heavily decorated in colors but do not have gold or silver, it is not assessed as illuminated technically.

The finest period of the illuminated manuscript is stated as the Middle Ages, and the practice of illumination was provisioned by the close relationship that was supposed to exist between text, picture, and ornament that differs depending on the ages. Even though it is called Medieval, it still differs from typical applications, such as a stained-glass window invented in the Middle Ages (Grabar & Nordenfalk, 1957).

In Chapter VI, it will be observed that various contemporary calligraphers, namely Meulman and Brown, take references from the illuminated manuscripts through the various poems or technically by employing the gold color. Apart from using gold as a color for their contemporary practices, what is encountered and examined in Chapter VI is also how these contemporary calligraphers make references to the meaning of the light that is illuminated with gold. They seem to use color to lighten the composition or highlight the work through the concept of light by utilizing gold. For this reason, to better understand and establish the connection between these examples of contemporary practices with the tradition, it will be significant to explain what illumination means to provide more insight into the illumination or light theme of the manuscripts.

In *Online Etymology Dictionary*, the word illuminate is "to light up, shine on," used back in the year 1500, related to the Latin term *illuminatus*, past participle of *illuminare* that also refers to "light up, make light, illuminate." One of the earlier usages is back to the late fourteenth century, *enlumyner*

refers to "decorate written material by hand with gold, silver, or bright colors." On the other hand, the word "illustration," as a term also explains in *Online Etymology Dictionary*, belongs to the year 1400 and means "a shining," in the early fifteenth century, "a manifestation," mid-fifteenth century, "a spiritual illumination," from Old French *illustration* "apparition, appearance" (13c.). It points at the Latin word *illustrationem*, which refers to "vivid representation" in terms of writing, and literally means "an enlightening." Moreover, the word *illustrare* from past participant stem refers to "light up, make light, illuminate," the root *leuk* "light, brightness," mental sense of "act of making clear in the mind" from the year the 1580s, "an illustrative picture" from the year 1816.

According to Walter and Wolf (2014), the Latin term *illuminare* is explained as "it lights up the pages" (Walter & Wolf, 2014: 11). They pay attention to words that are used to designate both writing and painting, which frequently refer to the same meaning. In Latin, for example, the term *craxare* means "to paint" and "to write" at the same time; in the Middle German dialect, the verb *meljan*, while refers to write, it counts as equal to the modern German word *malen*, which means "to paint" (Walter & Wolf, 2014). Hence, it may point both to the text and illustrations that the manuscript page consists of illumination; for illustrations, by employing the gold color or leaves, the initials were used to decorate, which points to writing and painting simultaneously. It is claimed that the light here also symbolizes the wisdom that ancient scribe brought to the dark ages through his illuminated letters in manuscripts, and it should be reminded that gold is still used today in contemporary calligraphy, as will be seen in Chapter VI.

The gold paint also revealed the richness of the work and functioned as a representative of the owner's wealth because the manuscript's illumination process was complex and costly. Today, various contemporary calligraphers, namely Meulman, seem to use gold to lighten the composition as well, as if he prefers to create a balance within the work that mostly employs a bunch of strokes that seem to create a kind of chaos. In the middle of this chaotic sense, gold stokes are separated among the heaps and take on a shining appearance in the composition. This issue will be examined in Chapter VI in detail.

Gold was often employed for special books such as an altar Bible or illuminated "Book of Hour," which consists of prayers that are appropriate for various times in a liturgical day. Illumination was usually planned before the beginning of the work and reserved the space for it. The text was usually written before the illumination. During the early Medieval period, text and illumination were usually performed by the same person; however, in the latest period, around 1000-1250 AD, text and illumination started to be applied separately (Walter & Wolf, 2014).

On the other hand, using gold for the manuscript is one of the fascinating features that added a layer of dimension, and the light is assessed as one of the oldest and most meaningful symbols for various cultures and religions -as in the case of the contemporary use without any specific reference to the religion, just assessed as a plastic value contributed to the work. From a religious perspective, light in the Bible refers to spiritual illumination and truth, and it represents purity, good, and holy, as opposed to the

darkness of evil. Light was one of the first things that created one of the first words spoken by God, which also were written in scripture as follows: "Let there be light" (*Gen 1: 3*). For this reason, light carries a primary significance for the Bible. The following statement of the Bible takes attention "Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path" (*Ps 119: 105*), which guides his commands to follow throughout his life. The theme of God's way as light is mentioned in the New Testament as follows: "The Lord has filled you with light. Live as children who have light. Light produces everything that is good, that has God's approval, and that is true is true" (*Eph 5:8-9*) (*Bible Signs and Symbols, 2016*).

Moreover, in religious symbolism, light is strongly associated with the ability to see. The theme of blindness is mentioned in sacred text to describe the lost spirit and may be on the wrong path in life. To recover it, it is connected to "seeing the light" and described as a spiritual awakening (*The National Gallery: Festival of Lights, n.d.*).

As a metaphorical perception in the Medieval Age, the book entitled *On Light*, edited by Clarke, Hout and others (2013), consists of a number of essays that engage with the light as a term that covers art and literature, science, poetry, miniatures, architecture, and religion in the Middle Ages. It is held from various perspectives, both literally and metaphorically. One of the noteworthy essays that belong to David Barbee, entitled "The Utility of the *Lux-Lumen* Distinction in Roger Bacon's Thought," claims that light is used to refer to human knowledge, which is associated with the existence of God. Also, the physical experience of light related to the sense of sight takes attention in the essay of Sabina Zonno, entitled "Blind or Blindfold: The Image of the Blind Man in Some Fourteenth-Century European Illuminations." Zonno mentions various representations of blindness held in medieval psalters, books of hours, bibles, and illustrations that employed blind and blindfolded as a theme. The assumption that illumination is a vivid form of expression of medieval culture actually provides various information about their lives, which also helps to appreciate the past and explain the present. Zonno investigates the iconographic tradition of a blind man in medieval codices that illuminated in Europe, which also gives information about the perception of blindness in the Middle Ages.

Zonno's claim is related to the traditional dichotomy between light and darkness that is based on various references in biblical passages to blindness. Light refers to "divine illumination," and darkness refers to "diabolic obscurity" (Clarke, Hout and others, 2013: 157). Divine illumination is claimed as connected to virtue and sight; the diabolic obscurity is linked to sin and blindness. Observing through the medieval illuminations, she points at the sightless men illustrated on the pages as solitary travelers or mendicants, holding a staff in their hand, not knowing where to go; for this reason, he needs the guidance of another man or a child that will show the way. This explanation reveals that blindness, in medieval society, was formed in both as a physical deformity and an image of a spiritual flaw, which prevents a person from seeing both the material and spiritual world. Hence, Zonno explains that blindness symbolizes "vice, depravity, corruption" (2013: 157). Therefore, in the Middle Ages, the blind person was rejected by society, and had to live in exile. Both for his inner moral condition

and social status, he was accepted as a lower rank in society (Ibid.). It is also related to the idea of light and illumination on Medieval manuscript pages. Here, the light and the darkness through the color will be seen as an inspiration for contemporary calligraphers, as stated earlier, particularly for Meulman and his order and chaos conception that comes as a concept and is reflected through his calligraphy practices. In that sense, chaos may be assessed as a concept of darkness mentioned here, while he establishes order through the gold. However, this concept has other dimensions that will be explained in Chapter VI, which will be more accurate in revealing the established and transformed relationship between the past and the present.

It should also be mentioned Medieval Gothic architecture, with its transition from the earlier Romanesque architecture with massive fortified structures, became higher towers with ribbed vaults of the Gothic that started around the twelfth century in Europe. It is stated that the symbolic value of light was the main reason for these changes. This vision was actually started in the fifth century AD with Saint Augustine, who wrote the treatise of medieval aesthetics, in which the mathematical aspects and relationships can be acquired with the understanding of nature. It is also claimed that Augustinian thought affected the Middle Ages. Moreover, the theologians and philosophers were closely interested in mathematics, and they considered there is a link between God and the world that can be conceived through geometry and arithmetic. Looking at the thirteenth century, the science of the architect had a theoretical root that God has assessed as the architect-artist himself, who built his royal place as cosmos through organizing the chain of creation. Hence, the Gothic cathedrals were built by architects who understood and practiced it as applied geometry as imitations of the work of the Creator. The main three elements were emphasized: the pointed arch, the ribbed vault, and external support flying buttresses. The result was that the walls no longer served as elements that support the weight that gave a chance to the large opening holes that windows can build to welcome the new lightening with the colored glass, which gave the opportunity the light to flow through colored crystals, illuminating arches, transepts, and apses (Martínez Enríquez, 1997).

From the ancient scribes' perspectives, it can be claimed that light -daily light and candle light- takes place as a physical element that is highly important for him during his practice and performing his work. It is used to determine when and where the scribe performs. For this reason, it is common to encounter "light" as a word. Looking to the various today's calligraphic works, it is understood from the way the gold is employed and sometimes the statement, a text, or a word extracted from these mentioned themes in terms of light, such as "turning darkness into light," that is mentioned in Chapter VI. That shows that various contemporary western calligraphers are well aware of the theme of light and the color gold in the realm of the traditional aspect of western calligraphy. Not just the techniques or materials are the mere concern of today's calligraphers. However, it is evident that various anecdotes behind the ancient scribes -mostly anonymous, but some are known by their name thanks to the notes that they left on the margins of the pages- become a center of attention to be inspired.



As an example, the Irish Gaelic Poem *Pangur Bán* (also called *the Scholar Monk and His Cat*) can be shown as various contemporary calligraphers mentioned in Chapter VI, actually inspired by it and entitled their works "Turning darkness into light" because of this concept. The poem was written in Irish and discovered in St. Paul Monastery in Austria in a ninth-century manuscript. According to this poem, a scholar became distracted while he worked, and he wrote this poem on his page instead of the text that he was supposed to write. He has a task to do, and his cat, named Pangur Bán, is chasing the mice (King, 2017). If he does not complete his task, there is no book, which is described through the line "Turning darkness into light" in the last lines of this well-known poem:

Practice every day has made  
 Pangur perfect in his trade;  
 I get wisdom day and night,  
 Turning Darkness into light. (King, 2017: pp. 15)

At this point, apart from the theme mentioned above, the tools and materials are worth mentioning because they can be observed as another inspirational feature for contemporary calligraphers. Since the technique and the material are one of the features that affected the formulation of the styles and had a role in the transformation of the styles, having insights into the traditional tools and materials will help better understand the tradition and the evolution of western calligraphy. Moreover, they also can be observed as features that can be assessed as experimentation for today's artists to manipulate, employ, adopt or adapt depending on their interpretation, which means they started to be another historical reference that can be traced through the works of contemporary calligraphers.

### **3.4. Tools and materials of the Western traditional calligraphy**

Tools and materials had affected the formulation of the styles and transformation of the ancient scripts that are still considered significant references to learn, practice, and manipulate in search of authentic styles of today's contemporary artists, also for newbies that want to learn the western calligraphy. For this reason, it will be significant to mention these medieval styles to provide information that will be used to assess today's various practices in Chapter VI. Moreover, as mentioned in Chapter II, under discussion about what western calligraphy is, most of the manuals of today's books consist of these styles with the aim of showing how to construct the styles. However, here, it is not the main focus to teach the ancient styles but to provide insight into how contemporary calligraphers employ and adapt these ancient styles in their works which will be mentioned in Chapter VI.

Calligraphy practices mainly point at the craft skill and the artistry that contain a wide range of personal views with knowledge, practice, and experience. One of the critical factors determining the form of letters is undoubtedly the writing instrument. The tool used for writing, and the surface that is written on, have an effect on a letter having a distinctive feature as a visual form. Although contemporary calligraphers do not



utilize all these materials that are mentioned here, it will be useful to mention them briefly, which will contribute to comprehending western calligraphy, hence contemporary western calligraphy tendencies, in which calligraphers have utilized a wide range of materials which are able to leave the marks to perform calligraphy. Moreover, it should be underlined that various ancient tools, such as bamboo, feather, or metal nib, are still used in today's western calligraphy workshops or courses, which will be seen in Appendix B, which covers the courses and workshops that I participated in Spain, France, and Turkey to learn the techniques, to get accustomed to the materials, in other words, to acquire the skill and craft. Considering the history of writing, it can be said that every conceivable surface has served as a writing surface, such as "clay, slate, pottery shards, linen cloth, bark, palm leaves, wood, metal, stone, animal skin, wax, and paper" (Clemens & Graham, 2007: 13).

One of the first materials and tools that have to be mentioned are brush, chisel, and stone. Roman writing systems dated back to 43 BC and came into prominence in the early first century AD, and lasted into the fifth century. As can be observed in Fig. 10, first painted on the stone with a straight haircut brush through twisting the tip of the brush to give the form of the letter, also to obtain the thick and thin strokes and serifs, then with the chisel and mallet, through an appropriate angle that is given to the tip of the chisel, the V-shape form could be managed and carved on the stone followed the brush-painted shape.

Fig. 10. Carving Roman Capital letter "R," Source: Jackson, (1981: 43).



Today, it takes attention that the brush -pointed and broad edge- has become one of the primary materials that contemporary calligraphers are employed because its' flexibility of the hair compared to the chisel or metal nib provides a wide range of possibilities within the strokes or lines, which are highly alluring for today's western practitioners that will be mentioned in Chapter VI. On the other hand, in Medieval Europe, the wax tablet was one of the earliest writing surfaces in the west, then the predominant papyrus, parchment, and particularly the fourteenth-century paper used for handwritten text.

Wax is one of the ancient types of material, employed widely in the ancient world and used until the nineteenth century. As a material, it was relatively affordable, which could be considered one of the significant advantages of

it that made it preferred widely. Also, it could be corrected easily because it was impervious to water. There were three significant wax functions of tablets during that period. First, it had been used by students to practice writing and take notes; second, used for rough drafts and artistic works, which could eventually be copied onto parchment. Finally, it was used by the French royal court during traveling. To write on the surface of the wax tablet, a stylus, which was made of wood, bone, horn, iron, or silver, was used. One edge of the stylus was a pointy edge for writing, and the other edge was wider and used for erasing (Clemens & Graham, 2007).

As can be observed in Fig. 11, a female holds an iron stylus to her lips and carries a *diptych* -a pair of hinged wax tablets. Next to her, a male holds a roll of papyrus illustrated as a couple posing with their materials before AD 79 in Pompeii. The surfaces such as wax and the tools such as chisel seem to be shifted today; however, it can be observed that various surfaces such as land, sand, or mud become one of the alternatives that can be experienced today as can be observed through the calligraphic works of a contemporary calligrapher Loredana Zega mentioned in Chapter VI. The techniques and limitations of medieval time became an opportunity and platform to force the boundaries in terms of writing, hence calligraphy, as mentioned in Chapter II, which reveals the western understanding of writing and calligraphy.

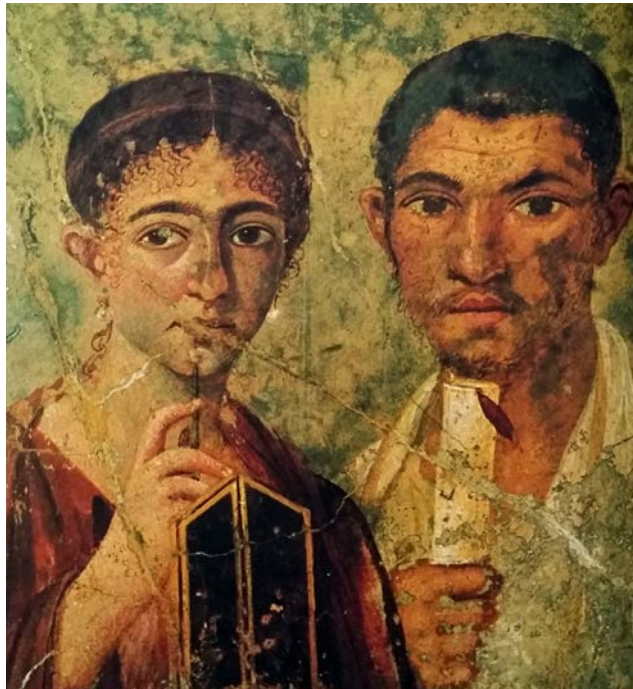


Fig. 11. A couple posing with their writing materials, Pompeii Before Ad 79, Source: Jackson (1981: 42).

Papyrus made from the pith of the papyrus plant almost exclusively grown in Lower Egypt was the most widely used writing surface in the ancient world that spread from Egypt to the Greek and Roman empires, then to northern Europe, contrary to the present time. It was used until about the year 677 and by the papal court until about 1057. It was replaced by locally produced parchment in Western Europe due to the collapsing of the Roman Empire, and providing the papyrus became

impossible. Thus, Western Europe turned to parchment, which was available and mostly produced locally (Clemens & Graham, 2007).

As can be observed in Fig. 12, on the papyrus fragment belonging to *the Iliad* of Homer, the form of the letter is majuscule and has mostly rounded forms. The text doesn't have any finer detail in the sense of the letterform, probably due to the harsh surface of the papyrus.

Fig. 12. Papyrus fragment, ca. 285-250 BC, *Homer's Iliad*, book 21, lines 567-81, Uncial hand written across fibers, Greek MS 1, Source: Clemens & Graham, (2007: 3).



Parchment was introduced in the second century BC. It was produced from animal skins called *perfamena*, from which the word parchment is derived (Mediavilla, 1996). One of the most significant advantages of using parchment is its durability as a material rather than fragile papyrus, which made the manuscript could be kept for much longer. However, it was not that easily affordable; for this reason, it was mostly preferred use for luxurious manuscripts.

In the Middle Ages, mostly sheep, cattle, and goatskins were used, but also there found various writing examples on the skins of gazelle, antelope, stags, and ostriches. Preparing animal skins is a long and tedious procedure that has to follow many steps. As Jackson states, "the true parchment" (Jackson, 1981: 36) is actually made from sheepskin, which was first supposed to be steeped in lime, then hair and fresh were scraped carefully. Next, it was used to stretch over a frame tightly. To remove excess fats, it was used to be covered with chalk and allowed to dry. Then, scraping with a moon-shaped blade when the skin was still on the frame, the parchment became ready to remove from the frame and cut to size. If the tanning was not that good, the only side of the leader -the hair side- could be used. However, if the process was satisfied, both sides could be used to write. Moreover, calfskin, called *vellum*, was also used for luxurious handwritten manuscripts and was prepared in the same way as mentioned above; in Fig. 13, it can be observed that skin attached to a herse to dry before use. With the observation of the various contemporary calligraphers in Chapter VI,



it can be claimed that the usage of vellum is not that common, with various exceptions, namely Brown, who employs vellum for his various projects not just as a material but with the emphasis of conceptual idea of using the skin. Once again, it is observed the materials of the traditional calligraphy can be assessed as a reference from the past that provides various opportunities to inspire and experiment with the contemporary attitudes of today's calligraphers.



Fig. 13. Attaching a skin to a herse, Source: Clemens & Graham, (2007: 11).

Before the expansion of using the skin as a writing surface, one could not encounter a great deal of improvement as a more refined form of writing instrument. Reed pen (Fig. 14) was used due to the papyrus's rough surface, which was not that appropriate for fine, small writing. Also, the material might not make it easy to elaborate the script with fine details. The scribe was supposed to be careful when writing on that fragile surface. The rounded form of the letter also could be challenging to execute on that surface. Reed pen is not that common among contemporary calligraphers, which can be claimed after the detailed observation and examination of the contemporary calligraphy practices and various contemporary calligraphers in Chapter VI.



Fig. 14. Reed Brush, obtained by soaking and beating the fibers, the Egyptian method; others various reed pen versions with or without metal reservoir, Source: Mediavilla, (1996: 39).

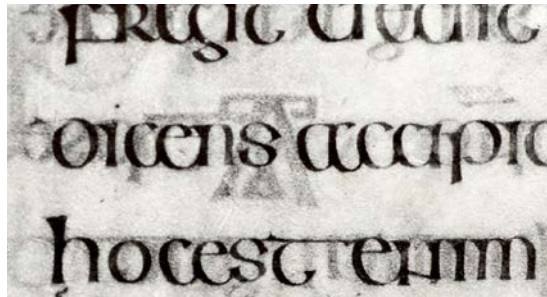
Compared to papyrus as a surface, parchment and vellum are smoother; for this reason, it may encourage the development of new materials, such as the quill pen (Fig. 15), which is made from the strong flight feathers of a goose or small, large birds. It also provided to write small letters finely for long periods without any need for re-sharpening. Depending on the tip of the quill and its cutting, the height and width of the letter, hence the text, could be arranged more delicately.

Fig. 15. Engravings of two quill pens, sharpened, ready to use, Source: Mediavilla, (1996: 23).



As shown in Fig. 16, a part of a text from *The Book of Kells*, a well-known manuscript written in Ireland at Kells in the Irish monastery on the west coast of Scotland, will be mentioned detailly in the following pages. It is one of the inspirational manuscripts that Brown mainly employs and reveals his references to his various calligraphy pieces, pointing to the styles of its' illuminations or script that was written by. It was written by Uncial majuscule and Half-Uncial with quill pens. As can be observed, the quill allows for writing very fine details as well as it offers to create contrast between the thin and thick strokes that affect the color of the overall text.

Fig. 16. A part of a text from *The Book of Kells* (c. 800 A.D.), Source: Jackson, (1981: 60).



On the other hand, after using parchment and vellum, the invention paper was first made by the Chinese. Ts'ai Lun (c. 50 – 121 CE) and Europe actually started to be used it before the advent of printing technology. It is claimed that the first paper mill was established in Fabriano in Italy around the year 1268-76 and was mostly made from flax, hemp, or linen (cellulose) which was obtained from cloth rags or ship sails, also scrap paper in late medieval Europe (Clemens & Graham, 2007).

Another tool that started to be produced and promoted is the metal nib; as shown in Fig. 17, a simple writing tool offers calligraphers to create various thin and thick strokes depending on the width of the tip of the

nib. It was produced after the metal pens made a solid metal known to scribes from the earliest times. Various companies manufacture metal nibs from various materials in different shapes. Also, the sensibility of the nib to the pressure, the reservoir, and the channel of the tip of the nib that leads the ink flow, can affect the form of the letter.



Fig. 17. Broad nib pens with different cuttings, and two different pointed pen nibs with different form and flexibility, Source: Mediavilla, (1996: 48).

In the light of the observation and research, also participate in the various long-term and short-term courses and workshops attached as Appendix B; the metal nib is a highly preferable and used material, chosen depending on the styles that the participants will be practicing. Hence, looking at the current situation, the materials and tools used today are quite diverse; however, it can be said that these earlier materials and tools mentioned here are still new for young practitioners dealing with these materials for the first time. Apart from technical possibilities, the materials mostly used by calligraphists who prefer manual production will be discussed in Chapter VI through the contemporary calligraphers examined. Hence, it will be helpful to mention the ancient writing styles formulated by the eras' needs and technical possibilities and inspire contemporary calligraphers to reinterpret them or reevaluate the forms to create personal styles or attitudes about them.

### 3.5. Ancient scripts of Western calligraphy

Throughout the history of Western Calligraphy, scripts have undergone significant changes and transformations, and new styles with great variety in execution emerged and developed for particular purposes of their era. Profoundly influenced by the needs, technical advances in writing surfaces, namely clay, stone, wax tablets, wood, metal, papyrus, parchment, or vellum, and writing materials such as a reed, chisel, quill, broad nib pen, moreover, perceptions of the time about the content and context, regional and national variations, political and geopolitical factors namely an invader who brings spoken and written language as a part of their culture which overall had affected the form of the letter.

As mentioned in Chapter II, the word script refers to the specific style used to copy the text or handwritten manuals used by medieval scribes. Scripts are based on conventions and also depend on the habits of the scribes and readers. It is claimed that the scribe did not necessarily create a new style out of reason. The significant change probably occurred by technical innovations in terms of materials, tools, and techniques, which can be modified purposely to obtain new styles (Smith & Light, 2016).

Chappell and Bringhurst (2000) state that the history of the Medieval scripts starts from Trajan's time (98-117 AD) to Gutenberg (the fifteenth



century). As in most of the books about the history and evolution of the Western Calligraphy scripts, such as Harris, *The Art of Calligraphy: A Practical Guide to the Skills and Techniques* (1995); Stribley, *The Calligraphy Source Book: The essential reference for all calligraphers* (1986); Drogin, *Medieval Calligraphy: its history and techniques* (1989); Ferraro, Metcalf, and others, *The Art of Calligraphy & Lettering* (2011); Harris, *The Calligrapher's Bible* (2003) and Mediavilla, *From Calligraphy to Abstract Painting* (1996), in which the study starts at the point where Roman letterforms came into existence. Since it is not a complete historical evolution of medieval times, more attention will be given to the scripts, which are the most known and possibly influential and will be launched with Roman letterforms.

The Roman system of scripts is claimed to occupy from the period of Emperor Augustus (31 BC-14 AD) to the papacy of Gregory the Great (590-644). Within this scribal activity and literacy of Antiquity, a system of script emerged that was adapted to a wide variety of written forms. The other categorization is made between majuscule and minuscule hand. The majuscule hand (capital writing) was written entirely in capitals and used mainly for inscriptions. It also has two kinds; Square Capitals and Rustic Capitals evolved from a common source, and both are assessed as monoline capitals used around the middle of the first century BCE (Clayton, 2013).

A hierarchical range began with Square Capitals for monumental epigraphic inscriptions and was used for high-grade manuscripts. Rustic Capital, the more fluid, was written form executed with the reed pen (*calamus*). These two capital forms are under the genre of the formal script. The informal version is called Old Roman Cursive, used for administrative purposes, correspondence, and everyday handwriting. There is also a style of Uncial that is a formal script and a slightly more rapid form called Half-Uncial that minimizes the stroke. Caroline minuscule, National hands, Protogothic, and Gothic versions were ultimately used before as ancestors of Humanist script that were ultimately inspired modern typefaces (Brown, 1993).

Hence, this part starts with Roman Capitals, formed by brush, which is highly significant and is also discussed whether it is a style of calligraphy. The Western calligraphy tradition had evolved around the broad edge tool rather than the brush. However, practices today by practitioners, me included, due to the way of manipulating the brush, which does not exist in almost the rest of the scripts, seem alluring to appreciate and adapt. It is also one of the script styles that is still taught in workshops or courses, as seen in the appendix. Mostly focusing on the basic strokes of this style, I am also inspired to employ them from my own work and other major styles that will be mentioned here and my own works in Chapter VII. Thus, it aims to provide various historical information about selected major ancient scripts to give some insight into these hands that contemporary calligraphers mainly interpret.

### 3.5.1. Roman Capitals (*Capitalis Monumentalis*, *Classical Roman Capitals*, *Imperial Capitals*)

The earliest example of Roman Capitals (*capitalis monumentalis*), also called Classical Roman Capitals or Imperial Capitals, dates back to 43 BC, came into prominence in the early first century AD, and lasted into the fifth century. During a long history of scripts, it had revived a couple of times. The first revival dates back to the eighth century, which relates to Charlemagne (742-814 AD), who had an aim to recreate the culture of the Roman Empire. In Charlemagne's time, the Imperial Roman capitals, called *capitalis quadrate* with pen-made form, were the first script in the hierarchy of scripts in the text, followed in descending and chronological order by rustics, uncials, and the Caroline minuscules, which will be mentioned on following pages. The second revival was in the fifteenth century as a part of an interest in the art and culture of Greek and Roman antiquity of the Italian Renaissance.

Considering these rediscoveries of the Roman Capitals, this script has become a standard to judge the form of all other capitals. The specific excellence of monumental writing is claimed as its "permanence, proportion, evenness and impressiveness" (Diringer, 1962: 168). Roman Capitals can observe these qualities with the highest perfection in their carefully proportioned letterforms executed between parallel guidelines.

A fine example of the Roman Capitals can be observed in the inscription on the base of Trajan's Column (107-113 AD) in Rome (Fig. 18). The inscription was written with the Imperial Capitals to commemorate the successful Roman campaign commissioned by Emperor Trajan (98- 117 CE) (Shaw, 2015). Trajan Column has approximately 44,8 meters high, composed of thirty-four marble blocks. It consists of the Dacian wars (between 101–102 and 105–106) illustration of a spiral band bas-relief erected by the senate and people of Rome (Goudy, 1963).

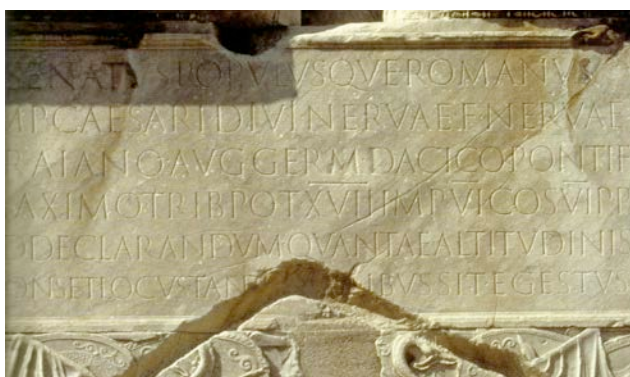


Fig. 18. *above* Inscription at the base of Trajan's Column,

*below* Recreation of the text of the Trajan inscription using Adobe Trajan, Source: Shaw, (2014: 5).

SENATVS·POPVLVSQVE·ROMANVS  
 IMP·CAESARI·DIVI·NERVAE·F·NERVAE  
 TRAIANO·AVG·GERM·DACICO·PONTIF  
 MAXIMO·TRIB·POT·XVII·IMP·VICOS·VI·P·P  
 AD·DECLARANDVM·QVANTAE·ALTITVDINIS  
 MONS·ET·LOCVS·TANTIS·OPERIBVS·SIT·EGESTVS

Roman Imperial Capitals is described as the Roman Empire's principal letterform for inscriptions, first written directly onto the stone with brushes and then cut into the surface to make that brush-writing permanent. As mentioned before, ancient writing styles in the West, the pen and broad nib metal pen are directly related to conventional writing, and Chinese is bound to brush writing. However, brush writing was practiced on stone, stucco, or prepared boards during the long history of writing in the West. The difference is the type of brush that was used. Chinese has been used to practice with a pointed tip, while in the West, a brush with a square cut was used for the Roman Capital style (Clayton, 2013). The Far Eastern calligraphy tradition, particularly Chinese and Japanese calligraphy, will be mentioned in Chapter IV.

Catich, with his books entitled *Letter Redrawn from Trajan Inscription in Rome* (1961) and *The Origin of the Serif* (1991), provides essential information and understanding of that script, particularly on the Trajan inscription (Fig. 19). He considers the letters with their serifs on the column as the finest example of not chisel-cut lettering but a flat, flexible brush.

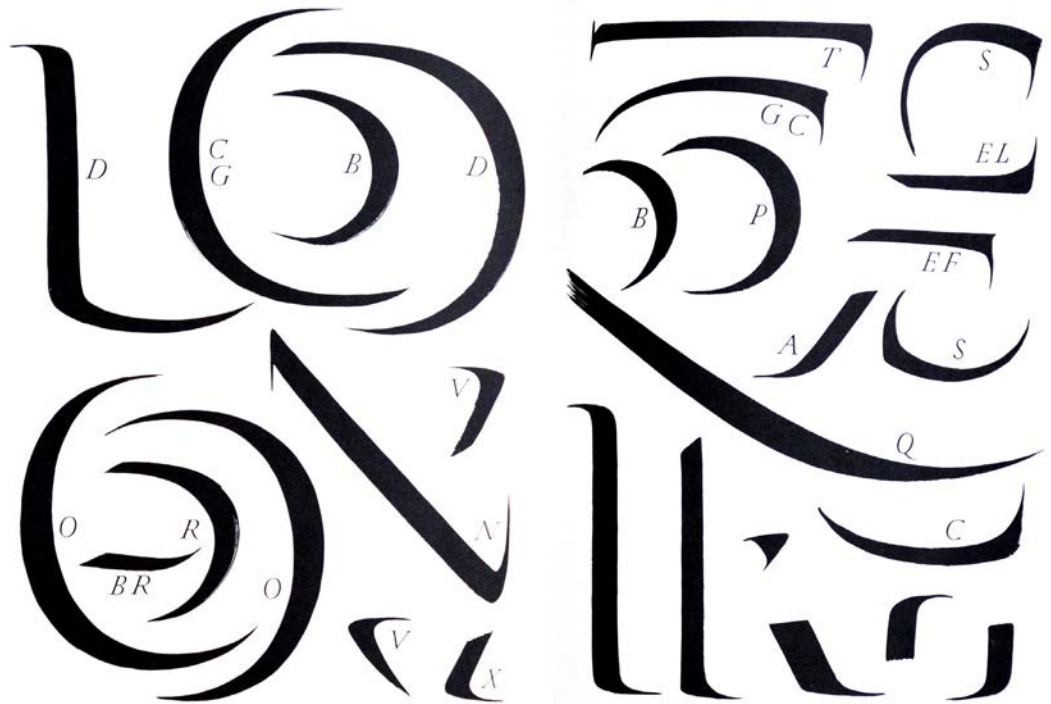


Fig. 19. Catich's basic brush strokes for Imperial Capitals, Source: Catich, (1991: 220-221).

Fig. 19 illustrates the basic strokes of Catich that are necessary to construct the Roman Capital letters. All strokes require a specific type of manipulation of the tip of the brush to create the thick and thin parts and the letters' feet.

Catich summarizes Roman Capitals' execution on the stone as a whole process as follows: first, the characters are carefully outlined, brush written included their serifs, then characters are cut in stone, and at last, they are painted with red-orange (Catich, 1991). As mentioned before, this claim is highly significant due to conventional Western

writing in terms of materials and tools. While ancient writing is often kept equal with the chisel or broad-edge pen in the West, Far Eastern calligraphy always remains with the brush writing. In Catish's argument, Roman capitals were first written not by geometric tools such as a chisel or the broad-edge pen but by brush wrote means that the letters were drawn, not written as in other scripts.

The script is characterized by varying widths of the letters, word spacing, and generous margins with subtle adjustments of scale from line to line (Shaw, 2015). The letters have modest thick and thin contrast with bracketed serifs. All letters are optically balanced individually. The letter "J, K, U, W, Y, and Z" are missing due to not being in the Romans' Latin alphabet at that time. The letters' weight is determined by the ratio of the thickness of the stroke to letter height, and various proportions range from 1:8 to 1:12, though 1:9 and 1:10 are the most common. Another important detail about the inscription is the calculation of the perspective and the distance of the legibility. The closer part of the Trajan inscriptions to the floor was written with smaller capital letters than the inscription's upper part. Hence it would be much easier to read the text (Ibid.).

These are the letters that I also regularly employ and practice over and over again with the brush to dominate the manipulation techniques that is highly different from the rest of the ancient styles that is mentioned in this part. Through focusing on the strokes and moves that serve the construction of the Roman capitals, my aim is mostly to create a composition with these moves and strokes without writing any text or a word, as will be seen and examined in Chapter VII, as well as various contemporary calligraphers mentioned in Chapter VI. It is one of the significant references from the tradition that can provide various possibilities to adapt and reflect as an expressive calligraphy work.

### 3.5.2. Square Capitals (*Capitalis Quadrata*)

Here, another significant style is Square Capitals (*capitalis quadrata*), which are mainly used for carved inscriptions; however, they are rarely used as a formal book hand that are occasionally found as display headings in manuscripts. It was used probably from the second century until about the end of the fifth century (Johnston, 1917) for monumental epigraphic inscriptions. As can be observed in Fig. 20, a page of *Virgil (Codex Augusteus)* preserved in the Vatican Apostolic Library, the text is written between two virtual lines, in which each letter is generally of the same height. Its' large forms with considerable width require maximum space. The thickness or thinness of stroke in letter form can be said generally based on a square-cut pen at a certain angle.

As the pen draws at a constant angle, the thick and thin strokes yield, as can be observed in the form of the capital "O" (as can be seen in the detail of Fig. 21); in order to achieve the precise form, letters were supposed to be written slowly that can be built up with multiple strokes on each letterform.

By analyzing how the Square Capital was built, it can be claimed that it was designed rather than evolved through the scribe's hand. As its form virtually resembles the form of modern block capitals, it may be claimed that the only difficulty in reading it is based on the fact that the text was written without separation, which is called *scriptura continua*, which means continuous script.

Ligatures and abbreviations are not often used as in the other formal script styles. Hence it is significant to mention that square capital, with Roman Capitals. However, they are the basic designs for today's capital letters; it is evident that Roman letters on Trajan's Column are frequently used in current applications, especially in history-themed works with reference. In addition, it is possible to say that in today's calligraphy course training, they are two basic writing types chosen for the applied practices of majuscule.



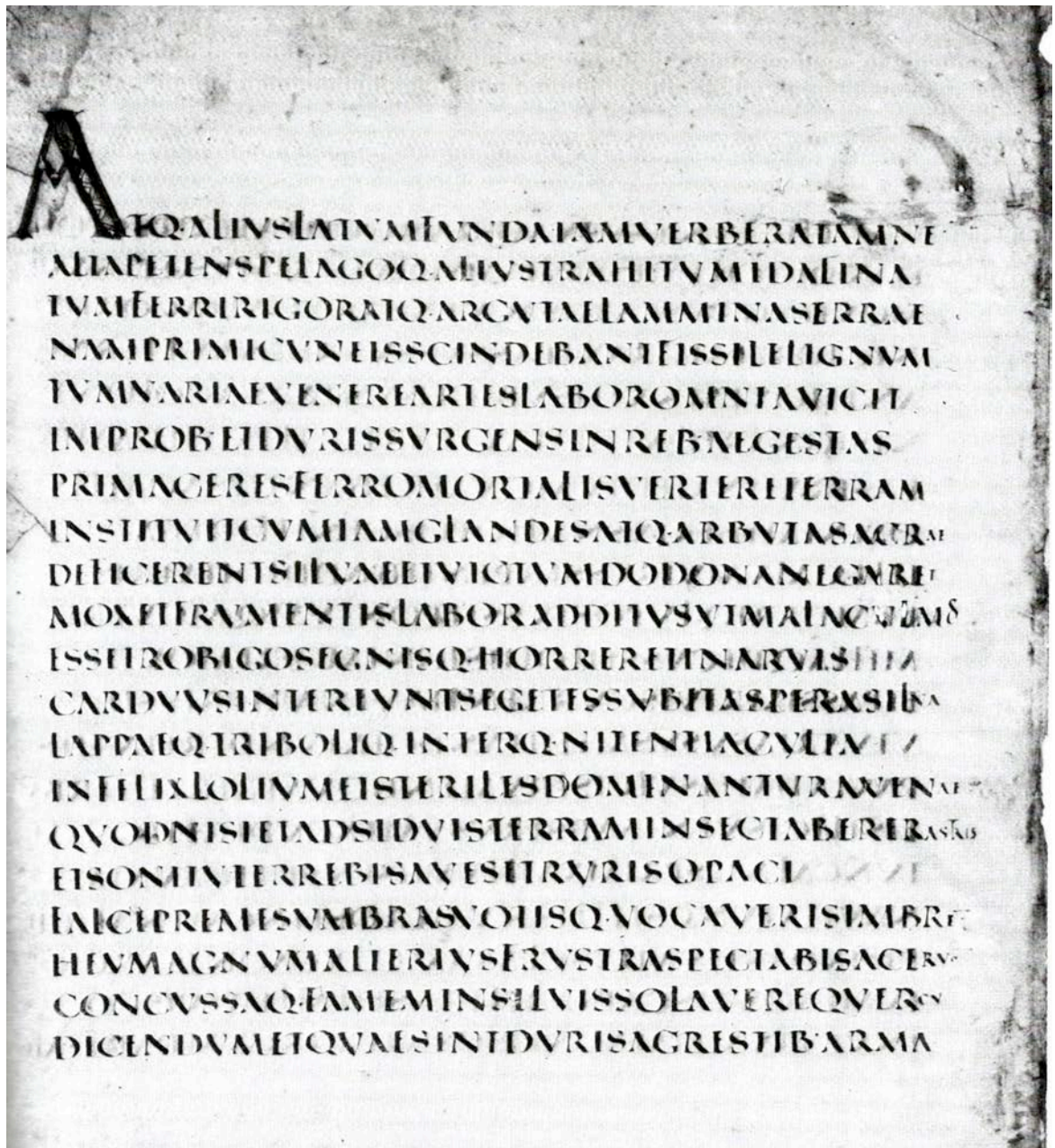


Fig. 20. Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. Lat. 3256, f.3v, *Virgil (Codex Augusteus)*, 4<sup>th</sup> century, Four lines decorated initial A, Source: Brown, (1993: 17)

PRIMACERESFERROMORTALISVERTERETERRAM

Fig. 21. Detail of the Square Capitals letterforms is extracted from Fig. 20 (the seventh line from the top), written "prima ceres ferro mortalis vertere terram."



### 3.5.3. Rustic Capitals

Another majuscule hand, Rustic Capitals, appeared in the first century and was used until the ninth century. Between the first and sixth centuries, it was the most used majuscule hand; later, it was assigned mainly for titles and chapter headings. This is another form of style that is still included in manuals and courses or workshops that try to teach the brush's manipulation technique, like the Roman Capitals, to acquire various hand moves and gestures that may probably adapt to integrate contemporary attitudes.

Rustic Capitals is semi-formal writing that is derived from a formal script (Catic, 1991). As Johnston (1917) claims, Rustic Capitals probably is a variety of Square Capitals, slightly flexible form and more condensed; in other words, the letter's height is taller than its width, as can be observed in Fig. 22, the document *Vergilius Romanus Ecloga* from Biblioteca Apostolica in Vatican City. Its more fluidly written form was used for handwritten text or manuscripts, occasionally for formal documents sign-written and inscribed (Brown, 1993).

Square Capital writing was a method that was not very convenient relatively due to its ductus and formation of the letterform that needs various turns of the brush, which led to spending more time on text to write; hence it was needed to use time cautiously. Due to that reason, as mentioned earlier, the scribes needed to find a way to write quicker, and at that time, Rustic Capitals probably served that need; eventually, its forms were easier to write with a pen than Square Capitals. Unlike the word rustic implies, the script requires almost the same care and is formed accurately as the Square Capitals need, only with the less rigid and closer stands in the line (Marcos, 2017). There are no punctuation marks; initially, words were not separated as in Square Capital text. However, a medieval dot can be found as a word separator (Fig. 23) rather than the more usual *scriptura continua* in a manner of monumental epigraphic inscriptions (Brown, 1993). Looking closer to the form of the letter with its reversed shape of arms, head, and foot serif, it can be written with both a reed or brush letter, as in Roman Capitals.

It is noteworthy to underline once again that, even if it is claimed as western calligraphy is based on broad-edged material, that does not mean only reed pen, quill, bamboo, or reed pen, it actually consists of the brush with its flexible hairs, twists and turns that can provide a more space to interpret for contemporary practitioners, and it can be claimed that for this major reason, the brush became one of the significant material that practitioners mostly employs me included.



Fig. 22. Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. Lat. 3867, f.3v. Vergilius Romanus, *Ecloga*, the second half of the fifth century, Source: Brown, (1993: 19).



Fig. 23. Detail of the Rustic Capitals letterforms is extracted from Fig. 22 (the third line from the bottom), written "Delicias.Domini.Nec. Quid.Speraret.Habebat."

### 3.5.4. Uncial (*Littera Uncialis*)

Uncial is another noteworthy style that needs to be mentioned here. It had dominated for a long time period with distinctive styles that also found a place in most of the literature that explains how to form uncial. It is evident that Uncial is among the styles that are also employed by various contemporary calligraphers such as Brown and Dokins. As mentioned earlier, Brown, depending on the project and its concept, occasionally employs the traditional tools and materials such as vellum and metal nib and prefers to write in various ancient styles, Uncial included. His influences by tradition will be mentioned in detail in Chapter VI. For this reason, it is significant to mention Uncial in this part briefly.

Uncial is a term derived from Latin *uncia*, thought to be related to letters that were an inch in height and may refer to the letters that occupied one-twelfth of a manuscript page. Uncial is also used as a term to distinguish its rounded forms from the square forms of the capital scripts (Davis, 1997). It was in the late Roman period of Christian Western Europe that Uncial first appeared in Italy's second century (Goudy, 1963); however, it was developed by the fourth century and in use until around the eighth century. Even after the eighth century, it was used mainly for display headings. It served for the Church and biblical manuscripts as an established formal book hand used initially for the text of a body of work and later for headings up to the twelfth century. A large amount of Latin text of Christian manuscripts was written with Uncial. For this reason, it is mostly associated with the Christian Church (Marcos, 2017).

The Bible, psalters, and other religious books were written in Greek because Greek was still the official language except for North Africa, where Latin was used for manuscripts. After Latin became the official language of the Church in Rome, Uncial, as shown in Fig. 24 in *the Gospels Mark* of the sixth century preserved in the British Library, as the beginning of the new variety of letters, is the second form of majuscule writing, was written quickly relatively to Rustic Capitals because of its curved form and fewer strokes needed to execute a letterform than Rustic Capitals. In the text of the Gospel (Fig. 24), the decoration is restrained and executed with slightly enlarged pen initials in ink. In the volume, red is used for the opening line of each Gospel, and the colophons are written in red and black. There are some corrections made later by the scribe with smaller Uncial letters. Also, the title was written in Square Capitals, which continued as a running title to part of Matthew as well. Uncial itself was a majuscule script. Several letters, such as "B," "C," "O," "R," and "S," were nearly the same as the capitals. Its ascenders have curved forms. While it is accepted as a capital form, it might be considered a transitional form from capitals to minuscule script due to some of the letters such as "P," "Q," and "H" that can be observed in Fig. 25 and Fig. 26 that have obvious ascenders and descenders not written between two virtual lines as capitals do.

One of the conspicuous characteristics of Uncial scripts is their curved forms, which are also influenced by the change of the writing materials and tools, namely from papyrus to parchment and from the roll to codex for literary works. Parchment as a writing surface has much more tolerance



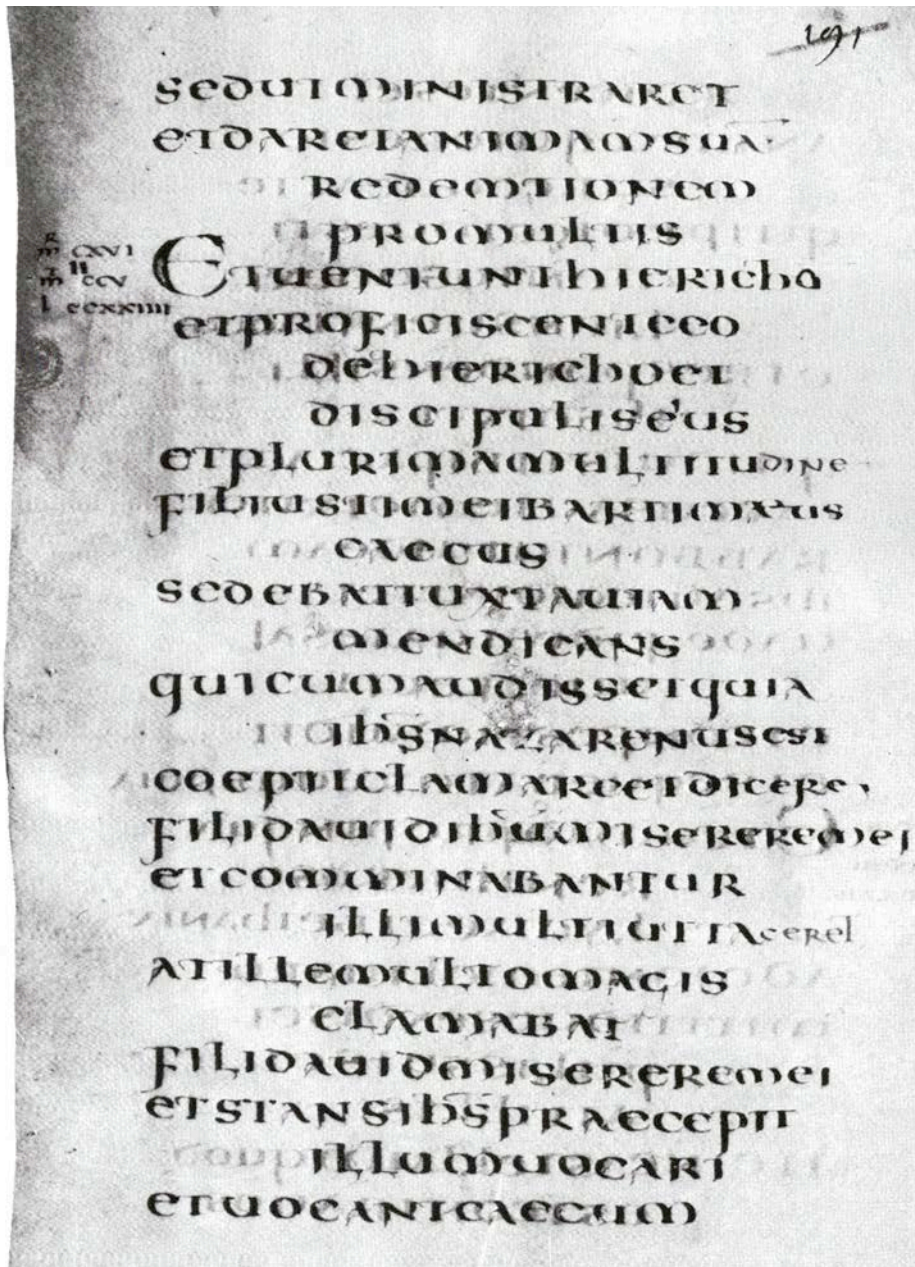


Fig. 24. British Library, Harley 1775, f.193, Gospels, Mark, the 6<sup>th</sup> century, Source: Brown, (1993: 25).

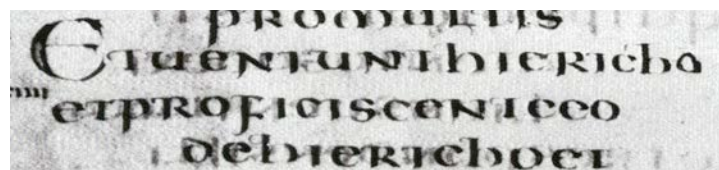


Fig. 25. Detail of the Uncial letterforms is extracted from Fig. 24 (starts with the fourth line from the top), written "promulis Et veniunt hiericho et proficiscente eo de hiericho et."

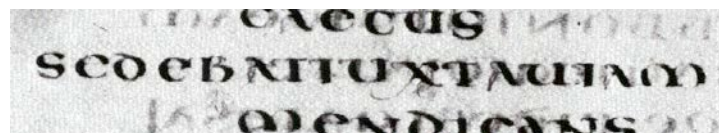


Fig. 26. Detail of the Uncial letterforms (begins with the elevent line from the top), written "caecus sedebat iuxta viam mendicans."

for the rounded form than papyrus. These curved forms also made the scribe's writing easier and faster relatively than straight lines and angles.

There was no word separation (*scriptura continua*) in the oldest examples, and each letter has no connection with the other. With time, the characters became more and more complex, with serifs executed detailly, also with its flourishes and exaggerations of strokes. The writing angle turns to ninety degrees which contrasts with the thick and thin strokes that are broad. It also started to practice a wider form that could hardly fit in the four-line pattern.

Uncial is one of the styles that is also included in manuals of today and one of the styles that is taught in the courses that will be seen; one example that I participated in France is mentioned in Appendix B.

### 3.5.5. Half-Uncial (*Semi-Uncial*)

Half-Uncial or *Semi-Uncial* is a formal book hand used in late Roman in Latin manuscripts, developed by the fourth century and used until around the eighth century in Christian Western Europe. As mentioned for the Uncial script, the half-uncial is also mostly used to transcribe Cristian text. Therefore, half-uncial is also known as Church letters. Early Half-Uncial is accepted as developed under the influence of uncial.

It can be quickly written, used for correspondence, scratched onto a wax tablet, or written on papyrus with a reed pen as can be seen in the document *Excerpta ex Operibus Augustini* belongs to the sixth century, preserved in Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana in Vatican City (Fig. 27). It is a cursive script that also influenced the development of the minuscule letter. This script represents a further step towards the lower-case scripts as minuscule writing. Rounded corners, tighter curves, and slightly rapid minimized strokes with ascenders and descenders of Half-Uncial are the main characteristics of this script (Brown, 1993). It was written between the four ruled lines rather than two. The script, due to its letterforms, needs generous interlinear space because some letters such as letters "l," "b," "h," and "d" (Fig. 28) have ascenders, and some letters such as "p," "q," and "g" (Fig. 29) have descenders. It can be claimed that the evolution of this script is based on the desire for greater speed, and the main difference between the Half-Uncial and the Uncial forms is the letter "a" with a rounded bowl that is often slightly open, and the letter "b" with a single bowl, the letter "d" with an upright stem and the letter "f" with a medial tongue as an intra linear stem (Fig. 28). While the letter "e" with the closed top, the letter "v," "h," and "n" were executed as the Uncial forms.

Half-Uncial was occasionally used for the long text with little space between each word, which looks like *scriptura continua*. The punctuation marks were rarely employed. Ligatures were frequent and usually appeared at the end of a line, where generally, there was not enough space to the end of a word.

As a script, it is influential in the development of the National Hands and led to the development of the formal Insular half-uncial known as *Insular Majuscule* -will be mentioned in the following pages. Due to the



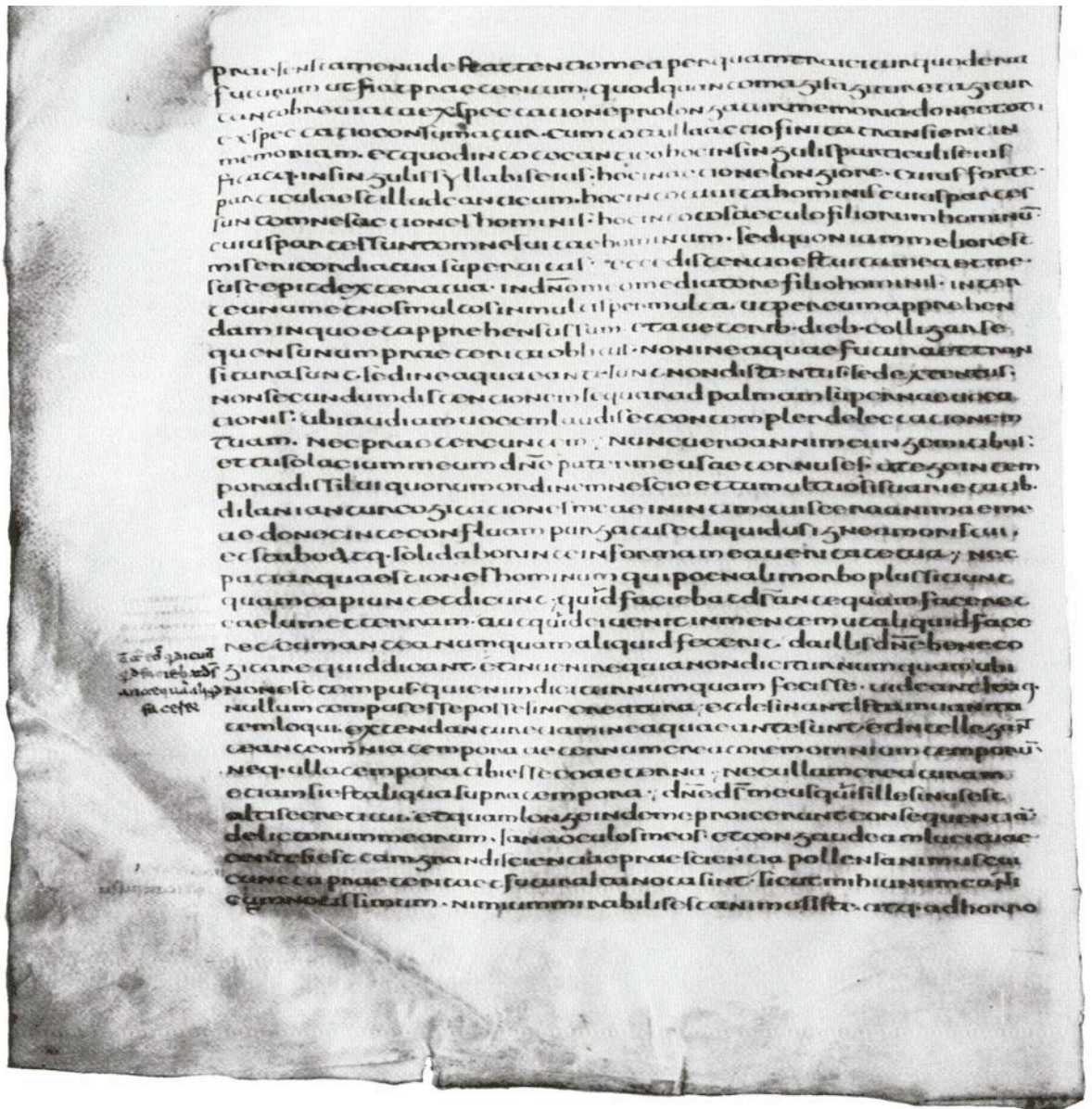


Fig. 27. above Vatikan City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. Lat. 3375, f.29v, *Excerpta ex Operibus Augustini*, the 6<sup>th</sup> century, Source: Brown (1993: 27).



Fig. 28. middle Detail of the half-uncial letterform is extracted from Fig. 27 (the sixth line from the bottom), written "etiam si est aliqua supra tempora. d(omi)ne d(ue)s meus quis ille sinus est."



Fig. 29. below Detail of the Half-Uncial letterform is extracted from Fig. 27 (the last line), written "cumnotissimum, nimium mirabilis est animus iste, atque, ad horro."



common features in the Caroline, Protogothic, and Gothic successors, it is accepted as one of the most effective forms of the Medieval period (Brown, 1993). For this reason, it is the style also be included to the manuals and courses of today; however, the style is not that commonly used by the contemporary artists as can be seen in Chapter VI.

### **3.5.6. Insular Majuscule (*Insular Half-Uncial*)**

Another significant style is insular majuscule, which is the main style employed to write various well-known manuscripts, namely *Lindisfarne Gospel* and *the Book of Kells*, the two significant examples of the eighth century. These manuscripts also inspire contemporary calligraphers, namely Meulman and Brown, mentioned in Chapter VI, through their intricate ornament that belongs to the British Isles, scribes, and scripts, which are sometimes considered not just a text but also an image. For this reason, it is vital to mention its background to the better frame while discussing these calligrapher's works in Chapter VI.

Insular Majuscule was closely related to the forms of Uncial and Half-Uncial scripts with its distinctive form. Even if it is called majuscule, it has some letters that have short ascenders and descenders that reach below and above the guidelines.

*Lindisfarne Gospels* is accepted as a tour de force of its own, and was produced by scribe Eadfrith and his contemporaries in the Lindisfarne scriptorium on the Holy Island of Lindisfarne on the northeast coast of England. Eadfrith was the Bishop of Lindisfarne from around 690 until his death in 721.

Fig. 30 illustrates one of the pages of *Lindisfarne Gospels* written by insular script, the lavish decoration consists of six lines; major initial "E" with interlace, spiral, and zoomorphic decoration such as birds and dogs, which is the characteristic of *Lindisfarne Gospels*. It follows with the display scripts with a ground of red dots.

Fig. 31 is the detailed image that shows the script with a closer look. It can be understood that the letterforms are required a familiar eye to recognize the exact letter. Apart from the letter form, the link between the letters makes the text closer to the woven-like appearance, which is the typical feature mentioned in part "3.5.8. The Gothic System of Scripts." This issue is significant because contemporary western calligraphers treat the written word as an image. To do that, sometimes they try to treat it as a complete composition as much as the formal characteristics of the script allowed. For this reason, the insular majuscule or gothic hand can facilitate the work of these artists in this sense and offer alternatives.

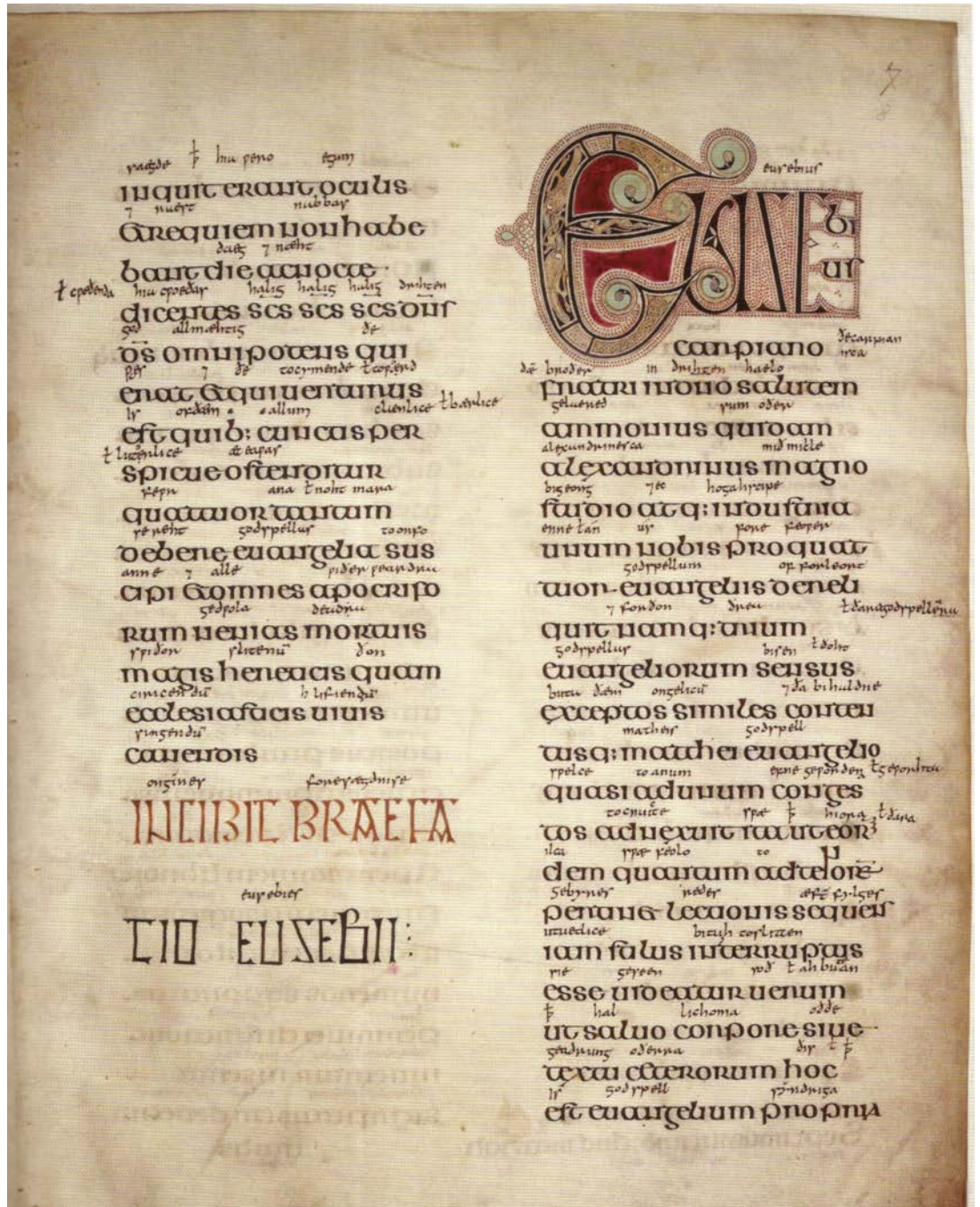


Fig. 30. above Cotton Nero D. iv, f. 8r of Lindisfarne Gospels, 675-725, possibly c. 698, Source: Brown, (2011: 11).

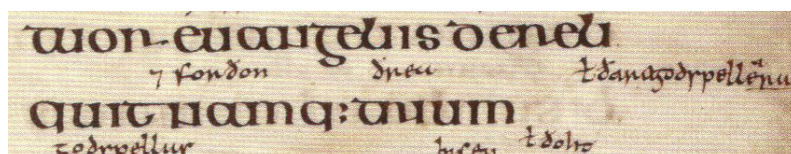


Fig. 31. left Detail of the letterform of Insular Majuscule is extracted from Fig. 30 (the second column the seventh line after the illuminated letters), written "tuor euangeliis dereli quit namq(ue) trium."

They wrote an elaborated and complex form with all pages that were elaborated with highly decorated letters, some in a single composition, and many two-page openings which are designed as a unit with carpet pages (Fig. 32) facing an incipit page (Fig. 33) that refers to "here begins...".

The carpet page (Fig. 32) that each Gospel has its frontispiece is a characteristic feature of Insular illuminated manuscripts that consists of mainly geometrical ornamentations, which were executed as metalwork on helmets as adornments, shields, and harnesses. Once craftsmen learned to transpose these Celtic patterns into lines and colors, they started decorating the books' interior (Grabar & Nordenfalk, 1957).

It may also include animal forms typically placed at the beginning of each Gospel. Wholly devoted to ornamentation takes attention to the usage of vivid colors with intricately decorated motifs (Woodville, n.d.), and each Gospel begins with a decorated script as in Fig. 33 that gives its opening words, which refers to incipit. Roman capitals, Greek characters, and angular letters are blended into a distinctive display script. Large decorated initials also point at the division of the critical text. They may be filled with interlaced birds or beasts, even a vortex of swirling Celtic spiral work, which recalls water, air, and fire (Brown, 2011).

Here, it is evident that the words themselves were assessed as a decorative element in book decorations itself with the Christian influence, particularly this issue becomes notable with the emerging tradition in the British Isles (Clayton, 2013). Here, letters are mostly heavily decorated and colored, that are sometimes hard to recognize. It can be said that even with lavish decorations, the focus point is the letter and the word itself that was elaborated.

Observing the glittering gold and silver with the splendid coloring of the initials and images that appear in the Medieval manuscripts, as in *Lindisfarne Gospels*, illustration as a term can be understood as what it actually refers to, lighting up the pages with intricate details and richness of the complicated Celtic decorations and lettering.

Through the text, it may be possible to illuminate the pages in various ways as Irish monks did in their Celtic manuscript, as in the case of Lindisfarne. It may point to the general explanation of the term writing, which is examined in Chapter II, underlines its description consisting of various acts of mark-making. On the other hand, manuscript illustrations are common from the early to the high Middle ages in which the same scribe carried out both the writing and the painting. It may lead to the use of the term *craxare*, which refers to both writing and painting.

Another noteworthy manuscript, *The Book of Kells* (c. 800 AD), was written in Ireland at Kells in the Irish monastery on Scotland's west coast that has influenced various contemporary calligraphers such as Denis Brown, who is examined in Chapter VI. The book contains the full text of the four Gospels with traditional introductory materials. With 680 pages, it is assumed as unfinished due to various ornaments that just stayed in the outline.





Fig. 32. Prefatory Carpet-page, folio 2verso of *Lindisfarne Gospels*, 675-725, British Museum, London, Source: Grabar & Nordenfalk, (1957: 116).

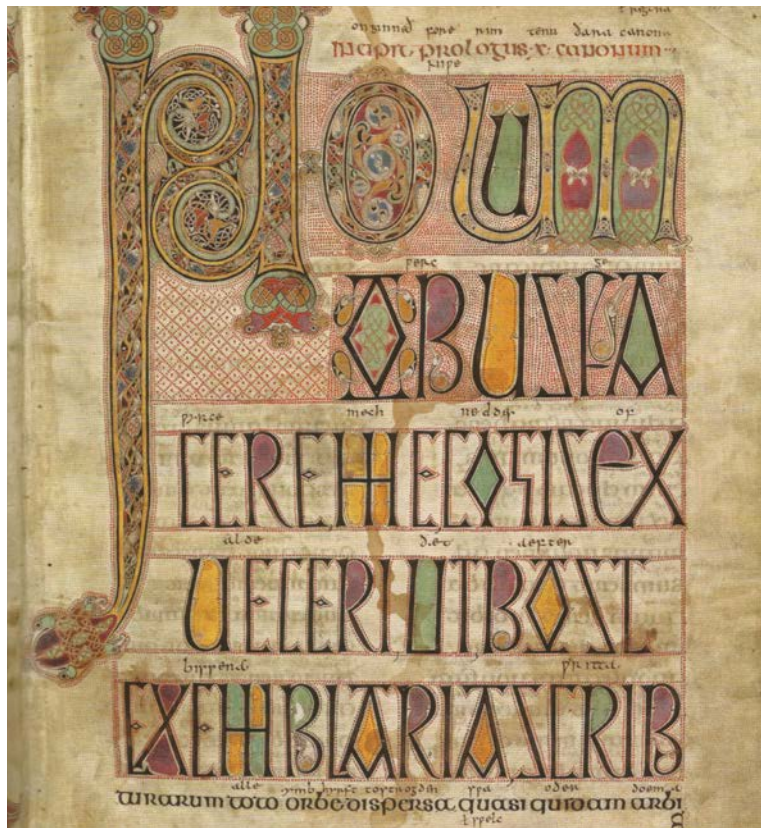


Fig. 33. *Novum Opus* Preface Incipit-page, folio 3recto of *Lindisfarne Gospels*, 675-725, Source: Brown, (2011: 9).

One of the noteworthy examples of Irish illuminated initials, Celtic knot, interlace, and page decorations is spread on the book's parchment. It is assumed to be one of the most fascinating, magnificent, and luxurious manuscripts without silver or gold used in its production; however, its dense and lavish decoration ranks it among the world's greatest illuminated manuscripts.

Fig. 34 illustrates the lavishly decorated initials with Celtic forms and colors accompanying the text. At the end of various lines, small decorative forms were used to finish the line's finish touch. The eye-skip of the scribe caused the word omission on the seventh line. This was noted with a dotted red cross, and the missing text was added at the end of the text on the bottom of the page, which was also noted with another red dot. These are significant facsimiles that one can reach and practice to learn the exact form of the styles and the understanding of how the lines and indent actually were practices, as will be seen in Appendix B, one of the courses that I participated in. This style is also can be shown as one of the historical references that can be observed through the contemporary calligraphers' work, which can be identified through the main features that are mentioned here, which will be discussed in Chapter VI.

The use of ligatures letters stretched mainly at the end of lines to fill the left blank of the text with decorative elements at first glance, takes attention and also can be shown as a treatment of the word as an image. Highly elaborated letterforms contain some alternative forms.

As mentioned before, even it is essentially a majuscule or bilinear script; some letters have short ascenders or descenders. The short vertical strokes are employed as the feet of *minims*<sup>5</sup>. The script is rounded and spaced widely due to its wide shape. Hence the letters occupy more space. The letters mostly touch one another. The large initial letters also were employed, some surrounded with the red ink dots. In some manuscripts, the space between the words not used, so it looks like *scriptura continua*. The final letters of the line depend on the space that left, tended to elongate, and decorated. Apart from the colored initials, some of the letters are filled with yellow paint (Meehan, 2012).

Some of the pages incorporate both zoomorphic (Fig. 35) and anthropomorphic (Fig. 36) decoration, interpreted as a part of the text with the purpose of enlivening the interlaces that adapted to the letters. Scribe executes them as representative of "maximum of movement into the smallest possible space" (Grabar & Nordenfalk, 1957: 113).

These zoomorphic and anthropomorphic decorations above can be seen through the various works of Brown that will be mentioned in Chapter VI. As a technique, he prefers to illustrate the characters he is willing to use in the same way as in *The Book of Kells*. It shows that not just the styles of letters but the illuminations can inspire contemporary calligraphers and become a feature to interpret and experience.

<sup>5</sup> The word *minim* is derived from the Latin word *minimus*, which means "smallest, least; minute, trifling, insignificant," as a noun "least price, lowest price," superlative of *minör* means "smaller." In calligraphy, it refers to a short down-stroke of the pen in making the letters m, n, u, etc. from c. 1600 (The Online Etymology Dictionary, n.d.).



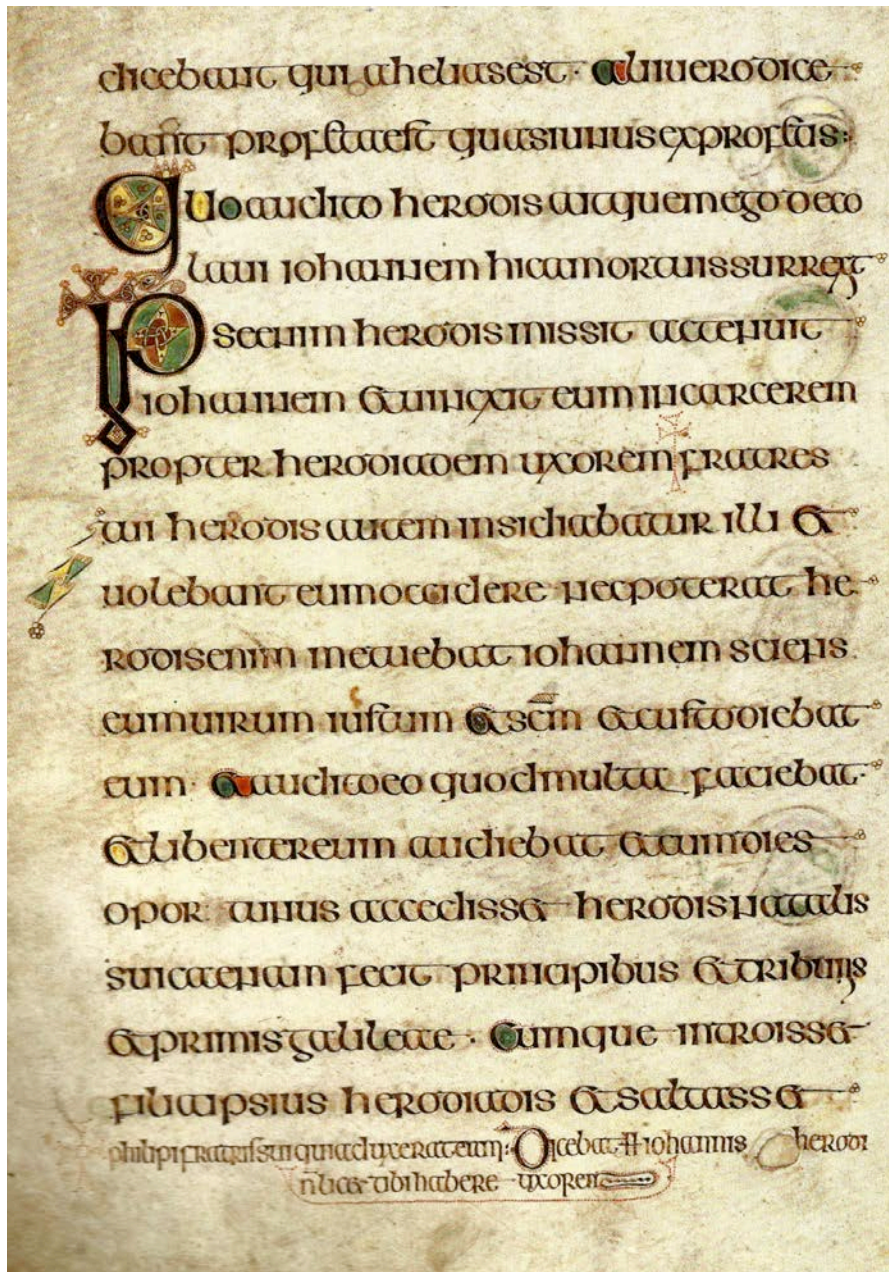


Fig. 34. *The Book of Kells*, folio 146v, c. 800 AD, Source: Meehan, (2012: 195).



Fig. 35. *The Book of Kells*, folio 203v, elaborately coloured and interlaced crosses set within lozenges inside the bowl of *Et*, c. 800 AD, Source: Meehan, (2012: 114).



Fig. 36. *The Book of Kells*, folio 273r, the last minim of the *m* of *eum* is in the form of a cross with Jesus' head at its apex, c. 800 AD, Source: Meehan, (2012: 117).

### 3.5.7. Caroline Minuscule (*Littera Minuscula Carolina*)

According to Martín López (2020), there are two significant moments of recreation of alphabetic forms: one is the twelfth century Caroline minuscule, and the other corresponds to the period of 1480-1500 assessed as prehumanistic writing. Caroline minuscule is one of the significant styles that is taught in courses and workshops today, found still relevant for contemporary calligraphers, supposed to understand and appreciate to these styles to go beyond the traditional aspect of western calligraphy, not by being apart but cherishing it as well.

Caroline minuscule is a medieval reformed script developed with the desire for the correct and legible text. This reform of the script is claimed as the first attempt that is considered carefully done on purpose in terms of standardization (Coulmas, 2003). Hence, Caroline minuscule developed as a hand that is both easy to read and write even to the modern eye, and the hand has similarities to current book typefaces. So, it is considered a highly significant script because it is assessed as a pinnacle in the history of western scripts that its style eventually reached most of Western Europe; it that later rediscovered and refined by the Italian Renaissance humanist, modeled for the fifteenth-century printers of books, such as Aldus Manutius (1449-1515) of Venice. Thus, it is accepted as the basis of current modern typefaces that have become the basis of the present-day Roman upper and lowercase type. Because well-proportioned letterforms characterize it, thin and thick pen strokes are described as harmonious alterations. With a few ligature usage between letters and a few variant forms for letters, Caroline minuscule is appreciated as an elegant and disciplined script creates text clear to read (Ganz, 1987).

Caroline Minuscule developed under Emperor Charlamagne, Charles the Great (c. 748-814 AD), also called as "venerable head of Europe," or "the father of Europe" (Boardley, 2010). It was developed in the late eighth century in the scriptorium of Charlemagne with the aim of bringing order to his expanding kingdom in terms of writing and has its graphic origin in the monumental writing of the Roman period (Martín López, 2020). He was a promoter of scholarship and education. Apart from his lack of ability to read and write, Charlemagne might have had an interest in arts and learning, and he might understand the importance of spreading knowledge with books. Under his patronage, with the desire to revive the literate culture of Classical Rome, the new style evolved under the influence of Roman half-uncial and its cursive version and adopted some features of the Insular script (Marcos, 2017).

Caroline minuscule had offered the disciplined and standardization of texts with the aid of a prominent monk named Alcuin (Flaccus Albinus Alcuinus; c. 735 - 804 AD) -also called Ealhwine, Alhwin, or Alchoin- an English scholar, clergyman, poet and teacher from York in Northumbria who had an essential role of reforming the hand. Under Alcuin's abbotship from 796-804, the scriptorium was founded at Tours in France, where the Caroline Minuscule was created (Clemens & Graham, 2007).

*Retractationes* of St Augustine belong to the first half of the ninth century and are preserved in British Library (Fig. 37-38).



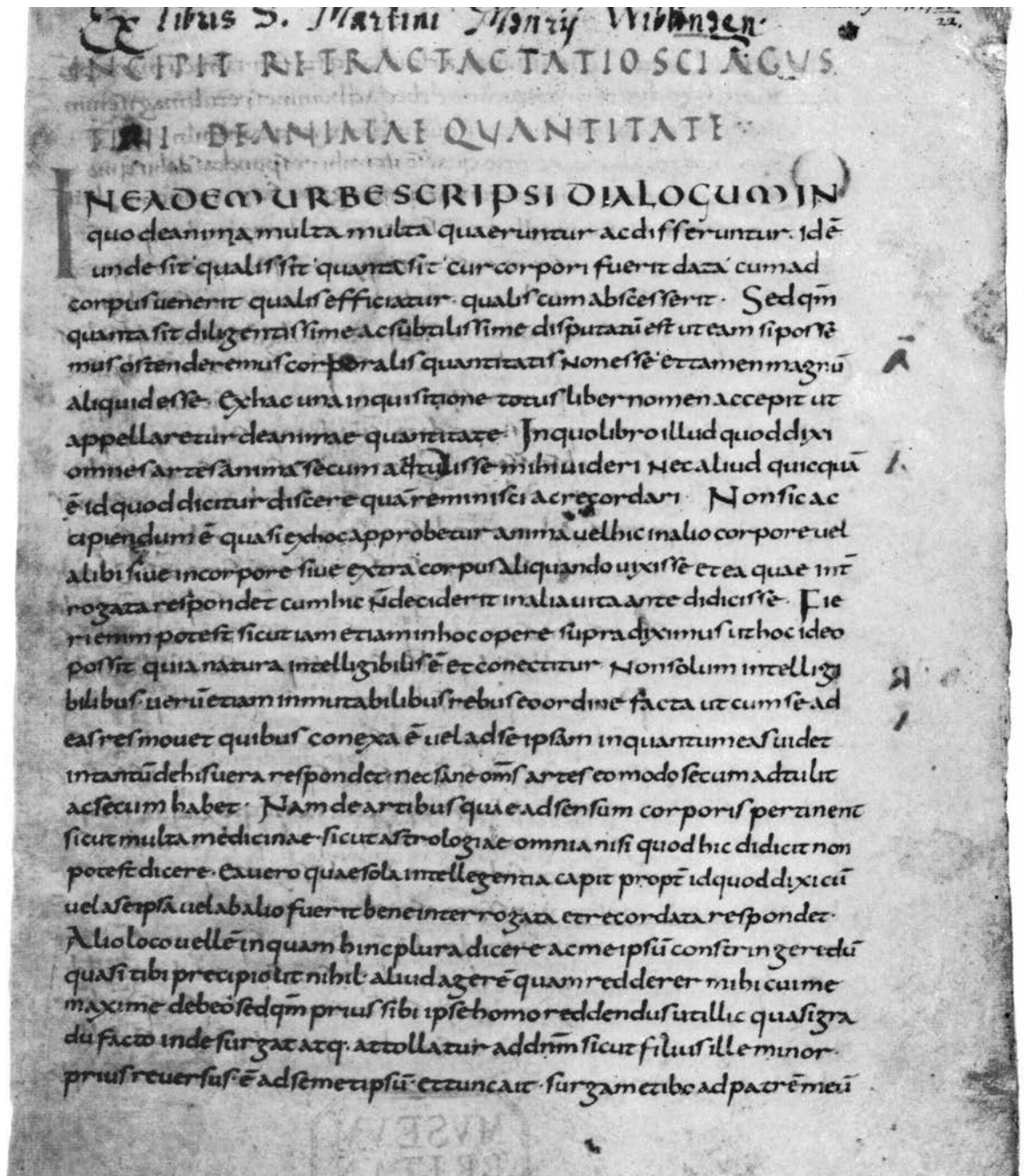


Fig. 37. British Library, Harley 3012, f.1, St Augustine, *Retractationes*, a first half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, Source: Brown, (1993: 69).

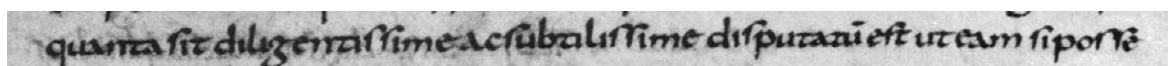


Fig. 38. Detail of the letterform Caroline minuscule is extracted from Fig. 37 (the fourth line after the title), written "quanta sit diligentissime ac subtilissime disputatum est ut eam si posse."

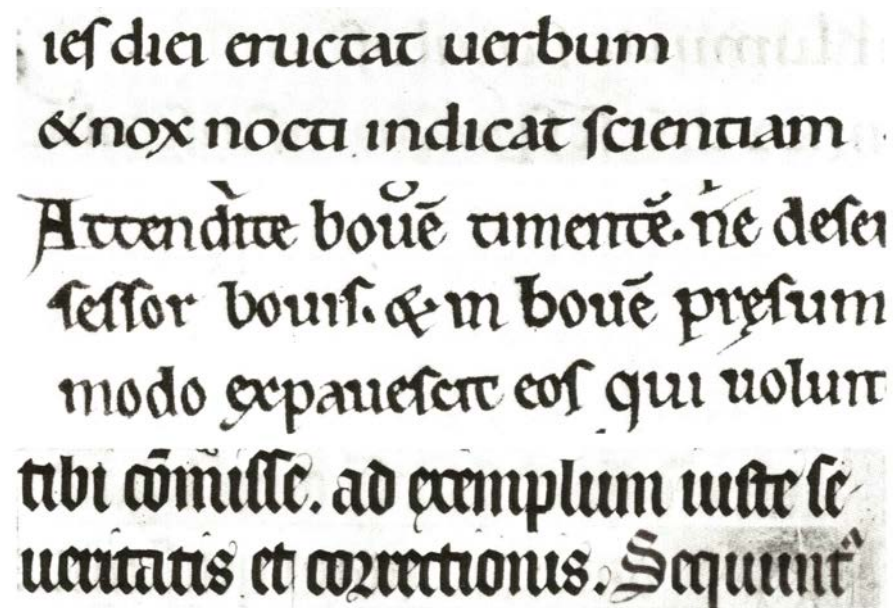
It shows one of the examples written by Caroline minuscule script. It consists of a title and the initial letter "I" in red. Decorations in the text are limited; also, the punctuation is executed by positioning the point in relation to the baseline. The title is in Rustic Capitals, and the first line of the text is in Uncial. The text in Caroline minuscule consists of clarity of uncial with the cursive hand's swiftness. The letters have rounded shapes. The space between the words became to be used as a standard, always well-organized from one another. It generally has fewer ligatures than other scripts relatively, and the abbreviations as well. Sentences begin with majuscule letters, and they are separated by points or semicolons.

Its attraction as a script lies in its clarity, uniformity, and legibility. For these reasons, it rapidly spread throughout Western Europe and became a dominant script between the ninth century until the thirteenth century (Goudy, 1963).

Having a new uniform script undeniably provided to spread the products to the entire kingdom. Hence, writing became a strong cultural heritage that heralds to grow the intellectual activity in a society based on the dissemination of the written text (Brown, 1993).

Fig. 39 illustrates examples of the letterforms that begin with the tenth century, the second example from the twelfth, and the last one from the fourteenth century. It can be observed how the rounded characteristic of Caroline script became more compressed; almost all the curves were excluded. The form of the letter slightly differed from each other. In the tenth century, it was less regular; in the eleventh century, its ascenders started to slant to the right and finished with a fork; by the twelfth century, letterforms became more angular, written closer to each other, more compressed, even stems overlapped, hence became less legible comparing to the previous centuries and it evolved toward the Gothic script (Piazzoni, n.d.), whose overall appearance like the woven textural look, that is the main characteristic of the Gothic writing system (Jackson, 1981).

Fig. 39. Caroline minuscule, pro-gothic and Gothic hand, Source: Jackson, (1981: 80).



It is essential to look at the factors that influenced Gothic scripts' development during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries before delving into the various styles. As mentioned before, the increase of literacy was no longer exclusively under the patronage of the Church. Moreover, founding new universities with a considerable amount of books needed about business, war, grammar, and history apart from religious texts. The needs had to satisfy in a short amount of time. The transformation after Charlemagne was bound to the rise of the cities, raising the economic activities. This is also when the advancement of printing and the invention of moveable type (c. 1450) at the stage in western Europe. Also, there is an urgent need for books due to the universities' emergence, which has led to a change in the written form structure. From the large and curvy form of Caroline minuscule to the Gothic that was executed with an oblique cut on the left side of the pen, it provided a further economy of space on the page of the manuscripts and required less time overall what the scribe was looking for. That means compressed letters with narrow angular forms, compacted text with a vertical visual appearance of the text, the spacing between the letters, and the strokes used to establish a letter tended to have equidistant upright strokes. The dark appearance of a page with small space between letters, words, and lines that create little white space makes it known as a Black letter. Also, "Old English," which refers to the script, was used in England during the Gothic period (Johnston, 1917).

To sum up, the transition from Caroline to Gothic is highly significant as a representative of the need of the era and how the letterform was shaped in the hands of the ancient scribes. Also, it can be claimed that the gothic writing system is one of the most eye-catching styles with its mostly textual appearance, in which the letter became hardly unrecognizable. That means the letter became only recognizable to the familiar eye, which causes the overall appearance of the word or text to be perceived as units. It can be claimed that the gothic system of writing is also one of the main styles that are employed and interpreted by various contemporary calligraphers. It does not necessarily mean the complete form and structure of the letter. However, these woven-like textures or various specific strokes and diamond shapes were also mostly adapted by these calligraphers. For this reason, it will be significant to mention the gothic writing system following various styles to become familiar with them.



### 3.5.8. The Gothic system of scripts

While the earliest European printers, commonly called gothic or blackletter typefaces, represented contemporary handwriting styles, in Italy, the Humanists of the Renaissance at about the fifteenth century distinguished and described gothic from the other form of writing (Reed, 2019).

The term gothic was meant to be synonymous with the word barbaric. It is claimed that if something was not of the classical Italian forms, it was called Gothic, which means rude or barbarous. However, it refers to Germanic or Teutonic (the Germanic branch of the Indo-European language family) (Goudy, 1963).

For nearly two centuries, roman types and handwriting gradually became the main standard in most of Europe; however, in some parts of northern Europe, the gothic style had survived much longer. For example, in Germany, gothic forms became dominant until the twentieth century, alongside a handwriting style called "Kurrentschrift," based on late medieval models (Reed, 2019). However, it should be kept in mind that black letter types are called *fraktur* generally in German, which is technically the term that refers to one of the four main families of black letter style, namely *schwabacher*, *textura*, and *rotunda*. For this reason, even all black letter is associated with Nazi propaganda; this issue will be mentioned in part "3.5.8.3. Fraktur (*Frakturschriften*)." Before that, it will be helpful to provide various information about this system and its styles.

The Gothic System of Scripts consists of a complex hierarchy of formal and informal (cursive forms) writing styles, developed and used between the final quarter of the twelfth century until the sixteenth century. Preference between the formal or informal scripts depends on the need, whether it is a text, a manuscript without illuminations, or *de luxe* liturgical volumes and university textbooks. While formal gothic scripts were used for the illuminated manuscripts with a significant patron that had a demand for a fancy manuscript, the cursive form was mostly preferred for documentary use; however, it started to use for books, particularly in the final quarter of the thirteenth century (Marcos, 2017).

When a scribe wanted to write quickly but attractively, he had to sacrifice some speed for clarity. Because shape or form was somewhat more important than speed, the term *formata* is applied... Finally, when beauty became of greater importance than speed, when the scribe was interested not only in recording the words but in making a calligraphic *tour-de-force*, the letters so gracefully formed that each word seemed to be woven of glorious individual letters, we use the Latin word for woven, *textura*. ...Letters, and often entire words, were linked by the hasty and erratic manipulation of the speeding pen. (Drogin, 1989: 4)

As explained above, there are various dynamics behind this transformation of the style from Caroline to Gothic. As Drogin states, the increasing need for books required an increase in the number of books copied. To save time and write more quickly and use the space much more efficiently, the manipulation of the pen was indispensable for writing in haste. The scribe took into account two options about the script. For more space, they were supposed to form letters with a shorter height and narrower width; thus, there would be more available lines on the page. They sacrificed the curves for the sake of speed with sharper pens (Drogin, 1989).

By the end of the twelfth century, the lateral compression of the *Protogothic* script started to be noted that became extreme, and a squarer, more compact aspect of increasing elaboration of the minims appeared. These features were determined in ranking the hierarchy of four grades of the first genre; *textualis*, *prescissa*; *quadrate*, *semi-quadrata*, and *rotunda*. The grade of these scripts is determined by the treatment of the minims' bottoms, especially the feet. When the feet were applied to the minims as in *quadrata* or simply rounded as in *rotunda*, it also gives information about which kind of texts, documents, or books used.

Apart from *textura*, the cursive style is also rediscovered with the linking of letters and the introduction of various features, namely loops. In executing the cursive form, speed was not the only criterion for the product but also the style that was executed, accompanied by several decorative elements. It was called *secretary* and introduced into England and Germany in c. 1375. Many areas used their own version of cursive scripts that were based on those produced at that time. By the end of the thirteenth century, cursives were also used for books, particularly in the context of professional university book production throughout Europe. This acceptance of cursives in book production caused to occur the mixed forms called *bastard* or *hybrid*. The term *bastard* refers to a script with mixed of forms of both *textualis* and *cursiva*. *Hybrid* refers to a script of mixed a *textualis* and introducing a few cursive letterforms executed without linking of letters (Brown, 1993).

The Gothic period lasted around the sixteenth century. As mentioned earlier, while in German-speaking countries, even after that time, it was used in the form of *schwabacher* (c. 1480-1530) and *fraktur* (c. 1500-1941), in Italy, for example, the Gothic hand never attained the level that it reached in the German-speaking countries, the traditional roundness was preserved. It never entirely transformed the angularity of its northern neighbors (Goudy, 1963).

Currently, it can be claimed that the gothic hand is one of the most inspired and interpreted ancient scripts among contemporary calligraphers. Even if it is not possible to determine which gothic hand -examined on following pages- that is adapted by these calligraphers, it is evident that the general features of the script can be detached by the familiar eye. Various interpretations of the Gothic writing practices by contemporary western calligraphers will be encountered in Chapter VI. One of the Gothic hand's most adapted features is repeated parallel strokes and the woven-like texture that can be observed as reflected in the practices of calligraphy. Particularly Meulman, Lampas, and Dokins are among these calligraphers whose calligraphy works carry visual morphological similarities that can be claimed as references grounded on the Gothic scripts, which will be examined in Chapter VI.

### **3.5.8.1. Formal Gothic (*Littera Textualis*, *Textura*)**

Formal gothic was derived from the pre-gothic form in the twelfth century and used primarily for liturgical books until the thirteenth century, most widely in France, the Low Countries, England, and Germany.

It is assumed to be one of the most calligraphic forms amongst the Gothic scripts and one of the most associated forms with the Gothic

writing system due to its woven-like textural appearance. This also refers to the term *textura* derived from the Latin word *texere*, which means "weave." That means a Gothic script style characterized by its dense, compressed characters and minimal interlinear space.

The space between vertical strokes adjacent is almost the same width as the strokes themselves, and the word spacing is also equal to the width of two thick strokes. These characteristics lead to perceive the overall appearance of the text that looks woven together as a textured pattern or a woven textile (Fig. 40). The text was once written; it can be claimed that it is difficult to focus on the individual letter; instead, it is perceived as a whole text.

Fig. 40. Gothic script written with vertical lines creates a woven texture as in the image, Image credit: Almıla Yıldırım, based on the model of Drogin, (1989: 67).

In Latin it is written: "Mimi numinum nivium minimi munimi muniu vini muniminum imminu viviminum volunt."



The letter "u" and "v" is the same, written "u." This text is practiced to apprehend the textual construction and dominate the hand and the student's eye in terms of the Gothic System. The word or a text looked like a unit, which is highly difficult to decode with the woven look that consists of a minimal amount of readability, even the page is turned upside down or sideways, it kept the rhythm and balance as a texture form (Drogin, 1989).

As can be observed, the letterforms have vertical stress with a tall and narrow width and compressed forms comparing the Caroline minuscule script. Their constructed forms with sharp, straight, angular lines are not necessarily connected to each other, especially in curved letters (as the word "volunt" in Fig. 40). Hence, it is perceived as broken forms. The overall appearance started to become an image rather than a text, at least for unfamiliar eyes. This type of execution will actually be encountered by various contemporary calligraphers through repeated strokes, the same or similar units that cause the construction of a similar image. This issue will be mentioned in Chapter VI.

As mentioned in Chapter II, Gutenberg carved *textualis* as a typeface for his *42-line Bible* in around 1455. That means *textura* was the first script transformed into typography in that sense. It is explained that it is not a coincidence; on the contrary, chosen on purpose due to a resemblance with the manuscript of that time, written by *textura*.

On the other hand, considering the letterform structure, it has a kind of mechanical approach, which may be considered the *textura* as one of the most appropriate styles that can be adapted to the type.

*Textura* has several variants of scripts called *prescissa*, *quadrata*, *semiquadrata*, and *rotunda*. This classification is based on minims' treatment, which will be explained in detail in the following pages. Hence, it will help assess contemporary calligraphers' interpretation through their practices and their strokes that resemble the gothic system of strokes by examining the ductus and various features that these calligraphers adopt and adapt to their personal attitudes.

As mentioned earlier, the repeated parallel strokes can be seen in Fig. 40, which is a common feature that can be traced through the works of contemporary calligraphers, particularly Meulman. In one series of his works, he only focuses on the woven-like texture constructed by the i letter, as seen here in the example of minim.

### 3.5.8.1.1. *Textualis Prescissa* (*Gothic Bookhand*, *Black Letter*<sup>6</sup>, *Textura*, *Sine Pedibus*)

*Textualis Prescissa* (Fig. 41), as can be observed in *Magnificat* of Queen Mary Psalter, belongs to the first quarter of the fourteenth-century c. 1310-20, is a book script of the higher grade determined by the treatment of the bottom of the minims.

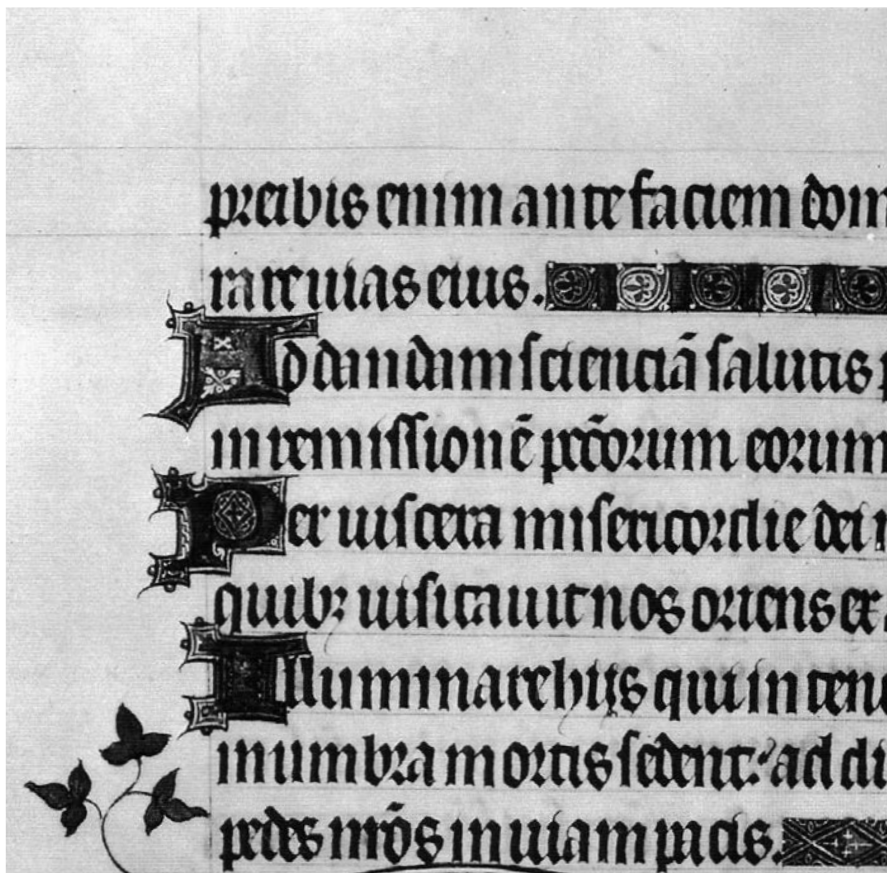


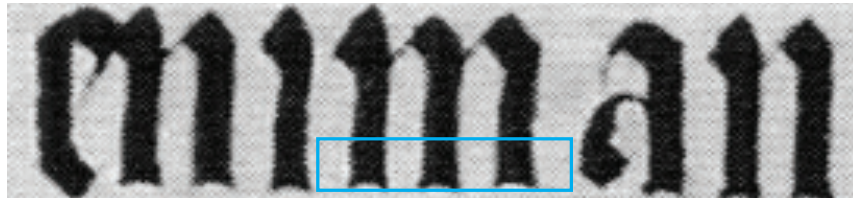
Fig. 41. Royal 2. B. VII, f.296v., *Magnificat*, Queen Mary Psalter, the first quarter of the fourteenth century c. 1310-20, Source: Brown, (1993: 83).

<sup>6</sup> When a form evolved in which the amount of black overbalanced the white, it was called "black-letter" (Goudy, 1963).



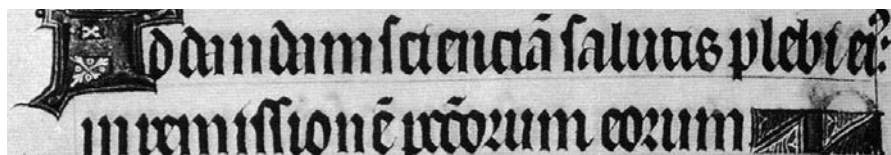
The term "prescissa" or "sine pedibus" refers to the feet of the minims that can be observed in Fig. 42, a detailed picture of the page from *Magnificat of Queen Mary Psalter* (Fig. 41), which were terminated horizontally on the baseline by artificially imitated of a straight pen script. Pen flourished, and geometric bar line-fillers existed as decoration features. The feet of the letters, as highlighted in the letter "m," is parallel with the baseline. This characteristic makes that style called as prescissa" or "sine pedibus" which means cut off or without feet.

Fig. 42. The word "eniman" is from the first line of Fig. 41.



In Fig. 43, extracted from the page of *Magnificat of Queen Mary Psalter* (Fig. 41), the characteristics of letterforms, some usage as abbreviations, and the alternative versions of the letters can be observed. The illustrated initial "A" is not written but drawn and colored in order to highlight probably the beginning of the statement. The second noteworthy element is the illustrated units that fill the space at the end of the second line. It gives a decorative and fancy appearance and serves as a line filler in which space occurs after the text that is not desired. As mentioned above, there are abbreviations at the end of the first and second line, also usage of alternative letterforms such as the tall form of "s" in the words "sciencia," "salutis," and "remissionem," the alternative form of the letter "r" in the word "eorum." Moreover, The line filler at the end of the second line can be observed, consisting of basic geometric shapes. It is claimed that the aesthetic of medieval manuscript production, particularly in the Gothic era, dictated that the text on the page of the manuscript was supposed to be arranged in block format with justified both sides of the margin within columns. If there was a leftover space, it had to be filled with line fillers at the end of the line so that the left blank space would have an appearance of a justified margin. The more luxurious the manuscript was produced, the more complex and decorative, intricate line fillers were executed (Clemens & Graham, 2007).

Fig. 43. The two lines is extracted from Fig. 41 (third and forth line of the page), "ad dandam sciencia(m) salutis plebi ei(us) in remissione(m) pec(cat)orum eorum"



Once again, it is necessary to be reminded that *textualis prescissa* is not commonly used, as seen in this part. Instead, the gothic hand with general features is interpreted by the calligraphers. However, as will be seen in Appendix B -various calligraphy courses and workshops that I participated in Spain, France, and Turkey, various courses on Gothic hands may cover and underline the different Gothic hands as mentioned in this part for newbies which create an awareness of the Gothic system and its rich diversities.



3.5.8.1.2. Textualis Quadrata (Gothic Book-hand, Black Letter, Textura, Fracta, Grossa, Psalterialis)

The term *quadrata* means squared, referring to the diamond or square-shaped serifs on the minims' feet. As observed in *Alphonso Psalter* belongs to the thirteenth century (Fig. 44), evolved from *prescissa* used as a book hand, and it became the standard script used for inscriptions on stones or stained glass.

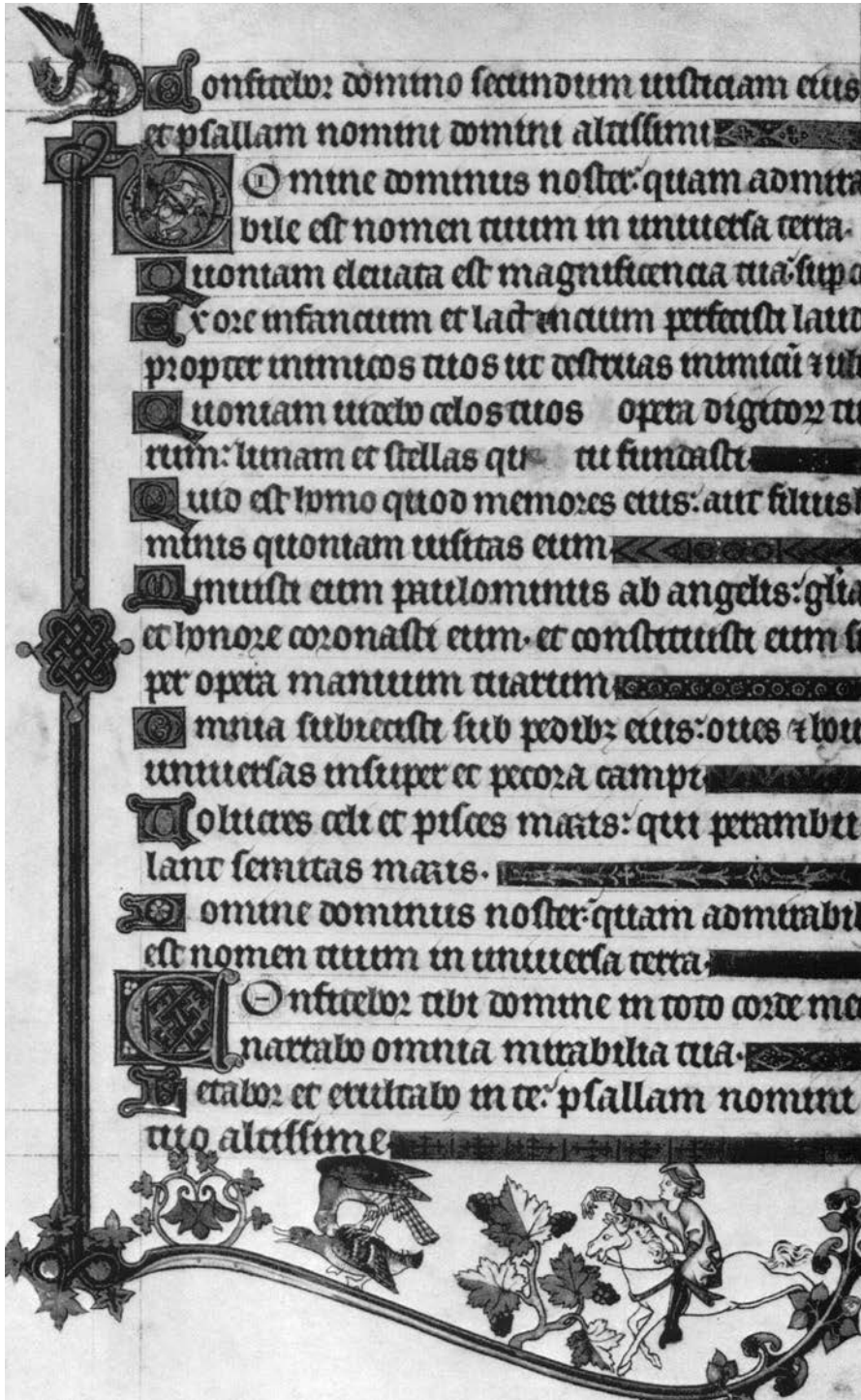


Fig. 44. Additional MS 24686, f.14v., *Alphonso Psalter*, c. 1284, Source: Brown, (1993: 85).

The main characteristic of all letters is their angularity and the finishing touches as little angular feet. The geometric bar line-filler and notable gilded letters on rectilinear grounds, also two minor initials, the letter "D" and "C," are noteworthy as in the case of sine pedibus. The letter "D" employed a grotesque, and the letter "C" fretwork infill are decorative features. The line fillers, a panel of interlace, oak leaves, and various naturalistic foliates occupy the page, which is also the main characteristic of the Gothic era's manuscript.

The letters such as "m," "n," and "i" (Fig. 45) are constructed by a series of strokes, as mentioned before, which makes the word illegible or causes confusion in distinguishing the letters. The word "O mine" is extracted from the third line of the page. The grade of the script is determined by the treatment of the bottom of the minims as highlighted here; the tree minims of the letter "m" have consistent feet.

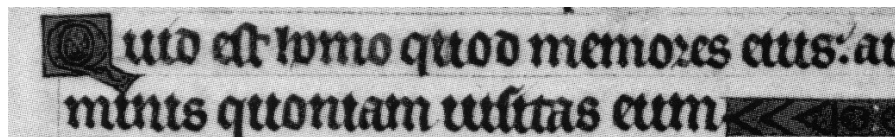
Fig. 45. Detail is extracted from Fig. 44 (the third line).



Another noteworthy detail is the Gothic textura capitals, which varied from scribe to scribe. Until Gothic textura, no script mentioned before had its own capitals; instead of either using the larger version of the actual script or earlier scripts such as Uncial, Roman Capitals were employed as capital letters. That is why it is a kind of new field needed to discover and created.

In Fig. 46, the capital "O" is written similarly to Caroline's oval form; however, it is painted and illuminated.

Fig. 46. The detail image is extracted from Fig. 44 (the tenth and eleventh lines), written "Quid est homo quod memores eius, aut filius hominis quoniam visitas eum."



Currently, as underlined before, textualis quadrata is highly significant with its woven-like texture image that is created while the calligrapher wants to write a text with it. This image-like appearance seems to influence the contemporary calligrapher, who focuses on the written image as a concept and as a visual form of written text. Particularly, the vertical repeated strokes of textura quadrata are adapted by Meulman, who will be examined in Chapter VI, interpreted and practiced as a contemporary work related to its ancient heritage.



### 3.5.8.1.3. Textualis Semi-Quadrata (Gothic Bookhand, Black Letter, Textura)

*Textualis Semi-Quadrata*, as can be observed in the Book of Hours (Hours of the Virgin) (Fig. 47), a version of *textura*, is a Gothic minuscule hand determined by the treatment of the feet, which can be assessed as an inconsistency that means some of the letters have square, the other has merely rounded form in their feet. The notable gilded letters on the page are the letter "D," which overlaps the script, that means the writing was executed before the decoration. Pen flourished letters executed in blue and red at the beginning of lines and gold and blue within the text. An angel carried an organ as a marginal figure, and the scene of God creating the firmament occupies the bottom of the page.



Fig. 47. Stowe 17, f.22v., Book of Hours (*Hours of the Virgin*), c. 1300, Flemish, Source: Brown, (1993: 87).

The script's grade as semi-quadrata, determined by the treatment of the bottom of the minims, can be slightly observed in Fig. 48, the detail of the page of the Book of Hours. Here, it was executed sporadically, as in the case of the letter "m," of which the first two minims have diamond shape feet, but the third is slightly rounded.



Fig. 48. The detail is extracted from Fig. 47 (the fourth line).

Moreover, the same characteristics of the Gothic writing system remain in Fig. 49. The alternative form of the letter "r" of the word "Gloria," the long "s" of the word "spiritui," also abbreviations and overlapping letters. The capitals are painted as previous ones, which means first drawn the outlines, then filled with ink, in some cases colored as in the letter "S."

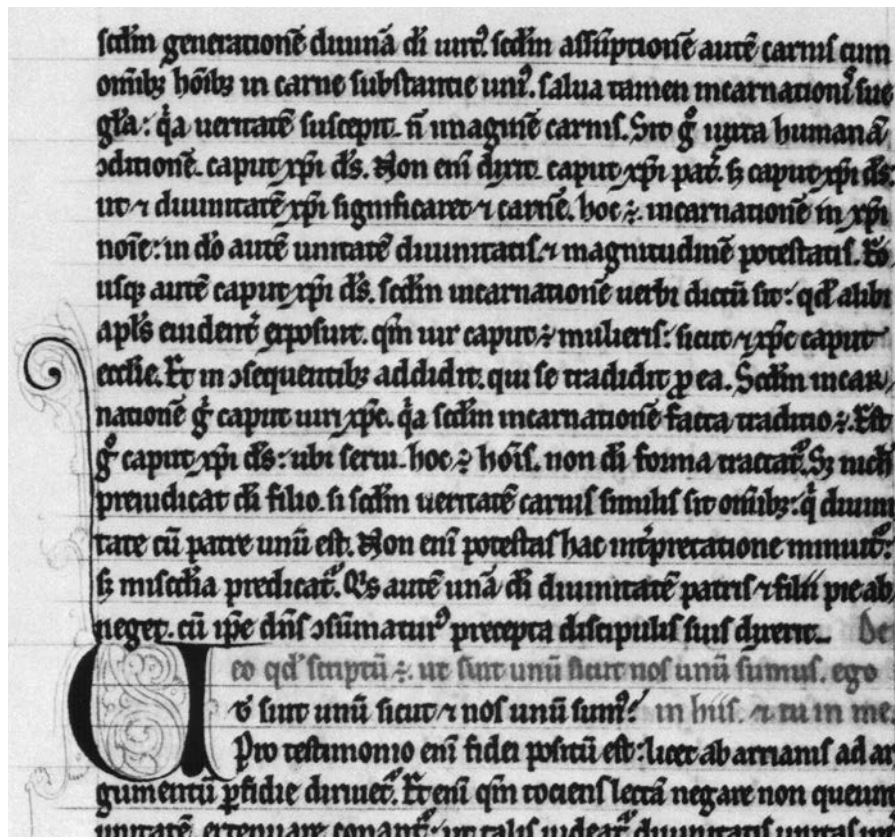
Fig. 49. Detail of the letterforms of Textualis Semi-Quadrata is extracted from Fig. 47 (the seventh and eight line), written "Gloria patri et filio et spiritui s(an)c(t)o. Sicu(t)."



### 3.5.8.1.4. Textualis Rotunda (Gothic Book hand, Black Letter, Textura)

Rotunda, as a term, refers to the rounded form. As a Gothic hand, this version is also called "half-Gothic," as if it is a transitional style between the Caroline and the Gothic Textura. The Gothic style's main characteristic is its elimination of the rounded forms, and the Gothic rotunda, or the name "rotonda," used in Italy, where the style was developed in the twelfth century, preserved the rounded form of the letters (Fig. 50), an example of pages of the manuscript *De Fide, libri quinque ad Gratianum Augustum*. The initial letter "U" consists of a three-line pen-flourished. The script is accepted as an English Gothic book script of the lowest grade and medium quality (Nesbitt, 1998).

Fig. 50. Burney 282, f.37v., *De Fide, libri quinque ad Gratianum Augustum*, the first quarter of the thirteenth century, Source: Brown, (1993: 89).



Between the tenth and thirteenth centuries, while the Gothic influence heavily dominated northern European scribes who seemed to pursue this broken characteristic of Gothic Textura, southern colleagues could be claimed that they never went that further in the course of the Gothic letter. Due to the constant interchange of scribes and scholars in the area, various Gothic Rotunda styles emerged. However, overall, the Italian peninsula's gradual isolation seems to be managed; hence, a broader and more rounded appearance was created at the University of Bologna in the twelfth century and used until the fifteenth century. The Spanish peninsula also was affected by this rotunda style and accepted as an elegant style used for a book hand. It was used in Spain in the late thirteenth century, also called "Spanish round-hand" or "redonda de libros." This variant is also accepted as one of the grades of Gothic as a book-hand that is related to the Italian *rotunda* (Clemens & Graham, 2007).

In examining the rotunda style (Fig. 51 and 52), the uprights' square endings were not used; in other words, the finishing touch of the feet was preferred to be created slightly differently. Rotunda is the grade of the script determined by the treatment of the bottom of the minims. Here, it took a simple rounded shape executed by a natural upwards curve of the pen. The bottom of the minims follows the nature of the pen's movement; that is why more curved upwards occurred in a cursive manner. That is also written faster than the preceding due to the finishing touch of the feet, which is definitely cut off abruptly.



Fig. 51. The detail is extracted from Fig. 50 (the second line), the word "in carne."

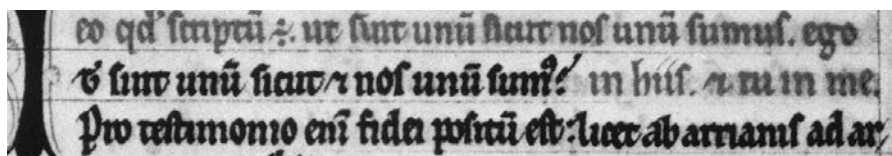


Fig. 52. Detail of the letterform of Textualis Rotunda from Fig. 50, written "De eo q(uo)d scriptu(m) est, ut sint unu(m) sicut nos unu(m) sumus, ego in hiis, (et)tu in me. Ut sint unu(m) sicut (et) nos unu(m) sum(us)? Pro testimonio eni(m) fidei positu(m) est, licet ab arrianis ad ar-"

It is claimed that the shape shows a humanistic influence. The minim height is smaller than the previous styles of textura, which makes it more readable. The letterform "a" has a different design than the others; also, the letter "d" on some occasions changed to the Uncial form "d" (Marcos, 2017). The abbreviations and alternative letterforms remain, as in the case of previous versions with more rounded forms. Comparing the Caroline Minuscule, Rotunda seems bolder with modest ascenders and descenders that provide clear and legible texts used even after the introduction of printing (Harris, 1995b).

Gothic Textualis Rotunda is also adapted to printing, as in the case of *textura*. To emulate the form of the letters, the handwritten text's overall appearance was the first step of the cradle years of the printing period. Typestyles, decorations, and illustrations were also imitated.

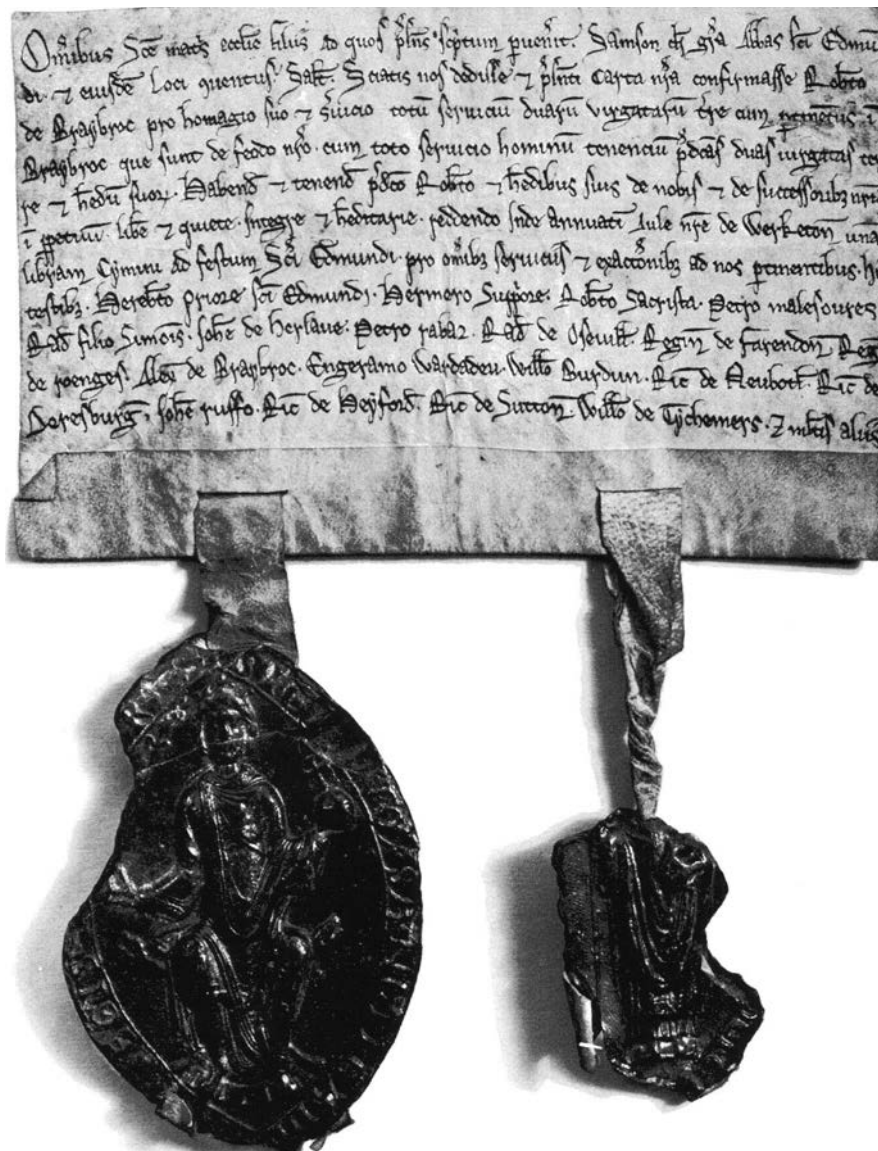


Currently, the rotunda is another ancient style of the Gothic hand that is mentioned in the courses for newbies that will be encountered in Appendix B. It is one of the Gothic hands that take attention with a different feature, which is its rounded form that is needed to be highlighted for beginners to be aware of. Furthermore, while examining the contemporary practices of calligraphy, the interpretation of the Gothic hand is encountered in a more rounded form, particularly in Meulman’s calligraphy works that are mentioned in Chapter VI. However, it is believed that the rounded feature comes from the Fraktur -which will be mentioned on the following pages- rather than the *textual rotunda*. Its morphological assessment will be examined in detail in Chapter VI.

**3.5.8.2. Gothic Cursive (*Littera Gothica Cursiva*)**

By the late twelfth century to early thirteenth century, the Gothic Cursive script can be observed through the *Charter of gift* by Samson, Abbot of Bury St Edmund’s, to Robert de Braybroc, of services pertaining to land in Braybroc (Fig. 53), which first emerged with the Caroline script’s influence. It was developed in the thirteenth century as a simplified version of textualis, and as a term, the Gothic Cursive refers to a large variety of styles of this genre that depends on the region (Brown, 1993).

Fig. 53. Charter of gift by Samson, Abbot of Bury St Edmund’s, to Robert de Braybroc, of services pertaining to land in Braybroc, written by English Cursive Documentary Script also called *Cursiva Anglicana*, c. 1208-1211?, Source: Brown, (1993: 93).



Because writing became more widespread, not just because of the universities but also because of the increasing need for government records, documents, private legal matters, and correspondences, it was encountered the emergence of cursive forms by which the act of writing could execute faster.

On the other hand, the copying was not just the monasteries' monopoly, but also the professional lay-scribes that started to appear at that time. It probably helped to satisfy these handwritten books' demands, which is also noteworthy due to the secularization of the written text, which heralded the various types of written text executed by these professional scribes (Marcos, 2017).

Its primary characteristic is described as the "running" hand of the scribe across the page, referring to the connected letterforms written without lifting a pen. Hence, it became suitable for everyday usage that could be executed rapidly.

As can be observed in Fig. 54, details from the page of the Charter of gift by Samson, Abbot of Bury St Edmund's, to Robert de Braybroc, almost every letter has attached with each other. The height of the minim is shorter, whereas the ascenders and descenders of the letters are more exaggerated with some flourishing. For this reason, it may be claimed that the legibility of the text seems challenging; however, for the eye, which was familiar with this style, it is probably recognizable.

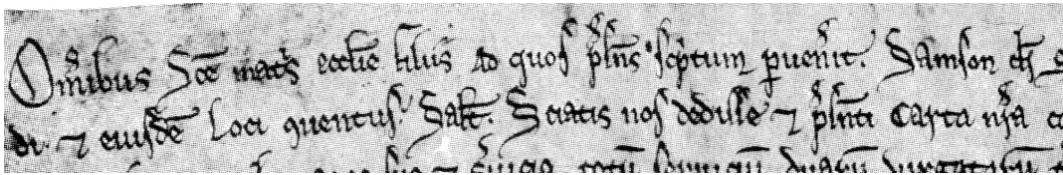


Fig. 54. Detail image is extracted from Fig. 53, the first two lines, written "Om(n)ibus s(an)c(t)e matris eccl(es)ie filiis ad quos p(re)s sc(r)iptum p(er) ven(er)it, Samson d(e)i gr(at)i Abbas s(an)c(t)i Edmu(n) di, (et) eiusde(m) loci(con)ventus: Sal(u)t(em). Sciatis nos dedisse (et) p(re)s nti Carta n(ost)ra confirmasse Rob(er)to."

As an informal style, various hands emerged depending on the scribe's hand with regional variations, as mentioned before. The major national forms of the Gothic Cursive scripts emerged in Spain, Italy, France, Germany, and England.

Looking at Spain, the secularization of culture in general, and the emergence of the universities, as mentioned above, also occurred in this country in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In terms of writing style, the Gothic writing system also underwent a transformation of cursive in the Iberian Peninsula, especially in Castile and Aragon, also lesser extent in Galicia and other Hispanic regions (Marcos, 2017).

The development of cities also meant municipal offices, the emergence of chancelleries, particularly in the sixteenth century, and a notable expansion in the schooling process significantly contributed to the expansion of writing. It is stated that in almost all towns in Spain, there was a municipal school in this century. One can learn the fundamentals of reading and writing, also counting, which consists of basic rules, including simple arithmetics. With all these, the increase in the literate population was indispensable. Hence, it is claimed that the Spanish

ruling classes at the end of the sixteenth century had a level of literacy that could not be comparable to that of other European countries (Cabero, 2015).

During that time, Gothic cursive, with its' cursiveness, served as an answer for scribes who searched for fast execution without losing the legibility or the aesthetic qualities of writing and in general, it is explained under three general categories. One is fractured, assessed as one of the most calligraphic forms used for solemn or luxurious manuscripts until the fifteenth century. The second group is a more rounded, semi-cursive form called less calligraphic due to its rounded shapes, mostly used in the fourteenth century for university documents. Moreover, the last group has quite an irregular layout with italic features in the fourteenth century (Cabero, 2015).

In addition, the arrival of the printing press gave the text of the books an impeccable appearance with legible and uniform block letters at that time. Consequently, it created a trend that will be mentioned on the following pages; however, a quick reaction of the Spanish scribes was to develop technically more complex forms to show the skill and demonstrate how professional preparation was needed for it. In addition, most of them started to work in the bureaucracy of the chancelleries, and some continued to write church books as master scribes, especially known for the large format used in the church choir in Spain (Cabero, 2015).

Here, it should be underlined one of the well-known Spanish calligraphers Juan de Iciar (1523- ca. 1573), the Durango master Juan de Iciar or Yciar "Vizcaíno," as he calls himself in many of his works, assessed as a prominent figure in Spanish calligraphy. In his youth, he spent some time in Italy, where he was able to come into contact with the great calligraphic masters of that country, or at least with his works, and on his return, he lived almost his entire life in Zaragoza. Together with the Italian masters, he was the founder of the Spanish Calligraphic School in the sixteenth century. In addition to his fame, his works earned him the admiration of King Felipe II, who made him come to El Escorial to work as his son's tutor and in the elaboration of some choir books for the palace library, among which the *Libro of the Knowledge of Astronomy of Alfonso X El Sabio* of 1550 dedicated to the prince (Ibid.).

On the other hand, Juan de Yciar's heritage became an inspiration for today's various typographers in the visualization and typographical digitization, as a new line of research and open field of the application of computer technologies for the digital recovery of his type-iconographic heritage consisting of historical, methodological and aesthetic quests. It shows writing with types, too, has its inspiration in the historical references comes from the ancient writing styles; hence calligraphy, as in this case, linked the Italian tradition of calligraphy with typography through the configuration of models. According to Herrera and Fernández (2008), it is evident that typographic design has developed forms inspired and influenced by calligraphic criteria and has translated handwriting into typefaces; thus, the relationship between calligraphy and typography is a fundamental issue to consider and underline that in order to understand and evaluate the visual aspects of letter forms and to

be able to intercept the great reduction in the quality of Typography, it is very important to awaken and deepen, with attention and understanding about the calligraphic culture in the past (Herrera & Fernández, 2008).

Looking at Italy, in the thirteenth century, cursive scripts developed in Italy to serve as notaries. A more calligraphic version was used as a book hand called *minuscola cancelleresca Italiana* (or simply *cancelleresca*, chancery script) in the fourteenth century with the influential effects of *bastarda* in France and *secretary* script in England (Marcos, 2017). In France, a cursive hand was used in a more looped version that had an appearance messy and slanted (Brown, 1993).

Soon it started to be taught in notary schools that executed y hand with the nib cut in the middle, which technically allows softer trace marks. Hence, it became an instrument employed by the emperor, pope, kings, feudal lords, or bishops. For this reason, it is also called *diplomatic minuscule* or *merchant script* (Piazzoni, n.d.).

At the end of the thirteenth century, cursive hands developed in England for literary purposes. In the late fourteenth century, versions of it started to be used, known as *anglicana* (as a term here, distinctively refers to English use, even if the script was probably adopted from France), *secretary*, and *bastard* (a hybrid version of *textura* and cursive).

*Anglicana*, first appeared in the twelfth century for correspondence. By the end of the thirteenth century, it started to use for general purposes. It lasted in the sixteenth century until it degenerated as a form. It has round and looped forms, as shown in Figures 55 and 56.

A squarer and regular version, called *Anglicana Format*, is a formal hand. *Anglicana Format* was designed based on *textura*, and characterized by its squatter and squarer appearance with broken strokes and hooked serifs. The distinctive form of it from normal *Anglicana* is the taller height of the ascenders of the letters that are usually arched.

On the other hand, *Secretary Script*, *Cursiva Media*, or *Court Hand* was another cursive script used for general purposes as a documentary and book hand under a class of formal scripts. It was probably imported from France in about the fourteenth century and gained popularity by the middle of the fifteenth century.

*Secretary Script*, as can be observed in the example of *Histoire du Roy d'Angleterre Richard* (Fig. 55), has an angler form, quite rounded than *anglicana*. Written with an angled nib, the contrast between the thickness and thin strokes is apparent. It could be written rather more quickly with several diagonal links between the letters.

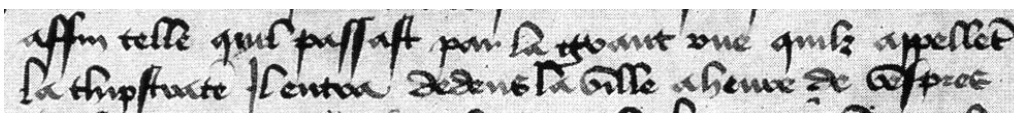


Fig. 55. The text is extracted from *Histoire du Roy d'Angleterre Richard*, Source: Brown, (1993: 107), written "affin telle quil passast par la grant rue quil appelle(n)t la thipstrate. Il entra dedens la ville a heure de vespres."



Currently, it is not commonly used by contemporary calligraphers; however, with its rounded feature, contrast within the stroke, and quickly written forms, as many other ancient scripts have, can be traced through the practices of today, which is not sufficient enough to claim that those practices are inspired by actual scripts that are mentioned here in this part.

Moreover, *Bastard Gothic* or *Hybrid Gothic* (*Littera Bastarda/Littera Hybrida*, in French *Lettre Bâtarde*), as can be observed in *Theological works of St Bernard* (Fig. 56), is a form of Gothic cursive that appeared approximately the second half of the fourteenth century, particularly in the North of France and the Low Countries as more elaborated and carefully constructed form (Marcos, 2017).

Fig. 56. The text is extracted from *Theological works of St Bernard*, 1432, Source: Brown, (1993: 101), written "dilige, unum sequere, unum app(re)hende, unum."



Furthermore, as will be seen in Appendix B, through the courses on the Gothic hand, the cursive feature is also included in these courses to raise the awareness of newbies in terms of the gothic hand and its rich diversities in the history of scripts.

The term "hybrida" indicates that the script is formed as a fusion of formal (*textura*) and informal (*cursive*) elements that developed in the mid-fourteenth century. Here, *textura* represents a formal noble hand, *cursive* represents informal base script. Adopting both scripts' characteristics, such as vertical ascenders from *textura*, alternative forms of the letters, such as long "s" and "f" from *cursive*, can be assessed as a transitional form between the *textura* and *cursive*. It is also characterized by its flourishes and hairlines, which cause a high contrast between thick and thin strokes (Brown, 1993).

It is common to see different varieties slightly performed depending on the level of formality needed and the speed required. As speed is indispensable, more individual peculiarities of the scribe hand can be observed in the text.

The word *bastard*, for the first time, started to be used to refer to a group of cursive semi-gothic scripts which emerged in France between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It is generally known as *batardes*. This style is genuinely French writing that keeps much of the essence of the Carolingian writing in a slightly looser, more angular, and linked way, and it can be claimed that these writings are highly close relatives with German Schwabacher types from the sixteenth century (Gutiérrez Cabero, 2015).

Among the French and Belgian Book of Hours, *bastard* was employed with lavishly decorated and illuminated initial letters with a miniature applied to luxury manuscripts. This genre belongs to the mostly fifteenth century, in which *Bastard* script was used as a formal book hand with speed and fluidity. It gains a more energetic appearance to the *textura* writing, characterized by a bold, powerful, stiff, and formal look. *Bastard* script lasted three centuries; hence emerged wide varieties were written as national variants. For this reason, the main lines of development will be mentioned here.



In the fifteenth century, the style of the French cursive hand was affected by *bastarda*, used chiefly in sixteenth-century France. The ornaments and decorations constitute a large part of the page, as well as a scene of illustration. There is no line-filler usage here, as seen in previous forms of Gothic writing systems.

As can be observed in *Vengeance de la mort Ihesu Crist* belongs to 1479 (Fig. 57), the initial "L" occupies three lines that are drawn and painted. Even if it has a cursive feature like inclination slightly toward the right, its pointed descenders take attention with high contrast between the thin and thick strokes of the letters. Even various letters seem to be joined each other as in the case of *cursive* (informal), *lettre bâtarde* formerly known as French humanistic is accepted as a formal hand that is supposed to be carefully written (Brown, 1993).

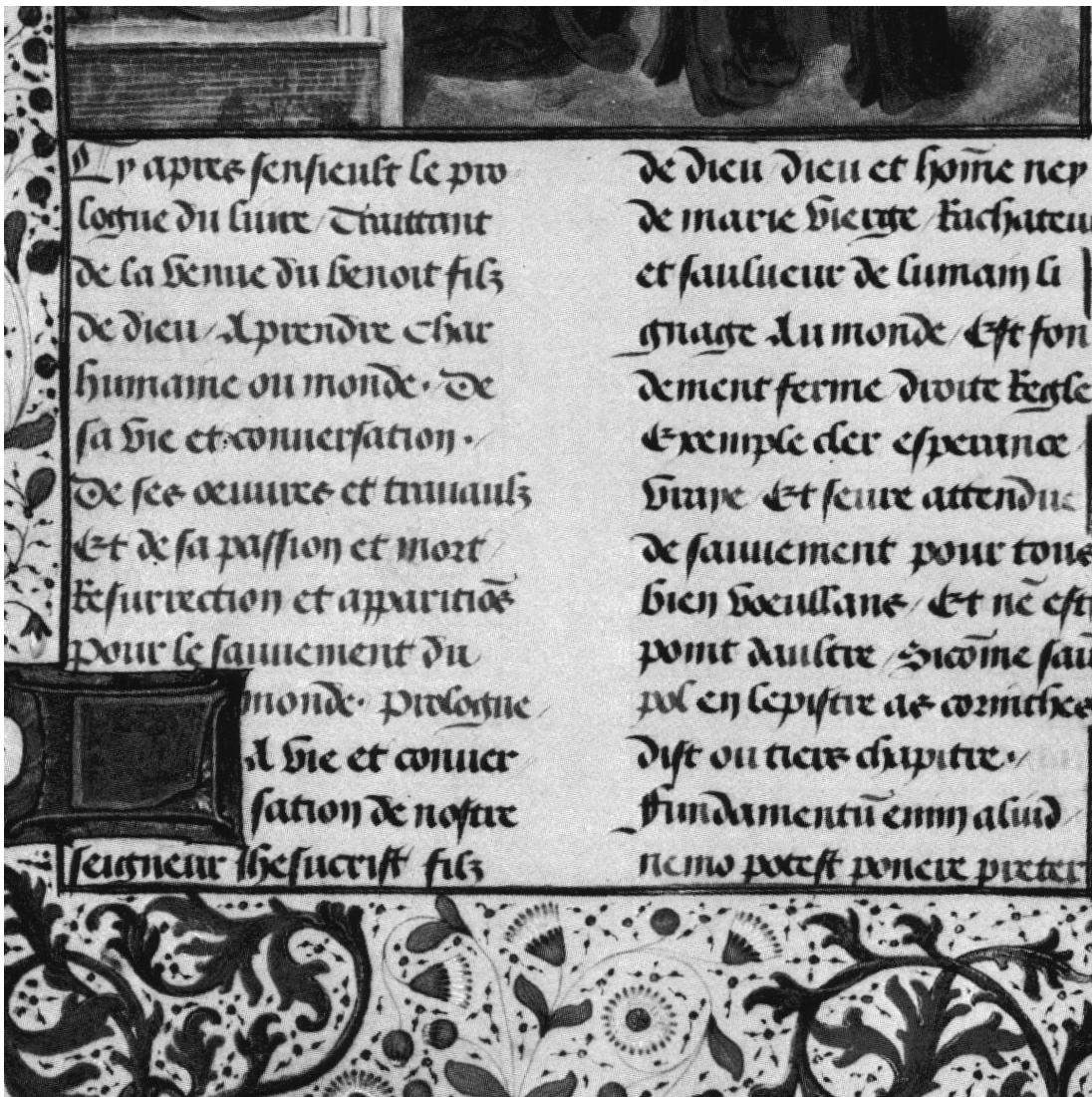
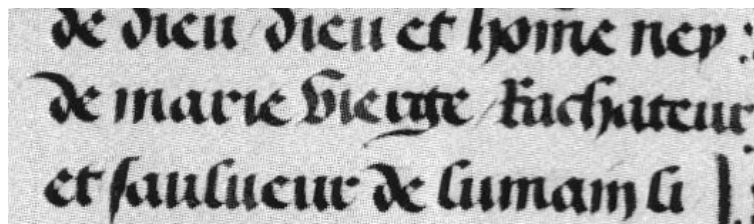


Fig. 57. *Lettre Bourguignonne*, Cursiva Bastarda, Cursiva Formata Hybrida, Lettre de Fourme Vengeance de la mort Ihesu Crist, 1479, Source: Brown, (1993: 111).

In Fig. 58, the letters' inclination can be realized, especially considering the letter "h" and long "s." Some of the letters, such as long "s," have retouches while executing the stem of the letter that creates an oval-like stem that started with a thin stroke, then in the middle, it becomes more expansive, hence finished with a pointy tail. Moreover, the contrast between thin and thick strokes, as in the case of the letter "e," is high. The cursive characters are dominant due to the curves and fewer broken strokes usage. This cursive feature can be seen through the calligraphic works of contemporary calligraphers, through the examination of the strokes that are practiced. Particularly observation of Meulman, even though he employed the vertical stroke of the *textura quadrata*, the feet and various forms that he performs consist of a cursive feature that reminds the cursive gothic hand. Mostly employing the brush, Meulman seems to adapt the gothic hand with the brush's flexibility that offers a broad possibility to interpret even within the stroke.

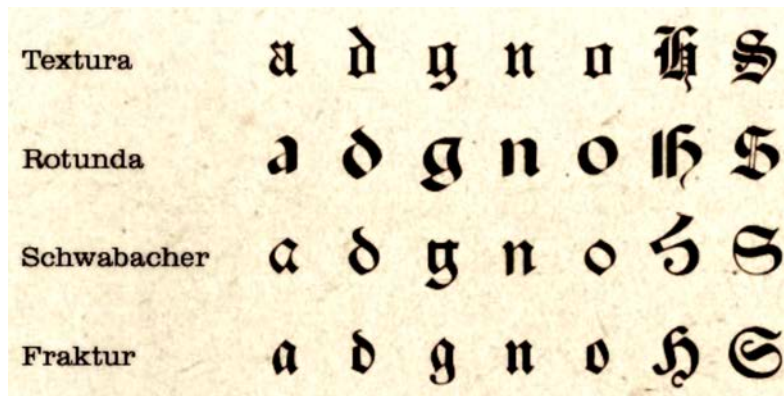
Fig. 58. Detailed image is extracted from Fig. 57 (the first three lines of the second column), written "de dieu, dieu et ho(m)me ney de marie vierge. Rachateur et sauveur de l'umain li."



On the other hand, *Germany-Schwabacher* script (Fig. 59) is a curvy version of "lettre bâtarde," used in Germany and Switzerland at the end of the fifteenth century. It consists of characteristics of *textura* and *rotunda*; for that reason, it can be said that *schwabacher* is a hybrid script that covers the formal and informal characteristics. Minuscule letters are formed relatively wide and double-angled. The letter "a," "d," "g," "h," and "o" are some of the most characteristic letters that reflect the distinctive form of that script. Majuscule letters are also quite wide and simply formed with several rounded elements.

Fig. 59. The letterform of a, d, g, n, o, H, and S are illustrated by the scripts.

from the top *textura*, *rotunda*, *schwabacher* and *fraktur*, Source: Making Book Richard Hollick, wordpress.com/2017/05/24/black-letter/, access: 12.06.2018.



In the fifteenth and sixteenth century, *schwabacher* became dominant as a common printed typeface until the twentieth century (Clemens & Graham, 2007).

In the early sixteenth century, *schwabacher* was replaced with *fraktur* with a more expressive form and was widely used in Germany until the middle



of the twentieth century. For this reason, it is not surprising that all kinds of Blackletter scripts tend to be called *fraktur* in the German language, which can still be encountered through the current practices of the contemporary western calligraphers who will be examined in Chapter VI.

### 3.5.8.3. Fraktur (*Frakturschriften*)

The German term "fraktur" indicates a specific Gothic script style derives from the Latin word *fractus*, which means "broken." It refers to the letters formed by several strokes of the pen, which make them appear broken with angular lines (Hartung, 2008).

It is the script that can be stated that various contemporary calligraphers, particularly Meulman, are inspired by and interpret it as a slight transformation to his calligraphic works. The inspiration can be detached through the visual examination and comparison of various physical features of the letters, even the strokes. The probable preference of Meulman may be depended on his commonly employed tool -brush, which has flexible nature that provides vast opportunity to perform within the stroke with thin and thick widths, also transitions between them and the curves that can be executed. Fraktur style consists of all mentioned features that can be observed through Meulman's work that are examined in Chapter VI. Actually, all black letter types in Germany are called "broken types" (*gebrochene schriften*) (Mediavilla, 1996). The unevenly broken terminal results from cutting the quill pen with the tip slit to one side rather than centrally (Stribley, 1986).

Emperor Maximilian I (1459-1519) desired to establish a library of printed books with a new typeface created specifically for using the printing of these books. A group of artists, namely painter Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528), author Johann Neudoerffer the Elder (1497-1563), and calligrapher and monk Leonhard Wagner (1453-1522) gattered with this task and created *fraktur* that was described as more elegant than *schwabacher*, more modern than *textura* and distinctly German without any elements of the *antiqua* (roman typeface) form Italy (Brown, 1993) as can be observed all scripts that mention here in Fig. 60. The book consists of writing style, which presents various kinds of German Fraktur in Latin writings, with their foundations.

*Kunstrichtige Schrei* (Fig. 60) is written in *fraktur*, published in 1709, written by a master writing and arithmetic, Adolph Zunner (c. 1696-1752).



Fig. 60. *Kunstrichtige Schrei*, Author: Adolph Zunner (c. 1696-1752), 1709, Nuremberg, Source: "MnF Gallica," gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10550838f/f9.item.zoom, access: 25.05.2016.

*Fraktur* is identified by the forked ascenders, it is more likely between *cursive script* and *textura quadrata*. Despite its upright aspect, many strokes have a higher, rounded, and less angular appearance than *textura*. Some *fraktur* letterforms have distinctive spikes that are the product of overlapping strokes by extending one stroke over the previous one. When many pen lifts construct the letterform, it causes many spikes to be created on the letter. Moreover, lowercase letters are similar to *textura* with narrow forms. The letters are also doubled-angled with several calligraphic elements like flourishes and curls. Ascenders of the letters have commonly forked ended. Uppercase characters, as can be observed in the book *Kunstrichtige Schrei* (Fig. 60) are quite wide and have rounded elements, calligraphic flourishes, dots, and curls. Between the sixteenth to nineteenth-century *fraktur* was commonly used; however, in the nineteenth century, it began to lose its popularity; instead, *antiqua* gradually became popular and more preferable than *fraktur*. During the nineteenth and twentieth century, both scripts, *fraktur* and *antiqua* (Fig. 61), were loaded with ideological implications in Germany in the sense of which form was appropriate to use as a typeface.

Fig. 61. *Fraktur* and *Antiqua* scripts, Source: Ross (2012: np.).



Historically speaking, while *fraktur* was used for the works written in the German language, *antiqua* type was used for Latin texts. This was the conventional use of two typefaces, and this fact led to be polarized them. During the 1800s, with the rise of nationalism, *fraktur* was assessed as "more German" than *antiqua*. For more than two decades, the National Socialist German Workers' Party used *fraktur* for their printed anti-semitic propaganda, and in February 1920, since the publication of the party program, the so-called *25 Point Programme*, for almost all documents, this gothic type was set. However, by 1941, Nazis banned using *fraktur* to claim that it is of Jewish origin, so it was wrong to call them a German typeface. With this claim, only a roman typeface, particularly *antiqua* started to be used in official communications. (Kellerhoff, 2021). However, *fraktur* still remains today through names of newspapers such as The New York Times, Chicago Tribute, art books, book covers, Heavy Metal groups, pub signs, menus, beer brands, and other forms of advertisement that evoke the feeling of oldness and rusticity. Moreover, as will be seen in Chapter VI, contemporary calligrapher Meulman mostly employs and interpret the gothic style. Through the examination of his strokes, the common features, particularly with *fraktur* style, can be seen. Not just Meulman but also Victor Kams seems to be inspired by *fraktur* cherishing the rigid form of gothic and diamond shape, as well as the curved forms that come with *fraktur* embodied through his various works that are also mentioned in Chapter VI.

### 3.5.9. Italic Script (*Cursive or Chancery letter, Cancellarescha*)

Italic script is highly significant that most of the first beginners of western calligraphy are advised to start with it, due to its ductus and construction are relatively easier to study and execute. This is observed with the personal experience in various courses and lectures that are held in Appendix A. Moreover, italic is a hand that gives more opportunity to interpret for contemporary calligraphers to explore and experiment with its more elaborated forms. In Chapter VI, a calligrapher Brown with his polyrhythmic calligraphy, which is personal interpretation of the italic hand will be mentioned through his interpretation of the italic hand, so-called "polyrhythmic calligraphy." For this reason, it is essential to mention italic script here slightly.

In the fifteenth century, the form of the humanistic script was rounded based on Caroline script; however, in the later period, it became narrower, curvilinear, and even from time to time pointed. After the *rotunda*, the following period witnessed the emergence of the italic hand. Hence, in Italy, it can be claimed that the curved forms were never lost, as seen in the writings of Northern Europe in the period of the Gothic system of writing (Johnston, 1917). The Italian Renaissance humanist Niccolò Niccoli (1364-1437) takes attention to his hand (Fig. 62), which is credited for a humanistic cursive, which can still be traced to the echoes of the Gothic hand (Fairbank, 1975). The text consists of both minuscule and majuscule cursive hand that is written by Niccoli. There is no noticeable amount of flourishes or exaggerated forms. Though, the initial "T" was first drawn and painted, not written as the others.

In Fig. 62, the letterforms can be observed closely. Most of the letters are linked with each other as a running hand, which escalates the text's writing speed, which is the main characteristic of the cursive hands. The letters' forms are not easily recognizable due to quickly formed letters that appear to be written in a hurry. As mentioned before, the writing speed has a noticeable effect on the appearance of the letterforms. The width of the letters is narrower, comparing the formal humanist hand, and the curves and the rounded forms step forwards. In contrast, the pointed, broken feature of the Gothic may remain; moreover, as in the case of the letter "h," the tail hanging down and slightly curved to the left, also pointed descenders of the long "s" probably inherited from the gothic forms. In a later period, the first

. PLAVTI . TRINUMMVS . INCIPIT . FELICITER  
**T**ensaurum abstrusum abiens peregre charmedes  
 Remq: omnem amico callicli mandat suo  
 I hoc absente male rem perdit filius  
 Nam & adis uendit has mercatur callicles est atq:

Fig. 62. Example of Niccolò Niccoli's cursive hand, Firenze (Italy), 1432, Source: Mediavilla, (1996: 200).



printed italic manual book addressed to the general public is one of the most noteworthy improvements in a sense, written by a papal scribe and type designer Ludovico degli Arrighi (Vincentino) (1475-1527) in the year 1524 in Rome, entitled *La Operina* (Clayton, 2013). It is a thirty-two-page masterpiece written with letters between 2,5mm and 3mm high.

In his book, *La Operina* (Fig. 63), Arrighi describes the general rules of execution with its primary oval forms, the vertical strokes of the ascender, and descender stems of the letterforms. Arrighi was an advocate of the human eye by which the best judgment of the letterforms could be established rather than geometric measurements. As can be observed on one of the pages of *La Operina* (Fig. 63), the majuscule and minuscule of Arrighi's italic hand with flourished, alternative letterforms are illustrated. Various advice on joining letters and compositions is also presented here to exercise. This book is still consulted today to observe and understand the italic hand of Arrighi. Apart from him, calligrapher, author, printer, and publisher based in Venice Giovanni Antonio Tagliente (1450-1528) takes attention with his more ornate style than Arrighi.

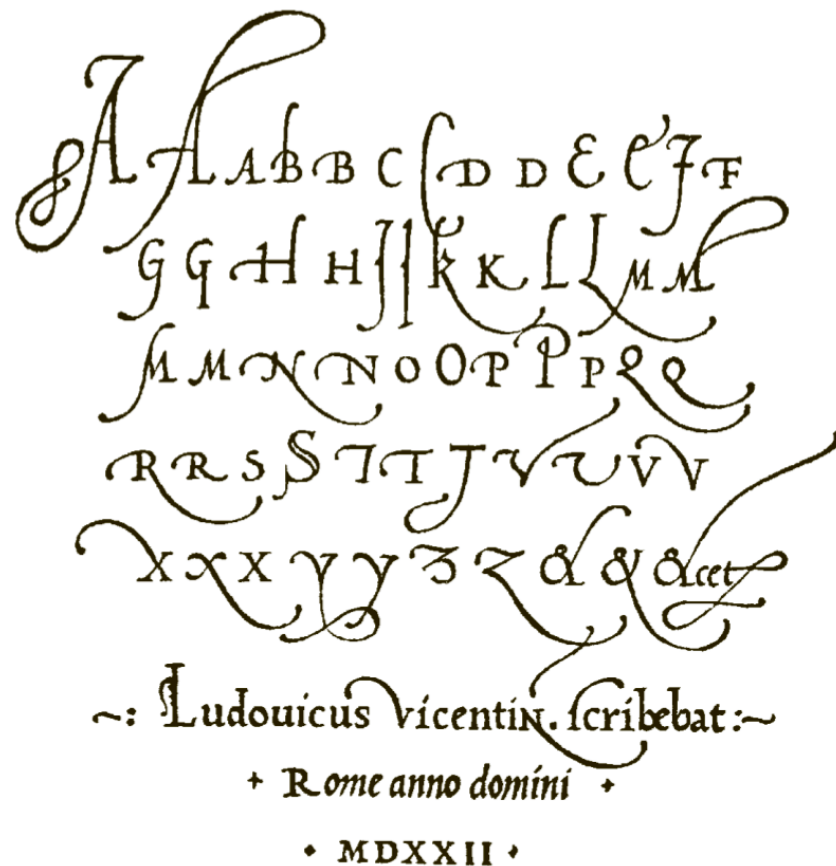


Fig. 63. Woodcut printed of *La Operina*, Ludovico degli Arrighi (Vincentino), 1524, Source: Arrighi, (1524: 24).

The italic script's main characteristics can be assessed as to its clarity of the forms and rapid and fluent execution of the letters. Moreover, its narrower form slightly slopes to the right, and simply executing serif sometimes flourished are among its characteristics. These features of the characters were first recognized in the Papal Chancery in the fifteenth century and then used as a court's hand for correspondences,

adopted widely in Western Europe. It quickly became popular, probably because of its' simplicity and elegance. It lends itself to formal uses. It was imitated and further embellished among intellectuals into flourishes according to their taste.

In Fig. 64, some of the letterforms can be observed in detail -the letters such as the letter "m," which is written without the pen lifting. So, instead of using several strokes for constructing the letter "m," one continuous stroke is used in terms of speed and fluidity. The economy of the strokes here provides the one to be able to write the script faster. The form is also compressed and sloped compared to the formal hand of a humanist.



Fig. 64. Detail image is extracted from Fig. 63, written "Rome anno domini."

It can be claimed that italic hand is one of the most practices and employed hand. In Appendix B, it will be seen the workshop that I participated in italic hand. For this reason, I can state that the execution of the italic hand is relatively easy comparing to the other styles, which makes it one of the very first style that is recommended to the newbies. Furthermore, as will be seen in Chapter VII, various contemporary calligraphers, namely Denis Brown and Viktor Kams mostly employs italic hand and transform it with their personal interpretations. For example, Brown (2017) prefers to study the letterforms of the italic in polyrhythm. That means, the inclination of the letters are not paralel with eachother, instead, various inclinations are executed that give more dynamic appearance and energy to the form of the hand. He calls it polyrhythmic calligraphy. As Brown, Kams also moslty employs italic hand while he practices logotypes or various personal projects that are digitilized mostly. Italic hand seems to give him a space to experiment with brush or pen that can be manipulated easily as will be examined in Chapter VI as well. That means, italic hand is one of the most inspired and encounted style that contemporary calligraphers prefer, as in the case of Gothic.

Suppose we repeat that the time we mentioned is the fifteenth century. In that case, it is inevitable to consider the particular inventions that have been assessed as major significance for the progress of humanity, which is the invention of printing, is appreciated because of its enormous effect on civilization. Apart from that, one of the most notable influences was on the manuscript tradition of the time and, therefore, on the scribes. It is even assessed when the perception of the calligraphy tradition as it was accepted had to be broken and transformed; some scribes were trying to learn the printing technique to continue to be part of it, avoiding losing their jobs. However, more strikingly, the western ancient writing tradition, which was performed basically for functional reasons, started to provide an alternative area to experiment. Moreover, it can be claimed that one of the very first trigger points was that the western calligraphy tradition had to be shifted, and the first initial period in the minds of moving toward contemporary calligraphy practices. For this reason, it is highly significant to observe the printing period and its' effect on scribes to understand and provide insight into the historical dynamics behind the contemporary attitudes.

### 3.6. Printing and scribe

The printing period is accepted as the epoch that has been called "modern times" (Steinberg, 1961: 7) because it was assessed as the deep cleft opened in history midway through the fifteenth century by Johannes Gutenberg and his followers using the leaden wedges, which are called printing types. It is also called typographic printing, which means impressions from master sets of characters accurately composed into words, lines, and pages. Such printing has been the learning tool, the preserver of knowledge, and the medium of literature (Chappell & Bringhurst, 2000), explained as "the process of duplicating images onto or into a base, usually paper, and usually through some mechanical means" (Steinberg, 1961: 6).

To broaden this definition, Carter (1925) discusses the word printing as its' literal meaning of pressing or stamping; he claimed the invention was illustrated by a very early exemplar, namely, ancient seals and Roman brick stamps. However, regarding the alphabet, printing refers to movable type, "the invention which made reproduction of books rapid" (Carter, 1925: 101).

In Chapter II, various information about printing in Europe is mentioned, so, in this part, various points are needed to be underlined related to a tradition of Western calligraphy and ancient scribes, which were affected by this invention. As mentioned earlier, hand-copying was the only way of recording and spreading the text, and gothic cursive and later humanistic scripts were employed to perform this function more efficiently and rapidly. However, with the invention of printing from moveable types in the fifteenth century, the situation started to change slightly. The idea of utilizing the interchangeable letters, which could be reused over and over again in different combinations, was just a simple beginning; however, at the same time, it was extremely laborious to hand-carve these vast number of units that were all required to use for all the pages of set type, required to print a whole book at a time; however, the very first printed books in the Gutenberg press were hardly cheap (Jackson, 1981).

In the cradle years of printing in Europe, the printers strictly followed and imitated the handwritten books for familiarity that had crucial importance because it was the basis of legibility and also significant to the potential customers who might have difficulty accepting the new-tangled technique that developed. That means the formal gothic hand was imitated and cast to print pages that remind the manuscript written by the gothic hand, which became the first script that continued by introducing printing and printer's type in Europe as a model for the first mechanically produced letters (Stribley, 1986). Hence, the earliest printing experiences in Europe were meant to transfer a scribe's design and adapt it to the printing technic of that time. Apart from all persistence in the traditional adherence, a scribe was well aware that the so-called "instrument of the Devil" (Drogin, 1980: 4) might cause severe consequences to the scribe's existence. For this reason, there were some attempts at this stage as a reaction to the existence of a devil's invention.

Chappell and Bringhurst (2000) point to the year 1637, England, to exemplify the attempts intended to provide the disruption of print shops and foundries. An opposition came almost entirely from the organized

scribes and illuminators. It is not surprising because of the assumption that printing technology is a threat to their means of livelihood. A significant number of print shops and foundries had been limited by decree. Considering the manuscript's content, most of the classic or ecclesiastical writings, in Greek or Latin, all made them unaccessible; only a few scholars and churchmen had that privilege. Once printed books started to spread and became accessible contrary to a manuscript, the opposition to printed books became censorship. Between the years 1689 and 1694, Parliament's Declaration of Rights was issued before the proclamation of William and Mary as King and Queen. However, after the Licensing Act expired in 1694, it was not renewed, and censorship of the press ended.

In such a climate, it can be claimed that the restrictive English laws on overprinting were not that effective, just for the insufficient number of these presses were affected. Still, it was possible to lose all the equipment, impose a fine, or receive imprisonment, which sounded like a high risk of disapproval from the royal governors. In other words, to be a printer is "a dangerous calling," regarded as a threat; the following quotation portrays this issue: "The logic of the ruling point of view is lucidly expressed in the 1671 report of Virginia's colonial governor, Sir William Berkeley: But I thank God we have not free schools nor printing; and I hope we shall not have these three hundred years, for learning has brought disobedience and heresy and sects into the world, and printing has divulged them and libels against the government" (Chappell & Bringhurst, 2000: 156).

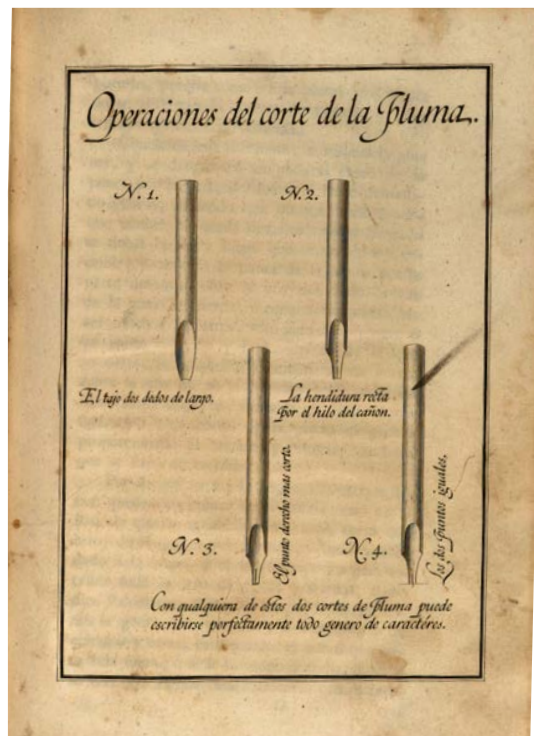
Despite all these situations, the sixteenth century leads entirely new markets with an expansion of productions. It was also the time that theological reformation and intellectual awakening became the core of these changes. With printing and later lithography, book production became popular with ornaments and illustrations, while it caused the disappearance of calligraphy (handwritten ancient style and tradition). First, these technologies helped the dissemination and adaptation of calligraphic knowledge. As an example, various texts were published, including various experience and works of Basque calligraphers such as Juan de Iciar around 1550 (Loaiza, Valencia & Gutiérrez Arias, 2010) and Spanish calligraphers such as D. Estevan Ximenez (?-1789-?) published a book entitled *Arte de escribir: compuesto por D. Estevan Ximénez, siguiendo el metodo y buen gusto de D. Francisco Xavier de Santiago Palomares*<sup>7</sup> in 1789. These published books are still valid today as a testimony of the sixteenth-century calligraphy for contemporary calligraphers who are willing to examine, understand and apprehend western calligraphy of that time. As seen in Appendix B, today's calligraphy courses still point at these various books as a source to examine and practice calligraphy. Even with the contemporary attitudes, it is assessed as a first step to go beyond the traditional aspect.

It can be observed that one page extracted from the book *Arte de escribir: compuesto por D. Estevan Ximénez, siguiendo el metodo y buen gusto de*

<sup>7</sup> Palomares is also a figure that Spanish typographers have claimed for more than twenty years. Because he was skilled in handling pen and ink strokes since they had worked as archivists, paleographers, personal or chancery secretaries, writers of privileges, or proofreaders. Not only would he belong to the small percentage of the population of the Hispanic monarchy who knew how to read and write, but he did so with such mastery that he could earn a living doing it (Bello, 2015).

D. Francisco Xavier de Santiago Palomares, describes pen cutting (Fig. 65) in order to teach the technique to practitioners with instructions. It is also claimed that Ximenez considered script more than a vehicle that conveys more than past words (Caruso, 2019).

Fig. 65. Pen cutting operation page of *Arte de escribir*: composed by D. Estevan Ximénez, following the method and good taste of D. Francisco Xavier de Santiago Palomares, Source: Santiago Palomares & Ximénez, (1789: np.).



In his book, it can also be observed that the cursive script forms are taught, probably with the popularization of writing, and the development of this type in a more straightforward form made it quickly skilled with little training. Hence, it could be used in schools for communication and learning, which would affect calligraphy tradition and other ancient scripts to decline (Loaiza, Valencia, & Gutiérrez, 2010).

Apart from the apparent advantages of printing, it was spelled as a disaster for ancient scribes. Some continued to execute their skills because the principal clients of scribes and illuminators were private patrons, who collected their works as a sign of wealth as much for their artistic content. Hence, it can be said that there was still work for illuminators to decorate and finish the printed pages (Jackson, 1981) manually. Moreover, to some extent, it was still necessary for manuscripts and documents that demanded wide distribution (Clayton, 2013); after all, scribes played a significant role in disseminating writing in official communications and copying classic books.

It is claimed that with the printing press, the practical constraints on western scribes and calligraphy were removed, giving a sort of freedom to the scribe to assess and execute his skill differently. At least, the primary concern, time and speed, became out of the agenda for the scribe. Because the printing press was taking care of it for them, the scribe had to find a way to compete. Evidently, he could not continue to his duty as he used to



before, which obliged him to learn to adapt to this technology, and he could step in somehow where human resources were needed.

The other concern was the functionality of the written text and the capacity of the scribe to fulfill the needs with legible well-constructed letterforms of the era. There were also no issues anymore to consider, primarily with printing technology. Because it started with the black letter and then evolved into a humanist hand, which became highly effective and was responsive to the needs of the book hand; for this reason, a scribe might feel more space and opportunity to discover the potential of western script styles and techniques to observe and appreciate. This is assessed as a new phase in western calligraphy practices.

Hence, in respect of printing technology, Miner (1965) roughly divides Western calligraphy history into three-phase. The first one covers the first century AD to the fifteenth century, until the printing press when the story of the formal hands emerged for the book productions. The second phase covers the period after the printing press, particularly between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, when it was witnessed the development of a fine and elegant script used for the official purposes of the chanceries and offices of government and the handwriting of the educated gentleman, the intellectual, and the Merchant. That means it was the period of writing masters still had been practiced to copy-book to publish. The last period covers the time between the nineteenth century to 1965 (the year that Miner's book was published) when western calligraphy was assessed as revived and started to practice as art itself. That means, at the time of the last phase, with the revival of the western calligraphy at the end of the nineteenth century and the twentieth century, the definition of calligraphy as "beautiful handwriting" probably started to be discussed and thought to be excluded from most of the practices of the nineteenth century (Miner, 1965).

In the following pages, the so-called calligraphic revival will be mentioned to frame the situation underlined above. Hence, it will give a chance to discuss the understanding and perception of western calligraphy, especially in the twentieth century, so-called modern calligraphy. It will also locate the situation when the European art world entered the periods of modern movements that profoundly affected the era. What was the situation of so-called western modern calligraphy in the last period of the nineteenth, but particularly in the twentieth century, will be understood by mentioning calligraphic revival; furthermore, one of the contemporary calligraphers, Pokras Lampas, mentioned in Chapter VI, is called himself a modern calligrapher. His concept and understanding of Western calligraphy with various features will be examined in Chapter VI; however, before doing that, mentioning the calligraphic revival will provide significant information to locate and frame his attitude as a contemporary calligrapher.

### **3.7. Calligraphic revival**

With industrialization, the printing methods were improved; thus, the nineteenth century is assessed as barren in terms of western calligraphy styles; however, the twentieth century witnessed the revivals of various

ancient styles with historical roots and redesigning of a typeface based on them. That happens principally in Britain and Germany, with the effect of printing technology. Hence, calligraphic revivals refer to returning the studying of this craft's historical developments in writing, ancient styles, and traditional tools and materials.

Even the discipline of manual writing and printing separated each other with the rapid industrial progress, the interest in the finest ancient scripts was renewed, which led to a closer look once again at the tradition. With the renewing of this information, once again, the standards of legibility and visual presentation of letters became a topic that modern eyes started to investigate in search of the desired combination of form and function, which is assessed as the essence of the calligraphic skill of the twentieth century.

It was the time that calligraphers interested in reviving various ancient styles also became the designers that created widely used typefaces. Their works were called modern calligraphy, which was based on traditional styles with the promise of reworking such forms with a different flavor of its own time. The potential of calligraphy is rediscovered and reexamined without restrictions on mundane aspects of copying and recording. Hence, calligraphy started to be assessed as something that offers a wealthy source to learn the craft, develop a high degree of skill and create (Stribley, 1986).

Clayton (2013) pays attention to photography which made calligraphic revival possible through the alliance between them; also, reaching the original works became easier, at least widely accessible of their pictures for accurate comparison and study. Moreover, the photocopiers became widely accessible and instructional; educational worksheets were easy to produce, new writing manuals were issued, and various older ones were reprinted, some in facsimiles.

In addition to these, fountain pens and fiber-tip markers started to be manufactured for broad-edged script forms, and a wide range of available materials for various construction styles of writing helped so-called modern calligraphers to discover (Nash et al., 2019). Thus, there was a huge difference between the ancient scribe and the modern calligrapher, who has a wide range of technological possibilities such as recently developed various alternative materials to choose from with various alternative elements in the design with the experience of centuries in both written and printed text that can be consulted as an inspiration.

Moreover, calligraphy started to be practiced and serviced for diverse uses, such as graphic design, painting, legal documents, diplomas, commemorative documents, handmade presentations or lettering in advertising, and teaching schools or groups of practitioners. Particularly in graphic design, the relationship between calligrapher's activities and the designers became closer, such as in the case of the development of computer fonts, the printing of the books, and lettering. In various ways, that means calligraphy moved on the stage (Loaiza, Valencia, & Gutiérrez, 2010).

As stated earlier, Great Britain became one of the most wealthy nations in the world with the early industrial revolution that provided

advantages, leading the other Western nations in the means of economic progress and growth, which was started at the end of the nineteenth century as a part of a wider artistic reaction against the mechanization of manual craft. It was a period that took the attention with the English author, socialist, and artist William Morris (1834-1896), who started to turn his attention to the ancient scribes' practices and began to experiment with writing at about 1870 (Jackson, 1981).

Morris is one of the significant pioneers that influenced the British Arts and Crafts movement that had a great interest in writing and illumination since his student's years at Oxford. That led him to a lifelong practice of writing and producing manuscript books. His philosophy was influenced by John Ruskin (1819-1900) and Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), who were a spokesperson for a movement that has raised serious doubts about the impact of industrialization on Britain from its inception. "They objected not only to the "ravaging" of the countryside, the growth of industrial cities and miserable conditions of work but to the way the division of labour was affecting "man" himself" (Clayton, 2013: 268). That refers to a person who no longer utilizes his full humanity at work, meaning head, heart, and hand altogether. According to Ruskin, the industrial system of work no longer allowed a person to fulfill his nature.

In late 1870, Morris became a sort of master in putting his calligraphy to an excellent standard. With early efforts, he guided the copybook containing various original editions of Renaissance masterpieces such as the forementioned calligrapher Arrighi and his *La Operina* (1524) (mentioned earlier) and *Il modo tempore le penne* (1523) and another italic master Giovanni Antonio Tagliente (1450-1528)'s *Lo presente libro insegna la vera arte de lo excellête scrivere...* (1532). With Morris's words: "a work of utility might also be a work of art, if we cared to make it so" (Ibid.), shows he still connected with the western calligraphy tradition of handwritten books.

Mediavilla (1996) calls Morris a well-rounded humanist artist because he combined the poet's skills also a novelist, calligrapher, typographer, printer, and publisher. That means multifaceted genius that leads him to be a founder of the art revival during the late Victorian phase of the Industrial Revolution. Employing ancient materials, such as quills, he wrote several illuminated manuscripts on parchment and paper. In addition to his work in interior design, furniture, and textiles, among other areas, through his company MMF & CO, Morris intended to edit the books he published as a writer. This led him to found in 1891 the Kelmscott Press.

Fig. 66 illustrates the printer's device with lettering in the style of the Troy type, which was used by Morris at the Kelmscott Press in 1891.

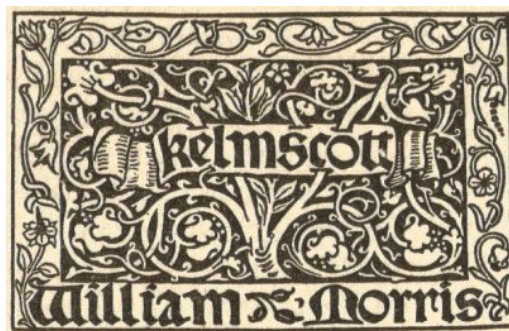


Fig. 66. The Kelmscott Press from 1891, Source: Steinberg, (1961: 309).



Troy type, as can be observed, designed based on the gothic hand, consists of stylized rigid broken forms, diamond points, and serifs with ligatures. The overall image is heavily illustrated with organic forms that remind the manuscript's margin decorations and reflect the feature of the era. Apart from that, it should be kept in mind that this was part of his idea of what a book should be. Typography was an essential part, and that led him to design his own typefaces, using references from the past but using modern techniques for his design, such as photography.

Morris's interest in calligraphy was mainly about the works of Renaissance scribes that he consulted for the basis of his research. He was referred to as the person who paved the way for the calligraphic revival. It was also assessed as a sign of revival of forgotten manufacturing manuscripts collected and inspired by others (Mediavilla, 1996).

These features can be observed in the facing page illustrated and ornamented by British artist Sir Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898) and printed with the Chaucer type by William Morris (Fig. 67). *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* is Morris's one of the most ambitious works as a printer and designer, completed just a few months before his death. Morris supervised every part of the production, as well as choosing the paper and ink, the type design, also the use of ornaments and illustrations. The book consists of eighty-seven full-page woodcut illustrations by Edward Burne-Jones.

Fig. 67. Page from *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 1896, Source: Steinberg, (1961: 312-313).



Another British calligrapher Edward Johnston (1872-1944) was inspired by Morris's activities and is worth mentioning here. Johnston, like Morris, explored medieval and Renaissance techniques and materials with manuscript preparation and writing. He started with a version of half-uncial and settled on a tenth-century version of Carolingian as a basis for his foundational hand. These scripts were also mentioned earlier in this Chapter. As an influential teacher, his book entitled *Writing & Illuminating, & Lettering* (1917) was among major works of its time, also assessed as the "calligrapher's bible" (Mediavilla, 1996: 255). It is a formative book that firstly covers the whole lettering arts, but at the core of it, there is calligraphy, in which Johnston reveals his understanding of calligraphic forms technically, discussing his own study and analysis, also into illumination, printing, engraving, and the cutting of letters in stone.

According to Clayton, "Johnston had relocated where the knowledge about letters was held" (2013: 275). That means several professions, namely "palaographer, sign-writer, clerk and notary, teacher, printer, the stone-carver, engraver, penman and architect," all fragmented parts were collected together within his book. With his students, Johnston began to practice and learn about ancient techniques, reviving the illumination skills, gilding methods, also vellum preparation and writing on parchment, and mixing the pigment to prepare paint and ink (Jackson, 1981).

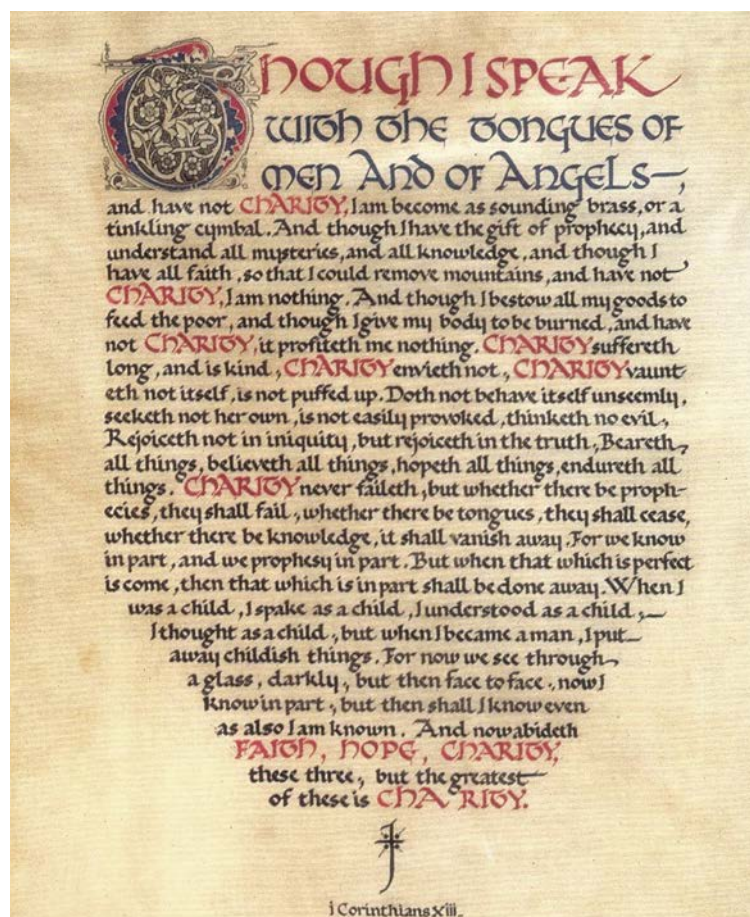
Clayton (2013) also emphasized using a broad-edged pen directly and spontaneously, which is the principal tool of most scripts from Roman times to the Renaissance, because their natural forms were already created by a feather, bird, or reed, with a wide and flat edge. That had a horizontally or obliquely cut tip, which causes the variation between thick and thin strokes while holding with a certain angle. It naturally made these varieties within the letter parts that moved around a letter shape, and unlike pointed tip nib or pointed brush calligraphy, there is no need to pressure on the nib. For Johnston, it was a "revelation" that appropriate shading was achieved naturally in the traditional places while the nib wrote. Hence, he studied different varieties of various scripts, from Roman and Rustic capitals to insular half-uncial and italic scripts, by changing the angle of the pen (Clayton, 2013).

Hence, Johnston established foundations and methods of analysis of medieval writing based on the basic structure of these scripts from a more formal perspective. His predominant emphasis was on particular alphabetic forms, such as Carolingian with its clear functional forms, and Johnston developed the Foundational hand, which is considered the letter that is needed to be a part of the calligraphers' training due to its essential elements (Loaiza, Valencia and Gutiérrez, 2010) that are called as "essential qualities of sharpness (meaning explicit form), unity and freedom" (Clayton, 2013: 274).



Fig. 68 illustrates one of Johnston's works, entitled *1 Corinthians XIII*, written with broad-edged pen writing in blue and black on vellum, consisting of decorated initials. The piece belongs to the thirteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians of the New Testament of the Christian Bible. Johnston practices this page that consists of two scripts, one for title and majuscule -an interpretation of uncial writing and the other, for the text is a foundational hand of Johnston, highly legible with minor variations and decorations attached as details of the letters. The initial T letter is drawn, and heavily illustrated with flowers, leaves, and branches.

Fig. 68. *1 Corinthians XIII*, Edward Johnston, ca. 1920s, Source: Kelly & Koeth, (2001: 18).



The overall composition is slightly different from the ancient manuscript. However, it can be said that using the selected old tools and materials and the interpretation of the ancient writing styles that are still quite close to the originals show a similarity not far from the ancient examples. That means the "modern" interpretation of western calligraphy is still loyal to the tradition in a sense. Even it is claimed that Johnston's letterforms created modern letters as art and for everyday use, it is still disputable to assert that "modern" calligraphy started to express "emotional unity" (Johnston, 1981: 157) with him.

It can be said that with calligraphic revival, reassessing process started, and it is a significant issue after the long period of silence in the realm of western calligraphy; however, searching for emotion through Johnston's text as in *1 Corinthians XIII* (Fig. 68) in his execution, would be an exaggerated comment.

It is evident that Johnston's practices reveal with longing for the past; it resembles a reminder of what they call revitalizing in a modern sense (meaning belongs to the twentieth century), re-handling very close to its essence, remembering western calligraphy, which was an out-of-sight for a long time; hence it is called as modern calligraphy. However, looking at the word "modern," comes from the Latin word "modo," meaning "right now," and "modernus" derived from it. With the adoption of Christianity as the state religion, this word even started to be used in the twentieth century for a reinterpretation of traditional calligraphy; it was used for the first time in the fifth century to distinguish the new period from the old (Roman and Pagan) period. Even its content is constantly changing, the periods that establish a relationship between the antiquity and itself, as well as the "old" from the "new."

Christianity is the statement of modernity (innovation). The old world is pagan; the new world is Christian. While the old world was in darkness, the light of Christ now illuminated the new world. This meant giving a new meaning to the state apparatus, social conditions, value judgments, and art in a short history. Thus, the so-called modern art is the joint product of the industrialized society and the critical consciousness (modernism) shaped in this society (Yilmaz, 2013). In one sense, modern calligraphy may refer to a new era of western calligraphy; however, it still points at the past literally hence calling Johnston's practices "modern" is disputable.

On the other hand, by depicting the term modern in the European sense of art, how these modern calligraphers perceive calligraphy as functional beauty still makes it disputable to assess these practices as an art form as executed in the twenty-first century. While writing and typography were assessed as an image and reflect highly different attitudes, namely while Futurist, Dada, or Constructivist artists literally took the writing to a very different field and by introducing quite extreme possibilities, breaking the writing a degree from the context of the western understanding, arranging type in a creative alliance between art, propaganda, and advertising, calligraphy still, in a sense, was performed an awakening by standing still. So, it would not be unfair to say a look back that is not completely parallel with the awakening in art. It will also be discussed in Chapter VI through the examination of practices of contemporary calligraphers, which seems to reflect the various features of twentieth-century modern art through the twenty-first century western calligraphy.

For this reason, the word modern that refers to Johnston's practices seems not to correspond to the expression in modern art and needs to be understood as the reawakening of ancient calligraphic scripts with a new interpretation that combines the function and forms closely bound to the tradition. The main issue is not being closely related to the past but still practicing calligraphy as a servant of the text that limits the boundaries of written text. Because, as will be underlined while discussing the contemporary tendencies in the realm of western calligraphy, calligraphy, with its nature, is accumulated form. No matter how it is executed, with or without semantic meaning, in other words, whether the letter or a word is written or not, if the one executes calligraphy, it means his practice still reserves the historical references. The execution

can be totally different from the ancient written text; however, it still carries and reflects its roots even through a line or a stroke. Reassessing the ancient styles for the sake of functionality shows that the ancient western writing concept discussed in Chapter II continues through these calligraphers, even in their modern interpretations.

Looking at Austria and Germany, the situation is slightly different from England. In Germany, calligraphic development was acquired, influenced by typography, and designed as an independent movement that formed and also spread to other countries (Loaiza, Valencia, and Gutiérrez, 2010).

A calligraphic renaissance began in the twentieth century with the Austrian royal archivist and lecturer in Vienna Rudolf von Larish (1856-1934) and the type designer Rudolf Koch (1876-1934) in Offenbach, Germany, who was followed by Larish several years later. Their approaches are considered quite different from English revivalism<sup>8</sup>, considering the German inclination of seeing inspiration in writing materials, Clayton (2013) claims that in Germany, calligraphy began to practice with these calligraphers, an art form that pushes the boundaries through the consciousness of calligraphic marks. For these calligraphers, one of the major importance was given to creativity without preaching any specific style of writing, unlike Johnston. That may refer to the sign of the understanding of writing as an image rather than a text, and that points at a line as a trace of primitive origins with emotionally charged that became an alliance with contemporary artforms.

Rudolf von Larish experimented with letters that were made with a variety of tools and introduced *Materialsprache* (language of materials) concept that developed modern alphabets with the emphasis on the relationship between letters and the writing surface in a figure-based sense. He began his career as a curator of manuscripts in the Habsburg's Library, then became appointed professor of calligraphy at the Vienna Art College. He published various articles to arouse public awareness and interest in calligraphy (Mediavilla, 1996).

Larisch is assessed as a calligrapher much more open in terms of using a wide variety of materials, surfaces such as glass, wood, metal, and textiles, which were never employed by Johnston. These variations, no doubt, affected the originality and inspirational diversity of his calligraphy works (Ibid.). Moreover, his approach to lettering is described as emphasizing writing as a performance, in which rhythm is considered a significant feature. With this approach, he preferred to use block letters popular in Secessionist<sup>9</sup> art; hence he could strip of historical associations of penmanship (Clayton, 2013).

8 It should also be noted that Edward Johnston focused on certain letterforms while ignoring others, which affected his creativity and the possibility to explore. Moreover, those styles were selected with the concern of his teaching program to determine which were more suitable or not. Rustic capitals, Uncial, Chancery script, and Gothic, were treated poorly in his manual; for example, he only describes one style, ignoring Fraktur, Rotunda, Gothic cursive, Bastarda, which means various significant masters of Flemish, Italian or Spanish calligraphers (Mediavilla, 1996). For this reason, it is not surprising that his approach, compared to Rudolf von Larish or Rudolf Koch, remained limited, focusing on the functional formality of the letterforms.

9 The Vienna Secession, an art movement which is closely related to Art Nouveau, formed in 1897 by a group of Austrian painters, graphic artists, sculptors and architects, namely Josef Hoffman, Koloman Moser, Otto Wagner, and Gustav Klimt.



Fig. 69 illustrates two pages extracted from Larish's book *Unterricht in Ornamentaler Schrift* (1905), preserved at Strasbourg National and University Library. Both pages consist of texts written by block letters with a heavy and robust look, accompanied by illustrations. As mentioned earlier, both pages are greatly influenced by the Vienna Secession led by Gustav Klimt (1862-1918), Josef Hoffmann (1870-1956) and Koloman Moser (1868-1918), created a new standard for design.



Fig. 69. Pages 67 and 68 from the book *Unterricht in Ornamentaler Schrift*, Rudolf von Larish, 1905, Source: Strasbourg National and University Library, numistral.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k9400975m/f14.image#, access: 21.02.2019.

The moment is also called *Jugendstil* (The Young Style), as a manifestation of breaking away entirely from any established tradition. Because the Vienna Secession was a reaction against the conservatism that dominated Germany and Austria at that time. Hence, their attitude revealed itself through book design, interior design, jewelry, furniture, fashion, and ceramics. With this book *Unterricht in Ornamentaler Schrift* (1905), Larish presents his bold, more geometric influences.

Like Johnston, another noteworthy calligrapher, Rudolf Koch from Nuremberg, takes his inspiration from tradition, material, and methods, both the tapestry and the manuscript. He founded the Scribes Workshops in 1918 (Mediavilla, 1996), in which various decorative items were produced in various media, such as metal, textiles, woodcuts, as well as manuscript books (Williams, 2022). He spent most of his time at the Klingspor type foundry and used historical models as a source of inspiration or springboard for his modern calligraphy and typography. He mostly focused on blocks of black letter text with bold, colorful initials and formal styles like Larish, yet still highly different from Larish with his German calligraphy turned into vivid means of expression.

It was again the period of *Jugendstil* in Germany, and Koch was inspired by it. Like Johnston, he started to imitate letterforms made with a broad-edged pen without much knowledge about calligraphy. He self-learned by studying old type forms in books and newspapers, studied broad-edged pen-like Johnston, and formed the letters with this traditional pen, which never died out in Germany because of the gothic writing system. He also consulted manuscripts, particularly woodcut letters in block form, and slightly changed forms to break any type of geometrical regularity, as can be seen in Roman lettering. Hence, he became a book artist and applied to Klingspor as a designer. Most of the design was developed from calligraphy and lettering. Koch explains his thoughts about it as follows: "lettering, gives me the purest and greatest pleasure, and on countless occasions in my life it has been to me what a song is to a singer, painting to a painter, a cheer to the joyous, and a sigh to the afflicted. To me, it has been the happiest and most perfect expression of my life" (Koch, 1976: 16).

As can be observed in one of his linocuts works, "What doth it profit a man..." (Fig. 70), based on the different locations of the angles of the heads and feet create asymmetrical rhythm within the letters and words with the rising and falling movement of the basic strokes.

Fig. 70. *What doth it profit a man...*, Rudolf Koch, linocut, 1920, Source: Clayton, (2013: 295).



None of the letterforms that can be seen here were written as a simple pen stroke. This creates diversity and overall unity, the main essence of his works. Moreover, a letterform is an interpretation of a gothic hand. Koch reanimates traditional gothic forms at the time of resurgent German nationalism. Even if the basic formation of the gothic hand is changed here; still, the text preserves the general textural appearance, black and broken features with the approach of Koch, and the general formation of the letters are still preserved. The spacing between the lines, words and even letters varies; hence, it may cause various overlaps, making it hard to chase each letter individually. These are the common features that Koch still reveals in his linocut from the gothic. Considering its woven-like textural appearance, even with the asymmetrical approach, remains the accompanied linocuts of the spaces left from the texts increase this effect more.



Another example is Koch's "Lord have mercy upon me" (Fig. 71), written in 1921, described as an "unrestrained revelation of his inner feelings" (Clayton, 2013: 294). That means Koch is closer to loading the emotion and self-expression through his written forms that seem to move away from the letterforms used to see. Still legible; however, it is evident that the asymmetrical approach within the letters and text started to make its appearance highly challenging to recognize each letter. It also gives an impression that Koch wrote it carelessly; however, it is claimed that Koch worked slowly with great concentration and calm (Koch, 1976). That means he probably planned where to put the next strokes or practiced it with awareness of the feeling that the word's appearance actually transmits. The letters still carry the features of the gothic hand, such as broken strokes, diamond shape serif of the letter "r," also there are exaggerations of the up and down strokes of the letters or punctuations.



Fig. 71. *Lord have mercy upon me*, Rudolf Koch, c. 1921, Source: Clayton, (2013: 294).

Koch's attitudes toward practicing writing and calligraphy as an image also can be observed in his typeface *Neuland* (Fig. 72), which resembles the practices of Larish that were inspired by Secessionists, particularly an Austrian artist Oskar Kokoschka (1886-1980)'s lettering that characterizes his expressionist paintings. However, here, Koch's treatment of the letterforms and freely written strokes differs from Larish's.

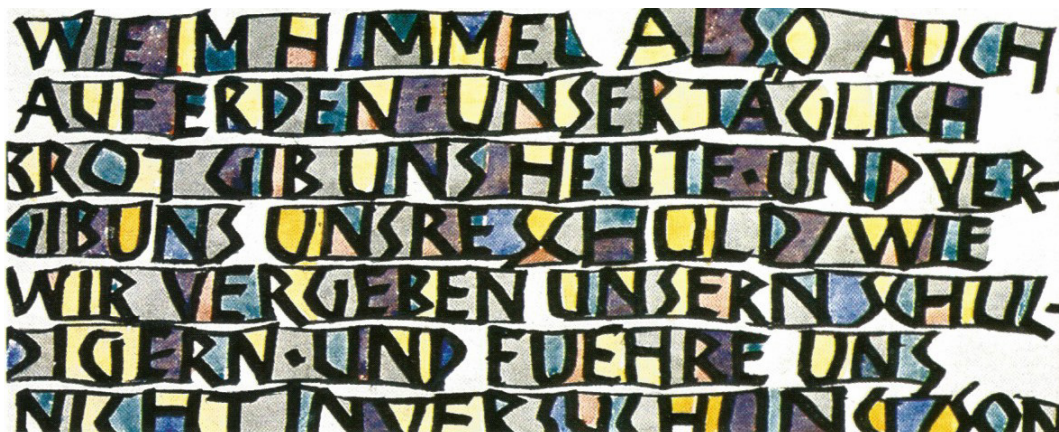


Fig. 72. *The Neuland*, Koch, the detail from the opening of a manuscript book, Source: Jackson, (1981: 158).

Moreover, the formation and ductus of Neuland are straightforward. With a few combinations of basic strokes written by bamboo or broad-cut material, it is possible to construct all of the alphabet, which is all majuscule. The preference for space in the words and lines makes it perceived as a unit that is also supported by applying various colors to space, within and between the letter giving the text -created blocked bar as can be seen in Russian Constructivists' posters -a sense of rhythm and harmony that reveals his understanding of calligraphy.

It is necessary to underline that Koch's scholarly interpretation of the black letter even maintains the relationship with the past; as a contemporary of Edward Johnston, he differs himself by not revealing the direct tendency to revive historic hands or techniques (Williams, 2022). His major interest was claimed as a straightforward and expressionistic calligraphy style, particularly in works of his last years of life (Kelly, 2011), which means the seeds of today's practices -examined in Chapter VI- began to be laid in those times.

Another noteworthy German Bookbinder, calligrapher, and Type Designer was Gudrun Zapf-von Hesse (1918-2019). She was an apprentice and assistant at Otto Dorfner's bookbindery in Weimar between 1934 to 1937. During her apprenticeship, she started to practice calligraphy. She explains, "One afternoon a week we had to write very simple letters. I was not satisfied with this form of instruction; therefore, I taught myself at home, from a detailed examination of the works of Rudolf Koch and Edward Johnston" (Zapf von Hesse, 2001: 31).

Another German-born designer and calligrapher, Elizabeth Friedländer (1903-1984), is also noteworthy to mention here as one of the first female typeface designers who worked on various media, from brochures and patterns to calligraphy (Muraben, 2018).

Moreover, it can be mentioned a British scholar of art and calligraphy, Nicolette Gray (1911-1997), who treated western script and lettering that, is assessed as a new approach at that time, which already could be seen in the Far Eastern tradition as an abstract visual form of art through its expressive sensitivity. Gray employed various materials from the tradition of western calligraphy also various illustrations and used them in an innovative way. She approached it as graphic design elements, and the visual power of the letters was used by her as components of design that expressed the content of the work. Hence, it can be said that in Europe and America, art and architecture schools started to follow gradually London's the Royal College of Art, where Edward Johnston taught lettering and calligraphy with the intention to teach the students an awareness of the rich heritage and potential of the alphabet.

The twentieth century faced the lettering and calligraphic artists and scholars, namely Stanley Morison (1889-1967), Jan van Krimpen (1892-1958), William Addison Dwiggins (1880-1956), Bruce Rogers (1870-1957), Frederic Goudy (1865-1947), and Hermann Zapf (1918-2015), who designed highly unique typefaces of that time. That means the calligraphy-based tradition of type design has existed, and later in the century, it has continued with various designers such as Charles

Bigelow (b. 1945), Matthew Carter (b. 1937), Adrian Frutiger (1928-2015), Kris Holmes (b. 1950), and Sumner Stone (B. 1945), who studied calligraphy and then started to design typefaces (Nash et al., 2019).

Among these names mentioned above, contemporary calligrapher Denis Brown, who will be mentioned in Chapter VI, points to his influences by pen manipulation techniques of Hermann Zapf. These techniques include the nib angle rotation while writing, also variation of pressure and using the nib corner in order to draw more refined terminals and serifs (Brown, 2017).

As Loaiza, Valencia, and Gutiérrez (2010) claim, this calligraphic revival mentioned here reorients Western calligraphy. Furthermore, it provides the opportunity to reassess calligraphy as a platform to reflect individual interpretations or the spark of relatively radical changes that were thrown during this period. In other words, it is the period that reassessed the various ancient styles and revived them, fused with the features of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Furthermore, it can be claimed that it is the time that is still taken as references and practiced by various contemporary artists that will be mentioned in Chapter VI.

On the other hand, at this point, it has to be underlined that the origin of western contemporary calligraphy can be better framed with insight into the Far Eastern and Middle Eastern calligraphy with its expressive potential through abstract interpretations. The reason will be better understood in Chapter VI once selected contemporary calligraphers are examined through their calligraphic attitude in their works, which carries significant influences of the Far Eastern and the Middle Eastern calligraphy mindset, at least consists of various common features that are distinguished themselves from the western tradition of calligraphy.

For this reason, it will be significant to include the Far Eastern and the Middle Eastern calligraphy in this research to understand western calligraphy tradition with the possibility of comparing it with other traditions moreover to locate the various features and inspirations that contemporary calligraphers acquired with the interaction with these calligraphy traditions, which differ from western in its core.



#### IV. CHINESE AND JAPANESE CALLIGRAPHY TRADITION: INFLUENCES ON THE WESTERN CONTEMPORARY CALLIGRAPHY

In the previous chapter, we have made a journey through the history of Western calligraphy, whose past is still very present in current calligraphy practices. Furthermore, contemporary calligraphers with their practices, namely Meulman, Brown, and Zega, mentioned in Chapter VI, including myself as mentioned in Chapter VII, have significant influences from the other calligraphy traditions and cultures, particularly Chinese and Japanese calligraphy have huge effect that are reflected to the current calligraphy works both technically and conceptually.

These effects are seen while observing and examining the current works as shown in Chapter VI, particularly with the knowledge of the western tradition, its features, why and how calligraphy had executed through the functional needs, how calligrapher -scribe- was positioned solely as the craftsman who was not assessed as an artist, not allowed to interpret or reflect any personal attitudes. While tradition can be defined and described within rigid boundaries, current western calligraphy practices present totally different directions. At its core, calligraphy started to be executed as an art form in which the calligrapher became an artist.

In the Far East, calligraphy has been assessed as the highest of all art forms for more than fifteen centuries. It is appreciated due to its expressive potential that has been offered by more than fifty thousand Chinese characters, which can be written in six different forms of the script that seems to combine an infinite number of graphic variations. Calligraphy still today remains a highly respected form of artistic expression in the Far East (Addiss, 2006). Hence, looking at Chinese and Japanese calligraphy, most features of contemporary calligraphy carry similar attitudes that are first extracted from the statement of the contemporary calligraphers, which will be seen in this Chapter.

What can be observed through the works of contemporary western calligraphers is how they employ the gesture of the hand in their calligraphic works, focusing on the strokes, assessing the work as a performance or act, and all actually grounded at the core of the Far Eastern calligraphy culture. It is also possible to claim that there are mutual influences between the Far East and West that can be traced today.



For this reason, in this chapter, first, Chinese calligraphy and then Japanese calligraphy will be mentioned to provide ample support to comprehend and understand the various contemporary Western calligraphers, and how Far Eastern influences manifest themselves will be examined in Chapter VI.

First of all, it has to be noted that the Far Eastern calligraphy term -used in this research- refers to Chinese and Japanese calligraphy. It is decided to focus on Chinese calligraphy in this chapter based on the research conducted through various pieces of literature on the Far Eastern calligraphy traditions that will be mentioned in the following. Then the various significant aspect of Japanese calligraphy will be held in terms of their influences on Western Contemporary calligraphy practices.

Tingyou (2004) mentions how Chinese calligraphy spreads worldwide, the first Korean peninsula in the second or third century, and then in the seventh century in Japan. One of the first copied texts belongs to a Japanese prince in 615 with the Chinese character representation that belongs to the Jin Dynasty (265-420). In the seventh century, it is mentioned that the Japanese students and monks were sent to China, spent time there, and with their return to Japan, various calligraphic works reached Japan by them.

Simultaneously, the Japanese started to create their own works and styles, which are basically combined with Chinese styles and their aesthetics and written language. Since then, these changes have led to an emerging new branch that differs from the Chinese. Hence, most Japanese script characters were adapted and adopted from Chinese characters' in about the seventh century (Sato, 2014) essential structural parts. It can be stated that the Japanese writing system is a hybrid system that employs two subsystems that function distinctly. One is a subsystem of Chinese characters, and the other is the kana syllabaries generated by the Japanese (Murase, 2002). Various explorations of new styles, namely kana of the ninth century, which exemplifies the departure from the established form of using merely Chinese characters, point to the new exploration of styles in Japan.

To sum up, it can be stated that Chinese calligraphy was introduced to Japan around the seventh century and became an essential part of Japan's ruling families; moreover, through artistically copying Chinese poetry, royalty and the aristocracy started to study the art. For this reason, it would be appropriate to limit the Far Eastern calligraphy, mostly Chinese calligraphy, in this chapter, then underline the various points worth mentioning about Japanese calligraphy to provide various insights regarding the influences on contemporary Western calligraphy practices.

It is crucial to remind that there is no intention to examine Far Eastern Calligraphy historically in a comprehensive way; instead, the purpose is to demonstrate how and in what way Far Eastern calligraphy has become an inspiration for Western contemporary calligraphers.

Before delving into the literal meaning of the word calligraphy in China and Japan, it would be appropriate to briefly mention the Chinese writing system, which differs from Western because its image based construction that is parallel to the word as an image understanding of various contemporary calligraphers that will be encountered in Chapter VI.

Moreover, the cultural mindset behind Chinese calligraphy, namely Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism, will also be examined here to provide information on the aesthetic considerations of Far Eastern calligraphy. Since contemporary western calligraphy technically and conceptually represents an absolute difference from the tradition, the criteria and the aesthetic considerations indispensably changed, resembling the Far Eastern aesthetic features. Moreover, it is known for the mutual interaction between Western painters -particularly abstract expressionists and Far Eastern art and culture -particularly calligraphy and painting. These interactions herald significant abstract painters and their paintings, also mentioned as sources of inspiration by contemporary calligraphers in Chapter VI. This influence shows the subtle influence of Far Eastern art, grounded on its culture. For this reason, it is significant to provide information about various features that deeply affect Western abstract artists, especially after World War II in America. In addition to this, tools and materials of Far Eastern calligraphy, namely brush, ink and ink slab/inkstone, and paper, since these tools are also employed by various contemporary western calligraphers such as Brown, assessed as an opportunity to experiment. Also, five basic script styles, namely Seal Script, Clerical Script, Regular (Formal) script, Running (Semi-cursive) Script, and Cursive (Grass) Script, are briefly examined to provide an insight into their evolution to mention the Crazy Grass style, which is highly significant of its time that will help to establish a link between the contemporary western attitude of various calligraphers. In the following, contemporary Chinese calligraphy focusing on modernist and avant-garde movements with effective practices will be held to locate the latest situation that will give a chance to appreciate the West.

Apart from Chinese calligraphy, Japanese calligraphy -the development of its writing systems with its characteristics and the concept of Japanese calligraphy, including literal meaning, are briefly explained. This part mainly focuses on Zen monks' writing and various contemporary Japanese practices to frame the general concept, which has influenced western abstract painters, hence western contemporary calligraphers with its mindset.

#### **4.1. Chinese calligraphy**

Practicing Chinese calligraphy and appreciating calligraphic works have been treated as a tradition of Chinese leisure since the Han Dynasty (25-200 BC). When the pictograms from which calligraphy first evolved around 1400 BC served as recording and communication ideas. Calligraphy was initially used for divination as a script, and it had a role that had a link to the myth that refers to written characters that had been assumed as a gift from heaven to humans. That meant those divinely inspired, such as shamans or the rulers, could understand and employ it. In later centuries, it gained an elevated position as art since Confucius (551 BC – 479 BC) pointed out "writing" as one of the six essential arts (*liuyi*) (Barras, 2002).

Far Eastern calligraphy also became a political power through large and well-ordered bureaucracies that started to be used widely as an element. During the Tang dynasty (618-906), calligraphy became a significant

element that started to be examined to enter Chinese imperial civil service until the end of the nineteenth century. That means calligraphy became one of the affirmed subjects of the ruling elite (Barras, 2002).

Hence, calligraphy is regarded as an art form in China, as early as 2000 years ago in the Han Dynasty, which started to be experienced in public participation, the emergence of theories of art criticism and aesthetics related to it. In contrast, for western calligraphy, about appreciation as an art form, it can be pointed to the sixteenth century after the printing technology that deeply impacted scribe and their business. Hence, it was a kind of inevitable conclusion to shift the concept in terms of calligraphy. However, as mentioned in Chapter III, it was not a sudden change. New awakenings and individual approaches have begun to emerge during the modern calligraphy period of the nineteenth century. When it comes to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, we see that it has progressed in a different and sharper line in terms of technique and concept. For these two cultures, the assessment of calligraphy as an art indicates quite different periods in terms of time. This situation represents a very recent history for the West compared to the Far East.

Even further, Chinese calligraphy is often referred to as "art within art" (Ryūruī, 2011a: para.1), which utilizes both visual and linguistic media to trigger the viewer's emotion; for this reason, calligraphy is also pronounced as "heart imagery," or the "soul painting." That means "a calligraphy work can be read as a text, felt as poetry verse, and admired as a painting at the same time" (Ryūruī, 2011a: para.6). Furthermore, it sided with poetry as one of the highest forms of art, and Barras (2002) noted that there had been debate about the calligraphy's aesthetics in overpainting. He underlines that painting was always taken his references from nature, whereas calligraphy, in addition to nature, has been more metaphysical due to its abstract form. The use of line, ink, composition, the work's spirit, and the one's personality that influenced his calligraphy was included in this discussion. All these features can be traced through various works of contemporary calligraphers, related to his/her attitude and background, which mostly focus on gestures and interpret them as a representation of the feelings and emotions of the writer -as expressions or experiments that are executed even without a word, or a letter. That shows the calligrapher's search for a deeper meaning through their artwork or the intention to attribute various values beyond the literal meaning of the written word. With this state, it can be claimed that contemporary western calligraphy already resembles the Far Eastern calligraphy concept.

Chinese calligraphy is characterized by its origin, cultural connotations, classification, and distribution; hence it results in a so-called "calligraphy culture chain" (Zhang, Tang, and others, 2008: 530) that is associated with the personality of the calligrapher character, temperament, the emotion even his moral, moreover the construction of identities of destinations, while western calligraphy is a so-called manuscript culture that calligraphy was employed as a utility.

Considering the general understanding and appreciation of Chinese calligraphy mentioned above and comparing it with the western tradition of calligraphy that is mentioned in Chapter II through

examining the definitions and descriptions of calligraphy from the western point of view and in Chapter III through the historical evolution of the ancient styles which were employed basically the functional reason -copying, preserving and disseminating the text-Far Eastern calligraphy illustrates highly different concepts and practices. Above all, as a supreme part of the Far Eastern culture, assessing as an art form reveals how writing and hence calligraphy is accepted and performed without the functional limitations of the western calligraphy tradition. It seems inevitable that this concept will influence contemporary western calligraphy artists. Because, as will be seen in Chapter VI, going beyond the limits of the western calligraphy tradition, performing calligraphy as an art form seems to be one of the most fundamental focus points of today's calligraphy artists, which is not considerable for the western calligraphy tradition.

As well as in Korea and Japan, calligraphy has become the supreme form of artistic expression and achievement, and it is assessed as one of the most challenging art forms to comprehend and appreciate with its technical and philosophic background (Murase, 2002).

Still today, in the twenty-first century, the past and history are assumed never to be forgotten because the Chinese are assessed as profoundly conscious of their cultural traditions, which influenced Chinese calligraphy's character and development. It is treated with great respect<sup>1</sup>, and it has a central role in Far Eastern tradition and culture that is practiced as a kind of everyday life activity (Sullivan, 1969).

It seems that the same appreciation has already started with the reanimation of western calligraphy as modern calligraphy, then from various perspectives, this awakening accumulated till today as a growing trend with a lack of core information and the fundamental parts that are needed to be underlined in this research.

Before continuing with Chinese calligraphy, it is significant to mention the Chinese writing system that is highly different from the Western writing system. That will provide insight and also a better understanding of Chinese calligraphy, hence contemporary attitude.

#### **4.1.1. The Chinese writing system and its characteristics**

Chapter II mentions the Western writing system, which is based on speaking language that is represented by sound symbols without referring to any visual ideas. While spoken language uses sounds representing verbal meaning, writing uses graphic marks representing these verbal meanings and records what has been said. Hence, in phonetic language systems, as in the West, each spoken word is constructed by one or more syllables, representing meaning.

<sup>1</sup> Barras (2002) explains the major reasons for this greater reverence for calligraphy, which is probably longer in China than in any other civilization; "...in China the power of the written word was not challenged by a culture of political oratory, as it was in the West. Never in China's long history has there been an equivalent of the Areopagus, where the great Athenian political debates took place, or the Roman Senate. Nor has there been a political orator such as Demosthenes or Cicero" (2002: 17), which means Chinese rulers expressed their strength and declared their views in written edicts.

On the other hand, letters with other symbols, a sign, or a combination of these signs are used to record a word in written language. For these reasons, in the phonetic system, sound and meaning are tightly related to each other. Here, it should be noted that the written sector only reflects the sound of the word and does not have much to do with the word's meaning (Wang, 2008). So, it can be claimed that being literate in Western language based on the phonetic system requires learning these phonetic symbols -how to write and read, which are meant to be together to construct a meaningful word that can be understood in a phonetic system. The formation of the word is ordered by the requirement that the word's form affects its spoken sound.

Whereas the Chinese writing system does not function such as in Western languages. Each written word in Chinese writing is represented by its unique symbol, a sort of abstract diagram known and called a character, not made up of an alphabet as in the Western languages. It is claimed that 3500 common characters and a total of 90.000 characters occupy a similar space with different shapes (Tingyou, 2004). Hence, it can be claimed that Chinese calligraphy is the art of writing based on characters or ideograms, which means a diagram of an idea refers to a symbol that represents a word (Tanahashi, 2016).

As an example, it can be observed in Fig. 1, the word *shu* (means "writing" or "book"), which is written in the size of a fingernail with various dine lines of brush, reflects various lengths and thicknesses of lines (Hearn, 2008).

Fig. 1. Chinese character for "writing" or "book" (*shu*) written by standard script of Chinese calligraphy, Source: Hearn, (2008: 17).



Basic principles of character structure were established at the time of the Chou Dynasty (771 BCE). Even various changes occurred in writing styles, the essential characters were held on a tendency to preserve their original forms, and earlier recognizable Chinese characters are usually pictographic signs, which are pictures of concrete objects (Davey, 2019).

Chinese characters on a bronze or a bone are derived from primitive drawings of an object or an idea. They were repeatable and consistent, meaning a painting that became a word, a pictogram, or an ideogram.



As stated, they were the words painted as paintings; however, these paintings were simultaneously the script. According to Da-Wei (2012), this issue points to the close affiliation of Chinese calligraphy with Chinese painting, which will also mention in this chapter, accepted as an indicator that the Chinese written language started from the pictorial and gradually modified into an abstract sign. At this point, as will be seen in Chapter VI, the focus point of the contemporary calligraphers are the gestures and the image-like writing/lines/strokes or marks that underline the attribution of additional meaning more than the phonetic counterpart. If remembered, in Chapter II, the superiority perception of the western writing system is mentioned that directly affected calligraphy before the printing period served to satisfy the specific needs -copy, preserve and disseminate the text. The shift from utility to artistry comes with the search of the artist beyond this phonetic writing system provides. Hence, here, image-like experience, not just creating a one piece, but as western asemic writers that are mentioned in Chapter VI, developed an unreadable repeated, systematic image that looks like a text directly seem to take their references from this character-based writing systems. Furthermore, as will be seen in Chapter VI, contemporary western calligrapher Meulman, whose motto is the word as an image, prefers to identify himself as a painter rather than a calligrapher, which introduces a confusing distinction that hardly needs to be emphasized between painting-writing/calligraphy through the current practices. Moreover, there is no such distinction in Chinese calligraphy. For this very reason, the internalization and appropriate understanding of these definitions depend on understanding the Far East calligraphy and its reflection in the West.

Parallel to the Chinese society's needs, which had also been developing increasingly to a changing social structure in terms of written language, more complex verbal forms were demanded to convey nuanced meanings and standardized forms to record language. In this sense, it can be claimed that pictograms had a limited capacity to express the meaning of abstract nouns, such as "peace" or "justice," or not enough to fulfill the needs for prepositions, verbs, and other parts of the speech, which cannot be conveyed through pictograms. For this reason, started at the earlier times of the Chinese language, it began to acquire the capability of expressing complicated and abstract meanings to convey. By the Western Zhou Dynasty (771 BCE), the Chinese writing system gradually employed semantic and phonetic symbols, while pictographic content decreased (Wang, 2008).

Today, Chinese characters comprise three elements: thought, sound, and form for daily uses and also serve as an artistic medium (Yee, 1974). Each character is supposed to be memorized to learn separately, which is claimed as a laborious process to learn. Even Chinese characters have phonetic clues frequently; still, characters are required to be memorized. It is also how people can learn calligraphy, whose emergence and development are closely related to Chinese characters derived from drawings of natural objects and the principle of the composition of these forms (Ibid.). While we are describing the Chinese writing system here, it seems to be talking about the features that today's calligraphers try to impose on their work. Focusing on the image that is formed around

the thought/idea/concept as an artistic medium shows the same features between them, as will be examined in Chapter VI. These features are also highly significant and can be traced through my personal calligraphy understanding and practices that are held in Chapter VII.

Fig 2 illustrates a combination of three main parts as an abstract unit. Part 1 represents the knife, part 2 represents the cow, and part 3 represents the horn. It is said that it is the standardized version of the word and the framework of the structure of the character remains the same as the ancient ideogram.

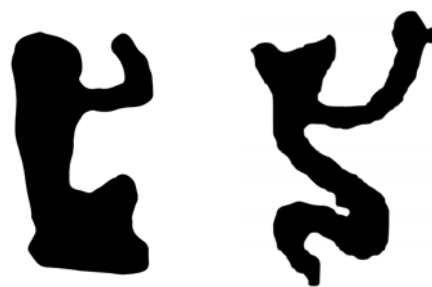
Fig 2. An abstract combination of three main parts, Source: Da-Wei, (2012: np.).



Here, what is significant to underline is the term abstract here that will be encountered in Chapter VI through the works that the text, word, letters or any recognisable writing features are eliminated, hence they are called as abstract calligraphy. Although this concept brings to mind the concept used by the West in abstract painting, as we will see and examine later in Chapter VI, this abstract concept parallels the Far East abstract concept rather than the West. This issue can be explained through the Fig. 3, by comparing one of the hieroglyphs of Egypt for the word "worship" with the Chinese character.

Fig. 3. *left* Egyptian hieroglyph for "worship,"

*right* Chinese character for "worship," Source: Yee, (1974: np.).



While Egyptian hieroglyph reveals a direct representation of the word illustrated by a straight picture of a kneeling person, Chinese character seems to capture a kneeling person's general concept by illustrating its basic shape with an exact imitation of the concept. Through this example, Yee (1974) pays attention to the Chinese mind, the so-called "above the real" (Yee, 1974: np.).

Here, it will be appropriate to underline the term abstraction through Yee (1974), who points at the different explanations that Chinese abstraction has, which carries the past roots and reveals the direct references from nature. It means that from the beginning of Chinese literacy, abstraction actually exists in terms of forming the shapes of the character and their structure and composition on the surface.

In Fig. 4, the word "to teach" is written by two different calligraphers of the seventh century. Both are executed at a certain speed and form, which seems individualized by calligraphers through exaggeration and distortion. The first one is heavier than the second one and seems written carefree manner, whereas the second is entirely in a different manner, lighter, and seems more in control. Hence, both are assessed as abstractions here. It won't be wrong to remind that the character is overall an abstraction of pictural representation of the word used for "to teach," and the calligraphers' attitude with more individual approaches make characters more flexible. Both are claimed that written in the seventh century. Hence, it is claimed that abstraction does not necessarily refer to moving away from the characters' overall meaning, which can reflect beyond the literal meaning. Abstraction here reflects the vital energy through the line or stroke of calligraphy that will be mentioned in part "4.1.3. Cultural Mindset Behind the Chinese Calligraphy," which is accepted as the fundamental component of calligraphy and executed with one breath, and the main issue seems not what is performed but how it is performed. So, it can be claimed that the written or printed word in terms of Chinese calligraphy does not carry the same concept or perception as the traditional Western mindset has (Yee, 1974: n.p.).

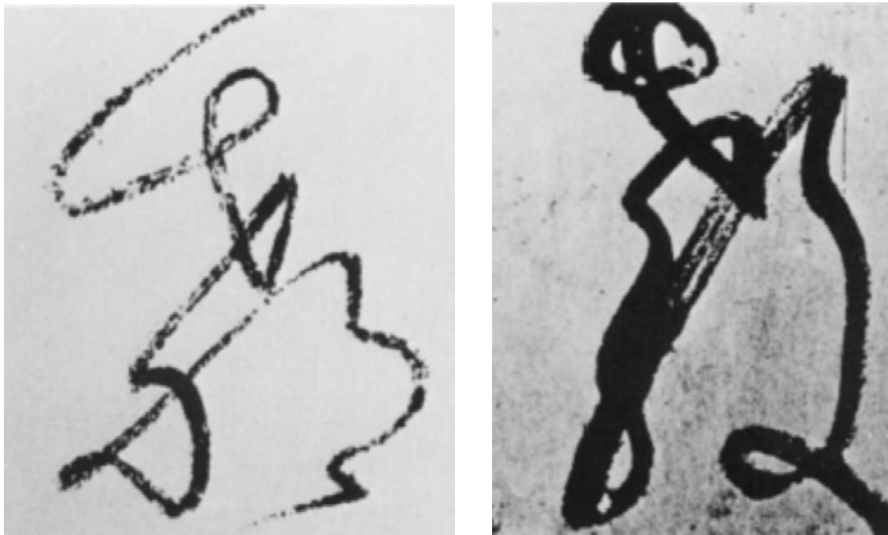


Fig. 4. Examples of the word "to teach," Source: Da-Wei, (2012: np.).

The abstraction in this sense is nothing new for the Chinese mind. It is highly significant that from the beginning of the Chinese writing system, it can be observed that the concept of writing differs from the West with the perception of tradition and abstraction. This issue will be discussed on followings from various perspectives in this chapter; however, it should be noted that understanding the representation

of the word in the written language, its apprehension, simplification with basic forms by rendering as visible and memorable forms can be observed through the evolution of ancient Chinese script, and abstraction as a word, in a general sense, employed related to any visual art, which is not concerned with the representation of an object or imaginary things of the world as well as optical views of that world. Simplified symbols such as Fig. 3 herald the standardized letter and character forms, hence, written languages. Their form and content started to be shaped according to the writing system, how, and what principles it is constructed.

In the western phonetic system, basically without referring to any visual meaning through its letters, it aims to convey the word's content with each letter representing sounds. In this sense, each letter is assumed as an abstract entity; however, in the Chinese writing system, this abstraction started from the beginning of the evolution of written signs, which already had a visual contribution to the meaning that is meant to be conveyed, and still today, the visual form, no matter how abstract it seems in appearance, it should be careful in using the word abstract in terms of Chinese writing system and calligraphy.

It is claimed that characters have played a significant role throughout the history of China as the primary carriers of traditional Chinese culture (Wang, 2008), and it is underlined that written words carry multiple roles, not just a character reflecting specific meaning, but also reveal itself as a moral exemplar, as a manifestation of the body's energy and the vitality of the nature itself, as various writers of calligraphy, namely Mediavilla (1996) and Stevens (2013) use the similar descriptions for western calligraphy that is mentioned in Chapter II through the definitions of the calligraphy and in Chapter VI.

As stated earlier, the visual form of Chinese characters, no matter how abstract it seems in appearance, should be careful in using the word abstract in terms of the Chinese writing system and calligraphy. The same issue is valid for contemporary calligraphy with highly abstract forms in which the text, word, or letter is eliminated, and calligraphers occasionally use the words expressive, experimental, or abstract calligraphy for these types of works.

Delbanco (2008) states that with this abstract appearance, Chinese calligraphy is not an abstract form with its dynamic, closely bound to nature and the human body's energy. This energy is supposed to be balanced with a strong structure constructed by the writer through the character's construction. As will be seen in Chapter VI, contemporary western calligraphers practice calligraphy as a performance, as if the tool becomes an extension of the hand, unless the feeling or energy cannot be transmitted to the stroke, line, or even a splash of the paint. Hence, what is explained here as traditional Chinese calligraphy and its mindset also refers to the contemporary mindset of the western calligraphers. In order to enlighten this issue, first, it is essential to mention the word *shufa*, which refers to Chinese calligraphy in terms of literal meaning, concept, and its perception in the Chinese mind to provide a better understanding of contemporary attitudes.

#### 4.1.2. The concept of the word *shufa*

In the Chinese language, the word *shufa* refers to the word calligraphy, which consists of two characters: one is *shu* that refers to writing and written text; *fa* refers to law, method, and way. Hence, the word *shufa* can be expressed as the discipline or laws of writing, and Iezzi interprets it as "the art and the discipline of writing" (Iezzi, 2013: 159).

Yee (1974) defines calligraphy as a general term that refers to a group of words that convey human thought in a written form by hand. Hence, the character mentioned earlier, which consists of the thought, the sound, and the form, constructed by various brushstrokes derived from the natural phenomena, shows that the term calligraphy is a concept directly related to the written language, which is represented by the character of the Chinese writing system. The character conveys more than a semantic meaning due to its formulation and concept; hence, the written character is seen more than the visual well-organized formation but beyond, which will be examined in the following pages in detail.

According to Iezzi (2013), the world images and their powerful forces are illustrated through calligrapher's brushstrokes in Chinese calligraphy. Iezzi continues as follows "In addition to be considered as an aesthetic presentation of the Chinese script styles, as a representation of things and ideas by graphic means, and as an artistic vehicle of self-expression, a reflection of calligrapher's inner being or the extension of the movement of their body," Chinese calligraphy is also be treated as the "embodied image of the universal macrocosm" (Iezzi, 2013: 159). Here, Iezzi points to the hidden implications and terms that the word *shufa* consists, which is expressed by her as a cosmic pattern, a "paradigm," "model," "figure," and "image." Thus, calligraphy is not just "the art and the discipline of writing" (Ibid.), but also it is considered as a representation of dynamism of the universe, which points to the world energy that ordered by the principle of the universe.

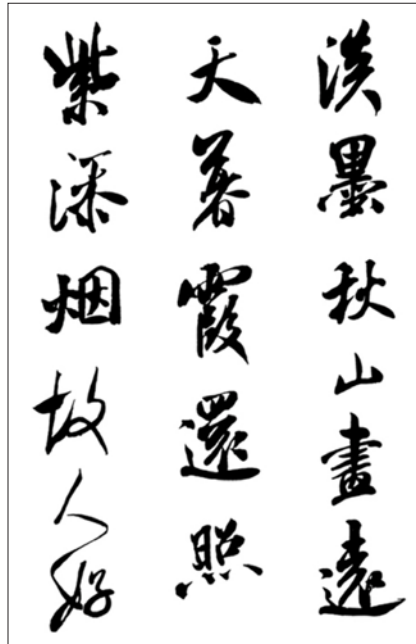
From these short translations, it can be understood that calligraphy in China is perceived as a discipline consisting of rules and principles in writing executed by hand like western tradition. At the same time, it is accepted as a form of art that reveals human thought, which may refer to the writer's message that is conveyed through the meaning of the text or may refer to the individual handwriting, which is also credited to one of the common beliefs is that calligraphy expresses the writer's personality. His good or bad fortune can be revealed through his handwriting. The variety of construction, the arrangement of compositions, and the strokes give an idea about the writer's appearance, not just the personality. On the contrary, the western tradition, in which the scribe could not execute calligraphy as a demonstration of his skill or any kind of individual interpretation, as mentioned in Chapter II and Chapter III. Since most ancient western scribe was anonymous, they could not be allowed to leave any personal trace as in the Far Eastern understanding of calligraphy. On the other hand, looking at contemporary western calligraphy practices, it is evident that a calligrapher is an artist highly significant and central role in his/her calligraphic works. Since current understanding is also



parallel with Chinese calligraphy, in which calligraphy can be assessed as a living entity that transforms and evolves related to its writer's perception, skill, and personal interpretations, it may be claimed that contemporary western calligraphy pieces of one calligrapher can be assessed chronologically to observe his/her attitude. As in the case of Meulman, that is observed in Chapter VI in a chronological order that started as a graffiti writer and ended as a so-called painter of western calligraphy. In order to better understand this theme, Fig. 5 and 6 can be observed that studied by Yee (1974) regarding how writers' personalities can be observed through their writing.

Fig. 5 is a part of a poem by a Chinese painter, poet, and calligrapher Mi Fui (1051-1107). Yee (1974) intends to give an appropriate description of the writer's general appearance through this part. When Yee looks at the text, it is conveyed as follows: "I imagine him [Mi Fei] walking with amused deliberation, head erect, alert and whimsical -the sort of man who would kneel to worship a grotesque rock as his beloved brother and paint misty mountains with the bold and humorous..." (Yee, 1974: np.).

Fig. 5. Part of a poem written by Mi Fei, Source: Yee, (1974: np.).



How Yee examines Mi Fui's writing on what basis or criteria may not be concrete here; however, it may give some insight after the examination of the concept behind the Chinese cultural mindset, the appreciation of nature and the energy, also script styles with their characteristics and aesthetic considerations of writing in the following parts. Even without any knowledge about it, it may be claimed that through Mi Fui's brushstrokes, which seem not that rigid or mechanical but seems dynamic and loose with a varied thickness that creates a contrast and also seems complicated to recognize each brushstroke, Yee (1974) may receive this amusement of the writer when he performed this piece. It is also significant that the critics were made without considering the semantic meaning of the written word here, which means the

characteristics and quality of the stroke carry various hints that may provide knowledge about calligrapher's personality. The characteristics and the term quality also will be examined in the following parts.

On the other hand, Fig. 6 illustrates the writing of a Chinese calligrapher, gastronome, painter, pharmacologist, poet, politician, and writer Su Tung-P'o (1037-1101), which Yee (1974) evaluates as "a man fatter, shorter, more careless in nature than Mi Fei, but broad-minded, vigorous, a great laughter-maker and a great laughter" (Yee, 1974: np.). Once again, without considering the semantic meaning of the text, by observing the strokes and the characters that were executed here, Yee (1974) tries to visualize the physical appearance of the calligrapher. Significantly, Yee (1974) thinks the calligrapher's physical form is similar to the character of the strokes, which also seems wider, hence more vulgar than the one in Fig. 5.

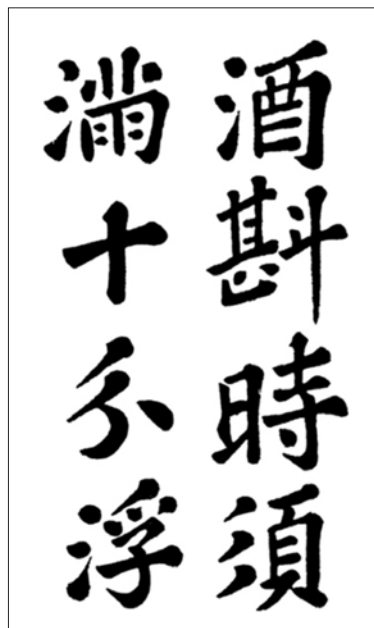


Fig. 6. The writing of Su Tung-P'o, Source: Yee, (1974: np.).

This issue is highly significant when contemporary western calligraphy practices are observed in Chapter VI. As already mentioned, since there are no concrete criteria and rules as in traditional western calligraphy, the assessments and descriptions of calligraphy practices started to gather around, just like the examples in Fig. 5 and 6. Through the splashes of the ink of the Meulman or the visual appearance and execution of the stroke in his work, his attitude and works are defined as aggressive or even creating chaos and order concepts, as he explained. These are details observed and discussed in Chapter VI; however, here, it is needed to indicate that the mindset behind the *shufa* also seems to point to contemporary western calligraphy in a sense.

Another issue about the writing is claimed that it reflects the writer's mood and frame of mind at that concrete moment of writing. It is based on the criteria that the writing is supposed to be done in one sitting, without any interruption in one concentration; hence there will be a possibility to reveal the energy of the writer (Da-Wei, 2012).

Fig. 7 is exemplified writing that is written at different times of the day of the calligrapher. It is stated that the first was written in the morning, the second at noon and the third one in the evening. These three words *wan li ching* means "the feeling of ten thousand miles," are executed as one sitting without interrupting, and according to Da-Wei (2012), three of them reveal the one-breath feeling. The first one was executed in the morning when the writer was still fresh; the second, at noon, seems more energetic, and the third, in the late evening, reveals a bit of hesitation of a writer as if he was weary.

Fig. 7. Examples of writing in three different time of a day, Source: Da-Wei, (2012, np.).



Here, the considerations of the writing, without precisely focusing on the style and the semantic meaning of the texts that they were employed, Yee's (1974) and Da-Wei's (2012) critics seem to describe one of the primary significances of Chinese calligraphy, which is something beyond the text or conveying merely the meaning of the text. It is also claimed for Western calligraphy by various writers and calligraphers such as Mediavilla (1996), Stevens (2013), or Brown (2017). However, it should be bear in mind that being in a state beyond the text is claimed by contemporary Western calligraphers, not by ancient scribes. From the viewpoint of contemporary calligraphers, these contemporary definitions held in Chapter II seem to reflect the aim, intention, or desire of today's Western calligraphers. It seems to imply western calligraphy overall; however, it is stated that the traditional concept of western calligraphy was rigid and used to satisfy as a functional vehicle that was supposed to record, keep, and convey the meaning of the text through manuscripts. According to the need of the era, it was evolved and developed without allowing any space for experience or any experiment.

For this reason, traditional western calligraphy cannot be assumed as an art form like the Chinese calligraphy, at least considering how it was treated back then. Moreover, keep in mind that the art concept and the perception of traditional western calligraphy as art is a misconception due to the historical evolution of the term art in the West, which is also mentioned in Chapter II. Hence, a highly significant point shows one of the considerable differences between perceptions regarding the Far East and West calligraphy.

On the other hand, calligraphy as a word is preferred to employ to indicate the Chinese art form of writing by westerners. Considering this point, in China, there seem to be no rigid differences between the word writing/calligraphy and writer/calligrapher, at least not as apparent as in the West. From the definitions of Chinese calligraphy above, it is evident that writing and written word, from the beginning, carry something more than the text's semantic meaning, and writing as an act and written word as an entity highly respected appreciated, and accepted as an art form. From the western perspective, as stated in Chapter II, the terms writing and calligraphy are used as if they are two different entities. It seems the perception is that the writing is not calligraphy, which means writing is just handwriting, and calligraphy is something that comes from ancient times with its strict rules that always have to be legible. Here, it is highly interesting that if the one claims that western calligraphy is supposed to consist of the western alphabet, in other words, when the viewer sees a piece of calligraphy, if he expects to find the reflection of the spoken language through calligraphic writing, then, how he will assess the Chinese calligraphy without understanding any words is something that has to be considered once again. To appreciate western calligraphy as an art form as Chinese calligraphy, different things should be sought except for legibility, which can be seen through the description of contemporary western calligraphers.

To advance gradually, it will be useful to mention art as a concept in terms of calligraphy in China briefly to understand the terms used above, which is used to describe *shufa* as an art form of writing.

According to Sullivan (1969), Chinese civilization is not as old as Western civilization; still, it remains one of the oldest living cultures that has been continuing and unbroken since about 1600 BC, and the spoken language and written language have developed almost three thousand years ago. It can be claimed that its existence reflects a historical continuum that is more than three thousand years old (Wang, 2008). During this long history, art was assessed as merely a tool for political and religious propaganda in ancient times, which refers to the period between the second millennium BCE, when a literate culture first emerged, till the end of the Han Dynasty (206 BC-220 AD) when the names of distinct artists started to emerge. It is claimed that art was accepted as an individual effort (Wang, 2008). When Buddhism was prevalent between the third and the sixth centuries, religious art dominated when painting and calligraphy were used as tools to promote Buddhism. Buddhism's themes were executed in scriptures in paintings, and calligraphers wrote the copies of Buddhist manuscripts as primary occupations. It is claimed that the brushwork was served for the traditional rules and never freed from this bondage (Da-Wei, 2012). Here, with the brushwork, calligraphy and painting are referred to, in which the same tools -brush and ink- were used.

Before the Tang Dynasty (618-907), art in China promoted didactic needs by the seventh century. While some paintings represented Confucian ethics, others exemplified court life and religious themes. In the later period, it is claimed that the artists started to create works that departed from these traditional themes. It could be said that in

these earlier times of China, the artwork was executed mainly for the enjoyment of the aristocratic class under the patronage of the Court with the themes of luxury and calligraphy served to please the Court with its highly decorative styles in documents (Da-Wei, 2012), then became a highly estimated art form and discipline with its deep-rooted history executed by masters (Yee, 1974).

On the other hand, Zhang-Cziráková, (2014) points at the time of the Wei Dynasty (220-265 AD) when the writing of Chinese characters probably became an independent and highly respected art form, although earlier period, in Han Dynasty (206 BC-220 AD) it is known that there were famous calligraphers. Hearn (2008) pointed at the creations of Wang Xizhi (303-361) (Fig. 29), one of the most distinguished Chinese calligraphers with his highly innovative, very well-known mastery of Chinese calligraphy of the fourth century, and it is claimed that the practice of calligraphy became high art with him. Particularly in wild cursive script with the soft fluidity of his brushwork and carefully adjusted, delicately composite balance, he has improved his style to a high artistic level and became one of the most prominent influential calligraphers even by contemporary calligraphy practitioners. This means just in the fourth century, masters of calligraphy searched for a way of expression in a more individual style. By the eleventh century, one of the most significant criteria became having a good hand together with a command of history and literary style, which determined who would be employed to the government through civil service examinations. It is started to be assessed as a typical individual development that mastering form and technique, not only in their brush strokes but also in their lives in a sense like the formation of human character as an artist (Hearn, 2008). Looking at the western calligraphy mentioned in Chapter III with the revival of ancient styles in the twentieth century, it can be started to mention the individual attitudes of the modern calligraphers while respecting and cherishing the ancient masters and styles, trying to experience the ancient styles within the limitations of the modern calligraphy. Looking at the time difference, for Chinese calligraphy, it is around the fourth century, and for western calligraphy, it is around the twentieth century. However, the major transformation will be observed through the twenty-first century, when the western calligraphy practices started to be appreciated as in Far Eastern -Chinese and Japanese calligraphy that will be mentioned in Chapter VI. Hence, it can be said that the concept of the fourth-century Chinese masters started to take attention of the twentieth but particularly twenty-first century's western calligraphers with the abstract concept that will also be mentioned in this chapter.

Until now, it would be noted that *shufa*, as an art form of writing, depends on various dynamics such as the need of society, politics, culture, and religion. In order to deeply understand the concept of *shufa*, it is indispensable to examine the cultural dynamics that reveal themselves through calligraphic practices, aesthetic considerations, and the term beauty, how they are assessed. Without these information it is hard to apprehend the Far Eastern concept of calligraphy and the way that it is also appreciated by the contemporary western calligraphers who have shown interest and tried to bring many of the ideas from Chinese



culture to their works. For this reason, it is significant to mention the cultural mindset behind the Chinese calligraphy consisting of Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism, with which Chinese concept of calligraphy will be more understood, and the differences between the tradition of the western calligraphy, as well as the influences of Chinese calligraphy concept on the contemporary calligraphers who are mentioned in Chapter VI with their practices, more focused on the act rather than the result as in the Far Eastern calligraphy.

#### **4.1.3. Cultural mindset behind the Chinese calligraphy**

Da-Wei (2012) states that the study of aesthetics in China dates back to 600 BC, and the aesthetics of brushwork have their roots based on the three religions, Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism. Here in this part, there will be some significant issues that need to be mentioned briefly to present the similarities with the contemporary western calligraphy practices and the mindset of the western calligraphers, which takes its roots from Chinese calligraphy. It is stated that the significant influences started with Taoism, also known as Daoism, a religion and philosophy that underlines living in harmony with the *Tao* (Li, Han, and Becker, 2018). The word "Tao" means the "way" in literal meaning and is accepted as Taoism's central concept (Clarke, 1988: 45).

The Taoist philosophy founder is Lao Tzu (b. c. 571 BC), literally "Old Master" (Li, Han, and Becker, 2018), who was also a contemporary of Confucius, slightly before him. Lao Tzu believed that man has his desires and ambitions, which emerged due to the turmoil and unrest of social life. Hence, he promoted the virtue of non-action, which means non-interference both on individuals and state, and discouraged the man motivated by fame, wealth, position, or any grandiose scale. Moreover, in his scheme of things, deities or spirits were not exist; instead, the cosmos idea was *Tao* and *Ch'i/Qi*, which points at the existence form of *Tao* (Da-Wei, 2012).

Taoist thought's very essence is based on the tenet that a person's thinking and behavior are supposed to obey natural laws and promote retreat, avoidance, and passivity in life (Tingyou, 2004).

The "Tao Te Ching," the classical text of Taoist philosophy, belongs to the sixth century written by Lao Tzu. The central concept of Taoism of the *Ta Te Ching* is described as indefinable and may refer to several philosophic meanings, sometimes can be seen as reflecting the unmanifest void- also mentioned under the Japanese calligraphy in part "4.2.4. Writings of Zen Monks and Bokuseki" which underlies the phenomenal experience of all major Oriental philosophies. Hence, *Tao* is accepted as "the source of the ten thousand things... beyond the realm of the sense or the intellect" (Clarke, 1988: 45), and it is also described as the vital life force that exists in all things natural (Da-Wei, 2012).

In order to explain *Tao*, it is stated that Lao Tzu used the word *wu*, which refers to the void that illustrates his philosophy of nature. *Tao* is *wu*, for him, a concept of empty space that can be found in both calligraphy and painting. It is also underlined the importance of simplicity, which is a belief manifested itself in Chinese life. Hence,

simplification was assessed as a standard of art that reveals the artists' approach as content with simple themes in his work or the economy of lines and color that he employs (Da-Wei, 2012).

Here, it should be examined about the term *qi* (Ch'I, Chi), translated as energy in the English language, a term that they used to explain the universal energy, also mentioned earlier. It is one of the most fundamental and significant concepts of the Taoist mind, and all relate to Taoist practices, philosophies, culture, and medicine. The ancient Taoist belief that the entire universe is perceivable was energy in constant flux and transformation, leading to various forms. In Taoism, the experience of energy is based on its all forms so that their language evolved to perceive it vividly (Dunn, 2016).

As a concept, *qi* is claimed to have been studied for thousands of years in China, such as in the book *I Ching* (The Book of Changes) (1122 BC), which consists of information on the patterns and cycle of nature. It is believed that *qi* is so fundamental and essential in everyday usage in China, demonstrating energy itself or the state of the energy. It is a word used as a suffix or prefix to infuse a subject with breath, vitality, or power qualities. As an example, it can be given the word *ch'i-che* means energy-vehicle, car; or *tien-ch'i* means sky, lightning-power, or electricity (Dunn, 2016).

In terms of calligraphy, as a piece of art, it is not perceived just the arrangement of brushstrokes that reveals its artistic value. It is also accepted as the display of strength and flexibility, the vital energy that the calligrapher transfers into his art, making it a unique piece. It is stated that this is the same *qi*, which the acupuncturist desires to restore health in a patient. In calligraphy, it is said that it cannot be measured with instruments; instead, it is supposed to be felt to appreciate it. The character is supposed to be composed in a good balance of black and white space on the surface through narrow guidelines, restricted tools, brush, ink, inkstone, paper, or silk. These features are reflected in the Chinese calligraphy works, as well as contemporary western calligraphy, which started to be performed and focused mostly on the calligraphers themselves and their being the main actors of the process. Even though it reminds the action painting of Pollock -which will be mentioned in the following pages-, the root comes from Chinese calligraphy.

Since calligraphy is appreciated through its energy, it is not allowing for any retouching or corrections. It cannot be said to ancient calligraphy in the past. It is known that particularly on vellum when scribe had a writing mistake, he has a chance to remove the error with his knife which was held by the scribe all the time when he was writing, or he specified the place where he made a mistake, any missing letters, words may be added, or a paragraph on the margins of the manuscripts. As stated in Chapter III, any mistakes are not welcome and may result in rewriting the whole piece; however, for a contemporary calligrapher, the errors or accidents started to be assumed as an opportunity to experiment. So, contemporary calligraphy heralds multi-layered meanings in which there is not one message that is needed to be delivered, and the errors are needed to be corrected.

The stroke of Chinese calligraphy is supposed to be performed in a sequence on the surface, leading to its analogy to dance. The calligrapher has to be confident without any hesitation during the performance. If there is any, it will cause to break the rhythm. Paper or silk absorbs the ink quickly; thus, the brush's speed and pressure are also significant, dictating the thickness and density of the ink on the surface. Hence, every stroke of fine calligraphy is accepted as loaded with the energy of a living thing, and it embodies itself the emotions, temperament, spirit, and *qi* of the calligrapher. The calligrapher's posture, the way he holds his brush, and his breathing are also countable in calligraphy. The movement of the brush dictated by the body is directly related to the intent of the calligrapher. The whole concept of performing calligraphy, in this sense, requires years of training to master. The mind and body are supposed to be united as one, and the brush becomes an extension of this unit and calligrapher's intention. Calligrapher using a brush is also often compared with controlling a sword in martial arts because both are accepted as conduits of the user's *qi* (Luo, 2020). This is the issue that will be encountered in the works of various western calligraphers, as stated above, who focus on the process rather than the result. In this situation, calligraphy practice becomes a performance with continuum, and western calligraphers, such as Stevens (2013), start to make the same analogy with music, or calligrapher Zega, as mentioned in Chapter VI, makes the same analogy with dance and presents her works accompanying dance and music.

Furthermore, *qi* is explained as the force which harmonizes positive and negative complementary forces, namely Yin and Yang. The Yin and Yang union is essential to the creation and the universe of all-natural things that are all from *Tao*. They have particular characteristics and qualities that move naturally, act spontaneously without effort. What explains here actually manifests itself in the brushwork as fundamental principles in painting and calligraphy. The visual existence, the embodiment of them, heralds the work to be approved. The expected result is a mystical experience that the viewer can catch through brushwork (Da-Wei, 2012).

In terms of art, Taoism encourages to back to nature in search of the quality of nature and human beings. It emphasizes that aesthetic is supposed to be separated from concrete practice. The term beauty does not rely on the benefits or satisfies needs; instead, it is natural and only exists in a spiritual realm when it is eluded from outside restraints. Tingyou claims that such artistic aesthetics are more profound than Confucianist thought, and they had an impact on a later generation. Overall, various schools formed a common aesthetic outlook that revealed itself in calligraphy and other arts (Tingyou, 2004).

The founder of the Confucian school of thought was Confucius (551-479 BC), who took an active role in China's service and for China's salvation. Fong (1992) states that Confucius was the first to define literacy or artistic expression in the Chinese World. He was an immortal teacher and philosopher who advocated "personal and institutional morality, correct social relationships, justice, and sincerity" (Li, Han, and Becker, 2018: 22). His school was assessed as predominant in China for more than

two thousand years representing the social and cultural trends of ancient China. His teachings became a text that was supposed to be study reflected on tomb monuments, sculptures, or paintings (Da-Wei, 2012).

The Confucian school promotes kindness, loyalty, forgiveness, and moderation, focusing on life's ideal perspective with progress and optimism. In terms of art, the Confucian school encourages natural beauty and the integration of beauty and kindness. It is believed that by art, a person can be educated in aesthetics, which helps that person enter a lofty spiritual realm that encourages society's harmonious development (Tingyou, 2004). For that, one must be on a path to a harmonious life as a duty with action and sincerity. That is claimed to only achieve through education and knowledge (Da-Wei, 2012).

On the other hand, Buddhism was introduced in the reign of the Eastern Han Ming Ti (58-75 AD) in China. It promises comfort in the belief in the reincarnation of the soul. It is stated that at that time, since many were already suffering because of the wars and violence of that time, Buddhism was welcomed. The art that was performed at that time is called Buddhist art, painting, or sculpture. One of the most important influences of Buddhism on Chinese development is claimed as Zen by the Japanese occurred in the seventh century, a form of Chinese Buddhism, and it will be mentioned in detail in the following parts (Da-Wei, 2012).

In Buddhism, it is believed that sudden enlightenment can be achieved through meditation, and the path of enlightenment can be obtained through the mind's eye, which can be perceived through one's heart and soul (Ibid.).

Copying of sutras, a scriptural narrative, especially a discourse of the Buddha, the sacred texts of Buddhism and Taoism, was accepted as an act of devotion to propagating the faith. A special brush with conventional-sized paper with a vertical grid was preferred. The most formal type of calligraphy, known as a standard script, mentioned in the following pages, was used for copying sutras (Hearn, 2008). It seems this description of Chinese calligraphy that they performed here reflects the values that are attributed to the writing or at least the expectations from one of the artwork of calligraphy in China that also leads us to examine an aesthetic consideration of a writing piece to frame the perception of Chinese calligraphy, which will also provide to compare and locate the Western calligraphy today with its influences. Since the visual and conceptual transformation of western calligraphy is seen in Chapter VI, it is indispensable that the criteria and aesthetic considerations of contemporary western calligraphy become challenging. The criteria or parameters of traditional western calligraphy, as mentioned in Chapter III -well-organized and constructed forms of scripts to write a functional, readable text- are no longer valid for the contemporary calligraphy. The claim here is to provide insight into the Chinese calligraphy considerations to see the similarities between Chinese calligraphy and contemporary western calligraphy.

#### 4.1.4. Aesthetic considerations and the term beauty of Chinese calligraphy

Three structural forms are assessed as essential for Chinese calligraphy: strokes, characters, and lines. All join together and, depending on the calligrapher's skill, may reflect the aesthetics and so-called beauty of the work (Tingyou, 2004). Among them, strokes are basic due to the reason that all characters and lines are composed of these strokes. Characters and lines are assessed as the tracks of the movement of the brush of the calligrapher or the arrangement of forms of the dots and strokes (Ibid.). For this reason, various literature such as Barnhart (1972), Yee (1974), and Tingyou (2004) explain these three gradually, starting with the stroke, characters, lines, and compositions, then overall calligraphic work based on the aesthetic criteria of the Chinese calligraphy.

Looking at the western tradition of calligraphy, it is also significant to learn the strokes and how to manipulate the material to achieve the exact strokes needed to construct the exact letter. It is significant to mimic the ancient style as similar as possible. However, the stroke or the line is not as significant as in Chinese calligraphy, in which the aesthetic and beauty of the written character basically depend on them. As mentioned in Chapters II and III, the beauty of the ancient style depends on how clear and regular the letter hence, the style is executed. In contrast, contemporary western calligraphy started to be closer to Chinese aesthetic considerations since the gesture became mostly the focus point of the calligraphic works. For this reason, the explanations of this part are crucial to understanding contemporary western calligraphy. Whereas, contemporary western calligraphy started to be closer to the Chinese aesthetic considerations since the gesture becomes mostly focus point of the calligraphic works. For this reason, the explanations of this part is crucial to understand the contemporary western calligraphy.

Chinese characters are composed of several different strokes, and each of these strokes is executed by a writer's brush with different moves. Yee (1974) first mentions the strokes' quality, and he points to four terms that are used to describe the quality of strokes which are ranked as bone, flesh, muscle, and blood. Here, it should be underlined that the stroke quality is constantly repeated by Mediavilla (1996) and Stevens (2013) as well as a significant criterion for calligraphic work executed by the skilled calligrapher. That means this is the issue that is needed to be understood well.

Yee (1974) quotes from the Chinese calligrapher Lady Wei (1727-1775) to describe them as follows:

The writing of one who has strength of brush is "bony" and the writing of one who is weak in brush is "fleshy". Writing that is bony with little flesh is called "muscular"; writing that is fleshy with little bone is "ink hog". Writing that has much strength and is rich in muscle is sacred; writing without strength or muscle is sickly. Each is used according to the situation. (Sato, 2011: 24)

According to a quotation from Chinese calligraphy Lady Wei, every type of stroke is supposed to have a bone within, which the writer's attitude can achieve. It is also one of the criteria to judge the calligraphic work,



whether the bone has a strength or not, hence how the one hand the brush and the wrist position are significant. If the writer employs his position appropriately, the bone will be achieved under the right circumstances after the long training in terms of calligraphy.

Furthermore, the flesh of the stroke depends on the thickness of the brush-hair employed and the pressure of the writer's touch on the paper. It also depends on the amount of water in the ink. When there is too much water in ink, the flesh will be loose; when there is too little water, the ink will be so thick, and the flesh will be fat. The nature of the muscle in a stroke depends on the bone and the stroke's flesh, whether they are executed well or not. When the stroke is bony and has a sufficient amount of flesh, the muscle will be there naturally. When the stroke is well written, it is claimed that muscles will join one stroke to another and even one character to another. Lastly, the blood of a stroke relies entirely on the amount of water in which the ink is mixed and becomes a color.

To sum up, it is stated that the life principle in terms of Chinese calligraphy is borne out even with the technical details starting with a stroke that reflects the character skillfully, and the written character that is stated here is calligraphy (Yee, 1974), which are not mentioned within the tradition of western calligraphy, while the stroke or a line can be the main theme or focus point of the contemporary western calligraphy. Then, how can one decide the quality of the work or measure it through western calligraphy? The features that are ranked about the Chinese quality of stroke seem to be valid for western calligraphy as well, which can only be executed through the skill of the contemporary calligrapher. This issue led us to think the relation between the tradition of western calligraphy and its craft nature may still exist within contemporary western calligraphy. Since the quality can be reflected through the skilled hand, the only way to acquire the skill is the practice that is started with the appreciation and understanding of the ancient scripts, their evolution, and techniques. Hence, it can be claimed that the quality of the stroke can be one of the significant criteria of contemporary western calligraphy as well, which means the contemporary mindset consists of ancient practical and theoretical knowledge still related to its past.

Da-Wei (2002) lists the aesthetic components as form, line, space-consciousness, and composition, similar to Yee (1974). The form described as the shape and the structure of a thing can be comprehended and established directly or indirectly influenced by nature both in calligraphy and painting.

Right now, it needs to pay attention to the stroke first, which is expected to be vivid. This is assessed as one of the aspects that the art of calligraphy is unique among other art forms since the vividness in which the creative process is recorded permanently. The consideration of quality aside, whether it is a good or bad piece, Barnhart (1972) states that when one looks at the work, it will make an effect as if he is watching the calligrapher at work with his every movement of the brush in the precise sequence. It makes every mistake remains, nothing is hidden with daring successes, splattered ink, or worn scrawls when

the brush is out of ink but still moves to finish the movement, or even the moment that calligrapher pauses in order to load his brush with ink, moreover, the changing tempo of the calligrapher will be apparent in his work.

Hence, Barnhart describes vividness of the stroke will cause the rhythm or mood to gradually grow, reflecting confidence and certainty of the purpose of the calligrapher. He sums up with the description of calligraphy as “a veritable record of the process of artistic creation” (Barnhart, 1972: 240) which makes him call calligraphy as vivid and seems to underline the performance aspect of this process which is focused on the action, rather than the product itself. These features can only be traced in today’s various western calligraphers’ statements, namely Mediavilla (1996) and Stevens (2013), mentioned in Chapter VI while observing the selected various contemporary artists, as well as in Chapter VII in which it is focused on the personal attitude of my calligraphy work. Here is the significant difference that shows contemporary western practitioners have been influenced by these general comprehensions of the Far Eastern Calligraphy.

Moreover, the vivid strokes here, as a primary principle of composition of Chinese characters, is not precisely referring to be representativeness of a living thing; instead, it underlines the balance and similar poise of a figure that may be standing, walking, dancing, which executes various lively movements. It is believed that every character is supposed to reflect these movements. The affiliation between calligraphy and dance, or music, as performance seems to come from that perspective, once again points at the process, the exact moment that the calligrapher executes calligraphic work. Talking about the moves and dance as features of Chinese calligraphy, it will be observed that various western calligraphers, namely Zega, literally fused her calligraphy works with dance, executed as performance, which will be mentioned in Chapter VI, shows another feature as has affected western attitude towards today’s practices in the realm of calligraphy. The mentioned affiliation between contemporary western calligraphy, music, and dance examined in Chapter VI takes its roots from this issue of Chinese calligraphy.

Also, the term beauty comes into play that is hard to define in terms of Chinese calligraphy, according to Yee (1974), and he seems to prefer to express it as something that speaks to the heart immediately, such as a picture of natural scenery, which can be traced to its origin. According to him, the beauty of the Chinese calligraphy is deeply rooted in lively movements, which are coordinated movements of a composed dance, rather than symmetrical arrangements of conventional shapes as in the case of printed characters that tend to be regular with the exactitude of outline, which is not desired qualities in Chinese calligraphy.

As a significant point, Chiang occasionally uses the word “painted stroke” (Yee, 1974: np.) while he explains how possible to create something close to the true vitality of art. The writer uses the term paint seems to have been explicitly preferred here due to the same tool -brush and the ink- that is employed for painting and calligraphy, and also, he probably stresses the fact that the direct imitation of natural

objects in the form of Chinese words can be reflected merely by brush, not a pen or a pencil. It is assessed as the calligraphy that is desired. Only by brush is it believed that the moves of the trees or movements of the clouds could be reproduced. Thus, the word painted seems to be linked with the type of tool employed, also directly linked to the nature of the Chinese character and how they evolved. For this reason, painting the word seems appropriate to describe it without creating any misconceptions or dualities between the terms painting or writing. This issue is also discussed for western calligraphy in Chapter II and Chapter VI to show the conflict between the terms that come with the perception of western writing and how Meulman started to call himself a painter rather than a calligrapher. However, this discussion seems irrelevant today, considering the current executions of calligraphy that employ a wide range of materials and tools with different techniques and concepts. As well, as underlined in Chapter VI, performing calligraphy becomes closer to mark-marking or painting as an act that does not necessarily mean it is supposed to be called painting. The claim of these calligraphers/writers is to create an image of the written word with writing-like gestures. Hence, the idea of writing is preserved in a sense, and the rigid distinction that is underlined by Meulman between painter and calligrapher does not make sense.

Far Eastern Calligraphy primarily focuses on the process itself rather than the product. What matters is "how something was painted" or "how somebody painted" rather than "what was painted" (Pohl, 2004: 556). It refers to the Chinese calligraphy process as a continuum that is also valid for contemporary western calligraphy, in which calligrapher started to be in the process as an actor.

In addition, Da-Wei (2012) calls painting and calligraphy sister arts. He stresses that Chinese art can be called the art of line, leading us to the Chinese brushwork with its comprehensive knowledge that is supposed to be observed through Chinese philosophy and culture. Also, major components of painting and calligraphy are lines, and in painting and calligraphy, most of the forms are constructed as a combination of dots and lines (Da-Wei, 2012). For this reason, it is highly significant to comprehend the relationship between painting and calligraphy through the background of the art of brushwork. On the other hand, it is known that calligraphy, poetry, and painting are called "three perfections" (Hearn, 2008), which scholar artists have mostly integrated into a single work. In such works, poetic and pictorial imagery with calligraphic lines has been employed to express the artist's mind and emotions (Iezzi, 2013) that are also the search of the contemporary western calligraphers for their current works to attribute -something beyond the literal meaning of the text through the expanding the boundaries, changing the criterias and concept and focusing the imagery of the written word.

Painting (*hua*) in Chinese refers to a hand that is holding a brush on a cultivated field that is called "to trace, to delimit" (Escande, 2019: para. 5). This explanation states that *hua*, the act of painting, emphasizes the brushstroke, the line, and the pictorial work rather than the color. Here, rhythm is assessed as fundamental in Chinese painting. It is applied to

stroke rather than color or tonality and implies regularity and cohesion blended in Chinese painting to the stroke with the brush (Escande, 2019).

In order to a deeper understanding of the term painting used for calligraphic work, or the act of calligraphical practices, it will help to look at Hearn (2008), who begins with the expression with the word *du hua*, which refers to "read a painting." He continues with how painters have achieved to embody the vital energy and form with only the most economical usage of the brush and ink on paper and underlines to capture this energy, life force, and spirit as an inner essence of the subject of painting. He states that the Chinese painter relied on lines as a lasting mark of the inked brush.

This understanding of calligraphy can not be encountered in the tradition of the West, whereas it can be seen through the works of contemporary western calligraphers, almost all of which will be discussed in Chapter VI. Furthermore, the word paint will be discussed in this part exactly; however, what is explained is being focused on the process itself puts forwards the performative aspect of calligraphy practices that highlight living written marks and moving brush strokes. Through them, one can trace the movement by looking at the final work even after the calligrapher's performance; thus, the process's perception may still continue in one's mind, and the contemporary calligrapher Meulman, mentioned in Chapter VI, through his calligraphic journey started as a graffiti writer, first called himself a calligrapher, then preferred to call himself a painter. It is highly significant that will be discussed in Chapter VI, which reveals once again the influence of the Far Eastern calligraphy culture, and how the contemporary tendencies started to liken to the mindset of the Far Eastern.

Since calligraphy and painting, as said before, are sister arts, the lines or strokes of painters, who probably were calligraphers at the same time due to being literate and learning calligraphy starts in his childhood, calligraphy seems one of the first significant art forms that painter also has to be acquired. Hence, if a painter employs these types of lines and strokes, they are described as calligraphic rendering due to those reasons. It would not be wrong to say that the words used to describe here, such as painted or written lines, seem not to cause any confusion in this context in terms of Chinese calligraphy. However, it is difficult to claim the ancient Western writing, in which there seems a very sharp distinction between painting and writing exists, as examined earlier in Chapter II. This distinction seems to come from both due to the mentality about the apprehension of writing in the sense of constructing the alphabet and the historical way to execute them.

It may be claimed that for Western calligraphy, especially with the freedom of a scribe who is freed from the burden of a text which is supposed to be functional to convey the message, when he starts to interpret his work must later than Chinese calligraphers; the term calligraphic seems to adapt from this mindset of Chinese painting. In Chapter VI, it will be mentioned various artists of the West who are claimed as influenced by Chinese art and reflects this influence in their artworks, namely, Tobey (1890-1976), Motherwell (1915-1991),

and Pollock (1912-1956) and their various works are called calligraphic or claimed to be likened to calligraphy without any background of calligraphy, on the contrary to Chinese painters. Moreover, these same artists are pointed by Western contemporary calligraphers, namely Meulman, Brown, and Lampas, whose works are mentioned in Chapter VI as sources of inspiration for their calligraphy. Hence, from various perspectives, it is evident that the considerable influence of Far Eastern calligraphy exists in various ways, not just in calligraphy but also in painting, aesthetic considerations, and the art's mindset. For these reasons, Far Eastern calligraphy has a highly significant role in forming the contemporary mindset in Western calligraphy.

The other feature that Tingyou (2004) mentions in terms of understanding aesthetics is the beauty of momentum and rhythm. According to him, those two are like a chemical reaction, and he explains them as "Momentum reflects the beauty of the visible structure of characters which change frequently and demonstrate the special technique and ability for expression of the calligrapher, while rhythm reflects the style and the way to illustrate the emotions and feelings of the calligrapher, or the power of understanding, imagination and creation" (Tingyou, 2004: 85).

Hence, momentum represents the beauty of the form of the character, which changes constantly reflects the acquired skill of calligraphers and accomplishment in terms of Chinese calligraphy and rhythm determined by the style consists of emotions and feelings of the calligrapher. Without rhythm and momentum, calligraphy would not be assessed as a unique, personal expression of an individual -overall points at the quality of the work achieved through a purified, vigorous attitude. Western contemporary calligraphers also regularly mention the rhythm of both the composition, the text, the Word -is there are any- or the line and stroke, even within the one stroke. Namely, Brown, as mentioned earlier, with his polyrhythmic italic hand, tries to push the boundaries of the tradition, which follows only one rhythm. Polyrhythm -mentioned in Chapter VI- reveals the multi rhythm within the written hand and illustrates the understanding of Brown's momentum.

The other term that Tingyou (2004) explains is the beauty of simplicity through Confucian and Taoist thought, which are mentioned earlier, and both have a common perspective about nature and other things in the world, which are assessed as complicated. However, they are made of the simplest materials that behave according to the fundamental law. One of the classics of Confucians, *Yijing* (the twelfth century BC, alternative names "I Ching," "I," "I-Ching," "Yi-Ching," "Zhou Yi," in Chinese "Classic of Changes," or "Book of Changes) declares that in the universe there are two kinds of *qi* (C'hi): *yang* and *yin*, which are both contradictory, unified and integrated, hence everything in the world can be produced by them.

This idea of simplicity is claimed that helps people to understand and obey. Tingyou illustrates the idea of the beauty of simplicity by pointing at traditional Chinese Opera (such as Peking Opera) as an example. He states that there is a simple expression technique in which there is no



setting on the stage, except a desk and a chair or two, also no real door for an actor and actress to open, close, or any carriage to sit in. A long journey is represented by a couple of steps; a large army is represented by a couple of people. The movements of the actors and actresses are the key factors in stirring the imagination of the viewers to lead them to think that the actors may be rowing a boat or sitting in a chair.

Also, the principles of Chinese painting that display the world in simple colors and lines are accepted as an example of the idea of the beauty of simplicity, particularly freehand brushwork, in which the spirit of the image, the things in his mind or understood by him are seeking by painters, rather than sophisticated images. Through just slightly made gestures, with a hint, a painter can reflect the image of the thing in his mind. It is understood that what is desired here is not any concrete observation or copy but expressing his creativity and feelings through imagination (Tingyou, 2004).

There is no need for complicated tools to practice calligraphy apart from the paper, brush, ink stick, and ink slab, which will be mentioned in part "4.1.5. Tools and Materials of Far Eastern Calligraphy Practice." It is constantly emphasized that even the simplicity and conciseness of calligraphy are its significant characteristics, it does not refer that mastering calligraphy is easy. Whereas, the materials and tools of the western calligraphy tradition, as mentioned in Chapter III, transform within time depending on the technical possibilities of the Medieval time, also the region, and as underlined, the tool and the material had affected the letterforms, hence the styles of the written hand.

At this point, it is significant to look at Yee's term, the abstract beauty of line. As a graphic arts medium, the word line promises general shapes, namely straight, curved, thick, and thin. Straight lines have the impression of "solidity, strength, severity, and immobility," whereas curves give feelings of "motion, buoyancy, suavity, delicacy" (Yee, 1974, np.). When the line is executed, they present a formal design of the abstract beauty that has a capacity to draw something beyond the literal meaning of the characters, referring to the process of artistic simplification of observed objects. The simplification refers to omitting the unnecessary parts with the interest of impulse towards beautification. Hence, Yee arrives at the term the abstract beauty of line in which there exist promises something beyond the literal meaning, which requires more time and knowledge to apprehend the overall logic behind it, as claimed.

Yee (1974) mentions one of the movements in contemporary Western art, namely Surrealism, which is assessed by him as a reflection of an intention of the artists with genuine insight that rocks the conventional ideas of beauty. He probably refers to the ancient times that were also discussed slightly in Chapter II, which refers to the functional, appropriate beauty of the Western calligraphy.

Yee (1974) seems to liken Surrealism and the Chinese mind, which is accustomed through centuries to an attitude of acceptance and appreciation of linear beauty. He points out that one of the most ancient

scripts composed circa five thousand years ago with this idea of the abstract beauty of line, whereas a Surrealist drawing that belongs to the twentieth century with a very similar attitude. Yee underlines that beauty is perceived by Chinese artists who desire to capture in real the essential form of the object and represent it in an aesthetically pleasing composition with a simplified outline of it (Yee, 1974: np.).

From the point of western calligraphy, abstraction has been started to be referred to the modern -mentioned in Chapter III, but particularly for contemporary calligraphy of the twenty-first century, because calligraphers started to eliminate the text, the word, even letters, at least unrecognizable, or focused on the lines, strokes, and compositions as in the Chinese calligraphy. This issue will be discussed in Chapter VI.

On the other hand, considering the explanation above, the term beauty starts with a more profound understanding of the stroke, what is desired by a calligrapher; hence it reflects an overall appreciation of the calligraphic work, which also leads to describing what calligraphy is in China. To remind, in the West, calligraphy is a term described through two words, *kallos* means beauty, *gráphé* means writing. In this context, it is translated and commonly interpreted as writing beautifully or beautiful handwriting, as examined in Chapter II.

In this sense, Fong (1992) claims that this explanation is a misnomer about Chinese calligraphy, as Mediavilla (1996), Stevens (2013), and Brown (2017) think that it is a misnomer about Western calligraphy as well. The term calligraphy is simply used as a convenient English language equivalent for *shufa* -mentioned in part "4.1.2. The concept of the word *shufa*." However, it does not reflect the same meaning as what western word calligraphy does carries. It is evident that the difference between Chinese and Western perceptions in terms of calligraphy, both in technical and practical ways, also reflects misconceptions and misunderstandings.

From the western perspective, these two words are examined in Chapter II and frame the overall situation through the literal meaning and how it is perceived and practiced in the West. The literal translation of western calligraphy mostly underlines a product more than a process. It has been produced to serve a specific purpose, and its' beauty is related to the visual form of the letter that has shaped throughout the history of western calligraphy, particularly in the medieval world.

Considering the medieval script, such as *carolingian* or *textura*, held in Chapter III, uniformity and symmetry of the letter's construction and the word and overall composition with clean strokes are the most significant features that take attention at first glance. They served for the text and its semantic meaning to record and convey.

The term beauty in terms of traditional western calligraphy came into play, which has tried to be explained through the well-constructed forms that are perfectly appropriate to serve the exact needs of the era, which seems legible as a representation of a spoken language. However, it is no longer valid for contemporary western calligraphy. As mentioned earlier in this part, the quality and the vividness of the

stroke become significant determinant features for contemporary western calligraphy work.

Yee (1974) distinguishes the types of movement and mentions two kinds: activity in stillness and activity in action. The brush gives the calligraphy the potential to be in a movement with the brush's curves and twists in the written characters. When the brush is poorly balanced in the calligrapher's hand, a stroke with a lack of rhythm and momentum may appear, which is the so-called dead stroke. Hence, he stresses that the judgment of a character's excellence mostly depends on the degree to how much the vitality of a particular natural object is possessed. That means both the character and the composition of the work have importance. Hence, the significant criteria are avoiding so-called dead strokes, which are also critical criteria to determine the work's quality.

It should be noted that vivid stroke points at an asymmetrical balance, which Chinese calligraphers prefer for the possession of the movement mentioned above. Using a similarly shaped stroke to construct the same character with symmetry or to form the similarly designed characters in the same piece of calligraphy is a situation that is strongly avoided. Not just the strokes of a character are supposed to be in perfect harmony with each other, but they also have to become a unit that competes in itself as not static symmetry but as a moving, living figure in a moment with equilibrium and dynamic posture. Thus, the character has to consist of unexpected shapes drawn by these asymmetrical balance or momentum, and for the balance, the human being or nature is taken as an inspiration (Yee, 1974). At this point, in spite of the polyrhythmic italic hand of Brown mentioned earlier, Meulman has various compositions based on the repeated strokes executed symmetrically in an order. However, to break this spontaneity, it will be observed in Chapter VI that Meulman employs drips and drops of the ink as an attribution of dynamism and living moment, as mentioned here. Hence, it can be said that these features will be observed as one of the significant features of the contemporary attitudes of Western calligraphy as well.

Back to Chinese calligraphy and nature, Barnhart (1972) mentions how brushwork is seen as an analogy with natural phenomena by Chinese calligraphers regarding principles of movement, growth, or structure. As an example, "the stretching branches of a winter tree," "the flowing water of a mountain stream," "a rock plunging from a high cliff" (Barnhart, 1972: 231) are the images that demand vividly executed principles of brush form, and movement is assessed that directly interact with the past art of the brush. Whether in painting or calligraphy, these qualities of the brushwork are claimed that viewers can observe whether they read Chinese or not. It is one of the critical points to express the quality of the stroke and the calligraphic work, through which the viewer can still catch the liveliness of the work without even reading it.

This issue is adapted to the contemporary western calligrapher as underlined before, that western calligraphy without related to the spoken word and the literal meaning of the text -free from the functional burden by eliminating the word and a letter- started to be

closer to an image that can be called as more universal than vernacular. In other words, as stated for Chinese calligraphy assessing through the quality of the work and overall composition without reading the written text, contemporary calligraphers expect parallel understanding from their viewers/audiences. It makes western calligraphy an art form that can be satisfied through its visual interpretation of the calligrapher reflected as a calligraphic experience.

On the other hand, apart from the strokes, Da-Wei (2012) points to the areas of the white paper, voids, which can always be encountered in Chinese painting and calligraphy, and describes them as "unfinished, empty, or yet-to-be-filled-up spaces" (Da-Wei, 2012: np.), as in the concept of Japanese calligrapher that will be mentioned in part "4.2.4. Writings of Zen monks and *Bokuseki*" and "4.2.5. The avant-garde calligraphy in Japan." However, it should be stated that what is underlined with these voids is that they are not empty but instead assessed as an integral part of calligraphy or painting that represents space-consciousness as an aesthetic component of Chinese art, painting, and calligraphy (Da-Wei, 2012: np.).

The spatial structure is formed by modeling light and shadow in terms of painting, and ink painting is perceived as an abstract rendering. The gestures and rhythmic indications of line here arise the spatial effect. Da-Wei names it "a calligraphically created space" (Da-Wei, 2012: np.). For this reason, he assesses calligraphy as a rhythmic art, where the difference between West and East moves in according to him. In the western world, the word is a combination of various letters, whereas a Chinese character is a combination of various shapes of lines and dots, which are localized in a unit of space on the surface as an arrangement. In this arrangement, what is indispensable can be claimed as the perfect structured, balanced arrangement as an architectural structure.

Hence, Da-Wei claims that Chinese calligraphy creates the impression of space and depth as fine art. This feature started to appear in the works of current western calligraphers, particularly Lampas and Dokins, who created a calligraphic space on the walls or the roofs of the buildings. These calligraphic spaces consist of lines, strokes, dots, or splashes as if they were constructed as a part of these spaces in a rhythmical composition. The indications are the gesture of the hand that became calligraphic arrangements as mentioned here through the Chinese calligraphy. These works will be seen in Chapter VI.

It is evident that calligraphy is a long journey to experience that requires maturity in hand and mind for Chinese calligraphy, as well as for Western calligraphy. These type of criteria such as stroke's quality and vividness of the work becomes criteria to distinguish "bad" and "good" calligraphy through accepted standards of aesthetic and expressive qualities, obviously can be achieved with arduous practices (Barnhart, 1972). Barnhart expresses this issue through the work of the writer Chang Pi (1425-1487) (Fig. 8) of the Ming period (1368-1644).

Fig. 8 illustrates the detail of Chang Pi's handscroll. Barnhart (1972) underlines that Chang Pi was a calligrapher who was constantly defending the quality of his work, whereas various viewers may consider it rather vulgar. At one glimpse, the sense of his purpose of brush strokes seems going nowhere with lack of purpose or distinction, which also gives an impression to slip over the paper, particularly the extended horizontals inclined to the left assessed by Barnhart as "the flaccid, aimlessly meandering quality of line," which is noteworthy here.

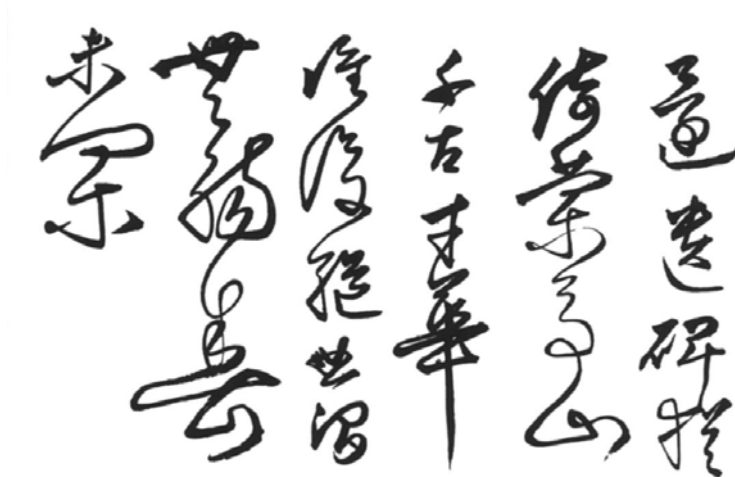


Fig. 8. Detail of a handscroll of Chang Pi, written by cursive script, Source: Barnhart, (1972: 240).

On the other hand, as mentioned in Chapter II, Stevens (2013) underlines that handwriting will be dead when the letterforms are relegated to only communication (restricted to spoken language), just pointing to the same issue here. It is evident that he advocates that there has to be something beyond the semantic meaning. He does not point to necessarily unliteral lack of letters of work or directly does not cherish the abstract forms of calligraphy without semantic meaning; however, he does not advocate that calligraphic work has to be written and read in a literal sense, at least, it seems the literal text is not assessed a must by him. He emphasizes what is generally missed by Western calligraphers due to the dichotomy between the tradition-expressive, hand-digital, or brush-pen. He claims calligrapher is supposed to consider all factors along a continuum. He points at the term quality of the work form, which is supposed to be significant in Western calligraphy, not trends, styles, or genres, but the quality will distinguish the work. For him, when the calligraphic work consists of a living/moving line, spontaneous form, and the mark of the tool, the tonality also the variegated strokes are the factors that add a unique quality to calligraphic work (Stevens, 2013). These are very similar to the Far Easter calligraphy when the viewer, without reading the text literally, would appreciate the work through its quality of calligraphic rendering. That means the quality of the work; artistic effects can be observed before even reading it.

Hence, contemporary practices that do not focus on the letters, words, or text in a semantic sense and mostly employ calligraphic gestures, dots, and stains spontaneously do not mean necessarily



rejecting the traditional concept of Western calligraphy either. This claim is grounded on the nature of calligraphy, a cultivated art form that requires past knowledge to forward. It still carries large and sophisticated principles and theory upon it, which also help to understand the framework of contemporary Western calligraphy deeply. This issue will be discussed in Chapter VI.

#### **4.1.5. Tools and materials of Far Eastern calligraphy practice**

The tools used in Chinese and Japanese calligraphy are not complicated either numerous. In the Far Eastern calligraphy tradition, four tools, the so-called “four gems of the study” (Da-Wei, 2012: np.), namely brush, ink, paper, and inkstone called *four treasures*, are fundamental and indispensable to every calligrapher, painter, and scholar. The reason to include this part is that these materials are mostly employed by western contemporary artists, such as Brown and myself included, to experience with the pointed brush, rice paper, and *sumi-ink* both the liquid and stick form, which is mostly used to execute abstract calligraphic works in the quest of the stroke.

It should keep in mind that various kinds of literature, such as Sullivan (1969), use the term brushwork when referring to Chinese traditional art such as calligraphy, ink-painting<sup>2</sup>, or painting, rather than sharply separating them are employed the same tool, brush.

Kuo (2010) states the writing of the script by brush is also a base for Chinese painting for more than a thousand years, due to the same tool and same kind of brush, and similar kinds of line production are involved here.

Moreover, in Chinese painting, writing is commonly included in a painting as a part of the composition. It is evident that calligraphy, painting, and poetry as a theme that calligrapher often prefers as a poetic poem or poetic prose unite in a single work of art; both verbal and visual representations are integrated simultaneously. With the poetic prose, it is claimed that the calligrapher did not limit himself to just a copy as an act; instead, he intends to revive the gestural movement with the imaginative power of the Chinese characters. Kuo claims that this aspect of Chinese calligraphy, with its ideal aesthetic and practice, makes calligraphy a more demanding art form than painting (Kuo, 2010). At the same time, most of this literature starts with calligraphy before delving into other disciplines because of the pretty much same reason but also points to calligraphy, which is the basic principle that is supposed to be discussed in order to comprehend and understand the general idea of Chinese art. For this reason, it will not be wrong to say that the brush is the primary tool, and in order to appreciate the brushwork, calligraphy is one of the primary disciplines that is supposed to be examined.

According to Da-Wei (2012), the Chinese brush has a long and more continuous relationship with calligraphy than painting in Chinese

<sup>2</sup> An ink painting, as Guest (2017) or Kuo (2010) states, is claimed as closer than painting, even though these three practices are intertwined, due to the reason that traditional calligraphy and ink painting prefers black and white; also ink painting provides the proximity with the calligraphic line in calligraphy (Da-Wei, 2012).

history. He points to the fourteenth century BC of the Shang period when the brushwork in calligraphy can be traced, whereas the earliest example of painting can be found in the Han Dynasty (the third century BC- the third century AD) in rubbings of pottery lines, painted tails, tomb frescoes or painted lacquer baskets.

Brush (Fig. 9) is commonly made of animal hair, such as sheep, deer, fox, wolf, mouse, or rabbit, according to the preference of the writer or the requirements of a particular style in China; then they are supposed to be tied together in small bunches and fixed into a reed or thin bamboo stem. In contrast, the Chinese writing brush is generally made of goat's hair, rabbit hair, or weasel's tail hairs, which provides softness and elasticity to the brush (Tingyou, 2004).



Fig. 9. Examples of Chinese brush, Photo credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

Brush provides broad capacity and versatility with its flexibility, unlike the rigid stylus or nib. A flexible hair is essential not only for the cause of variations in the width of strokes (Fig. 10) but also for creating three-dimensional effects mentioned earlier due to using the tip or side of the brush. With only black ink, the brush can produce an unlimited variety of shapes of lines and dots as much as one can manage (Da-Wei, 2012).

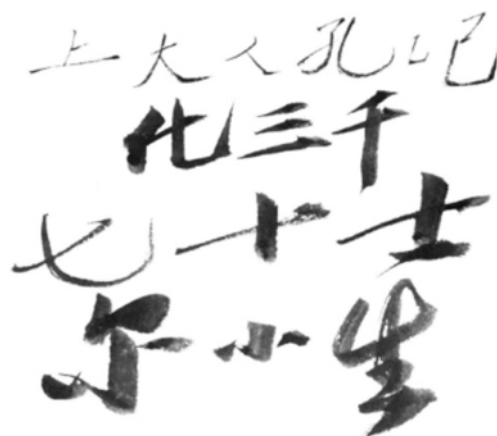


Fig. 10. Examples of the various brush strokes done with a single brush, Source: Da-Wei, (2012: np.).

Fig. 11 illustrates how to handle the brush, and Fig. 12 illustrates different ways of using the tip of the brush in writing for a vertical stroke. While writing with a brush, the brush is held vertically at 90 degrees to the paper's surface (Fig. 12).

Fig. 11. *left* The way to hold the brush, Source: Tingyou, (2004: 44).

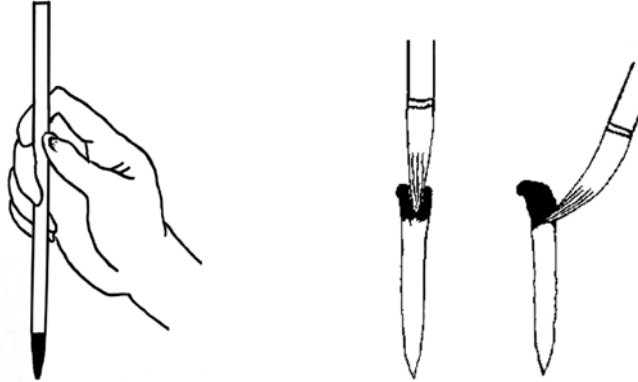


Fig. 12. *right* Moving the tip of the brush in the middle of the stroke and along one side of a stroke, Source: Tingyou, (2004: 45).

The brush has to be held not tightly to manipulate, such as rolling, twisting, and turning, which are not in the case of the Western calligraphy executed with a nib or quill pen. It is not just the finger, but the whole body participates in the execution; for this reason, coordination of the whole body is another issue that has to ensure a good line or a good painting or calligraphy. There is an allegory that painting and calligraphy -mentioned in various parts above- are like dancing because of the body's movement while using the brush. It is assumed as a kind of physical performance with body movement, which is significant (Da-Wei, 2012).

Compared with a feather or a nib of the western calligraphy, which is relatively limited in terms of thickness of the stroke, a brush can promise various thicknesses that express dark or light black ink and reveal the speed of the hand's movement, which cannot be revised (Fig. 10). This means the vigor of the strokes depends on the mastery of the brush (Tingyou, 2004).

Another critical factor is the speed of brushwork strokes, in which every stroke is constructed by alternative quick and slow movements depending on the relation to a particular character. It depends on the piece's size; not just the finger, the hand, or the wrist are involved, but sometimes the whole body (Yee, 1974).

It is evident that all mentioned features of the Chinese brush give a range of opportunities to execute a brush that has varieties within, on the contrary to the western metal nib or feather that gives limited thickness, and within the stroke, there is no dimension that the pressure provides within the ink. Looking at the contemporary practices in Chapter VI, Brown employs Chinese calligraphy and ink for his abstract calligraphy practices and focuses on the ink and the movement of the hand. He approaches the Chinese brush as an opportunity to experiment with his so-called reductionist calligraphy. Moreover, other calligraphers mostly employ broad-edge brushes that mimic the metal nib, but with its hair, it provides a certain amount of flexibility and room for a calligrapher to create various moves that stroke varies more

than the metal nib. Even western calligraphy is closer to being called broad-edge metal nib calligraphy; as stated in Chapter III, the first-century Roman capitals were first executed by brush, then chiseled on the stone. However, Chinese calligraphy is directly related to the brush; hence, vividness can be achieved depending on the skill of the calligrapher. It can be claimed that this criterion of the quality and the vividness of the stroke has become one of the desired features for contemporary calligraphers. Thus, they mostly prefer to employ a brush as the main instrument. I, myself, for my one of the series of calligraphy, employed the Chinese brush to experiment with its promised variety of possibilities that react to an amount of ink, the type of the moves, the speed, and the pressure of the hand. The gesture is the main theme of these works that will be presented in Chapter VII. The brush technique was acquired in Barcelona in one of the workshops I participated in that, mentioned in Appendix B. For me, it is the search for an enhanced perspective of the calligraphic mind that mostly builds around western calligraphy and exploration of the gesture that gives a highly intense visual appearance and transmits that feeling to the viewer.

Furthermore, Chinese ink is one of the most characteristic Chinese calligraphy and painting materials that differ from used in the West. The meaning of ink (*mò*) actually alludes to ink sticks, typically made of soot and glue (Li, Han, and Becker, 2018). It is a black and not liquid form, mostly in the stick form as in Fig. 13 (Yee, 1974), which is made of the soot of tung oil, coal, or pine wood with animal glue and perfume (Tingyou, 2004).



Fig. 13. Chinese ink stick, Photo. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

The ink must be prepared by rubbing on inkstone (Fig. 14) with water before practicing calligraphy. It is always preferred to use fresh ink; for this reason, it is supposed to be estimated at the outset how much amount of ink will be required to complete a piece.



Fig. 14. Example of ink stone, Photo. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

Since various western calligraphers, such as Brown, employs the Chinese stick ink, he also uses the ink stone to dilute the ink and experiment as reductionist approach of calligraphy as mentioned and presented in Chapter VI.

Another vital tool is paper, one of China's four great inventions; the rest is ranked as the compass, gunpowder, and printing. It is commonly said that paper was invented by Cai Lun (?-121) of the Eastern Han Dynasty; however, earlier papers were made of plant fiber used during the Western Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 25), earlier than the Eastern Han period. Xuan paper from Xuancheng and Jingxian in Anhui Province is one of the preferable papers by calligraphers and painters in China, which is made of the bark of the wingceltis tree and rice straw. It has to be treated with lime and bleached in the sun; then, the fibers will become pulp. Depending on the paper's absorption quality, the ink on paper reveals various appearances (Tingyou, 2004).

Apart from the Chinese brush, the rice paper is one tool that I also appreciated and employed for one of my series, as mentioned earlier. The aim was to be familiar with the paper and how it reacts to the ink and the brush. Furthermore, it provides a chance to experiment with a gesture that cannot be achieved with other regular paper that is used for the metal nib. It will be mentioned in Chapter VII through my personal works.

At this point, it will be significant to mention the script styles of Chinese Calligraphy briefly, but mostly focusing on the cursive script, particularly wild cursive script that is coined for Chinese calligraphers, highly innovative, Wang Xizhi (303-361), due to the reason that his wild script free from other calligraphy styles' restrictions, and assessed as a type of calligraphy closest to abstraction, which is a highly considerable feature of the western contemporary calligraphy as well. The relation will be mentioned in Chapter VI while observing the features of the contemporary calligraphy works with a highly abstract form closer to the asemic writing in which the semantic meaning of the text is eliminated, just as the word or a letter is eliminated in contemporary attitude. For this reason, before encountering it in Chapter VI, it will be appropriate to gain insight into one of the earliest examples of asemic calligraphy in which a word is assessed as an image. This feature is also encountered in the modern period of Western art and design, particularly works of Futurist and Dadaist artists, as well as the postmodernist graphic designers who created typographic works that break the rules -also mentioned in Chapter VI. Hence, this theme will provide a piece of important information to establish a link between the east and west in the realm of calligraphy comprehensively.

#### **4.1.6. Script styles of Chinese calligraphy**

Chinese written language was dated back three thousand years ago. As mentioned before, earlier examples took the form of pictograms and ideograms that were generally incised on the surfaces of the oracle bones or cast into the surface of bronze vessels. As ideographs were gradually standardized, various basic strokes were established, such as a disk being replaced with a circle, and a rectangle with four lines was facilitated for



carving. In brushwork, straight and slightly curved lines were started to be used as horizontal, vertical, or diagonal (Tanahashi, 2016).

Yee (1974) first points to the period of the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220), when there can be observed various changes in stroke-making, and after that period, he states that the evolution of different styles of calligraphy, which also brought changes in the shaping of the strokes can be observed, but there is not much change in construction and shape of the characters.

There are generally introduced five basic styles that can be assessed as script forms. These script forms developed in a logical sequence during the first millennium BC based on the growing use of the flexible brush and gradually increased awareness of the expressive potential (Barnhart, 1972).

They are ranked as respectfully "seal" (*chuan / zhuàn shū*) script of the Shang, Chou, and Ch'in periods (cs. 1500-206 BC) named after currently used on seals; the "clerical" (*li-shu*) script of the Han period (206 BC-AD 220) named after its apparent invention and preferred to use by government clerks; the "regular" (*cheng* or *k'ai*), the most formal of script types; "running" (*hsing*); and "cursive," or "grass" (*ts'ao*) forms of the Wei, Tsin, and Sic Dynasties periods (AD 220-618) (Fig. 15) illustrate the growing speed and great structural abbreviation (Fong, 1992: 123) (Wang, 2008).



Fig. 15. from left to right Seal Script, Clerical Script, Regular (Formal) Script, Running (Semi-cursive) Script, Cursive (Grass) Script, Source: Encyclopedia Japan, doyouknowjapan.com/calligraphy/, access: 21.02.2018.

The cursive script, among the others, not under any constraints, is assessed as free from the restrictions of other styles. It demands a differentiation of written characters, and there is no need to follow calligraphic rules strictly. Moreover, the structure of the strokes and dots of the character can be changed, assessed as an advantage by a calligrapher who can experiment and reveal his techniques and attitude through his cursive script writing (Tingyou, 2004). In a cursive script, the *italic* hand -examined in Chapter III- of the West can be lumped together in a sense. As examined in Chapter VI, an *italic* hand is stylized by Brown and constructed as a polyrhythmic form that allows him to create a rhythmical appearance that can be varied more than the regular *italic*. Brown calls it polyrhythmic calligraphy and often employs this style for his current calligraphy works.

It seems that with cursive style, which is executed with the extreme of speed and abbreviation in writing, the form of the brush writing, the essence of the appeal of calligraphy as an art form is achieved in the most immediate and dramatic ways. The essential principle of

the cursive script, as mentioned before, is to write each character as quickly and simply as possible but still represent the essence of its form. It leads to reduce a standard form to an abstraction, which can be imparted in continuously flowing movement (Barnhart, 1972).

It is stated that the range from the Seal script to the Cursive script precisely reflects the range from primitive form to an abstract art formally. Generally speaking, it is claimed that the evolution of Chinese writing moved in one direction, intending to make communication easier and more effective. Ancient characters are replaced with rectilinear characters by preserving the curved lines and complicated forms of much of the pictorial features of the earliest pictograms. Hence, the aim was always toward making writing forms to satisfy functional demands. The transition from ancient to clerical and regular script appears to have one of the most extensive Chinese writing system steps to make communication easier and more effective (Wang, 2008). It seems that it carries a similar tendency with the writing system of Western and the traditional calligraphy practices used for copying, preserving, or conveying the data through the manuscript. However, it should be kept in mind that the difference between the two systems starts with the written language's pictorial construction, which is based on a very distinct mentality mentioned earlier. Apart from the systematic differences, it should keep in mind that the perception of the written word is actually a major factor between two mentalities that creates a huge difference.

Tingyou (2004) mentions various calligraphers from Chinese history that are accepted as crucial figures with their creations in Chinese calligraphy in Jin (265-420), Tang (618-907), Song (960-1279), and Qing Dynasties (1644-1912). Especially in these four dynasties, it is stated that calligraphy had gone through significant changes. The style of the Jin Dynasty is assessed as a style with gracefulness in high esteem, whereas the style of the Tang Dynasty reversed it with rigorous rules. The Song Dynasty again reversed the Tang Dynasty's style through the influence of the essence of both dynasties, focusing on the expression of emotions and feelings of the calligraphers. Even before these times, some calligraphers were accepted as innovative to their own times with different attitudes. That means, before the modern era of China's opening to the world in the twentieth century, it will not be wrong to say that calligraphers were in search of unique, expressive ways through their calligraphy practices.

One of the most distinguished Chinese calligraphers, Wang Xizhi (303 AD-361 AD) is very well-known for his mastery of Chinese calligraphy, particularly in wild cursive script with the soft fluidity of his brushwork and carefully adjusted, delicately composite balance. He is credited with elevating calligraphy to the status of an art form. He has improved his style to a high artistic level and became one of the most influential calligraphers even by contemporary calligraphy practitioners. At that time, a new style of him was accepted as a milestone in the history of Chinese calligraphy (Tingyou, 2004).

Wang Xizhi thought the cursive script of that time was too restricted, and he proposed to develop a new style between the cursive and running scripts, which is called *wild* or *crazy*, one of the most unconstrained among

the other styles, free from other calligraphy styles' restrictions, and assessed as a type of calligraphy closest to abstraction (Tingyou, 2004). As mentioned earlier, about the theme of abstraction and the relation between contemporary western calligraphy, this calligrapher is highly significant as one of the first abstract calligraphers in China with the intention of the contemporary calligraphers of the twenty-first century.

Fig. 16 illustrates a short letter written in running script, in which Wang Xizhi sends greetings to a friend after a snowfall. It takes attention to the round, forceful and elegant nature of his brushwork. As in this image, much of his brushwork appears round and blunt, also dots and hooked strokes. Its character is assessed as even and balanced, maintaining a straightforward elegance and introverted harmony (Chinaonlinemuseum, n.d.).

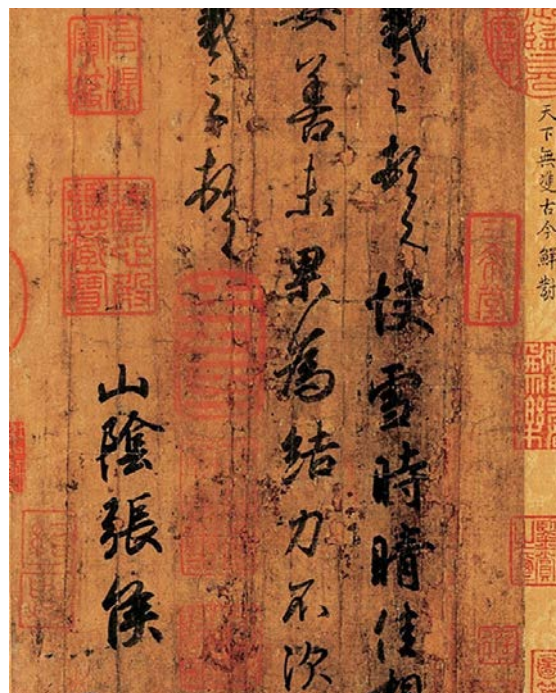


Fig. 16. *Timely Clearing After Snowfall* by Wang Xizhi, Source: China Online Museum, chinaonlinemuseum.com/calligraphy-wang-xizhi-snowfall.php, access: 21.04.2018.

In a *crazy cursive script*, the characters are mostly illegible; however, Zhang-Cziráková (2014) states that it cannot still be regarded as a pure abstraction due to the existence of the text and meaningful characters. The abstraction feature here is referred to as what it expresses through writer's feelings and emotions by the power of lines and artistic language of calligraphy. Apart from the content of the written text, viewer attention is attracted particularly by its beauty and the expressivity of lines, as mentioned earlier as aesthetic consideration of Chinese calligraphy. In some examples, the stroke's energy and the harmony of form are apparent; in some examples, the symmetry or significant contrast within the individual characters or entire composition with perfect coherence is afore in random composition (Zhang-Cziráková, 2014). What is encountered here through the attitude of the Xizhi is the similar attitude of the contemporary western calligraphers who gradually freed themselves from the restriction of the western calligraphy traditions and try to find a way to express

emotions and feelings. Expanding the boundaries, even breaching some of them conceptually and technically takes its roots from the Far Eastern mentality with the abstraction of the calligraphy.

Up until now, explanations have been given to provide knowledge about the Chinese calligraphy traditions, its historical evolutions with technical details, also the mindset behind the writing and calligraphy. It is highly considered that through the history of Chinese calligraphy, searching for individual expressiveness and tendency toward abstraction in a literal and functional sense has started from the beginning of the development of Chinese writing systems, which can be observed at very early ages. The writing system of China also seems to open this type of desire in its very own nature on the contrary to the Western tradition.

Before the nineteenth century, Chinese classical models and calligraphy techniques, including the aesthetic standards, were continued; however, by the end of the nineteenth century, this approach began to change, even diminished with the so-called modernity. It appeared in the calligraphy practices of Chinese calligraphers with the effect of cultural change that began at the end of the 1900s and the early 1920s when cultural movement emerged after the collapse of the Empire.

It is claimed that this transformation actually started in the 1880s, and till the end of the 1930s. There was as a new approach to calligraphy which became more and more individual, unreadable that beyond the stele-style; in addition to this, above mentioned calligraphers were in search of creating new models of writing, which would use to create readable, elegant, and easy to learn as calligraphic style that makes calligraphy more accessible to the audience.

A modernization process began in various fields of society, and China has opened to the rest of the World; at the same time, the usage of new materials and the emergence of new visions, which has influenced by Japanese calligraphy, are ranked among significant factors that affect these changes (Iezzi, 2016). Japanese calligraphy works had been already exhibited in China various times before the 1980s; however, it was only by the year 1980s that Chinese calligraphers started to visit Japan and had a chance to observe the Japanese calligraphy of that time themselves (Paderni, 2016). This connection with the Japanese Avant-garde calligraphy will be held in the following part "4.2.5. The Avant-garde Calligraphy of Japan" have caused to evolve a new approach to Chinese calligraphers' minds as a form of art. Here it should be underlined that there is a mutual interaction and inspiration between the West and East that highly affected the Western painters, who are shown as references of inspirations by the western contemporary calligraphers.

Furthermore, in China, artists who studied abroad in the twentieth century and returned to China mostly started to work in educational circles. It is claimed that they had a significant role in promoting Western art and promised to explore the possibilities of blending the East and West, which led traditional Chinese painting and calligraphy to develop (Da-Wei, 2012).

To sum up, this embranchment is said the result of modernization of calligraphy originated in the late Qing period (1644-1911), continued during the Republic of China (1911-1949) and the Maoist period,<sup>3</sup> hence

in the 1980s; it arrived at its points that becomes significant enough to cause a larger, more important change. That means it gradually started to lose the connection with the Chinese language and the traditional aesthetic considerations. Moreover, strict rules and stylistic standards slightly started to shift that the opening leads two sides of influences, between the East and the West. That means not only the forms, techniques, functions, materials, and media but also its own conception started to be seen differently. Barras (2002) explains this situation as follows "The content, too, is easier to understand. Calligraphy has become a livelier vehicle for personal expression, with feeling being conveyed far more directly than in recent centuries" (Barras, 2002: 11).

The cultural revolution took place from 1966 to 1976, and during this period, modern art (*zandai meishu*) was officially prohibited from publication and exhibition. With the death of Mao in 1976, unofficial art started to emerge in the late 1970s, which brought an avant-garde movement all around China around the mid-1980s (Hung, 2011).

The following part will be helpful in examining contemporary Chinese calligraphy, which will provide information to locate the current situation of Chinese calligraphy tradition with various interactions that started to occur with the cultural revolution of China. That also created a kind of mutual interaction between the West and East; hence it also reflects contemporary western calligraphy from various perspectives.

#### **4.1.7. Chinese contemporary calligraphy**

Chinese calligraphy, a vital practice of Chinese culture, is assessed as an integrated part of contemporary art. It is considered as an aesthetic appeal through its forms, in which strokes, their order, and placement in the composition are crucial. In order to master these features, the practice can still be indispensable, starting with learning the fundamentals in modern times as well. Moreover, it is claimed that it is also a time-honored practice, the human body as a contentious subject that serves as an instrument to reflect the beliefs of calligraphers (Yegorova, 2020).

Barras (2002) categorizes Chinese contemporary calligraphic art development beginning in 1947 into four: Classical, Modernist, Neo-Classical, and the Avant-garde. Classical calligraphers are described as artists who preserve tradition; neo-classicists seek to revive ancient traditions by fusing modernity. While, modernists search for revision of the art form structurally and conceptually in the middle of the 1980s,

<sup>3</sup> Mao Zedong (1893-1976) was a Chinese communist revolutionary who was the founder of the People's Republic of China; he was also a calligrapher and a poet that praised revolutionary action, used traditional poetic forms, and his calligraphy was widely showed than that of any other leader. Under Mao, on the street, words were occasionally displayed on banners or signs with slogans. For these revolutionary slogans, bold and block-like styles were preferred, with no resemblance produced through the use of the brush (Ebrey, n.d.). With Maoist directives, the aim was "reform of writing for the convenience of the masses" (Iezzi, 2016: 77), which is assessed as fundamental for the emergence of the Modernist movement mid-1980s. Calligraphers started to excel at painting and calligraphy and introduced painterly qualities into calligraphy, also pointed at as a new direction for calligraphy's future. Calligraphy started to practice in the service of socialism and the working class by employing big-character posters (*dazi-bo*) as a means of expression of the masses to convey a common political ideology. This usage also affected various artists such as Gu Wenda (b. 1955), Xu Bing (b. 1955), and Wu Shanzhuan (b. 1960), which is assessed as fundamental for the emergence of the avant-garde movement in the mid-1980s. that is also claimed that the panorama of calligraphy was chance. Generally, practices appeared in two directions: one is traditional, and the other is the avant-garde (Iezzi, 2016).



which heralds a new genre of the art. However, modernists still keep the classical idea alive in a modern context; in contrast, the avant-garde artists leave the convention by questioning how to open up new forms of personal expressions beyond conventional forms and thinking by fusing the calligraphic image with technique and modern forms of conceptual and performance art.

According to Iezzi (2016), these mentioned four currents together reflect the main pieces of the contemporary Chinese calligrapher. However, it is claimed that among the four, only the modernist and avant-garde movements, which testify to a different set of parameters, a different temporality, and spatiality, led to a significant transformation of calligraphic art that adequately reflects the Chinese contemporary culture's fast change.

On the other hand, Hung (2011) underlines that the notion of contemporaneity which refers to a sudden change in attitudes of the artist after 1989, starts with the 80's modern art and continues with 90's contemporary art, not as two consecutive trends, rather two disconnected activities that are conceived in separate schemes.

Chinese art appeared in a different look, in which the mass movement energy was diminished completely. Instead, numerous individual and smaller-scale experiments emerged with the common concern consists of "art medium and language, identity, the public function of art, and globalization (Hung, 2011: 37). It was stated that around this time artists, working with independent curators also started to create new exhibition venues and commercial platform for their works. Hence, in the early 1990s, the term contemporary art (*dangdai yishu*) replaced modern art through appearing the covers of books and in exhibition titles. Hung (2011) has termed this phenomenon as a contemporary turn in post-cultural revolution Chinese art.

In contemporary turn, abandoned or moved away from the modernist undertaking, is assessed as a major shift in terms of how history is thought. Here, it is underlined modern and contemporary, in historical context, indicate two different ways to contextualize post-Cultural Revolution Chinese art (Hung, 2011). Looking at the western calligraphy, it is difficult to point to a certain year to distinguish and called as contemporary; however, as mentioned in Chapter III, the nineteenth century is assessed as the modern period of western calligraphy, when the ancient styles started to be reevaluated and revived by the calligraphers and artists.

It is possible to say that it is a period that does not mean a complete departure from the past, which we can think of as a re-evaluation, but when it began to be seen as an art form for calligraphy, a more autonomous field in which individual approaches could be experienced. The functionality of the written word was still dependent on the western perception of writing mentioned in Chapter II, which is considered an aid for speaking and language.

On the other hand, it can be claimed that from the end of the twentieth century, so-called abstract, expressive, experimental western calligraphy started to be encountered mostly with the lack of any readable texts, words, or recognizable letters. It is the time that can be called

contemporary, that can be understood as a sharp distinction from the tradition visually and conceptually. It will be discussed in Chapter VI.

The first exhibition of Modern Chinese Calligraphy, as a representative of the birth of the Contemporary Chinese Calligraphy of the modernist movement, was held in October 1985 at the National Art Museum of China in Beijing, in which 72 artworks were displayed. Among the participants, there were famous artists, namely Gu Wenda (b. 1955), Xu Bing (b. 1955), Wu Shanzhuan (b. 1960), Luo Qi (b. 1960), Zhu Qingsheng (b. 1957), Shao Yan (b. 1960), Yang Jiechang (b. 1956) a few. Their attention was focused on a revolutionary reflection on calligraphic art, and they were assessed as the pioneers of the avant-garde calligraphic movement, who also took part in the first exhibition on experimental art in 1989 in China entitled "China/Avant-Garde Art Exhibition" (NAMOC, 5th-19th February). This exhibition is focused on the reflection on language and writing. Their works were assessed as neither calligraphy nor painting but intermingled both calligraphy practice and painting conceptions. There, the terms "expressionist calligraphy" or "abstract art" were linked with the pictographic shape of the characters and the combination of dots and lines in an abstract way. It is claimed that the year 1989 is memorable due to what it represented as a turning point in the development of Chinese calligraphic art. From this moment, various classical calligraphers looked back to the great tradition of the old masters, while the modernist artists continued to focus on experimentations that reflect themselves as distinguished outcomes (Iezzi, 2016).

Looking at the West, in the 1990s, there was debate about whether calligraphy is a "servant of a text" (Stevens, 2013: 25). It is the phrase that has been applied by scribes referring to being obliged to prioritize clear written text and communication rather than artistic expressions. Furthermore, an art symposium and exhibition were held at Saint John's Abbey and University in Collegeville, Minnesota, in 1996, and the book was published under the name of *Servi Textus: Servants of the Text*. It is mentioned various inquiries about the illegibility of texts that bothered several scholars without comprehension of the idea of writing something that no one can read (Brown, 2017).

So, at the end of the twentieth century, it is evident that western calligraphy with its abstract form was a highly controversial area, which led calligraphers to make various categories such as functional, interpretative, and expressive as British calligrapher and teacher Sheila Waters did. In comparison, the functional category covers the traditional calligraphy mindset, interpretative consists of interpreting the word and creating writing empathetic to the text without necessarily being illustrative or graphic. Expressive calligraphy was assessed by Waters as the most personal creation that reveals the emotion, energy, and discovery of the calligraphy, which reminds the core features of the Far Eastern calligraphy tradition.

To sum up, it can be stated that Chinese calligraphy tradition is still highly influential on contemporary Chinese calligraphy, especially through the modernist and avant-garde movements. In order to gain deeper understandings of contemporary Chinese calligraphy, it will be examined modernist and avant-garde movement through various

calligraphers' works. It will provide information to understanding the concepts and how the perception of Chinese calligraphy has transformed.

#### **4.1.7.1. Modernist approach of contemporary Chinese calligraphy**

Modernist calligraphers are inherited deeply rooted in the Chinese writing system, even expanding the boundaries of the rules of Chinese classical aesthetics for stylistic explorations mentioned earlier. With this feature, it takes resemblance with the modernist period of calligraphy -the so-called revival of calligraphy mentioned in Chapter III- the time that ancient scripts started to be rehandled and revised with the slight interpretation of the modernist calligraphers. That means the Notion of the scribe as a mere copyist started to change, and the creativity of the calligrapher was brought to the table by using a wide variety of tools and materials apart from the traditional ones. It was the time that the fluidity of the line and the quality of the letterform (Mediavilla, 1996) were demanded. In other words, mainly still employed the letters and texts that were interpreted with more expressive strokes, including brush and a wide range of materials, still can be traced as solid visual references from the past and the western writing mindset that related to the spoken words through recognizable letters and readable text that has a concern to be read.

Iezzi (2016) states that the pictorial approach to Chinese calligraphy and using the traditional tools is based on the fact that all the Modernist calligraphers are trained as calligraphers and/or traditional painters who do not prefer to abandon the explicit references to their origins. It reminds the preoccupation of generations of modern Chinese intellectuals and artists that Hung (2011) underlines: how one positions oneself between tradition and modernity and between East and West. The same issue can be considered for Western contemporary calligraphy, which will be examined in Chapter VI and discussed through my personal practices held in Chapter VII. Hence, it can be said that the contemporary period of eastern and western calligraphy has common features in that sense. Also, it is kind of indispensable due to the reason that the interaction between these cultures. It will be mentioned in the following parts.

Examining the contemporary Chinese calligraphy work, it can be realized that calligraphers prefer to reduce the number of characters that they employ and reshape them in their way; using of few essential characters with high aesthetic values is the main point due to their aim, which is to combine the aesthetic pleasure and meaningful content. These characters since similar to symbols that enlighten the viewer's mind; it can be understood the meaning of what they are carrying without knowing exactly what the meaning of the written character is. That means the modernist calligrapher is in search for to reshape the characters creatively or at least part of them to take the attention of various audiences (Iezzi, 2013), as in the case of modernist approach of western calligraphy.

Among the various script styles mentioned earlier, the cursive form and the *seal script* are more appropriate for their approaches. The cursive form, with its closure to abstraction, and the *seal script* with its most pictographic characteristics provide an opportunity for modernist

calligraphers to express their attitudes. As mentioned, for western calligraphy, an italic hand can be shown as parallel to the cursive form of Chinese calligraphy.

Looking at Chapter III, in which various ancient western scripts are held, the Gothic hand, with a wide variety of forms among the other ancient styles relatively, may be assessed as the one that is closer to interpretation through its compact forms that allow creating a woven-like image. With these features, it is understandable that contemporary calligrapher Meulman mostly employs and interprets the Gothic style, and Brown creates his personal style of the italic hand that is mentioned in Chapter VI.

As an example, the Taiwanese woman calligrapher Tong Yang-Tze (b. 1942) (Fig. 17-18) used the cursive script, particularly "wild cursive script," and in some works combined the seal script, gradually developed her own visual language after her previous training in different mediums and art-forms with the inspiration by texts from Confucius. Her influential calligraphic works in cursive style are assessed as the extreme abstraction after her interpretation. Characters of the cursive style are distorted but still can be deciphered generally. That means she prefers to continue the dialogue through her work between content and style, meaning, and gesture. There can observe variations in the lines or strokes' width and character, which seems to sustain the effect of movement that is executed through each character. Tong's work is assessed as beautiful both in the way of visual and profound in content (Kuo, 2010).



Fig. 17. *Knowing is not Difficult, Doing is Difficult (Zhi zhi fei jian, xing zhi wei jian)*, Tong Yang-Tze, 1997, ink on paper, Source: Kuo, (2010: 107).



Fig. 18. *Be Tolerant, So You Will Be Great; Have No Desire, So You Will Be Strong (You rong nai da)*, Tong Yang-Tze, 2007, Source: Kuo, (2010: 107).

Figs 17-18 also points to another significant characteristic of the modernist movement; the pictorial or graphical approach to calligraphy. Using colored ink or flecked ink with water started to be explored, apart from all the techniques of the ancient master that had been already employed. It should be underlined that modernists do not actually reject the use of four treasures, which both calligraphers and painters used; instead, some personal preferences and interpretations came into play, as Tong Yang-Tze, who usually employed gilded paper instead of plain paper (Ibid.).

Apart from Tong Yang-Tze, Wang Dongling (b. 1945) and Gu Gan (b. 1942) are assessed as one of the most significant modernist Chinese artists, whose works are described as latent between calligraphy and abstract art, which focused on abstract lines and their notions (Paderni, 2016). With the examination of Wang Dongling and Gu Gan's works, calligraphy's modernist concept will be deeply enlightened.

Wang Dongling (b. 1945) is assessed as one of the most successful modernist calligraphers in China, reflecting this ongoing transformation during the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s. He survived the turmoil by his big-character posters generally consisting of a revolutionary slogan or political phrase written largely to post publicly. His works are influenced by his experience in the United States from 1989 to 1992, when he was a visiting professor at the University of Minnesota and the University of California. He started to develop a new form of composition fused with traditional Chinese aesthetics with modernist art with a solid traditional art education that he has.

Fig. 19 illustrates his distinctive style, written in cursive script, well-characterized by his own brush strokes in which upwards or downwards turns sharpened with angles and long breathers. He commonly employs indecipherable Chinese characters in his works, and it makes his work closer to abstract painting than to calligraphy. It is underlined by Kuo (2010) that Dongling's experiment with calligraphy has been significantly influential on the whole development of contemporary calligraphy and ink painting (Kuo, 2010).

Fig. 19. *Untitled*, Wang Dongling, 2006, ink on paper, Source: Kuo, (2010: 111).





With his experiences in America and Japan, he became skilled to combined traditional practice with foreign elements such as photos, envelopes, and magazine sheets (Fig. 20), apart from his newspaper collages (Fig. 21).



Fig. 20. *Feeling and Passion*, Wang Dongling, 1999, ink on newspapers, Source: Iezzi, (2013: 167).



Fig. 21. *Calligraphic Styles and Bodies: Weston's Heart Sutra - A*, 2012, Wang Dongling, ink on magazine sheet, Source: Iezzi, (2016: 94).

Iezzi (2016) states that the purpose of this series reveals an integration between China and the West, traditional and modern approaches, also local and global cultures. The content of subject is the Heart Sutra; the most significant ancient texts for Chinese calligraphers consist of the teaching of Buddhism. The Heart Sutra is a traditional text that is assessed as both traditional and modern through its content and its written history; various ancient masters and significant modern calligraphers have also written remarkable copies of it. It physically embodies ancient Chinese calligraphy, also through the work of Dongling, for instance, transforming from tradition to modernity.

It can be said that the aesthetic considerations of Chinese calligraphy such as dynamism, vitality, irregularity, harmony, and solidity of brush stroke with its bone structure (skeleton), also calligraphic compositions are one of the main concerns of Dongling, which reflects that his works still profoundly focused on Chinese cultural references. Hence, his work's essence is not that different from the ancient concept in a technical way as well as its aesthetic taste, as in the case of the modernist western calligraphers.

It is also stated that the modernity of Dongling's works is manifested through photography, a modern form of art, which is also reproduced in an art magazine, a contemporary mass media.

Dongling uses a magazine sheet instead of Xuan paper; he reproduced the English title of the picture, the name of the portrayed woman with its date written by the Arabic numeric system. The naked photograph of a model (Fig. 21) represents the modernist approach to photography with its pure, simple, and real forms focused, which was not a modern subject until recent years of China. It can be assessed as an attempt to use non-Chinese elements in the framework of Chinese tradition.

Moreover, the calligraphy of China, written by ink as a colophon, is likened to traditional Chinese painting. It represents the Chinese integration, and the photography is assessed as from the West. Chinese writing here is a local culture in the traditional sense, and the nude, magazine sheet, and multi-lingual usage are assessed as a global cultural element.

Iezzi (2016) also states that modernists, such as Dongling, are decisive in including Western elements in their works since they will be more attractive and take the Western audiences' attention. As stated earlier, international communication led audiences to change from the 1980s, and also, they were influenced by Japanese and Western art, which also became one factor for these foreign elements in their works.

It is noteworthy to mention various conflicts and questions when Dongling prefers to write indecipherable Chinese characters in his own way, how the one can understand whether it is a Chinese character or not, or in other words, can it be still considered calligraphy.

According to various statements by Tingyou (2004), Kuo (2010), and Iezzi (2013, 2015, and 2016), even though these works are in between calligraphy and abstract painting, they are still calligraphy due to various reasons, such as still reflecting its roots, which are rendered calligraphically. This issue will be mentioned in the following pages after the examination of the various artist with avant-garde perspectives.

However, it can be stated that with the modern attitude in Chinese calligraphy, even the calligraphers are trained as traditional calligraphers or painters and deeply rooted in the Chinese writing systems; it can be observed here through these given examples that calligraphers are willing to expand the boundaries of the rules of Chinese classical aesthetics for the sake of stylistic exploration and experiences with references to their origins. These features are highly similar to the modern calligraphy mentioned in Chapter III, especially with the references to various ancient script styles that were revived and adapted to the needs of the nineteenth and twentieth century. Even the functionality was one of the core elements of that time; still, the stylistic reflection of each calligrapher can be assessed as an attempt to expand the boundaries of the tradition in the West as well.

#### **4.1.7.2. Avant-garde approach of contemporary Chinese calligraphy**

Avant-garde calligraphy is assessed as an acute notion of departure from a previous position. Here, with the previous position, it is referred to as the modern calligraphy attitude that is deeply rooted in the Chinese writing system and has its fundamental references from its tradition.

From the mid-80s until the end of the 90s, the first phase of avant-garde movements evolved in conceptual and abstract currents as its main trends, which performance was followed. In this period, the individual initiative of a single artist's tendency was the main decisive on the development of the movement.

As mentioned earlier, avant-garde artists are searching to go beyond the ancient structure and themes for the evolution of calligraphy in which the genuinely ancestral characters are conserved and reproduced in development. They want to experiment first on a global level, opening to the international market to be more intelligible for viewers outside of China. With this intention, it is witnessed the new currents, namely multimedia art, contemporary dance or graffiti art, and avant-garde artists, want to be a reconciliation between local and global phases through using calligraphic forms or concepts. Here, it can be claimed that these features of avant-garde calligraphers resemble contemporary western calligraphers, who mostly create highly abstract calligraphy works that herald conflicts and discussions, whether they are abstract paintings or calligraphy. It is evident that eliminating the vernacular elements and graphic features that belong to certain writing systems give contemporary calligraphers to reach an international level that people can satisfy the work through its plastic values. Hence, it can be claimed that not being able to read what is created here proves that the westerner's mind still tends to associate calligraphic works with painting rather than writing. However, as held in Chapter VI and Chapter VII, the claim of the contemporary calligrapher, whether the work has a close resemblance with the abstract painting, still consists of the tradition and culture of calligraphy and performed with the intention of writing. That means the abstract stroke or line is executed by writing-like gestures, which provide room to call it calligraphy.

When Chinese avant-garde artists called themselves modern during 1985, with the 1990s, these artists started to identify themselves as participants of a delayed modernization movement that aimed to transform China with the Enlightenment model based on a Western, embracing western literature and philosophy that newly translated and created works that grounded on reproduced. Western images, which refer to the West's long-past styles and theories, started to be used as their direct models.

Hung (2011) explains this issue as follows "The meaning of their works as "modern art" was located not in the original historical significance of the styles and ideas, but in the transference of these styles and ideas to a different time and place" (2011: 37). They leave the convention by

questioning how to open up new forms of personal expressions beyond conventional forms and thinking by fusing the calligraphic image with technique and modern forms of conceptual and performance art.

Iezzi (2013) points out two main currents actually characterize the Avant-garde movements: one focuses on the alternation of the form of the writing system and language (such as Xu Bing, Fig. 22-24), and the other focuses on calligraphic line (Wei Ligang, Fig. 37-38) assessed as the performance in itself with abstract beauty. The traditional calligraphy has been on the side of the art of writing the Chinese characters, whereas Avant-garde seems to split into these two currents and becomes "the art of writing (unmeaningful) characters" or "the art of writing (painting-like) lines" (Iezzi, 2013: 168).

Xu Bing (b. 1955) is assessed as one of the most inventive and internationally famous of all Chinese contemporary artists with his questioning of the nature of language as well as the nature of the art (Kuo, 2010) through meaningless repetition of the strokes, fake characters, texts that cannot be read but look like Chinese. He combines his earlier training fused with Chinese tradition with a willingness to subvert conventions for the sake of creating a new approach.

Unlike the modern concept of the 1980s, Xu Bing envisioned "his enlightenment as the construction of an interior time and space through meaningless repetition." For him, "there was a sudden achievement of knowledge, a contemporary moment outside the flow of history" (Hung, 2011: 39). His works have a kind of temporal significance that creates a perception of the actual Chinese text, but they are not. This feature reminds the attitude of ancient Chinese calligraphers with their illegible wild cursive writings, which are also assessed as references and inspirational works for western asemic writers of the 1990s mentioned in Chapter VI while examining the contemporary western calligrapher, among whom are produced works with the concern of attributing a value beyond the literal meaning of the word by getting rid of the functional situation that is loaded on the writing that is also discussed in Chapter II.

Fig. 22 illustrates his innovative writing systems called "New English Calligraphy" or "Square Word Calligraphy," which represents one of the most comprehensive attempts for the sake of enlightening Chinese Calligraphy in a way that was never implemented before. Xu Bing created an entirely new writing system based on the English alphabet using components of Chinese characters considering their shapes and rules. As mentioned earlier in the part of a Chinese writing system, Chinese characters are constructed by several written strokes in the same imaginary square. In this work, Bing writes each word made up of several letters written in the same square, and each word becomes equal to one Chinese character. He also developed a method to follow strictly to place a proper letter in proper order invented by him to write English words correctly, as in Chinese writing systems, which have strict rules, proper strokes order to construct characters.



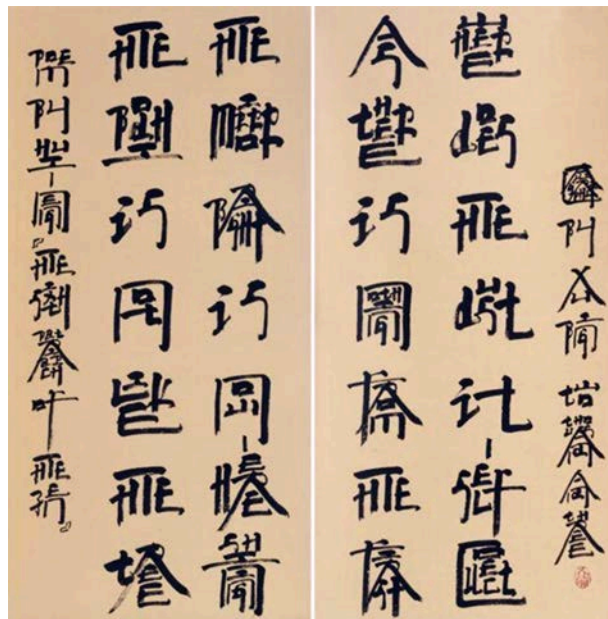


Fig. 22. *New English Calligraphy: Hui Neng the Sixth Patriarch of the Zen*, Xu Bing, 2003, ink on paper, two vertical scrolls, Source: Paderni, (2012: 104).

Moreover, he publishes the training method, which is similar to the traditional calligraphy training (Fig. 23), explaining its calligraphic rules and methods, and proper letter orders, and also gives exercises for whom want to practice. In Fig. 23, the text is supposed to be read from left to right as in the West and from top to bottom as in Chinese. The text is quoted from a Buddhist scripture translated into English (Paderni, 2016).

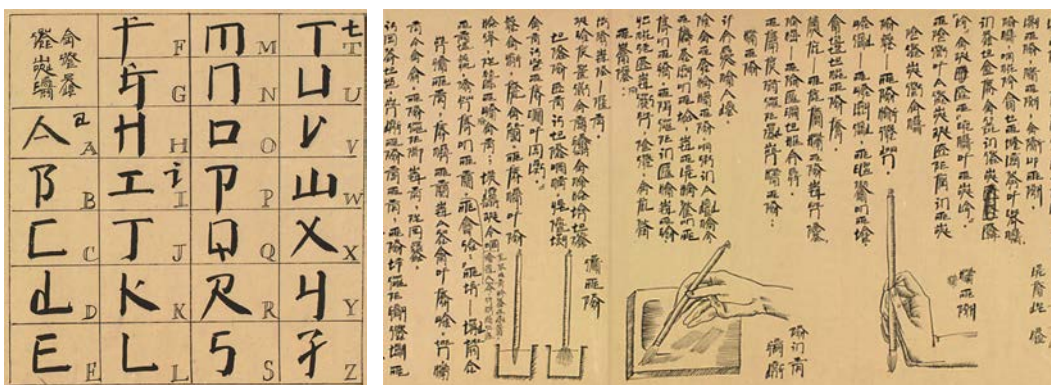


Fig. 23. *An Introduction to Square Word Calligraphy*, Xu Bing, 1994-96, Source: The Met 150, [metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/73325](http://metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/73325), access: 21.05.2018.

Here it is stated that it can be easily traced the reminiscence of Chinese calligraphy compositions; even Xu Bing is an avant-garde artist. He seems not to leave his local and original culture in his work completely. First, it can be observed that the work is composed of two vertical scrolls and divided into five columns. The title (at the beginning) and its colophon (in the end) are written in small characters. In each writing unit, the word is written in English, placed just as in the ancient Chinese writing, which reveals the Chinese reference comes from Chinese tradition. It is also stated that the text was originally written by a Chinese monk as a universal message in the poem form, which encouraged "go beyond the sensible and phenomenal realm of experience into the spiritual realm of "emptiness" to experiment what he called the "real" existence. For him, the essential meaning lies just beneath – or through – the



material world embodied in the "dust" image" (Paderni, 2016: 106). This work reminds one of the attitudes of the contemporary calligrapher Brown held in Chapter VI with his selected theme of one of the ancient manuscripts, the *Book of Kells*, and interpret it or takes references from the history of the known ancient scribe and create an eclectic work that he combines with past and present elements in one calligraphic work. This issue raises the claim that contemporary calligraphers still take their references from the past and the tradition of calligraphy in various ways, which will be seen in Chapter VI.

Iezzi (2016) states that in this work (Fig. 23), Xu Bing achieves to combines and intermingles the tradition and modernity, East and West, local and global culture; even he employs the traditional tool of Chinese calligraphy, it is obvious that the system of writing is not Chinese anymore. It is also stated that the artist conveys his message in a way that can be readable and understandable in the English language. In a sense, he invents a new type of writing, a new language that can be comprehended in world wide sense. Considering the modernist Wang Dongling approach, which is in search of a new visual code to form his figurative images with the same intention -to be readable by a non-Chinese viewer- Xu Bing tries to achieve it with one of the most known linguistic codes -English. He manages it by keeping the appearance of the Chinese calligraphic form. Iezzi (2016) claims that it is completely a new form of creation that no longer fundamentally belongs to only Chinese culture but rather a well-balanced mix of Chinese and Western at the same time (Paderni, 2016).

Fig. 24 illustrates another well-known work of Xu Bing entitled "Book from the Sky," an eponymous installation firstly displayed in Beijing in 1988. This set of four books consists of four thousand invented characters which cannot be deciphered; however, the composition, printing, and binding of the books are strictly bounded to Chinese tradition technically.

Fig. 24. *left* *Book from the Sky*, Xu Bing, ca. 1987-1991, Source: Paderni, (2016: 87).

*right* Detail from the work, Source: Xu Bing official website, [xubing.com/en/work/details/399?classID=1&type=class](http://xubing.com/en/work/details/399?classID=1&type=class), access: 21.05.2018.



In its first exhibition in 1988, multiple copies of books were put on the floor in rows, and large printed paper sheets covered with the same characters were hung on the wall from the ceiling. At that time, it is said that only half of the carvings were ready. Within two years, Xu Bing finished a total of four thousand fake characters and printed four hundred books of indecipherable text (Hung, 2011). Through this work, it can be claimed that various fundamental questions are raised in terms of Chinese calligraphy and the essence of the Chinese culture, and the identity which is strictly bounded to Chinese characters (Kuo,

2010). With this manipulation of language, whether he subversive or distorted the conventions, or eliminated the semantic meaning for the sake of exploring a new way of expressive forms in Chinese calligraphy, or he actually combined his early training in Chinese tradition and developed an approach to abstraction focuses on the concept.

With the work of Xu Bing (Fig. 22-24), he still preserves the formal features of Chinese writing systems or compositions, the formal pattern arranged as calligraphic lines or marks. In this sense, aesthetics and the idea of the beauty of Chinese Calligraphy, which firstly focuses on strokes, lines, then characters, texts, and overall compositions, seem still similar. Even the readable characters that only Chinese viewers can understand become signs, undecipherable written characters without semantic meaning, which is assessed as "code of rational thoughts" or "code of emotional feelings" (Iezzi, 2013: 169) by contemporary calligraphers.

Looking at contemporary western calligraphy, once again, similar explanations and assessments will be made, as will be seen in Chapter VI. As mentioned already, focusing on the strokes, lines, and plastic aesthetics of the forms takes contemporary western calligraphy to an international level that is not limited or stuck to the traditional execution and application of western calligraphy. That makes it considered an autonomous art form, rather than rejecting the past, taking various references from it, and also inspired by other disciplines and other calligraphy traditions. Hence the result is highly eclectic, pluralistic work that is totally open to discussion and conflicts because Western calligraphy is no longer familiar and can be defined or described as before since the boundaries between writing, calligraphy, and painting started to dissolve. The main tendency in the West, as in the Far East, searching for beyond to represent a personal understanding of calligraphy through gestures.

At that point, it will be useful to pay attention to a vivid debate on Contemporary Chinese Calligraphy that Iezzi points at a modernist Wang Dongling and avant-gardist Wang Nanming with their contrastive opinions. This kind of conflictions is also seen in western calligraphy, which is mostly encountered through the statements and explanations of the literature as held in Chapter II about the definition and description of calligraphy, consisting of the term writing, lettering, and typography.

While Wang Dongling thinks Contemporary Chinese Calligraphy is still calligraphy, Nanming claims it is not calligraphy yet. From Dongling's point of view, contemporary calligraphy is characterized by two principal elements, which are the aesthetic flavor and its spiritual value, or in other words content of traditional calligraphy and the concept of contemporary art.

Using Wang Dongling's words, Iezzi points to the issue that in modernist calligraphy, creative action exists, which arose from traditional calligraphy as an interpretation of the concept of abstract art, still deeply rooted in the concept of tradition. It is remembered that the metaphor of abstract lines is mentioned back to ancient times, and the idea of abstract calligraphy is stated that gradually occupied the Chinese mind and became a significant feature in Chinese aesthetic perception.

From that time on, it is stated that the sensitivity toward an abstract form of art gained much deeper in Chinese people than in Western people. A quotation supports this claim through the claims of Dongling by Iezzi: "Eastern people have recently come into contact with Western Abstract art and this contact has (re)awakened the aesthetic power of Chinese abstract line" (Iezzi, 2013: 164). Here, Dongling underlines the abstract concept of Chinese, which has been already existed before the communication with the West.

Dongling also claims that the modern rendering of Chinese calligraphy, with its ancient references, still can be assessed as contemporary in terms of visual form and also in its content with his words: "... even if calligraphy is a very ancient and traditional art, in its modern use it is an expression of contemporary reality both in the form and in the content" (Iezzi, 2013: 164). It is evident that Dongling believes that contemporary Chinese calligrapher is supposed to have a great knowledge of Chinese classical culture and art as basic requirements as well as a modern way of thinking and cultural trends. To sum up, Dongling claims that contemporary does not necessarily mean a subversion of the tradition; moreover, fine taste and spiritual value of tradition can be seen as sources for new experiments. This thinking is close to my contemporary western calligraphy understanding and perception that is summed up after this research, and it will be presented through my personal calligraphy work in Chapter VII.

On the other hand, Iezzi continues the discussion by pointing at professor Wang Nanming's claim that "contemporary calligraphy is not calligraphy yet" (Iezzi, 2013: 168). According to Wang Nanming, this kind of practice is a sort of anti-calligraphy, whose productions seems to be a kind of deconstruction of traditional calligraphy. Contrary to Dongling, Nanming claims contemporary calligraphy and tradition are not linked in any way. He prefers to assume it as an independent avant-garde form of art that was influenced particularly by Western Abstraction. That means contemporary practices in the realm of calligraphy are not autonomous systems but rather an isolated form from calligraphy, a temporary/transitional concept reflecting the time when it is used. It seems Nanming is expecting the contemporary calligraphy to be more than just hinting at the ancient traditions of calligraphy. This issue is highly significant because a similar topic can be considered and discussed for contemporary western calligraphy with highly abstract form and concept. However, contrary to Nanming's statements, it is sincerely underlined that the calligraphy training, accumulated practical and theoretical knowledge, can be assumed under the title of calligraphy, which will be discussed in Chapter VI and Chapter VII.

Fig. 25 illustrates one of Nanming's Works called "shufa ball." *Shufa* is explained earlier in part "4.1.2. The concept of the word *shufa*," the word that refers to Chinese calligraphy, is not just the art and the disciple of writing but also reveals the written paradigm, representing the universal dynamism and the World energy (*qi*). In his works, Nanming prepares these "shufa balls" with paper, and with the number of them, he creates various forms; a canvas, two seats facing each other, and a ball. Each paper ball consists of lines written in ink. Here at first glance,

the lines may not directly remind the Chinese calligraphic strokes, in both ways, how they are applied and the overall composition created.



Fig. 25. *left Combination: Ball of Characters*, Wang Nanming, 1992, ink on paper, Source: lezzi, (2013: 173).

*middle and right, Shufa Balls*, Wang Nanming, Source: New York Art Official Website, [new-york-art.com/old/Mus-Pusan-Metamo-wang-3.php](http://new-york-art.com/old/Mus-Pusan-Metamo-wang-3.php), and [new-york-art.com/old/Mus-Pusan-Metamo-wang-2.php](http://new-york-art.com/old/Mus-Pusan-Metamo-wang-2.php); access: 14.05.2018.

However, Nanming prefers to direct the viewer to Chinese calligraphy with the title of his work: "shufa." He prefers new methods and new media instead of the traditional way of representing it. Even though advocates that avant-garde is closer to abstract art, it seems still blurry to insist it is a deconstruction of tradition or calligraphy in a sense. With his calligraphic background, considering the nature of *shufa*, even the final product reflects a highly distinct form from traditional calligraphy concepts; still, with the accumulated knowledge and training, it seems the abstract nature of avant-garde still not so similar to the abstraction concept of Western modernism which is mentioned in Chapter VI. The creation of contemporary Chinese calligraphy is based on the daily manual process of doing the works, writing the strokes and lines, or leaving the marks, hence creating an object over an extended period of time with accumulated skill and experience.

To sum up, avant-garde calligraphy is considered an international with a more self-sufficient system not stuck to tradition as if a new form of art between calligraphy and abstract painting closely connected with Western art, such as Abstract art, Abstract expressionism, Conceptual art, Performance art, Contemporary dance, Multimedia art, and even Street art/Graffiti art. It will not be wrong to claim that contemporary Chinese calligraphers are still looking at the tradition for the sake of opening a new perspective in their works since Contemporary Chinese Calligraphy lies in variability that underlines the diverse method and styles in search for being internationally comprehensible. As stated earlier, the influences of the West and Japan, which will be mentioned in the following pages, seem to encourage contemporary calligraphers to create more expressive forms without restrictions. This issue also can be observed in contemporary Western calligraphers. Since the influences are mutual, encountering the trace of the Chinese and Japanese calligraphy tradition are indispensable. What fascinates is how the western mindset renders these influences and reflects their calligraphic practice with or without consciousness.

It can be stated that contemporary artists prefer to use calligraphy as an esteemed medium representing a sign of hope and a progressive future through delivered provocative works, which challenge the perception and how the viewer connects with others in society. Calligraphers prefer to be bold in their intimate analysis of social issues and communicate how they can advance the future of art (Yegorova, 2020).

On the other hand, it has to be underlined that the body, the connection between the calligrapher and his materials, also works are still underlined, even highlighted. It is possible to see that music and dance analogies used to define Chinese calligraphy come to the fore literally in contemporary practices. In fact, this issue is not unique to the Far Eastern contemporary interpretations. It is possible to encounter very parallel examples in the contemporary Western practices observed in Chapter VI. Since music and dance analogies are not employed to define western calligraphy in a traditional sense, it would not be wrong to say that the influences and references of these contemporary western calligraphers mainly belong to the Far Eastern calligraphy mindset. For this reason, it will be appropriate to mention the performative aspect of Chinese calligraphy to frame this issue, which will provide information about the determination of the influenced aspect from the Far East.

#### **4.1.8. The performative aspect of Chinese calligraphy: The analogy with dance and music**

The performative aspect of Chinese calligraphy evidently influenced the contemporary artists mentioned in Chapter VI; almost all of these selected calligraphers describe their calligraphic works as a process and stress the period by revealing the exhibition of composition as a performance through the videos or frames that illustrate the working moment. In other words, they prefer to underline how they create rather than what is created, which is the mindset of Chinese calligraphy mentioned earlier.

Furthermore, in various pieces of literature, such as Mediavilla's (1996), Steven's (2013), and Brown's (2017), western calligraphy is described through the analogy of dance and music mostly. These situations make it cannot be overlooked the performative aspect, which provides a chance deeper understanding of this reference that can be traced through the statements of the contemporary artists who reveal it in their calligraphic works.

Traditionally written words of Chinese calligraphy are arranged in vertical columns supposed to be read from right to left. There is no punctuation in traditional text, and proper nouns are visually distinguishable from other words. For this reason, the writer is supposed to write characters by order with established strokes. It has to be ensured that the character is written exactly in the same order and way each time written. It helps memorize the character and guarantees balance and proportion through uninterrupted flow and rhythm. With this aspect, calligraphers are assessed with much in common with dancers, who are supposed to learn the choreographed movements to maintain compositional order (Delbanco, 2008).

As Addiss (2006) states, the Far Eastern calligraphy is defined as an interaction of movement and pause like a dance that refers to energy and stillness. It means that when one sees a completed calligraphy work, one may assume it is fixed in time permanently and unchangeably; hence it is still and quiet. However, with closer examination, as done with the earlier examples in this chapter, one can observe the full motion of brush lines that start, continue, and stop freely, only for



another line that can be related to each other even if it moves another direction. Hence, calligraphy is assumed as a living entity that breaths through its gestural movement and pauses depending on several factors, such as the calligrapher and the script style's characteristics.

Furthermore, it is significant to state that a sense of space aroused by *qi* in calligraphy is essential for creating space, also considered parallel to dance and music movement. Since the depth mentioned above is created by calligraphic lines and gestures in painting and calligraphy, it can also be rendered or depicted through other art forms that the artists can pursue.

Yee (1974) describes the analogy between dance and calligraphy with this statement:

A dancer's movements follow the rhythm of the accompanying music: a writer's movements depend upon the length and shape of stroke of the style he is practising, which may thus be said to correspond to the music. When I see a dancer executing a "stilted" step, I am reminded of the Regular style of handwriting; when she changes to a flowing movement I think of the Running Style; and when she breaks into a light, rapid step, I think of the Grass Style. And conversely, I believe one can derive more pleasure from contemplating a piece of Running or grass Style calligraphy if one holds in mind the image of a dancer. (Yee, 1974: np.)

Yee also pays attention to the beauty of Chinese calligraphy, which is of the exact nature of the beauty of painting and dancing. According to him, the calligrapher's aim is not to convey merely legibility and make the page look nice that can please the viewer as good Western manuscripts -he claims, but the expression of thought, personality, and design overall that can achieve by individuality through a lively conception of equilibrium forces by concentrated and constant scholarly study (Yee, 1974). Here, he points to another difference between the West and Far East concepts in terms of calligraphy. As stated in Chapter III, the function of writing on the manuscript is assessed as merely to convey the meaning of the text through the script style of that period lacking the individual traces of the scribe- at least in terms of writing and mostly seen individual act was complaints or various doodles on the margins, which were not allowed. Moreover, the various manuscripts consist of decorated or ornamented initials that represent the owner's wealth.

Furthermore, Sullivan (1969) states that performing before an audience of the painter was virtually unknown in the West until the twentieth century; however, it was common in China. He also underlines that it cannot be limited to the discussion just to painting; calligraphy must be included because both are assessed as forms of peculiar unity.

Pohl (2004) also states three characteristics which are needed to be highlighted here: the representational function of art is not that significant in the Chinese literati tradition, and how something is painted (how somebody is painted) matters rather than what is painted. In calligraphy, the main focus is on execution. These qualities are obviously still adequate for Chinese contemporary artists, whose calligraphic rendering in dance and music is inspired by them. The creative and expressive act becomes more significant than the outcome, whereas the actual product, compositional aspects of a work of art, is the second.

The appreciation of calligraphic work refers to the viewer's aesthetic pleasure here, precisely following the brush movement and tracing the lines playing on the surface. Hence, it points to the production's aesthetic (reception) rather than the product/object's aesthetic. Since Chinese calligraphy is executed with the unification of mind and body, in total concentration, the analogy with dance, as a contemporary interpretation, is not that different from the traditional mindset.

The quotation of Da-Wei (2012: np.) from a Chinese investor, linguist, novelist, philosopher, and translator Lin Yu-Tang (1895-1976), who says, "Chinese calligraphy is nothing but dancing on paper," seems to support the analogy between calligraphy and dance. Particularly with the maturity of brush usage, the art of brushwork has reached its peak. Da-Wei also points at the "mad" calligrapher Chang Hsu (or Zhang Xu), an eighth-century Tang-dynasty Chinese calligrapher, assessed as a highly emotional person. After watching a female sword dancer, Kung-sun Ta-Niang (the Lady Kung-Sun), and her performance called "Dance of the Two-Edged Sword," it is claimed that Chang Hsu experienced a profound inspiration, and his skill of wielding the brush had much advanced. He also won his fame and esteem with this writing style, called "mad grass" (Fig. 26, 27), which seems natural, carefree handling of the brush without any restriction or boundaries by any traditional rules.

Fig. 26 takes attention to the lines' motion, which was completed in one breath without any hesitation in the execution; also, a constant flow of the brush's high speed creates a dry effect, which creates unidentified parts of lines that provide ample room for the viewer (Da-Wei, 2012). It is evident that the aim is not to convey the meaning of the characters or written symbols but instead to reveal the movement that is assessed as very similar to good dancing.

Fig. 26. *Mad Grass* style of Chang Hsu, n.d., Source: Da-Wei, (2013: np.).



Fig. 27 illustrates another example of Chang Hsu's calligraphy work entitled "Stomach Ache Note," written in his famous *mad grass* style. Here, the rising and falling rhythm of his brush movement can be observed, which is actually compared with the movement of dancing. It is stated that both in sword dance and his calligraphy, emotional sensation arouses, even if Da-Wei claims that Chang Hsu here is like Jackson Pollock (1912-1956), who entirely assimilated his own emotional drama and forgot all established rules.



Fig. 27. *Stomach Ache Note*, Chang Hsu, n.d., Source: Da-Wei, (2013: np.).

In Fig. 27, it is evident that Chang Hsu disregarded the rules about the characters' structure, and instead, he preferred to distort and exaggerate them to satisfy his own will. Da-Wei also underlines that it can be assessed as an excellent example of Chinese calligraphy with abstract context. Once again, it is mostly underlined the concept and intention of the execution of the calligrapher, which is called abstraction, as well as the character's visual appearance that is distorted or exaggerated. However, still carries its roots of tradition at the same time.

Chinese calligraphy is also assessed as a source of inspiration for many contemporary Chinese dance companies. The Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan takes attention to one of the most prominent in the country, combines dance, martial arts, and meditation, and melts them in a visual motion with traditional Chinese aesthetics since the 1990s. Under the direction of choreographer Lin Hwai-min, Cloud Gate Dance Theatre staged a trilogy entitled "Cursive I" (2001) (Fig. 28), "Cursive II" (2003) (Fig. 29), and "Wild Cursive" (2005) (Fig. 30), which are inspired by the rhythm of the cursive script and its calligraphic movements (Iezzi, 2013).

Choreographer Lin Hwai-min inscribes entire parts with this statement: "the idea of a continuous flow of calligraphic writing movement, and its correspondences in dance" (Schwan, 2015: 135) and continues, "I am always fascinated by the way ink flows on rice paper tender and fluid, it creates rich shades, from intense black to misty white. I hope I can convey the rich dynamics of dancing characters in calligraphy and the serene and intense power of the empty space on the white paper" (Kwan, n.d.; np.). This is one of the significant statements that also had a massive impact on me that let me experience the Chinese brush, rice paper, and ink that is examined in Chapter VII as a designer and calligrapher focuses on the gesture, moves of the hand, and assess calligraphy as a process, a performance, so prefer to be actively involved, as most of the contemporary calligraphers also present the similar attitude as mentioned in Chapter VI.

In "Cursive I" (2001) (Fig. 28), the dancer performs in front of a screen on which the gigantic brushstroke images begin to appear simultaneously with the dancers' movement, which vitalizes the intricate composition. The dancers dress black as a reminder of the Chinese ink. The still frame images represent motion first, unlike the following part, where the calligraphy is projected on the dancers with writing-like movements and gestures (Schwan, 2015). By tracking the lyrical flows of lines, dancers' movements subtly reflect the martial arts-like positions (Kwan, n.d.). It is such an act of calligraphy writing by the dancer's incredible energy that mirrors its ancient roots through the ink flows.

Fig. 28. *Cursive I*, Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan, 2001, Source: Iezzi, (2013: 174).



It also draws attention to the dancer with water sleeves<sup>4</sup> is an analogy to the act of writing in terms of color, movement style, and projections. Long pieces of black ribbon costume, as if an extension of the dancer's arms, emphasize the motion and make the trace visible and flow in the air (Schwan, 2015).

The second part of the trilogy is "Cursive II" (2003) (Fig. 29), improvising the lighter of the five shades of ink related to Chinese writing and painting. The five shades of ink can be obtained from the black ink stick by controlling the amount of water in the brush. To achieve it, the calligrapher experiences and acquires it with time and practice and feels each individual's capacity to brush how much ink that held. According to Long, "Cursive II," the female dancers with light costumes and the men dancers with the dark and bare-chested evokes the eggshell-white ancient porcelain's quality and analogies the growing gaps and cracks (Long, 1984).

<sup>4</sup> "Water sleeves" is one of the popular ways deployed to represent the motion expressed in Chinese calligraphy for the sake of exploration in the work of transitional Chinese calligraphers, also one of the common elements in the Chinese classical dance repertoire in which dancers with unusually long sleeves manipulate to create winding patterns in the air (Mackerras, 1988).



Fig. 29. *Cursive II*, Cloud Gate Dance Theatre, 2003, Source: Youtube, [youtube.com/watch?v=nGQlrTs2FAw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nGQlrTs2FAw), access: 23.02.2019.

The final part of the trilogy, "Wild Cursive" (2007) (Fig. 30), draws the ideas of the essence of the wild cursive script, fast written relatively, simplified; hence almost illegible style that is one of the closest to abstraction with the most unconstrained and free from the rules, unlike the other styles as mentioned earlier. Long white scrolls of rice paper are used as a backdrop on which the black ink leaks slowly. While black ink creates wild patterns on the rice paper's surface, dancers move against and between the rice paper layers, echoing the lines of the ink that gradually become unreadable signs. The capacity to reflect on the personal feelings and emotions of the calligrapher embodies its visual artistic lines. One of the very well-known representatives of this style is Wang Xizhi (Fig. 16), mentioned earlier in part "4.1.2. The concept of the word *shufa*," who also put it higher artistic level (Zhang-Cziráková, 2014).

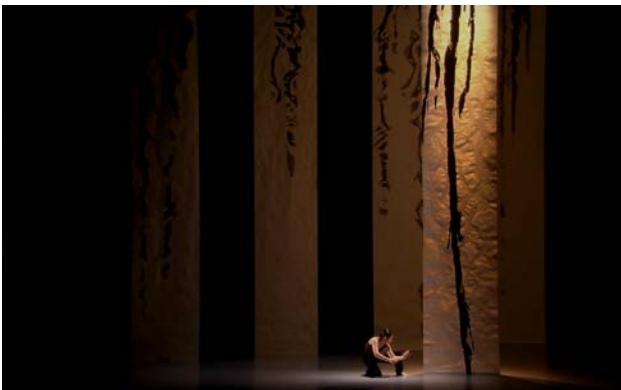


Fig. 30. *Cursive III: Wild Cursive*, Cloud Gate Dance Theatre, 2007, Source: Youtube, [youtube.com/watch?v=FU\\_3tRpSMvo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FU_3tRpSMvo), access: 23.02.2019.

As Schwan states (2015: 135-136), "The result is not a mere imitation of writing movements in dance, but rather a metaphorical preoccupation with the analogies between calligraphy and dancing." Here, it can be underlined that calligraphy is accepted as an art of control no matter how expressive it is. Calligraphic work manifests a balance of order and dynamism through all aspects of writing. East Asian thought, particularly classical Chinese philosophy, is assessed as an inspiration for somaesthetic research -defined as the cultivation of the experience involving the usage of one's body as a sensory appreciation. The ethical theory of China cherishes that critical self-examination is highly significant for moral progress, such as in the Confucian classic mentioned in part "4.1.3. Cultural mindset behind the Chinese Calligraphy" is a vital feature for harmoniously governing oneself, also family, and society. Hence, it is underlined the



importance of the body's crucial role both in art and in ethical living that can be achieved through self-knowledge and self-cultivation. Chinese calligraphy is perceived and appreciated as a crucial representation of the whole body's energy that involves not just the hand with the brush but also the arm, the body that guides movements.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the aim is to better frame the contemporary western calligraphy practices with its references, making it indispensable to examine the Far Eastern calligraphy, mainly Chinese and Japanese calligraphy, and their interaction with each other that manifest themselves through contemporary practices to provide various insights. Since Chinese calligraphy spread worldwide, first with the Korean peninsula in the second or third century, later to Japan in the seventh century, the Japanese students and monks spent time in China and returned with various Chinese calligraphy works were reached to Japan. Simultaneously, the Japanese started to create their works and styles, basically combined with Chinese styles and their aesthetics and written language. Since then, these changes have led to an emerging branch that differs from the Chinese. Hence, most Japanese script characters are adapted and adopted from Chinese characters' in about seventh-century essential structural parts. For these reasons, Chinese calligraphy as a topic formed a large part of this chapter.

On the other hand, as a significant part of the Far Eastern calligraphy, Japanese Calligraphy in which various aspects that are needed to be mentioned, such as the concept of calligraphy *shodo*, Zen and *Bokuseki* practices. These highly influential aspects affect the contemporary calligraphers mentioned in Chapter VI in a noticeable way. These calligraphers, namely, Meulman, Lampas, or Brown, claim their admiration of the abstract painting of the West. Among them, there are Pollock, Motherwell, and Tobey are mentioned in their statements. Here, the crucial issue was being aware of these artists, hugely interested in and influenced by the Far Eastern art, particularly calligraphy and painting, also the concept of Zen. That means contemporary calligraphers of the West mentioned in Chapter VI point at the Far Eastern calligraphy mentality by mentioning the abstract expressionist painters of the West. At its core, as a reference, it would be appropriate to underline the interactions and mutual influences between the East -particularly Chiana and Japan with the West. However, it will be more appropriate to look at the Japanese calligraphy briefly to provide valid information to locate these influences and references to the contemporary attitude of the western calligraphers.

## **4.2. Japanese calligraphy**

The calligraphy of Chinese tradition was introduced to Japan around 600CE. It became an essential part of the education of Japan's ruling families; moreover, through artistically copying Chinese poetry, royalty and the aristocracy started to study the art. Then, a style of calligraphy that is unique to Japan emerged with elements of pronunciation written with borrowed Chinese characters (Sato, 2014). Hence, it can be said that the history of calligraphy (*shodo*) in Japan is intrinsically related to China (Taylor, 2006).

Calligraphy has been cherished and valued in Japan as in China, as a method that reveals the calligraphic skill, cultural refinement, and inner character,

melted and fused in the written word. It is also assessed as a visual form in which the meaning-laden words and aesthetic space, negative and positive features also, the line's tension, the ink's bleeding, but more significantly, the contrast between the material -paper, ink, and the tone's nuances that created by the calligrapher exist. The trace of a calligrapher reveals his inner character, which constitutes a creative understanding of meaning in the scripts. While it is possible to be understood the calligraphy as merely aesthetic work, or a poem by the words alone, calligraphers attempt to meld these features together (Taylor, 2006).

As mentioned earlier, Japanese calligraphy is included in this chapter due to reason that it has an immense influence on western art and contemporary calligraphy, as in the case of Chinese art and calligraphy. These influences can be observed through the various contemporary western calligraphers that are examined in Chapter VI in both theoretical and practical frames. For this reason, it will be useful to gain insight into various points that have to be considered in Japanese calligraphy, the word *shodo* used for Japanese calligraphy, and various points that will provide information in terms of influence on Western contemporary calligraphy practices, namely practices of Zen monks, and Japanese avant-garde calligraphy, which affect the contemporary Chinese attitude and Western practices of contemporary calligraphy.

#### **4.2.1. Concept of the word *shodo***

Japanese calligraphy is assessed as one of the most popular and ancient brushwork disciplines, known as *shodo*. However, the preferred name during the medieval period of Japan was *shojutsu*, which means "the art of writing," later, in the time of the Edo period (1603-1867), with the Confucian influence, the word *shodo* (a way of writing) officially dominated calligraphy with the belief that writing could be clearly a way of meditation practice (Tara, n.d.). It is interesting while compare the concept of the western tradition and the etymological definition of calligraphy with the words *kallos* and *graphos*, which are translated to English as "the art of beautiful of hand writing." As discussed in Chapter II, as a concept, these two words have to be thought through to avoid any kind of anachronistic assessment. Looking at the concept of the *shodo*, the art concept is underlined, but also the stress is on how it is executed through the words "a way." It is significant that how traditional western calligraphy, without this type of concept in the past, transformed and reached a similar concept as in Japanese calligraphy through the interpretations of the contemporary western calligraphers.

Davey (2019) mentions Japanese calligraphy begins with the word *shodo*, which refers to "the way of Japanese calligraphic art" (Davey, 2019: np.). He states that the Japanese have achieved in designing their traditional arts and crafts as paths to meditation, in which mostly names refer to the way with the word *do* -form to say that they are practicing a way of life- such as *shodo* the way of Japanese calligraphy, *sado* the way of tea or *budo* the martial ways. It can be claimed that what has been practiced in the way that is accepted as going beyond a specific discipline, which also implies that practicing an activity goes beyond the limitations of that specific art and includes the art of living itself completely (Davey, 2019).

Sato (2014) explains that the word *sho* means "writing" and *do* means "way," (Sato, 2014: 10), and *shodo* refers to the Japanese study of

calligraphy. Here, he states that using the combination of the black ink (Sumi)<sup>5</sup> and the brush actually creates Chinese ideograms called *shodo*, the way of writing. To create *sho* as an art form, it is supposed to be prepared physically and mentally. That means learning breath control and focusing on the energy, which is called *qi* (chi) mentioned earlier, are required. The one who succeeded in this is called *sho* creator. When the one provides the concentration, internalized energy means being ready to pick up the brush and execute an ideogram in seconds. He takes attention to the regular writing needed to write personal letters or business documents, in which these preparations are not needed. Any adjustments or touch-ups to work are considered disrespectful, which will disturb the *qi*, and the work will be considered a dishonest representation of the artists' energy and personality. That refers to it is believed that *sho* reflects the writer's personality as in Chinese calligraphy.

Furthermore, Davey (2019) mentions the term beauty in terms of Japanese culture. First, he stresses the inner and outer beauty, which claims the unification of mind and body in artworks. It also refers to the artist's expectation, who is supposed to be as beautiful on the inside as his artwork on the outside. It is stated that inner beauty actually arises from the body's power, refers to vitality and stamina physically and the power of courage, decision, good judgment, determination, vitality, resilience, and resolve, and the power of ability, the potential for skillful accomplishment and far-reaching talent. These invisible qualities lead to the physical beauty of the work as visible as external beauty. It is claimed that the mind encourages and motivates the body, and the art exemplifies traditional Japanese beauty.

Moreover, the Japanese have been inclined to regard the unification of mind and body for a long time, and the beauty of the artwork is assessed through the balance within the work. It is stressed that symmetrical balance is static; for this reason, the point that the artist should stand is in the middle, which refers to not losing the balance, as well as not static, but asymmetric, not even but not uneven as in the case of Chinese art and the perception of beauty in China (Davey, 2019).

Davey (2019) claims that all art deals with beauty in different ways, and when the foreigner tries to learn a Japanese art, such as *shodo*, martial arts, or tea ceremony in Japan, an understanding of the outer form of beauty may be learned. In contrast, the inner part is not realized that easily. He underlines the term beauty, which is perceived in the West, seems stuck on just the physical appearance of the work. The concept here is given through an example of a younger Japanese, whose disciplines ending in "-do" are supposed to guide a way of living. With this accustomed to nonverbal communication, which is also different from the West, it is carefully acquired to observe everything in and out of the class given by the master. Here, Davey states that to understand and appreciate Japanese culture artfully, one must require real knowledge of the original culture (Davey, 2019).

<sup>5</sup> Sumi is a kind of ink that is created by burning oils of various kinds. The soot-carbon molecules are collected and fixed with animal glue and become a stick form. Sumi stick is supposed to be ground on a stone with water to prepare to use. The act of moving back and forth on the stone creates static electricity in the liquid. For this reason, it is also believed that grinding Sumi ink on a stone is another way to transfer human energy to ink (Sato, 2014).

In Japanese calligraphy, it is claimed that great virtuosity comes from the balanced interplay of opposites such as inner-outer, mind-body, dark-light. In art like *shodo*, the physical outer techniques reflect the mind and nonphysical principles. Grasping it can be achieved through years of close contact with the master, who has been attributed these artistic qualities not just in art but also in his life ideally. That means without interior beauty it will not be *shodo*, but will be *shuji* (handwriting). *Shodo* is explained as the way, *shuji* is just handwriting. When *shodo* is executed in a *mushin*<sup>6</sup> condition (empty mind) that also wields the brush, it will be the calligraphers' desired writing. Being present with concentration and practice are needed for *shodo*.

Moreover, Japanese understanding of aesthetics is often attributed to daily life as a form of the embodied feature as in art. They do not exist in isolation or separate from existence. Brush writing is a part of everyday life in Japan, and *shodo* is an appropriate example of Japanese art with its aesthetics reflecting life in a practical way intermingled with ordinary life, even enriching living. Japanese aesthetic's central principle is stated as its compromise spiritual as much as artistic principles, refusing to separate mind and body, art, and life. What is determined as significant here is to value artistic methods, principles, and aesthetic qualities (the practice of predetermined forms, elegant refinement, minimalism that refers to pure and clear expression without the complexity of decoration) common to most Japanese arts (Davey, 2019).

It is highly significant when considering the concept of beauty in terms of Western calligraphy, which is examined in Chapter II. It is mostly stated that beauty refers to the functional aspect of the letterform and how well the text is constructed on the manuscripts' pages, in respect of the main aim of writing: being readable that serving as a servant of text. It points at the visual appearance of the written form rather than the writer's attitude or his inner beauty. Hence, it will not be wrong to claim that Western and East tradition's beauty in terms of calligraphy is highly different from each other.

On the other hand, looking at the contemporary practices, the communication between two cultures seem to make them closer to each other in a sense with their overall attitude and intention of the writers; also the mindset behind it, how calligraphy is executed focusing on the process mostly rather than the production, and also the final language of contemporary calligraphy seems to become internationally comprehensible. This issue will be discussed in Chapter VI.

At this point, it is significant to look at Zen Buddhists' calligraphy, which profoundly influences the art of calligraphy in Japan and as a form of Buddhism that places importance on contemplative meditation and mental self-discipline and self-reliance. Because as a philosophy, Zen had a huge impact on Western art since the end of the 1930s in

<sup>6</sup> *Mu* is explained in everyday Japanese, meaning, "not, nothing, no, without, is not, has not, not any" (Davey, 2019: n.p). It is used as a prefix that refers to not having something. However, it suggests "nothingness" is a philosophical or metaphysical sense as claims. Moreover, Zen Buddhists are assessed as prominent proponents of *mu*. It is stated that the creative energy and the flow of the brushwork represent his brush movement which is created in a state of *mushin* (literally means "the mind without mind" (Way of Martial Arts, 2021: para.1).

all cultural fields, including painting, music, and science, in which with aesthetic consequences, the line gets the prominence importance, and the gesture started to be assessed as an artistic feature that gained a whole meaning in itself (Matute, n.d.).

Various artists of the 1940s, such as Tobey, were influenced by Taoism and Zen; the concept of emptiness and the idea of the void related to Zen were summarized through the artist's conscience. Considering the contemporary western calligraphers, namely Meulman, Lampas, and Brown, state their references from the Abstract expressionism and these western painters whom Zen and its concept already influenced, it is significant to include Zen and its features in this part.

#### 4.2.2. Writings of Zen monks and *bokuseki*

Zen Buddhism was brought to Japan from China during the Kamakura Period (1185–1333 CD). It incorporated the philosophies of Confucianism and Taoism, which are assessed as compatible with the sensibilities and approaches to life among warrior classes. These warriors and rich merchants, when they were retired, were given a raise as a class of populace, so-called the "literati" (Sato, 2014: 23) or *bunjin* (*bun* means literature, and *jin* means person). It is a class that skilled in reading and writing, especially involving paintings accompanied by Chinese or Japanese poetry, actually cultivated the art of calligraphy, painting, and the Chinese style of drinking brewed green tea that added to the tea ceremony became significant. The four ancient Chinese treasures mentioned before the brush, Sumi ink, inkstone, and paper, also became revered items. Moreover, a miniaturized container that functions as a container of water, *suiteki* -claimed as inspired by the teapot used in brewing green tea- also started to be used in both shodo and painting (Ibid.).

Zen has learned from the monk-scholar of its' time; mostly prominent abbots at significant Zen temples considered that painting and calligraphy of Chinese mode were assistance in the quest for a deeper understanding of Zen doctrine on emptiness and on the discourse of leaving no trace. Its' brushed characters are assessed as embodiments of the dharma rather than assessed merely signs which are pointing towards it (Tara, n.d.). For this reason, it was encouraged various arts thrived in the name of Zen practices. Japanese monks trained in Zen and Chinese literature used to compose Chinese-style poems, writing their verses on paintings, usually created in ink, illustrated typical Chinese images of birds, plum blossoms, orchids, bamboo, and landscape (Murase, 2002).

Addiss (2011) states Zen monks are among the artist with modern attitudes beside others, namely *waka*<sup>7</sup> poet-calligraphers, *haiku*<sup>8</sup> masters, Chinese-style literati, and professional calligraphers. These artists with modern attitudes were divided into these categories because they started to locate themselves differently from each

<sup>7</sup> The word *waka* refers to a Japanese poem, also known as *tanka* means "short poem," with a form that is so basic to Japanese literature still studied and written today (Heinrich, n.d.).

<sup>8</sup> *Haiku* is the 17-syllable Japanese poem, developed in the seventeenth century, still, a popular poetic form derived from an older form *waka* (Britannica, 2022).



other, and each artist of these categories has emerged from different traditions and reached different viewers and patrons. Even these groups sometimes overlap with each other with boundaries; they offer a method to approach which reaches a vast number of artists, schools, styles of Japanese calligraphy since 1886.

It is highly considered that, whereas Zen is not dependent on the written word theoretically, calligraphy is used as one of the most significant supplementary that convey what was not stated orally. Writings by Zen monks are called *bokuseki* which means "ink traces" (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2017) that is created by Zen Buddhist monks in a meditative state.

In Chinese, the same word *moji* was originally put into practice in the art of writing in general; however, in Japan *bokuseki* is used as a term, particularly for work written by Chinese and Japanese calligraphers. It also consists of Zen monks' official and private correspondence, their wills, and testaments. Among all, Zen master's certificates of the transmission of their teaching to pupils are assessed as the most important ink traces, which reflect their exposition on the words of the Buddha, and records of the divine names that were given to the pupils or the names given to temple buildings (Murase, 2002).

Even the one intends to categorize the stylistic features of the writings of Zen masters; it will be futile in the context of Zen teaching due to the reason that Zen emphasizes the discovery of the truth outside and beyond; hence the writings of Zen masters are supposed to be in the expression of their individual characters. That means Zen practices are uniquely expressive of the inner minds of the working writer; thus, it is claimed that *bokuseki* reflects an independent trend within Japanese history (Ibid.).

As Davey (2019) claims, *shodo* illustrates motion in stillness, which is desired for the calligraphy. It is supposed to look alive. While traditional Japanese calligraphy is explained as stable, balanced, and positive, it may be dead, not dynamic. With *shodo* and asymmetrical balance, it will look more natural and alive. It also leads to a response from the viewer to this art, inevitably on a conscious level.

For the *sho* artist, when the unity of mind and hand occurs, the mind will be in the present, which is encouraged by *shodo* and meditation. In meditation, it is claimed as one has a chance to watch the movement of thought, and if one is capable enough, he can notice a gap between thoughts. As if in that space, the thoughts pass through the mind as this being without ceasing to exist, without losing consciousness. There is something in that space in a split second, but not a thought. When the mind is empty in this sense, the perception is not dependent or modified by memory or conscious thought but the muscle memory, which implies that the body moves the mind as if the muscle has a brain. To gain muscle memory, constant practice carries significant importance (Davey, 2019).

It is a place that is described as "a place where time has no meaning, language is absent, the truth is observed and the only limitation is no limitation" (Arnold & Hausel, 2015: XV).

Even mainly associated with Zen Buddhism and the martial arts, as a universal concept consisting of training the muscle memory to react appropriately under high-pressure situations (Ang, 2020). These all concepts mentioned here, without subtly declaring, in various statements of the writers, such as Mediavilla (1996), Stevens (2013) and Brown (2017), also in various statements and descriptions of the contemporary calligraphers that is examined in Chapter VI, can be traced. Constant practice is encouraged in courses and workshops, as can be seen in the appendix, for the exact same reason, to establish the unity of the mind and body and acquire muscle memory.

Another noteworthy feature is the so-called circle sign (*ichi ensō*), which symbolizes the enlightened state, also highly respected in the Zen world. The tradition of brushing such circles dates back to the eighth century in China, and drawing a perfect circle is assessed as extremely difficult. It also reveals the state of mind of the calligrapher at the time that he makes it. When a part of it is missing, or something is added to it, it cannot be called a circle. The highest aim is to make a circle with perfections, without wrong turns. If a calligrapher dedicates himself entirely to this idea, the act of writing by brush in hand and drawing a circle is assessed as a means of spiritual cultivation (Murase, 2002).

In Fig. 31, Juin Onko's image of the single circle is brushed in one deft swath in the space of a single breath.

Fig. 31. Juin Onko (1718-1804), hanging scroll, ink on paper, Edo period (1615-1868), Source: Murase, (2002: 157).



Although it may show some irregularity, the resulting white space inside the circle stands out clearly -perhaps such a creation can only come from the brush of one who has lived a long time. Though this work is slightly different from what we have come to know as Juin's typical calligraphic expression, it excels in the powerful and spirited movement of the brush. It deeply communicates the sense of transport and abundance that marks one who has achieved an enlightened state.

To sum up, Zen has a tradition of using *shodo* to express its principles that can be observed through famous artists or meditators; however, not all Japanese calligraphy can be characterized as Zen art or Zen calligraphy. All Zen monks are not professional calligraphers (Davey, 2019). Their writing follows liberal forms with extremely loose rules. The rules do not decide the final shape of the character or definition of space. Hence, their writing is unrestrained. While it is engaged with a void mind and pure emotion, zen calligraphy is executed by the entire body. Visually Zen calligraphy is highly abstract; for this reason, it is somewhat related in its appearance and general concept to western abstract painting (Beyond Calligraphy, 2010).

Here, it is necessary to underline that *shodo* may be read and influenced by parallels in Western abstract expressionism because they may perceive through their abstract forms by Westerners with or without knowledge of Japanese culture and calligraphy. However, Davey (2019) claims that even historically, it may be true, *shodo* cannot be assumed to be equal to abstract art. From his point of view, the viewer mostly reaches to the artist's dynamic *qi* reflected in the work of art with his deepest feelings and emotions at the instant touches of the brush to paper. It is stated as what the viewer appreciates, mostly without reading or understanding the text or a character. It is also precisely what westerners comprehend as abstraction, contrary to Easterners, who assume the feelings and emotions of the artists represented by his work are a kind of abstraction.

Even with highly abstract lines, strokes, forms, or compositions, Chinese or Japanese calligraphy described as abstract forms are not accurate. Looking at the contemporary Chinese examples of Xu Bing, Wang Dongling, Wang Nanming, or Japanese avant-garde calligraphers who will be mentioned in the following pages, who execute unreadable works, and highlighting the visual expressivity of the script of Japan, gradually release the calligraphy from the meaning of written characters, from a character in general, creating works in the direction of abstraction (Bogdanova-Kummer, 2020), still appreciated through how they said or expressed it rather than what they said or expressed. Even to break all restrained coming with tradition, it is still described as calligraphic rendering executed with calligraphic background, reflecting similar aesthetic principles and concepts of beauty.

It leads to the question of how one can differ *shodo* from mere handwriting. It is given a hint and explains that if what one writes is not as important as how one writes, it refers to *shodo*, like the difference between fine art and something purely utilitarian. However, those two, in some cases, may overlap, created to a different motivation. *Shodo* is accustomed to looking at the subconscious and positively changing the unconscious as moving meditation because it is a way complete with writing (Davey, 2019).

Beginning with the Second World War and during the 1950s, Japanese traditional art began to alter under the influence of a contemporary movement. The individual preferences and styles of calligraphy began to be more visible than reflected in calligraphers' Works, which no longer belong to the category of simply depicting ideograms. However, they began to transform into abstract paintings in a sense, no longer restricted by the traditional writing system and mindset mentioned earlier in this part. Whereas the meaning of the character is

abandoned, the overall expression of the work started to be appreciated aesthetically in a new way, and each individual is willing to create a personal style that represents the exact moment of his execution (Sato, 2014). As mentioned earlier twentieth century, western calligraphy started to revive by the modernist calligraphers; first, the artists like Morris, then Johnston, Larish, and Koch, various ancient scripts were interpreted once again, blending with the personal attitudes of the calligrapher. The written text was still readable and writing; hence calligraphy still served as an aid of speaking words parallel to the western understanding of writing mentioned in Chapter II.

It is the point that calligraphers started to question the nature of the art of calligraphy, the need for legible written words, also the relation to abstract art, which occurred at the end of the twentieth century in the West. Whether different calligraphy schools provide various answers to this question in various styles, from conservative to radical, among all, it is claimed that the avant-garde Japanese calligraphy is one of the most significant and radical styles (Sato, 2011). For this reason, to provide various knowledge and insight about the theme of contemporary Japanese calligraphy, it will be appropriate to examine the avant-garde calligraphy in Japan, which is assessed influenced by Chinese tradition also in mutual relation to Western art. Furthermore, it is believed that the connection and references taken by contemporary western calligraphers will be discussed in Chapter VI.

#### **4.2.3. The avant-garde calligraphy in Japan**

Bogdanova-Kummer (2020) states that it is not easy to apprehend the post-war avant-garde calligraphy without understanding the modernization period of Japan since the Meiji period (1868-1912), when the new modern state started to redefine itself in search of a visual identity that would be suitable to the modern philosophy. It formed according to the new needs of the country, and calligraphy was perceived as a block to the modernization of the country. Between policymakers and calligraphers, there was a conflict between the new Japanese state oriented toward Europe, the United States, and the Traditional East Asian cultural order. For this reason, it is stated that its highly respected status fell with the restoration. In comparison, calligraphy was at the loftiest position on the hierarchy of visual arts in traditional Japan because of its connection with ancient knowledge and self-discipline required for practice, which is also assessed as the foundation of literati arts that inform ink painting.

With the reforms in the Meiji period, it is stated that the main reference of the Japanese art system shifted to the European model from the Chinese. The term *bijutsu* started to be used to refer to fine arts and has its roots in the German term *kunstsgewerbe*. According to it, there needed reformulation that led to the structural changes, and there was no place for calligraphy since it had no direct counterparts in models of Europe. This situation caused calligraphy to be replaced by painting as the most prestigious visual art. That means in the expositions of 1890, calligraphy was first separated from painting and situated at the end of the art section, grouped closer to the crafts section; then, in 1903, there was no calligraphy section at all.

It was the time that there was a discussion about whether calligraphy was art or not that occurred between the oil painter Koyama Shōtarō (1857-1916) and Japanese art theoretician Okakura Kakuzō (1862-1913). Koyama Shōtarō offered to exclude calligraphy from the fine arts (*bijutsu*) officially since it was assessed as unfit for the new paradigm. His proposal was based on the idea that calligraphy, among other things, belonged to language and script rather than visual images. Moreover, foreign visitors would not understand it; hence, it was unsuitable for international exhibitions. He underlined that calligraphy should be a part of school education, not in the fine arts. Furthermore, Okakura Kakuzo published a detailed critical response to Koyama, and he stressed that time would reveal whether calligraphy belonged to the fine arts or not (Kakuzō & Goddard, 2012).

Looking at the West in the 1880s, the international art movement, *art nouveau*, characterized by employing organic, ornamental shapes and patterns, started to integrate all within art and design. As a natural reaction to the Industrial Revolution, a high level of craftsmanship was required as a new style of art, contrary to mass-produced goods. At this point, it is significant to underline the interaction with Japan through commerce, which will be mentioned in part "4.4. The impact of far east art tradition on western abstract practices." That means Japanese woodblock prints were seen by European artists for the first time and became fashionable in Europe among the artists, namely Van Gogh, Gauguin, or Toulouse Lautrec, whom they hugely influenced.

Hence, in the Meiji era, various exhibitions excluded calligraphy from the beginning. That offended the calligraphers who decided to dismiss the *bijutsu* art system and its institutions and assessed it as a whim of the modern state, which had aimed at Europe and the United States. Until the end of World War II, calligraphy kept its position as semi-official status, perceived as a remnant of the past, untouched that cut off from the rest of the art World until its postwar heyday. The time between the Meiji restoration and the end of World War II is assessed as one of the most creative and transformative with westernization, which provided new opportunities that Japanese calligraphers could benefit from the communication with their continental counterparts and reconnecting to China.

Hence, it is said that the Chinese classics much more inspired the modernization of Japanese calligraphy through deep study of accessible antiques, reviving ancient calligraphic styles, such as bronze scripts or large seal scripts that incorporated into brush calligraphy with new European art. This situation started to offer more space, independence, and freedom to young calligraphers of Japan, who had a chance to learn directly from the real source, and choose the most appealing part to them without restrictions or any complexities of the hierarchies comes with the master centered calligraphy. That means reconsidering calligraphy and its future, separating calligraphy for educational aims from artistic calligraphy (Bogdanova-Kummer, 2020).

Calligraphy started to accept as a popular art form as a personal cultivation method, which has continued to be practiced by many professionals and amateurs. On the one hand, various brush stroke traditions of the past have been employed. The development of various



movements started to be developed, such as abstract calligraphy, which is influenced by Western paintings and other arts. While learning to write simply meant using a flexible brush with various strokes of lines on handmade paper, in the last period of the nineteenth century, utilizing the fixed points of instruments, such as machine-produced pencils and pens, led to questioning the definition of calligraphy in the broadest view.

Calligrapher Hidai Tenrai (1872-1939), one of the forefathers of *bokushou*, "image of ink," an image of ink (an alternative name for avant-garde *shodo*), a precursor of modern Japanese calligraphy initiated in the nineteenth century, and today he is credited as the father of modern calligraphy in Japan (Sato, 2011).

Fig. 32 illustrates the works of Tenrai, in which he employed the dry brush that creates an apparent texture through his strokes. The characters are written as two blocks with flowing brushes in cursive styles. As in the contemporary Chinese calligraphy practices, the fluent moves of his hand create a sense of imaginative compositions that still resemble the traditional system of writing, based on logographic ideas that are somehow linked to Chinese characters. Still, it seems complicated to realize the sensitive border between *sho* and the composition of the random maze of strokes.

Fig. 32. *Leaping Dragon*, Hidai Tenrai, written by cursive script, early 12<sup>th</sup> century, Source: Beyond Calligraphy, [beyond-calligraphy.com/2010/03/05/history-of-japanese-calligraphy/](http://beyond-calligraphy.com/2010/03/05/history-of-japanese-calligraphy/), access: 13.04.2018.



Hidai Tenrai stressed that the proper study of calligraphy directly referenced the Chinese classics and the developments in Western modern art. He preferred to practice and reproduce the lines accurately from these sources and interpret these lines for himself, stressing the expressive nature of calligraphy. The abstract term that dominated the thought of many Western artists of this century resonated in a discussion about calligraphy in Japan and manifested itself through these calligraphers; however, the abstraction in calligraphy was produced within the calligraphic tradition, which means tradition provided the ground for creating vital expressive lines and organization of the calligraphic world that control it. Also coined the term *hitsu i*, he refers to the spirit of the brush that describes one of the most essential in calligraphy. Through this spirit, the calligrapher expresses himself with a dynamic notion that depends on brush stroke or line, which is assumed to be synonymous with calligraphy. Hence, it was

not necessary to employ Chinese characters. That means *hitsu i* may be presented in any line. These lines could be expressive and powerful, focusing on the visual appeal of calligraphy, which is called doodlings by Hidai Tenrai. It was the first time that calligraphers engaged with purely abstract ink art (Sato, 2011).

Furthermore, one of the very first steps in the direction of abstract painting was engaged by Hidai Nankoku (1912-1999), son of Hidai Tenrai, one of the founders of *zenei shodo*, and Ueda Sokyu (1899-1968), assessed as one of the most radical students of Tenrai (Bogdanova-Kummer, 2020).

*Zenei shodo* is described as a spiritual art of arranging space around black lines, characters, or images that have nothing to do with pretty character writing instead of expressing oneself through art, which brings a higher level to calligraphic works. It is about taking a different course from traditional calligraphy, and it is in search of creating new aesthetics, grounded on appreciating the beauty of characters and focusing on the art of designing space (the void) (Beyond Calligraphy, 2010), which had affected to the western artist of the twentieth century while they look for presence with the feeling to fill the void. This issue will be mentioned in part "4.4. The impact of far east art tradition on western abstract practices."

*Zenei Shodo* excludes the ideas of characters and deviates from the rules of calligraphy. Here, it is highly significant to be a skilled master of avant-garde calligraphy; one is supposed to be acknowledged with a solid basis and years of classical sho practices. Hence, it underlines that even though it seems to be far away from tradition, it still evolves from tradition, fusing with the present, as a calligraphic interpretation of today's appreciation of calligraphy that conveys black lines with white spaces, sometimes characters through infinite possibilities (Beyond Calligraphy, 2010).

Fig. 33 illustrates that one of the works of Hidai Nankoku (1912-1999) is about taking a different course from traditional calligraphy, and it is in search of creating new aesthetics, grounded on appreciating the beauty of characters, focusing on the art of designing space (the void). It excludes the ideas of characters and deviates from the rules of calligraphy.



Fig. 33. *Shin-Sen-Sakuhin-Dai-Ichi Den-No-Variation (Spirit Line 1 Lightning-Variation) Den-Variation of the Lightning*, Hidai Nankoku, 1945, ink on paper, Source: Bogdanova-Kummer, (2020: 16).

Nankoku describes his attitude through his statements as follows:

After the evacuation, I used to sit at the kotatsu, improvising strange lines and dots and making mountains of waste papers. If people came, I suffered from such lack of confidence that I would quickly hide what I was doing. This continued for some time, until I suddenly remembered my father's admonition, "If you come to an impasse, return to the archaic (or origin)," I remembered "ku-wen" (archaic script) and leafing through the *Ku-chou Hui-pien*, a dictionary of Ku-wen. The character den (tien in Chinese, lightning) attracted me in a curious way and I began working it. The result was Spirit Line Work No. 1, which turned out to be variations on den. (shodo.co, n.d.: para. 2)

In work *Nonkoku, Shin-Sen-Sakuhin-Dai-Ichi Den-No-Variation* (Fig. 33), calligraphy was detached from its lexical components through the image with no resemblance to the character "lightning" as its title. It is assessed that his innovation might be challenging to apprehend by his fellow avant-garde calligraphers, who perceived this work as an oil painting on canvas as an indication of its entrenched in the European art tradition. However, for this piece, Nankoku claims his references from archaic pictography, which provided inspiration for his avant-garde pieces of calligraphy. That means he strengthened the link between ancient Chinese calligraphy and the new avant-garde calligraphy in Japan with the postwar period. This piece has a connection with calligraphic tradition in a conceptual manner more than visual; even the references from historic images could not be recognized easily. It is claimed that it was one of the first *moji-who kakanai sho*, which means "calligraphy that does not employ characters" (Bogdanova-Kummer, 2020: 16). Hence, it is believed that this piece reestablished the bridge between Japanese calligraphy and painting and reunited these two art forms, which were separated during Meiji westernization, in a new transformed way by following the route of abstraction (Ibid.).

Here, the apparent difference between traditional and avant-garde calligraphy can be observed, which became even more prominent as the visual experiments of avant-garde calligraphers emphasized radicalization in which the works started to be elaborated conceptually and the word detached from the semantic meaning. However, it is supposed to be underlined that the visual work is claimed to have its connection conceptually to the title of the work or the concept determined by the calligrapher, who is in search of personal manifestation of immense feelings and thoughts about his concept artistically.

In the light of the explanation above, it can be summarized that avant-garde *shodo*, an image of ink, is closely related to the abstract painting of the twentieth century. It is assessed as slightly ahead of its time, especially regarding the rigid world of traditional calligraphy. This understanding was created and developed by master calligraphers with their knowledge of calligraphic art, assessed as superior. Here, it is stated that through body and mind unification, one enters a state of permanent enlightenment. An artist's unity of body and soul embodies itself in its black lines of images of ink created in single brush strokes. The idea of avant-garde calligraphy has diverged from the traditional approach to writing, which is defined by rules and gained skills by studying and copying ancient styles: seal script, clerical script, cursive, regular, and semi-cursive script. Avant-garde offers a much more unrestrained practice to express oneself through creating a work. It means this attitude is supposed to surpass any limitations of time,

space, and aesthetics and reveals most subconscious and abstract feelings or the moment's spiritual state (Beyond Calligraphy, 2010).

With the emergence of the contemporary attitude in Japanese calligraphy, the discussion about how to define or how to decide which is *sho* or not, as in the case of contemporary Chinese calligraphy mentioned earlier in this chapter, aroused.

According to Addiss (2011), the difficulty of calling some work calligraphy, which conveys artistic expression to viewers, basically occurs because of disagreements. He underlines the intention of the calligrapher about the act of writing, which may not be present in all works that are assessed as calligraphy. However, as he states, detecting the intention is complex and may not necessarily have higher importance than appreciating any particular piece of writing as art. For this reason, Addiss (2011) offers to focus on its feature of being activity and interaction rather than assessed as the physical product. So, the thing that is needed to be avoided is to define calligraphy in a rigid and limited way.

Addiss (2011) claims that at this point, even the problem of the definition of calligraphy arises, and the answer probably could be yes, potentially due to the reason of the intention to write. However, as he states, the intention to write was not necessarily in all works, called calligraphy; moreover, verifying the intention is tricky and may not precede the acceptance of any particular piece of writing as art. According to him, the activity or interaction are all matters, not the products; for this reason, he offers to speak of Japanese calligraphy as "any writing seen by either the creator or viewers as calligraphy-as in all art" (Addis, 2011: np.). He points to the difficulty of calling some work calligraphy since while some call it calligraphy, which conveys artistic expression to viewers, the others may not agree with it. So, the real danger is being too rigid to define what calligraphy is in contemporary Japanese calligraphy practices.

Moreover, Sato (2011) claims avant-garde calligraphy is abstract work produced pretty much the same way as a work of calligraphy, consisting of definite stroke order and the execution as a performance often based on a character. In some cases, as in *bokushou*, another related art with more unrestrained expression, again mostly based on characters, is written in the same way as a calligraphy work. This kind has been developed beyond the limitation of traditional calligraphy and consists of more pictorial works of calligraphers and also artists. The difference is that the calligrapher has used various techniques but always writes the main form of the work in a calligraphic way with determined stroke order. For this reason, avant-garde calligraphy is assessed as the art of line. The significant issue becomes the particular characteristics of the calligraphic line defined by Lady Wei's theory -mentioned in part entitled "4.1.4. Aesthetic Considerations and the Term Beauty of Chinese Calligraphy" about the calligraphic line being like a human limb, having a bone, muscle, flesh, and skin. That means the calligraphic line should be three-dimensional as a sculptor with fully energized vitalizes the surface.

This issue seems similar in contemporary Western calligraphy practices compared to the past and present practices held in Chapter VI. However, the difference starts with how to perceive the notion of writing, and during this period, the role of writing started to change in the West. It seems the visual interest of artists in writing has been created the contemporary Western calligraphy practices make them closer to Far Eastern calligraphy practices without any distinctions between tradition or contemporary Far Eastern concepts. This issue will be examined again in Chapter VI while mentioning various contemporary calligraphers and their works deeply. It will at least give a chance to interrogate whether the intention behind the tendencies is grounded on just the visual aesthetics reasons, including the experiment with the brush, or consists of the interrogation of the mindset behind the act of writing as in the Far Eastern concept. Before delving into this issue, it will be appropriate to look at the mutual influences between these calligraphy cultures.

### **4.3. The impact of Western art on Far Eastern contemporary calligraphy**

Sullivan (1969) mentions the Western impact on Chinese and Japanese art and states that with traders and missionaries in the sixteenth century when European art was started bought by missionaries, and under their influence, various court painters attempted to adapt western perspective knowledge and shading to Chinese techniques. Japan first encountered European art and various European painting and engraving inspired by the artist of Japan. They have skillfully copied a western book about figure drawing, and perspective also affected and began to take attention.

Moreover, by the twentieth century, Chinese artists started to study Western art with China's modernization, especially with the implemented reform and opening-up policies; China and Japan have drawn upon others' experiences through inspiration from Western abstract art. Various modern Chinese calligraphers have learned from Western and Japanese abstraction and make dots and lines, also lumps using different colors on paper, without regarding the form them into characters. As mentioned in terms of Contemporary Chinese calligraphy, whether it is calligraphy or not, various attempts were assessed as breakthroughs in traditional Chinese calligraphy and the future orientation of this art, and others continue to criticize it as departing from the calligraphic rules, particularly practices without any actual Chinese characters (Tingyou, 2004).

On the other hand, Kaya (2003) states that Japanese calligraphy had started a new era in the Meiji period (1868-1912) with contact with Western culture, also in relation to China. In the beginning, it is stated that there was no quick inclination toward Western culture because, during the Edo period (1603-1868), the isolation had occurred by the seclusion policy. It was opened to fresh Chinese calligraphy yet. During 1880, a significant contribution occurred in studying Chinese calligraphy in Japan; however, calligraphers did not welcome modern art views immediately or directly since there was no same



genre in the west as claimed. Through the acceptance of modern institutions, it is stated that every area of Japanese culture has headed towards rationality and purification in terms of representation. While calligraphy is grounded on conventional methods of representation and values, it was beginning to suggest visualization as a form of representation. That also means calligraphy began to move away from literature and thoughts (Kaya, 2003).

After the Second World War, systematic exhibitions began to be held on a larger scale which public participation demanded. The appearance of written characters and letters by brush and ink started to be assessed as a significant representation of plastic art, which means calligraphy is no longer appreciated as an integrated experience of Chinese or Japanese poems. The changes in the shapes of characters and letters, tones of the ink depending on the distilled water, and the quality of lines mentioned earlier created a different kind of consciousness on an individual level (Ibid.).

Presumably, the influences that mention in this part mostly seem hybrid and inherent in both East and West at present, so it may be a judicial that may create various contradictions or disputes with ambiguity in a sense; however, it should be noted that various investigations are followed here through their articles and books, such as Sullivan (1969), Clarke (1988) or Iezzi (2016), with the comparison between these contemporary Far Eastern calligraphers and Western abstract artists mostly. The resemblance mostly seems in terms of the physical form of the compositions with various details, and the calligraphic brushstrokes with an approach to abstract painting focus on the spontaneous gesture of the artist's hand. It may be claimed that the artworks also these western artists may be informed by Far Eastern calligraphy and Zen writing with its direct action's ethics.

Iezzi (2013) claims that contemporary Chinese artists, both modernist and avant-gardist clearly influenced by Western Abstract art. Modernist Chinese calligrapher Gu Gan (b. 1942) and his work, which still recognized the shape of Chinese characters (Fig. 34), is stated as inspired by the European artist Paul Klee's (1879-1940) work (Fig. 35).



Fig. 34. *Opening up (Kai yi guguo zhi men)*, Gu Gan, 1995, mixed media, Source: Iezzi, (2013: 166).

Gu Gan (Fig. 34) is an internationally recognized calligrapher as a pioneer of the modernist movement in calligraphic painting on the mainland with a traditional Chinese painting train in Beijing. By 1960, he turned to studying calligraphy. It is stated that he started to be interested in modern art in the early twentieth century, especially Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), Paul Klee (1879-1940), and Joan Miró (1866-1944), and he started to experiment his calligraphic interpretations in the late 1970s (Iezzi, 2013).

Gu Gan, in most of his work, employs traditional Chinese characters that are archaic and pictographic formulations and abstract painting. By combining them, he creates special pictorial effects in composition, in which he reserves the traditional relationship of calligraphic form and content. It is stated that his aim and motivation is to reinvent the essence of old tradition through its transition (Goedhuis, 2012). For this reason, his writings and lectures are assessed as having an important impact on the development of modernist calligraphy (Kuo, 2010).

On the other hand, Swiss painter Paul Klee (Fig. 35) is the one that comes to mind with his sensitive lines; he had knowledge of Zen painting that probably encouraged him to create works with spontaneity, as in his action paintings (Sullivan, 1969). He also employs patterns, colors, and space in his painting to express his personal feelings. The geometrical figures are assessed as reminiscent of the signs carved on ancient Chinese poetry before developing Chinese written characters (Tingyou, 2004).

Fig. 35. *Embrace*, Paul Klee, 1939, pastel, watercolor and oil on canvas, Source: Iezzi, (2013: 166).



Through comparing the works of these two artists (Fig. 34-35), at first glance, the formal similarities between works take attention. The brushstrokes that artists employ with their sharp and sometimes smooth turns, which create a symbol-like form, seem to resemble. Both engaged with the strokes that reveal the dynamism and energy, as well as space, which is another main point that needs attention. In overall composition, space, apart from being a supporter, makes the form front and the second issue that takes equal importance to the strokes have.

Moreover, both do not prefer to employ something that will interrupt the symbol-like form and space as a background; instead, Gu Gan adds various small Chinese characters and red seals that give a dimension to the composition by creating a contrast. Like many others, he prefers the cursive and the seal script because the cursive script is one of the closest to abstraction, and the seal script is one of the most pictographic. Hence, these two are most appropriate to serve Gu Gan's attitude. It can be observed that Gu Gan emphasizes combining aesthetic pleasure with content. His characters here become something liken to symbols that lead the viewers to understand the meaning of what is envisaged even if they do not know the linguistic meaning (Iezzi, 2013).

According to Zhang-Cziráková (2014), his works are abstract ink paintings with strong calligraphic feelings, or they can be called abstract calligraphy. In other words, paintings with the strong inspiration of calligraphy with abstract lines are composed in a form that reminds the traditional works. His lines are composed as a series of lines, certainly not in a typical calligraphic way of using a brush. Sometimes he prefers to use a dry brush; in some cases, his lines flow on the surface softly.

Furthermore, in Fig. 36, Gu Gan employs the diluted ink on the paper that disperses, and the density creates the dimension through one color; black. Various parts of the composition cause stacks or crowded collections of the ink with splashes; in some parts, dry traces of the brush can be observed, also giving a three-dimension. At the center of the piece, there seems to exist a symbol-like character that carries the various moves of the brush with sensitive, sharp, and smooth turns; however, considering the overall compositions, it seems to turn to artistic photograph rather than artistic writing due to its strong image-like appearance.



Fig. 36. *Waves*, Gu Gan, 2006, ink and color on paper, Source: Kuo, (2010: 130).

Another impact is created with red stains that create some balance and energy. Once again, Gu Gan employs small Chinese characters at the left edge of the composition. Even not readable, the main composition promises to appreciate its emotion and sensible energy instead of focusing on the content. So, even though it is stated and intended to locate the western influences on Gu Gan's works here, it may be claimed that the Far Eastern calligraphy tradition still seems to dominate the calligrapher's mind and hand with free will. In both his works (Fig. 34 and 36), Gu Gan employs readable Chinese characters, instead only employing abstract lines and strokes. It is not known whether he makes a clear distinction between tradition and contemporary. However, it is evident that through this type of combination, he prefers to represent his contemporary attitude of his own with the influences of Western abstraction, which also manifests itself here through Gu Gan's big spontaneous-like strokes, marks, and gestures.

Another impact of Western art on Far Eastern contemporary calligraphy is put forward by indicating on Wei Ligang (b. 1964) (Fig. 37 and 38), avant-gardist seems only contemplate the outstanding beauty of the line and Brice Marden (b. 1938) (Fig. 39) by Iezzi (2013).

Wei Ligang, in his Fig. 37 and 38, experiments with a line movement, which seems a close relative of western abstract art.

Fig. 37. *Zhuang Zhou Dreaming a Butterfly*, Wei Ligang, 2014, ink and acrylic on Xuan paper, Source: Artsy, [artsy.net/artwork/wei-ligang-wei-li-gang-zhuang-zhou-dreaming-a-butterfly-zhuang-zhou-meng-die](https://www.artsy.net/artwork/wei-ligang-wei-li-gang-zhuang-zhou-dreaming-a-butterfly-zhuang-zhou-meng-die), access: 25.03.2018.



Fig. 38. *An Auspicious Bird Flying above the Golden Palace*, Wei Ligang, 2012, Chinese ink and acrylic on paper, Source: The Artling, [theartling.com/en/artwork/wei-ligang-an-auspicious-bird-flying-above-the-golden-palace/](https://www.theartling.com/en/artwork/wei-ligang-an-auspicious-bird-flying-above-the-golden-palace/), access: 25.03.2018.





One of the features that take attention is that Ligang does not engage with the high contrast within the lines; instead, he prefers the line's fixed weight, and without lifting the hand, he creates some kind of maze-like appearance with smooth and sharp turns. The preference of color for both works is again limited, just black and gold; one is executed with gold paints on Xuan paper's black surface, and the other is with black paint on gold paper.

Both consist of various stains and small details that create a crowd on the surface and also seem to interrupt the flowing form of lines. The movement of the lines gives static and also dynamic energy. The fixed weight and constant turn of the lines seem to create static energy, whereas the unexpected asymmetrical turns add dynamism to the overall composition.

On the other hand, Fig. 39 illustrates one of Brice Marden's works claimed to have a resemblance. Indeed, this approach of Marden with the overall composition and his attitude through flowing lines on the canvas with constant turns make us think of the inspiration of it on Ligang.

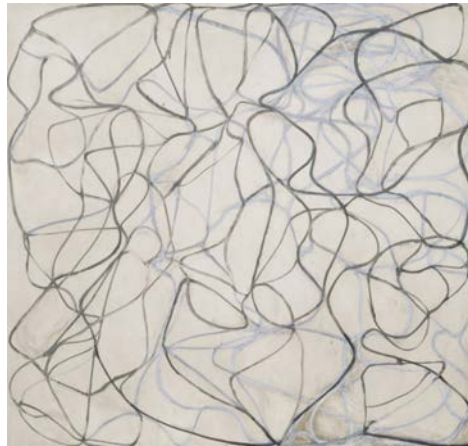


Fig. 39. *Vine* (1992-93), Brice Marden, oil on flax canvas, Source: MOMA, [moma.org/collection/works/79089](https://moma.org/collection/works/79089), access: 25.03.2018.

With these works, it may seem that Wei Ligang preferred to leave the tradition behind; however, Goedhuis (2012) states that various artists, such as Wei Ligang, turn toward the past to find a conceptual and stylistic model that leads to recreating the original cultural spirit of writing.

Thus, even if it seems a close relative of western abstract art, it is inspired by the simplicity of the use of lines, which belongs to the Chinese calligraphy tradition. It is a highly significant point, for Chinese modernist and avant-garde artists, through these features prove once again mostly the new contemporary attitudes are assessed as grounding to tradition.



Other noteworthy examples are mentioned through the similarities between the artists Franz Kline (1910-1962) (Fig. 40) and Chinese calligrapher Qin Feng (b. 1961) (Fig. 41) that whose works' were visibly influenced by the Western Abstract artist (Iezzi, 2013).

An American painter Franz Kline (1910-1962), made several portraits of Nijinsky (1889-1950), a Russian dancer, in his early years. Fig. 40 illustrates one of the mature works of Franz Kline, developed over the year 1949-50. It is said that his calligraphic works were actually written on the pages of a telephone book, and for the first time, Kline realized that this work also well as large pictures (The Met Museum, n.d.).

Fig. 40. *Nijinsky*, Franz Kline, 1950, enamel on canvas, Source: TheMet, metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/490194, access: 13.12.2019.



Fig. 41 illustrates one of Qin Feng's works, assessed as a leading figure of ink painting, actively involved in the Chinese avant-garde movement. Feng studied mural painting at the Shandong University of Art and Design in the early 1980s, and it is stated that he was one of the only two in his province that radically experimented with the styles imported from contemporary art during that period. In the '90s, when he moved to Berlin, it is claimed that he began to fuse Western modernism and Chinese ink tradition in his abstract composition while he searched for the possibilities of synthesizing modernism and the ink-painting tradition (Kuo, 2010).

Fig. 41. *Civilization Landscape*, Qin Feng, 2004, ink on silk and fiber paper, Source: Iezzi, (2013: 172).



Once again, these two works' similarities lay in their engagement with the black color on white space by free strokes and lines. However, Qin Feng (Fig. 42 and 43) mostly employ traditional tools such as ink, Xuan paper, or silk, engaging with ink brush on numerous layers of his surface. He also often dyes with tea or coffee, which is assessed as a symbolic gesture of two cultures that blend together (Kuo, 2010). Fluid ink and dynamic brushstrokes emphasize the gesture of the brush. The ink splashes also reveal that Qin Feng moves his brush loaded with fluid ink on the surface, and the explosive abstract marks add dynamism and support that movement. It also underlines the openness to the chance to create with unrestrained energy.



Fig. 42. *left Series Desire Scenery 16*, Qin Feng, n.d., ink, coffee, and tea on ceramic paper, Source: Artsy, [artsy.net/artwork/qin-feng-qin-feng-series-desire-scenery-16](https://artsy.net/artwork/qin-feng-qin-feng-series-desire-scenery-16), access: 13.12.2019.

Fig. 43. *right Desire Scenery NO.0946*, Qin Feng, n.d., ink on silk cotton paper, Source: Artsy, [artsy.net/artwork/qin-feng-qin-feng-desire-scenery-no-dot-0946-yu-wang-feng-jing-xi-lie-0946](https://artsy.net/artwork/qin-feng-qin-feng-desire-scenery-no-dot-0946-yu-wang-feng-jing-xi-lie-0946), access: 13.12.2019.

On the other hand, Clarke (1988) states that a similarity between Franz Kline's mature works and oriental calligraphy can be noticed through the usage of gestural lines, composed into dynamic symbol-like forms in black on an open wide white background. It seems to encourage the viewer to read mostly. Interestingly, Clarke also stated that Franz Kline had repeatedly denied that he was not influenced by Far Eastern calligraphy, or Zen, and other expressions of Oriental philosophy; however, it is also stated that his admiration for Japanese art could be realized with his collection of Japanese prints. Hence, as Clarke claims, it cannot be denied that there is a possibility of albeit unconscious at work. Here, ideogram-like shapes and large areas of empty space, and the asymmetrical placing of the forms belong to Far Eastern aesthetics. However, the fluidity of ink is closer to Far Eastern practice than the oil practice as in Kline's works.

To sum up, what has been observed physically through the works of contemporary Chinese calligraphers is enormously extended contrast between the thickness and thinness of strokes as a vital feature, also the usage of heavy and light ink, closeness and looseness of lines of the characters, and the dryness and wetness of the ink, which creates

different effects on the surface. With an exaggerated attitude in terms of characters, lines, and strokes, it is observed that the character patterns have changed, while various pictographic characters are written in their natural shapes (Tingyou, 2004).

These changes are assessed as the impact of Western abstraction. However, apart from relatively new approaches of these Chinese calligraphers, it is observed that they still employ the traditional tool, ink, and brush, also the technique of the execution, such as splashed ink (*pomo* or *p'ò-mo*)<sup>9</sup>, an ancient Chinese painting technique which involves throwing or pouring the ink on rice paper or canvas with traditional brush work (Schulz, 2015).

Moreover, as Caruso (2009) underlines, these big abstract marks look like Franz Kline's written/painted by Far Eastern contemporary calligraphers with calligraphic expertise and a sense of a calligrapher competent with a calligraphic brush. Even they look spontaneous, and it is still claimed that they are very carefully constructed and calculated by a calligrapher. For these reasons, these practices, with the impact of Western abstract artists, still, preserve various features that underline the above. Even various practices, such as Wei Ligang or Qin Feng, who do not prefer to engage with the written characters mostly, may be assessed as diverging in the context of China's abstract concept also mentioned earlier and closer to the abstract concept of the West, or it loses their connection with the tradition. However, it may be more appropriate to claim as leaving the Far Eastern concept of abstraction and entering the universal concept of abstraction.

Here, it should be underlined that Western art, particularly Western abstract art, influences the Far Eastern contemporary calligraphy; however, it should be kept in mind that the concept of abstraction is not the same as the abstract within the calligraphic tradition in the East (Sato, 2011), which is occasionally underlined earlier. It was also mentioned through the explanations of Yee (1974) with the theme of "the abstract beauty of line" (Yee, 1974: 106), which shows the difference that calligraphic lines tend to reproduce and rebuild the harmony between man and nature through vivid executions of a hand, whereas western abstract art intends to express the confliction between those two. For this reason, it is claimed that the Western artist is in an entirely different position to those calligraphers with a looser relation to their artistic tradition, whereas in China and Japan, calligraphers work and practice with an ancient tradition of the written language or style of the East (Sato, 2011).

On the other hand, Jezzi (2013) claims that the abstract seed seems to have started its germination through the connection to Western abstract art in a sense. From that time on, apart from the abstract lines,

<sup>9</sup> There are two different phrases, and two different Chinese characters are pronounced *po*; however, it is stated that the more common interpretation of *pomo* is "broken ink." That refers supposedly to the innovation of the eighth-century painter Wang Wei (699-761), in which the brush was used to build up a series of dense ink washes through diluted ink applied in a broad sweep. Thus, it gives a sense of the solid surface defined by line. Another interpretation of the term *pomo* is "splashed ink," which refers to a similar effect without being confined by an outline, freely and actively moving the ink over the surface. Splashed ink is related to the later Tang dynasty's art, and with various Zen artists of the thirteenth century, it became popular (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2006).

Chinese calligraphy has been focusing on the traditional interaction between yin and yang, black and white, empty and full through connecting them, which are stated as common features in both Chinese and Western approaches.

This particular moment has to be underlined by the different conceptions of abstract art in the West and China. Minglu (nd.), a scholar of Chinese contemporary art, the curator of *China/Avant-Garde* (1989) at the National Art Museum of China (Beijing), mentions the general perception and shared view of abstract art, a universal language that shared across cultures with a certain kind of sense due to the reason that there are no historical or thematical references. He underlines that it has to be understood by the history of the form; however, mostly, the beauty of its composition is realized. He advocates that this perception has to be texted. He claims that when looking at Chinese abstract art, one can see its limitations, reborn after the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966). He assesses it as a tendency that objected to the political subject matter; at the same time, the emergence of abstraction is seen as a part of the renaissance of traditional ink painting.

Minglu (nd.) claims that the history of contemporary abstract art in China cannot be comprehended through its pure formal terms; instead, it has to be regarded to understand its recent marginalized places. He describes it as marginalized because, in certain ways, Chinese abstract art is connected to tradition. That means there is interest in the transformation of tradition into the contemporary, as well as tradition can also be seen as a target. Either way, it is assessed as a positive force that plays a role as an impulse to create a new art form. Hence, Minglu (nd.) stresses that tradition benefits contemporary abstract art through repetition, series format, or involvement of script or written languages, an empty background that refers to nothingness or spontaneusness.

Whereas, the history of West's abstract art is different, and such a phenomenon in Western art cannot be found as a respect for tradition. At this point, he takes attention to the assumption that may be related to the interpretation of Chinese abstract art in Western art. Looking at the West, particularly between the 1950s and 1960s, there arose much talk of painting for painting itself. However, it is not easy to encounter such a language in China partly due to the history in which contemporary Chinese art evolved, and contemporary Chinese abstract art is executed as a mixture of an abstract language and traditional Chinese art languages, such as Buddhist practice and ideas. In terms of painting, the act is assessed as a search for infinity through the surroundings, not presented merely by the form itself but including the artist's personality and the act of art-making. Moreover, Minglu states there was much talk of materialization or dematerialization during the West's postwar period. In contrast, in China, it was absent and no opposition between painting and life, which means between subject and object.

Moreover, Tingyou (2004) underlines the differences and similarities between Chinese calligraphy and Western abstract art. First, he describes the abstraction in terms of Chinese calligraphy with the following statements:

Chinese calligraphy is an abstract art in itself to some extent. Its abstract features are illustrated in the fact that it absorbs the beautiful aspects of a thing, its neatness, differences in length, balance, symmetry, closeness and looseness, stillness and motion, changes and harmony. Also, Chinese calligraphy can be imitated and reshaped. All these aspects are similar to the art of Western abstract painting which creates pictures different from the real things. (Tingyou, 2004: 122)

Hence, it is understood that the similarities between the two, according to Tingyou, based on the physical interpretation and construction of the form, and what characteristics the overall work consists. Then he points out their different nature and continues:

Chinese calligraphy does not imitate other things, only the characters. With Chinese characters as carriers, the calligraphers try to create characters to be recognized by the viewer, which is quite different from the intention of Western abstract paintings. Western abstract artists do not use any thing or any language as their artistic carrier to arrange lines and colors. They seek unique forms, and they try to create quite different paintings. They pay attention to the fantastic structures and video effects of their paintings, especially the quality and coloring. They try to express their rich imagination and spirit of rebellion against traditions and formulas. Without an artistic carrier and without the restrictions of rules and formulas, they rack their brains for creativity and do their best to produce mysterious and thought-provoking paintings; the more attractive and irritating their paintings are, the better. So they use utensils in order to create an artistic dreamland which neither they nor others have ever seen before. (Tingyou, 2004: 122-123)

Here, it is understood that the differences are grounded on various factors, such as the conceptual attitude, that calligraphic work always consists of characters, and whether the debate points to various critics' contradictions. What is underlined here is how western abstract painters reach the lines and colors on their canvas through rich imagination without any restrictions of rules, formulas, or tradition, which is different from the Chinese calligrapher in search of achieving one of the most thought-provoking, attractive, and irritation paintings at the same time.

Looking through the various abstract artist, such as Tobey (1890-1976), Motherwell (1915-1991), and Kooning (1904-1997), created calligraphic works similar to the Chinese wild cursive script by using the color mostly instead of ink, and their paintings reveal how they followed the artistic principled of their own for the sake of exploring a pioneering way of expression in their work utilizing calligraphic dynamics.

However, Tingyou (2004) points at Chinese calligraphy that is restricted by rules such as the characters' structure based on Chinese characters, written by fixed rules, patterns, and order of strokes. A graceful work of calligraphy can be created with a well-thought plan. Moreover, Tingyou thinks that their works are novel in style, and even with various changes, the characters still are created regarding the familiar rules that are readable. Thus, the viewer can feel that the piece is attractive and willing to consider or accept new suggestions and ideas. Calligraphers may employ the characters' patterns to express their feelings, and the way to it is assessed as similar to those expressed through poems.

To sum up, Tingyou states that Chinese calligraphy reveals real, graceful, and natural feelings of calligraphers' inner world, consciously aiming "to inspire people and soothe pained hearts, not to challenge or stimulate sense organs" (Tingyou, 2004: 124).



In order to apprehend the mutual impact between the West and East in terms of calligraphy, it is significant to mention the impact of Far Eastern tradition on western abstract practices in the following part. It will give a chance to frame the situation that also provides knowledge for Chapter VI, where the contemporary western calligrapher will be examined because various calligraphers are selected for this chapter. They declare how they were influenced by Western abstract artists, such as Pollock, Twombly, or Motherwell, who were already informed about the Far Eastern art, calligraphy tradition, and mindset reflected through their works in various ways. That means direct and indirect effects come from the Eastern tradition that needed to be underlined about how far east affected the west.

#### **4.4. The impact of Far Eastern art tradition on Western abstract practices**

As mentioned earlier, cultural exchange between the East and West led to various development that can be traced through the observation of the art scene. These exchanges happened in terms of knowledge of the art and culture, technology, materials, and concepts. Even at first, the West had assessed the East as a distant supplier of luxury objects, rich materials, and decorations; a different vision and wealth on an artistic and cultural level are also provided with this interaction.

In China, particularly in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, European merchants and missionaries were unaware of Far Eastern art. The vast majority of porcelain, lacquer, and silks were sent to Europe, and their motifs and designs were copied and adapted for understanding European architecture and decorative arts. Moreover, the more recent migration of Chinese artists to the West in the mid to late seventeenth century led to a shifting cultural exchange between the Far East and West (Sullivan, 1969).

Moreover, Sullivan (1969) states that oriental art started to effect and created a response in European painting by 1850. Especially Japanese prints reached Paris with their fresh, simple color and harmony; the bold and clear design impacted painters such as Édouard Manet (1832-1883), or Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890), who copied these prints in oil. It is claimed that Japanese prints helped them free themselves from the academy's authority, and in the twentieth century, Western artists started to look beyond the style and tried to comprehend the meaning and methods of Oriental art.

Western artists were interested in the Orient in several areas at different times. Particularly several western painters began to pay attention to the gesture, such as the impressionists and post-impressionists, who are stated as profoundly influenced by art from the East.

To remind, the gesture is significant in oriental art. In China, since the thirteenth century, there has been an art form that has been entirely unrepresentative and abstract. Hence, it is claimed that gesture has its roots in Far Eastern art and mentality, appreciated as a significant value.

In the West, the birth of the pictorial genre, as action painting in the twentieth century, generated in the pictorial language as a specific form that speaks through the gesture as a significant aesthetic feature. That means various abstract expressionist painters began to consider the surface of the canvas as a record of an event rather than a surface to paint. The activity was recorded through lines, spots, stripes, drips, splashes, and dots -gestures- produced with the artist's pictorial material, as can be seen in contemporary western calligraphy mentioned in Chapter VI (González, 2017).

On the other hand, Kaya (2003) describes this atmosphere as the time that Western painters started to interrogate how pictures represent things and reduce the subject of the painting, pointing at abstraction representation; in the meantime, he underlines that West's keen interest in Japanese calligraphy started. Furthermore, the development of photography led European painters to try to find new motivation for being. All these factors of that time were reflected in Impressionism, and painters started not to be interested in figurative representation because it could be achieved with photography; they started to be more interested in the impression of certain scenes and landscapes. That means employing colors and gestures to convey emotions through brush strokes, stains, unpainted spaces, and bright colors. This attitude made it possible to trace the movement of the hand of the painter that was perceived as the material dancing along with the painter, such as in the work of Velázquez, Degas, or Monet (González, 2020).

Moreover, it can be said that Zen as philosophy also has had a significant impact on Western art since the end of the 1930s in all cultural fields, such as philosophy, painting, music, and even science. It reflects as an aesthetic consequence that the line gets the prominence importance, and the gesture started to be assessed as an artistic feature that gained a whole meaning in itself (Matute, n.d.).

Ely (2009) underlines that various western artists studied both Taoism and Zen as an alternative way to understand the nature of reality. It was an approach for them when Taoism, as one of China's principal indigenous philosophies, is assessed as an accumulated upon Western culture development and contributed to avant-garde artists' innovation in the Modernist and Post Modernist periods.

As mentioned earlier, Zen art is executed spontaneously through a single stroke without any retouching. Hence, one can reflect the quality of vivid lines in calligraphic work. It requires mastering both the technique and the execution of a pictorial object presented in detail and as a whole. Hence, it means exercising and practicing to be a master of different types of brushstrokes. Ink loaded brush, whether concentrated or diluted, can create thick or fine lines by altering the pressure and the pause of the hand to reflect the casual gestures that are appreciated in Zen art. It is one of the impacts that Western artists inspire (Matute, n.d.).

As discussed in the work of Zen painters, in many impressionist paintings, the attitude was toward the union of the mind, heart, and the body of the artist on the canvas through purposely made of the gesture (González, 2020).

Another contribution is stated as the concept of emptiness and the idea of the void mentioned earlier in this chapter in parts "4.1.3. Cultural Mindset Behind the Chinese Calligraphy," "4.2.2. Writings of Zen Monks and *Bokuseki*" and "4.2.3. The avant-garde calligraphy in Japan." To remind, the relationship between the void concept and the Zen artist is summarized through the fixed goal in the artist's conscience. It is not a set goal, but the object of the artist that refers to himself as the object, which seeks to represent the concept of emptiness -absence, while western artist looks for presence with the feeling to fill the void.

Furthermore, the idea of beauty is that Zen artists limit themselves not to falling in love with beauty. The aim is to eliminate it from his mind and memory to avoid any distraction from his contemplation. What is assessed as crucial is harmony -also constantly mentions by contemporary calligraphers such as Mediavilla (1996) and Stevens (2013). Hence, on one side, a traditional western system of thought covers filling and knowing, while the zen method of knowledge of reality covers the thought of emptiness to find. Western artists started to focus on the function of Zen which is summarized as awakening the sleeping consciousness of the artist. For this, it is indispensable to acquire a form that will create a shock. Even though there is no particular formal style of Zen, it tends to be identified through the work of gestural artists.

In the West, in various cases, it can be observed that the methodology of Zen has become essential and turned into a concept and an object, and most of the influence attributed to Zen in the American Abstraction of the 1940s and Expressionism in Europe (Matute, n.d.). However, considering the western calligraphy, this whole concept mentioned here seems to reveal itself in the twenty-first century, later than western art.

Furthermore, as a concept or form, the void started to determine the whole artistic aesthetic of the twentieth century in the West. It is the concept that is not assumed as an absence or a lack of something; instead, it represents an enormous presence that reveals the ambiguity between existence and being. That means it is something that is supposed to be appreciated as beyond nothing, underlines each being. Some of the artists that are stated who incorporated this concept into their works are ranked as Mark Tobey, Joan Miró, or Antoni Tàpies. Many others, such as Pollock, De Kooning, and action painting, employed these images already incorporated into the West and transformed them in different directions that had little or no resemblance with the basic principles of Zen. It can be stated that Zen became the ideology, a source of cultural and personal renewal (Matute, n.d.). That is the main reason here, the contemporary western calligraphers who point reference to action painting or abstract expressionist artists actually take their inspirations from the Far Eastern mentality.

On the other hand, Clarke (1988) points to Zen as not just a body of tradition about knowing but an act of cognition itself, which is Oriental parallel to Surrealism. As mentioned earlier, the freehand brush drawing of a circle *ensō*, as a common practice amongst Zen calligraphers where the artists associated with the void, represents the void in its own way, particularly recalling the brush images with the incompleteness of the circle takes the attention of the western artists.

Clarke (1988) claims that many Surrealist works in poetry or visual art practices can be compared to Zen through the change from a symbolic to a more purely abstract style that has been employed in several artists' work. That means a transformation from a symbolic to a non-symbolic, more purely abstract form, which represented a change in the function of art. Symbols started to be eliminated as an abandonment of the communicative function of art. It seems to be seen as a medium for self-expression. The transformation was for both the artist and spectator happened, and it was started as a trend of the twentieth century that art distinguished itself away from the public towards more personal and hermetic imagery, which led to a crisis among various artists over the questions of whether the communication was possible through art (Clarke, 1988).

Looking at the contemporary western calligraphy, a similar attitude, eliminating the words and letters seem to carry the same tendency through searching for self-expression of the calligraphy while talking about pushing the boundaries of the tradition and going beyond, which also represents the huge transformation from a symbolic to kind of a non-symbolic, abstract form; gesture. After that, it has started to consider the quality of the stroke or a line.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, artists, namely Paul Klee, Eugène Delacroix, and Henri Matisse, started to be interested in the harmonies and dissonance of color and light as attractive features. The gesture became significant that already many of the artists consciously used. Clarke (1988) claims that many artists started to see the lines as a primary formal element in their own right. That means it is no longer assessed as the secondary outlining form. They started to carry the line to greater expressive weight. Gestural dynamic qualities of the work of these painters have been expressed in their plastic terms. These effects of line, as Clarke claims, come from one specific source as an influence from the East on American artist's attitude, which is Far Eastern calligraphy. As mentioned in part entitled "4.1.4. Aesthetic Considerations and the Term Beauty of Chinese Calligraphy" in this chapter, Far Eastern calligraphy puts significance on the way artists use line and brush, how they handle it and how they execute the line; among the many aesthetic considerations and qualities, it is emphasized the importance of individual handwriting in gesture, expressive of characters, utilizing the line as primary for the sake of expression, stress on spontaneity, dynamic, abstract quality and the speed of the execution. All features are also cherished by the contemporary calligraphers mentioned in Chapter VI.

Among the artists, an American painter Mark Tobey (1890-1978) takes attention to his awareness of the features of Far Eastern calligraphy and reflects these influences in his densely structured compositions. He is assessed as one of the most important painters, with his ideas seen as links between present and past, East and West (Seitz, 1962).

Clarke (1988) mentions Tobey's visit to the Far East in 1934 and how he prepared himself before visiting there by reading about Oriental philosophy, Buddhism, and Zen. He traveled to Hong Kong, China (Shanghai), and Japan and documented his own journey in many letters. It is stated that even though his visit was relatively short, his response was rapid and profound to what he saw, which also led him to develop

writing ideas to present in his contemporary records. During his visit, he was also invited to speak at an art school and visited various exhibitions, where he bought an example of contemporary Chinese painting and various items, including wooden Buddha-like figures and various masks. It is stated that this journey had a significant effect on the evolution and development of his art. Furthermore, it is also stated that the dynamic city life itself was one of the significant factors that affected him during his stay in China. Japan is assessed as having a significant effect on him rather than China according to his letters, such as Japanese theater, namely one of the performances in which he describes as "practically no action, and yet plenty of it" (Clarke, 1988: 228) that lead him to draw various sketches.

Tobey's first direct contact with Zen was in the guest house near a Zen monastery, where he stayed for about a month. It is stated that during this visit, he appreciated the way activities are used as a means of apprehending Zen. Also, in 1923, he began to learn the technique of Chinese calligraphy from a young Chinese artist, Teng Kuei, who studied at the University of Washington at that time (Seitz, 1962). With the quotation of Tobey's own statement, he describes his experience as follows: "I have just had my first lesson in Chinese brush from my friend and artist Teng Kuei. The tree is no more a solid in the earth, breaking into lesser solids bathed in chiaroscuro. There is pressure and release. Each movement, like tracks in the snow, is recorded and often loved for itself. The Great Dragon is breathing sky, thunder, and shadow; wisdom and spirit vitalized" (Seitz, 1962: 47).

Figs 44-45 illustrate Tobey paintings painted by oil, tempera, and Sumi ink created in different periods and reflect various similar and diverged features. Tobey usually prefers to employ tempera or watercolor instead of oil in unassertive colors. His surfaces are prepared by brush strokes, often with delicate interwoven web-like texture as in Fig. 45, or supported with the smoking-like effects that are rising as in Fig. 44.



Fig. 44. *left Tropicalism*, Mark Tobey, 1948, oil and tempera, Source: Seitz, (1962: 66).

Fig. 45. *right Written Over the Plains*, Mark Tobey, 1950, oil and tempera, Source: Seitz, (1962: 71).

At first glance, they seem two-dimensional; however, uniquely constructed forms and spaces can be realized (Seitz, 1962). Various works, there consist of mostly recognizable formations from Eastern, medieval, and oriental calligraphy and ornament, also from primitive styles such as Egyptian pictographs, cuneiform, Arabic, Persian, and



Hebrew script, and Celtic illuminations. He mostly concentrates on nonfigurative images, and the point of his brush, gesture, and tension move freely. Line usage, as well as strokes and splashes, takes attention to the vitality of the scenes. Figs. 44 and 45 seem generated entirely by a thin line and brush strokes with minimum variations. There are also white lines that create variations in color. Typically in Far Eastern calligraphy, black is the color on a white surface. Tobey follows white on the dark image of calligraphy as if it is taken from the earlier carvings of Chinese style. There can also be observed pressure and realization of the brush as in the Far Eastern calligraphy brush moves.

Tobey believed in the importance of their brush writing and the outstanding value of their abstract feature. His works were displayed in important European galleries and museums in the 1950s, with the work consisting of painted calligraphic lines with a brush that superimposed surfaces. Tobey called his own writing style "white writing," which also creates a pictorial depth because the calligraphic notes in all of his paintings were in the form of white painted keys that were not alike (Turani, 1990). Looking at his later work, it can be observed that he preferred to be enriched by gestural drawn ink that he threw or splashed in a controlled way onto the surface. It is how he was constant in experimentation to capture the expression of the spirit (Weinberg, 2017: para. 6), as can be seen in Fig. 46.

Fig. 46. *Untitled (Sumi Drawing)*, Mark Tobey, 1957, Source: Weinberg, (2017, np.).



It illustrates that the brush moves of Tobey differ from the works in Fig. 44 and 45. There employs a broad mark of the brush, first left its traces by diluted ink, then the black Sumi with more tension and energy reveals the movement of the hand of Tobey. Once again, the ink splashes are split all over the surface, supporting the movement and explosion of black energy directly pointing at the resemblance with Far Eastern calligraphy as in Qin Feng's work (Fig. 43).

The splashed ink of a Chinese or Japanese calligrapher brush is accepted as part of the work's image. Pointing at the accidental effects in painting, Tobey explains in his word as follows: "...perhaps the Orient is inclusive of what we term the accidental. The accidental can lead us back towards the conscious if accepted and used, it can leaf to art" (Seitz, 1962: 127).

These type of splashes ink effect of Tobey evidently inspired by Far Eastern prototypes, and Clarke mentions how Tobey called them works of imperfection that represent an Oriental justification for his method of working as in the case of *kintsugi* or *kintsukuroi*<sup>10</sup>, the ancient art of Japanese repairing broken pottery with gold that consists the marks still visible.

Another noteworthy artist that Stevens (2013) mentions through his calligraphic sensibility is Robert Motherwell (1915-1991), an American artist, who was deeply impressed by the notion of writing and drawing reflecting his practices, which are characterized by an intuitive approach to painting, also should be counted among the painters who left their mark on action painting. Here with the calligraphic sensibility, it seems Stevens advocates that his works and calligraphic work with a certain quality that reveals the skill the competence of the calligrapher with his accumulated technical and practical knowledge, as mentioned in Chapters II and III, have aesthetic parity as fine art that works as representations and conceptualizations of things real or imagined (Risatti, 2013). However, it does not necessarily mean that Motherwell's work is calligraphy or calligraphic due to the restricted usage of the color once again, as in the case of Tobey; also, the emphasis on the bold gestures creates the visual similarities of the gesture that is employed by the Far Eastern calligraphers or contemporary western calligraphers with the drips and drops or a splash of the ink on the surface, or canvas. While being different and more gestural, Motherwell's main works closely resemble those of color-field painters. Thus, his work intertwines two tendencies of abstract expressionism (Gökdoğan, 2018).

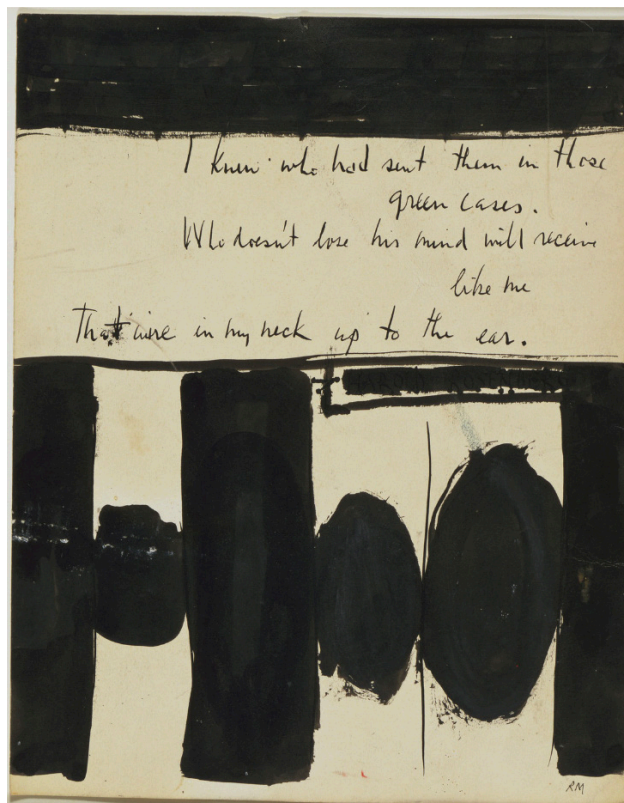
Motherwell got a comprehensive education in philosophy, literature, and art history. He is well known for his mutual interest in poetry. In addition to being one of the prolific and celebrated artists in the twentieth century, he was also genuinely interested in education and began to teach and give lectures for many years in the 1940s. Arguably, his significant works and his complete influential writing, editing, and teaching as an eloquent speaker can be assumed as one of his legacies worth credit here. He is well known for his mutual interest in poetry.

<sup>10</sup> This technique dates back to the late fifteenth century, with the cracked tea bowl sent back to China from Japan to be repaired. The repaired tea bowl with unsightly metal staples did not satisfy the owner; thus, the alternative way was to search for it. *Kintsugi*, as an aesthetic alternative for it, became common practice in Japan by the seventeenth century. Instead of rejoining the ceramic pieces with a camouflaged adhesive, in the *Kintsugi* technique, a special tree sap lacquer is dusted with powdered gold, silver, and platinum to put pieces together. The salient cracks of ceramic wares with a gold glint give a unique appearance to each repaired piece. With this technique, it is celebrated each artifact's unique history instead of hiding or disguising them. It is believed that *kintsugi* makes the repaired piece even more beautiful than the original by giving it a second life. Apart from the aesthetic principles of *kintsugi*, the practice is also related to the Japanese philosophy called *wabi-sabi*, which requires seeing beauty in the imperfect. This method was also born from the Japanese feeling called *mottainai* refers to express regret when something is wasted, and *mushin*, which refers to accepting change (Richman-Abdou, 2022).

He said he lived in a kind of "spiritual underground" (Yilmaz, 2013: 234). The reason for this was the weakening of the influence of religion with what the modern age brought.

Motherwell differs from other abstract expressionists in continuing his art without neglecting political and social issues. His best-known works are *Elegies to the Spanish Republic* (Fig. 47), a collective title that describes the series that began in the late 1940s and continued until the mid-1950s. In the artist's own words, these are metaphors for the contradictory unity between the dead and the living. In his *Elegies*, Motherwell was an artist that responded sincerely to the news of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) through this devoted series to the theme as a metaphor for all human suffering. The word *Elegy* was taken seriously as mourning for the dead that ought to be remembered and, as stated, something in danger of being forgotten about the Spanish Civil War in which democracy versus dictatorship. The white surface is observed to be engaged more in a two-dimensional manner wall-like flatness with oil paint. It is a collective title for a body of work that occupied the artist's prolific career from the late 1940s to his death in 1991. The series consists of variants of canvases in abstract pictorial form, has a crucial significance here as an example considering the point that mentioned as reflections of the influenced of Far East.

Fig. 47. *Elegy to the Spanish Republic No. 1*, Robert Motherwell, ink on paper, 1948, Source: MOMA, [moma.org/collection/works/37683?artist\\_id=4126&locale=en&page=1&sov\\_referrer=artist](https://moma.org/collection/works/37683?artist_id=4126&locale=en&page=1&sov_referrer=artist), access: 29.05.2016.



First, the series appeared as a pen and ink drawing that was to illustrate a poem, then Motherwell returned to the motif in which very few colors are used; the black stain embedded in the composition has an effect that those who see it once will never forget (Yilmaz, 2013).

His recurring motif is a rough black oval of varying sizes, and different degrees of compression and distortion can be observed in *Elegy to the Spanish Republic No. 108* (Fig. 48) and *Elegy to the Spanish Republic No. 110* (Fig. 49) as observed, illustrating Motherwell's typical works with their organic and geometric -stark black and white palette, ovoid and bar-like rectilinear forms.



Fig. 48. *Elegy to the Spanish Republic 108*, Robert Motherwell, oil on canvas, 1965-67, Source: MOMA, [moma.org/collection/works/79007?locale=en&page=1&with\\_images=true](https://moma.org/collection/works/79007?locale=en&page=1&with_images=true), access: 29.05.2016.



Fig. 49. *Elegy to the Spanish Republic No. 110*, Robert Motherwell, acrylic with graphite and charcoal on canvas, 1971, Source: Guggenheim, [guggenheim.org/artwork/3047](https://guggenheim.org/artwork/3047), access: 29.05.2016.

Black ovals interspersed with wide vertical bars. In different ways, freely painted forms evoke as if the black paint is splashed on with spatters and drips, dragged, flowed, or flattened in an intervening area. Simple shapes juxtapose with a surface that provides bold color contrast and a dynamic balance and rhythm through gestural brushstrokes, reflecting the artist's sincere responses to events as natural, emotional, and internally connected with their reference and content.

Contours and shapes are even repeated as basic forms are changed and multiplied with significant variety. The color support's appearance makes the depth and profound effect of Motherwell's commitment to his theme revealed and demonstrated. It can be claimed that the series is meant to present the images' interconnection as a total experience. Motherwell seems to manifest his humanist feelings and a profound sense of loss, mourning, and an elegy for these tragedies relating to fascism and the Spanish Republic (1931-1939) and a Spanish dictator Francisco Franco Bahamonde (1892-1975) in an abstract language embodied in the shapes painted in the black-and-white as if like a poem read aloud.



Motherwell began *the Lyric Suite* series (Figs 50 and 51) in 1965. Compared with one of the best-known series of large, human-scale paintings, this series has small scales that are softer and more fluid, consisting of inherent qualities of the ink and rice paper. As claimed, he produced almost six hundred pieces on Japanese rice paper as an experiment to reflect his deep inner creativity freed by conscious thoughts without change or revision after execution.. By letting the medium that creates the painting, he experienced the expression of the ink bled into or accidentally dripped onto the paper that allow the forms to explode (Hobbs, 2009).

Fig. 50. *Untitled* from the series *Lyric Suite*, Robert Motherwell, colored ink on paper, 1965, Source: Hobbs, (2009: 63).



Fig. 51. *Untitled* from the series *Lyric Suite*, Robert Motherwell, colored ink on paper, 1965, Source: MOMA, [moma.org/artists/4126?locale=en&page=1&direction=](http://moma.org/artists/4126?locale=en&page=1&direction=), access: 29.05.2016.



Spreading freely and forming unexpected patterns; however, spontaneous gestures reveal powerful contrast creating a pictorial composition. Proper technical discipline to produce simple flowing compositions, as observed in this case, described by Motherwell as follows:

Paint the thousand sheets without interruption, without a priori traditional or moral prejudices or a posteriori ones, without iconography, and above all without revisions or additions upon critical reflection and judgment and see what lies within, whatever it is. Venture. Don't look back. Do not tire. Everything is open. Brushes and blank white paper. (Hobbs, 2009: 62)

Motherwell, with his marks, embraced to be associated with a movement that engages spontaneously and passionately created the action of painting. The composition in large general scales is charged with deep feelings and open-ended meanings.

Hence, it can be said that the influences of the writing and drawing of Motherwell, also how he conceptualizes the issues and executes them as a reflection through his canvas, reveal the strong emotions through an emphasis on the black masses. It also reminds the sensibility of the Far Eastern calligrapher with the emphasis on the gesture, which has its



origin in the East; highly significant for Far Eastern calligraphy with the different perception of abstraction that comes with their writing system. An important reason it is perceived in this way is that the differences between the western and eastern art mentality can be observed by using the painting's lines, perspective, anatomy, and theme. The focus on the image on the canvas, rather than faithfully reproducing the superficial appearance of an object, is the main aim of the Chinese artists, who pursue their own understanding through appreciation of an ink painting.

On the other hand, looking at Brice Marden (b. 1938) mentioned in part "4.3. The Impact of Western Art on Far Eastern Contemporary Calligraphy," who has been creating paintings, drawings, and prints since the 1960s that relates to both painterly gestures of Abstract Expressionism, with a diverse subject such as alchemy, religion, and mythology. When he was a student, he started to study printmaking first and had an early job at a screen print shop, which allowed him to advance his technique. Then began to etchings inspired by his initial collaborations with printers. He worked comprehensively in his medium to explore the potential for subtle mark-making.

It is stated that during the late 1980s, he became interested in calligraphy and started to create *Zen Study 3 (Early State)* (Fig. 52) and *Zen Study 6 (Early State)* (Fig. 53) based on poems of celebrated poets; named "Cold Mountain." His works were made up of tangled webs and vertical gestures, suggesting a visual form of vertical writings of poetic couplets. His etching process for the print allows him to create flowing gestures created by dipping a stick in a sugar solution. Then he prepared his etching plate by drawing with this stick (MOMA, n.d.).

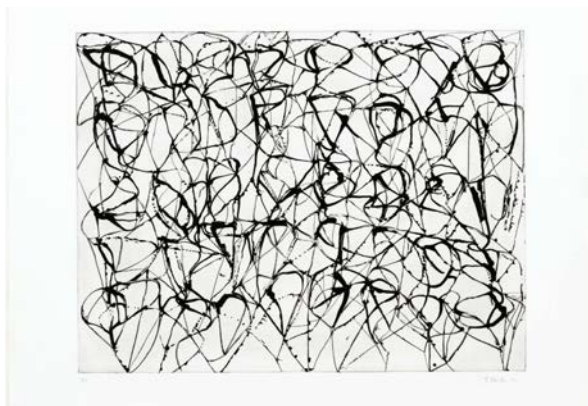


Fig. 52. *Zen Study 6 (Early State)* from *Cold Mountain Series*, Brice Marden, 1990, Source: MOMA, [moma.org/collection/works/69053/](https://moma.org/collection/works/69053/), access: 11.02.2019.

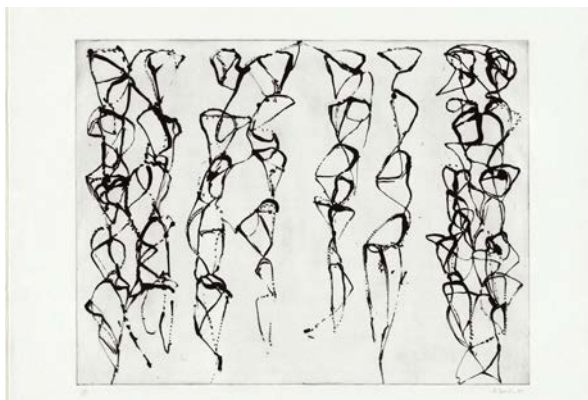


Fig. 53. *Zen Study 3 (Early State)* from *Cold Mountain Series*, Brice Marden, 1990, Source: MOMA, [moma.org/collection/works/69038/](https://moma.org/collection/works/69038/), access: 11.02.2019.

According to Caruso (2009), Brice Marden was inspired by his travels to India, Sri Lanka, and Thailand in 1983 and the following year to Japan House's Gallery exhibition entitled "The Masters of Japanese Calligraphy." Hence, he studied Chinese calligraphy and adopted these studies to his artistic practice and painting process. Indeed, his interest and intercultural experiences played a critical role in his attitudes, as in the case of other artists that will hold here. It is also stated that greater freedom in his abstract painting compared with his earlier dry minimalistic approaches can be observed in this work, particularly a series of calligraphic ink-on-paper works from 1987-90 based on the Chinese poem "Cold Mountain," which clearly shows the inspiration he received from Far Eastern calligraphy (Caruso, 2009).

To sum up, under the lights of accumulated knowledge here, the western abstract artist seems to employ the mark-like symbols and primitive forms as a medium to utilize in order to establish their paintings after the close connection between the Far East and West started, also intended to internalize the mindset behind them and fused all in the context of Abstract Expressionism with modernist and postmodernist attitude. These artists mentioned here, such as Motherwell and Tobey a, also have been serving as inspiration sources for contemporary calligraphy practitioners, which leads us to think, first of all, Far Eastern influence just started at this point implicitly or unconsciously, who points at Motherwell, or Tobey, namely Meulman, Brown, Stevens a few that will be mentioned in Chapter VI through examining the contemporary western calligraphy.

Before continuing with Chapter V, "The Calligraphic Tradition of The Arabic Script and Islamic Calligraphy: Influences On The Western Contemporary Calligraphy," one tradition named *Dishu*, a Chinese cultural phenomenon that refers to writing calligraphy on the ground, is also needed to be included here due to the reason that various western calligraphers, such as Meulman that will be mentioned in Chapter VI, is inspired, hence adopted and adapted this phenomenon to his various interpretations of calligraphic works. Since it affected the western artists as the Far Eastern calligraphy practice, it is appropriate to include it in this section. Hence, this part will give insight and provide knowledge while examining the works of Meulman that were inspired by *dishu*.

#### **4.4.1. Dishu: A Far Eastern calligraphy practice**

*Dishu* is one of China's cultural phenomena, literally translated as "writing calligraphy on the ground" or "writing street calligraphy" (Fig. 54). It is considered one of the easiest and most economical ways to learn and practice Chinese calligraphy; that started appearing in the 1990s in north Beijing parks as folk culture anonymously; then its popularity spread to many public spaces in other major cities of China such as Beijing, Shanghai, Xian, Hangzhou, Suzhou. Anonymous street calligraphers practice water in parks and streets daily, commonly based on classic Chinese literature, poetry, or aphorisms written in various styles. The park's pavement becomes a large paper surface with letters composed of the trace of the water and disappears as it evaporates. The

writers of *Dishu* can be of various ages; however, the master of writers are mostly older people as the calligraphy tutors teach the children how and what to write. The other significant aspect is that apart from the practitioners, the pedestrian passing by and seeing the piece on the groundwater calligraphy also participate and discuss it with the street calligraphers (Xiongfei, 2014). It is evident that *dishu* and the western calligraphy tradition have a resemblance in that both consist of tacit knowledge that refers to their craft nature, that the technical and practical knowledge pass from master to apprentice, as mentioned in Chapter III. Furthermore, as will be seen in Appendix B, all the courses and workshops that I have participated in Spain, France, and Turkey, preserve this feature to teach even if the theme is traditional calligraphy or contemporary. The content of the text can be anything, just supposed to be neutral with the content of the inscription based on classical texts and official poetry. Most of the styles chosen by a writer depend on his skill and mastery that corresponds to his inner personality. As stated before, the cursive script is highly appreciated among other Chinese styles due to its open possibility to experiment; it is the same for *dishu* writing.



Fig. 54. Portraits of two *dishu* artists photographed when practicing, Source: Anders, (2013: 20-23).



Chastanet (2013) claims that *dishu* is assessed as the ideal meeting of culture and health; hence, the writing on the ground with a whole-body augments the strength of the body. For this reason, it is stated that in China, *dishu* is accepted as a soft sport which leads one to train the memory and intellectual faculties through memorizing long text written on the ground (Anders, 2013).

*Dishu* artist uses tall, handmade writing tool (Fig. 55) as their instruments, rather than a traditional brush; instead of ink, they use water as their medium. The writing tool is very basic, made of a piece of sponge or a rolled towel. The earlier forms are made out of linen or wool rugs and wooden palm fibers, which can be seen still today, particularly in the Street of Shanghai. Hence, the construction varies from city to city, but the foam is most commonly preferred with a water container. Even a plastic bottle with a tiny hole in the cap is sometimes used to outline the letters like a spray can do, which requires controlling the pressure of the bottle manually to achieve a precise thin line (Anders, 2013).

Fig. 55. Handy crafted *Dishu* brushes, specially designed for calligraphy in an urban context used for different styles, Source: Anders, (2013: 25).



On the other hand, writing on paper with water is an old practice in China. When children learn to write Chinese characters by tracing the models, they use a hairbrush on the darker surface of a kind of fabric with water. When the wet surface dries, it can be used again and again to practice. This type of technique saves much paper when one is training calligraphy. Using the water on the street seems to carry pretty much the same attitude with this technique. It is written on the street with water; once it dries, it can be written repeatedly.

Moreover, *dishu* artists participate in writing as a body performance by sweeping their instruments following the strokes of the character with the whole body. The instrument is supposed to be held at attention, parallel to the body. Different body postures and attitudes affect the writing and reveal the writing level achieved in a public space. If the one holds the brush straighter position, and the body and the hand farther from the tip of the brush, the gesture of the writing will be different, in which the mark of a higher and more relaxed level of skill reveals his ultimate step of self-mastery. Through intensely focusing on the moment, which resembles to dancing or music, the act of writing creates writing the large text that spreads on the large areas of the pavement (Anders, 2013).

As stated before, the higher form of anonymity is not signed by the writers of their own inscriptions, which are deeply rooted in Chinese culture. On the other hand, its ephemeral nature is assessed as "an ode to impermanence" (Anders, 2013: 22), which refers to the desire for anonymity and the state of being obliterated. Anonymity is also underlined as "a will of independence; to really stay independent, one needs to be anonymous because as soon as one has a name, we enter the game of prestige and power and you lose your freedom" (Ibid.). In *dishu* writing, a writer is supposed to be a part of the group, where sharing with others and expressing yourself is the main goal, which means *dishu* encourages anonymity.

After examining the mutual interaction between the Far Eastern and Western calligraphy, it will be significant to mention the calligraphic tradition of the Arabic script and Islamic Calligraphy focusing on its influences on contemporary western calligraphy to provide knowledge and a better understanding of the contemporary attitudes of the western calligraphers.





## V. CALLIGRAPHIC TRADITION OF THE ARABIC SCRIPT AND ISLAMIC CALLIGRAPHY: INFLUENCES ON CONTEMPORARY WESTERN CALLIGRAPHY

As in Chapter IV, the Far Eastern calligraphy, particularly Chinese and Japanese calligraphy, with various perspectives, provided significant insight to understanding contemporary western calligraphy practices and tendencies; the calligraphy tradition of the Arabic script and Islamic Calligraphy will be examined, focusing on providing appropriate insight into the influences on Western contemporary calligraphy. The aim is not to focus on the historical evolution; instead, the various information providing sufficient background to assess contemporary western calligraphy will be examined.

Arabic calligraphy or Islamic calligraphy are terms that seem to be used interchangeably. First, it is crucial to indicate why this chapter chose the title "The Calligraphic Tradition of The Arabic Script and Islamic Calligraphy."

Calligraphy in the Middle East grew and spread with the language and the Islamic religion. It is claimed that calligraphy has its roots in the birth of Islam. It occupies a central place in Islamic culture through the numerous formulas by which Islamic poets and calligraphers started to write their epistles. Calligraphy became one of the most significant representations of Islamic heritage with its distinctive aesthetic expressions closely related to society's spiritual life and human beings with an awareness of writing, a unique quality of human race with its characters that preserves the Divine Word. Even though most of the works of Islamic calligraphy are in Arabic, and most Arabic calligraphy is Islamic, the two are not identical due to the various Coptic or other Christian manuscripts in Arabic also employed calligraphy, as well as there are Islamic calligraphy practices that belong to Persian or the historic Ottoman language (Schimmel, 1990).

Moreover, as Blair (2008) states, Islam is a noun that refers to a religion, and literally, in Arabic, that refers to Muslims' faith. She also states that this term has occurred only six times; the more familiar word is simply the faith (*al-din*) seems to prefer to use in the Qur'an instead of Islam, and Western art historians created the term Islamic art at the end of the nineteenth century due to the European interest in describing

religion's history. Hence, she underlines that such criticism is not that easily leveled in terms of Islamic calligraphy, in which writing is one of the most significant traditions at the center of this culture. The major script used for it is Arabic.

According to Islam, Arabic, as a language, was the one in which the Prophet Muhammad received the revelation from God. The script was adapted for many other languages spoken in the lands where Islam flourished. Blair (2008) prefers to use the adjective form "Islamic," which is related to this religion, instead of using the term Arabic; however, he uses it to indicate the culture that emerged and developed in that land, where Islam has a significant presence in fourteenth hundred years. She claims that using the title "Arabic Calligraphy" for her book *Islamic Calligraphy* would create a threat of confusing script with language. Hence she uses Islamic calligraphy as a means of calligraphy written in Arabic script in Islamic culture.

As Blair (2008), Simonowitz (2010) also assesses calligraphy practices with the Arabic alphabet as more problematic and complex practices as subfields of Islamic visual culture. He claims that it is commonly called Arabic calligraphy because the characters are widely derived from those of the Arabic alphabet. Still, according to her, the term misuses the calligraphic works in languages other than Arabic, employing the same characters. For this reason, she underlines that the most commonly accepted term scholarly is "Islamic calligraphy," even though it may also mislead many significant examples of calligraphic work that employs this alphabet. Hence, he stresses that Islamic calligraphy seems the preferable designation at present.

On the other hand, George (2010) mentions the first Arabic writing, which dates back to the first century of the *hegira*<sup>1</sup>. By the fifth and sixth century AD, the Arabic alphabet -simple and primitive early examples started to develop rapidly, particularly with the rise of Islam in the seventh century; it was also started to assess as a form of art. Through the seventh century, with Islam, the script radically transformed with the rising of a new political situation. That means calligraphic styles emerged with the rise of Islam (Sakkal, 2016). Thus, according to George (2010), because of these drastic changes that depend on before and after the Islamic period, the word refers to calligraphy for this territory seems to be no consensus. Whereas it is difficult to set the date of the emergence of the Arabic alphabet precisely, as he states, its origin dates back to the period before Islam. For this reason, he prefers to use the term Islamic Calligraphy, which refers to calligraphy with Arabic script that has been practiced after Islam; moreover, it may have been practiced as a significant cultural attribute of Islam that also embodies the elements of pre-Islamic legacy.

Furthermore, Adbib (2021) uses the term Arabic calligraphic art to refer to the art of writing using the Arabic alphabets derived from Persian, Turkish, and Ottoman and stated that calligraphy shows itself,

<sup>1</sup> Hegira, *hijrah*, also spelled *hejira* or *hijra*, means "migration" or "emigration, signifies the Prophet Muhammad's migration from Mecca to Medina to escape persecution in 622 CE. This date also represents the beginning point of the Muslim era (Britannica, 2020).

particularly in Islam. Thus, Islamic calligraphy as a term is appropriate to use; however, it should also be kept in mind that even though calligraphy has been assessed as a significant medium to preserve and dissemination the Qur'an, calligraphy with Arabic script has its extensive use in areas that are not tightly related to religious.

To sum up, Rajput (2014) states that the role of calligraphic art should be considered a particular language in which art is executed; in this case, the language is mostly Arabic. With the Holy Qur'an, which is assessed as the principal source that laid behind the development of the Arabic language and the evolution of calligraphic art, both the Arabic scripts and the Islamic calligraphy are supposed to be taken into account in this part.

Considering these issues mentioned above, it is decided to use for this chapter the title of "The Calligraphic Tradition of The Arabic Script and Islamic Calligraphy" to consist of all calligraphy practices without directly indicating the calligraphy practices with Arabic language or merely the Islamic calligraphy. As it will be examined, the contemporary practices in this genre consist of various perspectives that seem to differ from the tradition in many ways, even taking the trigger from its roots, also not strictly related to religion. Since it is intended to cover all perspectives in this part, this title is assessed as appropriate.

Moreover, Blair (2008) states that the term calligraphy, derived from the Greek *kallos* and *graphe*, is generally interpreted as "beautiful handwriting," following the western perception. In its broader sense, calligraphy is accepted as equivalent to the Arabic noun *khatt*, which contains the idea of writing through its literal meaning as line, streak or stripe, track, path or road, and writing. Just as Kaestle (2008) also underlies, Arabic Calligraphy is a hybrid term thought in the English language to refer to the beautiful handwriting of the Arabic language. For this reason, when calligraphy is used instead of the word *khatt*, the philological connotations are lost in its translated term "calligraphy."

The definition of *khatt* will be examined in part "5.2. The concept of the word *khatt*" is still significant to mention this issue to warn from the beginning, just as in Far Eastern calligraphy, in which the term *shufa* is used for calligraphy practices in the Chinese language and *shodo* is used for calligraphy practices in the Japanese language. However, it is crucial not to consider the term calligraphy from the western perception, examined in Chapter II. It is already discussed whether the translation leads to misunderstanding without considering contemporary practices. It seems to cause bias and wrong conception due to the preliminary examination of the term from the Western point of view. Thus, using the term to refer to the other traditions, such as the Far East and the Middle East traditions, also causes us to lose the essence and fundamental features of these traditions' mindsets. Considering these jeopardies in this issue, it is still preferred to use the term calligraphy with the promise of explaining the concept of the art of writing in these languages as it is done for Far Eastern calligraphy earlier.

This chapter will examine the Arabic writing system with its basic characteristics, then the concept of the Arabic term *khatt*, which refers to calligraphy in the Middle East. Through its conception, it will be

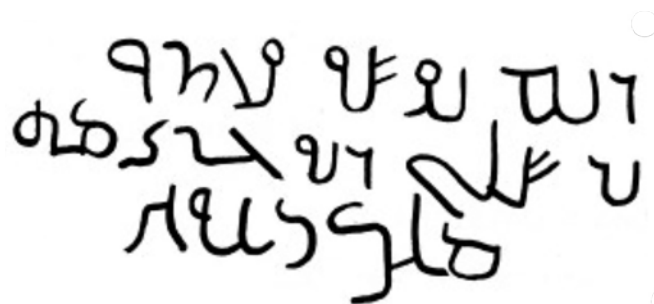
understood how calligraphy is perceived as a form of art in a sense. It also leads to consider the art concept and mostly how Islamic culture considers art, due to as various literature indicates, calligraphy emerged, and various script styles developed with Islam. For this reason, it is indispensable to mention the general conception of Islamic art, including the mystical concept that affects calligraphy and the overall art concept in this region. Then, to frame the perception of writing and hence calligraphy, it is significant to examine how Islam perceives writing. That will be examined based on the surah of the Holy Book Qur'an.

Moreover, the most basic forms with their features are included in the development of calligraphic styles. One of the central parts here focuses on contemporary attitudes, how calligraphy evolves, and how contemporary Western practices may be affected by it. Thus, the evolution of calligraphy in this region will be examined in this part. It will provide a chance to locate the possible influence on the contemporary Western mindset in the realm of calligraphy.

### 5.1. Arabic writing system and its characteristics

The Arabs can be traced as early as the Assyrian period in the ninth to seventh century BC; however, they became prominent historically by the time of Christ. Nabataeans, who were Arabs (Rajput, 2014), were the first independent Arab kingdom centered on Petra in modern Jordan but wrote in the Aramaic script, an official administrative script of the Assyrians and Persians. Nabataeans also contacted the other Arab tribes and had cultural and long-standing trade links with each other. They lived in an area that extended from the Sinai and North Arabia to Southern Syria as semi-nomads. They founded a kingdom until the Roman's destruction in about 105 AD. Still, their language and script (Fig. 1) significantly impacted the early development of Arabic writing. The Arabic forms and words in Aramaic inscriptions paved the way for writing the Arabic language in Nabatean Aramaic script, the precursor form of the Arabic that arose in the first half of the first millennium AD; it substituted for the Aramaic script (Robinson, 1995).

Fig. 1. Nabataeab script on Um Umm al Jimal's tombstone, 250, Source: Lee-Niinioja, (2018: 19).



As mentioned earlier, writing was known by Arabs in the pre-Islamic period as that was used, especially in trade. It is stated that two different flexible surfaces were commonly used; one is papyrus made from the pressed fibers of a plant of the Nile in Egypt, which was used for business correspondence, and the other was parchment, a more



durable material made from the animal skin was preferred to use for books. Furthermore, the Arabic script was developed much later than the Roman alphabet because the Arabs had a nomadic lifestyle that was not accustomed to the written word. That means they relied on an oral tradition for mostly keeping information and their communication. In the sixth century, the pre-Islamic period was assessed as the heroic age of literature when poetry was used as the only means of literary expression (Lee-Niinioja, 2018).

The earliest form of the alphabet is dated back to around 1700 BC in Palestine and Syria, which consisted of 22 consonant letters. The Arabic, Hebrew, and Phoenician alphabets were based on this model until around 1000 BC, when the Phoenician alphabet used a Greek model and then added vowel letters. It became a model for Etruscan around 800 BC and followed the ancient Roman alphabet, ultimately all Western alphabets. On the other hand, the North Arabic script dominated and became the Arabic script of the Qur'an that relates to the Nabatian script, which was based on the Aramaic script (Sakkal, 2016).

Hence, it can be summed the line of descent from the Phoenician to the Aramaic to the Nabataean and finally to the Arabic script, as illustrated in Fig. 2; the Arabic and Phoenician alphabets, with several other alphabets, namely Hebrew and Aramaic, were developed from an early model called the North Semitic. Greeks adopted the Phoenician alphabet, then the Etruscans and Romans, and finally, it became the Western alphabet known today (Robinson, 1995).

Modern Latin	A	B	C	D	E	F	Z	H	I	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T
Early Latin	A	B	C	D	E	F	Z	H	z	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T
Early Greek	Α	Β	Γ	Δ	Ε	Ζ	Η	Θ	Ι	Κ	Λ	Μ	Ν	Ξ	Ο	Π	Ρ	Σ	Τ
Phoenician	𐤀	𐤁	𐤂	𐤃	𐤄	𐤅	𐤆	𐤇	𐤈	𐤉	𐤊	𐤋	𐤌	𐤍	𐤎	𐤏	𐤐	𐤑	𐤒
Early Aramaic	𐤀	𐤁	𐤂	𐤃	𐤄	𐤅	𐤆	𐤇	𐤈	𐤉	𐤊	𐤋	𐤌	𐤍	𐤎	𐤏	𐤐	𐤑	𐤒
Nabataean	𐤀	𐤁	𐤂	𐤃	𐤄	𐤅	𐤆	𐤇	𐤈	𐤉	𐤊	𐤋	𐤌	𐤍	𐤎	𐤏	𐤐	𐤑	𐤒
Early Arabic	ا	ب	ج	د	هـ	و	ز	ح	ط	ي	ك	ل	م	ن	س	ع	ف	ق	ص

Fig. 2. The evolution of alphabets, Source: Milo, (2002: 113).

It is claimed that Qur'an was first transmitted through the oral tradition among Muslims, not through the written word. Not far, Muslims realized an excellent necessity for writing and were searching to create their script beautifully. For this reason, it is stated that the Arabic script is assessed as a sacred script of Islam (Robinson, 1995), and they started to produce a calligraphy tradition and transformed the Arabic script into an artistic medium that is supposed to reflect the genius and talent of the writer (Lee-Niinioja, 2018).

On the other hand, besides spreading Islam as a religion to the area, written and spoken Arabic was introduced by conquerers to the region. It is stated that the Arabic language is a significant factor that unites people who come from different ethnicity, language, and culture. In the early centuries of Islam, Arabic was the official language of administration and was assessed as the language of religion and learning. For this reason, the Arabic alphabet was adapted to the Islamic vernaculars just as the Latin alphabet was influenced by the Christian in the West (Brown, Barbour, and others, 2019).

Several forms of Arabic script emerged from the beginning of the Islamic period in the early seventh century, and all consist of 28 consonants instead of the 22 consonants of Aramaic. Of the 28, three are long vowels, *alef*, *waw*, and *yeh*, denoted with diacritical marks rarely employed in writing, which generally appear in Qur'anic writing (Waterman, 2009).

It is claimed that, among all the Semitic scripts, the Arabic script can be assessed as one of the wealthiest inventory of consonants that comprises twenty-eight basic letters (Rajput, 2014).

The Arabic language underwent various changes during the Umayyad (661-750 BC) and Abbasid dynasties (750 BC-1258). Diacritical marks (short vowels) were first introduced during the Ummayyad dynasty. The dots that can be seen above and below of modern Arabic letters were first started to be used in conjunction with Arabic forms in the Abbasid dynasty. While the alphabet was evolving, so were the calligraphic forms. For example, court papers began to be written in early cursive script forms (Ibid.).

Various consonants represent sounds that do not exist in the Aramaic language that also serve non-Arabic languages that use the Arabic script, such as Iran and Pakistan. This new ordering of the consonantal alphabet was also established chiefly based on the shapes of the letters (Robinson, 1995), and each of the letters may have up to four different forms, which are all consonants, unlike the Roman alphabet that was used in most European languages (Najda, 1994). These multiple forms of the Arabic letters depend on where the letter falls in the word. An initial form starts a word, a middle form stands in the middle of the word, ending a word, and stands along-form. Many of these forms link to the previous letters if there is any connection to the following letter. Apart from these linked letters, six non-connecters mean they do not link to the letter they follow: *alef*, *daal*, *thaa*, *zey*, *rey*, and *waw* (Waterman, 2009).

The Arabic alphabet consists of eighteen shapes that represent twenty-eight phonetic sounds with the aid of diacritical marks. It can be formed as a "b" sound with the same letter shape when one dot is placed below, a "t" sound when two dots are written above, or a "th" sound with three dots, added above (Moore & Ekhtiar, 2012). Several letters in the Arabic alphabet also share the same form differentiated by the number and placement of dots on the letters.

Fig. 3 illustrates the basic 18 shapes. Of these 18 shapes, as can be seen, 2 are used for three letters, 6 are used for two letters, and the other 10 are used for one letter each. There are no capital forms of letters in Arabic writing. All give the Arabic script its particular character (Brown, Barbour, and others, 2019). However, it can be said that it is alphabetical writing, unlike Greek or Roman, the text is written right to left; however, the numbers are read from left to right because of an ancestral system (Milo, 2002). This affects the orientation of the layout for the reader; the codices open in the opposite way that is done in the West.

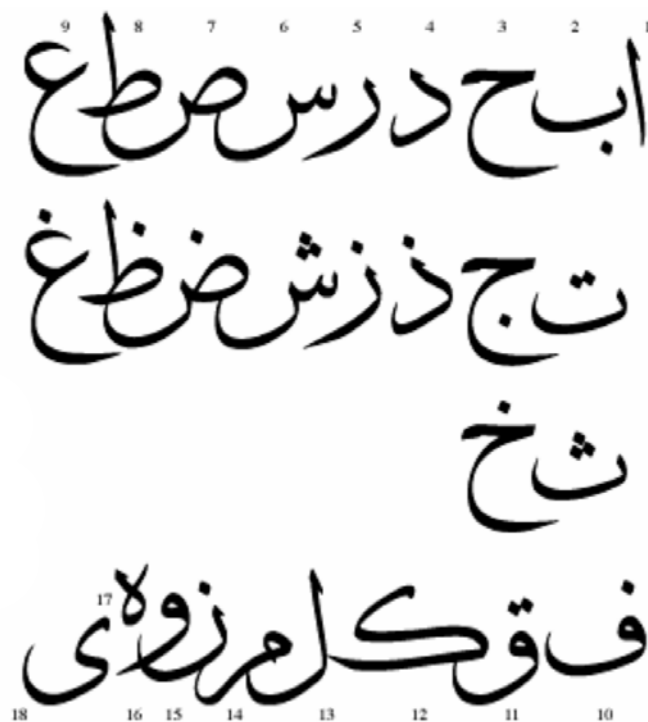


Fig. 3. The Basic 18 letter shape of Arabic alphabet, Source: Sakkal Desing: Art of Arabic Calligraphy, [sakkal.com/Arab\\_Calligraphy\\_Art2.html](http://sakkal.com/Arab_Calligraphy_Art2.html), access: 12.02.2019.

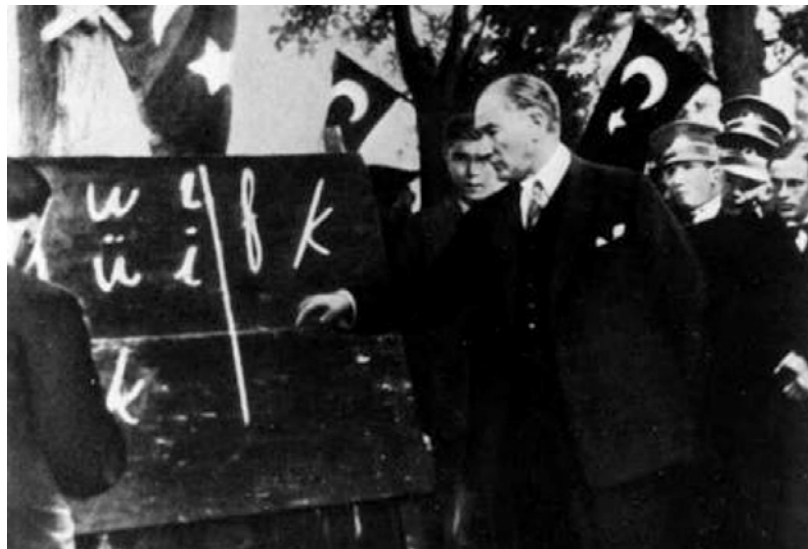
Moreover, the Arabic script consists of a flowing continuum of ascending verticals, descending curves, and temperate horizontals that balance the static individual forms and a rhythmic movement. Letter shapes commonly vary depending on whether they are an initial letter or used as a medial or final position in a word. Punctuation marks were not used until the twentieth century. Short vowels are executed by a set of marks written below or above the letters to aid in the pronunciation of a word. It has significant importance, particularly in the Qur'an, where reciting correctly has vast significance in texts (Moore & Ekhtiar, 2012).

On the other hand, Bittar (2007) states that the language of Arabic, when it first developed, they refused to erase Egypt's pictographs, the cuneiforms of Ugaritic culture. Even though it is a phonetic language, it consists of an embedded pictographic mission, and spatial notations are delivered through the *harakat* or diacritical and vowel marks, literally punctuating spaces that emphasize the decorative here, a light, or distance there. That means it has to be considered from two perspectives through its structural characteristics and spatial depths

that make it a dynamic and versatile language that conveys the form and space -visual interpretations as images or pictures- and meaning, which will be mentioned in the following part.

Furthermore, the arrival of Islam and the conversion of many regions led to an emerging number of languages adopting the Arabic alphabet even though there are no linguistic similarities. At present, among the languages which adopted Arabic letters are Persian (or Farsi, spoken in Iran, Dari in Afghanistan, and Tajik in Tajikistan), Pashto (spoken in Afghanistan and Pakistan), Kurdish (spoken in parts of Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey), and Urdu (spoken in Pakistan and parts of India). Moreover, Turkey used Arabic letters until it officially changed with the Latin alphabet and adapted it to the Turkish language in 1928 by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881-1932) (Fig. 4) (Moore & Ekhtiar, 2012).

Fig. 4. Head teacher Mustafa Kemal Pasha in front of the blackboard during the Alphabet Revolution studies, Kayseri, 1928, Source: Ortaylı, (2018: 353).



Atatürk wanted to create a new state and modern society with different mindsets, attitudes, organizations, and aspirations. In that period, Turkey was already transforming and interested in a radical phase of changes; the empire declined for two hundred years. Arab bureaucratic organizations in Turkey's history of discussions about reclamation and completely changing the letters are as old as the reform experiments in education. This is not merely a specific issue solely in Turkey. Since the beginning of modern times, modernizing societies using Latin and Cyrillic (Russian) alphabets have carried out spelling reforms and changed their alphabets. None of the living languages had a standard spelling during the Middle Ages. The writing used by old bureaucrats and a few intellectuals was based on memory and customs. In fact, each author had their own spelling, and there were no standard spelling rules accepted by everyone and no simple writing to read.

At the end of the eighteenth century, it is also known that the sister of Selim the third, Hatice Sultan (1768-1822), and a painter, architect, and voyager Antoine Ignace Melling (1763-1831) exchanged letters in Turkish with Latin letters. There are also Turkish books with Latin letters

written by some European writers to teach Turkish. Another hidden supporter of the Latin letters is Sultan II. Abdulhamid. "The reason for the great ignorance of our people is the difficulty in learning to read and write. The reason for this difficulty is our letters" (Ortaylı, 2018: 350). According to him, it was probably appropriate to accept the Latin alphabet to make it easier. In the meantime, the Turkish language's morphology based on analytical root structure and sound harmony make such arrangements inevitable. It showed that the Arabic letters were not a tool used in modern bureaucracy and non-formal education for Turkey. Therefore, the adoption of the Latin alphabet in the 1920s was once again on the table. In summary, this letter change issue has emerged in such a way that it is a need and has a long history (Ibid.).

It is also stated that the idea of changing to Latin letters occurred in a short period of three months in 1928, without allowing for binary use. Until then, even those who suggested and advocated the adoption of Latin letters hesitated to support Atatürk. Also, it is underlined that the adaptation of the Latin letters only because they are suitable for Turkish orthography, sound harmony, and the current script created a spelling problem in reading and writing. It was not just an obligation to write a personal letter, but a language that pronounced eight vowels had an alphabet with only three vowels, and misspellings were very likely. For this reason, the abolition of the old Arabic letters took place by law in November 1928, and the implementation of this law took place within three months with the gradual transition to new letters. People have given up the habit of writing with old letters. There was even a change in the alphabet, but they read for a long time and took notes with Arabic letters (Ortaylı, 2018).

## **5.2. The concept of the word *khatt***

As mentioned in Chapter II, calligraphy is an English term that derives from Greek *kallos* and *graphos*, and is generally translated as beautiful handwriting, hence in a broader sense, calligraphy is basically accepted as roughly equivalent to the Arabic noun *khatt*; however, as stated earlier, in order to understand whether they have equal each other considering the perception of their content, it is necessary to examine deeply.

The Arabic noun *khatt* is defined as "line," "streak," or "stripe," "trach," "path," or "road" (Blair, 2006: xxv), and Kaestle (2008) states that the word *khatt* is derived from "line, design, and construction" (Kaestle, 2008: np.). It is also stated that the tradition of Arabic *khatt* is closely related to the notion of the trace. Even with this information, it can be claimed that the understanding of the contemporary western calligraphers and the practices show close resemblance with their strokes, lines, or marks that are employed to leave a mark of the hand to this definition of *khatt*.

According to Blair (2008), pre-Islamic poets, such as Imru'l-Qays (b. 501 AD) and Labid (560-661 AD), used the noun *khatt* to refer to the traces of the sand left by abandoned composites, standard tropes in their poetry



(*qasidas*), or odes that collected and known as *Mu'allaqat*. Medieval Muslims well aware of this imagery and defined *khatt* as the extended trace of a thing. Moreover, the noun *khatt* also contains the idea of writing that can be understood from various translations as "line and stroke, stripe as well as handwriting, writing, script, calligraphy, penmanship" (Blair, 2006, xxv).

From these definitions, it can be understood that there is no apparent distinction between writing and calligraphy in the first place, as contrary to the western perspective examined in Chapter II, and also it can be said that *khatt* probably consists of the act of drawing, writing, even painting that basically any action that helps to leave the trace, line, or mark. This feature also takes resemblance with the Far Eastern calligraphy that is examined in Chapter IV.

On the other hand, Blair (2008) states that writing is a common explanation for the narrower definition of calligraphy, which also consists of its implicit assumptions of aesthetic qualities of a script, based on the Arabic phrases such as *al-khatt al-badi* or *al-khatt al-jamil* that means beautiful writing. With the more restricted definition of calligraphy, the concept seems to be described as a script that the writer executes with the intention of an impact the viewer in an aesthetic manner, not conveying only the information through the semantic content but also "speak through its formal appearance" (Blair, 2006, xxv), on the contrary to the ancient writing of the West when functionality was the main goal which could be achieved through the recognition of the letters that were well executed.

It is also stated that through the linguistic analogy, calligraphy is explained here as writing as *fusha* (literary Arabic) is to direct speech, that means it is opposite to *casography*. This definition usually consists of handwritten conveying information that can be readable; however, it is not written carelessly and randomly, but it will carry the different implements through the various hands (Blair, 2006). Here, it is understood that the written word's imagery does not supersede what is written in a restricted definition.

Waterman (2009) states that the correct formation of characters with their various parts ordering and harmonic proportion heralds the art of beautiful or elegant handwriting, which is the most appropriate definition of Middle East calligraphy. He underlines that calligraphy, a significant art form, is executed with its aesthetic considerations through correct construction and proportions of the characters.

Moreover, Lee-Niinioja (2018) states that each style has its own characteristics and not all styles permit variations; hence it is supposed to follow the rule of calligraphy that points at the "secret beauty of calligraphy" that comes with "the straight lines and neat shapes of letters" (Lee-Niinioja, 2018: 82). According to her, calligraphy in the Middle East is architecture-space between the length and width of letters, between the verticals and horizontals. That means letters can be linked or executed separately, and the most beautiful balance is achieved through the proportions of the first letters of the alphabet, *alif* that will mention following.

The beauty of the form also can be understood from the statements of a calligrapher, Ibn Muqla (886-940), that is quoted as:

...round off the shape of the characters; observe the laws of proportion; clearly distinguish the geometric forms according to their movement, horizontal, vertical, oblique and curved; observe carefully the thickness and thinness of the line; keep the hand steady but relaxed when handling the pen, so that the line shows no sign of wavering. These principles were to give harmonious form to the art of calligraphy. (Lee-Niinioja, 2018: 39)

Up until now, the understanding of beauty seems similar to Western perception in the realm of calligraphy, which refers to well-constructed letters with the right proportions, which is crucial to writing legible text, underlining the functional usage of calligraphy. Also, considering the rough translation of calligraphy through *kallos* and *graphos* -beautiful writing-, in some part, significant that indeed, the delightfully written word is assessed as an essential part in Islam that also stresses that calligraphy is often intertwined with religious significance because the Holy Book Qur'an is written with the Arabic alphabet, which causes to attribute it divine. That means calligraphy has become one of the main expressions of Islam as a representational art (Al-Nasrawi, Al-mukhtar, & Al-Baldawi, 2015), and the Qur'anic calligraphy and subsequently calligraphy, in general, started to gain the position as an artistic medium on every level of Islamic civilization (Rajput, 2014). Hence, it can be said that there is more than the semantic meaning of the calligraphy here. These attributed values can be understood by examining how writing is assessed by Islam, which will be held in following part "5.3. The importance of Writing to Islamic Culture."

Hence, calligraphy with Arabic script consists of information through its semantic content and its formal appearance, also the resonance of aural of it for the reader who recites the written word to internalize the sounds. Blair (2008) claims that even without reading or understanding it first, it is possible to appreciate the Arabic writing system's fundamental principles if one is already aware. It is also stated that from the artistic point of view, it has been appreciated for its diversity and the vast potential for development that has been connected to the Arabic civilization in various fields such as religion, art, architecture, education, and craftsmanship that took a great role in its advancement. Even this art form can be traced back centuries, and calligraphers often constantly practice the old masters' techniques, new styles with a modern influence constantly evolving.

With a general education in decent writing basics, a calligrapher is called a *khattat*, who gained a reputation with good handwriting after long training that transferred from master to apprentice. Whoever desires to learn this art is supposed to do it from masters to instruct him letter by letter, individually or in a small group. First, pupils are supposed to learn how to write each letter separately, and they master the merging and connection of letters in syllables and words. Under the guidance of the master, the pupil is supposed to learn how to sit appropriately, generally squatting, and also may sit on his heels; the paper has to be rested on his left hand or on the knee to keep it slightly flexible in executing the round endings of the letter. He is expected to graduate with high skills after a five-year training period and be ready for the examination before three masters. Suppose the pupil manages

to satisfy three masters with his calligraphy. In that case, he was honored to be called *khattāt* and thus received the *ijāza* (permission), which allowed the calligrapher to sign his product with his name and practice his art. One of the highest goals of a calligrapher is to write the Qur'an with his worthy and distinctive style that is only allowed to touch by the pure soul. Due to the writing of sacred words of God, it was expected that the calligrapher had to be clean, for "purity of writing is the purity of the soul." That points to a certain psychological character of a calligrapher, which is claimed as "of sweet character and of an unassuming disposition" (Schimmel, 1990: 36-37).

The letters of the Qur'an became a tangible sign of the victory of Islam; therefore, they were adopted by various peoples with non-Semitic languages. They also carry the plentifulness that Arabic and its letters bear due to their roles as vessels for the revelation. Therefore, it became indispensable to write the Divine word as beautiful as possible. It is also mentioned in various hadiths which promise that "He who writes the *basmala* beautifully obtains innumerable blessings" or "will enter Paradise" (Schimmel, 1990: 80). That means, with Islam, the term beauty in calligraphy attains another perspective, which basically serves to honor the name of God that can be attained with a unique attitude and character of the writer. With arduous training, after acquiring the skill of executing calligraphy, the master can write calligraphy beautifully not just with the appropriate proportions or constructions but also with the divine words of the Qur'an, which can elaborate and elevate the written word to the state of beauty.

Schimmel (1990) mentions that a calligrapher's general career line, which is relatively uniform, means that they generally grow up in an intellectual environment, often study with relatives, and then either gain their lives as an independent or court calligrapher or join various practical professions. After about 1500, in Ottoman Turkey, talented youngsters with the desire to participate in the training of calligraphy in Istanbul, where the art flourished under the sultans' patronage. Many of them might be employed as teachers in the imperial schools or theological schools (*madrāsas*) or work in the sultan's chancellery or some vizier, religious administration, or financial offices.

Schimmel (1990) also states that probably the most splendid royal tradition of calligraphy can be encountered in the Ottoman house, where almost every ruler was known as a calligrapher. Kings and dervishes were also fond of calligraphy that could adorn the Word of God most beautifully for them. It also inspired them to create an artistic equilibrium between the content of the verse and its delicate calligraphic line in which the music of the verse and the line's music are harmoniously blended. For this reason, before continuing with the script styles and their features, it is indispensable to examine the importance of writing in Islam, the philosophical background behind it, and the art of Islamic culture to comprehend and appreciate what calligraphy means in the Middle East that will give a chance to compare with the Western understanding of calligraphy, also locate whether there are any mutual influences in the formation of contemporary western calligraphy technically and conceptually.

### 5.3. The importance of writing to Islamic culture

Rajput (2014) states that until the advent of Islam, writing was considered a weakness of manhood in Arab society. For this reason, poets of this time created their *divans* verbally and orally transmitted their collections to the next generation. According to tradition, when the Holy Qur'an was revealed upon the Prophet Muhammed over twenty-three years in Arabic, the Arabic script was brought into writing, then elevated to an art form, the highest level of calligraphy, and assessed as the primary art form of the Islamic World.

Thus, it can be said that one of Islamic civilization's characteristics is the extensive use of writing, which decorates buildings and objects made on all media throughout the Islamic civilization. The primary use of script was functional, which had not evolved into calligraphy. With the advent of Islam, the status of Arabic script elevated the written word into an art form. Since the Qur'an is a text that appeared through Divine Intervention, the act of writing became a way of worship (Rajput, 2014), and calligraphy became one of the primary mediums of artistic expression.

Islamic calligraphy, similar to the Chinese tradition of calligraphy, aims to strengthen the faith's spiritual edifice, keep the sounds and meanings of the sacred text of the Qur'an, and preserve its accuracy. For this reason, writing the Qur'an is assessed as an act of religious devotion and merit; hence, writing becomes consistent with possessing divine power and energy (Siddiqui, 2007).

According to Blair (2008), in the West, the Romans were aware of the artistic potential of monumental inscription; hence they preferred to develop a clear and simple system of lettering through the letters, and the spaces between the letters were thought to conform to aesthetic principles, which is also assessed as the basis for modern lettering and book printing in the West as mentioned in Chapter III. One issue that takes attention in these earlier cases is that writing is generally used as a supplementary to explain and accompany the image. The difference in Islamic art is that writing started to assess as the main and sometimes the only decoration element, and the reason is Islamic religion that takes a pivotal role in the word.

This importance is confirmed by the very first word of God's divine revelation to the Prophet Muhammad, the surah *Al-'Alaq* in the Qur'an begins with the following statements that confirm these claims:

Read, O Prophet, in the Name of your Lord Who created,  
Created humans from a clinging clot.  
Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous,  
Who taught by the pen,  
Taught humanity what they knew not. (*Surah al-'Alaq* - 1-19)

In other words, the knowledge of writing differs a man from God's other creatures, and the importance of writing comes. Thus, the written word was put in a high position in the Islamic religion, and the Arabic language became the vehicle that conveyed the revelation. Since the first language of Muslims, the Arabic language also possesses true sacredness. This attitude toward language also led writing to escalate a

significant art form in the religion. Calligraphy in the Islamic context is assessed as a way of worship (Siddiqui, 2007).

Islam underlines the importance of the Book, and it is assessed as one of the first religions in which the distinction between the *ahl al-kitab*<sup>2</sup> and others written without revelation was clearly stated to form part of its legal system. The Prophet Muhammad is the bearer of this message is called in the Qur'an *ummi*, which is interpreted as "unlettered" or "one who needs no learning" (Schimmel, 1984: 77), and his mind was pure for the preservation of the true essence of the Divine message.

Everything that the Qur'an holds has been written on the Preserved Tablet by means of the preexistent Pen. This led to thinking about predestination and free will. According to a general belief, since all actions of people are written on the Tablet, it is called *maktub* in Islamic term means "written," or "written on the forehead" (Schimmel, 1990: 78) translated from *sarnivisht* (Persian) or *alın yazısı* (Turkish). It is believed that the lines engraved on people's forehead are interpreted as if it tells something about his fate as a title page of his destiny that could be deciphered with insight. The pen that can be written on that Tablet is the first thing that God created according to a Prophetic tradition, which is seen as a symbol of the first intellect.

Moreover, it is described in two angles called *Kirâmen Kâtibîn*, which in the religion of Islam is the name given to the angels who are found on the right and left shoulders of the men and identify and write good and evil deeds. One of these angels is on the person's left and writes about evil deeds, and the other is on the right and writes about good deeds. It is also stated in the Qur'an that these angels will witness people when they are reckoned in the hereafter in surah Qaf: "And the Trumpet will be blown. This is the Day you were warned of (This is the second blow which will cause all to come back to life for judgment). Each soul will come forth with an angel to drive it and another to testify" (50: 20-21).

Moreover, when Muslims finish their performs of ritual prayers, they salute these angels by saying, "Esselamü aleyküm ve rahmetullah," translated as "may Allah's peace and mercy be upon you," towards their right and left shoulders. The existence of these angels is mentioned in the Qur'an, and therefore believing in these angels is obligatory for Muslims. In Qaf, it is described as "We certainly know what the earth consumes of them after their death, and with us is a well-preserved Record," (50: 04) and continues as follows:

A Record preserving everything. Indeed, it is We Who created humankind and fully know what their souls whisper to them, and We are closer to them than their jugular vein (50:16). As the two recording-angels -one sitting to the right, and the other to the left- note everything, not a word does a person utter without having a vigilant observer ready to write it down. (Surah QAF - 16-18)

To sum up, writing in Arabic script became one of the central themes and hallmarks of Islamic civilization and visual culture, which spread

<sup>2</sup> *Ahl al-Kitāb* is an Arabic word that means "People of the Book" -Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians- are possessors of divine books such as the Torah, the Gospel, and the Avesta are different from the people whose religious are not based on divine revelations (Britannica, 2016).



over one-quarter of the globe during the past fourteen hundred years. It flourished under the patronage of the religion Islam, decorating buildings and objects made all through Islamic civilization. Qur'an, God's revelations to the Prophet Muhammad in the early seventh century, is assessed as one of the most significant epitomize of Islamic calligraphy through its codices on parchment or paper, written in brown or black ink in a variety of scripts with often decorated with gold (Blair, 2006).

On the other hand, calligraphy is practiced with a special status in the Islamic World as an art of writing, and it is assessed as timeless in its appeal (Graves, Quotah, & Simmons, 2019).

For Muslims, writing does not represent something of the reality of the word. However, apart from that, it is a visible expression of the highest art, the art of the spiritual world, and becomes probably the most reverent form of Islamic art that implements a relation between the Islamic countries' language based on Arabic and the Islam religion (Adbib, 2021). Looking at the ancient Western World, even though most of the manuscripts consisted the religious text, that means calligraphy was employed as in Islam, Westerners did not assess it as a visible expression of the highest art as Islamic culture did, or it was not stressed as an art form as mentioned and examined in Chapters II and III. Hence, it will not be appropriate to compare those two traditions; however, Blair (2008) states that the importance of calligraphy in the Islam lands is compared to mainly Chinese and Japanese calligraphy. In both traditions, calligraphy is considered the supreme art assessed as the most highly respected form of art in its home culture. It is observed in both traditions a similar dichotomy between the form, the script and the word's meaning. But, Blair (2008) also points out the significant difference between the two cultures through the materials they are employed, Chinese and Japanese work with a brush that affects the fluidity and uniformity of the strokes. In contrast, Muslims use a pen, which will be mentioned in part "5.7. Tools and materials of Islamic calligraphy practice."

Moreover, both Chinese and Japanese calligraphers reflect their personal style in their art, generally sat motionless, contemplating the exact moment of artistic creation which burst creativity and applying a brush to support. Hence the viewer is meant to catch or sense the artist's personality through their calligraphic creation. By following the brushstrokes there, the viewer can experience a visual sequence of the artist's movement and may participate in the physical process of creation in a sense. Whereas in Islamic calligraphy, the viewer appreciates the constant line and modulated forms that reveal the Almighty's transcendence, rather than seeing the calligrapher's personality in the written script. The divine feature is attributed to written text because the text convey the words' of God.

Hence, it is stated that calligraphy in Islam typically stands alone as a pictorial art and becomes one of the primary vehicles to indicate power, belief, legitimacy, and many other ideas and ideologies that an image reveals elsewhere. For this reason, with the quotation from Erica Dodd, a Canadian academic who has published several studies on Byzantine, Middle Eastern, and Islamic art, Blair (2008) underlines that Islamic

culture is "the image of the word" in the Islamic realm, calligraphy typically stands alone, as pictorial art is discouraged in most religious or official settings. Writing thus became one of the primary vehicles to signify power, belief, legitimacy, and many other ideas and ideologies for which images are used elsewhere. In the words of Erica Dodd, Islamic culture is "the image of the word" (Blair, 2008: 7).

It is highly significant because the image of the word concept can be seen through the works of the contemporary western calligraphers of the twenty-first century in the realm of western calligraphy. Namely, Meulman, while declaring his motto, he strongly advocates a word as an image in which he focuses on the overall visual appearance of the calligraphic work that will be seen in Chapter VI.

On the other hand, the concept of the images of the word actually can be seen in various art movements that took place in western art and design, such as Futurism, Dada, or Lettrism, in which the alphabet is not considered a linguistic sign but merely as a graphic representation. This issue will be mentioned in Chapter VI; however, it should be kept in mind that traditional western calligraphy was not basically and generally cherished the written text as an image. As mentioned the Gothic writing system examined in part "3.5.8. The Gothic System of Scripts" in Chapter III, because of the construction of the letter and the style, such as *textura quadrata*, executed as highly compact, started to create a woven-like appearance that causes considering the written text as a whole. In addition to the fact that scribes mostly eliminated round forms to save space on the pages of the manuscripts, it made reading difficult and slowed down the practice of writing; hence they left it and preferred humanist fonts instead.

#### **5.4. The general concept of Islamic art**

Tan (1999) underlines that the concept of art is relatively new in Islamic culture and is not a concept that gathers the creations of aesthetic values under a single title. Instead, each branch is considered separate, such as the science of music or the science of poetry. That means there was no clear distinction between the concept of art and craft back then, as in the West.

On the other hand, Eroğlu (2016) examines Islamic art with the methods of plastic arts, mainly focusing on the Islamic states' view of art through its' spirit, separately from the Holy Book, and he states that Islam has its own sense of art as a state, in which each ruler led to the formation of it according to the thought and perception of his own understanding of authority.

Before Turks joined Islam, Islamic art was the art of Arabs, then the contribution of Turks and Iranians to it has been claimed as more than that of the Arabs. It is stated that the rising power of the Abbasids was prepared by the Turkish elders in the palace of the caliph, and the revolutionary movement was formed with the contribution of the Turkish nations in central and West Asia. Hence, it led to the disappearance of Arab nationalism, and the true sense of Islamic

culture began to develop. For this reason, Eroğlu (2016) underlines that if Islamic art is examined closely, it can be seen that quite interesting interactions take place. Arabs' view of Islamic art and the shape Islamic art took after the Turks were included in Islamic art are quite different (Eroğlu, 2016: 26).

Eroğlu (2016) describes Islamic art which is not only influenced by religion. Religion is the first factor in Islamic art; although it is based on revelation and prophetic declarations, it also attaches great importance to reason, thought, and research. The mechanism controlling the soul is interpreted as the inner eye of the human. Thus, it is described as the Islamic artist looking with his outer eye but seeing with his inner eye. According to him, it can be said that Islam and, consequently, Islamic art are based on such a dialectical mechanism.

In the essence of Islamic art, the primary ingredient is the idea of eternity. Art deals with the superiority of the spirit over the material. Spirit is supposed to mold the material, and for it, a peaceful environment is indispensable. Spirituality<sup>3</sup> is significant for the artist; what is imagined more than what is seen has excellent value. These dreams could not be marked with images that everyone could see outside. Dreams take place in the brain, so no theory of vision was even likely to get there, and the main starting spirit of Islamic art is the idea of holiness, which can be traced in every unit of Islamic art that begins and ends with it. The sacred is also absolute relative to the mystical. Furthermore, artists do not present themselves as true creators because the artist of Islamic art does not have a goal of participating in God's creation as a creator of art. Hence, the core purpose of Islamic art is to be an intermediary in getting to God. For this reason, art in Islam does not conflict with God since every act includes some worship of a man. Therefore, there is a close connection between mystical formations and Islamic aesthetics. At this point, a state of ecstasy enters; the artist of Islamic art does everything in his power to move away from the worldly and spiritually to become closer to God and makes an effort to do so, and generally speaking, in Islamic art, beauty can be seen in all branches, order, harmony, and the multitude's unity (Eroğlu, 2016).

Eroğlu (2016) divides Islamic art history into three general periods: early Islamic art (650-1000), medieval Islamic art (1000-1500), and new age Islamic art (1500-1800). He states that architecture is assessed as one of the first and main branches of Islamic art, the second branch is determined as immovable artworks connected to architecture, and the third is non-architectural portable artworks. When Islamic art is examined in terms of architectural works, it is classified as religious

<sup>3</sup> In an Islamic context, spirituality refers to three fundamental terms, ranked as *ruhaniyya*, in Arabic derived from the word *ruh* means spirit comes from the command of God; *ma'nawiyyat*, a Persian word derived from *ma'na* means meaning that conveys the inwardness concepts in opposition to illusory. The last term that spiritually refers to is the flow of *baraka* means spiritual power, an elegance that permeates the universe. All the people have taken closer to the resources of everything. In Turkish, spirituality (*ruhanilik* or *manevilik*) refers to those mentioned aspects as well. Hence, it evokes the thing with God as its origin, related to obedience to decrees of God, something hidden and needed to be discovered. Even though it is hard to define spirituality in the concept of calligraphy, it seems to refer to the aim of the calligrapher, which goes beyond the technical features of practices (Cappellari, 2017).

in its most crude form -mosques, tomb monuments, and non-religious -madrasas, palaces, mansions, caravansaries, and military buildings. There are works of art, entirely from inside and outside of these structures. Ornaments made with mosaic and fresco, then stucco, tile, stone, and brick materials in the early periods take attention; also carpets, tiles, calligraphy, oil lamps made of glass, chandelier, window glasses, pulpit with wooden work, wings, and rahle to doors and windows, door handles with metalwork are assessed as a part of indoors. It is also said that many wall paintings that were made by the hands of the early and medieval Islamic states might consist of various figures assessed as an art form other than architecture. There is no explanations in the Qur'an that confirms the issue of the prohibition of figures in Islam. In the verse of Surat Al-Ma'idah, there is a various explanation to prevent paganism, and it is known that there are hadiths that have a specific approach to this issue, but it is claimed that these verses may be a fabricated, not the original ones. However, Eroglu claims that there is still no question that these verses had frightened the artists that led to avoidance figuration (Eroğlu, 2016).

Since Islamic art follows the non-representational being as tradition, it is reflected in the mosque, writing, and illumination, especially in important circumstances, namely in the mosque (Al-Nasrawi, Al-mukhtar, & Al-Baldawi, 2015).

On the other hand, Lee-Niinioja (2018) states that the avoidance of figuration was systematic and deliberate regarding a religious building, which gave a new form of symbolic significance to artistic language. It is also stated that various usage of figurative art rarely encountered in Islam was partly based on the prohibition of presenting animals and humans in any kind of paintings or sculpture due to the reason that pre-Islamic period, worshiping of idols was developed and through it, the sculptural art flourished.

Moreover, it can be underlined that the prohibition of depiction led to emphasizing the virtue and importance of fine writing, the inability to convey the figure and reality due to the prohibition of copies in Islam has led to the development of arts such as calligraphy, architecture, illumination, decorative arts, miniature, and tiles. The figure has become the language of writing and painting in calligraphy, which turns into a picture with an aesthetic writing style. Thus, the writing does not create separate visibility from the object it represents and does not create a separate story. The calligrapher takes away the line, light, shadow, and volume of the object and pours his respect for the Creator only into symbols, thus glorifying the sacred as well (Kozlu & Benuğur, 2014).

However, Teparić (2014) claims that various Muslim artists did not absolutely follow this issue. When the Muslims liberated Mecca, the destruction of all statues and idols that the pagan Arabs set up in the Kaaba courtyard and then entered it was ordered by the Prophet. Moreover, the shrine's walls were decorated by a Byzantine painter. Among them, there was the Prophet Abraham's display with arrows, throwing for divination, and the painting of a virgin and Child. It is claimed that the Prophet covered these two images with his hands and

ordered them to be removed. It was done probably with respect for honorable people, not as a sign of the painting figures' approval as relics of religion, contrary to the belief he made in his propaganda. Hence, it is said that Muslim artists may realize that painting as a creative art might be considered undesirable; rather strictly forbidden.

Teparić (2014) also underlines that this could be the reason for avoiding naturalism and realism in Islamic art. Today, it is said that natural and realistic arts are accepted widely because art is no longer assessed as a servant of religion. Hence, it can be claimed that the most important thing to mention in Islam and Islamic art is a clear reflection of Islamic spirituality. For this reason, God cannot be represented in any physical form, which is not explained literally in Qur'an, as mentioned earlier. However, what has clearly indicated is that the faithful Muslim should not make or worship idols; they also discouraged turning their faces towards any type of figure, including the figure of the Prophet, hence to prevent any misleading towards idolatry, creating portraiture of the Prophet Muhammad was also prohibited. That means sayings and lessons are valued much more than the physical features of God or the Prophet (Teparić, 2014). This issue also can be seen through the practices of *khatt* that will be seen in the followings. Particularly the mindset behind Islamic art can be traced through the calligraphy and how it is understood and appreciated. The formation of the calligraphic composition is grounded on this mindset that a similar attitude can be encountered through contemporary western calligraphy practices as well; at least the research for beyond the literal meaning of the text and attributed artistic values on the practices can be understood better through the apprehension of this calligraphic cultures and their mutual interactions.

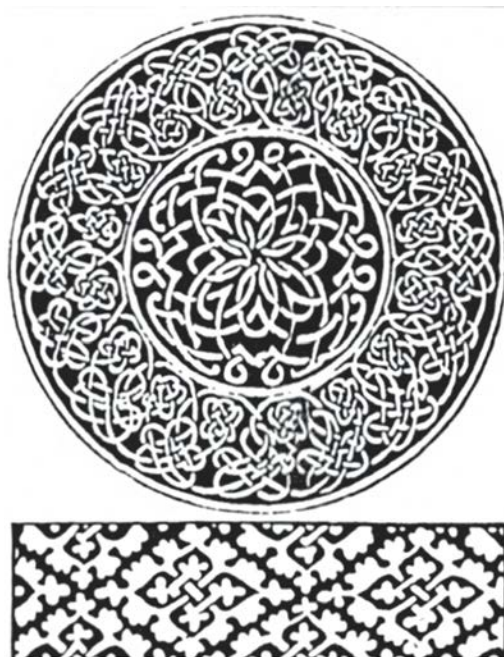
Islamic art, which is seen chiefly in vegetal and geometric ornaments, is often viewed as decoration attached to mathematics, but this is not like the perspective case in which mathematics is evaluated. Both geometry and herbal ornaments turn into abstract, set out with an abstract search, and in this context, almost every volume of abstraction is evaluated. So the geometric perception in Islamic art is of great importance. It can even be stated that all herbal elements were subjected to such abstraction and invited to keep up with geometry. Units come side by side and reveal a situation to fill a certain space, and the viewer's eye watches by focusing on these pieces one by one. Moreover, the language of Islamic art, especially its geometry, is sought not in nature but through spirit and reason. In art environments where Islamic art is advanced, man is perceived not with his body but with his mind and spirit; this situation leads to a vision based on abstraction, particularly that stands in favor of the abstract (Eroğlu, 2016). In this sense, it should be emphasized that the earliest perception of abstraction emerged in Islamic art in the east.

It reminds the discussion of the abstract concept in Far Eastern art and calligraphy discussed in Chapter IV. Here what is understood is that the abstract concept in Islamic art also has different attributions and appreciation from the West. Even with the different bases, the abstraction still takes its references from its roots and culture, also reflected in the calligraphic art.



Fig. 5 illustrates composition examples with their decorative style, which is closely related to abstraction. There can be observed an incredible amount and variety of motifs. Generally, the first major group in this direction is vegetal motifs: palmettes, half palmettes, vine leaves, grape bunches, and rose decorations. The second group is geometric ones. While these may be a framework for other embellishments, they may also constitute the entire decoration. The third group is various motifs, the effect of geometry, the primary geometric units used, circles, and rhombuses. With the possibility of infinite growth, the design can be extended in the desired direction, the completed unit with its beginning and end is not the design itself; its boundaries depend on the artist's request. It gives crucial freedom to the audience with its design type. The principle of arbitrariness, the dominant feature that appears in most early Islamic ornament, is that neither its dimensions nor its internal forms were conditioned by anything other than itself. This art was able to take the art of calligraphy from its meaning and add it to itself, and it was also used in architecture and other crafts. The idea of eternity that embodies this style as a basic feature, which has no end and no beginning, has attracted attention throughout history, evoking a sense of eternity and eternity on those who see or follow these structures. An unnatural unity draws attention in the first examples, then matures and reveals an abstract style. Islamic art is an abstract art based on arabesque. According to Eroğlu (2016), this is why it avoids the figure.

Fig. 5. Fringe and medallion compositions by N. Zoppino, Source: Mülayim, (nd.: np.)



In Christianity, imagery, especially in churches, was intended to teach religion to illiterate people; especially in the Byzantine Empire, Jesus, apostles, saints, and biblical subjects were staged on the walls of churches. However, Islam is wholly separated from Christianity in this regard. In Christianity, the imagery was used as a tool for the spread of religion, and in the art of the early Christian period, almost all artists painted religious themes during the Renaissance and Baroque periods. In Islam, there are no such depictions in mosques

and masjids. Worshiping idols is strictly prohibited in Islam, but there is no restriction on painting sculptures made for artistic purposes, as mentioned earlier. It can be said that the human figure is less limited and frequent than the geometric, vegetable, and animal motifs. Various examples of human usage can be encountered in the civil architecture and plastic arts in the Early Islamic period of art (Alsan, 2019).

Furthermore, in the miniature paintings, the arts of plastics, or calligraphy, such artistic expressions can often be encountered. In prayer spaces, presenting characters is avoided because the figures in Islamic mosques or shrines actually have no meaning or function. The confirmation of the Unity of God, his glory, and greatness is the direct teaching of Islam. That means there is no place for secular art. In the meantime, stylized characters, human and animal figures can be encountered in ornamented facades of miniature painting in secular art reduced to the two-dimension. For this reason, it is stated that there are differences between the sacred arts, traditional arts, and religious art. Some may consist of a religious theme; however, it does not mean they represent sacred art. The fundamental concept of traditional art is grounded on the principle of Divine Originality. Calligraphic writing of The Holy Qur'an is assessed as the sacred art of Islam (Teparić, 2014).

Presenting characters and figures in any form of artistic representation is aimed in a way that resembles each other. Teparić (2014) claims that this resemblance might be derived from Islamic law based on the equality of the people before God. In the meantime, such representation of figures is not man-centered and not for the purpose of worship. It is stated that the characters in Islamic art were derived from elitist artists. They originally came from the need for scientific books, illustrations for stories, traditions, and historical events. At this point, once again, a certain kind of hidden spirituality takes attention, which consciously requires avoiding a closer look at the actual and illusionary material dimension of arts. Teparić (2014) underlines that this is not a sign of a lack of creativity, not an inability to naturalize figures. However, it points out why Islamic painting gave less attention to perspective and three-dimensionality. On the following pages, through the practices of calligraphy, this understanding will be encountered and understood how it reflected to appreciation of *khatt* in this sense.

On the other hand, it should be stated that the theme of color is not seen as an objective quality. Since the aim is not the objective representation of nature through shapes, refraining from imitating the outward manifestations of phenomena, the Islamic artist also did not have to delve deeply into true colors. The mere aim of the artist was to reach the holy light, which is assessed as the source of colors (Tan, 1999). This subject is mentioned in the Qur'an as follows:

Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. His light<sup>1</sup> is like a niche in which there is a lamp, the lamp is in a crystal, the crystal is like a shining star, lit from the oil of a blessed olive tree, located neither to the east nor the west,<sup>2</sup> whose oil would almost glow, even without being touched by fire. Light upon light! Allah guides whoever He wills to His light. And Allah sets forth parables for humanity. For Allah has perfect knowledge of all things. (Surah An-Nur 35)

In Quranic passages, light is underlined as a divine symbol that comes from the Qur'an in Islam and the sacred Book of Muslims. It refers to various meanings used as a metaphor, sometimes in comparison, as seen in the quotation above. There are several instances of the stars, the sun,

and the moon used, such as the moon being identified as a light, the sun being as clarity, or as a lamp. The term *nūr*, or light, is used in its literal meaning in the Qur'an commonly, and as mentioned in western tradition with the quote of "turning darkness to the light," in the Qur'an, too, related to the shadow, there are passages as "from the shadow to the light." It is used as synonymous with vision, whereas shadow refers to blindness. In the meantime, light can signify knowledge and faith, as well, while the ignorants stay in the shadows. Hence, light help one can see the truth of the World clearly (Bonnéric, 2020). It can be claimed that as a symbol and theme, light is employed pretty similarly in Christianity, as mentioned in Chapter III. This issue is significant because various contemporary western calligraphers are inspired by this mindset, employ light conceptually as a theme, and practice calligraphy focusing on this subject. These practices will be examined in Chapter VI. For this reason, this information here provides insight to apprehend the effect of the tradition and the religious content that is found itself a way as an expression or interpretation source through the contemporary tendencies.

Meanwhile, the coloring and formal pattern reflect a clear distinction between Western and Islamic art. The visible object of the World is represented in the works of Islamic artists as an abstraction. For example, a tree is not a particular tree but represents a tree in general. Thus, when picturing the tree, an artist does not represent a tree in nature; instead, he projects the tree in his mind, how he perceives through his senses that transform symbols in his mind. The source of color can be reached by removing distance; that is why the perspective is not adopted in Islamic arts (Tan, 1999).

Fig. 6 illustrates the miniature that comes from a copy of the "Tales of a Parrot," a part of the *Tutinama* that consists of 52 stories told by a parrot to its owner to keep her at home.

Fig. 6. Miniature from a copy of the *Tutinama* (*Tales of a Parrot*) "The Sheikh with the Talking Parrot of Wood and the Mute Copy," India, Mughal, c. 1580, Source: The David Collection, davidmus.dk/en/collections/islamic/materials/miniatures/art/3-1999, access: 07.02.2019.



The overall scene belongs to an Indian interior with red-sandstone architecture with lobed tops of doors and niches. Unlike European painting, which tried to realize the volume with modeling and depth with perspective since the fifteenth century, Islamic miniature, as shown here, remained a surface painting. It is essentially ornamental, ignoring the third dimension. It is a great mistake to give his arrogance or backwardness to this situation. If Islam neglects the embroidery model and perspective, they do not need these tools and find them suitable for their body. It is important to remember that miniatures are placed on the book's pages to illuminate the text. The book is read closely, not from a distance, and perspective gives the impression of depth only from a certain distance.

On the other hand, calligraphy became an important social and political tool within the Islamic World's royal courts, and text started to be used as a decorative and functional element on various objects, including textiles. Calligraphy also became a fertile ground for various development, which was directly based on the Qur'an.

The importance of writing for Islamic culture mentioned earlier. In addition to this, as Teparić points at the Islamic philosopher Ibn Sînâ who underlines the first element of the World as a point in the first place, under the action of nature and includes a line, plane, and finally a three-dimensional body (*jism*). In this regard, it is underlined that calligraphic art's basic principles are a dot and a line, which eventually result in a letter.

Considering the historical context of the origin of calligraphic art, which began in the pre-Islamic era throughout the Near East, abstract geometric art was more developed than the visual-figurative context with the inscription's spirit. And such practices with calligraphy provided a fertile ground with Islam's arrival, which affirmed that the written word is an artistic expression in Islamic calligraphy.

Hence, the Islamic calligraphy started to be seen as one of the most dignified ways of transmitting God's words as a way of worship, a way of being closer to God by reciting, writing, or transmitting his words. Hence such forms of artistic expression became a sacred, religious or secular forms executed in the mosques, sacred palaces, public buildings, and homes (Teparić, 2014).

This mentioned geometric composition of the written text and the combination of the dots and lines that construct the letter are the idea that western contemporary calligraphers mostly employ, which will be seen in Chapter VI, which is not an issue for traditional western calligraphy. With this perspective, as in the case of Far Eastern calligraphy culture, Middle Eastern calligraphy provides significant sources of inspiration for today's calligraphers.



Fig. 7 is a bowl illustrating how calligraphy can be used as decoration on such ceramics with the dramatic impact of a simple inscription written by Kufic script, mentioned in part "5.6. The development and spread of calligraphic styles." It is stated that this kind of bowl was a visual indicator of its owner's wealth and status. The writings on this bowl offer the following advice: "Planing before work protect you from regret; good luck and well-being" (Ekhtiar & Moore, 2012: 64). The careful, appropriate planning necessary to ensure the text can fit appropriately on the vessel around the perimeter requires attention.

Fig. 7. Bowl with Arabic inscription, white slip with black-slip decoration under transparent glaze, 10<sup>th</sup> century, Iran, Source: Ekhtiar & Moore, (2012: 65).



Another medium for calligraphy is *tiraz*, which means "embroidery" in Arabic, a piece of textiles that consists of calligraphic bands, as in Fig. 8, which are generally produced in royal workshops and presented to the service of the court. It is dated as early as the seventh century from Egypt is shown as one of the oldest inscribed objects in the Islamic world. The inscriptions on it follow a certain formula, which often included the name of the ruler, his titles, honorifics, the place of manufacture, and occasionally the workshop superintendent's name. In addition to mentioning the ruler's name, these bands of calligraphy may bear good fortune wishes to the owner, common in North Africa and Spain, or may also provide information such as the date and place of production.

Fig. 8. Tiraz fragment, silk, lampas, late 14<sup>th</sup> to early 15<sup>th</sup> century, Spain, Source: Ekhtiar & Moore, (2012: 67).





A calligraphic inscription (Fig. 8), written in yellow letters against a red background, decorates the fabric's center band. The calligraphy on this textile is executed in a Spanish version of thuluth, widely encountered in other media such as stone, wood, glass, and metalwork. The inscription is the phrase called "Glory to our lord the Sultan" (Ekhtiar & Moore, 2012: 66), where the decoration is more ornate and stresses the word *sultan* to glorify the ruler.

It can be observed that the tall vertical parts of the letters seem to balance the horizontal sections of the inscription. Also, a decorative element below is assessed as another figure that balances the overall composition. The function of these textile fragments remains unclear; however, it is claimed that *tiraz* probably served to celebrate and reinforce the power and the authority of the court and the ruler (Ekhtiar & Moore, 2012).

Looking at this written text above, the plastic value of it can be observed as the dominant part that catches, what makes us think of the word as an image interpretation of the contemporary calligraphers with highly abstract forms that are employed the lines and strokes and make a combination as a structure that can be observed through the *kufic* style examples of Fig. 7, or a woven-like block appearance of the *tiraz* example of Fig. 8. In western calligraphy tradition, apart from the woven-like textural appearance is encountered in gothic texture that is mentioned in Chapter III. Apart from that, the function of the written text was the core of the calligraphy. However, as underlined earlier in Chapter IV, through the examination of the interaction between the Far East and Western contemporary calligraphy, the Far Eastern mentality of writing, hence calligraphy, through the plastic value of the written text as construction that creates an image of the word. That means, apart from the literal meaning of the written word, various aesthetic values and spirituality related to religion are attributed to calligraphy, indicating the rigid difference between Western calligraphy traditions. On the other hand, the plastic interpretation of the written text became one of the major features of contemporary western calligraphy, which is obviously attributed today to the interaction between the Far East mentioned in Chapter IV, as well as The Middle Eastern calligraphy as seen here with these historical examples of *khatt*.

It is claimed that even calligraphy in Islamic art replaces the entire repertoire of paintings and sculptures, which still could not be assessed as its mere substitute. There are various exceptions of architecture that calligraphy is seen as art created within Islamic culture as a revelation. For this reason, as stated earlier, it needed to be written more beautifully as God's revelation. The calligraphy in Islam was not only meant to copy the sacred and holy texts, contrary to the tradition of western calligraphy. Early inscriptions belong to specific people who represent Islamic spirituality in the Islamic tradition, which must be mentioned in the following. The materialization of the spiritual mathematics developed by the application of calligraphic materials is observed. Calligraphy is assessed as a reflection of the spiritual condition and purity of the heart of the calligrapher, similar to the Far Eastern mentality. It is believed that with time, the hand becomes more and more sophisticated and calligraphers, according to Sufi tradition

in any sense, become humble servants of God with the attempts to be closer to God through their calligraphic works -as for the western scribe, who was also seen as a servant of the God; however, they were not allowed to sign, at least it is rare to see, that's the reason most of them are anonymous. However, in Islam, *khattat* signed their works, which is interpreted as a sign of celebrating the divine word rather than their own personality, and very often, it is said that calligraphic art represents great Sufis with their content exclusively related to the Sufi gathering places. In the later period, calligraphy started to be released from the book's format. It became an independent art form that entered all fields through usable objects in everyday life, which means it entered the secular sphere of life as well (Teparić, 2014).

Furthermore, the beauty of western art, mentioned in Chapter II, corresponds to the idea of absolute beauty, which refers to any object in nature representing a reflection of the mere beauty of God. Since it is assessed as immanent, there is no concept of ugliness, and Islamic art aims to seek beauty in its own source. That means one is supposed to look behind the visual beauty. Islamic artists are not concerned about the physical world; therefore, the artist is free from the concern of replacing the physical world with something else. The aim of the artist is a search for the source of beauty as an individual. The character and individual interpretation of the artist are irrelevant. It is a way of metaphysical creation in which the artist is assessed as the discoverer, not a creator. In order to reach the essence that is stated as the transforming quality, reaching beauty would be achieved through abstraction as a first step for stylization -simplifying and outlining the object- which makes way for symbolization; then, the abstract is represented in a symbolic language. It certainly leads the emphasis on lines in Islamic art, and the monotony is avoided through variations that mean the artist is supposed to avoid repeating his work. Hence, a viewer with an Islamic background does not look at the work of art as an external phenomenon but instead tries to perceive its mysticism. To interpret it, mystic terminology is needed to be familiar (Tan, 1999). For this reason, it will be significant to mention the mystical dimension of Islamic art that will provide information to understand art in Islam better.

## 5.5. Mystical dimension of Islamic art

Schimmel (1990) mentions one of the significant aspects of calligraphic tradition that becomes evident with many masters, who were, in one way or the other, linked with a *Sufi* order. Thus, apart from the meaning of writing in Islam and the Qur'an mentioned above, it is indispensable to examine the philosophical background of calligraphy before continuing with its styles. That will also provide an insight into how *khatt* is perceived in Islamic culture, which differs from the tradition of western calligraphy and probably affects contemporary western calligraphers.

Sufism, as a word explained as it derives from an Arabic term for a mystic, *Sufi* that is derived from the word *suf* means wool, a reference to the woolen garment of early Islamic ascetics; meanwhile, *Tasawwuf* is an Islamic mysticism that literally means to dress in wool in Arabic.

Schimmel states that it has been called Sufism in the West since the early nineteenth century (Schimmel, 1990).

Sufis are also generally known as "the poor," *fuqara*, plural of the Arabic *faqir*, in Persian *Darvish* (Schimmel, 2018). Nevertheless, some say that the origin of the word is the Greek word *Sophos* meaning "wisdom," or that the word is derived from the word *safa*, meaning "purity" (Schimmel, 2018).

Öztürk (2013) states that the definition of Sufism is generally made according to the situations of Sufis. These definitions are influenced by the rank, tendencies, and social status of the Sufis and their life before entering the mystical life. This makes the definitions subjective, and there can be different definitions of the same person at different times. This difference sometimes stems from responding according to the situation of those who want to learn Sufism. For example, living a poor life is considered the highest of happiness by Sufism to attain divine peace, which means denying material superiorities. For that reason, those who saw this situation called them *fukara* or *fakir* (poor). That inexpressible realm they had enjoyed was tearing them away from the suffering world, throwing them on mountains, cities, and roads. Sometimes a whole life was spent wandering in this ecstasy, always without rest. Those who saw this situation called them *seyyah* (traveler). They dive into the horizon of immortality, beckoning to be strange in the world doomed to fade. They were called *guraba*, *garip*, or *gureba* (foreign, orphan, guest). They are also called the one who stays *aç duranlar* (those who stays hungary). They often escape from those who live to eat and prefer to live in solitude. This condition causes them to be called *süküftiyye* (those living in caves).

The prophet is a spiritual leader, and he has gathered all the leadership of the state, religion, and spirit. He is nourished by revelation and in contact with the owner of the being. Therefore, for him, three tasks were assigned. With his death, these three powers were divided, and the authority of state officials started to be held by the head of the Muslim state, the *fiqh* jurisdiction, and the spiritual and mystical education authority by another group. So this last group constitutes the staff of guidance that is called Sufis (Öztürk, 2013).

It is stated that Sufism has two sources: the Quran and the *sunnah*. According to Öztürk, a sincere examination will point out that Sufism is based on these two sources, from its terms to its traditions. Since those who started and carried out this activity were called Sufi, their attitudes and tendencies were also called Sufism (Ibid.).

According to Öztürk (2013), these people, who knew living as the purpose of existence, were given various titles and names, and the most popular of them was Sufi (*mutasavvuf*). Öztürk also underlines that these people only knew how to obey Muhammad, and neither is aware of Greek philosophy against those who claim to derive from the Greek word *sophos*. He stresses that throughout Sufism's history, no Sufi has been called a philosopher, nor has any philosopher been called a Sufi.

According to Schimmel (1990), the tradition of Sufi has traced back thousands of years ago, when the Sufi masters, mostly craftsmen or

artisans, would instruct their own selected disciples in their shop and introduce the mysteries of Divine Love and beauty, which was expressed through well-measure writing. Sufism is a mystical belief and practice of Islam, in which Muslims search for the truth of the divine and knowledge through the direct and personal experience of God (*Allah*). It consists of various mystical paths designed to understand the nature of humanity and God and to ease the experience of the presence of divine love and wisdom in the world.

The purpose of Sufism is explained as being in touch with the creator, the essence of a man, and the whole of this world. Considering its historical development and its features as thought, it seems that Sufism fulfills the following three tasks in Islamic society: opposition to alienation, providing spiritual ascension, and engaging in religious dissemination activities (Öztürk, 2013).

The thirteenth century was a significant period of Sufism when the Spanish-born Ibnü'l-Arabî (1165-1240) created a theosophical system that concerns God's relation and the word, and became a cornerstone for a theory of Unity of Being. It is believed that all existence is one, an appearance of the underlying divine reality.

One of the greatest mystical poets of the Persian language is Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī (1207–1273), who composed his lyrical poetry attributed to his mystical beloved, Shams al-Dīn (b. 1257) of Tabriz as a symbol of their union. His 26,000 couplets is an encyclopedia of mystical thought that can be found in his own religious ideas. Rumi (1207-1273) inspired the whirling dervishes who performed elaborate dancing rituals accompanied by music. Yunus Emre (b. 1238) was one of his younger contemporaries who initiated Turkish mystical poetry with his verses by the Bektashiyyah (Bektasi) order dervishes, who are still admired in Turkey. Hence, in its proliferation period, Sufism's fundamental ideas spread to the world of Islam and largely contributed to forming the society.

In Turkey, there were various noteworthy mystical poets in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with the influence of the new mystical orders that emerged apart from which was already exist. Most of the literature consisted of mystical ideas and expressions. Reform politically and socially in the Islamic countries has generally objected to Sufism because it was generally considered to encumber society and avoid the free development of society. Hence, the orders and dervish lodges were finally closed by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1925 (Schimmel, 1990). According to Öztürk (2013), today, this institution has unfortunately lost the spirit of Islam and has become an advocate of political sect.

The Sufis during that time created a literature of impressive extent that defended their writing activities with *hadith* (a recorded saying of the Prophet Muhammed) and contributed widely to the development of national and regional kinds of literature. They were supposed to convey their messages in their own languages and Sufi poetry is aimed to express divine love and mystical union by employing metaphors of profane love and the desire of the soul for union with God (Schimmel, 2018).

Fig. 9 illustrates a lamp stand with an inscription of the mystical Sufi poem in its description of a moth drawn to a flame, which is linked the surface decoration with the object's function.



Fig. 9. Lamp stand engraved, and inlaid with black and red pigments, 1578-79 AD, Iran, Source: Ekhtiar & Moore, (2012: 69).

This kind of stand contains lamp oil that fits into the socket and is sometimes used to hold large candles. The writing on the stand transforms this everyday object into kind of a symbol of mystical devotion, which was commissioned as gifts for shrines, mosques, or other religious institutions (Ekhtiar & Moore, 2012).

The poem is from well-known Persian and Indian poems, starting at the top of the stand, and translated as follows:

I remember one night as my eyes would not sleep  
I heard a moth speaking with a candle  
[Said the moth:] "Because I am a lover, it is [only] right that I should burn.  
[But,] why should you weep and burn yourself up?" (Moore and Ekhtiar, 2012: 69)

Around the shaft of the lamp (Fig. 9), there are two couplets by Indian poet Amir Khusrau Dihlavi (1253-1325), each taken from a different lyrical poem written as follows: "There is not a moment that my soul is not burning from love for you. Which heart is not burning from that artful coquetry? I am burning from jealousy because you set fire to another, yet no one else is burned but me . . ." (Ekhtiar & Moore, 2012: 68).



Here, the verses belong to Sufism and speak of the moth (the lover) and the flame (the beloved), which are common metaphors in Sufi poetry that relate to the relationship between God and the believer, who has a desire to unite with the divine (the beloved). There is a dialog between the moth and candle, which represents this desire of the devout lover that seeks the object of his/her love; God. The intensity of the divine here is represented by the flame of the lamp, and even in the presence of God, no mortal can survive; still, the moth is captivated by the bright flame because of its nature. Hence, it can be said that the maker of this brass lamp wanted to imbue it with various layers of meaning by using these metaphors. The poetry here executed decorative but still legible calligraphy related to the lampstand to the symbolism of fire. In this example, it can be claimed that calligraphy transforms an everyday object into a symbol as a reminder of a poetic tradition that reflects faith, devotion, and love.

On the hand, Sufism has a significant role in educating the masses and becoming deeper into Muslims' spiritual concerns. The mystics have a large-scale responsibility in being missionaries all over the World. By elaborating Muhammad's image, the Prophet, a founder of Islam, influenced piety by their Muhammad-mysticism. The vocabulary of Sufi is essential in Persian, and also other literature such as Turkish, Urdu, Sindhi, Pashto, and Punjabi are related to it. Through poetry, mystical ideas are aimed to spread widely among Muslims. Moreover, the Sufi tradition is assessed as an almost integral part of calligraphers' life, and many of these calligraphers were also poets at the same time. The greatest masters indulged in rhyming exercises to teach their disciples and various vital points of this craft, and it became popular around the tenth century (Schimmel, 1990).

## 5.6. The development and spread of calligraphic styles

In this part, it will be mentioned the common scripts briefly to have an insight into the variations. However, mostly it is aimed to arrive at the figural representation of calligraphy called *calligram*, which will show the attitude of khattat towards a figural interpretation of the written word. It will provide a chance to compare with the figural representation in the West within contemporary calligraphy and encountered in art and design of the twentieth century, namely Futurism, Dada, or Lettrism, which will be given references in Chapter VI.

Schimmel (1984) states that Islamic calligraphy is almost endless, considering the various types of Arabic script also the extension of Islamic culture. She states that literature about various aspects of Islamic calligraphy has also been produced in the West, where Arabic letters, which were mostly used for decorative purposes, are also known in Europe since the Middle Ages.

Islamic calligraphy has passed several changes in centuries. Among the scripts, *Maghribi* (Fig. 10) used for Qur'an and other manuscripts, *nasta'liq* (Fig. 11) used for poetry, in manuscripts or on objects such as album pages, textiles or capets, *kufic* script (Fig. 12) can be observed.

Kufic script also has variations namely *floriated kufic* script (Fig. 13) and *knotted/plaited kufic* script (Fig. 14) used for writing Qur'ans, ceramics, metalwork and architectural decorations.

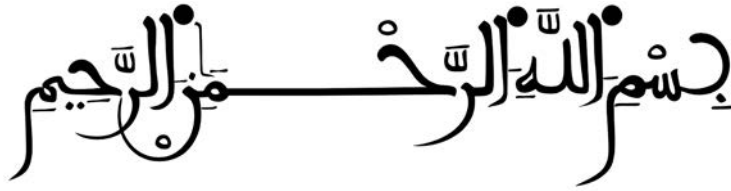


Fig. 10. *Maghribi*, Source: Ekhtiar & Moore, (2012: 61).



Fig. 11. *Nasta'liq*, Source: Ekhtiar & Moore, (2012: 61).



Fig. 12. *Kufic* script with variations, all reading bismillah (is a phrase in Arabic meaning "in the name of God"), Source: Ekhtiar & Moore, (2012: 58).



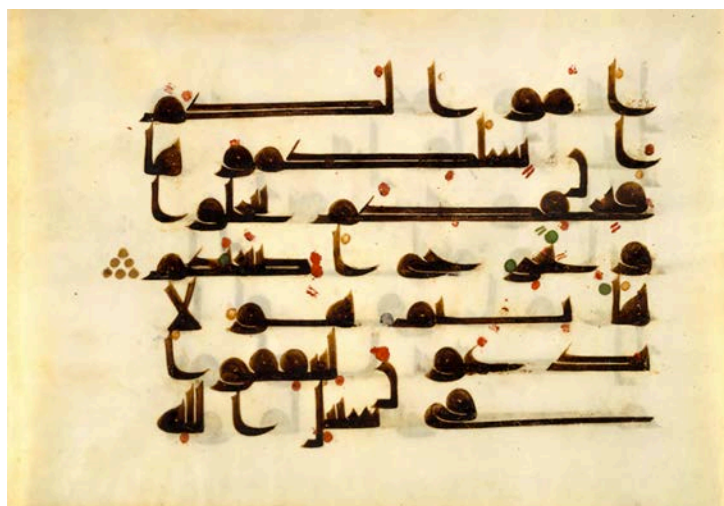
Fig. 13. *Floriated Kufic* script with variations, all reading bismillah (used for writing the Qur'an, on ceramic and metalwork), Source: Ekhtiar & Moore, (2012: 58).



Fig. 14. *Knotted/plaited Kufic* script with variations, all reading bismillah (used for writing the Qur'an, architectural decoration), Source: Ekhtiar & Moore, (2012: 58).

Fig. 15 illustrates one of the early Qur'anic leaves written by the Kufic script in the late ninth–early tenth century when it was at its peak as tradition. Like many examples, this page is written on parchment in black ink with a broad-nibbed reed pen. Horizontally elongated letters here can be seen as characteristics of the early Kufic Qur'ans written on parchment, interpreted as a response to the rectangular page format.

Fig. 15. Folio from a Qur'an Manuscript, late 9<sup>th</sup> early 10<sup>th</sup> century, made in probably Syria, ink and gold on parchment, Source: TheMet, metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/448369, access: 11.05.2020.



The angular script is lightened by the roundness of several letters, which look like large black dots, and their inner blank spaces are so small that they are reduced to a needlepoint. The measurements of the early Qur'an differ from those of later times. Traditionally, God's Word is supposed to be written in large letters, and most of them seem to submit it that is assessed as an injunction; however, various versions of the Qur'an exist meant for a traveling scholar. Generally written in brownish ink on a fragment of fine vellum with fourteen lines on the page is written as a large manuscript meticulously representing a well-proportioned, highly refined calligraphy of the highest quality beauty (Schimmel, 1990).

Schimmel (1990) points at the West's admiration for Arabic writing through the German emperor's coronation gown, which had the fine Kufic inscription on it. She claims that this interest was natural, first attracting the orientalist who understood these letters as exotic decorative devices. Only in the late fifteenth century did German readers start to reach the Arabic alphabet first. Then, Arabic printing was first founded in Italy and Holland. During that time, it is stated that there was no particular interest in the letters used by the Christian world. In the eighteenth century, the unbiased interest in Oriental subjects continued to grow, and various studies were committed to the early development of the Arabic script.

Islamic calligraphy entered a highly significant period during the ninth and tenth centuries. The vizier to the three Abbasid caliphs, Abu Ali Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Muqla (886-940), commonly known as Ibn Muqla, a calligrapher, established the concept of proportion, and he defined the six styles of writing (Yūsofī, 1990). Before him, the proportions of letters were not considered. It is stated that more than 20 cursive styles were in use by the late ninth century; however,

most of them were not assessed as elegant as the perfected Kufic. Ibn Muqla designed a cursive script with the desire to create a beautiful, well-proportioned one that could compete with Kufic. For this, he established a comprehensive system of basic calligraphic rules which was based on the rhombic dot as a unit of measurement, and he redesigned the geometric form of the Arabic letters, with a suggestion that the height of the letters is the same size as the diameter of a circle in an Arabic letter, fixed their relative size and shapes according to this rhombic dot. He also gave standards to the dots' size on Arabic letters, and these whole developments led to the execution of more uniform styles of writing (Lee-Niinioja, 2018).

It is claimed that Ibn Muqla, as an artist, was inspired by bees as they built the cells in their beehive; Muqla established the initial principles of perfect proportional script depending on the design of the pen nib on the paper (*rhomboids*) that fit on the letter Arabic letter alif (Islam, n.d.).

Fig. 16 illustrates the calligraphic diagrams of the letters *alif* and *ain*, according to the established proportional system based on rhombic dots. In this system, the pressing pen diagonally on the paper forms the *rhombic dot*, similar to the western calligraphy practices, in which the nib is held at 45 degrees to create a diamond dot. This system is well known as *al-khatt al-mansub* means proportioned script, which is measured every letter related to the *nokte* (rhombic dot), the height of the *alif*, and the circle (Osborn, 2008).

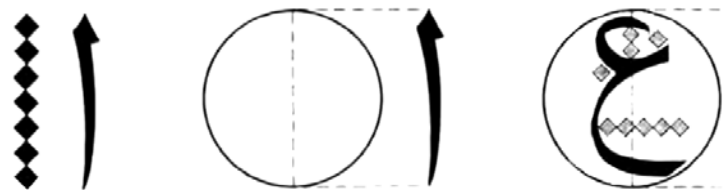


Fig. 16. *Al-khatt al-Mansub* (The attributed line) of Ibn Muqlah, the letter *alif* and *ain*, Source: Osborn, (2008: 74).

Alef is the first letter of the Arabic alphabet, and with a closer look, it is stated that it takes resemblance with the standing or kneeling human figure. The diamond mark (*nuqta*), as illustrated here, represents the nib of the pen and how many nib presses are needed to construct the basic unit regarding its determining proportions and measurements for all of the letters. *Alef* is divided here into seven nib presses to structure it, whose proportions are developed based on human anatomy instructions. The length of *alef* is also used to determine the diameter of other letters that are rounded, such as *ain* (Sakkal, 2016).

Ibn Muqla calculated the length of *alif*, the first letter of the Arabic alphabet with its straight vertical line. Then, he adapted the size and the shape of other letters to his calculation of the *alif*, which became the fundamental proportion of the letters and the basic reference in measuring the length and breadth of letters (Lee-Niinioja, 2018).

Hence, the geometric principles take a significant role in calligraphy, and the legibility of the text and the beauty of its line require rules of proportion that are supposed to be constructed correctly. With this concept of proportion calculation, it is understood that the construction

system of the letters of the West and the Middle East are basically pretty similar, in which the right proportion carries high importance to achieve the well-constructed letterform to be read. Moreover, these rules of proportioned are grounded upon the size of the letter *alif*. In essence, it is a straight, vertical stroke. Apart from the *alif*, the Arabic dot has to be considered as a unit of measurement in calligraphy. It is a square dot that is executed depending on the way the pen cut and the pressure of the fingers, which is supposed to be delicate and precise to separate the two sides of the nib or point of the pen. Depending on the calligrapher and the script that is executed, the *alif*'s height may vary from tree to twelve dots, and the width of the *alif* is equal to one dot. The important thing is that the calligrapher once has his *alif* written; he is supposed to draw it in the same way throughout the text. It is the general geometric principles; however, it may also vary in practice.

On the other hand, it is significant to state that *alif* is a highly respected letter in early Islamic thought. According to the Sufi mystic, a thirteenth-century Persian poet and Islamic scholar, Rumi (1207-1273), *alif* was honored by being the first letter of the alphabet with its unit and sincerity (Lee-Niinioja, 2018).

Apart from this system, Ibn Muqla also invented the six major cursive scripts of writing, codified from the tenth to the thirteenth century, namely, *muhaqqaq* (Fig. 17), *naskh* (Fig. 18), *thuluthi* (Fig. 19), *rayhani* (Fig. 20), *tawqi'* (Fig. 21) and *riqa'* (Fig. 22), six proportional scripts, also called the Six (Islam, n.d.).

Fig. 17. Bismillah written by *muhaqqaq* used for Qur'an writing, architectural decoration and ceramics, Source: Ekhtiar & Moore, (2012: 60).



Fig. 18. Bismillah written by *naskh* used for manuscripts, ceramics and tiles, Source: Ekhtiar & Moore, (2012: 60).



Fig. 19. Bismillah written by *thuluth* used for Qur'an writing, manuscripts, metalwork, ceramics, Source: Ekhtiar & Moore, (2012: 60).



Fig. 20. Bismillah written by *rayhani*, chancery script used for letters, missives, edicts, and architecture, Source: Ekhtiar & Moore, (2012: 60).



Fig. 21. Bismillah written by *tawqi'*, used for Qur'an, missives, edicts and architecture, Source: Ekhtiar & Moore, (2012: 60).

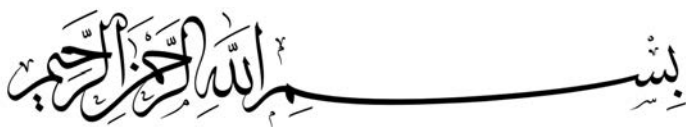


Fig. 22. Bismillah written by *riqa'*, used for letters, edicts, and manuscripts, Source: Ekhtiar & Moore, (2012: 60).





In addition to Ibn Muqla's works, the second greatest name in Islamic calligraphy, Ibn al Bawwab (944-1022), made significant changes without actually violating any of the rules. He gave elegance to the geometric harmony of the letters designed by Ibn Muqla. It is called "Al Mansub al Fa'iq" (the elegant Mansub), known as the more graceful style. His artistic contribution to Islamic calligraphy, particularly to the six scripts mentioned earlier, was despite perfection and beautification through their forms, he favored the *naskh* and *muhaqqaq* scripts. It is said that he wrote 64 Qur'an and a large number of secular works, that some of their fragments remain to the present day. Moreover, a well-known calligrapher and secretary of the last Abbasid caliph Yaqut al Musta'simi (d. 1298), the following century, developed a new method of trimming the reed pens with an oblique cut, which led to giving a new dimension of grace and beauty to the six scripts. He also created a new style derived from thuluth called *yaquti*, which is a cursive script created to attain the levels of perfection with special ornamental forms that were started to be used in the Qur'an and secular manuscripts (Lee-Niinioja, 2018).

On the other hand, it is claimed that the Arabic scripts reached their peak of refinement during the Ottoman (1281-1924), who ruled Turkey and almost all of Arabia and parts of the Balkans in Europe. The works of Ottoman calligraphers are assessed as the finest ever written. They were prominent for the patronage of calligraphy and elevated the written religious text into sacred art, particularly the Qur'an. They added a number of new calligraphic styles. *Diwani* (Fig. 23), used in the Ottoman *dawaween* (bureaus) (Ebeed, 2016), is one of them that is used extensively for the secular writing of government directives and decrees also for architectural decorations. It is constructed from a cursive movement emphasized by a balanced up and down and right to left. This style is assessed as one of the most decorative forms of Islamic calligraphy. Its letters are executed highly close to each other, and it makes reading harder. The style is highly ornamental and decorative and the *Diwani* calligraphy piece is adorned with details that are assessed as a representation of the calligrapher's skill level. For this reason, it was used as a royal calligraphy form for a long time, which required high mastery (Waterman, 2019).

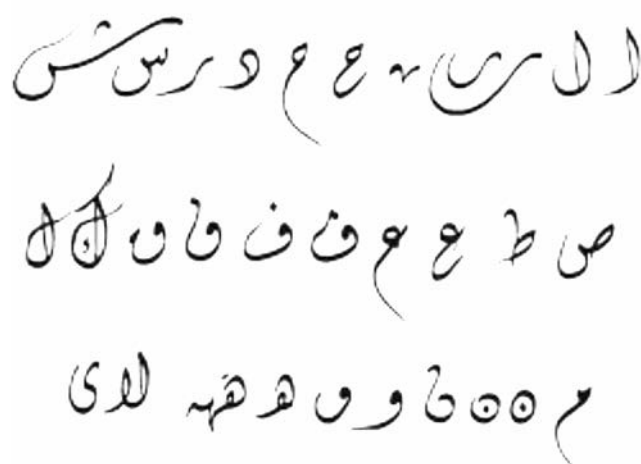
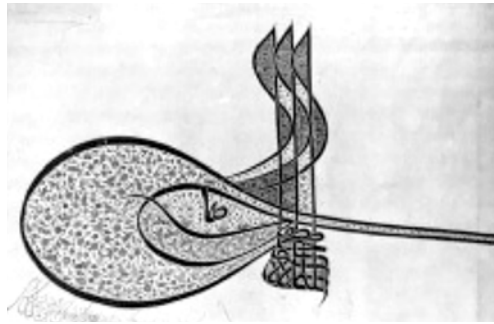


Fig. 23. *Diwani* script, Turkey, c. 1700, Source: Waterman, (2019: 33).

Another contribution is introducing symbolism and images in the text's compositions, called *tughra* (Fig. 24), which is a monogram representing an edict of the ruler, containing his name and title belongs to medieval times. The ingenious use of the Arabic script here can be a symbol of the Sultan's signature, a sentence from the Qur'an, or a common prayer that was geometry, representing vegetal forms, birds, and other animals as calligraphic compositions (Waterman, 2019). It was penned in a highly intricated with parallel curvilinear strokes. It was placed at the head of the document customarily (Yüsofî, 1990).

Fig. 24. *Tughra* of Sulayman the Great, Mid 16C, Source: Waterman, (2019: 34).



In ministerial offices, *tughra* was used as a royal seal and considered to confirm a decree's validity in the same way as a royal signature. Its usage was first limited to the headings of royal edicts, coins, seals, and agate signets, but later period started to be used more widely. The early examples are not written in any particular shape, but Ottoman calligraphers developed a special form of it that differs from the other forms. The style of *tughra* is usually derived from the *thuluth*, *riqa*, or *divani* scripts. There are still various forms of rein used in many Muslim countries, such as Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Persia, and Afghanistan. However, it fell out of use in Turkey after the Arabic script's abandonment in the twentieth century (Yüsofî, 1990).

*Calligram* is basically a poem, a phrase or a word, organized as a design that appears as an image or figural representation of the text (Reynolds, 2022). It is a sort of figurative aspect of calligraphy that consists of interweaving written words employing anthropomorphic figures of calligraphers, zoomorphic, and inanimate objects such as a sword, a mosque, a ship made with the letter and the Arabic grammatical conjunction *waw*, mostly connected to the Turkish art of the sixteenth century. Calligrams, which can be found in the Sufi circles, consisting of artists from various domains; hence, many artists practiced calligraphy, significantly contributing to this variation.

As stated earlier, calligraphy is considered the writing of a text and an abstract arrangement of a particular worldview and meaning in Islam. The plastic expression of the writing takes precedence, while the meaning comes later. In some calligraphy works, the presentation of the text makes it difficult to choose the meaning and makes it difficult for the reader to understand the text due to the Arabic letters used, but the aesthetic forms it carries open the way for the reader/viewer to reach the meaning from the visual (Kozlu & Benuğur, 2014).

It can be stated that calligrams are not created to convey a specific meaning through the words merely. However, also its organized form

carries, in most cases, three levels of distinguished meaning, which are ranked as the meaning of the words, the meaning of form, and the interconnections between the words and form (Cappellari, 2017).

The earliest period of Islamic art at about eighth century, it had witnessed the development of calligrams when floral motifs also started to flourish in calligraphy as a representation of the first connection of abstract forms of letters with material forms. That means their representation was not realistic as in Western art, but abstract (Saoud, 2010).

The ending of the letters formed as a leaf form, and with time, it became a more and more intricate network of plant motifs or sometimes zoomorphic motifs as well. The calligraphic writing sometimes disappears in these ornaments' intricacies, making it difficult to recognize the letter shapes. In some practices, letter endings are formed as human forms where the human figure consists in a letter as if the shape of the letter depicted figurative representation as calligraphic painting. Some include Ali's Camel, Boat Ament Billah, Solomon's Seal, Emblem of Love, Boat of Writing, prints in the shape of the mosque, a pitcher, human figures, lions, birds, a glass, or paired Waw's. The flexibility of the Arabic letterforms led to the expression of figures and characters within the classical calligraphy writing because it is stated that this issue did not violate the tenet of Islamic calligraphy, which is said as unity (Teparić, 2014).

Fig. 25-26 illustrate various examples of zoomorphic calligraphy, displaying the bird (Fig. 25) and a man (Fig. 26). It is stated that such animal figures are also prevalent among calligraphers, mainly Turkish, who created ingenious pictures of living beings constructed from religious expressions and sacred formulas. Some of these motifs, such as the pigeon, composed of the Bismillah (in God's name) or lion, are representations of symbols related to individual personalities known for their spirituality. Within the calligraphic practice, a text related to the calligrapher's name is written in the intricate tangle of Arab letters. These forms are not actually manufactured during their life, but with their death, people, out of honor for their spirituality, righteousness, and devotion, prepared those calligrams.



Fig. 25. *left* Bird in *naskh* script, the 7<sup>th</sup> century, Iran, Source: Lee-Niinioja, (2018: 28).

Fig. 26. *right* Calligraphic expression in the form of a portrait, Source: Aksel, (2010: 92).

The bird, a pigeon with a voice pronounced "hu, hu," makes dhikr that praise God, and people who have seen a specific spiritual symbolism in the birds nourish the respect for them. As creatures of God, they were assessed as the depiction or symbol of angels' understanding of the human mind, which brings good things. Symbolically, the bird is the

soul that craves freedom from material bondage to rise to the level of eternal residence of the Ruler of birds. The symbolism of birds consists of special significance since the beginning of humankind, such as the raven who taught Kabil to bury his brother Abel; Sulayman spoke with them. Also, in Sufi texts, as a symbol, the bird has a particular place and meaning. They carry news. Moreover, a phoenix is a mystical bird that reflects spiritual conditions. For this reason, it is a common feature that can be encountered in poetry as a paradigm unobtainable, something that is between heaven and earth (Aksel, 2010). Or the rooster was used pictured by calligraphers because it is a religious bird in the indigenous Iranian tradition and an angelic that calls Muslims for morning prayers.

Lamps were used to create letters to remind Muslims that God is the light of the earth and heaven, as mentioned in part ""5.4. The General Concept of Islamic art. Flowers were also accepted as a representation of pious words. The Sufis, with the search for the secret of the letters, wanted to invent new ways of explanation of each letter, and hence they reached the level where the letters are accepted as "pure otherness which symbolizes everything as far as it is "other," in connection to God," and they assessed letters as "radically incompatible with the quest for the Absolute" (Lee-Niinioja, 2018: 51).

Fig. 26 illustrates the face of a man. Here, it is stated that there are still identifiable shapes of letters; hence, it seems like calligraphic inscriptions that look like drawing of the faces, and portraits of human figures which manifest the perfect man or *Insan-al-Kamil* (Aksel, 2010).

These calligraphic letters in visual art instrumentation and figuration make the content for painting in words. Here letters are just borrowed forms of a spoken word and shape the distinctive figures. It also points to the flexibility of Arabic letters that can assimilate to each form that can be recognized in this material world. Apart from being identified with the shapes of individual letters, letters are also used for a description related to the Arab word "*Al-hamd*" (Teparić, 2014: 157), which means to be thankful to God. Hence, it is claimed that calligraphy does not aim to imitate nature as the measure of reality, and it just aims to understand the transcendental essence of nature. It does not mean to admire the material world but admire God. These calligraphic works are created with the influence of symbolism known in the material world. As a result, so-called pictorial calligraphy was introduced to Arabic arts.

Islamic art is also known as the art of character with symbolic meaning. In Qur'an, the Surah Fussilat (41:53), "We will show them Our signs in the universe and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that this Quran is the truth. Is it not enough that your Lord is a Witness over all things?..." shown as a reference to the symbol which consists the second dimension that hidden in all things. It is claimed that the artists are inspired by these external, visible, inner, and hidden signs and reflect their insight to create calligraphic works. Hence, these calligrams are assessed as entities that create the relationship between the living beings, their metaphysical dimensions, and their Creator. That means calligrams encourage viewers to consider both metaphysical and physical dimensions of reality (Teparić, 2014). Here, the relationship between the word, the letter, or a stroke of a letter and image may remind the word and image relationships in the West, where a calligram means a poem, phrase, or word that refers to the literary text in general poetic

form that reflects an object's arrangements and compositions, in which the calligraphy, handwriting, or typography are employed in a way that creates a visual image. That means the image is created by the words and visually expresses what the words say (Artandpopularculture.com, n.d.).

First, known calligrams can be traced back to Greek poets of the Hellenistic period in the fourth century BC and have a religious root through their poetic modality. They came from offerings in which the name of the donor and the occasion of the donation were written. Furthermore, in the Middle Ages, various examples of calligraphy contain pictorial elements, such as in Greek manuscripts of the *Acts of the Apostles*, which contain a thousand calligrams in prose. Looking at the sixteenth century, with the discovery of the classic calligrams, they were tried to be imitated in Greek and Latin, which means the poetic genre was revitalized once again. Then, in the eighteenth century, in Germany, the calligram started to be paid attention, even becoming one of the popular aspects of poems written for everyday events such as weddings, and with modern art, the calligram started to be appreciated as a poetical act in itself, rather than its illustrative visual mode. Furthermore, in the twentieth century, around 1913, a french poet Wilhelm Apollinaris de Kostrowitsky, known as Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918), returned to calligrams and revitalized them with his published book entitled *Calligrammes. Poems de la Paix et de la Guerre* in 1918. His calligrams presented in this book were considered an absolute novelty and became popular throughout the Western world and invaded advertising, comics, and book covers (D'Ors, 1977).

Influenced by Surrealism, Symbolist poetry, and nature itself, a simple letter of Apollinaire is claimed that generated an important artistic impetus in France and left a mark on his time. Instead of imitation or theory, he preferred to give a forth to his imagination and intuition and started to speak of a new lyricism. Hence, his words were appreciated through their subtle blur between tradition and modernity (Guillaume-apollinaire.fr, n.d.).

Fig. 27 illustrates one of his poems entitled *Salut monde*, which is written in the form of the Eiffel Tower and can be shown as an example of a calligram. In this poem, the theme is manifested by the artist visually presented by the text of the poem. The typographical arrangement of words has a vital role in conveying the intended effects and becomes a significant element of the poem.

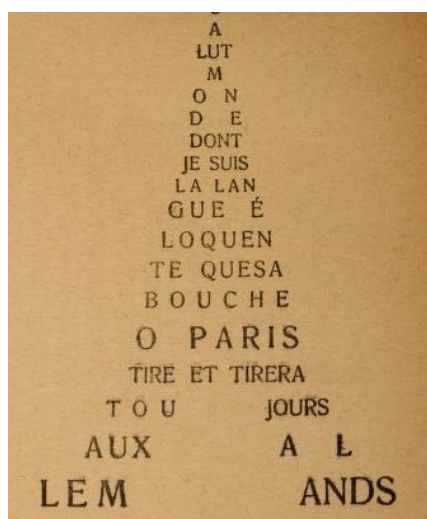


Fig. 27. *Salut monde*, Guillaume Apollinaire, Source: Art and Pupular Culture, artandpopularculture.com/Concrete\_poetry, access: 12.01.2021.



Hence, in the light of this information, on one side, Islamic calligrapher creates calligrams, which become pictorial calligraphy, as a way of explanation of each letter related to Islamic spiritual symbolism, assessed as the first connection of abstract forms in a sense, on another side, the twentieth century's arrangements with the intention to convey the intended effects through the meaning of words, rhythm or rhyme -the conventional elements of the poem. In substance, whether these two seem to have the most common ground, it has to be noted that the fundamental nature is highly different. Still, it can be claimed that there is an apparent effort to reveal and convey beyond the literal meaning of the word or the text. It is possible to say that they meet with the transformation of the operational mission imposed on the perception of writing.

At present, many contemporary western calligraphers also seem to embrace these issues that will be examined in Chapter VI, which put the readable calligraphy work to abstract more painterly interpretation that leads the discussions about the western calligraphy mentioned in Chapter II. However, as also will be seen and explained through my personal attitude and perception about the practices of calligraphy that will be mentioned in Chapter VII, western writing and calligraphy have this potential that is needed to be realized and being aware of this, which is directly related to the artist or calligrapher.

## **5.7. Tools and materials of Islamic calligraphy practice**

This part will mention tools and materials employed for Islamic calligraphy practices, which will provide an insight into the concept and compare it with the tradition of western calligraphy to locate the differences, as done in Chapter IV while examining Far Eastern calligraphy. While mentioning the spirituality of Islamic calligraphy, it is indispensable to note calligraphic tools, described as "vehicles of the spirit, symbols and reminders of human origins, destiny, and death" (Cappellari, 2017: 256). This appreciation comes with the calligraphic experience of artists and from Islamic thought of tradition.

As mentioned earlier, calligraphers, *khattat*, are among the most regarded artists in Islamic culture. The art of calligraphy was learned from the master, often within the same family. To be called a master, one was supposed to be acquired a formal license through student training that lasts for years by copying models to perfect the skill. It is assessed as a long and rigorous process, and most of the calligraphers, highly educated, generally come from the upper society. The extensive training consists of many rules from the best court masters. The quality of the calligraphic work is affected by the tools and materials engaged; for this reason, knowledge of writing implements is required (Ekhtiar & Moore, 2012).

Looking at the western tradition mentioned in Chapter III, monks and laypeople were employed to copy the manuscripts during medieval history, including enslaved people. Particularly in the scriptoria of the monasteries, it was executed as an arduous work, required a seven-year training to be master and started to practice as a scribe. As in Islamic calligraphy, to be a master was needed to acquire technical and practical knowledge, which refers to knowing, preparing, and learning

the manipulation of the tools and materials. It can be claimed that all are still relevant for contemporary western calligraphy, even if calligrapher practices highly abstract forms that reveal personal attitudes towards western calligraphy. It is mentioned in detail in Chapter VI and examines the personal calligraphic works in Chapter VII.

In former times of Islamic calligraphy art, about the eighth century, calligraphers were supposed to prepare their writing implements themselves, such as cutting the reed pen blending their ink, treating their paper, and making their rulers. The calligrapher prepares the necessary pens and penknife (*qalamdan*), a small spoon, whetstone, and scissors to cut paper (Fig. 28) (Yūsufī, 1990). Among these materials, three of them, the pen, the ink, and the paper, are assessed as the essentials required as initial conditions for the performance of the art (Cappellari, 2017).



Fig. 28. The calligrapher's implements: reed pen, ink, inkwell, twisted silk, and a page of *mashq* (writing exercise). Source: Ekhtiar, (2006: 208).

The writing instrument that was first used to write by Qur'anic scribes was the reed pen, *qalam* is the Arabic word for pen, which comes from the Greek *kalamos* (calamus). It is also claimed that before Islam, reed pens were used to write Greek, Coptic, and Hebrew (George, 2010).

A reed pen (*qalam*) is assessed as one of the essential tools for calligraphy; however, in some cases, there are mentioned employing a very fine steel pen or a quill, also a brush for early manuscripts from India and Central Asia (Schimmel, 1990), as in the western manuscript. It also needs to be underlined that the brush, as in the Far Eastern calligraphy, was not a material employed by Islamic calligraphers. The choice of the material seems directly related to the nature of the alphabet that was used, depending on the available materials and techniques of the time.

The reed for the Islamic calligraphy had to be moderately mature, and the degree of its maturity could be judged by its color. From the outside, it was supposed to be completely brown, and from the inside, white. It is supposed to be straight, fine-grained, and free from any bends or knots, neither too long nor too short or heavy. Nibs are cut with different widths and degrees of sharpness for writing different scripts to write large and clear letters or small and faint lettering. The nib can be broad for Kufic calligraphy or very fine to produce the *Diwani* styles' intricate detail (Waterman, 2009).

Every master had his special way of trimming his pen. There are also two kinds of penknives (*qalamtaras*), often ornamented beautifully, such as in Ottoman Turkey (Schimmel, 1990). For sharpening the penknife, a whetstone is also required. After writing the calligraphy on wool or silk cloth, colored and reversible, it is used to clean the nib of the pen and prevent ink from drying on it (Yüsofi, 1990).

This is a highly notable feature of Islamic calligraphy that reveals a cultural tradition that had never existed in traditional western calligraphy. Values attribution to the materials can only be seen in the Far Eastern and Islamic calligraphy. Looking at the contemporary calligraphers, the material or tool that is served for their personal quest for the experiment can be anything that can leave a mark, which will be seen in Chapter VI. Furthermore, in Islamic calligraphy, Schimmel (1990) mentions various comparisons between the pen and the sword, which are often related to each other since the lord of the sword and the lord of the pen are assessed as perfect attested princes. It reminds the Far Eastern calligraphy and the relationship of the calligraphy master with his tools, also comparing the sword. Various comparisons of the pen with a lance through their shape, which resembles each other; also, the pen is compared with arrows likewise since the long slender *alifs* of *muhaqqa* and *rayhani* style produced by pen particularly enhanced such analogies. Even when comparing the pen to a goldsmith and his jewelry product, the pen puts the secrets in man's mind on paper in undulating lines, and underlines how calligraphy is appreciated as an act in Far Eastern and Middle Eastern calligraphy traditions.

To sum up, it can be said that the pen refers to a rich symbology in the context of Islamic and Turkish contexts, on the contrary to Western calligraphy. It is the instrument created by God before the creation to inscribe the destiny and disseminate culture and knowledge (Cappellari, 2017). Whereas, in traditional western calligraphy, the tools, and materials, as mentioned in Chapter III, did not consist of any sort of attributed values as in Far Eastern or Middle Eastern calligraphy. They were just utensils that were employed to write the text. Depending on the technical possibilities of the time, they were changed, which also affected the styles of the script.

Another significant material in Middle Eastern calligraphy is the ink, "seen as a symbol of knowledge (Cappellari, 2017: 256), which was introduced during the Ottoman times through the blessing of prayers. A calligrapher usually prefers to mix his own ink, and to produce black ink, very fine dust of charcoal or soot mixed with gum arabic is usually preferred. The ink may also vary in colors, such as deep black, ordinary lack, grayish-black, or a black verging on green called peacock black (Waterman, 2009), as in the Far Eastern calligraphy, in which the variety of the black is achieved by adding different amounts of water, which attributes dimension to a stroke even though it is just written in black.

The other material, inkwell, contains both ink and wadding with a shallow and a wide opening, preferably. The wadding has twisted silk fiber steeped in ink to provide sufficient ink to charge the nig and prevent any drip or spillage (Yüsofi, 1990).

Another important tool is paper, which is accepted as a calligraphy component and assessed as sacred because it is perceived as the bearer of spiritual and worldly knowledge containing writing (Cappellari, 2017). It also affects the quality of the writing. The development of calligraphy was facilitated by the change to paper from papyrus, which had a raw surface that did not allow artistic writing (Schimmel, 1990).

Furthermore, with a closer look at the paper in Fig. 28, which carries various writings of the Arabic alphabet, or maybe various strokes, ups and downs, and turns, the overall appearance reveals the practice of a calligrapher. The calligraphic practice is called *meşk*, which consists of various exercises mainly consisting of copying a living master or an Ottoman calligraphic exercise album, called *meşk murakkası*. It is stated that commonly once a week, a student brings his exercises to his master. His master traces his exercises in red ink to correct the proportions and the letters measurements by showing the right moves of the calligraphic strokes.

Here in Fig. 28, instead of copying work, it can be observed that various stroke exercises randomly remind the pen testing of the western calligraphy mentioned in Chapter III. Here, it is called *mashq*, which is worth mentioning here because it is seen that these kinds of exercises become a form of expression of the calligraphers, who prefer to focus on the moves of the strokes, movements of the hand that bring forth the gesture as in the examples of Far Eastern calligraphy mentioned in Chapter IV, or as will be seen in contemporary western calligraphy that will be examined in Chapter VI.

### 5.8. Siyah Mashq (Black Writing)

*Siyah Mashq* means "black writing" (Fig. 29) (Ekhtiar, 2006: 107) refers to the calligraphic exercise pages written by traditional calligraphers in Iran. With its visual and aesthetic characteristics and its role in the transmission of skills from master to apprentice with its spiritual dimensions, it was assessed as a presentation in the primary sources of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.



Fig. 29. Page of *mashq* by Muhammad Riza Kalhur, Source: Ekhtiar, (2006: 208).



Later, it became an independent art form and flowered in the nineteenth century with relevance in modern and contemporary Iranian art with their bold forms and harmonious compositions, also found in the Western Islamic World and Ottoman Turkey. In Arabic, they were called *musawwada* (blackened); in Turkish *karalama* is derived from the verbal noun *kara* (black), a specific practice and exercise of calligraphy in which calligraphers use all available space on paper that makes paper all black and the overall outcome become a visually comparable to abstract art (Cappellari, 2017).

*Mashq* -writing exercise- is integral to calligraphy training. As stated earlier, copying and repeating individual letters and their combinations help strengthen the hand and improve the concentration and discipline necessary and significant as integral parts of the system. The practice also led the calligrapher to determine the script's size to be used and try out the pen, decide whether the ink is of the correct consistency, and map out the overall composition and visual impact of the work. It also allows them to refine the letters' shapes and recover any unsteadiness or stiffness in their hand. All can be achieved by constantly repeating individual letters or groups of letters on a different part of the page. To utilize the available space on the sheet, the calligrapher usually rotates the page several times, making it a heavily filled, dark sheet with little white space on it. Exercise is often done one by one, from master to apprentice, or in tiny groups. The master writes the *sar mashq* (model) while the apprentice observes. Then apprentice practices the *mashq*, and give it back to the master to correct and to take advice. It can be covered page after page or on a wooden slate (*lawha*) after the wooden slate with exercise. After successfully completing, the master issued the apprentice a license *ijaza* that authorized him to work as a professional scribe or master. This process generally takes from three to ten years. In Iran, it is stated that, in contrast to the Ottoman Empire, there was no tradition of producing *ijazas* as finished works of art consisting of elaborate illumination and fine calligraphy (Ekhtiar, 2006).

Looking at the western tradition of calligraphy, it is possible to encounter various pen trails (*probatio pennae*), mainly on the flyleaves in the back of manuscripts or on the margins. While copying the text, after trimming the nib, a scribe was needed to test the nib to check if it had the appropriate width and cut at the right angle equally to avoid any unwanted streaks of white visible within the letters' strokes. For this, pen-testing was done as a process that a blank piece of paper or parchment was scribbled down with various lines, short random words, or mini drawings (Kwakkel, 2018). However, at that time, these squiggly lines were not assessed as something as valuable as in Islamic calligraphy.

On the other hand, as mentioned earlier, in Futurist, Dada, or Lettrist practice, there can encounter various unreadable handwritten texts, looking like *siyah mashq* or *probatio pennea*, which consists of a pile of strokes or lines perceived as random text without any semantic meaning. This kind of example also can be observed through the works of asemic writers of the West, which refers to the unreadable written texts or marks that mostly appeared in the twentieth century, which will be mentioned in Chapter VI.



Furthermore, considering contemporary western calligraphy, various practices remind the trials of the material through repeating strokes or lines, as in the case of Meulman or Ingmire -mentioned in Chapter VI, who basically employ calligraphy as a response to a poem or a piece of music. As these responses continue to rust, the composition looks like heaps of scribbles along the composition.

The sixteenth century is assessed as the beginning of the *siyah mashq* as an art form when its examples acquired a new dimension and attracted the patrons' and art lovers' attention who collected items. They started to produce individual pages along with paintings, drawings, and finely penned verses of poetry in royal or non-royal albums, often signed and sometimes dated as a sign of works of art rather than mere exercises. It was supposed to be a finished look at that time, which led to making lavishly illuminated and elaborated borders for inclusion in albums, as in Fig. 30 penned by Ahmed Karahisari (1469-1556). Here, it can be observed that *karalama* consists of dots, strokes, various letters, and many different types of connections between letters that create dense a kind of chaotic areas of writing.

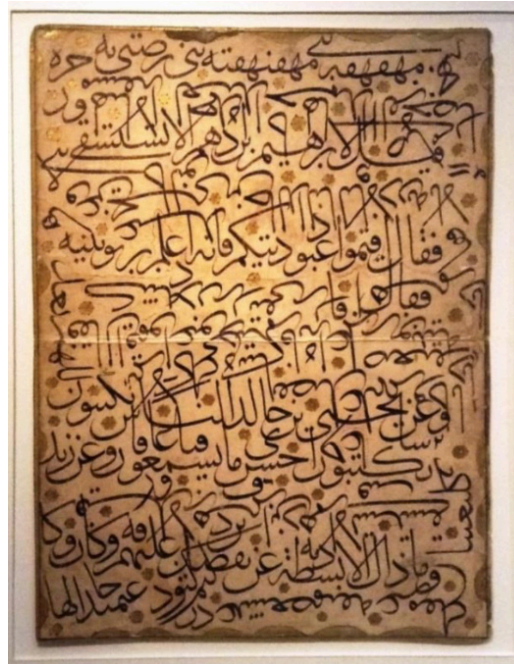


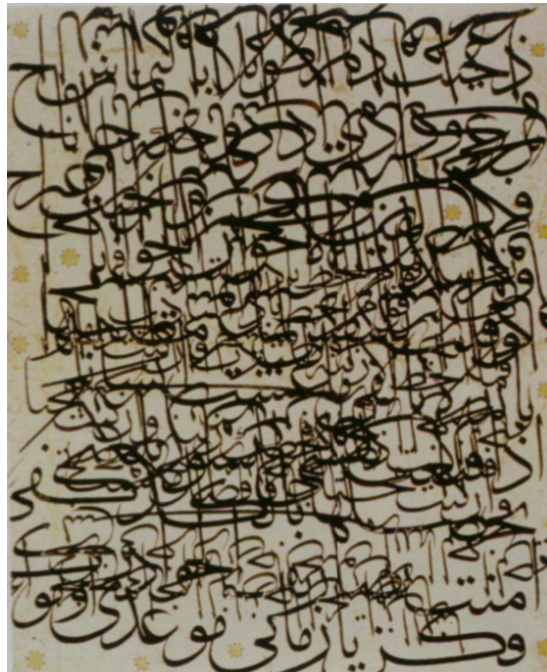
Fig. 30. *Karalama*, Ahmed Karahisari, Turkey, the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Sabancı Museum in Istanbul, Source: Cappellari, (2017: 114).

There are three levels of competence in calligraphic practice, which are all equally important, and each was supposed to be mastered in sequence. The first is called "visual *mashq*," which means the apprentice studies the writing of masters and observes its spiritual characteristics. The second is pen practice (*mashq-i qalami*), which means copying from a master's writing. First, isolated letters should be copied or words in the master's hand to understand every letter's form in style. Then, it can be studied in short compositions. The apprentice is supposed to contemplate the elements of the master's model that seek guidance in concentration from the departed spirits of the calligraphy of masters. That takes at least one year period. Finally, the third stage,

called "imaginative practice," is possible to attempt for a day or two, which means to go beyond mere copying. It requires calligraphers' imagination to form of beautiful appearance. This advanced type of practice makes the calligrapher a master of spontaneity; for this reason, it is claimed that practice is "a selfless, painstaking, and highly structures process that requires extraordinary discipline and lies at the very core of the master-pupil relationship" (Ekhtiar, 2006: 111).

It is stated that Turkish *karalama* (Fig. 31) consists of distinct musical qualities. The arrangement and repetition of letters on the page of *karalama* create some sense of rhythm as it appears on the page. Letters overlap or are written upside down. Here, the written letters are mostly interpreted as a visual manifestation of a musical note with flowing, intermingled, superimposed lines (Ekhtiar, 2006), as will be seen through one of the calligraphic works of Ingmire held in Chapter VI as an interpretation/reaction of a piece of a poem or a piece of music.

Fig. 31. Page of *karalama*, Turkey, Courtesy of the collection of P Art and Culture Magazine, Source: Ekhtiar, (2006: 113).



In the contemporary tradition, these types of practices are continuing to be created by contemporary calligraphers both as a type of exercise and as an art form that is affirmed through these statements "We never waste the paper, and we learn how to use every space available in our practical exercises (*karalama*)" (Cappellari, 2017: 113). As a reminder, *dishu* is mentioned in Chapter VI, a Chinese calligraphy exercise practiced by water on the pavement is another excellent example of not wasting any paper to practice. This kind of performance is also encountered through the work of contemporary calligrapher Meulman-mentioned in Chapter VI- executed in similar technics attributed conceptual approach through the word picks.

In the mid and the nineteenth century, the popularity of this art form arose, and although it may not necessarily mean to affect the letter shape, instead to influence the compositional characters of the script

that has horizontal regularity as a norm. Instead, the fluidity of words rises and falls underlines delicate movement and artistic whim. It also gives possible experiments such as reverse writing and bilateral writing in which it has to rotate the page completely to read the text or employ unusual colored inks and papers assessed as forward-looking by the calligrapher. Moreover, it is underlined that the beauty of the *mashq* pages lies in the purity of the letters and the balance and clarity of the compositions, even in the heavily worked as in examples (Ekhtiar, 2006), which is parallel to the traditional western mindset about the written text being readable.

These pages can be viewed from various directions, and the calligrapher is not limited or supposed to follow a linear sequence with a beginning and end. It takes attention here that the perception of beauty, while still preserving various features, is also slightly transformed to a different level that seems mostly focused on the harmony of the overall composition that consists of multiple moves of the pen. Here the technique takes attention, and the text either negligible the meaning; for this reason, these works are assessed as highly abstract, which can be seen through the contemporary calligraphy practices of various selected western calligraphers, such as Meulman, Ingmire, or Lach that will be examined in Chapter VI.

In both forms, various contemporary western practices in this genre of the twenty and twenty-first century and *siyah masqh* of the sixteenth and seventeenth century consist of bold forms of the individual letter, and their arrangement on the page -whether legible or not- are valued as communication between the calligrapher and viewer in a different level. Moreover, in *siyah masqh*, the dots employed mostly over or under letters are omitted to prevent any distraction from the letter shape. It reveals his direct presence by perfecting the letters' forms and shapes and experiments with new compositional elements. As a representative of a union between the calligrapher and his work, it is also claimed that they reveal the embodiment of the calligrapher's moral essence.

This type of work is closer to the imaginative *mashq*, in which the imagination, spontaneity, and intuition of the calligrapher are assessed as the primary tool. It is also stated that here the calligrapher pushes the limits of the canon boundaries while still working within it by creating a *tour de force* of calligraphy. That means he does not follow any particular set of compositional rules; however, he reflects the whim and spiritual needs of calligraphers as masterpieces of improvisation, which is already a part of the nature of calligraphy with Arabic script and Islamic calligraphy. Through their work, the viewer is supposed to pass through letters or words to their essence. It makes a difference as works of a high aesthetic calligrapher (Ekhtiar, 2006).

This issue is also highly noticeable that apart from the visual and maybe technical similarities between various western contemporary and *siyah masqh* practices, such as losing the semantic importance of the text and enriching the overall textual composition with the search for harmony and rhythm through experiment, there are significant differences in terms of calligraphers' perception of writing and the value attributed to calligraphy. It is hard to claim that the calligrapher's

spirituality and moral values take primary space that they reflect the practices of westerners. While in *siyah masqh*, it is still underlined that they carry and reveal the roots, most significantly the spiritual value through the spontaneity and intuition of calligrapher even pushing the boundaries; in other words, it still seems to break the rules within the rules in a manner of speaking. Moreover, as mentioned various times earlier, abstraction already exists within the nature of the Arabic script, which also reflects calligraphy practices contrary to western calligraphy. The only abstract thing seems to be the individual letters of the Latin alphabet, and with the contemporary attitude, western calligraphers are in the search for an experiment under the influences of traditions that are logically utterly different from their own.

Here, with the consideration of the tradition of Islamic calligraphy and various interpretations that started as an experiment, it can be said that calligraphy cannot be appreciated just as a formal and technical exercise but also involves several dimensions of a human being rooted in a significant cultural heritage, "reflecting on death, upholding morals, worshipping the Divine" (Cappellari, 2017: 262).

Here, it will be helpful to examine the contemporary practices in this genre to provide significant insight into locating the current appreciation and mindset in terms of calligraphy. It will also give a chance to compare the mindset that can be detached in contemporary western calligraphy, as it is done for the Far Eastern calligraphy in Chapter IV.

## **5.9. Contemporary practices with Arabic script and Islamic calligraphy**

Contemporary Islamic calligraphy is characterized by its roots and elements of rupture and continuity. A broad spectrum of different approaches can be ranked between the modernist and traditionalist calligraphers. Some prefer to adopt the Arabic script into their calligraphic work, acquired by traditional training. Others may employ Arabic letters and words applying to different types of the medium -that will be mentioned on the following pages; without considering the geometrical proportion of the letters mentioned earlier about the construction of the letters, they may prefer to experiment with artistic exploration. However, it does not necessarily mean that contemporary calligraphy does not represent spirituality; it can portray secular and spiritual themes. The main difference between traditional and contemporary is assessed as how the artist learns the art and how he prefers to construct the letters (Cappellari, 2017).

Issa, Cestar, and Porter (2016) state that contemporary calligraphy of the Arabs started in the early 1950s. It can be said that different approaches and visual and theoretical applications have been witnessed. On the one hand, some artists are assessed as creators of a new aesthetic language following their countries' independence from the colonial governments of Great Britain and France, in search of a new aesthetic language that led them to express themselves through nationalism. It is stated that these artists did not directly use European techniques and media and even rejected them, instead of focusing on indigenous media to

introduce calligraphy with Arabic script and Islamic calligraphy into their art. Arabic letters are a significant feature of their artwork. That means they employed calligraphy as a symbol of resistance to find the identity and dispose of the consequences of colonialism as a resistance to the westernization process. This quest for a new identity led the artists to return to their origin. Hence traditional calligraphy had been protected from cultural imperialism. Considering the nature and creative possibilities of calligraphy with divine words and its abstract nature, Islamic calligraphy was accepted as wisdom rooted in the tradition and mysticism of Islam that leads to preserving its originality and identity (Amani, Bolkhari Ghani & Jabbari Kalkhoran, 2021).

The other group of artists, who mostly lived in exile because of lack of educational opportunities or conflict and war, started to create works referential cultural languages. Some have references to their tradition and heritage with the script that marks their identity where they live. Furthermore, another group of artists comprises contemporary artists, who were assessed as the ones that observed international aesthetics, concepts, languages, and occasionally Arabic and Persian script -whether readable or not. They are considered key artists contributing to new modernities that began in the early 1950s till today (Issa, Cestar, & Porter, 2016).

The period between the 1950s and 1970s is called innovation and consists of the first group mentioned above, which refers to the emergence of new education patterns, art criticism, institutions, and patronage. The new schools of thought led to generating new ideas and approaches by producing specific visual language and alternatives (Issa, Cestar, & Porter, 2016).

According to Lee-Niinioja (2018), calligraphy schools reach across the Islamic world, not limited to a single country, and share a common identity that consists of all works that artists have used calligraphy for their art as a purpose of identity. By the middle of the twentieth century, independence took place for most of the region's countries alongside the oil revenues; it is called the era of hope and optimism, which brought a short period of prosperity, secularism, and political idealism. The need for radical changes in visual art, literature, poetry, and the social and political sphere arose. At that time, it is also claimed that there was an eagerness to show to the world that Baghdad could be transformed into modern, cosmopolitan capital, so many artists were willingly or unwillingly sent to study outside their home countries in the USA, France, or the UK mainly (Issa, Cestar, & Porter, 2016).

In the 60s and 70s, artists started to create works that were referential to national and international, past and present features. After World War II, it was stated that new Western culture associations opened in the region, such as the Iran-America Society in Tehran, with other international rivals, Goethe Institutes, and Italian and French cultural centers. It made it easier for an artist to apply for scholarships, travel and read foreign literature, translate poetry and novels, or see foreign films. It also means that foreigners started to invest in the region's art. New schools also led the new visual vocabulary to emerge, borrowing from the decoration of shrines, tribal and folk art motifs, coffeehouse



paintings, numerology, and talismanic and coded signs from traditional decorative elements, including calligraphy (Issa, Cestar, & Porter, 2016).

According to Osborn (2008), when contemporary art began in the 1960s of Islamic calligraphy, it was closely related to the search for ethnic and national aesthetic identities of Arabs; the style became popular as a tourist form in response to market demand, particularly in the tourist market of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States. However, when the market became satisfied with letter designs, artists started to search for inspiration elsewhere, which led the artist to reconsider.

In the 1970s, there was great unrest, witnessing the Lebanese civil war, the assassination of King Faisal (1906-1975) of Saudi Arabia, and the deaths of Egyptian President Nasser and singer icons of independence Om Kalsoum. That led to new political instability and censorship, and the abrupt end of multi-cultural activity in the region obliged many intellectuals to leave their homeland. Among these uncertainties, various benefits from rising oil prices encouraged art patronage and investment in art nationally and internationally. The year 1979 is assessed as a significant breakpoint for the region when the Islamic revolution in Iran, the invasion of Afghanistan by the USSR, and an Iraqi politician Saddam Hussein Abd al-Majid al-Tikriti (1937-2006) and a Libyan revolutionary, politician, and political theorist Muammar Muhammad Abu Minyar al-Gaddafi (1942-2011) became firmly entrenched in Iraq and Libya. It is described as the urge to return to the region's cultural roots with the ambition to experiment with Western influence (Issa, Cestar, & Porter, 2016).

According to Lee-Niinioja (2018), in the 1980s, the Arab world had reached a kind of awakening in the realm of calligraphy. Various artists experimented in different ways, and four main types of schools arose at that time. The first one is called pure calligraphic works, where the meaning of letters and words takes essential roles. The second one consists of abstract works in which the letters and the words are executed as abstract entities from their original context and meaning. The third one is called figurative calligraphy, which employs human, animal, and other recognizable shapes formed with writing. The last one is called calligraphic combinations that range from a mixed maid with Arabic script to paintings with overlapping text on the image used as a background. These works have similarities in materials and formats with Western-style, such as can be observed in the following part entitled "5.9.2. *Hurufiyya* movement and its characteristics" reflect various influences of Western art; however, it is stated that these non-western works point to a culture in which the writing plays a significant and central role in history. Lee-Niinioja underlines that non-Western elements in calligraphy here are attached to the identity issue. According to her, Arab artists affirm that identity has many aspects worth exploring, as a basis of the statements that "assertion of one's identity is an act of survival" (Lee-Niinioja, 2018: 73).

Lee-Niinioja (2018) also mentions that when Arabic artists first stepped onto the international stage, they had ideas about western masterpieces and a new stream of modern avant-garde. They were even trained as Western artists; however, they felt marginalized as mere

foreign imitators. For this reason, it is claimed that they had to find a visual vocabulary to reflect their cultural identity through calligraphy in contemporary models, which still preserve the heritage.

In the 1980s and 1990s, there witnessed some signs of cultural revival, the opening of Egypt's Cairo Opera House complex, a museum of modern art, concert halls, and galleries built with Japanese fund support in 1984, and the first Cairo Biennale was held. By the mid-1990s, Jordan received refugees escaping from conflict, and the new wave of Iranian cinema arrived at the end of the decade. During this period, various artists once again emigrated to the West for careers in the UK, Italy, or the US (Issa, Cestar, & Porter, 2016).

In the early years of the new century, 2000-2015, there was a growth in the international recognition of this region's art. With the desire to explore personal roots and cultural history, the younger generation employed script, using various media from neon to video, still concerned with communication with their people. It is stated that until the twentieth century, a calligrapher in the Muslim world was not just simply a master of the pen but also an artist par excellence, and calligraphy was assessed as the major art form -which has already started to be considered in the nineteenth century in the West with the modern calligraphy mentioned in Chapter III. Even the English language distinguishes between the concept of writing and calligraphy; in the Arabic language, both here described by the word *khatt*, and the evolution of calligrapher is traced back to the eighth century. The Arabic and Persian scripts were assessed as the quality of abstraction and essential essence of Islamic art. According to Issa, Cestar, and Porter (2016), this issue explains why the artist of this region had no difficulty assimilating western abstract concepts and adapting them to their calligraphic works.

Today, contemporary artists, parallel to this form of art, create works inspired by their rich heritage, particularly calligraphy, which celebrates the versatile shape and forms of Arabic letters. Through these statements, the attitude can be understood: "I wanted to take advantage of the richness of Eastern art and mix it with Western art to produce a synthesis in works that would be avant-garde" (Lee-Niinioja, 2018: 74). That means calligraphically composed words and letters became the reflection of self-knowledge to create "a truly universal language of geometry, rhythm, proportion, space, light color" (Lee-Niinioja, 2018: 74). About that issue, there are also various conflicts, as stated at the beginning of this part, as in the Far Eastern contemporary approaches examined in Chapter IV and the contemporary western calligraphy practices examined in Chapter VI.

When the calligrapher prefers to neglect the classical perspective and tries to create new things, even consisting of Arabic letters, according to traditionalists, it becomes something else rather than calligraphy. It is claimed that calligraphers can still create new approaches within classical art as a part of the tradition by using different colors, transparent ink, or new materials. The composition, colors, and materials may be changed; however, the innovation occurs within the tradition. The letters will be the same executed in the past,

which started practiced today (Cappellari, 2017). About that issue, as mentioned earlier, in western calligraphy, the debate was moving around whether calligraphy is a servant of a text. Without letters or words, it is still calligraphy in the twentieth century. No matter how abstract it may seem, the letter or the written word has always been a jumping-off panel by providing references in different ways, and even in gestural works, calligraphers, who preserved the act of writing as a concept and idea, continued to call their work calligraphy or writing.

Once again, it should be underlined that it is evident that contemporary calligraphers search beyond the literal meaning of the word employed for calligraphic work. For contemporary calligraphers, who are primarily inspired by the traditional practices, the history, and the evolution of calligraphy, it is indispensable to have been deeply influenced by other calligraphy traditions and practices with the aim of creating calligraphy works that contain different, more original and personal experiences with a high-pitched expression and interpretation. As will be framed and underlined, the determining criteria for the work about being calligraphy should be re-evaluated and reviewed; since the attitude of contemporary calligraphy is beyond the limitation of the tradition, the criteria and approaches to assess the works also have to be beyond the traditional frame.

In order to better understand the contemporary approaches in this genre, first, it will be appropriate to mention the impact of western art; then, the artistic movement called hurufiyya that is highly noteworthy to discuss, in which calligraphy manifests itself through one of the most diverse ways as modern abstract art.

### **5.9.1. The impact of Western art on the Middle Eastern calligraphy practices**

Mavrakis (2013) mentions Western influence on Islamic art started in the mid to late nineteenth century with *al-Nahda*, which refers to the Arabian renaissance and the European colonization of the Middle East. It represents a period of the revival of traditional literature and poetry. It was a time of enlightenment culturally that flourished in Arabic-speaking regions of the Ottoman Empire, Egypt, Lebanon, and Syria. It encouraged the artist to employ western traditions and aesthetics due to colonization. It is stated that with *al-Nahda*, various Islamic artifacts continued to be produced, but most of the forms started to be replaced by Western art forms. It is also claimed that institutions of education and art societies started promoting Western art in the Middle East. At that time, European instructors started to teach courses in drawing, painting, and perspectives in the institutions, while art societies exhibited the Westernized work of Arab artists to the public (Mavrakis, 2013).

According to Puerta (2016), in the middle of the twentieth century and shortly before, Arab and Muslim artists had a desire to renew the plastic arts of their respective origin with genuine components of their artistic tradition and employ the techniques, processes, and Western avant-garde points of view that they started to be in contact with through various channels. Calligraphy and the signs of Arab writing built a

vast capacity to assume the various graphic and contemporary plastic explorations from the beginning as a fundamental element of identity with the search for new techniques, forms, and contents. This situation encouraged the movement called *hurufiyah*, which will be mentioned in the following part, a term that refers to a new art form that emerged in the modern Middle East due to struggles between expressing and reflecting the cultural heritage and the Western experience that artists had. It spread and developed throughout the Arab World and Iran. The dominant feature was "painting with letters" (Issa, Cestar, and Porter, 2016: 16) or in the 1960s and 1970s with firm limitations in a formal as a vital form of modern artistic expression (Ibid.).

It reminds the Far Eastern calligraphy practices held in Chapter IV and how they perceive the written word as a painted sign. In that case, the main tool is the brush which seems to be the dominant feature in interpreting calligraphy as painted rather than writing. In other words, the character's pictorial feature seems to be the second. Here, in the case of calligraphy with Arabic script and Islamic calligraphy, particularly with the *hurufiyyah* movement, calligraphic painting, even not executed with the brush, is still preferred to indicate as an act of painting. It has to be considered that the pictorial power of the Arabic letter and its potential, as well as the Far Eastern characters, provide a space for artists to experiment in that sense.

On the other hand, the abstract nature of both traditions, even differently, still supports the artists' experiment in the name of artistic expressions, which seems to load value more than the meaning that the written text can convey. It may lead us to understand the preference of Meulman, one of the contemporary calligraphers, who will be examined in Chapter VI, who prefers to call himself a painter. He suggests more than the semantic meaning of the text or the word that can convey, and apparently, he expects a different kind of reading act from his audiences. This feature can be encountered in both the Far Eastern and Middle Eastern calligraphy almost from the beginning, thanks to the pictographic nature of the characters and the perception of writing that is loaded with various values mentioned in Chapters IV and V. However, it probably started to be mentioned for contemporary practices in Western calligraphy not before the contemporary practices that are mentioned in Chapter VI, under the influences of both Far Eastern and Middle Eastern calligraphy tradition. This issue will be understood more accurately after examining the contemporary practices of Western calligraphy in Chapter VI.

### **5.9.2. Hurufiyya movement and its characteristics**

*Hurufiyya* means alphabet letters derived from the Arabic term *huruf*. When this term started to refer to the contemporary art movement, it underlined the references to the medieval system of mastering consisting of political theology and practices with letters, which were assessed as primitive signifiers of the cosmos. It is also known as the *al-hurufiyyah movement* or *al-huruf al-nuraniya* (luminous letters, characters), which means using the calligraphy of an abstract artwork as one of the graphic elements used (Puerta, 2016).

In *Hurufiyya*, the calligrapher attempts to experiment and use calligraphy by exploring the plastic possibilities of figures that help to diversify from other alphabets. It is a form that consists of the traditional understanding of Islamic calligraphy and the precepts of modern art. Through these features, the calligrapher desires to create a specific language that reflects the culture, which traditionally refers to the bound with strict rules, trained with a master for many years to acquire the techniques and the rules of calligraphy. With the contemporary attitude, it is said that these rules are extended or even broken, which allows artists to experience alteration of the Arabic letters. Hence, the *hurufiyya* movement is assessed as a new identity and art movement that Middle Eastern calligraphers created when gaining independence from European colonial powers, which causes the idea of European culture's superiority. In the meantime, it is also underlined that the calligrapher began to realize the importance of their own cultural heritage. As a result, searching for an authentic cultural and national identity began reviving traditional art forms. Furthermore, the basis of the *hurufiyyah* moment is the usage of Arabic script, a traditional art form revived. Copying the verses of the Qur'an or other texts is also a part of a tradition that passes from generation to generation; however, this is abandoned by *hurufiyyah*, rather, an artistic experiment with the Arabic language, letters, or text as a visual element of a composition is encouraged. Hence, it is chosen to express the cultural identity with the Arabic scripts employed as a subject (Puerta, 2016).

It is claimed that Western art was also influenced by the *hurufiyya* movement, namely cubist painter Georges Braque (1882-1963), as well as works by Piet Mondrian (1872-1944), Max Ernst (1891-1976), Joan Miró (1893-1983), Bruce Nauman (b. 1941), and Paul Klee (1879-1940) (Ibid.).

The Iraqi artist Madiha Omar (1908-2005) is assessed as one of the first Middle Eastern artists that influenced her own time that led the *hurufiyyah* movement with her usage of Arabic script with Western influences. She was an active artist in the U.S. and Baghdad from the mid-1940s and is credited as the pioneer of this movement, particularly after an exhibition of letters in Washington, D.C., in 1947. It was assessed as "the liberation from the word" (Lee-Niinioja, 2018: 73).

Omar's exhibition was also entitled "Abstract images of Arabic letters" in 1949 at the Corcoran Museum in Washington, with a manifestation in English that was published with the title "Arabic Calligraphy, an element of inspiration in abstract art" (Puerta Vilchez, 2016: 163) consists of the visual, mathematical dimension of the arabesque with a mystical spirit that symbolizes the wide variety of Arabic writing refers to its roots (Ibid.).

Fig. 32 illustrates that one of the works of Madiha Omar belongs to 1978. It takes attention with its forms of the work that remind the curves of the form of Arabic script with turns and dots used above and below the letter. It can be claimed that the Arabic letters were the primary source for her abstract practices to reflect the expressive images through simple forms. The work consists of curved lines that are claimed to resemble the Arabic letter *ayn* (Fig. 16).





Fig. 32. *Untitled*, Madiha Umar, 1978, watercolour on paper, Source: Barjeel art Foundation, [barjeelartfoundation.org/collection/madiha-umar-untitled/](http://barjeelartfoundation.org/collection/madiha-umar-untitled/), access: 15.02.2020.

According to Omar's statement, it signifies two vital meanings in Arabic "a spring of water and the eye with which people see" (Mavrakis, 2013: np.). Mavrakis here underlines a resemblance and probably influenced by modern western art considering the understanding of composition and the color preference, such as Joan Miró (1893-1983), one of the notable names of the twentieth-century painting.

Fig. 33 illustrates one of Miró's paintings that reveals his mystical red and black creatures mostly reflect his imagination. The geometrical and compositional concern here probably resembles Madiha Omar, who also put her attention to geometrical shapes, spaces, and color through the reference to Arabic letters.

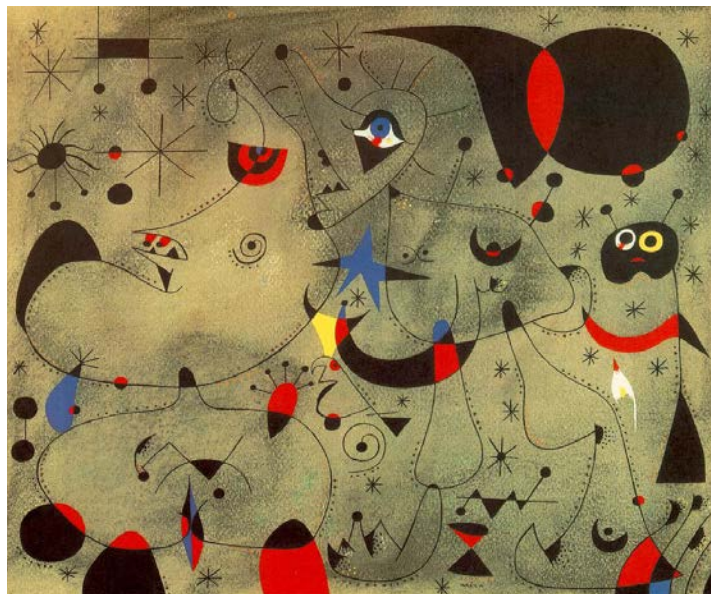


Fig. 33. *Nocturne*, Joan Miró, 1940, Tempera, gouache, egg, oil, and pastel on paper, Source: The Artchive, [artchive.com/artchive/m/miro/nocturne.jpg](http://artchive.com/artchive/m/miro/nocturne.jpg), html, access: 15.02.2020.

Shakir Hassan al-Said (1925-2004) is another pioneering artist of the *hurufiyyah* movement of the second half of the twentieth century, assessed one of the fathers of modern art in Iraq with an innovative and influential attitude as a painter, sculptor, and writer (Issa, Cestar, and Porter, 2016).

Puerta (2016) mentions al-Said's relations with Sufism, which is not just intellectual or artistic but also profoundly vital testimony of his writings and paintings. The oneness of Islam (*tawhid*), abstraction (*tagrid*), ascension (*'urug*), and the movement (*haraka*) are the highly significant concepts of Sufism in that sense that provide principles for his art. He wrote a manifesto entitled "Unidimensionality" (*al-Bu'd al-wahid*) in which he attributed to writing the value of dimension covers the movement (*haraka*) and orientation (*ittigah*), not the theme as in the case of traditional calligraphy. He encourages us to turn to graphics with "pure formal value" as the ideal medium that can recover "the true values of art" (Puerta, 2016: 164) represented by abstraction. This stage is assessed as a contemporary art stage where the artists experiment and express their freedom (Ibid.).

Arabic script is a representative of the history of Arabs that stayed in the socially conscious. With this mindset, he uses the Arabic scripts in his works created in an abstract manner. His work entitled "Writing on a Wall" (1978) (Fig. 34) demonstrates a street wall segment resemblance to graffiti of Baghdad or other Middle Eastern cities. Mavrakis (2013) once again claims that his work's abstraction is influenced by the western artist, namely Mark Rothko (1903-1970).

Fig. 34. *Writing on a Wall*, Shaker Hassan Al-Said, 1978, acrylic on wood, Source: Issa, Cestar & Porter, (2016: 59).

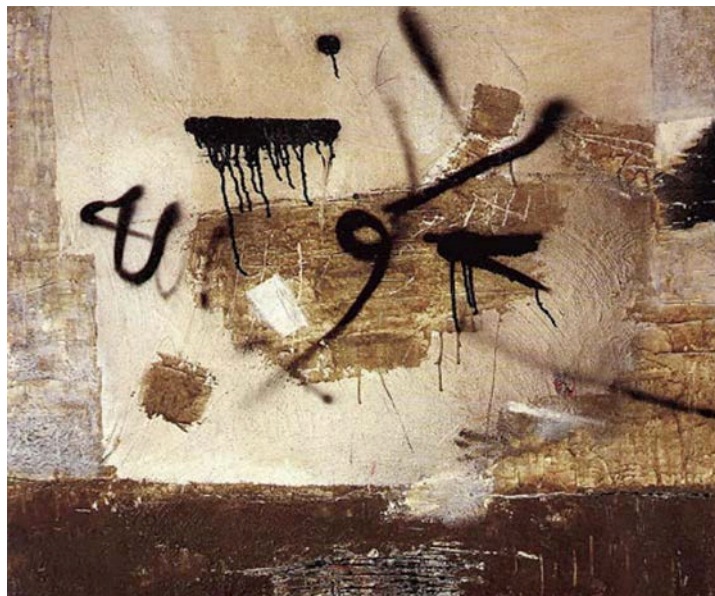


Fig. 35 illustrates Rothko's works as an example of his early compositional structure representing his exploration for over two decades. Blocks are separated slightly into blocks of colors on a colored ground. The blocks' edges are softened irregularly by employing the closely related tones of the colors that seem to emerge from their ground. Among the blocks, the green bar takes attention against the orange around it, causing optical vibrant. The color blocks are not entirely flat, preferably consisting of variable intensity that adds softens to lines, which is a technique of the artists that creates translucent layers. It is claimed that Rothko's paintings have been associated with the aesthetics of the sublime, and according to Mavrakis (2013), the resemblance comes from the usage of the large and flat colored planes.



Fig. 35. No. 3/No. 131949, Mark Rothko, 1949, Source: MoMA, [moma.org/collection/works/79687](https://moma.org/collection/works/79687), access: 13.02.2020.

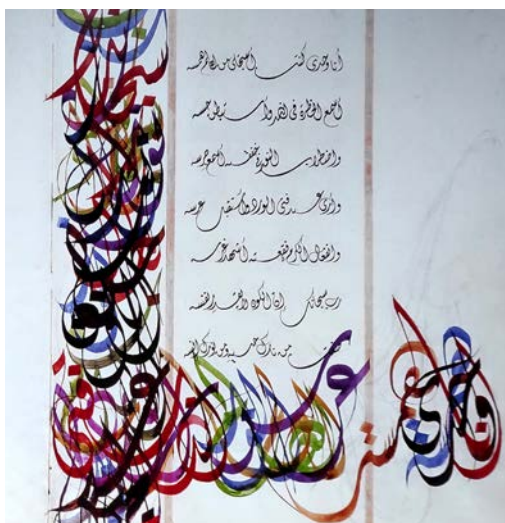
On the other hand, the way Shaker Hassan Al-Said (1925-2004) employs letters is worth mentioning. As stated earlier, the resemblance with the writing on the street wall without much consideration, such as the perfect construction of the letterforms with well-organized compositions, still the turns of the lines of the letters executed with the subtle attention to the dimension of the color within itself, which also carry vital energy that reveals through these lines. The artist experimented without traditional restrictions and experienced the plastic possibility of the letterforms freely without considering the text's semantic meaning. The purpose here reflects his attitude through his unidimensionality with simple executed lines that balance the movement. Here it can be claimed that the desire of the artist not just creates a visual appeal and sensation but also, through creating a different level of communication between him and the viewer, create a sort of testimony of the "existential experience of human perfection" (Puerta, 2016: 164).

It is also stated that some artists, mainly from Sudan, did not prefer to adopt Western art elements. Instead, the aim was to employ African cultural traditions with Islamic visual traditions and customs of locals that can be encountered in modern indigenous compositions. The artist Osman Waqialla (1925-2007) is one of them who called himself a *khattat*. It is probably to indicate his attitude, primarily focusing on traditional consideration of calligraphy in this region, reveals its aesthetic considerations and values, not assimilating Western features as other artists mentioned here. Even though he traveled to England to study, it is stated that his passion is traditional calligraphy, which led him to study with various masters and encouraged his students to explore and experiment with Arabic letters. It is also underlined that he was one of the artists who started experimenting with colored ink, secular poetry, and prose. For this reason, he is assessed as an innovative who tried to liberate calligraphy from the boundaries (Issa, Cestar, and Porter, 2016).



Fig. 36 illustrates one of Waqialla’s works, a page from a twelve-page manuscript of poetry by Sudanese poet Al Tijani Yusuf Bashir (1912-1937). The composition of a page is organized in a conventional way that consists of a text. Within the text, the letters already provide a rhythm with ups and downs letters, also curves movement, and the way they link with each other gives a text a unique form. Meanwhile, the border of the page is illuminated with colored Arabic letters in the manner of *siyah masqh*. Layers of these multicolored letters create a pattern that is impossible to read, but various letters may be recognized here. It is stated that the works of Waqialla’s most notable features are his emphasized the letterforms as living entities; hence he focused on the space between these entities (Mavrakis, 2013).

Fig. 36. *Al Sufi (The Mystic)*, Osman Waqialla, 1952, Source: Issa, Cestar & Porter, (2016: 39).



Moreover, Palestinian artist Kamal Boullata (1942-2019) calls attention to his creative works called “Geometrical *hurufiyah*” due to the assumption of his letters as a geometric form (Mavrakis, 2013). It is stated that he creates works based on calligraphy’s linguistic and symbolic roots with the foundation of Islamic art that reveals the Palestinian identity. The arabesque geometric development of Arabic letterforms led to vegetal and floral motifs. Within classical Arab science, mathematics and geometry share identical primary structures with the form of letters.

Fig. 37 illustrates one of his works created with the same attitude.

Fig. 37. *In the beginning was the Word*, Kamal Boullata, 1983, silkscreen, Source: Barje Art Foundation, [barjeartfoundation.org/collection/in-the-beginning-was-the-word/](http://barjeartfoundation.org/collection/in-the-beginning-was-the-word/), access: 13.02.2020.



By employing the Kufic style with a pure line and a certain angle in the colorful geometric design, artists inspired by classical calligraphy reveal their abstract characters within the contemporary attitude.

The square is an integral part of the composition that transforms into a prism that seems to reflect the color and light with the lines and thin layers of oppositional colors (Lee-Niinioja, 2018). He explains his attitude through the following statements:

...I was visually seduced by the color stripes in these artists paintings as much as I was by Frank Stella's Moroccan series (1964) while the art world valued such works as the quintessence of abstract painting, and notwithstanding my appreciation of their systematic approaches, arhcitectonics, linearity, flatness and fullness of colour, I felt that their literalness signalled a dead end in the history of painting. And yet, I could not ignore the challenge they arouse in me. (Issa, Cestar & Porter, 2016: 140)

In order to create razor-sharp edges and right angles in flat and solid colors, he prefers to employ silk screen printing. Each print was prepared by hand to provide millimetric precision that is limited by the execution by reed pen, particularly in the imitation of cursive moves. He prepares these pages with a pencil and ruler and draws his letters. To remind, the word *khatt* also refers to script in Arabic, including lines and rules. The linear rules of the Kufic script are highly appropriate for his compositions, which is actually an ancient script used for writing the Qur'an. With time, he underlines that he prefers to abandon all references to Arabic letters to focus on the square unit. He seems to cherish the visual appearance, form, and content interdependently (Issa, Cestar & Porter, 2016).

Fig. 38 illustrates one of the works of Steall's *Morocco* series that was created between 1964 and 1965 and one of the examples of wall panels with geometric interlace of the fifteenth century. Paintings are almost pure color and are finished where the color ends. It can be defined in Geometric Abstraction. In this abstraction, which spreads especially in the USA, the surface is smooth and non-woven. A few forms do not extend across the entire surface but divide them into parts (Gökduman, 2018).

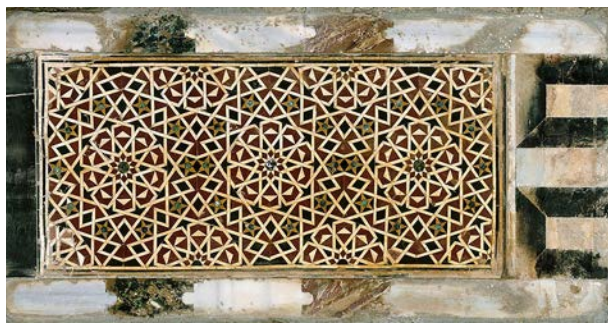
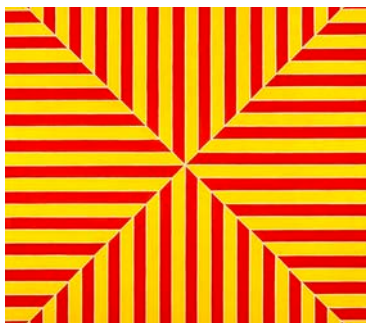


Fig. 38. *left Marrakech*, Frank Stella, 1964, fluorescent alkylid on canvas, Source: TheMet, [metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/480953](https://metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/480953), access: 13.03.2020.

*right* Wall Panel with Geometric Interlace, 15<sup>th</sup> century, attributed to Egypt, Cairo, polychrome marble; mosaic, Source: TheMet, [metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/452203](https://metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/452203), access: 13.03.2020

It is claimed that Stella was inspired by Arabic tiles, as shown in the image. This polychrome marble mosaic decorates the interior walls of religious institutions and palaces of Egypt and Syria. The contrasting colors bordering the mosaic and the rectangular baseboard panels are stated as characteristics of this period's architectural decoration. In Stella's work, he prefers fluorescent paint that takes attention to the picture plane. He also kind of creates an illusion with the localization of the stripes in different colors. Here, it is underlined that Stella had his inspiration from the Middle East. It seems a highly intricate



relationship between the artists of the West and East that affect both sides and reflect their artwork as a referential point.

Another noteworthy artist, Charles Hossein Zenderoudi (b. 1937), part of an Iranian artistic movement in the 1950s and 60s and one of the pioneers of modernism in the 1960s and 1970s, living in France since 1961, works with themes and objects that closely relate to Iranian history, and religious practices. He produces pure forms mostly, as in the same pages, abstract forms seem mostly to lack literal meaning. The rhythm is a significant composition element that appears in kaleidoscopic colors in various techniques, including oil on canvas. Hence, it can be said that traditional tools and materials are not employed here. The letters on the page seem to float as weightless entities or appear superimposed, creating layers of rich texture on the canvas's surface (Ekhtiar, 2006).

Fig. 39 illustrates one of Zenderoudi's works, "Ayn + 'Ayn," in which he repeats the horizontal rows with the sweeping loops of the letter ayn's fragment, revealing his capability of creating various single letters. The work reveals the artist's manipulation of the reed pen to master the skill to achieve the letter's desired shape and thickness with perfect structure. This also reminds the practices of calligraphers constantly repeating the forms, as in the case of *siyah mashq* mentioned earlier. Every unites of the letter ayn's practice creates a united overall composition with a sharp contrast between the black and brown ink on the canvas. It seems that Zenderoudi here prefers to lose the original written form and focus on the movement, moment, and essence of his writing. All unite has not had the same posture; hence it creates a powerful rhythm in the overall composition. The saturated color also provides it within the units. Hence, each unit seems to be moving in the space.



Fig. 39. "Ayn + 'Ayn," Charles Hossein Zenderoudi, 1970, gouache on paper, Source: Ekhtiar, (2006: 128).

Fig. 40 illustrates another work of Zenderoudi, a calligraphic composition organized as a roundel. Once again, he seems to prefer to engage with the calligraphy as an image rather than convey the literal meaning of the word or a text. By searching for a new form of expression with his calligraphic practices, he still seems to retain the word's visual tradition as an image that reminds a sort of intricate decoration constructed with the calligraphic units. Instead of color, he prefers to deal with the black in the space. The image is actually not asymmetric; however, there exist blocks that repeat the same unit within that block. The overall composition seems to be well-organized, considering the rhythm and harmony. It is not accurate whether the letters are recognizable; however, Zenderoudi prefers to create a pattern and textual appearance by mimicking the pen's basic moves, which also reminds the practices of calligram.

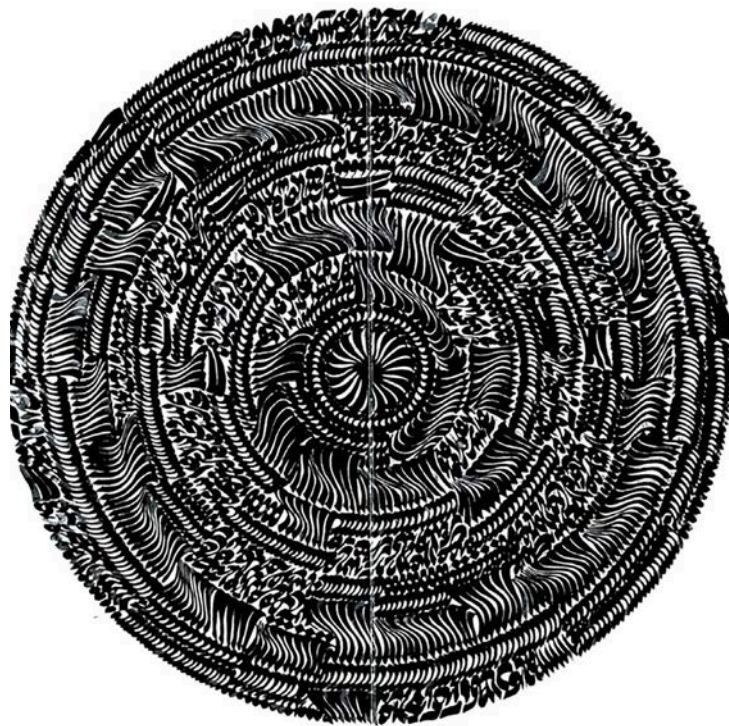


Fig. 40. *MIUZ+SFKE*, Charles Hossein Zenderoudi, 1972, acrylic on canvas, Source: Zenderoudi Official Website, [zenderoudi.com/english/artwork.html#](http://zenderoudi.com/english/artwork.html#), access: 20.12.2019.

Here, another point that is needed to be underlined, apart from Western art's impact on Middle Eastern calligraphy practices, it did not encounter much interpretation about the influences of western calligraphy tradition on contemporary Middle East calligraphy practices. One of the exceptions is El Seed (b. 1981), a Tunisian street artist who fuses calligraphy with Arabic letters and modern graffiti on large-scale murals (Eng, 2015).

El Seed is also one of the calligraffiti artists, a movement that Meulman was the first artist that coined the term as a fusion of graffiti and calligraphy, which will be mentioned in Chapter VI.

Seed learned Arabic in 2010, taking evening classes in Paris. The traditional proverbs of Arabs inspire his works, and he creates them

by employing poetry or quotations; hence every piece has a meaning relevant to the place where he paints and the people living there. He underlines the universal dimension that each person can relate to (Issa, Cestar, and Porter, 2016). That means his personal style and interpretation are not all connected to classical calligraphy, particularly not limited by its rules starting with extending the letters (Eng, 2015).

Seed's works *Douz* (Fig. 41) and *Onk el Jmel* (Fig. 42) represent his interpretation through abstract patterns, conveying messages concerned with social, political, and global issues. He paints undulating messages composed as an ornament, highly intricate and colorful pattern that becomes images, which can be appreciated as a representative of the abstract quality and beauty of the Arabic script's ornamentation related to the Islamic culture, which seems the significant element here. As can be seen, the repetition of the strokes overlaps each other, which reflects the interlace of a noteworthy arabesque here.

Fig. 41. *Douz* from the *Lost Walls* series, El Seed, graffiti, 2013, Tunisia, Source: Issa, Cestar & Porter, (2016: 303).



Fig. 42. *Onk el Jmel* from the *Lost Walls* series, El Seed, graffiti, 2013, Tunisia, Source: Issa, Cestar & Porter, (2016: 304).





Seed underlines that his practices should not be assessed as a rejection of the tradition; on the contrary, he expects to be assessed as “more of an invitation” to his language, culture, and art (Issa, Cestar & Porter, 2016: 302), as will be seen in the contemporary western calligraphy practices in Chapter VI.

To sum up the contemporary calligraphy of the Middle East, with the gaining freedom from colonial rule in the early to the mid-twentieth century, artists with the need to express their cultural identity by fusing with the Western values and norms that were exposed to them, and with the *hurufiyyah* movement, artists started to incorporate Arabic text into art practices while still preserving most of the learned Western art.

It is crucial to remind once again that even western art is one of the major factors that encourage the artist to produce artworks of *hurufiyyah* movement, traditional Islamic art is not entirely devoid of abstraction. Before modern times in the Arabic region, it is stated that abstract or non-figurative art took attention in the Islamic world even before in the Christian world.

With decorative patterns, calligraphy became abstracted hence challenging to recognize and read. As stated earlier, the primary purpose of calligraphy’s decorative patterns was to turn matter into something abstract without rigid and heavy features. Thus, Mavrakis (2013) offers that western art is influenced not by *hurufiyyah* abstraction; instead, modern *hurufiyyah* is a further form of abstraction of traditional calligraphy in the Arabic region.

As in the case of contemporary Far Eastern calligraphy, the most crucial feature is the viewer’s response as an art piece who cannot read the script. The same issue will be observed while examining contemporary western calligraphy in Chapter VI. It is one of the significant features of the interpretation of the contemporary calligraphers seeking beyond the literal meaning of the written text, word, or letter by focusing on the stroke, line, or even a stain that carries and reflects the arduous process of acquiring the calligraphic skill that is blended with the personal interpretation of the time. This takes contemporary calligraphy to a universal level that is not directly related to one language or culture.

Here, in Middle Eastern calligraphy, apart from the meaning of the letters in the text, each letter’s symbolism within itself also has to be considered one part of the calligraphic combination. That means calligraphic works always carry a kind of symbolic message, an image, and a text.

Teparić (2014) claims there is usually an equal emphasis on text and image of the calligraphic works, which complement each other in a harmonious balance as the two poles of diversity. Yet, he underlines it is possible to read the image to understand these diverse messages visually. Hence, Middle Eastern calligraphy’s main objective is to frame the scope of calligraphy with Arabic script and Islamic calligraphy by focusing on Arabic letters and their engagements in representing various artistic figures.

Hence, it can be claimed that contemporary calligraphers engaged with international aesthetics, using Arabic script, occasionally transformed that into purely abstract or/and decorative forms. Some consist of words or short phrases that create a specifically Arabic pictorial abstraction. Nevertheless, it is still possible to read the image, to interpret it through diverse messages of visual impressions. That does the vernacular calligraphic practices started to be treated as a kind of international communication to appreciate, and calligraphic practices began to emphasize the aesthetic design of writing as a medium that represents artistic interpretation, in which both the artist and the viewer can be entered into a kind of dialog through multiple ways textually, visually or symbolically.

In the next chapter, it will be significant to examine contemporary western calligraphy with its features and links with the other calligraphy cultures, particularly Far Eastern held in Chapter IV and Middle Eastern held in this chapter through the selected calligraphers and their works.







## VI. CURRENT PRACTICES IN REALM OF WESTERN CALLIGRAPHY

So far, in the previous chapters, significant knowledge and assessments were made in terms of traditional western calligraphy, also the Far Eastern -mainly Chinese and Japanese calligraphy-and the calligraphic tradition of the Arabic script and Islamic calligraphy, including the mutual interactions between them. All are highly important before examining contemporary western calligraphy due to a better understanding of the transformation of apprehension of western calligraphy and the shifted execution of the current western calligraphers technically and conceptually. The transformation is understood with the deep insight into the traditional aspect of western calligraphy mentioned in Chapter III. Also, the perception and definition held in Chapter II provide the chance to discuss the past and the present of western mentality in terms of writing, hence calligraphy. Furthermore, with significant features of the contemporary western calligraphy that will be seen in this chapter, the interaction and influences between the west and east calligraphy cultures examined in Chapters IV and V let us frame the dynamics behind the contemporary tendencies. Without deeply considering the Far Eastern and Middle Eastern calligraphy, it will be seen that examination of the contemporary western tendencies and practices to apprehend the calligraphy practices are impossible.

Western calligraphy undertakes new dimensions with many layers marked by a rich diversity of forms in the contemporary mindset. It will not be wrong to claim that western calligraphy technically and conceptually has passed through a new phase with today's attitude. Under the information that was gained and presented in the previous chapters, contemporary western calligraphy will be examined and assessed in this chapter through the various significant practices.

Here, as an adjective, contemporary describes today's practices of western calligraphy, which are not traditional, nor cannot be called modern in both technical and conceptual ways. The reason for that is actually extensively explained in Chapter III in part "3.7. The Calligraphic Revival."

As mentioned in ancient writing styles in Chapter II, so-called calligraphy was the only option for writing, copying, duplicating,

preserving, and conveying the text before the pre-printing era, which puts the functionality of the written text in the center of the perception of writing, hence, the ancient writing styles in the pre-printing era in the West. That means there is no room for any interpretation of the scribe as an artist, nor could load emotions or feelings on it outside of the boundaries of the notion that had been loaded to the written text, contrary to the Far Eastern and the Middle Eastern understanding of calligraphy, in which there has not a sharp distinction between the writing, calligraphy, and painting. As stated in Chapters IV and V, this distinction starts with the writing systems highly different from the phonetic alphabets, including the historical, cultural, religious, and social differences that directly affected the appreciation of writing in the East, hence calligraphy.

As mentioned in Chapter IV, *shufa* is a term that is used for calligraphy in China, which refers to "the art and the discipline of writing" (Iezzi, 2013a: 159). Apart from the meaning of the text, *shufa* reveals the personality and the mood of the calligrapher, assessed as one of the most significant forms of art and executed as a performance. Furthermore, in Japan, calligraphy is called *shodo*, which refers to "the way of Japanese calligraphic art," which reflects the inner and outer beauty of the calligrapher that conveys through the natural energy (Davey, 2019: np.). These explanations are already done in Chapter IV, which frames the Far Eastern appreciation of calligraphy as an art form attributed to the emotions and feelings of the calligrapher.

On the other hand, in the Middle East, as mentioned in Chapter V, *khatt* is the term defined as "line," "streak," or "stripe," "trach," "path," or "road" (Blair, 2008: xxv), which assessed as a divine art that reflects the God's words; hence it has spiritual and mystical value attributed on it.

As underlined in Chapter III, traditional Western calligraphy was practiced as a craft in which there was a concrete requirement that determined how calligraphy was; hence the written text needed to be executed with the appearance of the actual style of the writing of that time. It can be said that there was a general agreement about what a concrete traditional craft education in calligraphy was -again mentioned in Chapter III- which required repetitive actions without invention and departures from all routine. That means traditional western calligraphy needed to be understood in its essential existence as a physically functioning entity. The subject was the manuscript as the craft object with its basic physical configurations formed, communicated through the legible written text, not the perception nor appearance as an image. Hence, it is evident that the western tradition differs significantly from the Far Eastern and Middle Eastern calligraphy, not just technically but most notably in the way of understanding and perception. However, it can be said that this situation changed today, starting with the technological advancements that affect the manuscript culture and traditional scribe.

By 1450 in the West, Gutenberg perfected typographic printing, and literacy spread more widely among people until the time that it was no longer a privilege of a few. He developed the technique of the movable

metal type and used a script *textura quadrata* -mentioned in Chapter III- to print his 42-line Bible. That means he tried to replicate the style of lettering of the fifteenth century as closely as possible to be accepted more quickly. After that, printed incunabula imitated a wide variety of scripts from medieval manuscripts. Apart from the letters, the printers started to employ woodblock illustrations for illustrated printed books, in which decorative borders and ornamental initials became printed elements. Hence, printing became a necessity. Since then, the highly accessible printing press technology became directly effective and more functional to conserve, copy, duplicate, and convey the text, booklets, or books needed at that time.

Under these circumstances, it was indispensable to affect various aspects of calligraphy practices, particularly scribes, who copied text and started to lose their jobs as copiers. At least, from the functional usage of the written text, when there was no need for a scribe to write a text or book, it was inevitable that a scribe had to turn to different fields or might be reconsidered his position as a sole craftsman. For this reason, according to Mediavilla (1996), Gutenberg is credited for that invention as a person that "had freed calligraphy from subjugation to text" (Mediavilla, 1996: 8).

At this point, it should be reminded that it will not be that accurate to claim that the changes in the realm of western calligraphy conceptually and visually started with the printing period. It certainly affected scribes; as stated, the business of writing a book with handwriting has started to be not preferred because it could not immediately respond to the needs of writing or copying books. Hence, it would be more appropriate to claim that printing as an invention did not free calligraphy, as Mediavilla (1996) underlines. However, it is possible to consider it the first ignition in terms of the transformation of calligraphy tradition over time. Instead, as mentioned in Chapters IV and V, the interaction between the West and East leads to an encounter with the understanding and appreciation of the calligraphy in the East that affects the western artists, hence calligraphers. This chapter will also demonstrate these effects while mentioning the contemporary attitude through the notable works in that sense.

It can be claimed that there is a certain point where traditional writing and calligraphy are entirely separated from today's practices in understanding, technical possibilities, and application of calligraphy. It should be reminded that calligraphy word meaning and perception are still subject to disagreements, incomplete interpretations, and perceptions today in a traditional manner, as discussed in depth in Chapter II.

After Gutenberg's fifteenth-century invention of the printing press, the second important issue, mentioned in Chapter III, is the revival of traditional writing styles in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that started to be assessed as a modern period in western calligraphy. It was the time faced after the Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth century; mass-production methods lowered the cost of the products and made it possible to manufacture products in large quantities. Hence, mass productions, images, texts, and artifacts, including reproduction, were assessed as the experience of modernity.



Here, it should be reminded that the word modern comes from the Latin word *modo*, meaning "right now," used for the first time in the fifth century to distinguish the new period from the old (Roman and Pagan) period. Even its content is constantly changing, the periods that establish a relationship between antiquity and itself, as well as the "old" from the "new." That means the modern calligraphy here refers to a new period in the transformation of the perception of ancient writing styles of calligraphy that embraces both functionalities, i.e., functional beauty of the letterform, that is charged with conveying the meaning of the written text, while in typography, new typographic styles including finer serifs and sans serif forms started to be employed as metal types. It can be claimed that the typography started to be transformed visually by means of production, such as thinner strokes were possible to use on finer paper with a more accurate printing press.

Hence, a revival of calligraphy in the West here refers to the revivals of various ancient styles with historical roots that led to redesigning a typeface in the twentieth century based on ancient styles. That means modern calligraphers returned to study the historical developments in writing, ancient styles, traditional tools, and materials. The interest in the finest ancient scripts was renewed by looking at traditional western calligraphy practices.

What is needed to be underlined is that the standards of legibility and visual presentation of letters became a topic. Modern calligraphers, such as Edward Johnston, Rudolf Koch, or Rudolf von Larisch -mentioned in Chapter III-started to investigate the possible combination of form and function in the sense of the letterform. It can be said that this issue is the primary topic and the essence of the calligraphic skill of the modern calligraphy of the twentieth century.

Modern calligraphy of the late nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century represented what the contemporary was at that time, while contemporary meant modern calligraphy. However, it can be claimed that what had represented the modern/new at that time was finally not appropriate for today's western calligraphy practices anymore. That means the legibility of the written text through the designed letterforms and the organization of the written text are not the main concern of today's calligraphers. It is one of the most striking features of contemporary calligraphy, which leads to assessing calligraphy works as the visual representation of the personal understanding and interpretation of what calligraphy is.

One of the main reasons for this is that contemporary western calligrapher started to reflect on his own writing/calligraphy perception, freed from being the servant of the text, meaning to see beyond the literal meaning of the written text, the word, letters, and focusing on the fundamental units of the writing, namely lines, strokes, marks, and traces, hence, the appearance of the calligraphic work moving away from recognizable, identifiable images of letters and signs. Hence, they started to be closer to the abstract forms, which led to the sharp technical and practical differences between writing and painting in the West gradually converging, merging, and even becoming

quite similar. That creates ambiguity, making it hard to decide whether it is writing/calligraphy or painting from the perspective of tradition and modern Western perception in writing, as mentioned in Chapter II.

Since the bibliography on contemporary western calligraphy is not as much as on traditional western calligraphy, it is considered that the most appropriate approach is to study various cases that present the features of contemporary western calligraphy in this chapter. It will help to observe, understand, examine and explain the current perspective through articulated various technical and conceptual features to contemporary tendencies in the realm of western calligraphy.

Here, it will be encountered different types of cases that are determined to locate the motivations and dynamics behind the transformation of traditional and modern calligraphy by observing the practices of various calligraphers, namely Niels "Shoe" Meulman, Pokras Lampas, Said Dokins, Denis Brown, Denise Lach, Loredana Zega, Thomas Ingmire and Viktor Kams. The reason of chosen these calligraphers is that they present unique artistic experiences through exploring more expressive individual approaches. Creating personal styles with various motivations, such as interaction with other calligraphy practices, mainly the Far Eastern and the Middle Eastern, also inspired by the western abstraction artists; calligraphers, today, prefer to create a fusion of works that melt in each other that invite the interlaced complexity, also ambiguity in terms of traditional calligraphy practices and perceptions that had been loyal even in the modern revival of the western calligraphy.

After the detailed examination and assessments with the aim to frame the current state, understanding of western calligraphy with its features and dynamics lead to observing the main inspirations behind these practices, as well.

Before talking about each of these calligraphers, it is necessary to comment on the approach that each of them brings, which is related to the idea of the word as an image, transforming the written text by pulling it out of its traditional context and reaching to the point that is called abstraction within the calligraphy context. For this reason, before delving into these artists one by one, it will be mentioned pictorial approaches to the text that is encountered in the modern and postmodern period. Most contemporary western calligraphers have the tendency to create calligraphic works with the concept of the word as an image, such as Meulman, Brown, Lampas, Dokins, and so on. That means the visual appearance of the written text, word, or even a line or a stroke has become one of the main concerns of today's western calligraphers, who take inspiration from traditional calligraphy, also other traditions and art and design work that have been passed through many stages, particularly modern and postmodern periods. Apart from that, specifically, it will be included the part on asemic writing, a term that started to be encountered in the 1990s in the West; however, throughout history, it can be encountered in ancient practices of Chinese calligraphers, who created works within this context. Due to providing insight about these issues that are needed to be mentioned, since various today's calligraphy practices that will be seen in this

chapter, through the elimination of the text and the words, create calligraphic works demand a different kind of reading rather than meaning the convey of text through written, legible messages. Hence, it can be claimed that contemporary western calligraphy practices cannot be evaluated in isolation from these concepts.

### **6.1. "Word as an image" concept of the modern period related to contemporary Western calligraphy**

In this part, it is mentioned that a word as an image concept in which writing is assessed through its visual aspect rather than its semantic meaning focusing on the modern and postmodern periods because it is significant to state that the tendency of contemporary calligraphy to appreciate the word as an image takes its root from the earlier examples, particularly modern and postmodern period of the West, apart from the concept of the Far Eastern calligraphy, hence the character-based language that already mentioned in Chapter IV, which is evident that has a significant impact on today's calligraphy understanding of the West.

When talking about modernism in art, it is said that its roots go back to the Renaissance, and it is freed from the influence of church and religion. The human and human mind is at its core. What caused the formation of modernism was the medieval church authority and the Renaissance and Reformation movements, which were experienced due to the revolt against this authority. Changes and transformations started with the mentioned enlightenment principles and the French Revolution in the eighteenth century and continued with the Industrial Revolution and industrialization in the nineteenth century. In this process, which is said to have started with French artist Paul Cézanne (1839-1906), the idea of modern art spread in waves in many European countries (Becer, 2007).

The twentieth century was a time of radical changes in which various aspects, such as social, political, cultural, and economic characters of life by industry, affected the social environment, human life, visual art, and design. When discussing the modern period and its features, what comes to the fore is the situation brought about by the conditions, which faced several consequences. Particularly powerful developing technology, production, consumption, mechanization, and the concept of "speed" emerge accordingly. After the development of technology and industrialization, especially the increasing communication between the masses, the information flow it brings, and the demand for this information flow, mass communication opportunities have led to significant changes. It has affected the production-consumption supply-demand balance not only for small businesses but also in large markets. It has brought up efforts to gain a share from the expanding market with the increasing product variety or expand the existing market share. The way to achieve this is only possible by creating a demand for the product or reviving the demand, that is, with advertising. With this competitive environment entered, rapidly growing economies have, of course, reflected on people's lives in all areas, and new job opportunities

have caused the differentiation of existing ones. The increase in mass production and consumption causes urbanization, flows towards cities, and the formation of large masses constantly in motion, that is, working, competing, and consuming abundantly (Bektaş, 1992).

While technology is effective in a way that will radically change the culture, some definitions will inevitably change with the productions of artists and designers advancing in the direction required. The point is reached with the idea that, after technical developments, the existing systems are behind the times and not meeting the needs of the age.

Modernism means abandoning the past and habits altogether, catching the day, and even thinking about the future. The better, more beautiful, and ideal concepts and standards are mentioned, and the process of universality is entered. While state of the art being better and more beautiful is open to criticism, modernism and better standards, which make an impact in all sub-branches, especially graphic design and typography, brought together the concept of functionality and universality, brought the ideals of objectivity and impartiality. Moreover, it is observed that the period of manifestos is experienced. By their nature, they defined their rules in line with sharp articles, drew the borders, and radically rejected everything outside these limits. Each of them aimed to establish a new world order and change the world by being under the influence of the previous trend or by rejecting entirely as a reaction against the previous trend. One of the most distinctive features of art and design activities at the turn of the century was searching for a new structural order (Bektaş, 1992).

In the modern period, while all happened in the western art scene as framed above, calligraphy had entered a period called the revival, as mentioned in Chapter III, part entitled "3.7. The calligraphic revival" started. It can be claimed that the significant trigger point was the mass production of books in the nineteenth century, and a book-design revival began as a consequence of the English Arts and Crafts Movement with William Morris, who was deeply interested in industrialization and the system of factories. He also experimented with calligraphy, page decoration, novels, essays, and poetry, also interested in the Gothic Revival of the nineteenth century. That means looking back as significant references to medieval scripts, patterns and ornaments started to reappear in nineteenth-century books.

Hence, revivals of calligraphy -so-called modern calligraphy with the huge influences of Morris's quest for reexamining earlier script forms- seems to cover creating artistic lettering -it is the part that differs from the tradition- with conserving the purpose, which has been assessed as conveying the message through written words. It is a highly significant feature of the tradition that reflected the perception of writing in the West, as mentioned in Chapter II.

In other words, modern calligraphy can be seen as the period in which calligraphy has begun to be evaluated as a functional, artistic, and decorative element by being revised in line with the needs of the day, which in a way adheres to the tradition in terms of purpose, form and maintains its basic notions such as conveying the message. That means

the West still preserves how they understand the notion of the writing, hence calligraphy. Calligraphy is assessed essentially writing. It uses the writer's tools, such as pen and ink or brush and paint. However, writing aims to convey pre-determined meanings through standard forms of language. This is the main significant issue that is needed to be assessed that the revival of calligraphy -modern calligraphy- is assessed as a part of the Western calligraphy tradition because it is highly believed that the main breakthrough in the transformation of western calligraphy started with the changing the perception of writing, hence calligraphy, which refers to rethinking about the functional duty of the written text through the pre-determined writing system.

To sum up, it can be stated that modern calligraphy practices are based on traditional styles with the promise of reworking such forms with a different flavor depending on the calligrapher, and the potential of calligraphy is rediscovered and reexamined without restrictions on mundane aspects of copying and recording. Although there is a perception that it symbolizes the new, both the intellectual and figurative references from the past prevent us from drawing a new and radical framework for modern calligraphy as contemporary.

As mentioned earlier, what contemporary western calligraphers propose here through their images of the word as an interpretation of western contemporary calligraphy actually is not the first. Looking at the twentieth century in the West, it can be observed that various movements and artists embraced the same treatment of the word as an image.

Cubism, Futurism, Dada, and Surrealism are among the modern movements that need to be considered here, directly influencing the graphic language of form and visual communication. As it is claimed, twentieth-century graphic design has become closely related to modern painting and poetry (Meggs & Purvis, 2006), while in the realm of western calligraphy, it started to be seen the revival of calligraphy -so-called modern calligraphy, which means cherishing the ancient styles, the admiration and adaptation began, rather than searching beyond as in typography.

Drucker (1997) mentions that typographic experiments, particularly the experiments of Dada and Futurism with visually striking works, promised the opportunity to linger between the boundaries of the fields of literary and visual art. The printed page was suitable, affordable, available, and effective for producing and promoting early twentieth-century avant-garde artists, poems, and innovations. She argues that these movements emphasized materiality as the heart of their experimental approach to visual and poetic forms of representation. Drucker (1997) suggests a methodology closer to the early avant-garde artists' actual practices, based on a rereading of their critical and theoretical writings.

The Futurists, who said that "a running horse has twenty feet, not four," were overwhelmed by the excitement of city life more than anything else (Turani, 1990: 606). Embracing Italian literary Futurism, writers not only captured the urban and modernist themes of Futurist painting but sought to develop a language suited to what they perceived as the



speed and brutality of the early twentieth century. The new genres, such as *parole in libertà* (words-in-freedom), designed analogies (pictograms where shape analogically mimics meaning), *dipinti paroliberi* (literary collages combining graphic elements with free-word poetry), and *sintesi* (minimalist plays) were established, and one of the most significant among them was *parole in libertà* (words-in-freedom), which also pointed to free word poetry. That means the poetry was liberated from the limitations of linear typography and traditional syntax and spelling (White, 2019).

They were fascinated with the shape of letters, in which they found significance, and also in the arrangement of the text on the page in the details of typography. They thought that there was no fundamental difference between words and material things, so the poet should arrange the words in a poem as the artist arranges the colors and lines on a canvas. That means grammar, syntax, and logic were often eliminated. This issue takes similarities between the contemporary calligraphers such as Meulman, who sees the word as an image, discarding the text and the word mostly, focusing on the form of the letters or such fragments of the letters, which also will be seen through the works of Pokras Lampas, who will be examined in this chapter with his *calligrafuturist* movement.

Fig. 1 illustrates one of Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's (1876-1944) well-known works in which the confusion, violent noise, and chaos of battle explode above the girl reading her lover's letter from the front. Marinetti's experience in the trenches of war inspired this poem.

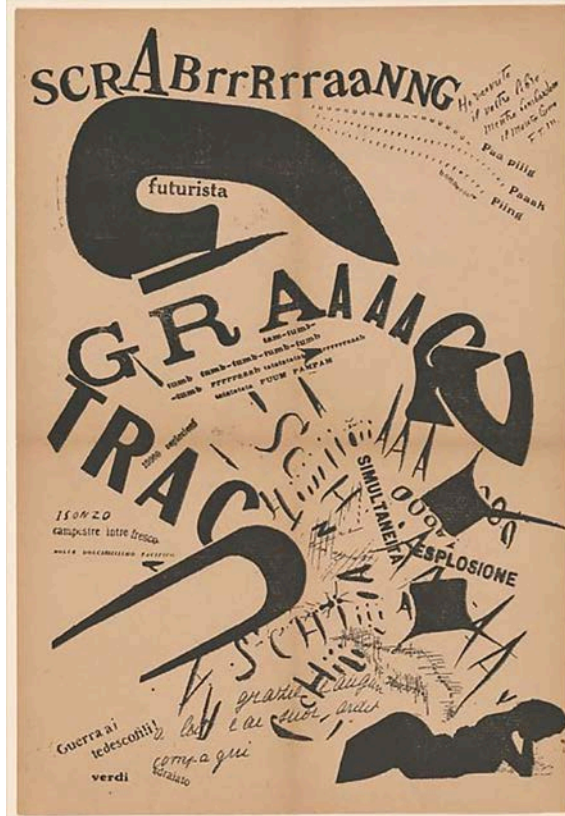


Fig. 1. Poem from *Les mots en liberté futuristes* (Futurist Words-in-Freedom), Filippo Marinetti, 1919, Source: Meggs & Purvis, (2006: 252).

Here, produced explosive and emotionally charged poetry not following the rules of correct syntax and grammar. It was a kind of typographic revolution against the classical tradition through the futurist concept that embraced speed, the machine age, sound, and noises. Here, italic was used to refer to quick impressions, boldface for violent noises and sounds. Free and piercing words have supported the velocity of the clouds, airplanes, trains, explosives, or atoms. Moreover, these new and painterly typographic compositions became a futuristic design called *parole in libert * means "words in freedom" (Meggs & Purvis, 2006: 252), where the writing and typography became expressive visual form as an image started to reflect the emotions, as in the case of Far Eastern writing and contemporary western calligraphy practices that are mentioned in this chapter.

On the other hand, it is claimed that the visual arts of Russia were slower to develop in the nineteenth century compared to Europe, contrary to the literature. The Russian Academy of Art -founded in 1757- began to send Russian painters abroad for training in the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, as with literature, a burst of creativity in the visual arts started in the early twentieth century (Lieven, Keenan, & others, 2021).

As in the rest of Europe, all art fields had been affected about a decade before the political and economic revolution of 1917 in Russia, called the Russian Revolution or the Russian Revolution of 1917.

Artists such as Vasily Kandinsky (1866-1944) started to create lyrical abstraction during this period that was assessed as highly influential in the European art scene, or Kazimir Malevich (1879-1935) started to explore geometric abstraction; furthermore, in architecture, artists started to push the boundaries as seen in Vladimir Tatlin (1885-1953), who executed the Monument in 1920 to the Third International -a spiraling iron and glass tower that has been the tallest building of the World. In this design, architectural models of the past were rejected; instead, a more utopian future based on technology and progress took priority. In the same period, one of the most significant movements, Constructivism, took place led by El Lissitzky (1890-1941) and Aleksandr Rodchenko (1891-1956), in which strict geometric forms and crisp graphic design were favored by artists (Lieven, Keenan & others, 2021) and the Russian avant-garde had reached its creative period at that time till the 1930s. That points to the expansion of the conception of art that started to be a part of daily life with the new possibilities that opened for artists and poets. They started to participate in a completely new society and had a chance to develop the principles that influence life itself. Among these artists, futurists were one of the first to cooperate with the new political power. At first, all futurist artists were called leftist/left-wing artists, whether Cubists, Suprematists, or Constructivists. Even if the Futurists aimed to reject the old culture completely, Jangfeldt (1976) states that the struggle was against the influence of old art on contemporary art creation rather than the contemplation of the old culture. Just like the old political system and the old rulers had been changed with the Russian Revolution, Futurists were assessed as innovators of art and literature with provocative

terms against the culture of the old society (Jangfeldt, 1976). They preferred themes such as speeding automobiles, trains, racing stylists, dancers, animals, or urban crowds rather than still life and portraiture as Cubists did. Futurists' works are assessed as brighter and more vibrant, revealing dynamic compositions with rhythmical forms that reach violent movement (White, 2019).

As mentioned earlier, the typographic revolution was also declared in the Futurist manifesto in 1913 with the desire to create a form visually dynamic and capable of reflecting with size and boldness of the visual effect in type, as seen through Marinetti's works. However, it should be noted that Russian Futurism -calligrapher Lampas points at as his one of the inspiration points- was primarily literary rather than plastic, which means many interests were majorly in literacy.

Whereas Dada was another movement that symbolizes reaction against World War I's carnage as an anti-art with strong negative and destructive elements. The Dada artists and writers intended to shock, protest, and create nonsense. Rejecting all traditions was a way of complete freedom for them; hence Dada became a significant liberating moment that carries traces of Marinetti's rhetoric on artistic and social traditions. That means various aspects of its style, technically and aesthetically, were borrowed from Futurists, particularly typography. Marinetti's goal was to be against the traditional concept of meaning, and he experimented with poems that were simultaneously textual and visually interpreted. As in Futurist typography, Dadaists composed typography moving around the page, vertically, horizontally, and diagonally with various different styles to create a liberal pile of pictorial blocks. They continued to create letterforms as concrete visual shapes instead of merely phonetic symbols (Farthing, 2012).

As can be seen in Fig. 2, there was a radical attitude toward distinguishing style elements closely related to word and image, including various type forms, which were composed as if every letter exploded on the page.



Fig. 2. Kleina Dada Soiree poster, Theo van Doesburg and Kurt Schwitters, 1922, Source: Meggs & Purvis, (2006: 302).

Compositions are organized with the new interpretation of the horizontal-vertical directions, which means they are printed horizontally and vertically in any direction on the same page and the functionality, evidently, was not a concern of Dadaist artists. Capital-lower cased, condensed, light-bold syntactic elements were employed mostly because they were used in as many different styles as they preferred, and the legibility of the text is not the issue; the punctuation is not conventional. They also put letters randomly. The hierarchy was extreme through hefty usage of the letterforms. Hence, it can be said that typography became an important element during the Dada and before them for Futurists; the visual appearance and its impact became a highly crucial part of the works, independent of the meaning of the text. The usage of the typography, photomontage, letters, letter spacing, and line spacing also negative spaces had significant impact on communication design development (Trachtman, 2006).

The Dadaist typographic techniques were even used by various cubist paintings such as Braque and Picasso, who included elements of writing as components of their works. And today, still various designers, such as David Carson -will be mentioned in the following pages, revealing the influences of Dada through their work.

Looking at contemporary western calligraphy, mostly subtracting the meaning of the text from written calligraphic work and calligraphic composition/performance or piece stand up independently as an autonomous art form, as in asemic writing pieces. They demand their audiences look through the written word to decipher different kinds of meaning that compel the audience to look at the visual composition rather than try to read, as Futurist and Dadaist artists, who were free from any rigid rules of tradition.

Moreover, Russian Formalism, which emerged around 1915, is associated with the Society for the Study of Poetic Language (OPOJAZ), the Moscow Linguistic Society, and the Prague Linguistic Circle as the school of literary criticism can be mentioned here. Its name is derived from "form," in other words, the form of literary work which points at the "formal devices such as rhythm, metre, rhyme, metaphor, syntax or narrative technique" (Mambrol, 2016: para. 1) rather than the content. That means formalism as a special mode of language proposes an opposition between poetic-literary language and practical-ordinary language. Here, ordinary language refers to the language that serves the purpose of communication. The literary language refers to the self-reflexive in which it promises to its readers a special experience with its formal devices called "literariness" Russian-American linguist Roman Jakobson (1896-1982). It focuses on poetry primarily and analyses the language of fiction and how it produces the defamiliarization effect (Mambrol, 2016).

On the other hand, another movement, Lettrism, can be mentioned here, an avant-garde poetic movement that is assessed as one of the most radical movements of the early post-war period (Takac, 2018), born in Paris in 1946 with the guidance of the Romanian poet Isidore Isou (1925-2007). He advocates a new type of poetry attentive only to the sound value of words, not to their meaning. This manifesto began



to circulate in his native country and later arrived in Paris, where lyricism would see its most significant development. Lettrism was a continuation of earlier art movements such as Russian Futurism, Italian Futurism, and Dadaism, and it can be claimed that it extended the experimentation with letters that started with Dada. Its cultists created sound constructions in which only the aesthetic value of words, syllables, or even onomatopoeias without imitative value were taken into account, thus bringing poetry closer to music. Later, the cultists of Lettrism tried to make their movement encompass all the arts, such as poetry, film, and painting, and the basic object was aimed to be beyond the figurative and abstract as well.

Isou stated that all semantic content should be emptied to make it purely formal, an approach from the Russian Futurists, Italian Futurists, and Dadaist poets. Letterists were experienced with creating hybrid forms grounded on the writing combination and visual art. First started to work with the film in the 1950s, Isou's innovative approach was to make images that disrupted the image, carved by scratching and painting on an actual film.

Fig. 3 shows Isou's work, "Dual Network," a term used in electrical transmission. There are two colors that Isou's employs in almost similar proportions and are used as contrasting matches on a white canvas. In both parts, he employs orange color to perform the handwritten characters. With a closer look, isolated letters, compound word constructions, and typographic symbols can be realized among the orange text batch. The overall unreadable text can differ from these readable elements and exist as visual and plastic aspects.

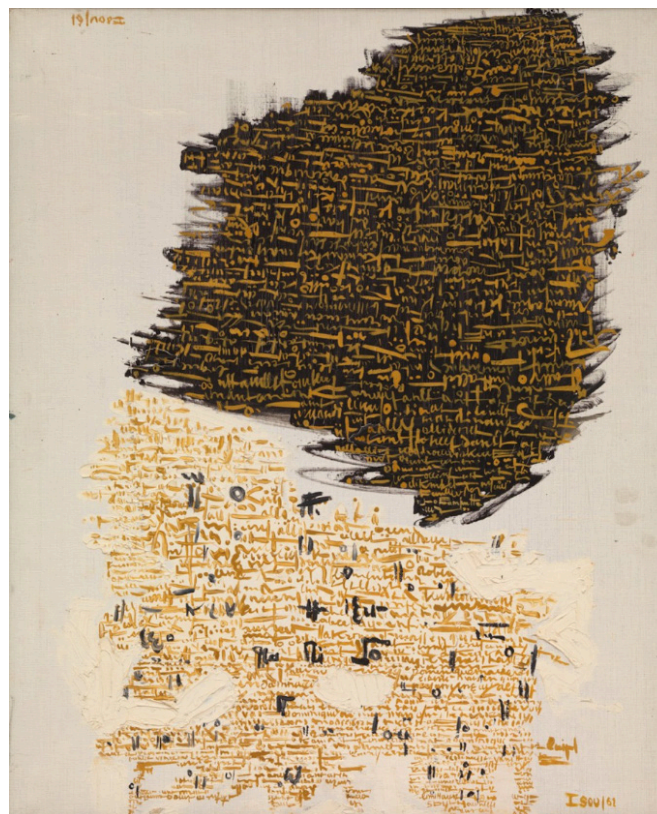


Fig. 3. *Double Network*, Isidore Isou, 1961, oil on canvas, 1961, Source: Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, [kunstmuseum.li/index.php?page=31&kid=77&lan=en](http://kunstmuseum.li/index.php?page=31&kid=77&lan=en), access: 16.02.2019.



Hence, Isou focuses on their materiality here. The alphabet is not considered as a linguistic sign but merely as a graphic representation. The idea of Isou's future of poetry is limited to its formal aspects by ignoring any semantic meaning of the text.

Here, it is necessary to underline that letters are used as only compositional elements. It is not a language, hence cannot be appreciated as messages that it carries through written words. In other words, one who speaks and is not understood is not accepted as an unknown Lettrist poet, and any kind of writing, even though exhibited, can only be appreciated as a manuscript, not as a work of art. This issue is also mostly discussed among asemic writers, which will be mentioned in the following pages. Writing and symbols here used in these kinds of works are solely seen as an art object assessed as a third visual material after figurative and abstract (Acquaviva, n.d.).

Looking at the various contemporary western calligraphy works, not consist of any readable, hence understandable text, basically not pointing any type of language or writing system still can be related to the calligraphy. Not referring to any type of understandable communication through written text, even may not have direct influences or resemblance with any type of ancient scripts; however, the judgment about visual aesthetic about this kind can be assessed through the quality of the line or strokes as mentioned in Chapter II on the discussion about the western calligraphy definition and in Chapter IV on examining the Far Eastern calligraphy. That means contemporary western calligraphers started to employ western calligraphy as Dadaist artists and were appreciated as the Far Eastern calligraphers.

Another noteworthy genre is Concrete Poetry as a lyrical genre can be considered too that began in Germany in the 1950s by Bolivian-born German concrete poet Eugen Gomringer (b. 1925). The poet employs words, letters, colors, and fonts, combining them to improve the poem's effectiveness. That means the artist seeks to go beyond the semantic meaning of the word with an experiment in language, incorporating visual, verbal, kinetic, and even sonic elements. Through his work, there can be found the basic characteristics which give importance to the material aspect of the poem: the words.

Fig. 4 shows one of the works of Gomringer, "Do You Think." The arrangement of the letters and words takes attention, creates an image, and offers visual meaning. This kind may also consist of a combination of lexical and pictorial elements. The physical arrangement of this part is aimed to provide cohesion, which is thought of as not found through the actual words. The white space of the page is also considered as necessary, which becomes a canvas on which poems become objects that are supposed to be discovered. Here, the standard syntax and logical sequence are ignored by Gomringer; hence, this kind is performed as visual poetry that is assessed as freeing the words from any syntactic structure, meaning, or sound. Hence, the overall visual appearance as an image of the word carries importance, surpassing the semantic meaning, syntax, or sound (Castillo, 2018).

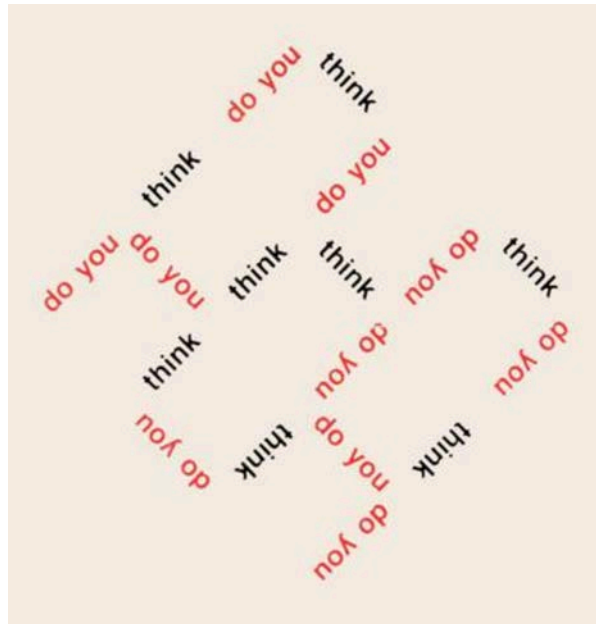


Fig. 4. *Do You Think*, Eugen Gomringer, 2005, screenprinted on linen, Source: Bielefelder Kunstverein, archiv2019. [kunstverein-bielefeld.de/en/exhibitions/2015/eugen-gomringer.html](http://kunstverein-bielefeld.de/en/exhibitions/2015/eugen-gomringer.html), access: 05.12.2020.

It also reminds the *calligrams* of the Middle Eastern calligraphy mentioned in Chapter V, as representations of a sort of figurative aspect of calligraphy consist of interweaving written words employing anthropomorphic figures of calligraphers, zoomorphic, and inanimate objects such as sword, a mosque, a ship made with the letter and the Arabic grammatical conjunction *waw*, mostly connected to the Turkish art of the sixteenth century. Calligraphy is considered the writing of a text and an abstract arrangement of a certain worldview and meaning; hence the plastic expression of the writing steps forward, and the aesthetic forms carries to open the way for the reader/viewer to reach the meaning from the visual (Kozlu & Benugur, 2014).

Hence, in the light of this information, on one side, Islamic calligrapher creates *calligrams*, pictorial calligraphy, as a way of explanation of each letter related to Islamic spiritual symbolism, assessed as the first connection of abstract forms in a sense; on another side, the twentieth century's arrangements with the intention to convey the intended effects through the meaning of words, rhythm or rhyme -the conventional elements of the poem. In substance, whether these two seem to have the most common ground, it has to be noted that the fundamental nature is highly different. Still, it can be claimed that there is an apparent effort to reveal and convey beyond the literal meaning of the word or the text. It is possible to say that they meet with the transformation of the operational mission imposed on the perception of writing.

At this point, after talking about the word as an image concept, it will be significant to point at the abstract feature of contemporary western calligraphy, in which the works are primarily defined as expressive, experimental, or abstract calligraphy because of lacking the letters, words, even any kind of recognizable writing feature, instead, mostly focusing on the moves and gesture of the hand. These calligraphers, namely Meulman, Brown, Lampas, and others- will be mentioned on the following pages- constantly underline their influences on the

western abstract painters and their gestures, such as American painter Jackson Pollock (1912-1956), an American abstract expressionist painter, printmaker, and editor Robert Motherwell (1915-1991), Spanish painter, sculptor and art theorist Antoni Tàpies (1923-2012) or an American painter, sculptor and photographer Cy Twombly (1928-2011). Some of them are mentioned in Chapter IV with their influences from the Far Eastern calligraphy tradition and how the mutual influences reflected both sides. Moreover, as mentioned in Chapter IV again, the Far Eastern culture is claimed as the root of the gesture within the calligraphy and painting traditions.

After the explanations made earlier, it will be helpful to talk about abstract painting through various painters, whose works are mostly called calligraphic and underlined the resemblance of contemporary western calligraphy. It will give more detailed insight that will provide information to discuss the relationship between the contemporary western calligraphers with the visual similarities of their work and their perception and practices of contemporary calligraphy as the performance or an act on the stage in the following pages.

## **6.2. The Western abstract painting related to contemporary Western calligraphy**

In the twentieth century, New York became the center represented by artists such as American painter Jackson Pollock (1912-1956), a Dutch-American abstract expressionist artist, Willem De Kooning (1904-1998), an American abstract expressionist painter, printmaker, and editor Robert Motherwell (1915-1991), or an American painter Franz Kline (1910-1962), who almost all were of European origin, represented the Western culture that came to America, particularly from the New York School. When Pollock and De Kooning influenced the New York art scene with solo exhibitions in 1948, it is regarded as the date of the emergence of the abstract expressionist movement. Some of these artists lived in New York, some from nearby cities, and used to meet and exchange ideas whenever they had opportunities to hang out with poets and writers.

It was the time when western calligraphy was still closely related to the ancient writing scripts with the enthusiasm of reviving and reassessing the ancient styles with the attribution of personal artistic preferences of the modern calligraphers. However, as stated in Chapter III and earlier in this Chapter, the expressive experiences close to the abstraction were not practiced as in the abstract painting context.

Here, it should be stated that still, today, it will be wrong to resemble highly abstract contemporary calligraphy pieces with abstract western painting through the visual resemblance. Because the concept of abstraction in calligraphy is not the same as the abstract concept in western painting, rather, it can be claimed that it is closer to the abstract concept of the Far Eastern calligraphy tradition that is mentioned in Chapter IV. This issue will be discussed in detail in part "6.13. Characteristics of contemporary western calligraphy" is featured in this Chapter.

It is stated that according to Motherwell, at their time in New York, the modern art concept meant pessimism, and according to the place where they stayed, whether voluntary or reluctant, meant a kind of "spiritual underworld" (Yilmaz, 2013: 223). It is stated that the artists were looking for a way out of this aura of pessimism. That shows the origin of the Abstract Expressionist movement, which can be found in the European avant-garde, particularly concerning the work of German Expressionist Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944). The spirituality mentioned here is stated that came in the form of Kandinsky's spirituality, which saw pure abstraction as the ultimate way to convey emotions, and Kandinsky believed that any form of representation was an obstacle to attaining depth. Hence, abstraction was seen as a vehicle of inner meaning for these artists as a formal exercise (Young, 2014).

As a reason, it is stated that the social, cultural, and artistic development of the century, particularly looking towards the mid-nineteenth century, the time symbolized the transition from handicrafts to industrial production with an incredible speed that reached urban life. The commercial evaluation of industrial products and economic warfare also emerged social crises that caused unrest in the societies, leading the social change in a short time that shook Europe to its roots. As a part of the society, the artist was also influenced, and the alarming rate of serial inventions in the industry caused a disintegration tendency in the plastic arts. As an internal reaction to these anxieties and discomfort caused by materialism, the artist started to respond by transforming his attitude, turning away from figuration and objects as the subject of his painting (Turani, 1990).

Hence they turned to Surrealism to be inspired by Jung's (1875-1961) ideas about psychoanalysis and Freud's (1856-1939) about memory, myth, and the unconscious mind to employ them in their paintings (Yilmaz, 2013).

To avoid control of the rational and conscious mind, surrealists practiced various performances, such as automatic drawing<sup>1</sup> and writing, in which the artist did not prefer to concentrate on what he was doing, writing, or drawing. They reduced them to physical rather than mental activity to reveal and release unconsciousness (McNiff, 1998).

The exportation of the object from paintings by American artists was by no means an aesthetic intent. Everything, including aesthetics, had to be either excluded or subjugated for the true unity of the painting material and the artist's attitude. The attitude on the canvas should have been that of freedom, independent of all moral, political, and aesthetic values. In this understanding of painting, since the painter is an actor, the viewer

<sup>1</sup> It is assessed as one of the significant contributions of the Surrealist movement to modern and contemporary art that has a unique method mostly employed by Surrealists, such as French painter André-Aimé-René Masson (1896-1987), who is among the pioneers of automatic drawing. It is described as reflecting and expressing the subconscious, in which one is supposed to draw randomly without rational thinking. That means there is no rational control over it intending to discover something in terms of the psyche of an author. Joan Miró (1893-1983), Salvador Dalí (1904-1989), Jean Arp (1886-1966), and André Breton (1896-1966) are among the prominent artist rapidly influenced by automatic drawing (Pereira, 2016).

should look at such paintings by thinking about the beginning, duration, orientation, mood, concentration, watchfulness, and relief of desire, just like the beginning of the action in a drama (Yılmaz, 2013).

While these artists were living in big cities of Europe such as Paris, Rome, London, and other art centers for a long time, some went to many countries of Asia, such as Mark Tobey (1890-1976), which envisaged people to live in peace leads him to explore spiritual representation in art. In addition, Tobey started to study Chinese calligraphy that year and became interested in Persian and Arabic alphabets due to his travels to the Middle East in 1926 (Gökdoğan, 2018). He had been in China and Japan, living in a Zen monastery in the Far East in the 1930s; he not only sought to create an original abstract formal aesthetic but also tried to reflect the mystery of the spiritual world as he perceived it, just like a Far Eastern calligrapher (Antmen, 2001).

As mentioned in Chapter IV, Tobey's work has calligraphic connotations through his usage of the limited colors that are black and white, the emphasis on brush strokes, and his relation to the mystical aspect of calligraphy that he tried to acquire during his time in the East. The overall form creates an actual representation of the brushstrokes in his painting, that as dynamic energy. Furthermore, it can be said that the meaning of the gesture acquired a very particular concretion, which is apparent in the works of the twentieth century, starting with the Impressionists, particularly during Expressionism and Abstract Expressionism, when the aspect of pictorial painting started to emphasize. The gesture was employed consciously by many painters (González, 2017); from that general sense of loose brushstroke, one passes to that of automatic brushstroke. The gesture contemplated in the program of abstract expressionism lacks conscious control, is autonomous, and does not respond to the needs of the representative function and, therefore, becomes the fundamental way of expression of the unconscious, of the innermost self (Graells, 2007).

Here, the interest in Orient should be underlined, as Chapter IV mentions. Although it has been intriguing for over a century, interest in the Orient tended to focus on one or two areas. The harmonies and dissonance of the color and light of the Middle Eastern started to attract in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the artists namely Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863), Paul Klee (1879-1940), and Henri Matisse (1869-1954), and the second half of the nineteenth century, interest in Japanese prints was generated among the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists. Looking at the 1950s, Chinese calligraphy and Zen Buddhism drew the attention of the Abstract Expressionists (Brenson, 1986). Furthermore, it can be claimed that Japanese, Indian and Chinese art and Middle Eastern art are part of Western culture, all simultaneously being explored (González, 2020). That means contemporary western calligraphers point at the Abstract Expressionists as inspirations, subtly discussing the Far Eastern influence indeed. It is highly significant to be aware of this fact that is also needed to be underlined here.

The expansion interest in Orient is claimed to reflect the geopolitical situation that coincides with expanding commercial and cultural



relations of the East and West. There had been an increasing number of exhibitions of Oriental Art with the growing market that helped with the development of global communications and travels, particularly with the opening up of China; as mentioned in Chapter IV, the interest kept growing. It became widespread (Brenson, 1986), which probably touched the needs of the artists of that time.

At a certain point, the need of the western artist intersected, and writing came for a moment in the western artist's adventure of abstract art that marked the twentieth century. The universal understanding of the Eastern calligrapher's brush, equipped with a philosophical attitude, spirituality, movement, and energy, forms the basis for the dynamic creation of many western artists. It is not that difficult to see the similarities here (Antmen, 2001).

As examined in Chapter IV, the painting of Tobey looks like a work of a Chinese calligrapher who created highly expressive gestures with his brush. The expected issue from the calligrapher is the understanding of nature, the existence of its own inner harmony that is reflected in his writing, which he repeats thousands of times with limited materials such as paper, brush, and ink. In this respect, the calligrapher becomes the authentic master of his interpretation, unlike the Western artist, whose originality is valued first. In this sense, the act becomes a kind of show that is seen as a stage, where the artist creates the pictorial space with brush strokes which transforms into images that reflects the expression of loaded energy and the emotion, expression, and rhythm internalized in ink as can be seen in Pollock's painting ritual (Antmen, 2001).

Continuing with Pollock, who made figurative paintings under the influence of Picasso (1881-1973), Miró (1893-1983), and Gorky (1868-1936) from the early 1940s, started to blend what he learned from these masters, embraced the Native American culture that he always had interested in. He then started to try abstract surrealism in which the paint effects are organic and geometric seen together, which carried him to an entirely abstract painting understanding around the 1950s. His breakpoint exhibition in 1948 indicated that he started to be away from his previous figurative paintings. He is associated with "action painting," and his painting technique, pouring the dyes on top of his large, was released with his photos and videos when he was acting (Yilmaz, 2013).

The term action painting was first used by the American critic Harold Rosenberg in 1952; "At a certain moment the canvas began to appear to one American painter after another as an arena in which to act- rather than as a space in which to reproduce, re-design, analyze or "express" an object, actual or imagines. What was to go on the canvas was not a Picture but an event" (Rosenberg, 1952: 22).

After Rosenberg's use, the term had a reorientation effect on the aesthetic perspective of the New York School critics. The vital thing in this movement is that the works are created without a preliminary design due to the thoughts created by the associations. For this reason, the formation process of the picture becomes more important than the finished picture (Gökdoğan, 2018).

Fig. 5 shows how Pollock applies his technique in his workshop. Here, the painting has no top or bottom and no left or right because Pollock works from all directions (Soussloff, 2004). He crawls on the vast canvas that is loosely laid on the floor.

Fig. 5. Jackson Pollock applying a flow technique at his workshop, 1950, Source: Landau, (1989: 189).



On his one hand, he has a can of paint; on his other hand, he has a stick rather than brushes or palettes. Sometimes he also preferred a paint with a hole to drop the paint without touching the stick. The canvas flushing technique applied on the surface is mainly performed with the wrist, arm, and shoulder rhythm. The artist put the canvas on the ground and painted. Most of the paints that he used were fluent. He used brushes as if they were sticks without touching the canvas but moving around the canvas.

Pollock described himself as free and comfortable when moving on the canvas. Before painting, he was not used to envisaging what he wanted to paint and also not creating a preliminary study or draft. He approached the drawing directly because he believed the painting was working quickly and directly to express something. He preferred working with large canvases such as three to four meters, where he felt most at home. Occasionally, he stepped onto the canvas to allow himself to move on all four sides. He stressed the importance of the result that he creates at the end of this natural process rather than the techniques used to put the paint on the canvas. For him, the method was not more than the instrument he used to reach the result (Karmel, 1999).

Pollock's application of the concept of using paint with a childlike approach and reducing the pictorial space to two dimensions is

assessed as rhythmic, not wild or random, that he developed as a technique. The important point for all of them is that this method of painting is very suitable for what is called the spiritual automata of the surrealist environment. This method, which was tried by Tobey and developed by Pollock, was much more suitable for the expression of the inner life through improvisation rather than the calculated paintings of the branch (Yilmaz, 2013).

Antmen (2001) states that action painting of the American abstract art movement mimics the free, rhythmic, agile movement of Far Eastern calligraphy, paint's fluidity, and brush strokes' speed beyond calligraphic images. It seems as if the artist is going on this stage, such as Pollock and his canvases on the floor. Pollock says that this method is not a new method and that "this is how the Easterners work" (Ibid.: 78).

*Full Fathom Five* (Fig. 6) is an early example of Pollock's flushing technique that he experienced with its practice, which allows it to reach numerous combinations compared to the possibilities offered by conventional brush blades. To this work, he also embedded pebbles and added various objects such as nails, buttons, pennies, torn cigarettes, matches, and paint tube tops, which were hidden in thick tangles of silver, green-blue and white industrial paint. The aim seems to lead these materials to retain their individuality, which creates a tactile sensation in their energetic heavy paint (Landau, 1989).



Fig. 6. *Full Fathom Five*, Jackson Pollock, 1947, Source: Landau, (1989: 173).

His lines are free and dynamic, emphasizing line quality; also, speed of execution, spontaneity, and willingness to welcome the accidental fall of paints take attention to the similarity between Far Eastern aesthetics, which is held in Chapter IV. When it is pouring the paint, not written, his techniques still resemble the Chinese splash ink technique (*p'ó mo*) (Clarke, 1988), which is also observed continuously in contemporary western calligraphers, such as Meulman. These paintings were supposed to be done quickly without premeditated but should start from an explosion of spontaneity. The hegemony passed through to the artist's body. The body started to be in connection with the work as a part of the painting, even surrounding it through entering it, which led to creating a close dialog between the canvas and the body, which had existed since prehistoric times when the body acted as a brush (Feijóo Cid, 2016).

Miguel Álvarez (2007) states that the parts of the body, particularly the hand in the tracks, have appeared in archaeological sites that show the instinct of the man wanted to represent the handprints as a form of expression, as a necessity to transmit something since the first artistic manifestation that appears with the body. Here, the body takes its significance and appears as the prominent element in the act of an artwork created within Abstract Expressionism, underlining the presence of the artist as a trace of the gestural marks on the surface.

This issue also can be seen in Far Eastern calligraphy in Chapter IV, how the material becomes an essential part of the calligrapher. The calligrapher is supposed to act with the brush that is a part of him to channel his energy to his work. The movement of the calligrapher becomes a movement of the brush, leaving the mark of the calligrapher.

In the western tradition of calligraphy, familiarity with the materials was crucial to manipulate them to serve as functional entities. However, with the contemporary attitude of the western calligrapher, it can be claimed that they started to establish close similarities with the mindset of the Far Eastern calligraphers and the body-canvas interaction that started with Pollock.

Furthermore, looking at the relationship with the spirituality of the works of Pollock or whether it has any type of relation with the calligraphy, Eikelboom (2017) states that it is difficult to read his drip painting as a product of theological intent and underlines that questions about a painting's origin and an artist's anxieties are only one way of understanding the importance of a painting. Rather than having an intentional theological discussion of Pollock's paintings, Eikelboom (2017) prefers to make an impact-based discussion of their theological significance.

On the other hand, Young (2014) claims that Pollock is rarely mentioned as a spiritual artist; however, his painting images are assessed as iconic, "romanticized bad boy of the twentieth century American avant-garde serves as a window into Pollock's soul and the urges for renewal that lie there" (Ibid.: 35).

Moreover, Yilmaz (2013) states that while Tobey's work is mystical, Pollock's can be assessed as intellectual and creative that the method



of his painting steps forward as a significant point that was very suitable to be called psychic automata, which is highly significant for the surrealist environment. According to Yilmaz (2013), Tobey experimented with this method, and Pollock developed a much more convenient expression of inner life through improvisation rather than calculated painting.

In most Western paintings from the Renaissance to the end of the nineteenth century, the nature of the human vision is positioned to determine the organization of the painting. The picture plane adapts to the viewer through devices such as perspective and chiaroscuro. However, painters began challenging the assumption that the viewer's visual expectations should determine the painting plane in the twentieth century. Instead, a painting becomes an opportunity to experience the vision itself differently, and Pollock's drip painting achieves this concerning the nature of seeing. Through tangled webs of his thick and thin lines, some broken, some continuing, do not offer discernible representation for visual comprehension; however, they offer rhythmic energy composed by Pollock through his dancing around the canvas (Eikelboom, 2017). This feature makes it likened to jazz improvisation, which is also mentioned by calligrapher Stevens (2013) while talking about practices of western calligraphy today.

Another noteworthy artist is the abstract painter Antoni Tàpies (1923-2012), which can be mentioned here with his refined visual language consisting of gestures and symbols, which seems to resemble the calligraphic gestures of contemporary western calligraphers, such as Meulman.

Tàpies's interest in the subconscious mind attracted him to the contest of breaking with the tradition of western painting. In 1945, he started to draw in a style influenced by Surrealism and the theories of Jung, representing his mental energy by repeated lines and motifs that cover the whole surface of a drawing. While his earliest works in the 1960s were collage-based, primarily abstract paintings on cardboard, after studying in Paris and meeting with Picasso, Tàpies started exhibiting regularly, transforming his painting under the influence of Surrealism (Grimes, 2012), which will be observed through his works mentioned on the following pages.

Tàpies' early works reflect the solid mystical sense that merges into nature and then is reduced to abstract signs in his later works. Apart from the narrative content of paintings, Tàpies prefers his every work to be appreciated as an independent plastic object charged with mental energy. He states that "the value of the work as a presence has to be strong as that of a talisman or icon" (Dexeus, 1990: 13).

With this statement, it is possible to claim that he was also influenced by oriental art and philosophy that underlines the emphasis on nature's identity and human beings (Clelia, 2014), also emphasizing the physical and spiritual transformation that represented through his works, which evokes through signs and symbols from Eastern and Western cultures reveal this influences. Moreover, with the influences of Klee and Miró, his iconographic compositions were increased and communicated with an intense textual appearance.



As seen in Fig. 7, his earliest work, entitled *L'Espirit català*, belongs to 1971, one of the first elements or signs of identity started to reveal itself in his work as representative signs of Catalonia, footprints, writings, and everyday objects (Clelia, 2014). Here, it can be observed that the scratched surface with graffiti-like marks is difficult to read. It seems that the surface built up with these incised letters and signs suggested an appearance of the walls of Catalonia.

Fig. 7. *L'Espirit català*, Antoni Tàpies, 1971, Source: Dexeus, (1990: 71).



Fig. 8 illustrates that one of Tàpies' works, painted with Indian ink, represents gestural moves of the brush and has significant similarities with the visual appreciation of Chinese calligraphy, particularly asemic examples experienced with the Cursive writing of China, mentioned in Chapter IV.

Fig. 8. *Composition with India ink*, 1979, Source: Dexeus, (1990: 95).



Incorporating great expressiveness of intense movement reflected itself through the wide range of tonalities created with the potential of Indian ink. This expressive behavior and manipulation of him with loose brushstrokes create a sense of spontaneous works that convey the feeling that something is happening or there is a specific movement on the surface. It provides his particular interest of his in gestural language. According to Graells (2007), through his work, the sensitivity and mysticism can be observed through his gestures, uniting its interior with his pictorial works that have similarities with the Far Eastern mentality.

Cy Twombly (1928-2011) is another artist claiming that his work is also based on writing and drawing rather than brushwork, as in Tobey, Motherwell, or Tàpies. He employs writing for his work, some legible, mostly not. One of the essential features is the line of his work filled with emotion that can be compared to Chinese calligraphy.

Twombly's work is universally recognized in the art world (though not in the calligraphy world) as carrying profound meaning. In other words, Twombly writes his paintings and in so doing imbeds them in the great cultural traditions of the West. This is not yet true of the work of Western calligraphers. It is what makes Twombly's work beautiful. If we have any ambition to create a Western art from called calligraphy, we will have to grapple with this problem. We will have to fill our merchant script with the deepest longings of our souls. ...We will have to become poets of the line. (Neuenschwander, n.d.: para. 14)

His grey canvases covered in looping and roiling cursive are also scratched with rhythmic white chalk series that he focused on towards the end of the 1960s.

They are informally known as the *Blackboard Series* (Fig. 9), primarily seen as his most outstanding achievement, most iconic body of works that seem to imply a secret language that needed to be deciphered and imbued in hidden narrative coming from the past, interpreted at present in search of more expressive clarity.

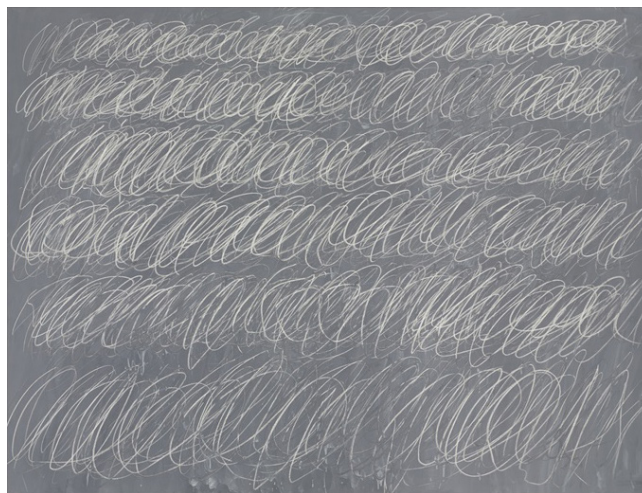


Fig. 9. *Untitled (New York City)*, Cy Twombly, 1968, oil paint and wax crayon, Source: Artnet, [artnet.com/artists/cy-twombly/untitled-new-york-city-kpAvSt550L37XKTUIA5KzQ2](https://www.artnet.com/artists/cy-twombly/untitled-new-york-city-kpAvSt550L37XKTUIA5KzQ2), access: 14.08.2017.

In Fig. 9, using oil-based house paint, wax crayon, and pencil on canvas, Twombly created the resemblance to a classroom chalkboard with white markings. It is one of the most prime examples of the series with its six horizontal lines of repetition of circle spreading across the canvas,

loopy and continuous seemingly infinity. It seems the artist commonly scribbles on a piece of paper aimlessly. Moreover, through the down of the canvas, it can be observed that the artist seemed to lose control of lines, also drips, smears, and spatters became more explicit and visible toward the bottom of the picture.

On the other hand, the rhythmic harmony and balanced loops on canvases he filled with the obsessively systematic repetition are described as lyrically expressive lines that spread all over the surface. It reminds a strict technique called the Palmer Method<sup>2</sup> used to teach handwriting, and he seems already aware of this laborious training. Accumulated repetitive drills seem to reveal his dense cursive energy with a choreography in which individual act of personal expression occurs. Both systematic and irregular, premeditated, and an intuitive, unruly act of Twombly evokes a graffiti-scarred wall on the surface. Through experimenting with it in his grey-scale canvases, illegible script with scrawled spirals evokes some sort of primitive handwriting, a form of contemporary mark-making (Cy Twombly, n.d.).

It is for sure that looking at these palimpsest-like surfaces as if looking at walls where all those moments exist and were layered on each other. Hedges (2011) assesses this issue as a sense of a multitude of meanings that collected Twombly's as a mass of independent actions, i.e., a multitude of presents also represents a kind of nothingness, in other words, absence.

Twombly's images of action seem to be placed somewhere between order and chaos, as in the case of Meulman. The bodily energy flowing through his paintings seems to be felt by the viewer, which can also be seen in his written words and texts. By revealing his personality of art, Twombly represents himself as a speaker, and what talks is not the product but the action. The sign and mark of the artist seem to be from a discourse of verbal signs in a conventional manner. In this context, painted or drawn words rather than written words play a role in reverse by integrating with each other and serving a broader sense in the conceptual rhyme.

Jacobus (2016) focuses on the artist's use of poetry, which mainly employs handwritten words and phrases in his work. With careful examination of Twombly's works where the poetry and canvas met, he gives significant insight into his imagination through his scrawled quotations and verbal scribbles. Here, it is questionable whether the artist chose a specific passage with which kind of internal dialogue or what words and writing have to do with painting and drawing, or it demands to be read differently.

<sup>2</sup> The Palmer Method dominated and prevailed in the American education system in the first half of the twentieth century. As a method, it was used to ensure the students had the same writing style. Based on the rhythmical forms, the Palmer Method offered a detailed prescription for the correct posture, pen-hold, and specific movements for muscular training. All finger movement was prohibited; the gestures coming from the shoulder and being left handy were discouraged. The body was treated as a machine with its automatic movement, and the writer was lack of any sensory feedback from the writing surface. Based on a series of endless-like movement drills, this method could successfully generate clear and controlled forms (Clayton, n.d).

Fig. 10 illustrates a series of texture-like writing gesture that creates an impression of an ongoing text. Even if they do not consist of any letter or a word, the overall appearance is sufficient to make an impact as a text. It is not surprising that his works assessed the classification of asemic writing.



Fig. 10. *Note I - Note II - Note III* from an *Untitled Series*, 1967, Source: MOMA, [moma.org/artists/5988](http://moma.org/artists/5988), access: 14.08.2017.

It would be enlightening to mention briefly the assessment of John Berger (1926-2017), encountered in his book entitled *Portraits: John Berger on Artists* (2015) that he offers a new perspective to look at the diverse cast of artists, and Twombly's pictorial play among the others. Berger starts his statements with the general critics of Twombly's painting about being resembling writing or a kind of *écriture*<sup>3</sup> and how they have been seen as parallel to graffiti. Besides the same impression he has, Berger also states that the paintings offer and refer to more than all the walls that Berger saw; he gazed at all the cities that he passed. Through their readabilities and un-clarities, the way the words are modified, manipulated, written over each other, and erased from one another, create the unsaid that any language can offer the same signification it has.

For Berger, Twombly's paintings are landscapes of foreign and familiar terrain (Berger, 2015). His one of the medium is writing, which consists of graphic marks, abbreviated signs, hatchings, loops, numbers, and the simplest pictographic-like forms that spread throughout his canvas or paper as a result of the instant moment and movement as a whole, these exaggerated forms of handwriting often created self-consciously also becomes a compositional device. It may be claimed that Twombly's writing-like gestures with handwritten forms may cause them to be assessed as calligraphic.

Apart from Berger, the French theorist Roland Barthes (1917-1980) wrote one of the essential pieces of writing on Twombly. He starts with these questions and continues as follows: "Who is Cy Twombly? What is it he does? And what are we to call what he does? ... ("drawing," "graphism," "scratching," "clumsy," "childish") ... "childish," TW's

<sup>3</sup> *Écriture* is described as writing, handwriting, script, [style] writing. Larousse Dictionnaires de Français, <http://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais-anglais/%C3%A9criture/27596>, access: 12.02.2019.



"graphism"? Yes, why not? But also: something more, or less, or aside from that ...it is *displaced*" (Barthes, 1991: 157).

While Barthes examines the writing on Twombly's work, he finds them a kind of writing concerning calligraphy as some kind of allusion to writing; it can be said that the scribbling of Twombly seems a kind of system needed to decipher. However, it is sincerely believed that the visual form of Twombly's scribbles reminds the asemic writers of the West rather than calligraphy that mostly alluded by the brush strokes rather than pencil-like scratches. Here, in fact, it is necessary to open a parenthesis on this subject because although the asemic studies of the twentieth century stand out, it is possible to reach studies that date back to the Far East and the Middle East conceptually when looked more deeply.

However, looking at the abstract expressionists, the meaning of the gesture, gesturality, or gestural painting with a general sense of loose brushstroke passes to that of brushstroke that lacks conscious control, becomes the fundamental way of expression of the innermost self. The gesture contemplated in the program abstract expressionism lacks conscious control, does not respond to the needs of the representative function, and, therefore, becomes the fundamental way of expression of the unconscious, of the innermost self (Graells, 2007).

As an example, the painting of Tobey looks like the work of a Chinese calligrapher who created highly expressive gestures with his brush. The expected issue from the calligrapher is the understanding of nature, the existence of its own inner harmony that is reflected in his writing, which he repeats thousands of times with limited materials such as paper, brush, and ink. In this respect, the calligrapher becomes the authentic master of his interpretation, unlike the Western artist, whose originality is valued first. In this sense, the act becomes a kind of show that is seen as a stage, where the artist creates the pictorial space with brush strokes which transforms into images that reflects the expression of loaded energy and the emotion, expression, and rhythm internalized in ink as can be seen in Pollock's painting ritual (Antmen, 2001). This type of painting was supposed to be done quickly without being premeditated but should start from an explosion of spontaneity. The hegemony passed through to the artist's body. The body started to be in connection with the work as a part of the painting, even surrounding it through entering it, which led to creating a close dialog between the canvas and the body, which had existed since prehistoric times when the body acted as a brush (Feijóo, 2016).

Eventually, a sense of being skillfully made as physical material was excluded so that its abstract creative features could be intermingled with the intellectual aura of the written word, particularly poetry. That means the skilled hand and the sense of making seem erased from much contemporary art, as evident in Abstract Expressionism in both its color field and gestural varieties. The skilled hand was no longer in plain view, meaning the craft and fine art split, which began in the eighteenth century (McNiff, 1998). Here, it can be said that just because two works look visually similar does not mean it is appropriate to be compared, especially in contemporary calligraphy and abstract expressionist painting, which stem from different intentions that differ from the general generative principles.



At this point, another significant issue that is needed to mention is the time after the modern period, the postmodern period with its attitude, and how possibly contemporary western calligraphers may relate themselves through its feature that can be traced through their calligraphic works, apart from the inspirations comes with the tradition of western calligraphy, the other calligraphy traditions, and the abstract western painting. While the West started to face the postmodern condition, it will be useful to consider the situation in contemporary western calligraphy, which will be delved into in part "6.13. Characteristics of Contemporary western calligraphy."

### **6.3. The relation between postmodern condition with contemporary Western calligraphy**

In the second half of the twentieth century, the social, artistic, and cultural situation started to change, affecting all levels of art, culture, and social life. It was the postmodern condition that began to spread in the late 1960s, especially in France. The characteristics of this thought or approach have gradually gained weight in the USA since the 1970s.

In the modern era, human beings and thoughts are assessed as centers and claimed that all reality could be reached with the human mind and knowledge. Whereas, in the postmodern period, the thought system is expressed as a decentralized way of thinking. The thought defines reality in terms of neither God nor human beings; however, if there is a truth, it varies from person to person and situation to situation. That means there is no single meaning; instead, multi-meanings have existed. This feature seems relevant to contemporary western calligraphy, which can be assessed as an open work of Eco (1989), in which there is no definite message; instead, multiple possibilities exist. Hence, the structure of open work also motivation of it may enfold disorder, a kind of chaos or noise referring to pluralism, which can be seen in the work of the contemporary calligraphers that will be mentioned in this chapter, particularly, Meulman, with his performances and calligraphic pieces, even with their titles, underlines the chaos and order related with his graffiti background, as an underground artist.

Lyotard (1984) sees postmodern artists or writers in philosopher's position. It is claimed that neither the works produced nor the texts written, in principle, can be governed by pre-established rules. They cannot be judged according to a decisive judgment by applying similar categories to the text or work. These rules and categories are the rules and categories that the artwork seeks for itself (Lyotard, 1984). In other words, postmodernism means working without rules to find the rules of what you do (Appignanesi & Garratt, 1998).

According to this approach, there is no definite, universal and definable truth (Doltaş, 2003). Here, it should be underlined that postmodern does not refer to the end of the modern; on the contrary, a work has to be modern first in order to be postmodern (Lyotard, 1984). Even if postmodernism is assumed as a reaction to modernism, and the suffix post refers to the term after, it would be more accurate to state that it gives the meaning of continuing from modernism, arising from modernism, and coming to life

with the criticism of modernism, and therefore continuing its existence with the existence of modernism. It takes its' references to eclecticism, pluralism, and randomness. It also includes the state of beyond, which is also constantly repeated as going beyond the traditional calligraphy within the statements of calligraphers such as Mediavilla (1996), Stevens (2003) or Brown (2017), also other contemporary western calligraphers, who will be examined in this chapter with their contemporary attitudes as indicatives of various postmodern features.

Harvey (2006) emphasizes this situation in cinema by quoting McHale, who emphasizes the plurality of coexisting worlds in postmodernist literature. He thinks that Foucault's concept of the *heterotopia* is the perfect image to grasp what this literature is trying to describe. With the concept of *heterotopia*, Foucault describes the coexistence of many fragmented possible worlds in an impossible space or, more simply, spaces that are superimposed or juxtaposed with each other. Characters in the film no longer think about how to solve or uncover a fundamental enigma; instead, they force to seek answers to these questions: What world is this? What needs to be done in this world? Which of my selves will do this? He continues to explain this situation, which he made his debut in literature, by talking about a modernist classic like *Citizen Kane* when he leaps into the cinema. *Citizen Kane* is a film that includes a reporter's efforts to bring together different memories and perspectives from those who knew him to solve the enigma of Kane's life and personality (Harvey, 2006). Alternatively, for music, an example of the postmodern attitude can be given as the synthesis of melodies that have entirely changed or differentiated from the familiar style using the opportunities brought by the time and the ethnic origin of musical instruments from different cultures.

In this context, looking at western graphic design, Pelta (2004) takes attention to the 90s, the time that witnessed a series of violent assaults on the system through anti-globalization movements called culture-jammers for whom the excess power, consumption, and proliferation of the brands are reaching and assessed as an offense to the cultural health of nations. While this issue is seen as an evolutionary cycle of design, Japanese-American curator Andrew Blauveth calls it a "transfiguration of a critical avant-garde into a post-critical rearguard" and states that "graphic design today feels like a vast shapeless body capable of absorbing any blow. Without coherence and increasingly dispersed. This absence of a critical mass or a resistant body is the heart of the current malaise" (Pelta, 2004: 16). Through this statement, Pelta points to the moment of pluralism as a consequence of the end of dogmatism. Also, without an orthodox critical position that is assessed as positive because of the possibility of new and diverse voices, in the meantime causes the lack of a unique style, supplied by a multitude of styles as "a heaven of trends" in many cases, seems convenient due to the logic of markets. Hence, the stylistic and ideological plurality that are critical for various designers of postmodernity domesticated and became an element that can be utilized; hence trying to reach new target audiences has increased significantly.

Pelta (2004) also takes attention to the year 1984, when graphic design transformed until the twentieth-first century with the appearance of the Macintosh computer. This is assessed as a crisis of modernity and its

influences on design methodology, the application of the deconstruction theory, the problem of using and abusing history, and questioning the author. For typography, deconstruction refers to a vocabulary revision, questioning of the traditional ways of reading and various ways of utilizing the letter as an abstract and invisible vehicle through not following the traditional structure and meaning of the text. Hence, the behavior of designers toward technology is assessed as worth mentioning, particularly compared to the perfection offered by computers, the inclination towards the incorrectness of hand, exploring the error, and claiming the traditional techniques and values which became popular manifestations such as graffiti, lettering, and calligraphy (Pelta, 2004). At this point, it can be claimed that through contemporary western calligraphy practices, it can be observed various common features such as the concept of incorrectness or error, randomness, spontaneity, pluralistic and eclectic inclination, in which the hand of the calligrapher become essential through the gestures. However, it should be underlined that accidents/errors in calligraphy are slightly different from the motion of change. Calligraphy, in its nature, requires constant practice with scripts or gestures used to construct these scripts. That comes with muscle memory, as mentioned in Chapters II and III; hence, such as Stevens (2013), calligraphers claim there is no chance of a significant factory while creating a calligraphic piece. In other words, calligrapher knows where to put the following line, stroke, or stain, or at least, they let them happen. Hence, it is not like a chance; however, it comes with the mastery of the hand. As mentioned, the criteria, if there will be, becomes the quality of the line or the stroke of the calligraphic works, integrity, and authenticity are assessed as features that are difficult to obtain, as in the Far Eastern calligraphy tradition mentioned in Chapter IV with stressing the stroke's vitality.

Moreover, American graphic designer Tibor Kalman (1949-1999) rejected good taste for the sake of aromas of design, which heralded the new excitement of the birth of ugliness, mundane and vulgar as a powerful visual tool, or designer Steven Heller's appreciation of these positions in relation to ugliness as a conscious attempt to create and define alternative standards. Such as image overlays, low-resolution reproductions, hybrids of past and popular elements, or a mixture of different typefaces began to challenge the classical aesthetic beliefs. The main issue became to reach alternative ideas (Pelta, 2004), which can be seen in the contemporary attitudes of the western calligraphers. Since beauty is something that is difficult to describe and considering the situation of the twenty-first century, the aim is not to reach beauty, and it is the same for graphic design.

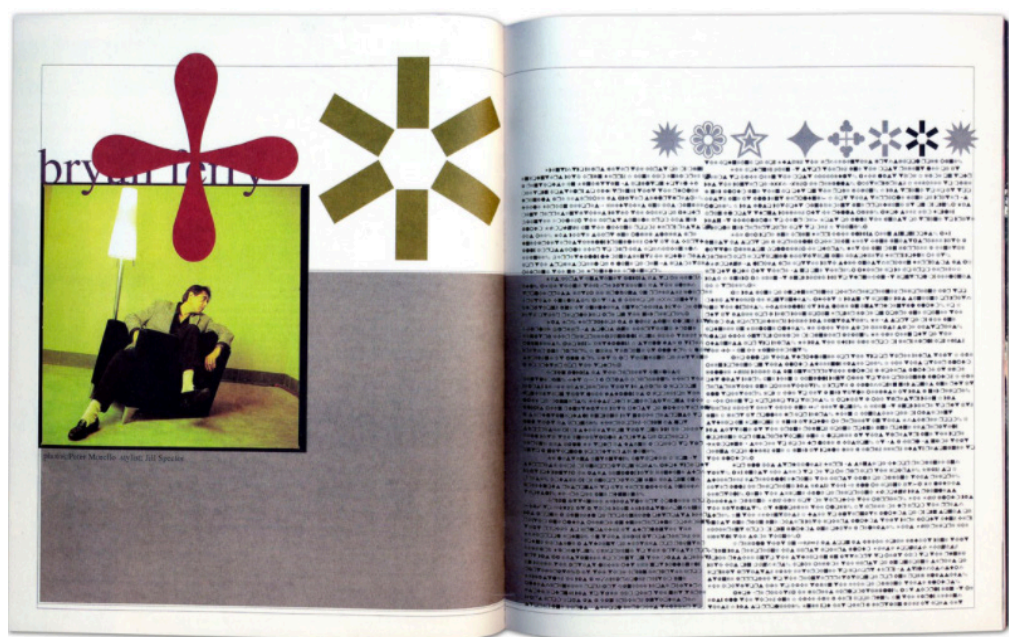
It is observed that designers emphasize the importance of embodying emotion in their designs, which is highly significant and also valid for contemporary western calligraphers. Especially mentioning the Far Eastern calligraphy, this issue is also underlined that claimed as one of the features that are influenced by this culture. This issue is also relevant for postmodern designers, such as Peter Bil'ak, Neville Brody, Oded Ezer, Jonathan Barnbrook, and David Carson, who have attracted attention with their approaches and works in the field of graphic design and have a noticeable impact on other designers. Bil'ak especially revives typography with the choreographies he created, and designer Oded Ezer uses today's technology as a different application platform in his projects. Furthermore, Neville Brody has been drawing

attention since the 1980s and carrying out ambitious projects that can be considered pioneers in many subjects, whereas designer Jonathan Barnbrook can be mentioned with his works that reflect his responsibility and current oppositional personality and his political attitudes, also interpretation of the ancient scripts, particularly the Gothic hand. And last, self-taught designer David Carson draws both praise and criticism for his works, approach, and discourse. Among these designers, looking at American graphic designer, Carson took attention in the early 1990s with experimental editorial designs for lifestyle and music magazines. His works were started to be created around the "end of print" mantra, which also became his published book *The End of Print: The Graphic Design of David Carson* (1995), in which his typography and layout approach revealed. What is noteworthy about Carson's approach is showing that editorial layouts do not have to adhere to rules about image placement, consistent typography, or the number of copies that stubbornly flow after each issue (Gosling, 2019).

By avoiding the objective sensibilities and logic of modernism, using intuition and twisting the grid or throwing it all aside, he transformed not only editorial design but typography and graphic design. His works show the rejection of hierarchy, formal layouts, and traditional typography – essentially designing with a blank canvas. His lack of formal education is perhaps a blessing in disguise, as it gives him the freedom to create without the shackles of design rules. This creative freedom is manifested in his highly expressive work that connects with the audience on an emotional level. Carson's approach is about redefining the criteria of legibility by using reverse leading, rotating the text columns horizontally or overlapping with each other, using extreme letterspacing or any type of unusual layout technique that is evidently challenging for a reader to read or decipher the written text (Miranda, 2020).

Fig. 11 illustrates one of the most famous issues of Ray Gun magazine, dedicated to the alternative music genre, pushing the limits of modern and traditional approaches.

Fig. 11. Bryan Ferry Ray Gun spread, David Carson, 1994, Source: AIGA, [eyeondesign.aiga.org/anti-grid/icon-david-carson-on-why-computers-make-you-lazy-and-indie-mag-design-needs-to-liven-up/](http://eyeondesign.aiga.org/anti-grid/icon-david-carson-on-why-computers-make-you-lazy-and-indie-mag-design-needs-to-liven-up/), access: 20.02.2021.





This issue belongs to 1994, in which the interview with English singer Bryan Ferry was typeset by an illegible font Zapf Dingbats because Carson found the interview highly boring after reading it.

As mentioned above, here on this page, there is the same attitude toward the rules of the typography and layout, not using horizontal or overlapping text but using unreadable type in a simple layout. Hence, it is claimed that is a critical balance between order and chaos -also will be seen as a concept of Meulman calligraphic works, even used as a title- referring to the postmodern attitude preserved here and revealing Carson's passion for transforming the design conventions and showing not to confuse the legibility with communication (Miranda, 2020), as seen through Futurist and Dadaist artists of the twentieth century, whose aim was employing the expressive feature of typography as mentioned earlier.

On the other hand, an English graphic designer, typographer, and art director Neville Brody, like Carson, created a significant break with his designs, especially after 1980. He talks about emotional communication and thinks that when there is nothing in the name of emotion, a designer is a technician or scientist. Brody, who did different experiments on typography in *The Face* magazine, broke the tradition of presenting all the articles in a magazine neatly and cleanly with his sloppy typography. As such, he is considered one of the most influential designers of the 80s and one of the greatest pioneers of the new typography of the 80s (Bektaş, 1992). Here what is significant is that typography has a personality, letters may have characters, even souls, and can express emotions, which lead to communication through these channels, changing the idea of the functionality of the text, which was the primary issue that was considered before. Over time, his works, which exemplify the power of visual expression, add individuality and emotionality to their functionality with their characters that push the boundaries and take their place in designs as forms of criticism of opponents. In addition to his changing face, he seems to have taken more responsibility in this sense.

Poynor (2003) states that writing itself is no longer accepted as an alphabet; instead, it is getting closer to the idea of the keyboard as an instrument of music that composes creative pieces. Within writing, there exists its own rhythm, color, and repetitions; through them, what is encountered is an emotional reaction to the visual appearance of the text. To do that, basically, it is needed to filter out readable words, instead preferring the visual structures that can convey the rhythm and visual quality of writing, as in the case of visual poetry.

This explanation of Poynor is also valid for contemporary western calligraphy that consists of highly abstract signs or at least does not contain readable words. Even if the calligraphers employ the written text, they still try to attribute the content and the visual interpretation that mostly reveal the emotion or trigger the feeling that demands to be considered as a calligraphic art piece. An attribution of visual and emotional features to calligraphy is also related to the deconstruction of typography, which, as mentioned earlier, puts forward the visual expression by utilizing the possibilities with progressive expansion



of the limits and boundaries of writing. Focusing on the gesture, the line, or a stroke, make a contribution with the drips or drops of the ink and assess them as complementary elements of the calligraphic composition, sometimes using different styles in an eclectic way with the performative aspect; moreover, somehow involving the audience/reader to interpret or experiment the work depending on their background -as in the case of open work- seems to come with the postmodern period.

Here, it should be significant the asemic feature within writing, hence within contemporary calligraphy, which is a highly considerable attitude of the western artists, which takes its roots from the Far Eastern calligraphy culture, that can be related to today's works of calligraphy while examining the selected artists on following parts.

#### **6.4. Asemic writing related to contemporary Western calligraphy**

As stated earlier, asemic features also can be observed through most of the practices of Meulman, Lampas, Brown, Ingmire, and Dokins, who are examined in Chapter VI. It can be claimed that whether contemporary calligraphers are aware of the term asemic writing or not, with its concept mentioned below, they seem to be searching for something beyond the literal meaning of the word by using the potential of the calligraphic signs and units such as lines or strokes, as in Futurist or Dadaist works, also in postmodern graphic design, particularly typography. For this reason, lastly, before continuing with the selected artists in this chapter, it will be significant to mention asemic writing and its general application to relate to the contemporary applications in the realm of western calligraphy.

First, it is necessary to look at the meaning of the term semantic to explain the term asemic. *Online Etymology Dictionary* explains the term semantic, which dates back to the year 1894, from French *sémantique*, applied by Michel Bréal (1883) to the psychology of language, from Greek *semantikos* means "significant," from *semainein* means "to show by sign, signify, point out, indicate by a sign" (Harper, n.d.).

On the other hand, the term asemic is used to refer to "having no specific semantic content" (Leftwich, 2016). If something is asemic, it means that it does not seem interested in the literal meaning of the word. What writing means for asemic writers needs to be mentioned here to frame the concept, which is also one of the features of the calligraphy works of this chapter.

Asemic writer Jacobson (2013) describes writing as "essentially coded marks on a surface" (2013: para. 3) and continues with asemic writing, which is described as "being an unspecified open semantic code -a code that is open to interpretation, with no fixed meaning" (Ibid.). It is understood that contrary to a general understanding of writing mentioned in Chapter II as a reflection of the spoken word, Jacobson points to a general assessment of the term writing with an extensive definition here; moreover, according to him, asemic writing is assumed

to be a new way of expression through dismissal with the language. Words are not appreciated through their meaning anymore; instead, be seen as entities that do not require a literal meaning of reading.

Moreover, Leftwich (2016) explains asemic writing "A seme is a unit of meaning, or the smallest unit of meaning (also known as a sememe, analogous with phoneme). An asemic text than might be involved with units of language for reasons other than that of producing meaning" (2016: 14). It is what we encountered through the works of most contemporary calligraphers. Even if the composition looks highly loaded, sometimes it only consists of small units: strokes.

Here, it can be explained asemic as being without any semantic contact, which may consist of handwriting gestures, letters, and symbols. Also, characters from other writing systems such as Chinese, Arabic, and Korean can be added to the fragments of letters and even new symbols of one's devising. Hence, it is claimed that the asemic writer incorporates writing but "at an infra-verbal level" (Leftwich, 2016). Here, it is also pointed at something beyond the word's semantic meaning instead of focusing on composing ideas into words and sentences as marks.

Fig. 12 illustrates one of the asemic writing of Leftwich that mimics the written text, which seems written in haste because of rough scribbles, free form of text-like handwriting piece. It looks like a page extracted from a book with its systematic appearance. For a moment, it is such as to convince the viewer that it is a written text. With this appearance, it evokes a classical sense of reading urge in the eyes and arouses the expectation that there is a written text and a semantic meaning to be extracted from the text. However, as claimed above, Leftwich demands a high-pitched reading here, which means looking beyond the text, and observing the appearance of the texture as an image of the written text.

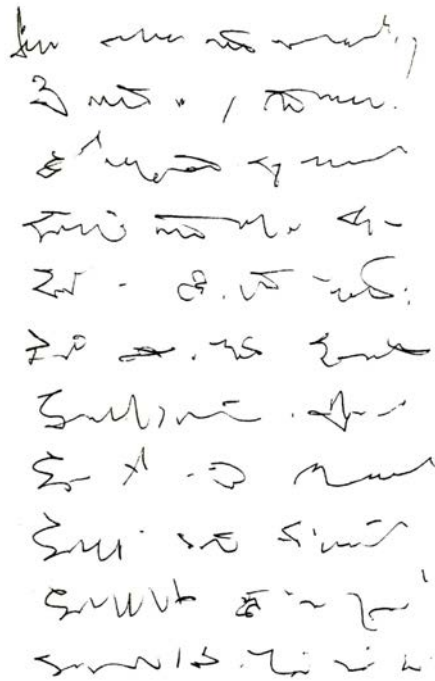


Fig. 12. Jim Leftwich, n.d.,  
Source: Jacobson & Gaze,  
(2013: 113)

Another example can be observed in Fig. 13, the asemic writing works of Italian artist Monica Dengo, who seems to be influenced by calligraphy and illustrates her asemic writing by calligraphic strokes. She underlines her belief in writing by hand as "a powerful means of expression of our humanity and see the act of writing as an act of marking our existence, a gesture that has deep meaning in itself and not only connection with the verbal message that it carries" (manicodengo.com, n.d., para. 1). Her formal training in calligraphy seems to manifest itself through her gestures, which she tries to find a way to establish a contemporary connection.

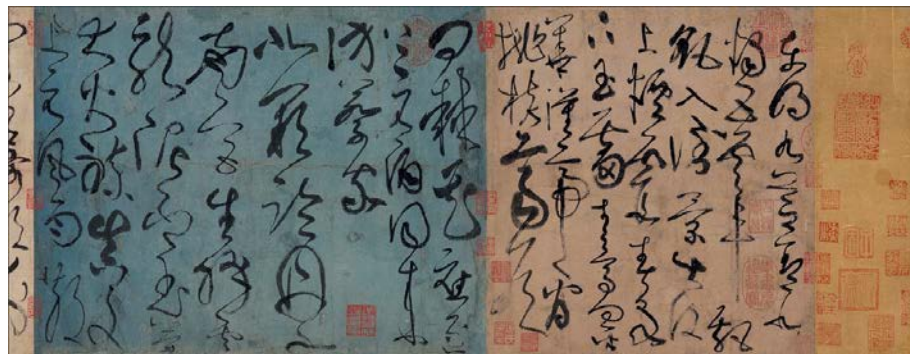
Fig. 13. Monica Dengo, n.d., Source: Jacobson & Gaze, (2013: 61).



Dengo convinces us that there is a text in her work, with the image-like text she created with hand gestures. She creates a movement in her composition as if there were some ligatures or elongated, exaggeratedly interpreted letters. The overall image-like appearance reminds the calligraphic works of Meulman that will be mentioned in this chapter with his motto, the word as an image, blended with his graffiti artist background and calligrapher/painter -as he started to call himself to describe his later calligraphic works. Here, it should be stated that even if the term asemic started to be discussed in the twentieth century in the West; this concept is not new, on the contrary, there exist very earlier examples of the asemic writers, such as "Crazy" Zhang Xu (ca. 675-750), a Chinese calligrapher of the Tang Dynasty (618-907) -also mentioned in Chapter IV.

Fig. 14 shows an earlier example of asemic writing belonging to Zhang Xu. He used to write exuberant and energetic cursive calligraphy, which became known as the "crazy grass style" -mentioned in Chapter IV- under the influence of a copious amount of wine.

Fig. 14. *Four Ancient Poems*, Zhang Xu, Cursive script on hang scroll, ink on paper, Source: China Online Museum Web Sites, comuseum.com/calligraphy/masters/zhang-xu/four-poems/, access: 26.05.2016.



Assessing it as a process and performance, Jacobson and Gaze (2013) finds asemic writing closer to intuitive rather than logical. He even mentions Zen art, which points to the notion of a “no-mind”<sup>4</sup> state -referring to the Far Eastern Calligraphy tradition mentioned in Chapter IV, based on the fact that Chinese ink landscapes, handwritten Japanese batik designs, overall calligraphy, painting, and poetry, which intertwined with each other are said to be written.

As an example, *ensō* (circle) -mentioned in Chapter IV, is a sacred symbol of the Zen school of Buddhism, one of the most common subjects of Japanese Calligraphy. It may be called “the circle of enlightenment;” “the infinity circle;” is translated as “mutual circle;” or “circle of togetherness” (Egen, n.d.: para. 1). Even though it seems simple in form, a perfect circle that is desired is notoriously challenging to draw. For this reason, some calligraphers, as claimed, spend quite an amount of time practicing drawing it. As believed, the overall appearance of the circle is determined by the artist’s personal feelings and mood, as well as style.

As a concept, the open circle reflects Japanese Zen Buddhism, and it represents eliminating the desire for perfection and letting the universe be as it is. It embodies the “no-mind” concept mentioned above. In a state of “no-mind,” a person eliminates the thoughts and emotions and is completely present now. It is believed that true creativity can occur if a person draws *ensō* and can manifest the state of total presence (K.M., 2019). It is underlined that *ensō* practices make it elevate a state that is loaded with full feelings and emotions that not every person can reach or reflect on.

Here, it can be claimed that *ensō* is a sign overloaded with various meanings mentioned and can be ranked as asemic writing, not just its form but also in concept highly parallel with the promise of asemic writers who assess the act of writing beyond the Western perception and interpretation. It seems they also demand freeing the mind and the term and act of writing, as in the case of a Japanese calligrapher.

Moreover, avant-garde Japanese calligraphy -also mentioned in Chapter IV with their tendency to create contemporary visual poetry and illegible graffiti lettering or for the Islamic calligraphy, as in the case of Zenderoudi and his interpretation of *siyah mashq* (black writing) -mentioned in Chapter V, that consists of gestures of the calligrapher as a kind of calligraphy practice can be shown as examples for asemic calligraphy.

Even in the different calligraphy traditions, a tendency toward illegibility or producing unreadable signs can be observed throughout history in various concepts. Its main aim is to challenge conventional notions of reading, writing, and language’s meaningfulness –not only supposed to act as a “servant of the text” (Stevens, 2013: 25) -mentioned

4 The old Zen term *mushin*, translated into English as “no mind,” implies two things: without mind and heart, assessed as the phase in which a wakeful brain disengaged itself from all self-referent activities. In Zen meditation, the meditator keeps a minimal focus on the rise and fall of the breath. The entry into a “no mind” phase occurs by dropping out the stimulus and response patterns. Hence, Zen’s “no mind” is a mental posture in which perceptual awareness goes beyond emotional echoes (Austin, 1999). This term is examined in Chapter IV, entitled “The Far Eastern Calligraphy and its influences on Western contemporary Calligraphy Practices.”

in Chapter III. Intending to write, these mentioned artists who talk about asemic writing, namely Leftwich, Jacobson, Dermisache, or Gaze, call themselves asemic writers; however, when looking at Tobey, Motherwell, Tàpies, or Twombly -mentioned in part "6.2. The western abstract painting related to contemporary western calligraphy," with their gesture on paintings generally alluded with the writing-like gestures challenge the conventional notion of art that has calligraphic connotations through the limited usage of color -black and white, also their emphasis on brush strokes but most of the time nothing to do with the mystical aspect of calligraphy. They stopped hiding the brushstrokes for the sake of gesture and freed the painting from mimetic representation by breaking all relations with the objective world with the totally automatic execution of the painting.

Under this explanation, it can be stated that the asemic tradition is claimed as a Western attempt to generate a similar fusion of these separate cultures, which also carries its references from Futurism and Dada. These practices also cannot be considered similar to the fore-understanding of western writing mentioned in Chapter II in any traditional sense of the term. They offered a different sense of a physical form of writing created purposely to exploit the meaning of the writing as a means of physical functional forms. Through their shock value, they were so controversial and radical in confronting western society after the destruction of World War I.

According to Jacobson (2013), the motivation behind the asemic writers is the belief that the word does not function as well in today's culture as it had in the past, which is explained in Chapter II as the perception of writing serving as a functional entity merely conveying the meaning of the word, served for the spoken language; hence, asemic writing offers to express complex emotions better than verbal writing does. The word, and the writing systems, in a conventional sense, are not sufficient enough for the asemic writer to express and convey all the emotions of the writer. When one reads the text, the semantic meaning may provide or at least intent to illustrate the thought of the writer's mind, but still, according to asemic writers, the visual power of the writing gestures, strokes, lines, stains loaded with this tendency may convey beyond that text could ever reflect. That means the western writing system developed based on the function and appreciated as one of the most advanced writing systems in the World mentioned in Chapter II is insufficient for asemic writers to convey the overall meaning that they are intended to reflect.

Hence, what Jacobson stresses here, is that western perception is transformed into a new form of expression, and he explains this as follows:

To me, all writing is asemic writing. By this, I mean that there is relativity to writing. If someone can understand a piece of writing by being able to read the words, it is not asemic writing for that person. And if a person cannot read the writing, the text becomes asemic. I will break it down into two definitions: true asemic writing and relative asemic writing. True asemic writing is when even the creator of the piece cannot read their own writing, and relative asemic writing is a natural writing system that can be read by some people but not by everyone. (Jacobson, 2013: para. 12)



This quotation points to the diversity in the realm of asemic practices and collects them into two categories: true asemic and relative asemic writing. The main common feature here is that both preserve the feature of being illegible.

It is also said by Jacobson, whose approach to his work is with a sense of the history of writing, that he feels a great connection with ancient writers, such as cave-painted proto-writing, hieroglyphs, and illuminated manuscripts (Jacobson, 2013). For this reason, most asemic writer with references to traditional writing practices claims to explore this type of writing, including calligraphy. It points to other features of asemic writing that are influenced by tradition in a sense. Even though the forms seem highly formless, not resemble the letter that one can recognize, it is still insisted to use the word writing to refer to them, not painting or drawing; even the execution may consist of all techniques. Here, one of the most significant common features seems to be the intention of the writer, employed writing gestures or signs performed writing in their own unique way.

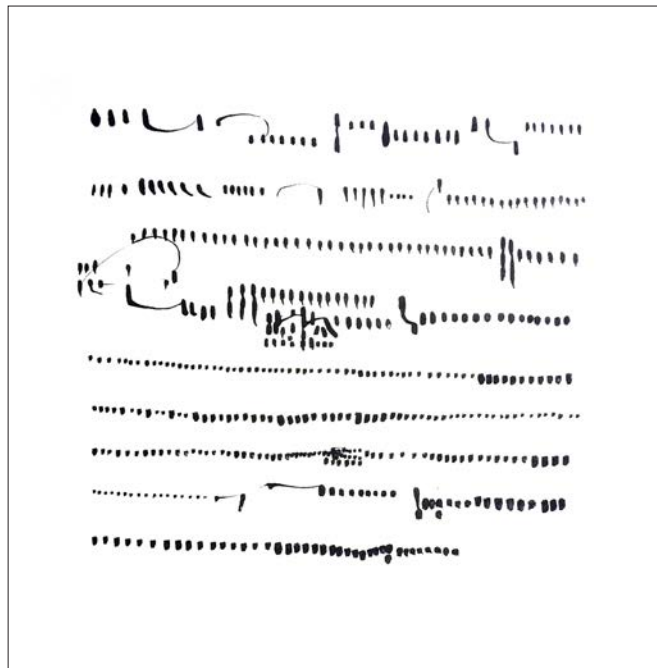
On the other hand, the other noteworthy detail is explained by Leftwich (2016) as "there is no actually perfect asemic thing or sign, since everything conveys some meaning, everything may find its way to -at least- an inner emotional (scribble of) meaning" (2016: 37). For this reason, he offers the term *pansemia* from the Greek prefix *pan-* which refers to "all." As he claims, everything expresses or is an echo of semantically rich signs, almost providing a *shadow of meaning*. It is impossible to detach the meaningful written traces that are imagined or conceived. Even among the asemic writers, the term is found problematic; however, it seems that using the term asemic is appropriate in this research since it is still under debate, and as observed, most of the artist in this genre uses the term asemic to refer their works created with the same strategy.

Hence, what is stressed here is that western perception is transformed into a new form of expression in which one can have an impression of a text from the visual appearance of the work, as in Twombly's case, which leads a viewer to read or to decipher. The main common feature here is to preserve the feature of being illegible. It could be written by an alphabetic system, even consisting of the minor units of writing, handwriting gestures, and symbols, also characters from other writing systems such as Chinese, Arabic, and Korean, moreover, can be added to the fragments of letters, and even new symbols of one's devising; however, if the writer is able to read it, it cannot be claimed as asemic work for that writer. What is pointed out here is that being beyond the semantic meaning of the word, instead of focusing on composing ideas into words and sentences as marks. Under this explanation, asemic writing is assessed as a Western attempt to generate a similar fusion of these separate cultures (Leftwich, 2016).

For example, a noteworthy Argentinian artist and asemic writer, Mirtha Dermisache (1940-2012), can be shown. She wrote her first book in 1967 consists of 500 pages in length without a single word can be given. As she said in his book, "I started writing, and the result was something

unreadable" (Owen & Pearson, 2017: para. 10); it can be claimed that her work invokes an impulse to read through the visual execution of the lines and strokes, the smallest units that can be assessed as a part of writing as can be seen in Fig. 15. This page consists of readable text, neither print nor script, just free strokes or lines; a kind of drawing actually seems to imitate a conventional text format. It is noteworthy to visual resemblance with Twombly's scribbles, which also seems the text with following lines as in the text.

Fig. 15. *Sin Título (Texto)*, Mirtha Dermisache, nd., c.1970s, ink on paper, a selected example is from *Textos 1970-1979*, Source: Owen & Pearson, (2018: 15).



Roland Barthes wrote a letter to Dermisache about her "extreme intelligence" and "nothing is more difficult than to produce an essence, that is, a form that refers only to its name; didn't some Japanese artists spend their entire lives learning to draw a circle that only refers to the idea of a circle? Your work is linked to such a demand" (Dalbello & Shaw, 2011: 339).

Barthes' idea about Dermisache's works that reminded him of *ensō* practices makes it elevates a state loaded with whole feelings and emotions that not everyone can reach or reflect on. That also underlines the promise of asemic writers who assess the act of writing beyond Western perception and interpretation. It seems they also demand freeing not the mind but also the term and act of writing, as in the case of a Japanese calligrapher.

As Stevens (2013) states, letter artists, even without letters, have a passion for letters and writing, which means the idea of writing, and communicating through these signs is repeatedly underlined as a part of writing. It creates an open work that Eco (1989) mentions, reflects the calligrapher's perception, and gives a chance to interact with the viewer/audience of calligraphy unconventionally.

Since calligraphy, as claimed in this dissertation, is a subgroup of writing and judged by the western perception that is deeply problematic; however, it already has that nature in itself, as in Far Eastern calligraphy tradition, hence focusing on the stroke or a line is not necessarily assessed as a reflection of the tendency to create an abstract form, but with the reference of medieval scribes and scripts, being aware of the fundamental consciousness in the realm of writing, even the visual form seems abstract; in its concept, it can be still assessed calligraphy without literal meaning of the words and letters, since it is accumulative form deeply referenced by the past, medieval scripts, and scribes. It is pretty much the same to think about how western writing can be wordless as in the case of asemic writing.

The main focus is the abstraction of conventional western writing by using writing gestures to reveal the main purpose: creating beyond the conventional perception of western writing and calligraphy.

As underlined, contemporary calligraphy also has roots in the past. It requires training embraced with historical, technical, and practical knowledge, as traditional calligraphy is also developed by constant repetition and practice.

What is seen here, as in the Far Eastern calligraphy, western contemporary calligraphy can also not be judged with the criteria of western abstraction as observed here through various artists that affected contemporary calligraphers such as Meulman. In other words, focusing on the stroke or a line is not due to the tendency to create an abstract form in the sense of western abstraction; being aware of the fundamental consciousness in the realm of writing has become an essential feature of contemporary interpretation.

## **6.5. Niels "Shoe" Meulman**

In this part, Meulman is the first contemporary calligrapher that will be mentioned here. Apart from his popularity among the young calligraphers, as a result of the intersection of his background, he started with graffiti and blended it with western calligraphy. The transformation of his calligraphic works can be experienced both conceptually and visually that emerged over time. Especially considering the influences of traditional western calligraphy and the influences of Far Eastern and Middle Eastern calligraphy, it is inevitable that they have contributed to the transformation in his works over time.

Furthermore, western abstraction, mentioned in Chapter IV and in this chapter in part "6.2. The western abstract painting related to contemporary western calligraphy," through the examination of Meulman's work, it will be seen the contemporary tendency in the realm of calligraphy can be related to the modern period of Futurist and Dada artists, also carry various postmodern features as mentioned earlier that, which assess calligraphic work as an image and tries to build an aesthetic consideration and interpretation as an autonomous art form that can reflect the personal understanding, even feeling and emotions of the calligrapher. Even if all framed features sound

like his works represent a break from the tradition of calligraphy, it is not. Instead, he embraces the past and takes his various references from history technically and conceptually. Hence, through Meulman's work, the various features of contemporary western calligraphy will be framed to help describe and locate today's calligraphy practices.

It is decided to examine Meulman's works in their chronological order so that the transformations in his calligraphy journey will provide insight that supports the living and transforming nature of western calligraphy and also presents how Meulman's point of view in terms of Western calligraphy may be affected and transformed during his career under various influences that will be determined in this part.

Niels "Shoe" Meulman (b. 1967, Amsterdam) is a graffiti artist, painter, writer, designer, and calligrapher known for his calligraphy works carrying vivid traces of graffiti and calligraphy. He started to tag streets with the name "Shoe" (Fig. 16) in 1979 and became a graffiti pioneer in Amsterdam.

Fig. 16. Shoe, Museumplein (Amsterdam), 1983, Source: Meulman Official Websites, [nielsshoemeulman.com/chronicle/](http://nielsshoemeulman.com/chronicle/), access: 12.02.2019.



During the 1980s, he traveled with the graffiti crew called "Crime Time Kings" to Paris, New York, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Oslo, and Barcelona and spread their work throughout Europe. Garbage trucks, trams, television studios, shopping malls, and subways were among the mediums that served their performances.

As known, the 1980s was when graffiti emerged as a genre of modern urban art, which started to develop in the 1960s and 70s in New York. However, graffiti served as slogan-like text, bold caps written in public spaces. It soon evolved into large, multicolored, and visually complex calligraphic illustrations made by spray paints, especially on public transport and the subway of New York. Hence, the New York City authorities started a so-called war against graffiti artists. Since graffiti became increasingly related to deliberate rebellion and provocativeness, it started describing graffiti as a vandalism action. During these times, graffiti works have been eliminated or removed with the fear of the community's debasement (Ganz, 2004).

Later then, in the late 1990s, post-graffiti and street art aesthetics began to attract attention. These movements, like graffiti, took an opposing stance,

but they developed new directions and artistic techniques. They used various materials such as flour dough, adhesives, and stencils that deal with street art. The works were illegally performed in public places, just like graffiti, but street art focused more on paintings than letters. Many post-graffiti artists have ensured that established graffiti intertwine with traditions such as folk art, metalworking, and calligraphy (Farthing, 2012).

Ganz (2004) claims that graffiti is accessed as an act with a lengthy historical background that dates back to a thousand years earlier; it has existed since the beginning of humanity.

Moreover, Mediavilla (1996) mentions Pompeian graffiti, and according to him, Latin peoples and Pompeians were wall scribblers. They were mostly written on their walls about two subjects that were love and politics. As Mediavilla (1996) states, they had written about their electoral notices, sometimes somewhat mocking tone that describes the chosen candidate as asses or oxen when the one was disinclined to vote for, and the subject of love, not that common; however, remarkable.

Furthermore, in terms of ancient writing styles, Thorpe (2017) points at the Rustic capitals, mentioned in Chapter III, which appeared in the first century. It was used until the ninth century belongs to the medieval period used for graffiti-like actions -just as the term "rustic" implies a robust and dynamic script that is preferred use for an announcement, information, or even for conveying rude messages that used to be written on the city's walls as graffiti today.

Looking at the meaning the word graffiti, according to *Encyclopedia Britannica*, is derived from the Italian word *sgraffito* means "scratch," and graffiti means "incised inscriptions," which can be described as a form of visual communication executed by an individual or group illegally that involving unauthorized marking on the public space (Britannica, 2014).

Hence, it can be said that graffiti is an act of writing with a deep historical background and, during its evolution, mostly executed illegally, and as a consequence, it was accepted as a vandalized act. Meulman is among these graffiti artists, who was declared *persona non grata* by the authorities of Germany, as it is claimed on his official website (nielsshoemeulman.com, n.d.), and in one of his interviews in the newspaper NRC Handelsblad of 1986 there is the capital headline written: "Ik ben een vandal" (I am a vandal) (nielsshoemeulman.com/chronicle, n.d.). It seems that he is not uncomfortable with being accepted that way, and he intends to embrace it. For Meulman, graffiti and calligraphy started to be considered a type of sister art that can be blended with each other, as the Far Eastern culture considers the same for painting and calligraphy due to the reason that both are grounded on communication through letters, words, or at least the concept of writing even if it consists writing-like gesture that takes references from writing.

Moreover, as will be mentioned in the following pages, the reason for this perception of Meulman. Meulman thinks ancient scribes and graffiti writers have various common features, such as being anonymous, bombarding the surface with letters, and performing their arts under severe conditions.



Thus, calligraphy can provide new possibilities, such artists like himself to reveal the personal interpretation of contemporary western calligraphy. What is considerable about Meulman's approaches here is his concept of contemporary calligraphy, in which he transitioned from the streets to fine art called *calligraffiti*.

*Calligraffiti* is a term derived from a combination of calligraphy and graffiti as a unique fusion because of the claim of Meulman that calligraphy and graffiti, hence scribe and graffiti writer have various features in common- which will be mentioned in the following pages.

Taghinia and Heller (2013) define the term *calligraffiti* as a "survey of modern and contemporary artists who have experimented with the use of language and examined the power of the letter within their works" (Taghinia & Heller, 2013: 5).

Through examining the works of Meulman, it will be understood that the primary concern of the Meulman is neither language nor the letter because Meulman is a calligrapher that is in the search for the beyond the literal meaning of the text, word, or a letter, which may be merely assumed as a trigger to experiment. This issue will be better understood in the following pages by examining his works. So, it can be said that the term *calligraffiti* refers to a fusion of Meulman's perception of Western contemporary calligraphy and his graffiti background, through which Meulman seems to establish a link between calligraphy/calligrapher and graffiti/graffiti artist.

From 2007 until 2010 I've been experimenting with different brushes, different papers, different inks. And what I found is that Arabic, Latin and oriental styles are different... The way a human writes is quite universal. Just like a cat jumps on a table the same way across the globe. Of course, the different ways of writing are part of a specific culture and took centuries to evolve, so I chose the one closest to me. I strongly identify with the medieval monks. ...I think those monks -traveling around Europe, painting their golden letters - were the graffiti writers of their time. ([calligraffiti.nl/interviews](http://calligraffiti.nl/interviews), 2014: para. 64)

Here, he points at a link and similarities between himself as a graffiti artist who keeps his anonymity by using his tag "Shoe," traveling and bombing the street with his tag. On the other hand, the anonymous ancient scribes mentioned in Chapter III worked on manuscripts under severe conditions of dedicating letters and words. Meulman sees ancient scribes as precursors to a generation of artists who were painting words and had to travel to other cities to copy books or exchange styles which affected the evolution of the ancient script styles. Graffiti artists like himself also travel and meet various graffiti writers, collaborate, and paint words on the walls. Moreover, for an ancient scribe, making a mistake was not an option while he was studying during the daylight with great attention, whereas graffiti artists usually are forced to perform in the dark with haste; hence mistakes are either left or accepted as a part of a whole or quickly eliminated from the work. It is noteworthy that the influences of the ancient writing styles, not just scripts but the cultural features and the traditional aspects, seem to take his attention and affect and reflect as a concept to his practices from the very beginning of his *calligraffiti* practices.

With *calligraffiti*, Meulman embraces the written or painted letters resembling various ancient styles, the approach to the visual treatment

of the letterforms, or traditional decorative flourishing with a careless untraditional attitude. Through Meulman's works, these features will observe and examine Meulman's calligraffiti approach to frame the dynamics and influences behind his contemporary western calligraphy, which is also affected several young graffiti and calligraphy artists, that will be mentioned in parts "6.6. Pokras Lampas," "6.7. Said Dokins," and "6.12. Viktor Kams."

Meulman launched the calligraffiti movement with a solo exhibition at the Post BG venue in Amsterdam in 2007, as well as in Berlin and Cologne, Ibiza in 2008. He demonstrates some of the extended possibilities of his particular art form with firm roots in graffiti and a realm of performance that the action of writing and painting -as he claims- merge into a distinct discipline. As a founder artist of the *Calligraffiti* movement, he began to invite contemporary artists worldwide to paint in his hybrid style under the name of Calligraffiti Ambassador. It reached and affected a broader audience and practitioners of this art form. To become an ambassador, artists are expected to deal with some mural projects and their own approaches fusing with the graffiti aspect. These artists later established a group called "Calligraphy Masters" with the intention to create awareness of western calligraphy, particularly among young artists, which consists of along with like-minded artists with the intention to encourage more and more people with a rising interest in mastering their hands and developing new experimental paths in this evolving discipline.

The group's intent to provide the latest information and event in the field of calligraphy as a non-profit organization gradually became an internationally renowned community of more than thirty artists, partly due to their activities in the field they took credit for. Meanwhile, the community has pioneered many organizations to arouse public interest and keep many emerging calligraphy artists alert, continuing to provide its presence that is felt and combined with today's technical skills. This issue will be mentioned in part "6.12. Viktor Kams," a designer and calligrapher, who is one of the members of this group.

Fig. 17 illustrates one of Meulman's earlier works of the Calligraffiti exhibition held in Amsterdam in 2007.



Fig. 17. *Unruly 001*, Indian ink on rice paper, 2007, Source: Meulman & Eeuwens (2010: 21).

He has been working with the word "unruly"<sup>5</sup> for years, which basically refers to a reaction to an overly regulated society. He explains his concept with the following statement:

The paradox of unruly lies in culture and nature. By setting rules for ourselves we try to create order in our planet's chaos. Getting rid of the weeds and planting flowers and building fences, we hope to keep the scary wilderness out. But there is a lot of order in nature's unruliness. The Unruly on the right shows that no straight line is really straight if you look closely. The left shows the opposite when plants grow, they follow a set of rules that have proven to be very efficient. Not unruly at all. (Meulman & Eeuwens, 2010: 122)

Meulman's style here is a highly stylized version that seems to have a way of going back and forth on the fine line between text and image, supporting the word's verticality, making the word difficult to read but still recognizable. The reason to assess it as stylized will be understood by examining the style by comparing it with the ancient style of writing, particularly the Gothic hand. The regularity of the strokes creates a texture-like appearance with repetitions and similar space left between each stroke, which can be observed especially in the Gothic system of writing examined in Chapter III. The formal similarities between Meulman's version of hand and the Gothic scripts will be analyzed through his other works, providing supportive information for his interpretation of the gothic styles -particularly *fraktur*- in his practices.

In Fig. 17, *Unruly 001* calligraphy practice, using black ink on white rice paper -the material of the Far Eastern calligraphy tradition- creates a high contrast to make the word strongly visible, reminding the Far Eastern calligraphy in which black is the color through which the various tones can be given with the dilution of the ink.

Meulman also seems to want to show the traces of the brush -commonly used for Far Eastern calligraphy, as discussed in Chapter IV; however, here, the brush Meulman employs is the broad edge brush used for the Roman capitals, as mentioned in Chapter III.

Furthermore, the repetition reminds the practice of the calligrapher to master his hand, focusing on the strokes first, then the letter and its constructions. The long stroke of the head of the letter "r" is the only feature that seems to balance with the horizontal touch. Here, even it provides a visual balance by breaking the verticality of the regular strokes; as Meulman states, the central concept for him is to underline the unruliness of nature and culture within the order that points to a paradox.

It is evident that here the feature of beauty that comes with the traditional perspective based on the perfectly constructed letter to be recognizable and readable is not the concern of Meulman either. This issue points to the changing mindset and the transformation of the perception of calligraphy in the contemporary attitude that will also be observed through other selected contemporary western calligraphers examined in this chapter.

<sup>5</sup> Unruly is a name that Meulman picks for one of his companies inspired by a stewardess on an Easy Jet flight who passed the form written: "WARNING TO UNRULY PASSENGER FROM" (Meulman & Eeuwens, 2010: 17).

Other works of Meulman can be seen in Fig. 18, taking place in the Nosmo King exhibition in the Hip Hop bar De Duivel (*The Devil*) in Amsterdam in 2008. It coincides with the same weekend when smoking is banned in coffee shops and bars in Amsterdam. It was the first smoke-free weekend that addressed that restriction by Meulman's calligraphic works, which present the concepts of his attitude, such as *Free City* (Fig. 18), *Dope Smoker*, and *Where there is no smoke there's no Fire*, evidently to resist the smoking restriction constituted by European Union (Meulman, 2010: 18).



Fig. 18. *Free City*, Black permanent marker ink on polyprone film, 2008, Source: Meulman & Eeuwens, (2010: 107).

It can be observed that the work consists of only words, and each letter interacts with the other as a running hand, which makes us think that it is written in haste. The black permanent mark ink creates a runny flood that cannot resist gravity, making an impression of being sloppy, and the black-white composition creates a strong impact as a stamp.

Meulman prefers to use a marker here, supporting the contrast that does not provide any space for observing the traces of the hand, as in the case of a brush. There are various exaggerations in the constructions of the letters, such as the letter "F" with the head and tail, the letter "r" with the head, same as in Fig. 18, the letter "e" with the middle bar, and the letter "y" elaborated with small decoration. The letters' style is the same type of style that Meulman mostly employs, which is derived from the *fraktur* script that will be examined through various other works of Meulman on the following pages.

Once again, it can be said that this work is stated in between the word and image, which underlines the motto of Meulman; "seeing words as images" (Consiglio, 2013: para. 8), which reminds the various art movements that took place in western art and design, such as Futurism, or Dada, also as examined in Chapter IV and V, because of

the writing system of the Chinese, Japanese, also the writing system of Arabic scripts and the mindset behind them that lead the different consideration of the written word then the West with attributed values comes with the cultural and religious system. This issue also will be mentioned in the following after examining more works of Meulman to provide more referential practices to discuss.

Other provocative practices of Meulman can be seen in Fig. 19, entitled *Throw-Up*. He literally throws up the ink on the canvas, creating tension that can be assessed almost as an attack.

Fig. 19. *Throw-Up*, Main promotional visual for solo exhibition at Arkitip Intel Project Space, 2010, Source: Meulman & Eeuwens, (2012: 65).



This is the literal presentation of the bombing that comes with the graffiti background of Meulman and is further interpreted and elaborated with calligraphy, as can be seen in Fig. 20.

Fig. 20. *The Way*, 2010, Acrylic on linen, Source: Meulman & Eeuwens, (2012: 99).

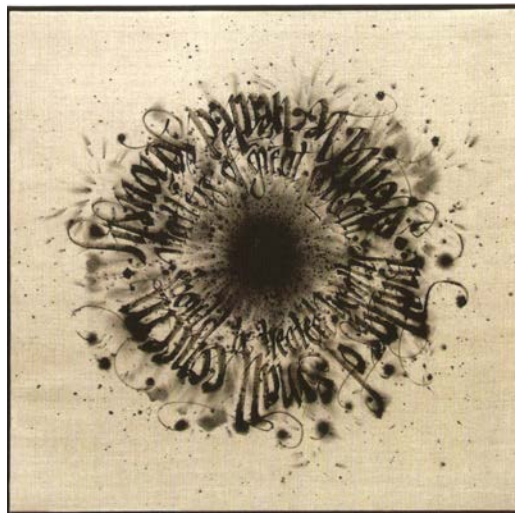


Fig. 20, entitled *The Way*, was created in 2010 with the dominant feature, the spot of ink, located at the center of the linen. The text is organized as a circle widening around the ink spot, written "Matters of great concern should be treated lightly. Matters of small concern should be treated seriously," a saying from Hagakure -a practical and



spiritual guide for a warrior- by the samurai scribe Tsuramoto Tashiro (1678-1748) (Meulman & Eeuwens, 2012: 138).

Considering the visual application of letters and ink spots gives the sense of rule/control with Meulman, who are still concerned about writing the readable message, and the sense of un-rule/ un-control, with the ink bombing on the canvas that leaving stains on the message as a result of scattered pieces which can also be assessed as complementary elements that build a harmonious interconnection with the interpretation of the ancient style, comes from the past, and the contemporary interpretation of the artists comes with the present.

Meulman embraces various accident-like spots, normally not acceptable in traditional calligraphy practices, which is examined in Chapter III in part entitled "3.2. Mastering the skill of ancient writing in the Middle Ages," which caused to rewrite the overall page of the scribe. Accidents or mistakes were deemed demonic in the Middle Ages, believed to be caused by the so-called demon *titivillus*, "a patron demon of calligraphy" (Drogin, 1989: 17). Whereas, in a contemporary interpretation, it is not a failure of the script nor an accident or error that needs to be corrected; instead, it seems to be perceived as an opportunity to employ as a complementary feature, a gesture of the hand loaded with sense and emotions of the calligrapher depending on the calligrapher's concept, as in the case of Meulman. It reminds the search for inspiration in the dirt of walls or the streaked patterns in stones of Da Vinci, or the phenomenon of mistakes and distortions of McNiff (1998) that are underlined in the case of trusting the process. It is claimed that the accidental blot, mark, or naturally occurring stain can be assessed as a starting point for some extraordinary interpretation (Turner, 2011). These features are also highly significant from my personal perception of calligraphy, which reflects my research and the process of creating and transforming the concept and visual interpretation of my calligraphic work that will be examined in Chapter VII. It will be seen basically letting pour the ink on the surface while creating a hand gesture is assessed as a contribution to the composition, becomes a part, sometimes the dominant feature that affects the overall feeling of the visual appearance. It leads to sometimes repeating over and over again until they reach that sense which is believed that gained with constant training of the hand and acquired muscle memory that gives the calligrapher the feeling of confidence in any hand movement as a profit. Or just continuing after accidentally ink drop and deciding to respond at that moment with the accumulated theoretical and practical knowledge rather than the chance.

Here, it is apparent that Meulman wants to see the act of bombing as an opportunity that will support his concept of chaos and tension through unexpected gestures by an unpredictable act of bombing. On one side, there is an order with the circled written text, and on the other side, there is chaos that is created with the actual ink bomb right at the center of the composition. It reminds the postmodern feature that is mentioned in part "6.3. The postmodern condition related to contemporary western calligraphy."

On the other hand, a sense of humility comes with making mistakes, contrary to the belief of the traditional western calligraphy, which was searching for the perfect construction of the letters, in which the beauty

was found, as mentioned in Chapter II. Whereas the idea of mistakes or errors points to the idea of fragility, which refers to the mark of the hand, which is never perfect in that sense. This kind of perception, as McNiff (1998) claims, introduces a new perspective on aesthetic value, being less concerned about the reproduction of the ancient writing styles; instead, the intentional accidents and distortion led spontaneity to increase through the unique qualities of the gestures of the calligraphy comes with experience and experiment. This issue also reminds the concept of Far Eastern calligraphy that focuses on the action of the calligrapher, his self-development as an artist and a human that needed to reflect through the hand of the calligrapher and the brush with an energy that is appreciated by the writer, and the viewer. As mentioned in Chapter IV, this issue is also inspired by Western abstract artists and contemporary western calligraphers, and Meulman is apparently among them. With this attitude, for the work of Meulman in Fig. 20, it can be said that the text becomes hardly legible, but some of the letters can be recognizable; still, the overall composition starts to become an image rather than a written text. A more individualistic approach to strokes and gestures captures viewers' attention and creates visual contact with the calligraphic practice. This feature became dominant in Meulman's calligraphy interpretation, as other works will be presented in this part.

Meulman also takes attention with his performances on Singapore's streets (Fig. 21).

Fig. 21. *Sweeping Beauty I (Fading beauty)*, 2012, Singapore, Source: Youtube, [youtube.com/watch?v=9GCFdTH\\_SbA&t=2s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9GCFdTH_SbA&t=2s), access: 19.06.2018.



It is a project he performed during the calligraffiti tour held in 2012. Meulman, in these performances, uses water and broom that can mimic the broad edge nib on the broadest surface. Meulman engages his interpretation of the Gothic hand with various flourishes that he adds.

The artist's whole body's graceful movement, instead of the wrist and fingertips as a dance of the sweeping broom with Meulman, once again shows his fondness for the splashes of the water and the image of a word. In this case, the word beauty, within seconds, evaporates and disappears on the ground, becoming practicing ephemeral calligraphy on the ground. The written word appears on the surface entirely and then starts to disappear and transform a kind of image of a word that becomes abstract. Here, Meulman's practices are inspired by the concept of *dishu*, practice techniques of China, using the water as ink and brush to practice Chinese characters and calligraphy on the streets and parks of China, starting at the beginning of the 1990s in North Beijing park, then spread to most major cities of China. The written texts are based on classic Chinese literature, poetry, or aphorism and vary from regular to cursive styles, making the practitioner's whole body engage as a dance (*Dishu: A look at China's street calligraphers*, 2016).

Fig. 22 illustrates the *dishu* practices of Chinese practitioners and François Chastanet, the documentary photographer, filmmaker, and designer who also practices *dishu* in the Latin alphabet. Chastanet has a documentary project entitled *Dishu: Ground Calligraphy in China* (2011), the first survey on contemporary calligraphy practice in public places of Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenyang in China. His first interest was started in the early 2000s when *dishu* took his attention due to the similarity to graffiti in an urban context. In the survey of the roots of this cultural phenomenon and its development in Chinese society, he searches to explore the possibility of its application to other writing systems, mainly western.<sup>6</sup> The Latin calligraphy with the thick and thin contrast quality strokes can be handled with the same tools, namely with water and the Chinese street-foam brushes, which are flexible to manipulate to achieve expansion contrast related to the pressure applied to the writing tool.



Fig. 22. Practicing *dishu* in Roman and Chinese letterforms, Source: Anders, (2013: 26).

<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, Chastanet conducted several workshops in Utrecht, the Netherlands, in which each participant was invited to create his own writing tool, mainly out of foam and wooden sticks, and they experimented with them on the streets or a public squares with a Latin lettering model optimized for street calligraphy.

Chastanet (2011) believes that ground calligraphy can be adapted and practiced to western calligraphy. It is highly possible to perform in an occidental context both in the sense of physical and conceptual practice, and Meulman seems to have supported this idea with his own work.

Up until now, it can be claimed that traditional western calligraphy and Far Eastern calligraphy have been adapted and adopted by Meulman with various features. These include the techniques, tools, and materials of Chinese calligraphy, various aesthetic features such as performative aspects, and accidental possibilities of the writing process, including splashed ink as a part of the composition; all can be claimed as influenced by the Far Eastern calligraphy.

In the following years, Meulmans' approach to text as an image began to show itself better in his exhibition entitled "Justified Scriptures," held in 941 Geary, San Francisco, in 2012.

Fig. 23 illustrates one of his works called *Justified Scripture 3x1*, which represents a basic stroke -the letter "i"- of Meulman's fraktur interpretation written with a broom, and 3x1 refers to the number of strokes he employs here. The three repetitions of the same strokes differentiate every time he performs, both in their general forms, particularly in the strokes' beginnings and end, because the broom that Meulman employs here has a strong impact on the strokes' overall appearance with the ink splashes. The dry ink effects also help to see the path of the broom's hair that supports the stroke's verticality and creates texture once again differentiate from each other. Hence, all three are even the same stroke, still representing different touches of the writer.

Fig. 23. *Justified Scripture 3x1 with Broom*, 2012, Source: Meulman & Eeuwens, (2012: 37).



Here, it seems that Meulman slightly recedes himself from actually readable words, as in Dada or asemic writing; instead, he prefers to focus on one of calligraphy's fundamental elements, which is a stroke. It will not be that accurate to relevant it with the deconstruction of typography because it is an attitude closer to searching for the core rather than deconstructing. It is not locating himself apart from calligraphy but exploring the natural potential of writing and calligraphy. The repeated stroke can be claimed to derive from a tremendous interest in the beauty and aesthetics of the western written world, meaning the desire to write a perfectly constructed

letter requires countless repetitions until the hand correctly captures the style. It also reminds the *ensō* circle that the Zen monk draws to perfect it, held in Chapter IV. As Forng-Shean claims, "Different works of art create their image with its unique art language. Calligraphy can convey aesthetic feelings via a simple language: strokes. The emotions of strokes are presented through the form of handing calligraphy. It's the basic concept to appreciate the rhythm and dynamism of vivid strokes" (Forng-Shean, n.d.: para. 1-2). Hence, it will not be wrong to describe Meulman's approach here as searching the vivid stroke that can carry and reflect the writer's emotion inspired or influenced by the Far Eastern mindset.

From the perspective of traditional western calligraphy, it can be stated that the line between the traditional and contemporary leads to a discussion about the definition of western calligraphy as discussed in Chapter II because the only feature that Meulman employs is a basic stroke of the hand. The boundaries start to be blurry, and it becomes challenging to coin the work as calligraphy, especially considering the perception of writing and calligraphy in the West that is criticized through the well-construction of the letter and the readability of the text. However, as underlined in Chapter II, here, the situation needs to be rethought, and the discussion about what calligraphy is or is not with the traditional West's criteria needs to be transformed with the consideration of contemporary western calligraphy as discussed in this chapter.

The separation of the disciplines of writing versus painting or the belief of the indispensable feature of the writing assessed as the functionality of the text can not be ranked as a part of the culture of the writing or calligraphy. Writing has its potential to interpret depending on the artist seeking beyond these literal meaning criteria of the text. It has a desire to set free from the language barrier for the sake of a universal level. It has to be realized that the western idea of abstraction cannot be thought through the contemporary western calligraphy, which still embraces the tradition, acquiring the skill with arduous training and practices to master the skill that will help to see the beyond that mentioned here. Even contemporary calligraphy with highly abstract forms cannot be thought a different entity from calligraphy because it still requires the awareness of the ancient styles, tradition, and culture with accumulated technical and theoretical knowledge that is performed with writing like gestures and mindset of a calligrapher, also practicing it as a craft, meaning requires craft knowledge that covers knowing the materials, learning the skills. Hence, contrary to the western traditional calligraphy mindset, it is sincerely believed that these practices of Meulman focusing on the stroke can be assessed as calligraphy practices that are reflected the perception of the calligrapher's fused with his individual interpretation.

It is believed that Meulman desires to achieve this kind of perception in mind but still seems to contain conflict because, at this point, Meulman starts to call himself a painter rather than a calligrapher, which is not accurate for Far Eastern calligraphy. Painting and writing are not necessarily different as in the West, which is mentioned in Chapter IV, depending on the perception and appreciation of calligraphy/writing,



which seems to be assessed superior to painting, even though they are called sister arts, employed in same primary materials that are brush, ink, and paper.

On the other hand, by calling himself a painter, Meulman wants to underline that his practices, in which he experiments with the writing-like gestures and touches of the hand, differ from the ancient writing styles and practices. Instead of underlining the difference between painting and writing, it would be more appropriate to stress the meaning of the word writing that as discussed in Chapter II, which consists of a variety of activities such as carving, drawing, writing, or painting, hence painting is just needed to be assessed as a technique to write in this sense, different from the discipline considered as painting in plastic arts.

Turning to the examination of Meulman's stroke that he adopts and stylizes when it is observed through the stroke's visual form, it can link Meulman's repetition. The Gothic writing system, as in Fig. 24, shows the form of the letter "i" in Insular Majuscule, Carolingian Minuscule, Early Gothic, Textura Quadrata of the fourteenth and fifteenth century, Textura Prescisus, Fraktur, Bastard, Gothic Cursive, and Rotunda. Considering the general form of all, gothic scripts -mainly Fraktur style- are closer to the style of Meulman's particular hand. Especially considering the repeated stroke of Fig. 23, executed with one touch of the hand as a running hand, starts and ends with the turns that carry similarities mostly with Gothic cursive, as shown in Fig. 24.

Fig. 24. The forms of the letter "i" are illustrated based on the models of Mediavilla (1996) and Harris (1995b), Image credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



Not just the letterform and how they are executed, but also, once again, some characteristic features, such as woven-like appearance, are observed as a reference point for Meulman's works. Particularly in the case of textura, in which the letterforms basically can be constructed with the same stroke "i," as in the cases of the letter "m" and "n" that are shown in Fig. 25. The oblique nib pen constructs the letterforms with four nibs high. The angle of the pen is 45°. The diamond shape can be observed through the letters' feet, also the first strokes of the letters,

which is one of the most salient features of the *textura*. Every unit that constructs the letter has basically an “i” shape that Meulman repeats.

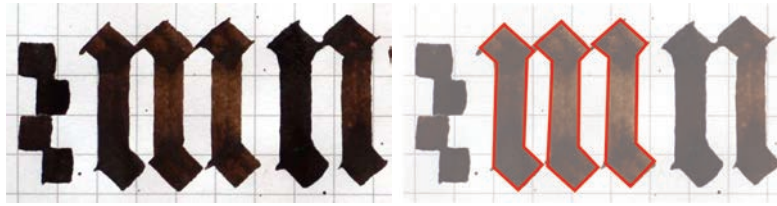


Fig. 25. Gothic system of script, *textura*, the letter form of “m” and “n,” Image credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

As mentioned *textura* above, this system of writing creates the overall woven shape, which makes the perceive the word or a text as a unit (Fig. 26) rather than focusing on individual letters. Hence, the text or a word can be comprehended as an image, especially by the unfamiliar eye.



Fig. 26. Gothic script written with vertical lines creates a wovenly texture as in the image, Image credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

In Latin it is written: “Mimi numinum nivium minimi munimi muniu vini muniminum imminu vivi minimum volunt.”

As seen in this figure, the Latin phrase mentioned on previous pages is written by *textura*. When the text turns upside down, it will give pretty much the same visual appearance, which is highly noteworthy as a grid-like system of actual readable text.

On the other hand, when observing the images of Meulman, it basically can be analyzed as in Fig. 27. The flowing strokes partially overlap each other, with a more fluid version of the stroke. The resemblance between the *textura*’s woven-like appearance and Meulman’s repeated strokes comes from the overall composition’s visual appearance rather than the physical appearance of the strokes between the *textura* and Meulman’s one-hand strokes.

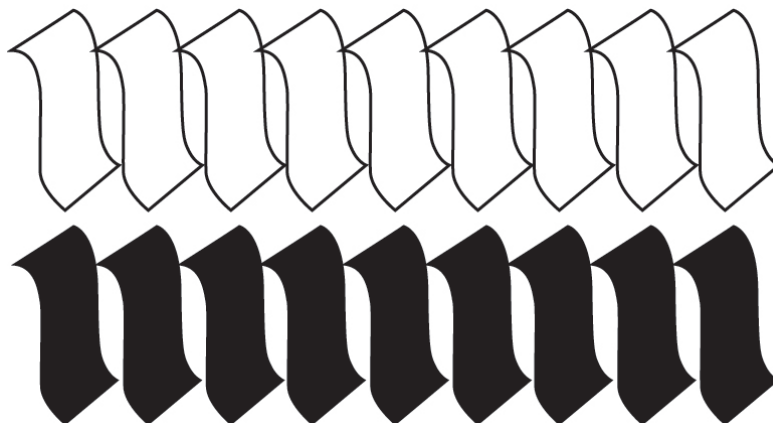


Fig. 27. The vectorial analyze of the strokes of Meulman, Image credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

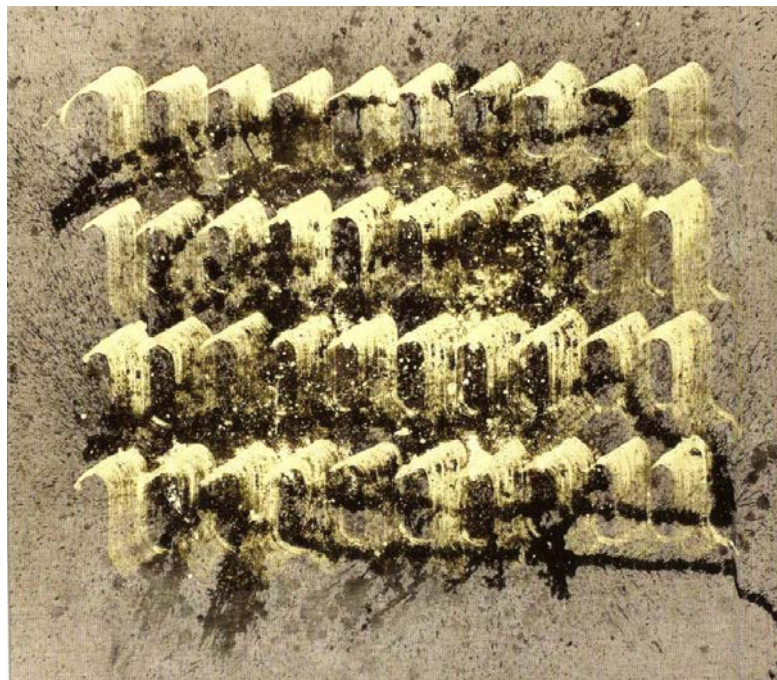
In Fig. 28, the strokes' structure between textura and Meulman's differentiate each other, but the grid-like woven appearance remains. When examining the first and last stroke as a foot, as observed in Meulman's previous works, he employs the same hand that transformed from the textura script and becomes more running hand form with its curves. Strokes are produced by the brush moves; thus, the letter's foot is not as rigid as in the case of the one constructed with the nib. About the script and its ductus, it is evident that the artist follows the same hand, textura script. Also, after a more detailed examination, it is possible to observe that the angle is almost 30°. Hence, it can be said that even though it is the stylized version that belongs to Meulman, inspired by the Gothic hand, various features, such as the tools that are broad edge nib and the angle and the position of the tool reminds the same as in the tradition. In that way, he can preserve the resemblance between his interpretation of the hand and the ancient style of writing that can be linked through these analyses.

Fig. 28. *Justified Scripture 2x1 with Broom*, 2012, acrylic on linen, examining the stroke of Meulman, Source: Meulman & Eeuwens, (2012: 36), Image credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



Another example of the stroke and repetition style can be observed in Fig. 29, entitled *Justified Scripture 10x4* consists of repeated strokes of "i" that create a texture on the surface.

Fig. 29. *Justified Scripture 10x4*, 2012, acrylic-enamel on linen, Source: Meulman & Eeuwens, (2012: 64).



Once again, 10x4 refers to how many strokes he uses for his work, but this time, all exist in one linen. As a concept mentioned earlier, the created texture through even space and repeated strokes of gold seems to create order -will be mentioned in the following pages as a concept; however, it is also disrupted by the black ink splashes, even partly making it disappear and give the appearance of chaos.

Mediavilla (1996) states the attitude of today's calligraphers, which is described as "their aim for dynamic shapes balanced between chaos and calm" (Mediavilla, 1996: 11). Furthermore, Stevens (2013) claims that with time, calligraphers may get bored when the work becomes predictable that lead him to deal with an order to "push it in a looser direction, or start with chaos and rein it in" (Stevens, 2013: 42). He claims that this issue makes calligrapher feel still surprised through exploration in his work that is in progress, and the aim becomes to balance expected with unexpected outcomes. Hence, it arrives at the definition of Stevens (2013) mentioned in Chapter II, about organizing marks, which manifest itself through a texture like a woven image of Meulman that is the product of his motto; the word is an image.

In Fig. 29, Meulman emphasizes awareness of space and precision by repeating the form with free strokes in harmony until a pattern is composed. Once again, there are various references from the past and the present. The unification of strokes that have been practiced here with synthesis and integration remains the practice of the scribe in the middle ages, the time that hand copying was the only way of recording and transmitting relevant text with the uniformity and repetition of forms. It is crucial for the pre-printing era of information perception to recognize and read handwritten texts produced in the West (Chappell & Bringhurst, 2000). It is obvious that acquired skills can be achieved merely by practicing. Meulman with several repetitions of the same stroke, as if he is practicing the movement of the pen and the hand. It seems they are repeated characters as a trial to warm the hand and make it flow. This undoubtedly requires repetitions, and reciprocally, for the sake of going further, by the ability to think and see fresh in a non-habitual manner. The acquired hand became a reflection of all that can be observed on the canvas, propounding the view of thinking beyond the letters with lines.

On the other hand, in Meulman's repetitions, the regularity of the strokes is vivid with the effect of the gold paint. Employing gold also can be considered as a reference from the past. As mentioned in Chapter III, the illuminated manuscript always consisted of gold paint that revealed the richness of the work and functioned as a representative of the owner's wealth because the manuscript's illumination process was complex and costly. It was often employed for special books such as an altar Bible or illuminated "Book of Hour," which consists of prayers appropriate for various times in a liturgical day. Illumination was usually planned before the beginning of the work and reserved the space for it, and the text was usually written before the illumination. During the early Medieval period, text and illumination were usually performed by the same person; however, in the latest period, around 1000-1250 AD, text and illumination started to be applied separately. The gold paint is also accepted as a light source that illuminates the page of the manuscript.



Using gold for the manuscript is one of the fascinating features that added a layer of dimension. The light is assessed as one of the oldest and most meaningful symbols for various cultures and religions. From a religious perspective, light in the Bible refers to spiritual illumination and truth, and it represents pure, reasonable, and holy, as opposed to the darkness of evil. The light was one of the first things that created one of the first words spoken by God, which also were written in scripture as follows: "Let there be light" (*Gen 1: 3*). For this reason, light carries a primary significance for the Bible. The following statement of the Bible takes attention "Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path" (*Ps 119: 105*), which guides his commands to follow throughout the lives. The theme of God's way as light is mentioned in the New Testament as follows: "The Lord has filled you with light. Live as children who have light. Light produces everything that is good, that has God's approval, and that is true is true" (*Eph 5:8-9*) ([Jesusway4you.com](http://Jesusway4you.com), 2016).

In these practices of Meulman, the visual appearance is pretty similar to the practice of an Iranian painter, calligrapher, and sculptor Charles Hossein Zenderoudi (Fig. 30), mentioned in Chapter V.

Fig. 30. "'Ayn + 'Ayn," Charles Hossein Zenderoudi, 1970, gouache on paper, Source: Ekhtiar (2006: 128).



"'Ayn + 'Ayn" (Fig. 30) was created in 1970, with various saturated levels of color that provide depth to the composition. However, the units of Meulman have a regular and same height that seems to take his references from the Gothic hand texture practices that creates a woven-like texture. It cannot be claimed whether Meulman has his inspiration from Zenderoudi in his visual attitude; however, it can be claimed that contemporary artists' aim seems similar to the Middle East, to create an image that the viewer can read as signs and as images. Western artists, however, seem disadvantaged with the forms of Latin alphabet letterforms that carry phonetic values rather than pictographic ones. The Western artist obviously emulates the potential of the Arabic letters that provide a space to experiment with artists to go beyond.



As for Christianity, for Islam too, light is assessed as a divide symbol comes from the Qur'an in Islam and the sacred Book of Muslims, as mentioned in Chapter V. It has various meanings used as metaphors, quotations, or comparisons in several instances of the starts, the sun and the moon that is identified as a light. The sun refers to clarity, and the term *nūr*, or light, is used to refer to its literal meaning, as mentioned in the work of Meulman through its title, "turning darkness to the light." This also will be seen in other contemporary artists in part "6.8. Denis Brown."

Light, like daily or candlelight, takes place as a physical element that was highly important for the medieval scribe during his practice and performing his work. It is used to determine when and where the scribe performs. For this reason, it is common to encounter light as a word in scribes' notes on the pages of the manuscripts when describing the conditions and how hard their work is. As an exemplary, the Irish Gaelic Poem, *Pangur Bán*, which is thought to have been composed by an Irish monk working on a copy of St. Paul's Epistles around the sixth century, can be shown here with the following lines:

Practice every day has made  
Pangur perfect in his trade;  
I get wisdom day and night,  
Turning Darkness into light. (The scholar and his cat, *Pangur Bán*, n.d.: para. 8)

Here, as seen in the last line of the poem of *Pangur Bán*, "Turning darkness into light" becomes the title of one of the works of Meulman, as can be observed in Fig. 31.



Fig. 31. *Turning darkness into light*, acrylic and indian ink on linen, 2013, Source: Consiglio, (2013: nd.).

Once again, it is a readable written line with a highly intricate manner that seems to create another texture-like appearance consisting of splashes of the ink, making the scene a more dynamic composition. Meulman reveals the dark written text born from the lighter background that seems to support the text by merely the words with ink splashes. As mentioned earlier, here, the light carries various symbolic meanings in the sense of Christianity, in which the word of God is assumed as a light that leads the person to a right

and good path. Meulman, through gold and yellow application on the background, points at that reference of the illumination. On the back, the written text in gold can be seen; on this level, the same text once again is written in black, preserving the gold as light strokes of the letters. It gives the impression that the light comes behind the black written text, referring to this phenomenon.

Moreover, in religious symbolism, light is strongly associated with the ability to see. The theme of blindness is mentioned in sacred text to describe the lost spirit and may be on the wrong path in life. To recover it, it is connected to "seeing the light" and described as a spiritual awakening (The National Gallery, n.d.).

Hence, Meulman points to an illuminated manuscript by employing the gold paint, but also with an attempt to split drips and drops all over the linen seems more likely an accident of a twist of his wrist, contrary to the attack with the ink bomb. The accident of the ancient scribe is not welcomed, as mentioned earlier, which caused them to start overwriting the whole piece. However, Meulman prefers to embrace the spontaneity and the causes of the action at the time of the practice, which happens as a performance of Meulman. While he references repetitions to find a perfect stroke and regularity, he allows a sort of chaos in the middle of the regularity with ink drops. Furthermore, the poem actually starts with the following lines:

He loves: Pangur, never idle  
Day or night  
Hunts mice; I hunt each riddle  
From dark to light. (Gill, 2009: 191)

It has a parallel metaphor between a cat called Pangur Bán, who catches mice, while a monk is writing the so-called manuscript "hunting words" all night long, which resonates with Meulman, as a graffiti artist, who used to go out at night, painting the walls by catching the words. The piece centered around the words "turning darkness into light," echoing this poem's last line.

The period around the ninth century when the Irish poem was held, and the script used in that period was an *insular* script that was used in Ireland to develop a state appropriate for luxurious codices after the seventh century, as mentioned in Chapter III. What Meulman uses for his work is not *insular*, but his own hand is influenced by the Gothic system of writing mentioned above for his previous works.

By examining the letterforms (Fig. 32), the hand manipulated and constructed by Meulman once again carries various characteristics of the scripts' Gothic system. Some letters form from "Turning darkness into light," the letterform of early gothic (proto gothic), fraktur, and bastard scripts. The basic construction of some letters, such as the letters "o," "e," "r," "i," and "s," remain a general form of Gothic here. With fewer hand lifting, the style transforms into a more angular and fluid shape. The analyzed repetitive stroke of him constructs the overall statement that gives a vertical appearance to the text. This also puts forward the texture of the woven-like execution to the front of the composition as in the Gothic hands. Even though it is a legible

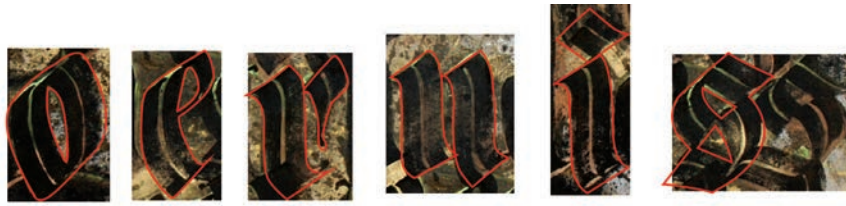
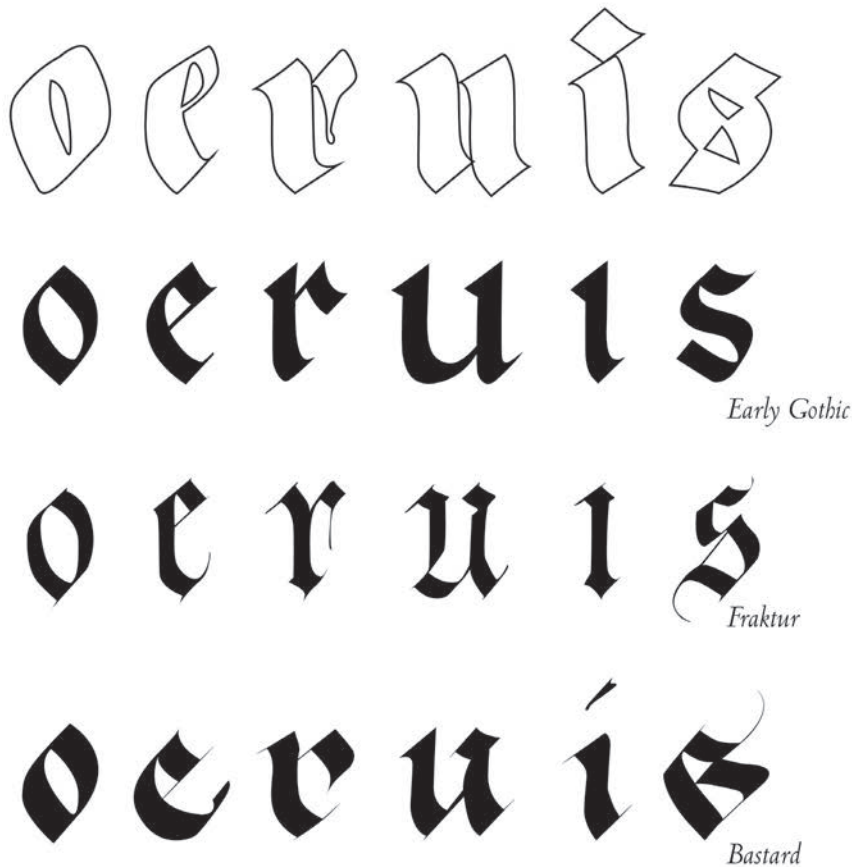


Fig. 32. Details are extracted from Fig. 31, Image credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



statement, the execution and the various compositional elements, such as drips and drops of the paint and close color preferences, make it difficult to read. It can be stated that the overall composition also reveals the idea of Meulman, which is the word as an image and painting the words, which leads to the assessed this piece as a painting.

Apart from the ancient script styles that Meulman has been influenced and interpreted in his contemporary calligraphy work, it is evident that he was also inspired by medieval scribes, particularly Eadfrith (d. 721), a Bishop of Lindisfarne or commonly known as Holy Island of the northeast coast of England. Eadfrith is the monk scribe of the *Lindisfarne Gospels*, mentioned in Chapter III. He prefers to blend that idea with the willingness to underline the plastic value that can be revealed through the image of the written text, as in postmodern designers' attitudes. The eclecticism is evident through bringing these concepts from the tradition, interpreting them from the contemporary perspective, executed as a painting with the contribution of background that creates a chaotic feeling.

Another example can be seen in Fig. 33, which illustrates one of Meulman's commission works painted as six pieces inspired by *Lindisfarne Gospels* as part of an exhibition that celebrates returning the Gospel to northern England. It was installed at New Castle upon Tyne's Castle Keep as a modern tribute to the incipit of St John's Gospel in *Principio Erat Verbum*,<sup>7</sup> which means "in the beginning was the Word." Meulman says, "That's funny, because in the beginning for me there was a word too, and the word was 'shoe'" (Consiglio, 2013: para. 5). His comparisons between graffiti writers and ancient scribes have been mentioned before and once again, with this work, Meulman points to his comparison. With these pieces, he embraces the *Lindisfarne Gospel* and Eadfrith, the ancient scribe of the Gospel. However, it should be underlined that the *Lindisfarne Gospels* are written by *insular script*, highly different from the Gothic writing systems in their forms but it still consists of intricate forms of letters that are colored and illuminated, which is also difficult to decipher for unknown eyes, as in the case of the Gothic writings.

Fig. 33. *Straight outta Lindisfarne*, Source: Consiglio, (2013: np.).



*Straight outta Lindisfarne* (Fig. 33) was created to honor the name Eadfrith. It can be observed that the name Eadfrith, written by the repetition of the stroke of the brush in gold, is a dominant piece of the composition. It can be claimed that Meulman commonly employs gold concerning medieval usage, which also seems to support his references of him taken from the tradition. The piece is constructed with the repetition of the stroke, accompanied by words, such as "straight outta Lindisfarne" and "monk business," also in Latin "Quod scripsi scripsi" which can be translated as "he wrote." These are written directly with the same hand that Meulman used here, which interprets the Gothic writings with various exaggerated swashes.

<sup>7</sup> The text of *The Gospel of John*, the fourth of the gospels, is stated in its final form around AD 90-110. The text is probably best known for its opening, "In principio erat Verbum, et Verbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat Verbum," which is translated as "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (Horn, 2019).



This resemblance is established due to various comparisons considering the Gothic script's characteristics as mentioned earlier and shown in Fig. 34.



Fig. 34. Detail extracted from Fig. 33, Image credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

On the left of the figure, the word "Eadfrith" on gold is written by Meulman with his stylized hand, a hybrid form of *textura* and *fraktur* scripts, as stated above. *Textura* (in the middle of Fig. 34) is a broken form, which reveals one of the main characteristics of the Gothic system of writing, and *fraktur* (on the right of Fig. 34) is differentiated with its curved strokes, which is obviously adapted and adopted by Meulman here.

First of all, the overall compactness of the word, which causes to be executed by the compressed, heavy form of letters, shows resemblance; also, one of the main parts is the usage of the diamond shape as the feet of the letters and the diamond dots that Meulman uses directly refer to the Gothic system once again. Apart from that, looking at individual letterforms, the form of the letter "d," "r," "i," "t," and "h" carry the basic characteristics of both *textura* and *fraktur*. Moreover, Meulman employs exaggerated flourishes, as in the case of the letter "f" and "h." As mentioned and illustrated before, *fraktur* has various alternative forms of a letter with flourishes, such as the letter "h" and the alternative form of "n," as stated in Fig. 35. It seems that it renders the form of the "f" in the same attitude.

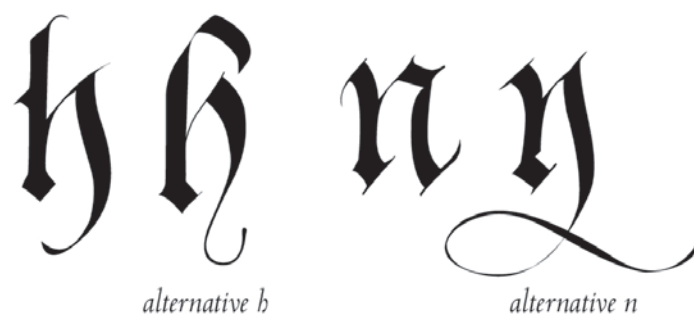
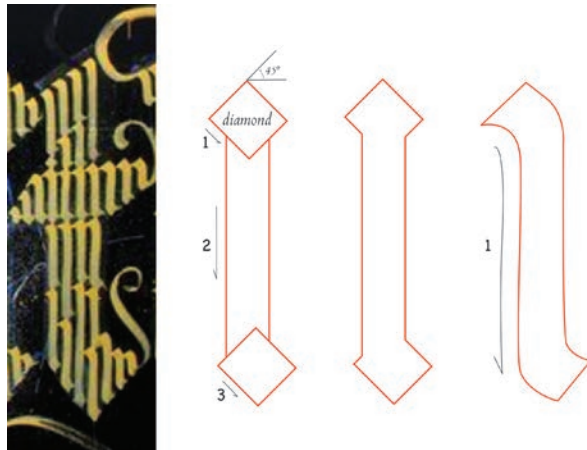


Fig. 35. Alternative letterform of "h" and "n" of *fraktur*, Image credit: Almıla Yıldırım based on the model of Mediavilla (1996).



In Fig. 36, the letters here are constructed by various repetitions of the same basic stroke, "1," which is also illustrated above with the red lines. Various heights of the repeated stroke "1" are used to construct the exact letter, in this case, the letter "t," that is drawn or, as Meulman states, "painted" (Consiglio, 2013: para. 3) rather than writing. On the right, the stroke "1" is illustrated, consisting of three strokes, as shown. First, it started with the diamond shape, then the stem, and last finished with a diamond once again as a foot of the stroke, which is the ductus of the textura. Hence, with three main strokes, the shape of the letter is constructed. However, on the left, it can be observed the movement of Meulman's form of "1," which is written with one movement of the hand.

Fig. 36. Detail image is the letter "t," extracted from Fig. 33, the letter "t" of the name Eadfrith, Image credit: Almila Yildirim.



In another noteworthy work (Fig. 37), Meulman reveals the rigid transition of his original style and the concept closer to an image rather than a readable text.

Fig. 37. *Image of a Word*, acrylic and pigment on linen, 2014, Source: Meulman Official Website, [nielsshoemeulman.com/calligraffiti/archives/4179.html](http://nielsshoemeulman.com/calligraffiti/archives/4179.html), access: 20.05.2018.



The letters are intertwined with each other, and the only thing that can be observed various moves of the paints on linen that blended with black, white, and green colors that give depth to the moves of the hand and create more visible boundaries, starting, and endpoints of the strokes' moves. Meulman once again employs ink drops on the surface spontaneously. On one side, there is control through the strokes where to locate; on the other side, there is an uncontrol with the ink drops that support the visual chaos he embraces the most. Here, there is a significant point that has to be mentioned. As stated before, Meulman started to call himself a painter with his *Calligraffiti* approach; notably, he advocates his motto, "A word is an image, writing is painting" (Meulman & Eeuwens, 2012: 140). At his lecture and workshop at UCLA Design Media Arts, California, in 2004, and another lecture as a special guest in 2008. He explains his motto as follows:

A word is an image. I think a letter in itself is nothing. It's about words. The sequence of the letters and the meaning of the word can create a picture. For graffiti writers this goes without saying. In my book I drop a line about it: A word is a tight unit of matching characters, ready to be dropped behind enemy lines. To me a word and the way it's written can be a poem or a story. (Interviews, n.d.)

As mentioned, the word seems to be understood as a unit, and the letter alone has no significance for Meulman. He points at the graffiti background and his mindset as the written word, overall composition as a picture that seems to be considered by graffiti writers. With the allegory of the poem or story that Meulman says, it can be claimed that he charges the image of the word with a different type of meaning that demands a new concept of reading that goes beyond the semantic meaning of the word, as in Futurist or Dadaist works, asemic writings, and also clear resemblance can be seen to the postmodern period. However, the statement "the writing is painting" mentioned above seems to directly stress the established proximity to the abstract painting of the West.

As mentioned in Chapter IV, it should be remembered the influence of the Far Eastern calligraphy and painting on the abstract painters, discussed in part "4.4. The impact of Far East art tradition on western abstract practices" and how calligraphy and painting are assessed as sister arts due to the fact that the same tools are employed -brush and ink- to perform calligraphy and painting, and at their core, both share common features and concept formed depending on the Far Eastern culture. Hence, with this work (Fig. 37), Meulman reveals his contemporary attitude within the realm of western calligraphy, in which the main concern is the visual composition rather than the written text meaning to convey his feelings and interpretations about the theme.

At present, many contemporary western calligraphers -as in the case of Meulman- seem to embrace these issues that will be examined in this chapter, which put the readable calligraphy work to abstract more painterly interpretation that leads the discussions about the western calligraphy mentioned in Chapter II. However, as also will be seen and explained through my personal attitude and perception about the practices of calligraphy that will be mentioned in Chapter VII, western writing and calligraphy have this potential that is needed to be realized and aware of this, which is directly related to the calligrapher. For this reason, it has to be stated that Meulman is not the first artist

that considers the word as an image; however, he takes attention to his statements, also his practices that fused with graffiti, Far Eastern and Middle Eastern calligraphy perception, and the abstract painting of West.

Furthermore, it has to be considered that while modern movements occur in the art world, western calligraphy started to live its revival with the pioneering calligraphers, namely Edward Johnston, Rudolf van Larisch and Rudolf Koch, as mentioned in Chapter III. It was when these artists rediscovered the ancient writing styles and started to study them once again, still with a similar attitude toward the beauty of writing that is focused around the appropriate construction of the letterforms, that led the message to be understood clearly. Hence, it was when the Western perception of writing and calligraphy was still sticking around the functional purposes of the written text. For this reason, calligraphers such as Meulman may be claimed as among significant calligraphers and graffiti artists of the twentieth century, practicing calligraphy as an image of a word in his Calligraffiti style. It can be stated that the works of Meulman show that contemporary western calligraphy lives its postmodern era and carries a resemblance with abstract western painting in a visual sense; however, it reflects the proximity with the Far Eastern mentality, which is a different understanding of abstraction. That means contemporary western calligraphy does not reject the past and the tradition as in the modern movements -Futurism or Dadaism-, cherishes the past, even employing them technically and practically as a concept to interpret, blending it with today's understanding of the calligraphy heralds the autonomous personal varieties and interpretations as in the postmodern examples.

Fig. 38 illustrates that one of Meulman's works belongs to 2015.

Fig. 38. *UP*, ink and acrylic on Mulberry paper, 2015, Source: Unruly Gallery, unrulygallery.com/category/niels-shoe-meulman/, access: 21.12.2018.





This work consists of spontaneous ink touches of the hand with the written word "Up" in his own version of the Gothic hand once again. Although it does not attract much attention at first glance, it is written in a visible and legible layout upon close examination.

The free gestures of the ink give a powerful and dynamic visual appearance with various stains that support the movement. Hence, it can be said that Meulman mostly started to experiment with the gesture as a trace of the hand of the calligrapher that seems to intend to reveal the energy as in the case of the Far Eastern calligraphers, in which the brushstroke expresses the calligrapher's emotions and personality manifested through the physical act of writing as a process of creation. Furthermore, as mentioned in Chapter IV, it should be reminded that the gesture has its roots in the Far Eastern culture. That's why the painterly experiences of Meulman here carry a close resemblance with the Far Eastern mentality. Similar performances will be encountered in other calligraphers examined in "6.6. Pokras Lampas," "6.8. Denis Brown" or "6.10. Loredana Zega."

The same attitude continues in Meulman's later works, as shown in Fig 39. It is hard to claim that it contains any recognizable letters, but there exist moves on colorful background in various ways by black and gold, and the background supports the black and gold scribbling and polishing them. The moves of the acrylic with thick density can be observed as if Meulman is scribbling the linen with writing-like gestures as if his intention is writing. Furthermore, the scribblings here are remembered from the works of Twombly that are mentioned in part "6.2. The western abstract painting is related to contemporary western calligraphy."



Fig. 39. *Stay Sane*, 2015/2020, acrylic and spray paint on linen, Source: Unruly Gallery, [unrulygallery.com/category/niels-shoe-meulman/](http://unrulygallery.com/category/niels-shoe-meulman/), access: 21.08.2020.

It is not surprising since Meulman points out the huge impact of the abstract western painters on him, and among them, Twombly is noteworthy. Here, looking at practices of Meulman that point to spontaneous gesture, which the asemic writers commonly employ. He basically reacts to overly-regulated society, multi-layered, challenging to read, more gestural image-like words on large-scale canvases with the motto of a word as an image. Meulman points to his calligraphic background in one of his interviews and states the affinity between him and Cy Twombly (*Interviews*, n.d.). Besides Meulman, other artists examined through this doctoral research, namely Pokras Lampas, that will be mentioned on the following pages, also practiced with the same attitude and produced a body of work in the realm of contemporary calligraphy, employing their stains, drips, spatter, splotch, blot applied with messy hands -as in the case of Twombly and his messy fingers-summons gestures and traces left on the surface.

The scribbles performed in different directions caused the composition to move further away from the visual appearance of the written text, making his piece close to the painting in this sense. Since the writing is painting for Meulman, it is not an issue to execute contemporary calligraphy traditionally or commonly. The main and significant feature is that it consists of lively gestures of the hand performed with writing-like actions, focusing on the idea of calligraphy. It can be said that calligraphy is conceptualized in the minds depending on Meulman's point of view. It makes contemporary calligraphy very difficult to define, as can be done for traditional or modern calligraphy. Only it can be described through the works of the calligrapher and can be defined as it is not, rather than what it is. And it is evident that contemporary calligraphy is not traditional or modern calligraphy; instead, an autonomous art form that carries various features comes from the traditional and modern as a living entity, advancing accumulated discipline reveals its eclectic nature.

According to Meulman and Eeuwens (2012), abstract expressionism and calligraffiti have much in common. Both assume canvases as an event and an area to act. The painting techniques are similar, and "the speed of the gesture, intense and spontaneous, carefully controlled accidents channeled by chance" is the same for both (*Ibid.*: 16).

Meulman claims, "Most abstract painters come from a figurative background. Mine is calligraphic. Letters and words instead of trees and nudes. That's a big difference. But I'm not alone in this. Look at the work by Cy Twombly or Christopher Wool for example. Basically, I'm moving towards abstraction because I think imagination is the key to... well, everything (*Interviews*, n.d.: para. 10)." Here, calligraphic background points at the references from the past both in practical and technical means of tradition, also still treated as a craft, as its origin that needed to be underlined here due to the main difference between the abstract painting and abstract calligraphy. Even Meulman claims his inspiration from the great painters of Abstract Expressionism; he found his own way of transforming his calligraffiti attitude conceptually that is needed to be assessed as different from abstract painting.

Furthermore, Meulman's statements above may provide one of the significant backgrounds to frame the mindset of his practice that



one has the aim to call "abstract," nevertheless with his calligraphic background, the abstraction here seems closer to the abstraction concept of the Far Eastern calligraphy that is examined in Chapter IV with the referential aspect of his writing-like gestures that is acquired through the personal practices of the traditional scripts, that means he also cherishes the tradition (also the craft side of calligraphy), prefers to take his references from other calligraphy cultures, particularly the Far Eastern, as well. Hence, as an overall piece, it is not appropriate to identify it as western abstract art; however, it may be claimed as an abstraction through the conceptual method as a process.

Due to the urge of feeling about to create beyond the conventional text, as the scribe makes himself free, it is obvious that various features of the calligraphic mindset have shifted. It focuses on contemporary practices as a performance that leads Meulman to establish affinity with other calligraphy traditions, which have treated calligraphy as an art form from the beginning. That seems to encourage him to free himself from the western perception of writing that is to be read and focus on the unit of the letter with a writing-like gesture; Meulman states that he creates an image.

Even the form of Meulman seems abstract visually; in its concept, it cannot be assessed as abstract in the sense of western abstraction since it is a cumulative art form deeply referenced by the past, medieval scripts, and scribes with other various references mentioned in this dissertation. The main focus is the abstraction of conventional western writing by using gestures to reveal the main purpose: to create beyond the conventional perception of western writing and calligraphy by challenging it. Meulman is basically writing his work even though he calls himself a painter with the writing-like intention and gestures.

To remind, there was no concrete distinction between painter and calligrapher in the Far East because learning to write means learning the shapes of thousands of characters. They have a close relationship with the words and paintings that the West does not have. They read the word and also look at the word as a picture. Furthermore, learning the use and meaning of the brush and ink as channels of energy and learning the significance of the gesture of the arm, wrist and body make the way writing and painting share similar features and the natural world's energy.

What precisely can be observed through most of the practices of Meulman and his Calligraffiti technique is that he embraces spontaneous drips and drops of ink, a splatter of paint, also layered marks that create a sort of texture that make them compared to the gestural works of the Far Eastern calligraphers, also the gestures of the abstract expressionists that is described as a loose brushstroke with agility on the wrist, the arm and the whole body that can participate, influenced by the Orient. Hence, the painter and the writer can be used interchangeably here without causing any contradiction or dispute in the sense of western contemporary calligraphy. Meulman writes/paints his calligraphy pretty much similar way to Far Eastern calligraphy.

Meulman's calligraphic works, the free-floating spaces and vital gestures, in which the pictorial becomes privileged over the literal

meaning of the work, as can be observed in his earlier works. This issue has a long history in Chinese calligraphy and painting that cannot be assessed as abstract because they cannot be executed as automatic and spontaneous as abstract expressionist works with the trained hand, mind, and body. The gesture is so significant; however, the way a word is written is just as significant as what the word itself may reveal or convey as in the concept of Chinese calligraphy. More emphasis started to be placed on this aspect for Meulman -conceptualized through his motto the word as an image- and the gesture started to be consciously used instead of unconsciously done. Since they all are intended to fill with a level of emotional expression, this issue also can be compared to Chinese calligraphy. Here, it is also remembered that the word and image relationship is different between the East and West. In the West, as seen, words may be utilized and conceptualized as images as in the poems but mostly remain visually and physically neutral, which can be assessed as a passive entity that has created a core split between words and what they may refer to beyond the literal meaning. However, as mentioned in Chapter IV, this division is unlikely to exist in China, where words are images that are part of the cosmic order. Western distinctions between subject and object, individual and nature, cannot be readily conceived, assuming words and images are bridges. They do not separate painting from calligraphy. The reason why calligraphy has haunted many contemporary calligraphers and also artists such as Tobey, Motherwell, and many others mentioned here undoubtedly consider the possibility of this bridge.

Hence, it is no coincidence that the Calligraffiti movement of Meulman, with his perception explained above, draws the new generation of artists' attention by immersing them in a spontaneous process that requires patience, careful refinement, and critical judgment with space for trial and error, above all, attributing meanings beyond the traditional perception of the act of writing. It would not be unfair to claim that much contemporary work has a slight "Shoe" flavor among followers, such as Pokras Lampas, who will be examined on the following pages, adapting his style to their work, thanks to his seminars, workshops, and performances. Lampas is also noteworthy for his calligrafuturism, sharing a similar interest in this visual art and an appreciation for the interpretation possibilities that the historical roots provide to explore.

## 6.6. Pokras Lampas

In this part, the works of Saint Petersburg-based calligrapher Pokras Lampas (b. 1991, Russia) will be examined due to the fact that the wide variety of tools and mediums that he also employed in his unique movement called *calligrafuturism*, a fusion of calligraphy and futurism -mostly the concept of cherishing the technology and the speed and treating the written word as an image.

Lampas' pieces reveal not only the aesthetically pleasing visual forms but also in conception as a multidimensional space where a bold expression of letterform demonstrates mastery and deep understanding of movement, rhythm, and harmony, which can be read as dynamic, innovative, and epochal by many.

One of the main aims is to demonstrate the extended possibilities of contemporary calligraphy applied to various instruments, such as the roof of a building or the body of a woman. All of his works push the boundaries and limits of traditional calligraphy and reflect the current tendencies of contemporary calligraphers. That's why observing his work and discussing the technical and conceptual features will help frame the characteristics of contemporary western calligraphy.

It can be stated that Lampas is deeply inspired by Meulman and his Calligraffiti Movement, and as a former graffiti artist like Meulman, he decided, after performing street art for many years, to shift his focus on performing calligraphy on the streets. After being invited to join to Calligraffiti community, he has been involved in the growing group and became one of the most active and inspiring long-standing members, participating in various street art projects, producing commissioned work both for private clients and public spaces, as well as exhibition pieces, signage, and memorial work, as an itinerant artist like Meulman. Promoting his calligraphy and exploring its contemporary possibilities in workshops for beginners, students, and professionals from different areas, he also works collaboratively with clients from various areas such as music, fashion, and editorial. Despite his young age, Lampas has been located in private collections of discerning collectors worldwide. He is also one of the members of "Calligraphy Masters," which will be mentioned in part "6.12. Viktor Kams".

Lampas describes his initiative aims, which he frames at one of his lectures entitled "Drop out Design," based on modern design ideas with the collaborations of artists created as experimental art except for regular and common work for agencies in the Design Prosmotr event (Designprosmotr.ru, n.d.).

To give a broader field of possibilities to his experiments, the use of new tools, materials, and techniques gives another dimension to his work. Here his tools, materials, and techniques will be examined through his various works, including large brushes and brooms as Meulman does, experimented on rooftops, plexiglass surfaces, fabrics, human bodies as canvas; also various collaboration works that are employed on various surfaces with his interpretation that he called modern calligraphy, and the movement called as *calligrafuturism*, he tackles are bound to the mindset of Calligraffiti Movement -basically fusing calligraphy with graffiti, creating a mural works.

*Calligrafuturism* is a word created from the combination of calligraphy and futurism. It was launched as a name reflecting Lampas' self-developed style based on calligraphy, combined with the Latin and Cyrillic alphabet. Lampas mentions a particular connection between generations and alteration of generations occurred from the old to the new, with new technologies, new values, a new outlook on culture, and a certain kind of respect for traditions that each generation brings. With futurists, the intention was to break tradition, with modernists to change slightly, still both looking at an innovation (Belyakov, 2018).

Here, to understand Lampas' term of *calligrafuturism*, it is significant to look at the Russian Futurizm (Futurism, Italian Futurismo), the twentieth-century movement centered in Italy, as mentioned earlier in part "6.1.

"Word as an image" concept of the modern period related to contemporary western calligraphy," cherished the dynamism, speed, energy, and power of the machine. During the second decade of the twentieth century, this vitality, change, and restlessness of modern life, as affected across most of Europe, also affected the Russian avant-garde -a significant and influential time that took place in Russian Empire and the Soviet Union covers 1890 to 1930, mainly to the visual arts and poetry (White, 2019).

With consideration of the information mentioned above, the practices of Lampas based on his *calligrafuturism* with the inspiration of Russian avant-garde art of the twentieth century -particularly Futurism, can be assessed as a representation of the new perspective of calligraphy -so-called modern calligraphy by Lampas reflects the movement and a kind of new aesthetic of the contemporary calligraphy through employing the mediums such as the floor, huge scale calligraphy on plexiglass surfaces, infinity mirrors installations and fluorescent lights. In this sense, one of Lampas's notable works, a project (Fig. 40) performed in 2015, created one of the world's most giant calligraphy pieces up until that time on one of the building's roof in Moscow (RED Factory, Malaya Kaluzhskaya Ulitsa, 15 c.1, Moscow, Russia, 119071).

Fig. 40. The Red Factory roof in Moscow, 2015, Source: Lampas' Official Website, pokraslampas.com/the-largest-calligraffiti-in-russia-and-the-world-2015, access: 12.06.2018.



As asserted, sixteen hundred square meters of artwork produced in two days can also be seen from a satellite. It is not a surprise that the project quickly became known worldwide, with the short movie's helping promote the creation of this artwork. Preliminary of the project, such as providing a vast amount of paint, nearly a ton, and applying paint on a large surface with a special brush designed one-meter ink surface by applying four big brooms for this performance. It was invented to perform the text dedicated to moments of inspiration and creativity. It can be claimed that he dares to demonstrate mastery in the field as an outstanding display of skill and captivated tour de force as a performance.

At first glance, one of the striking features of the image is its visual complexity, which consists of various strokes intermingled, overlapping with each other, also blurred with the drops of the paints all over the composition, which makes it perceived as an image that can be seen a kind of calligrams as mentioned in Chapter V. Albeit the image is all built with writing-like gestures and strokes probably derived from the



construction of the letterforms, Lampas seems to maintain the overall aesthetic with eliminating the textual clarity of words and the proper form of letters as in the case of Meulman.

What Lampas concentrates on seems more likely that the visual and graphical feature of the original text with the gestural movement flourished by the plastic possibility that the lavish instrument allows with a little detached interest in making design understandable. In other words, what he does is eliminate the accurate letterform and rearrange the strokes so that they can move as an intricate abstract piece of painting emerging with the act of the writer, seems to evoke an emotional response through its vivid composition, still can be appreciated as traces of the artist that eyes can follow. These features remind the features of futurists that had a desire to cherish movement, dynamism, and energy. Furthermore, it reminds the Far Eastern calligraphy practices, once again, as in the case of Meulman. Especially focusing on the fundamental unit, strokes, and emotion-loaded brushes that reflect the moves and gestures of the hand, an act of the body. Furthermore, the compositions that the calligrapher creates by eliminating words and letters inevitably lead to abstract associations or perceptions as images.

Fig. 41 illustrates how Lampas performs with the process of broom writing. Just as he can write with anything that makes a calligraphic mark, he uses the broom as a writing tool similar to Meulman, giving the piece an aggressive freewheeling feature and a correspondingly dynamic look.



Fig. 41. Screenshots from the performance, Source: The World Calligraphy Museum, [calligraphy-museum.com/en/news/news/calligraphy-artist-pokras-lampas-painted-the-roof-of-the-red-october-building](http://calligraphy-museum.com/en/news/news/calligraphy-artist-pokras-lampas-painted-the-roof-of-the-red-october-building), access: 12.06.2018.



The image executes in a concentric composition that makes it dynamic by adding graphic accents and some wayward flowing lines, and surplus inkblots. They are quickly applied and interspersed with rapid moves all over the surface. The impression of flow and movement enlivened with the elaborate detailing gives the impression of decoration or embellishment of the text. Sparsely nested levels of circles designate the superiority not of the word but the visual compilation. The sequence uses circles to create a sense of movement, graduating from pale effect to medium and thin shades. They were all created using the different widths of the broom; thus, it allows the creation of textures with different densities. Moreover, the slope, proportion, thickness, and decorative nature of the text are achieved by the inscription's slope that meets its purpose.

Within each circle, the size, spacing, and counters of the letters have been kept uneven but were intricate with each other as a unit. Before the paint has been dropped onto the surface, it can be drawn out by shaking the broom in the air. However, splashes that leave the lacy patterns can be observed from a certain distance with the combination and spontaneous arrangement of strokes, the balance between sometimes overlapping lines that create color contrast because of the transparency of the paint. With a closer look, it remains a big messy split because of dropping unintentionally, namely kind of an accident. In this case, this accident can be described as a subtle collaboration with the strokes to establish a new generation of ligatures.

Lampas' free form implies movement and action that give evidence to describe it as a performance of graphic freshness, obviously seeming to be inspired by the vitality of the futurists' works. Text of lesser significance, difficulties in deciphering, still has a striking impact as a lyrical element behind and beyond the letters, evolved from his passion for playing with letterforms and exploring the limits of legibility by eliminating the words, even letters. He is underlining their collaborative relationship rather than accentuating the individualism of each letter through his calligrafuturist perspective.

Another project of Lampas, as shown in Fig. 42, is located in Atrium Mall as an infinite mirror public art installation in Moscow, a project in the Atrium pedestrian tunnel, which opened in the fall of 2017.

Fig. 42. A T R I U M, Atrium Mall & The Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation, 2017-2018, Source: Lampas' Official Website, [pokraslampas.com/a-t-r-i-u-m-pokras-lampas-huge-public-art-object](http://pokraslampas.com/a-t-r-i-u-m-pokras-lampas-huge-public-art-object), access: 12.07.2019.



It can be seen as inspired by these features mentioned below that reveals the mindset behind the calligrafuturism of Lampas as well. In this composition, Lampas, once again, employs the strokes, eliminating the legible text, hence creating a piece that visually bundles the viewers up and includes them into the composition.

Lampas states that he had an idea for a long time to work with the space that is familiar to people as a location that can be presented in a different look as a calligraphic piece. Here, mirrors take roles that promise the viewer while taking pictures of themselves; they can see the different looks of the same object depending on the day and night. Furthermore, the tunnel's functionality is left to walk along without interfering with the traffic of people every day (Belyakov, 2018).

Here, it has to be stated that even though Lampas eliminates legible texts, he selects quotes from a Russian and Soviet poet, playwright, artist Mayakovsky (1893-1930), a Russian avant-garde artist and art theorist Malevich (1879-1935), a Russian painter and art theorist Kandinsky (1866-1944) as inspirations because of his interest in art history particularly Russian avant-garde as mentioned earlier. Lampas explains his inspiration here as follows:

The Russian avant-garde is a story about the fact that Malevich's "Square" was written a hundred years ago, in 1915. And at the same time [were written, voiced] huge, some important, revolutionary ideas -not so much from the point of view of some terms from politics or society, but in general. The attitude to art, the attitude to the form, the attitude to the word were created and realized by the best minds of that time. And therefore Lissitzky, Rodchenko, Mayakovsky are people who really inspired me sincerely, and I wanted to continue their idea, their thoughts in my rethinking. (Belyakov, 2018: para. 5)

One of the project series can be mentioned here to exemplify the medium's expressive potential with the contemporary aspect, entitled *Calligraphy on Girls (COG)* (Fig. 43 and 44).



Fig. 43. Photo shoots of "Calligraphy on Girls Project," Session #6, Special for Desingcollector.net, Source: Lampas' Official Website, calligraphyongirls.com/session-6/, access: 12.06.2018.



Fig. 44. Photo shoots of "Calligraphy on Girls Project," Session #13. "FUTURE," Source: Lampas' Official Website, pokraslampas.com/calligraphy-on-girls-session-13-future-18, access: 12.06.2018.

Lampas executed ten consecutive COG photoshoot sessions. His curiosity about moving up a new dimension in his project, moving his work medium from wall and canvas to woman's bodies, besides cars or big subway halls (Gori, 2014), basically with the idea that the art of calligraphy reveals the female body's beauty differently. Hence, these practices are neither related to the ritual of various cultures –as they leave marks on their bodies for birth, puberty, marriage, war, peace, abundance, earth awakening, or burial, all of which have different painting styles- such as aborigines, who paint each other's bodies as an expression of deep respect or cooperation, performed collectively for special occasions and ceremonies require great attention. While the primary goal of these ceremonies of aborigines is not aesthetic but spiritual and social (Yılmaz, 2013), for Lampas, his main issue here seems to become an inspiration that represents the fusion of art and body in a harmony of strokes, primarily written with black and white on the delicate skin. Starting with the choice of composition, materials, location, and overall composition where to start and end with the general exposure of the model, these calligraphic works of Lampas consist of various compositions of strokes blending with each other, formed according to the chosen body parts of the model.

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In Fig. 43, it can be observed that highly decorated strokes, which seem well designated and composited, are supported by the lavishly written that elaborates his style. Changes in the weights and sizes depict various forms, simply resorting to the different makers with different nib widths.

On the other hand, in Fig. 44, on the model's skin, the black and white marks collaborate with each other as complementary entities. While with the black paint, strokes that Lampas employs can be seen in a more linear form, the white paint mostly seems to practice more spontaneously in a sloppy manner. Here, the photoshoots also consist of various materials, such as surfaces with calligraphic compositions and even a fabric that the model seems to wear.

Lampas' attitude appears to corroborate and exemplify the statement of calligrapher Denise Lach -who will also examine her contemporary calligraphy practices in part entitled "6.9. Denise Lach." She states, "... just as you can write with anything that makes a mark, you can also write on anything that can be marked" (Lach, 2013: 162).

The materials that can leave the marks and the surface that can be marked can be employed by calligraphers to perform their calligraphy. Once again, the attitude points at the mark-making that Lampas also seems to practice in these examples with wordless but writing-like strokes.



Another example of calligrafuturist work can be seen in Fig. 45, *Glitch*<sup>8</sup> experiment, inspired by the well-known painting *The Persistence of Memory* (1931) by Salvador Dalí (1904-1989)<sup>9</sup> with Lampas's interest in Surrealism –one of the most important and influential artistic movements, defined by Andre Breton as to lose oneself in the flow of thought by getting rid of all kinds of aesthetic or moral concerns, beyond all control of the mind. Meta-reality/surreal, even first began with a literary style created by French avant-garde poets, later became a part of the perspective of European culture's life. In Surrealism, it is believed that the unconscious mind can be awakened, and the purpose of creativity has adopted this aim as a principle (Farthing, 2012).



Fig. 45. Glitch experiments, Source: Lampas' Official Website, [pokraslampas.com/f-by-pokras-lampas-p-1](http://pokraslampas.com/f-by-pokras-lampas-p-1), access: 13.06.2018.

<sup>8</sup> According to the online dictionary, the word *glitch* defines as (1) a defect or malfunction in machine or plan (2) computers. Any error, malfunction, or problem (3) a brief or sudden interruption or surge in voltage in an electric circuit (Dictionary.com: n.d.). It will be explained in detail on the following pages.

<sup>9</sup> Surrealism opposed the trapping of emotions and thoughts under the control of the mind and had a significant impact as an unusual and complex movement by examining the symbols of the subconscious, suppressed motives, and dreams that we often do not try to make sense of, with the freedom of rejecting reason and logic and prompting people to think about them. With this style, Dalí made a figure suitable for interpretation in many ways. Dalí claims he physically draws "photos of dreams" with his hand as reflections on the canvas of hallucinations and images that occur when he is in a paranoid mood (Erkaya, Yüzbaşıoğlu & Ünlü, 2007). *The Persistence of Memory* is one of the very well-known works of Dalí, with the fluid clocks in this painting.

Glitch experiments of Lampas are inspired by the mindset behind Dalí's Surrealism and fluid clocks, as seen in Fig. 45, interpreted such an innovative way of combining images that being constructed as a concentric composition in general, written as if it is melting down, takes similarities with the visual appearance of the glitch work. With letters related to each other in an intricate manner, however, not being easy to decipher, these interactions prompt the shapes to be detached as marks, interlinear spaces, movements, and counter-movements. It is an intricate weaving of elements and overlapping strokes in different tones, transforming static movements into a dynamic form. Besides, the transparency of paint supports the dynamic way by collaborating with overlapping strokes that create a sense of depth within the strokes as if multiple block quilts, irregular and layered images.

The work's composition can be divided into two different pieces based on mixing concepts. In comparison, the upper parts are framed above with the definition of the strokes that constitute the pattern and their effects on viewers; the lower parts are interpreted by Lampas differently and strikingly. This part seems scattered as continuous twisting lines, with the contrast built by the width of stretched lines flowing from the complexity. Obviously, there is a bearing closely resembling with melting clocks of Dalí, emitting another sight of his creation. Inspired by Dalí, revived with the particular language and hand of the artist, he uses whimsical arrangements of the melting strokes in each other. The inconsistency of strokes promoted but still reflects the mechanical sense instead of a human to refer to the original effect.

The distorted second part references a digitally interpreted glitched look with distorted elements in it. This loaded implication indicates the futuristic experimentation of Lampas' contemporary calligraphy attitude. The overall look gets far from the perception of the text and every writing unit, every stroke of Lampas is visible, written by brush with the compositional concern. He seems to be given an override to the visual appearance of his work in a decoration sense; hence, it can weaken the idea and lead to a more superficial perception. This claim is made due to the overly loaded composition with decorative units, as can be observed through his other calligraphy pieces, leading to looking at the visual form, but the concept behind it seems overshadowed. The striking point, though, is the collaboration of these two parts -upper and lower parts of the canvas- that combine surprisingly. It could be accepted as a significant attitude that reveals Lampas' experimental contemporary tendency, so-called *Calligrafuturism*.

The Glitch art inspires this mechanical sense; the melting clocks of Dalí become melting calligraphy as a glitch, indicating the distortion or malfunction as defined. Glitch is "an unexpected blast of pixelated, hallucinatory jagged lines spreading across our TVs and computer screens" (Wong, 2013: 1). It is "a digital bug fractures the image we're looking at and, for a frustrating moment, interrupts the film, game or photograph before it returns to normal" (Ibid.).

Hence, Glitch art as a form of expression seems formally reminiscent of the geometric of a modernist abstract concept, mostly depicting data directly, not the direct visual representations of figurative reality. It has



to be defined what the representational means in digital space since glitch art is related to it (Downey, n.d.).

"Glitch art takes temporary pixelations, interruptions and glitches and turns them into visually arresting pieces, questioning the forms and traditions of art using digital techniques" (Wong, 2013: 2). Considering the digital context, representation does not refer to an image or likeness of a physical object but rather a new concept of the likeness of immaterial information. Glitch art is a signifier of data; hence, it requires technical knowledge to understand the idea behind the work; thus, the viewer can be involved with it.

Fig. 46, one of the works from *The Melting Ice Cream* series, shows one of the works of Canadian Mathieu St-Pierre, who uses computer programs and analog video signals to create glitch images, exploiting electronic failures as a creative element. These series are created as the result of several trials and errors as glitch manipulation. He states: "The images not only document the fragility of those virtual data, they are often capable of triggering memories and associations from real world life experience. We are consequently faced with electronic malfunctions in the realm of pixels versus the perfect imagery" (mathieustpierre.com, n.d.: para 3).

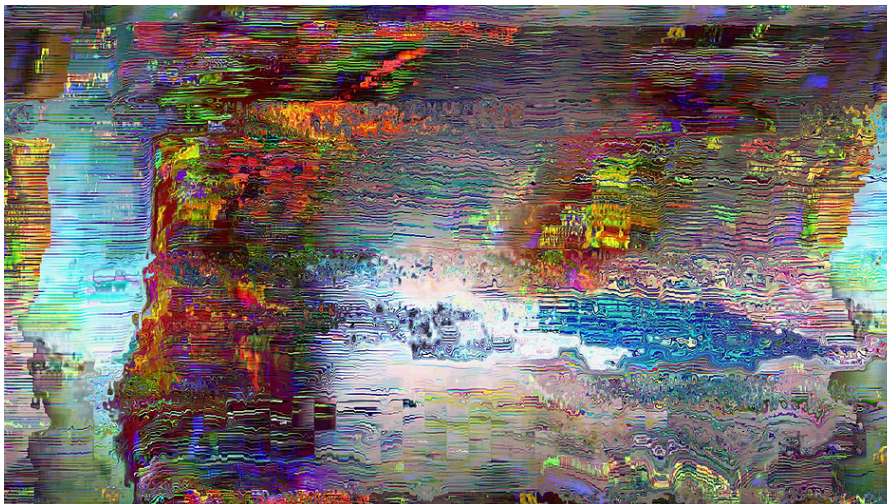


Fig. 46. *The Melting Ice Cream* series, Mathieu St-Pierre, n.d., Source: St-Pierre'S Official Website, [mathieustpierre.com/meltingicecream](http://mathieustpierre.com/meltingicecream), access: 12.04.2020.

In light of this information, also remembering the works of Meulman and Lampas mentioned here, who employs accident-like spots that are not acceptable in traditional calligraphy, as mentioned in Chapter III, underlines the transformation of the perception of calligraphy in contemporary practices. Rather than assessing as an error that needed to be corrected, unplanned, unintended, and unexpected events started to be assumed as opportunities to yield a new kind of possibility that calligraphers could experiment with for the sake of gestural experiences in the realm of contemporary calligraphy. As the phenomenon of mistakes of distortion of McNiff (1998) and his trusting the process interpretation, in which the accidental blot, mark, or naturally occurring stain can be assessed as a starting point for some extraordinary interpretation (Turner, 2011).

A similar attitude can be seen through his modern gothic calligraphy collection in Fig. 47, which shows the established link between western calligraphy tradition and current practices, as in the case of Meulman. Ancient writing styles seem to be taken as a stepping point, interpreted by the calligraphers in the context of their understanding of western calligraphy. The perception of the word as an image here also appears as a protected feature, once again. The overall piece represents an image consisting of various lines and strokes of a broad edge marker and a brush. Both seem illegible, focusing on the piece's texture and overall color, playing with different strokes and lines.

On the left of Fig. 47, without glitch experience, it can be observed that the gothic inspiration is employed and executed highly decorative with swashes and additional strokes that make the composition woven-like but not static and rigid. Furthermore, spontaneous strokes follow various rhythms, as will be seen in the work of Brown -mentioned in part entitled "6.8. Denis Brown" with his polyrhythmic practices.

Fig. 47. Works from Lampas' *Modern Gothic Calligraphy Collection*, Source: Lampas' Official Website, pokraslampas.com/modern-gothic-calligraphy-collection-by-pokras-lampas, access: 02.04.2020.



Whereas, on the right, while the general attitude points toward the stylization of the gothic hand in a dynamic rhythmic manner, Lampas once again collaborates with the glitch appearance that is executed in the middle of the composition to refer to. Lampas, in these pieces, put two concepts together, one is hand-made, and the other is machine-made to create his calligrafuturistic piece that cherishes the speed and dynamism underlined in Futuristic works as mentioned in part "6.1. "Word as an image" concept of the modern period related to contemporary western calligraphy." It is a work that is put together features from the past and the present, blended and composed as a unique piece. It reminds me of postmodern works, which are eclectic in composition, in which parts are different from each other and that are thought not to come together.

Observing the work of Lampas, it can be claimed that, like Meulman's attitude toward calligraphy, Lampas tries to reflect his own calligraphy understanding in a genuine way. The use of brushes and paints is highly similar to Meulman's in a technical manner, such as mainly employing wide brushes or preparing his brush that is appropriate to the surface to perform vast areas. Furthermore, the works he tries to set up in a loaded conceptually inspired by the western abstraction and the mindset behind the Far Eastern calligraphy are presented in hybrid forms that are constructed not with the functional concern in writing. Actively experimenting with the combination of his knowledge in the realm of calligraphy, street art, and design, he prefers to practice calligraphy as an act or performance that happens at an actual moment with the presence of an artist himself. However, not just the process but the final product takes the same importance for Lampas. By focusing on the overall appearance of the work, he seems to act more intuitively, fed by his experience and practice in the realm of calligraphy. That means his "modern" calligraphy in his own word with the influences of mostly avant-garde movements, such as Surrealism and Futurism, however, reflects the contemporary attitude of western calligraphy through the elimination of the words, focusing on the strokes, lines, spots -gestures- to reach the liveliness of the stroke or line appreciating as performance, can be assessed as contemporary western calligraphy. All these features provide important information about the dynamics of the contemporary western calligraphers and reveal that contemporary western calligraphy, with its practitioners' background, expands its perception related to the tradition. It can be stated that the central and primary unit focused on and used is a line, a stroke, or a drop of ink, which leaves the mark behind; hence, it is assumed to be a writing-like gesture. In other words, the idea of calligraphy is illustrated by contemporary calligraphers, and it seems the idea is limited by the artist's perception, who is mostly in search of being beyond the literal meaning of the written/printed word. In this sense, another calligrapher, Said Dokins, will be a significant example, not just with the visual execution of the contemporary attitude but also by using the calligraphy to reveal his political critics against various social situations and events, also showing the link between the past and the present appreciation of western calligraphy.

## **6.7. Said Dokins**

In this part, the calligraphic works of Said Dokins will be examined due to the fact that his various executions of calligraphy with different materials, consisting of most common and traditional tools, also photography, depending on the concept of his theme. He is one of the contemporary calligraphers that pushes the boundaries, fusing styles and techniques put together in both legible and illegible ways.

Hence, observing and discussing the works of Dokins will provide information to frame the features and characteristics of contemporary western calligraphy and also give the chance to determine similar dynamics and inspirations behind the current applications within the realm of calligraphy.

Said Dokins (b. 1983, Mexico) is a Mexican-based artist, a member of international associations, including "Calligraphy Masters" -will be mentioned in part "6.12. Viktor Kams" and *Calligraffiti*, with a growing reputation in the field, starting with his early experience in the streets as a young graffiti writer in the 90s. With his training in visual arts at the National School of Arts and Design (ENAP), as well as in Philosophy and Critical Theory, also at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), he started to learn western calligraphy with the calligraphers such as Denis Brown -also will be mentioned in part entitled "6.8. Denis Brown" and Carl Rohrs, furthermore, Japanese calligraphy with Master Masahiko Hiyama. With awakened the conceptual interest in relationships between signs, memory, and their forms of representation through his enormous mural interventions in public space, creating installations, and light painting, performs nationally and internationally; he exhibits his works in museums and galleries in countries such as Spain, Germany, Holland, Belgium, United Kingdom, France, China, Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Ecuador, Peru, among others, also part of the collections of the Polytechnic University of Valencia, Spain, and the Museum of Contemporary Art of Bogotá, MACBO, Colombia. He has signed curatorial projects on urban arts and several political issues in his country.

Dokin's training allowed him to develop his calligraphy style, which combines the calligraphy tradition with references to pre-phonetic writing and graffiti with a displacement of the linguistic sign, as in the case of asemic writers and focuses on the multiple aesthetic possibilities through establishing the relation between the context and history. In addition to creating poetics based on pre-phonetic writing, it deals with the economics of medieval calligraphy and the features of Japanese calligraphy, which are mentioned in Chapter IV. For Dokins, every experience is a trace, a psychic impression that creates a texture. In this sense, calligraphy and graffiti are not only on paper and ink, on walls, and in spray, but in every event as an artist's performance (*Said Dokins, n.d.*)

Dokins combines multiple art forms with various mediums in the process of output, namely calligraphy, graffiti, installation, photography, and occasionally video art. He establishes the close link between the spaces he inhabits, most significantly focusing on the social problems that go through them with research and listening to community narratives. His daily creation routine primarily focuses on urban spaces to intervene with letters and strokes. The city is the primary platform for action in various ways. He presents his work's message to get the public's attention to provoke criticism through his work (Rey, 2014). One of his statements about this issue is as follow:

The urban territory has devoured me, and I have always lived in big cities. Although I know the street, I am continually surprised by the quantity of tags, stains and colors of the city, the conflict and penuries -the defensive attitude of those of us who live in the city, the multitude and the dysfunctionality of the city. Ever since doing graffiti, my relationship with the non-authorized has marked many of the ways I operate. I always try to get away with what I can, to do the unexpected, to break schemes of legality. Working in the urban space, one can point out situations. One can reach people's daily lives in some way, infiltrating disorder, and in this way pass from private interests to public ones. (*Said Dokins, n.d.: para. 3*)

Here, it can be claimed that for Dokins, writing is "a form of interpretation of existence where diverse cultural discourses converge;



it is a political act that stresses the power relations that shape urban space, history, and the way we understand art" (Said Dokins *Contemporary Artist*, n.d.: para. 1) and calligraphy and graffiti are intermediate practices of inscription and trace, distortion of symbolic orders, and political expression.

It undertakes cultural practice, contemporary art production, research, and cultural management. He underlines that "Writing is a gesture, an act that generates meaning, at the same time it's a way of interpreting existence. The performative dimension of writing creates meaning the moment it happens, but, like all actions, it is evanescent, impossible to capture, we only have the inscription, the trace that it leaves behind, to try to decipher it" (Said Dokins *Contemporary Artist*, n.d.: para. 9).

With the mindset behind the meaning of writing that is stressed as the existence of diverse cultures as a witness of history and established strong relations through the inscriptions and traces, Dokins prefers to focus on the writing-like marks and gestures. His work is dominated by the quality of the mark, rhythm, tension, and texture, used as a political element in the calligraphy field.

Therefore, it can be claimed that his works would be an example that calligraphy can be perceived not only from an aesthetic perspective but also as a means for social criticism, as in the case of Meulman, who uses his calligraphy apart from expressing his motto -the word is an image- criticizing some practices of authority figures, such as smoking bans. In other words, the painterly quality is created on various surfaces; Dokins practices calligraphy to express emotions and feelings in an expressive and gestural manner. It means that he prefers to load the pieces with a concept with a highly personal visual attitude.

One of the most notable projects of Dokins is an installation called *Appearances (La práctica de la alegría ante la muerte)* (Fig. 48-49), which has been honored and announced by the Cádiz City Council (an ancient port city in the Andalucía region of southwestern Spain) as an award-winning outstanding and accomplished work (premioscortesdecadiz.es, 2015).

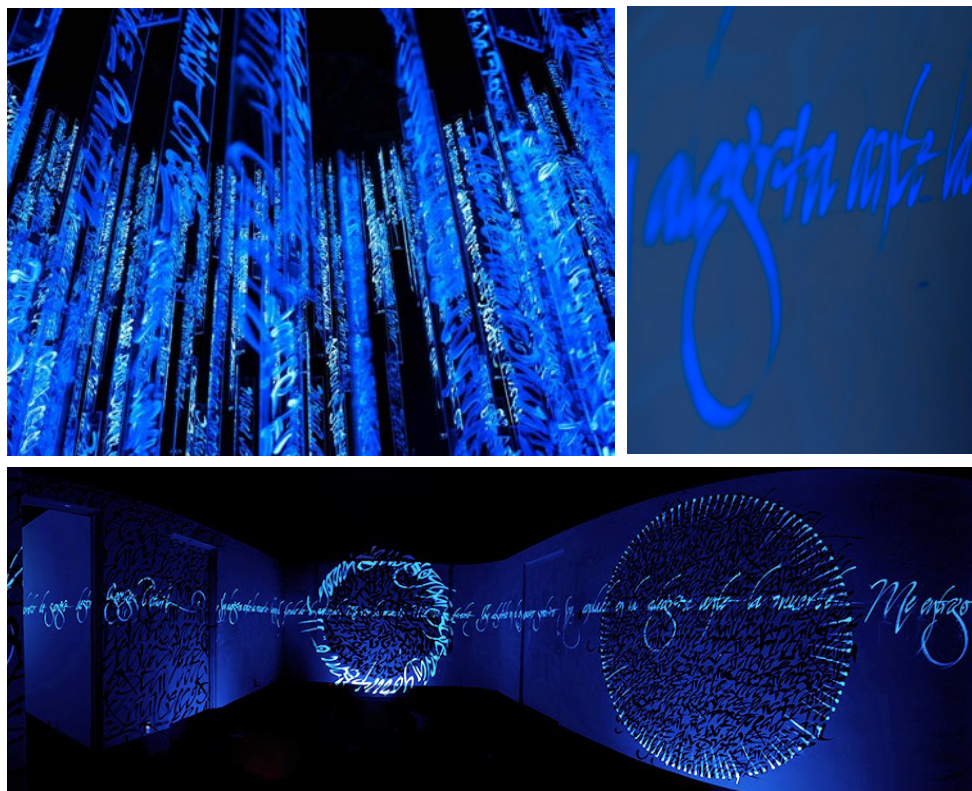


Fig. 48. *Appearances (La práctica de la alegría ante la muerte)*, Installation, 2012-2013, Source: Said Dokins' Official Website, [saidokins.com/2012/04/la-practica-de-la-alegria-ante-la.html/](http://saidokins.com/2012/04/la-practica-de-la-alegria-ante-la.html/), access: 02.01.2018.



This installation consists of five hundred eighty translucent plastic strips with the written name dangling from a circular, spiral-shaped, inverted cone that looks like a chandelier. With invisible ink, Dokins wrote on each strip the name of the person who disappeared due to Mexico's political actions between 1972 and 1998. Under the daylight, it looks like just transparent strips, and only the black light activates the invisible ink. Thus, the inscription becomes visible and readable. To establish a connection with the term memory, the artist does not prefer the static mechanism; on the contrary, an automatic dimmer allows light to turn on and off slowly, which also points to the tension in exploring the dichotomy specifically between light and dark. The overall installation consists of various styles that can be assessed as freehand and texture-like compositions that are more like an image rather than text (Fig. 49).

Fig. 49. Details from *Appearances (La práctica de la alegría ante la muerte)*, Installation, 2012-2013. Source: Said Dokins' Official Website, [saidokins.com/2012/04/la-practica-de-la-alegria-ante-la.html](http://saidokins.com/2012/04/la-practica-de-la-alegria-ante-la.html), access: 02.01.2018.



A part of a text written by a hand of Dokins with more elaborated and exaggerated ascenders and descenders of the letters applied as a style that takes attention and gives a more dynamic look and tension to static writing. The text can be readable; it is evident that he wants the visitors can read the message. Even it seems his own interpretations of the letterforms, in some letters such as "e," carries little strokes that can be associated with the ancient script.

Furthermore, a circular composition of the calligraphic strokes, which will be encountered in Dokins' later work. Unlike the previous examples, its' forms are constructed by sharp edges of the strokes, which gives it a more aggressive appearance. Dokins' use of the clock forms in his other street artworks will be seen in the following pages

that create intricate woven-like textures reminding the feature of the gothic writing system. It is unreadable that it seems he creates his own alphabets or codes reminds ancient forms that roughly scratches on the rocks or walls. The image has a strong appearance also seems like a compact pictorial sign (Fig. 49).

Moreover, to support the theme thematically, using the voices of the testimonies of disappeared politicians and their relatives, as well as the sound while the funeral, elevates the visual effects both physically and symbolically. He also captures his subject matter with ease. To see his installation immerses the viewer in a total experience as a witness of this incident (Rey, 2014).

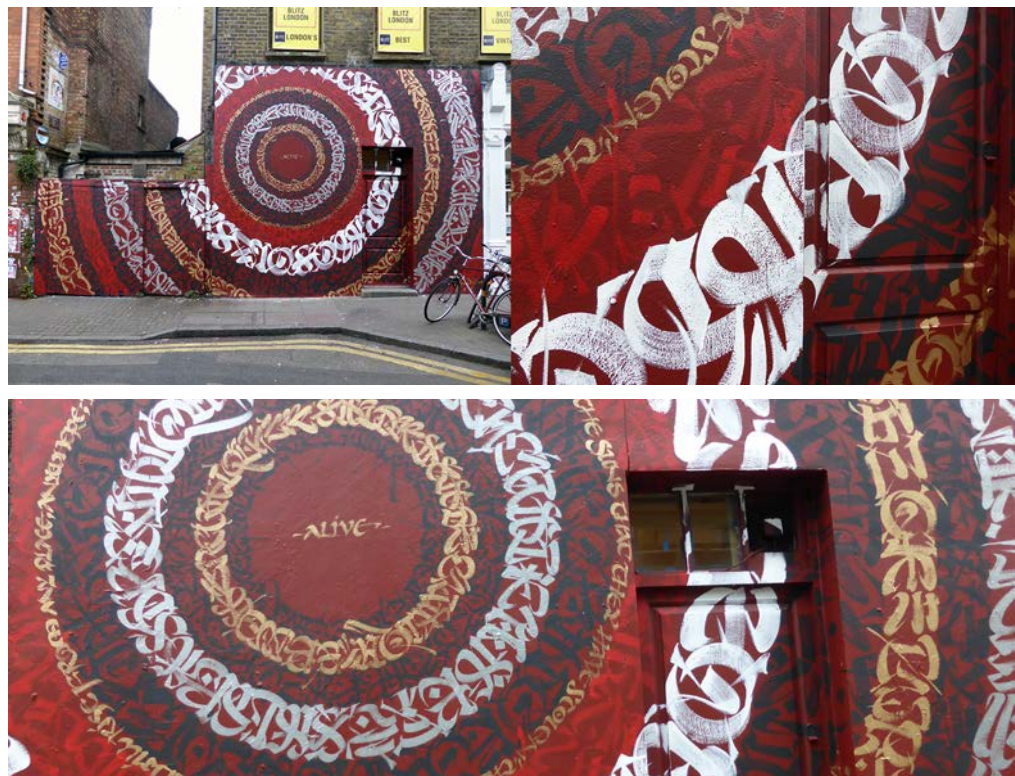
In a quest to convey his interpretation, Dokins creates a multidimensional space where various thought and emotion coexist and is represented by entirely conceived details of a setting. Looking through the ground under the black light, it can be observed that a series of lines appears on the ground, simulating a clock. On the walls, the written text by psychoanalyst Theodor Reik (1888-1969) is as follows: "La función de la memoria es la protección de las impresiones, pues el recuerdo tiende a su deterioro. La memoria es en lo esencial conservadora, mientras el recuerdo es destructivo" (The function of memory is the protection of impressions since the memory tends to deteriorate. Memory is essentially conservative, while recollection is destructive) (premioscortesdecadiz.es, 2015).

The impressively executed work of Dokins can be assumed as unexpected visual poetry, exemplifying the medium's expressive potential with hand-painted calligraphic artwork flourished with rhythm and movement. Gestural strokes and curves of letters with long ascenders and descenders let him alternate between the spiritual and temporal, the perpetual and ephemeral, which conveys what writing and calligraphy mean for Dokins, as explained before. It seems that he creates a different space to reflect silence, sorrow, depth, and the sense of missing, in particular, evokes feelings and emotions. Due to loosely composed hand strengthens the human factor in the realm of feelings and creates a candid, dense, and dynamic influence on viewers (Apariciones. Said Dokins, 2012).

Among his all experiments, for *Appearances (La práctica de la alegría ante la muerte)* installation, light has a central role. As Stevens states, experimenting with a new tool or method may bring unexpected opportunities, which means pursuing and achieving a new way of calligraphic mark-making and images (Stevens, 2013: 133). It is highly believed that it is one of the main reasons to prompt the artist who is trying to explore a new way of transitioning letters from visual forms through the emotional or sensational degree. It can be claimed that it is associated with the impulse of contemporary calligraphers that ignite going beyond the limit in the field that requires artistry, vision, and a sense of design. As speaking of the urban location's potential as a medium and his circular compositions as seen above, Dokins' mural urban calligraphy work, a relatively more common art form as typically fully painted frontispieces, however, still need to get attention due to its well-presented compositions with its intricate forms, composed in details and flourished with vivid colors.

Fig. 50 demonstrates one of Dokins' mural calligraphy works, painted on one of the walls of Hanbury Street in London, when he participated in a group show as a contributory artist at the Hoxton Gallery. The work presented here with the detailed photo is one piece of a calligram series, painted to commemorate the first anniversary of the abduction and subsequent disappearance of forty-three students from the Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers' College in the Mexican state of Guerrero. This incident caused international outrage and became an embarrassment to the President's government; thus, the case was seen as emblematic of many others. Dokins wants to honor their memory with visual poetry featuring Rosario Ibarra (b. 1927), a social fighter for political disappearances in Mexico since the seventies. The poem on the wall of London is as follows: "You will rise from any place, anywhere, to greet and hug me, and recover in that embrace, all the suns that they have stolen from me. They took them alive! We want them alive!" (Said Dokins new walls in London, n.d.).

Fig. 50. *Alive*, Hanbury Street, London, 2015, Source: Said Dokins' Official Websites, [saidokins.blogspot.com.es/2015/12/said-dokins-new-walls-in-london.html](http://saidokins.blogspot.com.es/2015/12/said-dokins-new-walls-in-london.html), access: 16.02.2018.



The piece, designed as concentric circles, is very well measured and organized in spacing, which is crucial to fit the whole image on the façade. Entwined circles designate the superiority of the visual compilation. They consist of letters in complex, indecipherable compositions and rhythmically overlapping strokes. It is up for discussion whether his letter is perfect or not as a form; however, their effect is agreeomy in mass. It does not necessarily reveal perfect individual letters for the sake of the perfection of the whole. Beyond controversy, organizing marks in harmony provides a more personally satisfying feeling. Moreover, in the center of the artwork, as if just on the heart of the piece, Dokins wrote the word "Alive" in a different style as if an anchor point from where the text fans out.



The contrast of the letterforms provided with the variety of size, weight as well as colors, and textures achieve to create a perception of movement within the image itself, starting from the center with the word *alive* and rippling through outside of the image –the edge of the endpoints of the design as it may call. Dokins may be ascribed to the same attributes, but it is for sure that choosing elements that complement rather than compete with each other is a crucial point of the design process. Consisting of six color palettes, used red dominantly both in the background and for the one part of the circle of letterforms is probably to link with the theme.

The complexity of his image, consisting of various elements, tends to create a hybrid image not just about its technical details but also about its reflections as an interpretation of the thematic impulsions with a bit of detached interest in making design usable and functional. More accurately, the lesser significance of legibility, although the poetic statements Dokins choose in general, have striking meaning literally. Overall, the artist engages himself well aware of the visual power of letter and word in both ways, as a form and as a meaning it conveys. The compositional resemblance between these western contemporary artists and the work of Zenderoudi seems to have its roots beginning with the mindset behind the Middle Eastern calligraphy, which is the level that this culture puts the concept of writing and how the beauty is perceived and executed. In other words, similarity seems to be an influence that transcends similarity in visual appearance.

Chapter V already mentioned how the Middle East elevated the written word as a form of beauty due to showing respect to the word of God; hence the aim is to write as beautifully as they can. The employed decorative attitude also comes from receding from the figurative implications; that is why the abstract nature steps in. The experiment and artistic features already exist in the Middle Eastern calligraphy's essence in that sense, whether conventional or contemporary. It can be said that western calligraphy tradition lacks this mindset that begins with the perception of the writing in the West once again. The terminology confusions also probably occur due to this sharp separation between calligraphy, writing, and painting. While in the Arabic region, calligraphy, most appropriately *khatt*, seems to be appreciated as a superior form of that culture without any difference between writing or calligraphy in that sense; on the contrary, in the West, it is difficult to claim that this perception also exists. Hence, contemporary calligrapher already aware of calligraphy's perception in the West cannot cover their attitude. Hence, contemporary calligraphers are searching to justify their practices as superior to the tradition. Here comes another confusion, whether they are calligraphers or artists who employ letters, words, or sometimes abstract units that are already a part of the written letters.

It is evident that the observation of the West's contemporary practices gives us a chance to claim that calligraphic practices have already transformed into an art form beyond the western perception of calligraphy that is mentioned in Chapters II and III. Instead of creating a debate here, it is crucial to understand the concept of different cultural appreciation in terms of calligraphy, which will also frame the West's contemporary attitudes. The features of contemporary calligraphy

consist of wide varieties that depend on calligraphers' perceptions and attitudes towards calligraphy. Influenced by various factors, such as the history of the writing, also ancient writing systems and styles, even the anonymous scribes, other calligraphy traditions both on a means visual and conceptual level, also different art forms, these artists combine their personal backgrounds and interest for the sake of creating their own styles. Hence the individual attitude toward contemporary concepts is created and represented in a fusion or hybrid form.

As Stevens (2013) states, a fusion of Eastern sensibility, graffiti, scribbling, handwriting, expressive mark-making, drawing, a tendency to abstraction became a part of the spirit of contemporary calligraphy, and powerful expressive marks and images appear as hallmarks of the Western approach which means being a non-western.

Another notable work of Dokis is the photographic calligraphy series entitled *Heliografias de la memoria* (2015-2019) (Fig. 51 and 52), a long-term project exploring social and historical relations. These selected places, such as historic sites, public plazas, monuments, boulevards, or abandoned places, become re-signification spaces with the light calligraphy of Dokins.

Fig. 51. From a work series *Heliografias de la memoria*, 2014- 2015, Mexico, Source: Revista Picnic, [picnic.media/heliografias-de-la-memoria-el-arte-de-capturar-luz/](http://picnic.media/heliografias-de-la-memoria-el-arte-de-capturar-luz/), access: 02.01.2018.



Fig. 52. From a work series *Heliografias de la memoria*, 2017, Netherlands, *Desplegar el plan natural en toda su amplitud* (To Deploy the Natural Plan in All its Amplitude), Source: Revista Picnic, [picnic.media/heliografias-de-la-memoria-el-arte-de-capturar-luz/](http://picnic.media/heliografias-de-la-memoria-el-arte-de-capturar-luz/), access: 02.01.2018.





Images are captured by the calligraphic gestures executed by the luminous tools created to perform as a series of calligraphic actions when the act of writing takes place by long-exposure photography. They reveal the action, developed as a series of interventions in urban locations with a solid historical and symbolic value, nevertheless encoded by flow and transit, as a non-place. The text is written with light, so the written text/word disappears as soon as the moves of the calligrapher become invisible to the eye.

The first work of the series took place in Queretaro, Mexico (Fig. 51). It repeated as different practices in different cities (saddokins.com, n.d.), as in Fig. 52 in the small village in Apeldoorn municipality with 120 inhabitants. The building was constructed in 1917 and had a significant role in housing a communicational complex. During the Second World War, transatlantic links were established between the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies (present-day Indonesia).

Dokins explains the process of creating this piece as follows:

In order to do this piece, we went through many adventures. We parked in a forbidden spot, then we walked 20 minutes on a rocky track, where wild boars were ready to attack us, finally, in the middle of nowhere, there was the tower. It was slightly raining, and while we were shooting, police arrived and kicked us out of the place, we didn't know it was forbidden to be there at night and take photos. We were able to do just two shots, but it was one of the sessions we enjoyed the most. (*Said Dokins, n.d.: para 7*)

Well-inscribed strokes convey certain levels of translucent dramatic scenes supported by the transparency effect that light provides. This sense is even doubled with the overlapping of strokes, emphasizing created contrast sense that stands out in silhouette against the city behind.

Dokins seems to play in the realm of ephemera by capturing the moment visually stimulatingly. As an image, it seems that repeated rhythms that follow complement each other and also create highly elaborated sculptural entities on the streets with their shadows reflected from the surface. Even if they are captured as still frames, the translucent effect of the written strokes creates an illusion as if the strokes are moving.

Another point that has to be underlined is that all are performances captured and recorded as an act of writing. Once again, scratched strokes create a pictorial image that is way beyond being a recognizable alphabet or a text. However, the repetitive image pattern gives the impression that it is a text image and creates the urge to read. It can be accepted as an asemic calligraphic writing of Dokins. It also reflects the same tendency of the contemporary calligrapher, which is a desire to go beyond the perception of Western writing.

Hence, how he employs and adapts the technique to his work and how he records his strokes as a performance reveals the writing act as a process worth attention. It can be claimed that Dokins literally writes with a light and records his messages. He seems to offer a new aspect as a practice in the field of contemporary calligraphy.

Dokins' more recent works, the series of *Palimpsests* (Figs. 53 and 54), takes attention that he preserves to create a circular composition with employed strokes that intertwine each other, as seen through his previous works. This series takes attention due to Dokins' experiments that take calligraphy practices to a new format as a series of pictorial works with laser-cut wood reliefs and digital audiovisual pieces, exhibited in the Contemporary Art Exhibition in 2019 in Milan Design Week, Tortona District, Milano.

Fig. 53. From a work series *Palimpsests*, 2019, Bloop Showcase, Milan Design Week, Tortona District, Milano, Italy, Source: Said Dokins' Official Website, [saidokins.com/projects/contemporary-art-exhibition-said-dokins-milan/?v=267d696eab9e](http://saidokins.com/projects/contemporary-art-exhibition-said-dokins-milan/?v=267d696eab9e), access: 22.05.2020.

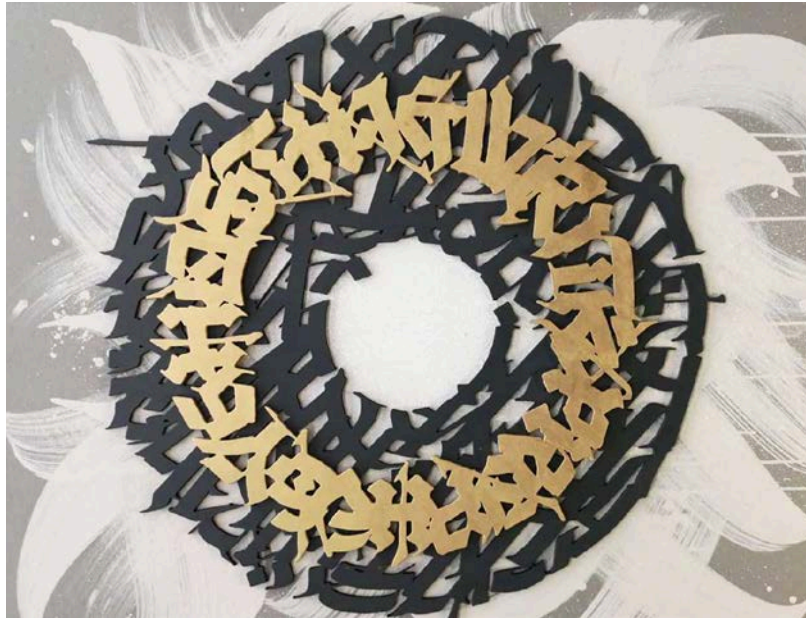


Fig. 53 takes attention to the usage of the gold that creates a third layer and locates by Dokins as a top layer of the work. As mentioned in Chapter III and observed in the works of Meulman, gold helps to establish the link with the tradition of western calligraphy. The usage of the gold here gives a more vivid sensation as light and takes attention, helping to distinguish the circled written text and make it appreciated as if a different note on the surface.

Whereas, Fig. 54 takes attention to the dripping of the white color on the red written background surface that creates some sort of tension. Once again, it can be seen that Dokins, like Meulman and Lampas, employs the drips and drops of the ink, accepted them as one of the significant complementary units that make it differ from the tradition and make it closer to the idea of postmodern designers, who cherishes the error and accident through their designs as mentioned in part "6.3. The postmodern condition related to contemporary western calligraphy."



Fig. 54. From a work series *Palimpsests*, "Crown 01," 2019, Spray, acrylic and laser cutting on wood, Bloop Showcase, Milan Design Week, Tortona District, Milano, Italy, Source: Said Dokins' Official Website, [saidokins.com/projects/contemporary-art-exhibition-said-dokins-milan/?v=267d696eab9e](https://saidokins.com/projects/contemporary-art-exhibition-said-dokins-milan/?v=267d696eab9e), access: 22.05.2020.

On the other hand, it should be stated that the title *Palimpsest* is a word that is a parchment or other writing surface used more than once, rewriting for one reason or another on what was previously used/written. That means the original text has been erased totally or partially then overwritten by another. In other words, a *palimpsest* is a "multi-layered record" (The Chicago School of Media Theory, n.d.: para.1). Etymologically, the word derives from the Ancient Greek

palimpsestos refers to the action of "scraped again" (Harper, n.d.). In that sense, considering the perception of Dokins about writing and calligraphy, which is summed as a form of existence where diverse cultural discourse converges, as a cultural practice, he points to marks made by those that passed before us, represents traces, also serves as a complex and infinite network that involves distant stories. Hence, the notion of palimpsests mentioned here takes a central role for Dokin in these practices. As seen in details, Dokins employs spray, acrylic, and laser cutting on wood. He has physically gained a dimension image by creating layers, supporting the color selection that can be divided easily; moreover, the translucent nature of the color supports the idea and the appearance of layers, referring to the idea of palimpsest with a faint, left-over effect. Furthermore, while the paint -a more conventional way- is employed to create back layers of the palimpsests, the upper level is created with the laser-cut wood that makes the writing cause the text to explode forward and be more visible visually and in size.

Dokins' statements take attention here as follows: "The experiences and the relationships of subjects with objects and their environment constitute the main axes in the investigations of this artist. For him, action as an ephemeral inscription has the power to activate memory and symbolically re-signify the spaces it occupies. Despite its evanescence, its mark remains as an act of resistance to the politics of oblivion" (*Said Dokins Contemporary Artist*, n.d.: para. 5). Here, it can be claimed that except for reference to the palimpsests of the medieval times with the materials selected and the technical details that it was implemented with the idea of overlapping writings, a montage of heterogeneous fragments seems to refer to chronologies that artist to put attention the concept of history, memory, and death as can be observed in previous calligraphy works and interpretations of Dokins.

Hence, it can be stated that, through combining the traditional aspect of western calligraphy, including pre-phonetic writing that makes us consider the marks, signs apart from the writing systems and their elements, Dokins develops his unique style and perspective. Apart from the influences of the western tradition of calligraphy, it can be claimed that the general concept of Far Eastern calligraphy influences his practices with the consideration of the word that is seen as an image. He embraces the multiple possibilities that can be established through the relationship between context and history. He considers contemporary calligraphy as a cultural practice that reflects the trace of history and can be employed as an element that conveys political interpretation. As Dokins, another calligrapher Denis Brown is worth mentioning here with his various traditional references and a wide variety of applications that illustrate various similar and different attitudes that contemporary calligraphy provides as possibilities to interpret. It will be significant to observe Brown's understanding and noteworthy statements and discussions in the realm of contemporary calligraphy.

## **6.8. Denis Brown**

In this part, Denis Brown will be talked through his calligraphic works because of his clear references to history, as in the case of Meulman; also his postmodern attitude in contemporary calligraphy



with employing the various materials employed and differently used like Picasso, Braque, Duchamp or Schwitters, who used the industrial materials produced for other purposes in an artistic context. It is known that they used mass-produced objects such as newspapers, straws, and linoleum in their first collage experiments. These ready-made objects are taken out of their context and used in the context of art. In this sense, the approaches of these artists can be described as revolutionary approaches. They used these products as part of the composition in their paintings (Yilmaz, 2013). Brown's usage of mass-produced objects, such as wire, and copper-based metal leaf, can be assessed as collage work worth mentioning here. Furthermore, his polyrhythmic calligraphy experiences that refer to his italic hand interpretation that heralds various rhythmic moves differ from the tradition -mentioned in the following pages- illustrate the different attitude from one of the basic features of traditional calligraphy, which was grounded on the same rhythmic repetition within the letter and the Word. Lastly, his abstract calligraphy concept that he performed and filmed as action will reveal the other possible creation that contemporary tendencies led the calligraphers to experiment with. Hence, in this part, examining the works of Brown will provide various significant inputs to frame the scale of contemporary attitudes within the realm of calligraphy.

Denis Brown (b. 1968, Ireland) is one of the contemporary calligraphers inspired by the medieval manuscript, particularly the *Book of Kells* (circa 800 A.D.), a well-known manuscript written in Ireland at Kells in the Irish monastery on the west coast of Scotland written by Uncial majuscule and Half-Uncial with quill pens -mentioned in Chapter III.

Fig. 55 illustrates the time Brown used a quill pen and practiced the historical script at his fifteen years old while demonstrating calligraphy at Roscrea Heritage Centre, County Tipperary, Ireland, probably copying the page's ancient texts and illuminations.

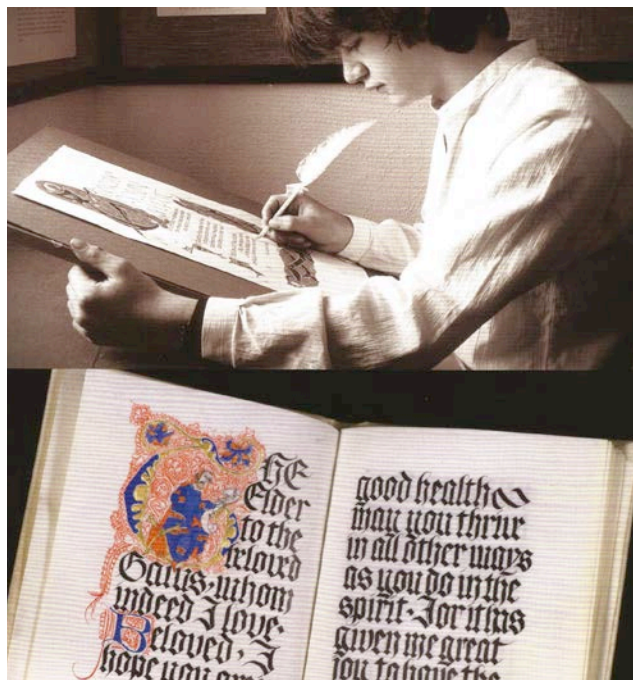


Fig. 55. Dennis Brown, 1983, Source: Brown, (2017: 4).



Part of his training as an apprentice scribe helps apprehend the form, the letter's construction, the overall composition of the page written conventionally, and the nature of practicing the tradition in the realm of ancient Western writing systems. It is assumed as a must for the calligrapher to practice the ancient scripts, to learn the tools and materials, and also the techniques, whether later on, they prefer to continue practicing traditional, modern, or contemporary calligraphy. It is indispensable to learn the fundamentals of tradition that will help to understand the letter construction and how the styles evolved and transformed. As mentioned in Chapter III, this information will provide critical input for even today's typographers.

Brown studies the historical models and exact forms of letters in a traditional sense. Slightly reflecting personal interpretations of various scripts, such as *italic hand*, and exploring the contemporary calligraphy with a more dynamic balance, learning intricacies of contrast in layout and design, and he generates his motto as being free, which is generally not regarded as a term that refers to or used in a traditional sense.

As for myself, I participated in various courses and workshops on traditional calligraphy to learn the fundamentals of traditional western calligraphy mentioned in Appendix A, which gives the vision to appreciate and interpret, also blended with the personal experiences that will be revealed through original works of calligraphers. Hence, it can be claimed that there is a tangible link between the past and present due to the accumulated nature of the calligraphy.

One of the examples of his earlier work that is inspired by ancient manuscripts is illustrated in Fig. 56-58, *The Great Book of Ireland*, his first big commission manuscript project, studied between 1989 and 1991 as a large volume of 250 pages with contributions by 121 artists, 143 poets, and nine composers. It has a concept that combines handwritten text by its authors, accompanied by paintings and drawings contributed by visual artists. Poetry is one of the elements that Brown combines, as in the cases of Meulman and Ingmire -which will be mentioned in part "6.11. Thomas Ingmire" occasionally employs poems as a trigger point that reveals itself through visual calligraphic compositions (Brown, 2017).

As Brown (2017) states, *The Great Book of Ireland* was created due to the idea of painter Gene Lambert (1921-2000), who collaborated with Irish poet, writer, and lecturer Theo Dorgan, to make a contemporary version of the *Book of Kells*, which is mentioned in Chapter III. As a creation process, the first stage was a poem written by hand on each manuscript page and then created a visual response on the facing page. It can be stated that calligraphy would be incorporated with this concept at the heart of this project (Brown, 2017).

As a calligrapher, the only person working on every page of the project of *The Great Book of Ireland*, Brown employs calligraphy with a more challenging role that provides unifying visual and verbal elements helping artwork and handwritten poems. Each double-page spread could sit together as a one-piece composition. Making handwriting and drawings appear on the pages as organic extensions of contemporary

calligraphy seems the dominant feature of the pages. It can be stated that the calligraphic interpretation of the written word seems to take a compositional role.

In Fig. 56, the book's title is written in majuscule letters based on Roman capitals mentioned in Chapter III. The expanding strokes of the letter "E," "K," and "A" are also the initial strokes of a nib, which creates a sort of serif that gives the title a more elaborated look, and reveals the attitude of the calligrapher. The elaborated details, such as small touches of the nib, seem like diamond shapes that belong to the Gothic writing style.

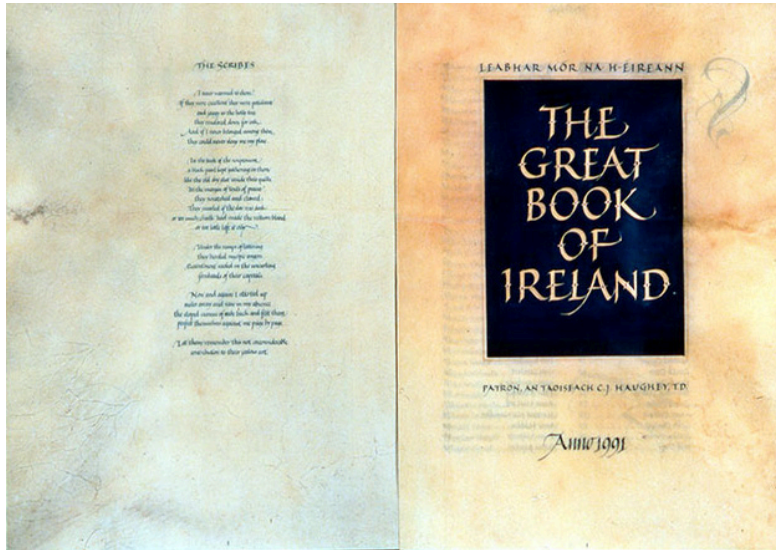


Fig. 56. The title page of *The Great Book of Ireland*, Calligrapher: Denis Brown, Poet: Seamus Heaney with his poem called *The Scribe*, 51x36x11cm, Source: Brown, (2017: 16-17).

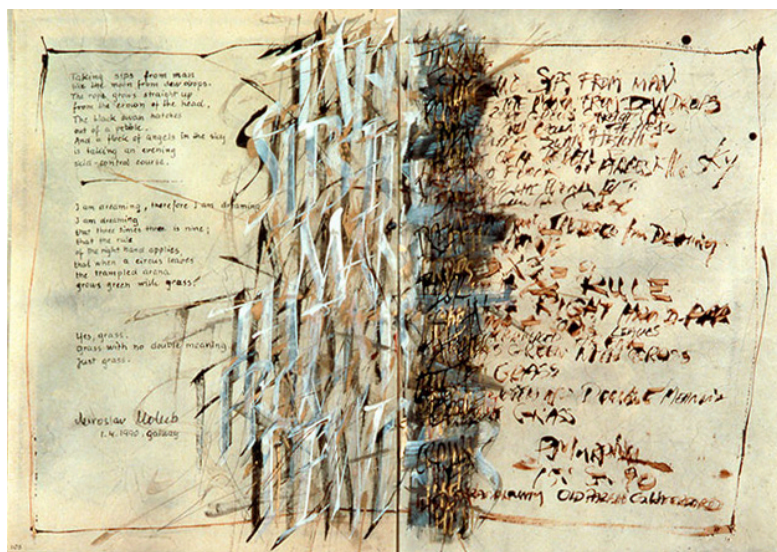
In Fig. 57, the facing pages are composed as a unit composition dominated by Brown's italic interpretation. His style is based on the italic script's rhythm flow, examined in the following pages. The handwritten poem that supports the overall composition as text units can be observed. The highlighted statements in Brown's rhythmic flows seem to support Madden's painted leaves of various sizes but are still readable and keep the main letterforms that help recognize and read the text that is written by Brown.



Fig. 57. *Folio 49*, Calligraphy: Denis Brown, Poet: Anthony Cronin, Visual Artist: Anne Madden who painted leaves on the page of the manuscript, Source: Brown, (2017: 18).

In Fig. 58, the facing pages are once again planned as a unit composition, dominated by the text written by Brown himself.

Fig. 58. Folio 108, Source: Brown, (2017: 18).



His italic script's rhythm flow is located in the middle of the composition with a more condensed form. The highlighted text is written repeatedly with various color combinations, which creates a woven appearance and causes unreadable text; even the letters are recognizable. On the left-hand page, while the text is written relatively clean, the right-hand page is more complicated and challenging in terms of legibility. Brown wrote the left-hand page with his highly aggressive and wild italic version of the calligraphic style; poet Miroslav Holub wrote the poem on the left-hand page with his stiff handwriting next to the calligraphy of Brown, and artist Pat Murphy wrote the poem on the right-hand page with his quite the opposite style of handwriting. This preference for a combination of the composition may refer to the collective work of manuscripts that were often written by various scribes and illustrated by illustrators. Furthermore, as mentioned in Chapter III, the *Book of Kells* is a noteworthy manuscript consisting of Irish illuminated initials, Celtic knot, interlace, and page decorations that spread on the parchment. It is lavishly decorated and ranks among the world's most excellent illuminated manuscripts without using gold or silver.

Hence, what can be observed with this collaboration work is the written words as images on the pages; while being complementary to the poems, it seems to liken to a lavishly decorated form of the *Book of Kells'* pages, in which various decorations and figures accompanied to the text, furthermore, within the letter itself, it is possible to observed treatment as an image, that also reminds the motto of Meulman reflected his work and caused to call himself a painter. The actual *Book of Kells*, as mentioned above, is a result of master craftsmanship produced by a monk community in a traditional sense of manuscript production. All scribes would have been educated due to similar educational processes and a highly similar vision of the work. However, for *The Great Book of Ireland*, artists, poets, and a calligrapher worked independently with various materials. Since having a different period study that spent on pages, using inconsistent vellum type and quality cause not focusing on the craftsmanship enough as Brown himself states and he assesses



*The Great Book of Ireland* as a "sketch" book in the best sense of the term (Brown, 2017: 25).

What is noteworthy is that Brown intends to explore more dynamic compositions partly inspired by his training as a novice. Beyond the traditional sense, it can be claimed that he is in the quest for developing artistic approaches that stray from the conventional method and practices of tradition. However, he still carries the traces that reflected the works of Brown, whether as a context or as a form inherited from the medieval time, because his actual style is developed based on the italic hand that is served as a functional entity that is often legible, hence its mission is to convey the meaning of the poem, or the text. The way he executes his hand also supports the formulation of his hand. While creating his own style, he pushes the limits of traditional syntax and text writing in a dynamic form that structurally supports his construction and analysis. The formal analysis of his italic hand will be discussed in the following pages of this part. As mentioned before, almost in every case of calligraphy practitioner, Brown, after studying manuscripts, first sketching details, and then drawing the overall form of the entire volume, created a series that enlarged his representation of the perception of a manuscript in a contemporary manner. Emulating historic insular styles, it is evident that Brown tends to see beyond rather than using it in a historical and functional sense.

Another noteworthy project of Brown is the *Ancient Codex Series* (Fig. 59-60), also called *Kells Burning*, which is assessed as "a greatly enlarged representation of the *Book of Kells* with darkened pages being consumed by flames depicting in textural gilding" (Brown, 2017: 35).



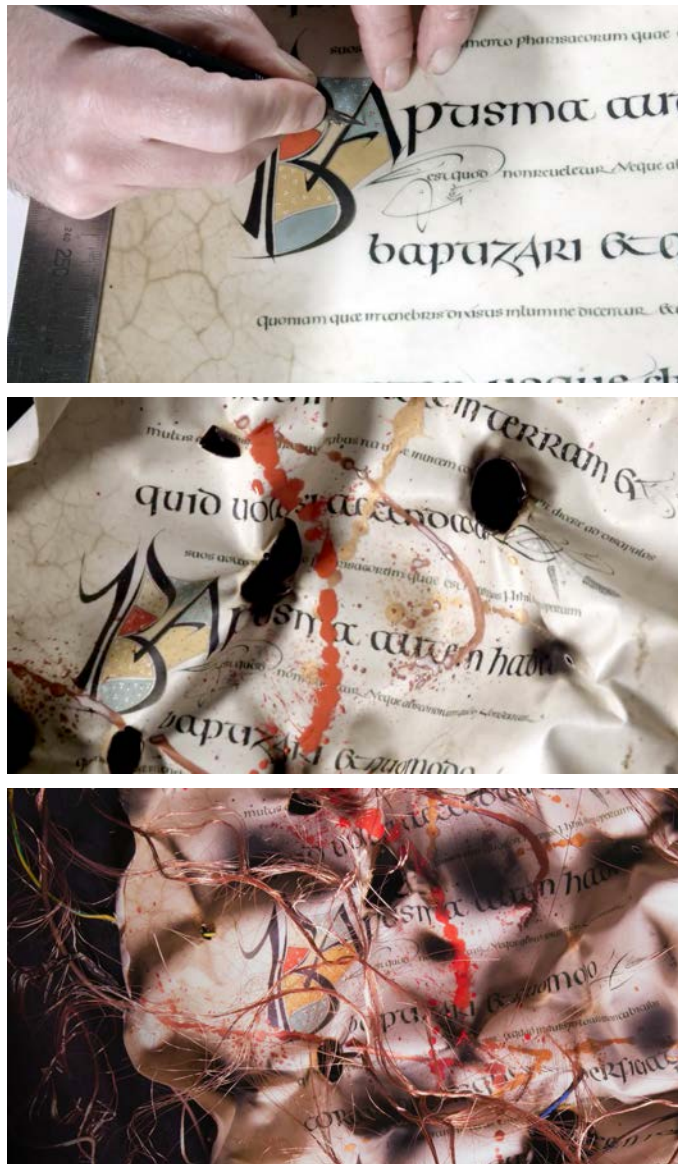
Fig. 59. *Phoenix* (From *Ancient Codex Series*), 1992, Source: Brown, (2017: 38).

With the claim of searching for more profound than the decorative pages as in the *Book of Kells*, he seems to emulate insular historical style with his individual interpretation underlined as he dissociates from religion by gradually deviating from the Catholic practice on which he had been raised.

In *Kells Burning*, his symbolic appreciation of the *Book of Kells* through burning the vellum is explained as an attempt to purge both himself and the religion and free the artistic and sacred spirit. Brown criticizes the religion's dogmas, the *Book of Kells'* preciousness of the craft practice, and its intricate and delicate details.

The Irish style was practiced on the calfskin vellum burned; the paint was splashed on the page, and the copper wire was wrapped as the last touch. He creates the Codex series pages by laying the pages outdoors, throwing buckets of water, and splashing paint on them, just before and after writing (Fig. 60).

Fig. 60. Fragments from the video of 2017 version of *Phoenix* that illustrates the steps of the production of the work, Source: Brown's Quill Skill Website, [quillskill.com/trad](http://quillskill.com/trad), access: 13.06.2018.





In his work, *Phoenix* (Fig. 59 and 60), Brown continues his experiment with various processes, including burning the precious vellum and employing different materials to make a composition that provides the work with a physical dimension. After writing the text in insular styles on ancient pages made from stillborn calves' flexible skins, he drew and painted some decorated initials, as seen in the *Book of Kells*. With the fire of the lighter, the vellum's transformation starts to appear, which turns the flat page into a third dimension on which the straight lines of text turn into undulated text and become unreadable. Attaching the electric wires and making splashes of paint on the sheet make the ancient page look as if it contains lively energy that reminds the splashes of the western abstract artists such as Tobey or Motherwell -also often used by contemporary calligraphers that are mentioned in this Chapter. It transforms the conventional appearance into a more gestural plastic form.

During the process, it seems that Brown also heralds the experiment with the material physically by the interventions of sunlight and water directly (Brown, 2017). His attitude here is also likened to the act of abstract expressionists, particularly in action painting that is assumed the canvas as a scene recorded of the artist's acts. Brown seems to create a dramatic scene by employing different materials and using them as a collage to reflect his contextual and emotional mood. This is the issue that is mentioned earlier in terms of employing the mass-produced products as complimentary units of the composition that related to the artists such as Picasso, Braque, and Duchamp. There is order and chaos in the same work, which started as a two-dimensional but then turned into a thrid dimensional piece with crumpling of the written piece for the sake of conveying the tension and emotion as a concept.

A similar attitude can be observed in *Unclean Page* (Fig. 61), first created in 1993 and augmented in 2017.



Fig. 61. *Unclean Page*, 1993, augmented 2017, Source: Brown's Quill Skill Website, [quillskill.com/film.html](http://quillskill.com/film.html), access: 13.06.2018.

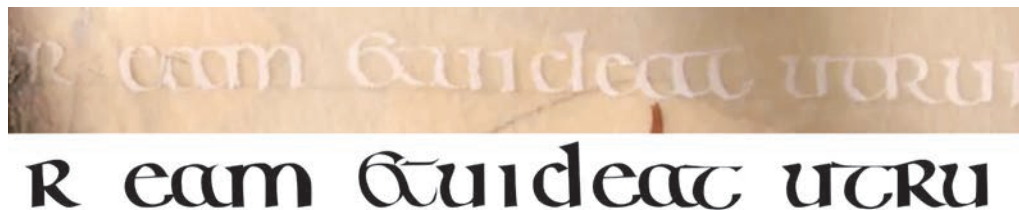
At first glance, the most noticeable part is the vellum, prepared as if it has wounds on some parts. This somehow creates a disturbing appearance that emphasizes the type of material Brown uses -a skin with a perception of being a living part rather than a dead tissue. As if the vellum is infected, its wounds interrupt the text, creating tension for staring eyes. The details can be observed in Fig. 62, the holes created by burning the skin and various tissue scar-like appearances created with various materials imitating the wounded skin.

Fig. 62. Details from Fig. 61, 1993, augmented 2017, Source: Brown's Quill Skill Website, quillskill.com/trad, access: 13.06.2018.



It is evident that Brown's primary concern is not beauty in a traditional sense, nor to be read and convey meaning through the written materials. Instead, the crucial point is to convey the thoughts and feelings of the calligrapher through various mixed techniques in an eclectic manner. Furthermore, Brown juxtaposes two kinds of writing here; one is an insular style that is mentioned in part "3.5.6. Insular Majuscule (*Insular Half-Uncial*)" of Chapter III, written with an almost similar color to the vellum; also, it seems as if Brown first wrote the text and then erased it (Fig. 63), but the traces of the written text remain.

Fig. 63. Detail fragment from Fig. 61.



The other writing seems just scribbling written closer to the wounds in red to support the idea of the wound. Contrary to the *Book of Kells*, there is no decoration or flourishing within the script in the text here. The visual interpretation of the overall composition reflects Brown's appreciation of the idea of calligraphy not just by creating his own writing style but also as a concept; whole entities, including materials and techniques, are included, and every level is evidently reconceptualized for the sake of contemporary attitude of Brown which he reveals in his statements:

As I was developing my artistic direction, I wondered if the calligrapher might sometimes take the creative lead; not to uphold the original semantic, nor to merely interpret, but to actively engage with the meaning projected. The traditional calligrapher's approach in presenting a text is akin to when an interviewer respectfully allows a renowned guest to present their point of view unchallenged. However, a more dynamic interview may possibly arise when the conversation is directed to provoke the guest to interactively respond. (Brown, 2017: 50)

It is evident that Brown interrogates the traditional perception of the medieval scribe, who was not supposed to reflect his personal interpretation on the pages of the manuscripts nor the creativity beyond the semantic meaning of the text, which was the dominant figure of that time. One of Brown's initial efforts with his calligraphy is to surpass it and create a controversial meaning by provoking thoughts. Considering his concentrated concepts, he seems to employ calligraphy here as a bench. Not the calligraphy itself but the idea behind the tradition's overall concept is mostly criticized here. As he states, he has four primary reasons for taking a provocative approach:

First: Art I was inspired by at the time was often controversial and I found that aspect stimulating and engaging. Second: I was tired of people admiring calligraphy without caring to read the text and I aimed to inconvenience that shallowness. Third: I had been made aware by my work on *The Great Book of Ireland* of the modernist didactic that art must be autonomous. Thus it must not follow or illustrate ideas already implicit in a text. I sought to be proactive with the meanings projected. Fourth: Investigate curiosity in finding the strange Leviticus texts, combined with my impish sensibility, also caused me to engage with a provocative approach. (Brown, 2017: 55)

As mentioned in Chapter II, while discussing the definition and description of the term calligraphy, it is stated that Brown also criticized the conventional perception of the West that refers to beautiful writing. He refuses it due to limiting calligraphy by conventional notions of beauty or writing and common tendencies that assess calligraphy as superficial beauty. In this perspective, Brown (2017) criticized church dogmas, which reminds the monastic culture of the early Middle Ages and the Rule of Benedict that framed the monastic life, including the craftsmen scribe who was assessed as a servant of God, hence was supposed to execute his craft with humility, means without personal interpretation as mentioned in Chapters II and III. Brown started and reflected this attitude in his practices, such as his vellum pages where the skin is riddled with sores, and the writing started to appear more like graffiti scribblings that can be assessed as closer to the asemic writing practicing, at least behind the idea as he mentioned above through the statement "...admiring calligraphy without caring to read the text..." (Brown, 2017: 55).

Fig. 64 illustrates the game called *Pac-Man*, which heavily influenced Brown's childhood memory.



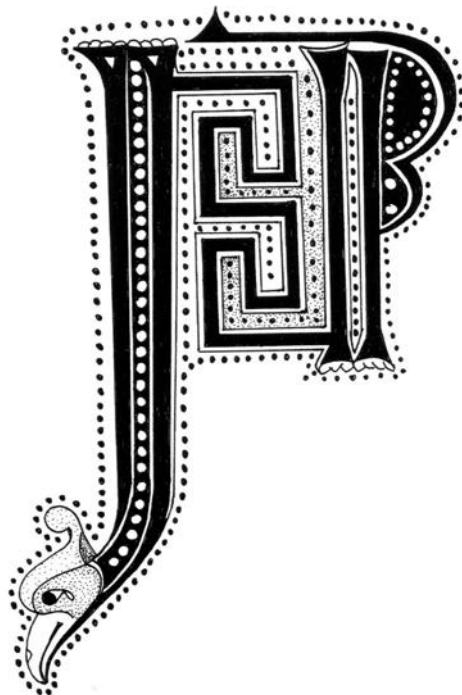
Fig. 64. A screenshot from the videogame *Pac-Man*, Source: The Pac-Man Website, [thepacmanwebsite.com/media/pacman\\_flash/](http://thepacmanwebsite.com/media/pacman_flash/), access: 18.06.2018.

It is an arcade video game created by Japanese video game designer Toru Iwatani and first released in 1980. It seems his early conventional training in calligraphy, spending a considerable amount of time with the *Book of Kells* and the Old Library in Trinity College with various manuscripts that he could examine; on the other hand, spending time with schoolboy activities, particularly in the 1980s video games found common ground to meet. As can be observed, Pac-Man is a yellow mouth head character, supposed to eat all fruits in the meantime has to escape from the other characters, which are illustrated with various colors with big eyes. In other words, the character of the game is the hunter, at the same time can be a hunt.

As Brown states, he establishes the various similarities between the graphics of this video game and insular manuscript decoration, such as the two-dimensional vectorial illustrations both have. Furthermore, as mentioned in part "6.5. Niels "Shoe" Meulman," his one inspiration comes from the story of a cat, *Pangur Pan*, who is trying to hunt the mouse while his owner, a scribe, copies the text. Meulman establishes the link between himself as a graffiti writer hunting the words at night and the cat hunting the mouse. The link that Brown establishes here seems to take similarities with this concept between the scribe and the pac-man.

The visual similarities through being two-dimensional can be observed through the elaborated initial of St. John's Gospel of the eighth century in Fig. 65. It is a highly elaborated initial. The thick stems of the "I" and left-hand upright of the "N" are divided by a hollow filled with white dots on a black ground with a thin white border, also terminating with the head of the bird. Furthermore, between the two bars of the N, there is a mosaic-like maze pattern in black with white and colored borders liken to a pathway in the *Pac-Man* video whose paths look like a mosaic labyrinth adorned with points to eat (Davis, 1997).

Fig. 65. The beginning of St. John's Gospel, *The Book of Dimma*, 8<sup>th</sup> century, Trinity College, Dublin. Source: Davis, (1997: 35).





Hence, it can be understood how Brown has connected the graphics of the iconic *Pac-Man* video game with insular manuscript decoration. Both are flat and two-dimensional; both have features like geometric grids and patterns of dots, also little monsters crawling around the screen and pages.

Brown's interpretation started to appear in the year 2001 during his practices for the commission work with the souvenir store that accompanied the *Book of Kells* exhibition—designing a poster with the text of an ancient Irish poem *Pangur Bán*, which is also mentioned in previous pages while observing Meulman's practices.

In Fig. 66, while the scribe is writing his text, two cats are illustrated as the one is looking at the scribe, and the other is looking at the mouse climbing to the chairs. Another cat is illustrated in front of the computer playing *Pac-Man* with the mouse in his hand, also surrounded by the statement in Latin "in principio erat verbum," translated as "in the beginning was the Word (Logos)." Brown writes the poem in his very personal style, attempting to create a hybrid form incorporating Insular minuscule and his italic style. The page contains many layers of paint that make the appearance ancient with the solid color used. It can also be observed in the transparent layer of calligraphy and flourishes employed as components of the overall compositions.

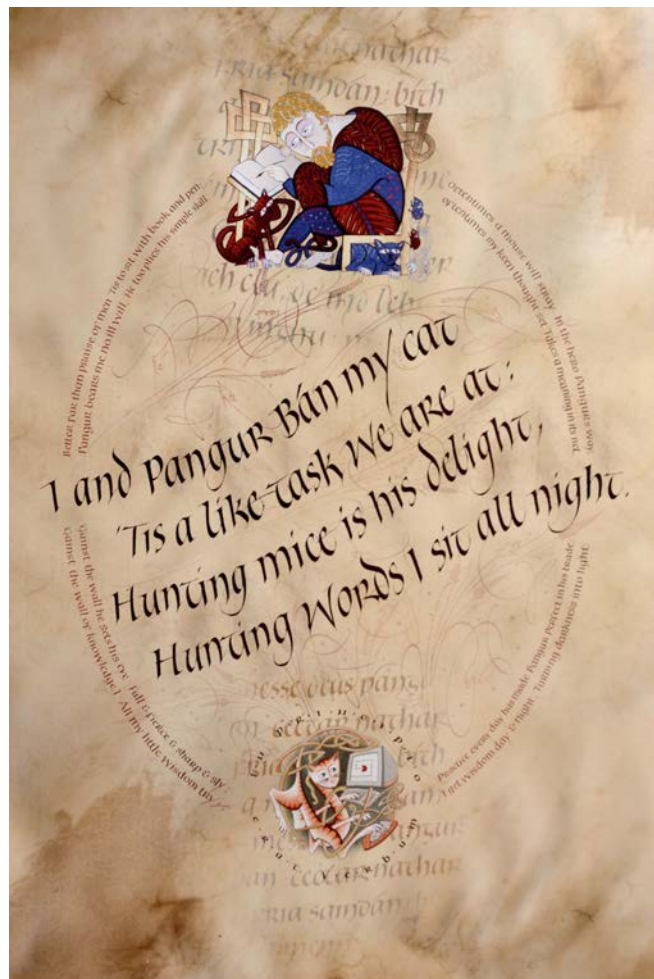


Fig. 66. *Pangur Bán* and details, 2001, Source: Brown, (2017: 190).

"I and Pangur Bán, my cat,  
'Tis a like task we are at;  
Hunting mice is his delight,  
Hunting words I sit all night"



In his 2015 version of the *Pac-Man* and the *Book of Kells* interpretation, he produced a full-facing page entitled *Pac-Man Gospel* (Fig. 67). The surface's overall background is similar to the earlier version with the application of the silver and gold leaves and the coloring of the page that has a resemblance to the old page's appearance with degradation. On the left-hand page, the *Pac-Man* screen is illustrated. On the same page, a marginal note is written by him as "In principio erat verbum, et tunc venit Pac-Man," which can be translated as "In the beginning was the Word, but then came Pac-Man" (Fig. 68). It is written in a stylized italic style that belongs to Brown, mentioned in the following pages. The left-hand page is written by Insular majuscule (Fig. 69).

Fig. 67. *Pac-Man Gospel*, 2015, Source: Brown, (2017: 194-195).



Fig. 68. Detail extracted from Fig. 67.

"In principio erat verbum, et tunc venit Pac-Man" (In the beginning was the Word, but then came Pac-Man).

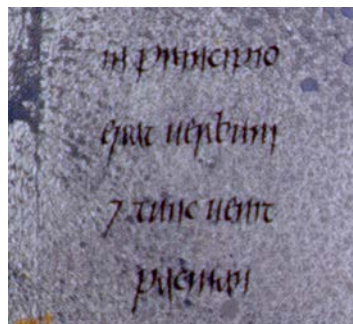


Fig. 69. Detail extracted from Fig. 67 (the right-hand page of *Pac-Man Gospel*), 2015.



Brown produced a poster that he reconsidered the same theme in 2016, called *Turning Darkness into Light* (Fig. 70), as Meulman also was inspired by and created a work with the same title (Fig. 31) mentioned in part "6.5. Niels "Shoe" Meulman." The concept of light was also mentioned before in Chapter III, dedicated to the tradition of western calligraphy, how it is apprehended in the Middle Ages, and how it refers to both physical and metaphorical meaning of light that the scribe illuminates the page of the manuscript with his writing illumination.

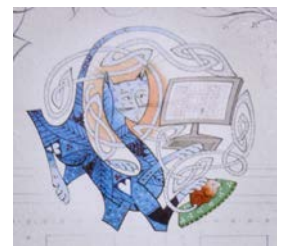
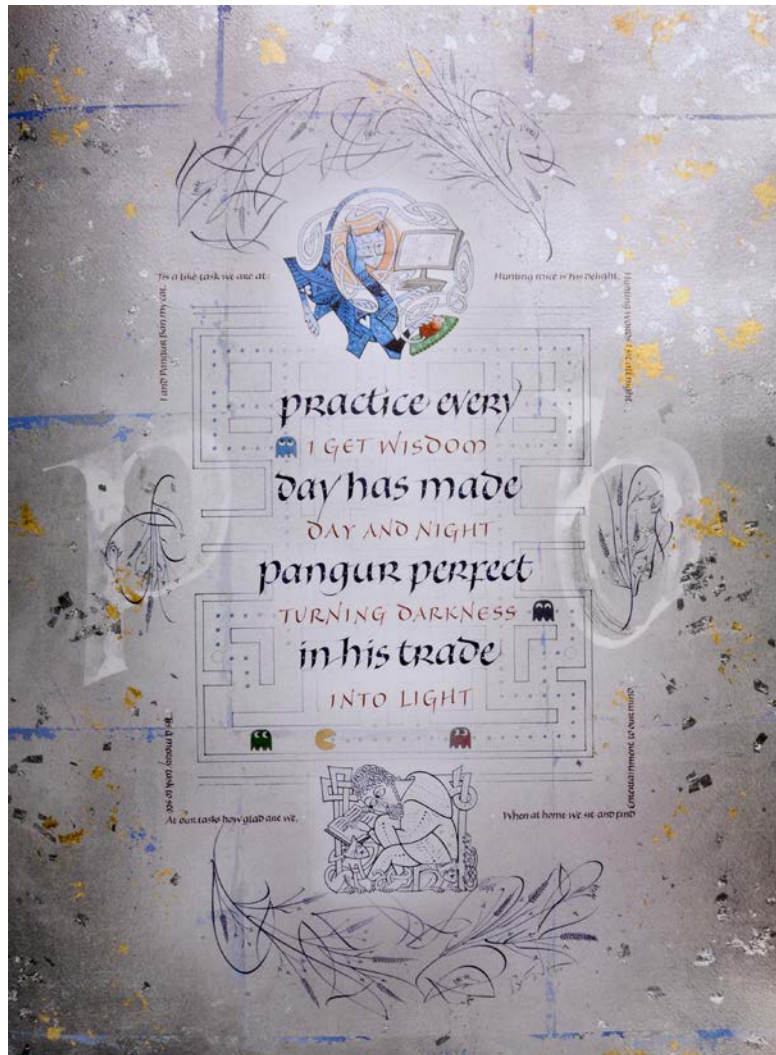


Fig. 70. *Turning Darkness into Light* and details, 2016, Source: Brown, (2017: 193).

"Practice every day has made, pangur perfect in his trade, I get wisdom, day and night turning darkness in to light."

With Meulman and Brown, it is evident that the concept of the historical illuminations, the scribes, and their struggle with the circumstances in their time have influenced them while practicing contemporary attitudes. In the case of Meulman, while the power of the word as Fig. 31, is a dominant figure, which is highlighted with silver or gold paint, Brown seems to focus on the concept once again, which, in his case, is the resemblance of the visual depiction of illuminations that employed for the *Book of Kells* and the video game *Pac-Man*, not the text nor the writing style that employed.

In Fig. 70, the illustrations are pretty much the same as in the previous version of the poster (Fig. 66). The overall composition and the layout

have also remained. Here, Brown writes other verses of the same poem *Pangur Ban* with the same hybrid writing style of Insular script and his italic hand. For background, the Pac-Man is depicted with its overall screen of the play, including the yellow head, the dots he is supposed to eat, and the other characters trying to catch him. The letters "p" and "d" are written, referring to Pangur Ban's initial. Silver and gold leaves seem to elaborate the pages and may refer to the illuminated manuscript and the light concept. Moreover, in detail, the scribe, cat, and mouse are illustrated in the same way as Celtic decorations.

This attitude reminds the gathering together the image of skyscrapers, one of the important silhouettes of the era, with images from Greek myth as in "Death of Adonis" painted by the Italian painter André Duran (b. 1947) or The New York AT&T building of the American architect Philip Johnson (1906- 2005). The building has a Chippendale<sup>10</sup> style crownless pediment placed on it and has the appearance of a grandfather clock. It has the appearance of a modern skyscraper with its general atmosphere, and Johnson gave the building the appearance of a witty postmodern building by placing a Chippendale-style pediment on it, giving it the appearance of a pediment over old cuckoo clocks. Both strikingly reflects the postmodern era and one of the dominant feature of postmodernism, being eclectic and employing two things that could not be put together.

On the other hand, it is crucial to state that it may not necessarily be assessed as a reflection of technology, particularly considering the works examined here. It will be fair to evaluate it as Brown's perception of the graphic similarity of the insular manuscript and 1980s arcade games.

It may raise the question of whether technological developments can be considered one of the significant influences that reflect and even cause the shape of the contemporary interpretation of the Western calligraphers. However, as discussed in Chapter II, it is a matter of questioning the perception of western thinking in terms of calligraphy. Hence the interrogation of the contemporary calligraphers and the desire to experiment beyond the mindset of the west seem to associate with the interaction between the various dynamics. These interactions have been established with technological advances for sure, such as emerging the possibility to travel around the world, reaching the news and information quickly that refers to knowing the social and cultural features of other calligraphy traditions. Hence the influences became indispensable in various ways from each other. However, in the realm of calligraphy, under the light of the knowledge and accumulated data, it is decided not to consider technology as a significant effect apart from printing mentioned in Chapter III. Technological advances provide the possibility to comprehensively reach the knowledge about the roots, which is mentioned here as one of the significant effects on contemporary calligraphy. Delving into the ancient scripts, structure, form, and historical references that contemporary calligraphers

<sup>10</sup> As a style, *chippendale* was fashionable in the third quarter of the eighteenth century and named after the English cabinetmaker Thomas Chippendale (1718-1779). It was classified into three main styles: Gothic, Rococo, and Chinese. Chippendale employed and fused these different stylistic elements into unified designs incorporated with pointed arches and s-shapes curves (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2011).



encounter during their practices and research is provided. Apart from that, it can be claimed that technological advances can not be perceived as an effect of technology on Brown's contemporary mindset.

Furthermore, it has to be considered that the ancient writings and writing tools provide an experimental platform for a contemporary calligrapher. However, using a cane or quill pen is a new concept, including the circumstances of the scribes and in what condition they were supposed to work, not the video games that the contemporary calligrapher was born into. Experimenting with the act of writing in a way that the ancient scribe did provide to experiment with a new horizon, yet as Stevens claims (2013), even the ancient writing or manuscript can be expressive from the point of contemporary, which seems to depend on the perception and appreciation of it.

Once again, it has to be underlined that not with the technology directly but with the shifting perception in the realm of writing and calligraphy is the main issue that has to be discussed here. One of the primary trigger points seems to be the interaction with other traditions, such as the Far East and Middle Eastern calligraphy, and the mindset behind the concept of writing, which has a considerable effect on contemporary calligraphers' practice. Differentiated with western through engaging various materials, even being located calligraphy that is not limited to the semantic meaning of the text directly related to spoken word probably provides a slightly different perspective to experiment with contemporary western calligraphers. Far Eastern calligraphy is examined in Chapter IV, and Middle Eastern calligraphy is examined in Chapter V. However, it has to be kept in mind that technology, such as printing and how it had a role, and how the Western mindset has shifted in the realm of writing and calligraphy is crucial. Apart from that, technical advances in the tools and materials can not be considered one of the significant dynamics and motivations behind contemporary calligraphy practices. At every level, the calligrapher seems to dominate the form and the material to put what is in his mind on the surface. Hence, the new material can be a trigger or a little challenge for a second; however, what exists as a concept seems to reflect that energy in contemporary work, which may be worth considering.

One of the most employed and interpreted hands is italics, which inspires Brown. He describes his way of executing italic hand *Polyrhythmic Calligraphy* (Fig. 71) that he has been practicing and teaching in this genre.



Fig. 71. Autograph of Denis Brown written "Denis Brown, for Almila" with polyrhythmic calligraphy, 2017. Source: The front page of Brown's book, Personal archive.

Furthermore, Brown developed the program called "Italic Rhythm to Polyrythmic Calligraphy," an online master class that enrollments can follow on the official website of Brown. The program consists of nine hours of video tutorials with lectures, demonstrations, and short videos on various aspects, beginning with two modules on an italic hand. The program is subtitled "Expanding Writing Dynamics," which is at the heart of program. It offers advanced training embraced with fundamental knowledge with pen techniques demonstrated and discussed in detail.

First, the Italic hand is explained by its theory with general principles by demonstrating each letter of the alphabet. The Italic Capitals are omitted; however, "Wild Swash Capitals," perfect examples of more experimental and artistic approaches that Brown develops, are featured in the program's following parts. The hand is built in a narrower form, particularly with energetic gestural strokes and advanced pen manipulations that one can employ after certain practice hours. Writing fast and fluently while controlling the pen to make more complex or subtle forms is encouraged. Before delving into Brown's *polyrythmic calligraphy*, it would be appropriate to mention the term rhythm, which is commonly used in the realm of writing and calligraphy.

Rhythm is defined as "the placement of sounds in time" in the realm of music. In Greek, *rhythmos* is derived from *rhein*, which means "to flow." Hence, in a most general sense, it is described as "an ordered alternation of contrasting elements" (Crossley-Holland, 2022). Apart from music, the notion of rhythm is also used for other art genres, such as poetry, painting, sculpture, architecture, and nature. While rhythm in sculpture or painting occurs in space, in musical work, rhythm is defined as "music's pattern in time" in which composition occurs (Ibid.).

Mediavilla (1996) defines rhythm as "the breaking of a given period of time into segments which are related to each other by their frequency" (Mediavilla, 1996: 27). He states that in the realm of music, the tempo is a rhythm, while in plastic arts, rhythm can be identified as "the juxtaposition of more or less similar graphic elements at regular intervals" (Ibid.).

According to him, it can be established in various ways, such as distributing the light and dark areas that can be unified, which are constructed each other that provides a link, which also promises a whole. He elaborates it by pointing at the nature that reflects total harmony, in which they also unite through rhythm and contrast at once. For example, once one reaches the highest energy levels, the human body is necessary to attain harmony in moves in a coordinated manner; he underlines this form of harmony as a form of rhythm. In the realm of artistic creation, he states that if this principle can be operated within oneself, it would push one toward the creative act.

Mediavilla (1996) considers calligraphy as a rhythmic phenomenon with its repetitive feature, but not with the repetition of the exact same strokes. He compares the movement of the waves in the sea with the vertical strokes' movement on the surface. He states that when a wave is isolated as one, it would lack expressing the vital quality, as in the case of a single component



of a sign or a letter, which would lack the potential to express the vital energy of the overall piece. Hence, the difference between the thin and thick varieties in a handwritten stroke or a line can convey the intrinsic rhythm that will dynamically emerge through their repetition.

Stevens (2013) also mentions rhythm among the three notions that have to be considered in calligraphy practices, apart from form and moment. He underlines that the balance of these three aspects is crucial and exists as a delicate relationship. One can dominate the form by learning about the shapes, strokes, and various details of the letters, which leads to becoming aware of rhythm as one learns how effectively put one letter after the other.

Stevens (2013) underlines that it is not an easy task to observe and dominate the letters' spaces and intervals, which are as important as the form itself. Once it is achieved, it provides the recognition of these harmonious relationships between these notions; hence the ability to change and manipulate rhythm can be accomplished, which can have a significant impact on the overall piece of calligraphy. Becoming aware of the possibility of the change of the rhythm, the realm of the movement becomes available to be aware of in order to dominate the overall attitude, hence through learning to increase the dominance of movement; it seems to provide to manipulate form and rhythm without losing them as an essential element of the calligraphic practice.

On the other hand, Stevens (2013) mentions the hybrid attitude, which is also mentioned in Chapter III. He uses the term hybrid to refer to the way of engaging with tools, not just broad-edge that western writing is assessed as mainly evolving around it, but also to use the sensibility of the pointed brush, which Asian writing is evolved with that mindset. What he underlines here is the broad edge of the western, which is canted for weight, basically creates an even rhythm within the script, whereas the pointed brush can create various rhythms by changing the tool's pressure while using it. Hence, the term hybrid refers to the use of both sensibility and the possibility of creating various lines and attitudes by the tools that are assessed as belonging to other traditions, as well as with different attitudes.

To sum up, Stevens (2013) and Mediavilla (1996) underline that with the different attitudes, in a technical and perspective manner, the rhythm of the calligraphic work can be diversified from how it was observed in conventions; hence it may lead to open a different platform for a contemporary artist to experiment such as Brown with his *polyrhythmic calligraphy*. Under the lights of the explanation about rhythm, it would be appropriate to mention the term *polyrhythm*, also called cross-rhythm, which is explained as "the simultaneous combination of contrasting rhythm in a musical composition" that is assessed as related to American jazz, also Afro-American phenomena, including rock music, in which polyrhythmic texture is prevalent (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2013).

Brown's term *polyrhythmic calligraphy* refers to his personal attitude as an individual approach that he adapted from the music and refers to his strand of calligraphy. As Brown states, the term basically implies "simultaneous utilization of two or more rhythms" (Brown, 2017: 113).

Fig. 72 illustrates the italic hand's structural rhythm constructed from the repeating forms with various letters that create a pattern belonging to words. The hand is written approximately 5° degrees slanted to the right with the highly organized space within and between the letters. One specific rhythm in these examples can be observed with the help of parallel guides. All the letters, including their ascenders and descenders, are parallel to each other, following one another with the same rhythm.

Fig. 72. The rhythm of the italic hand in a conventional sense explained by Brown. Source: Brown, (2017: 93).



Fig. 73 demonstrates the various practices of word minimum that start with the primary form of fluent writing, transforming a more rigid and compact structure. Hence, experiencing the rhythm transforms the polyrhythmic practice that has evolved progressively by increasing amounts of various moves.

Fig. 73. The word "minimum" penned by Brown with alternative rhythmical approaches, Source: Brown, (2017: 105).



First, two examples of Fig. 73 consist of a similar static rhythm -that is a significant feature of traditional western calligraphy- which starts to vary in the third example by slightly letting free the hand and pushing the hidden guides where the minim is located -as in the modern attitude of calligraphers-. In contrast to the previous ones, the last two practices reflect high opposite moves with exaggerated forms, assessed as polyrhythms by Brown with highly exaggerated moves of the hand following the strokes of the letters that started to transform the script into a highly challenging one to recognize.

The second aspect of rhythm in calligraphy that Brown underlines comes from this pattern of repetition of writing movements that is basically the fluent gestures that occur in writing freely. This fluency gives the hand-drawn letters vitality, as Mediavilla (1996) also refers, likened to the vivid strokes of Chinese calligraphy, as explained in Chapter IV. It can be said that the contrast within the stroke and the broken and highly curved lines create the high opposite appearance, which probably carries an analogy with the music, according to Brown, in which increasing and decreasing tempo creates rhythm. Brown describes calligraphy "as a recording in ink of a performance of movements" (2017: 89); if one is hesitant while writing, it will immediately reflect in his writing, which will cause losing fluency. It also points to the attitude of the western abstraction expressionists, particularly action painters, as mentioned earlier, how they perceive the canvas as a stage.

In Fig. 74, the two samples of the letter "n" are presented side by side for comparison to a closer look at the *polyrhythmic calligraphy*. It can be observed how the italic hands differentiate concerning attitude of Brown. The general differences between the two are the contrast between the thick and thin strokes and the width of the letters that Brown writes more condensed than the conventional one. The regular italic letter "n" has a broader structure with more curvy forms. The difference between the pen's angle, in which "n" is specified with the red lines, creates a significant difference between the two letters, even though they are penned with the same nib width. The angle is usually around 45° degrees. In contrast, the angle of Brown's letter is more than 45° degrees which directly affects the overall appearance of the letters, such as the contrast between the strokes and the width of the letter. The letter n becomes more pointy, vertical stressed with more aggressive moves of Brown. It can be claimed that this transformation provides a perception that the letter has a more dynamic form, as Brown promises.

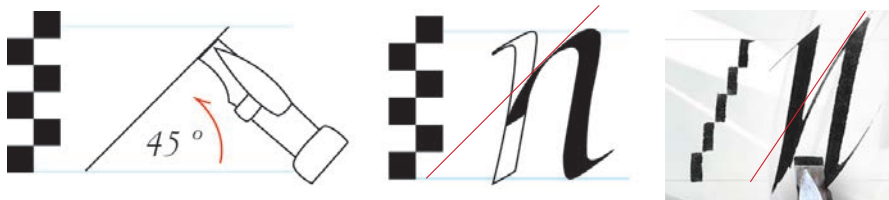


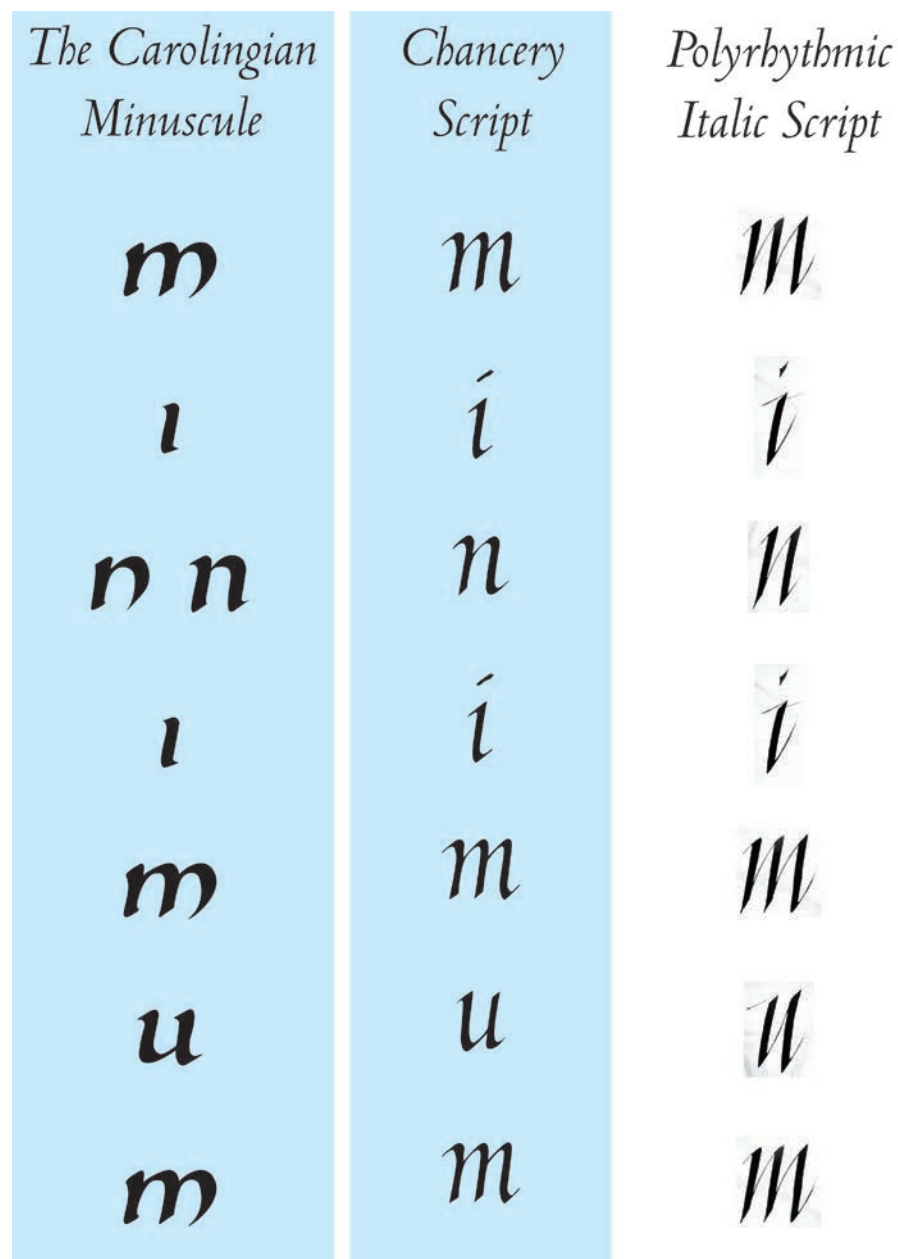
Fig. 74. *left* the letter n of the Italic script with 5,5 pen nib *minim* height in respect of the model of Mediavilla (1996: 198),

*right* Brown's Italic hand of the letter n with 5 pen nib *minim* height with the space between the stems not much more than a single nib width, Image credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

Moreover, as mentioned before, the conventional italic is based on the minimum pen lifts to write faster. The letter "n" is written without lifting the pen in the first example, which means with one stroke, whereas Brown writes his italic hand with aggressive and fast gestural movements, with several strokes to build up the letter. Three energetic strokes construct the letter "n." It seems to refer to the transformation, not just the appearance but also the change of the italic hand concept, which is constructed with fragments of the strokes opposite the conventional mindset.

To observe the overall appearance of the letters of minimum comparatively, it will be helpful to observe through the scripts held in Chapter III, as shown in Fig. 75.

Fig. 75. The letters of the word *minimum* with the Carolingian Minuscule, Chancery Script and Polyrrhythmic Italic Script  
Source: Models are written according to the models of Mediavilla (1996), Image credit: Almila Yıldırım.



After observing the features of polyrhythmic calligraphy, it will be helpful to look at how Brown started to transform it from a word into an image.

Fig. 76 demonstrates one of the practices Brown, with his italic hand, engages with various exaggerated forms intermingled with each other. As a reminder, it can be said that the exaggerated interpretation of the italic letters can be observed through the majuscule and minuscule of Arrighi's italic hand on the page of *La Operina*, where flourished and alternative forms of letters can be observed with their joints, also a various composition that allow intermingling the various letters in the text, mentioned in Chapter III.



Fig. 76. *In the Beginning Was the Word*, 2015, Source: Brown, (2017: 117).

In this figure, recognizing the letters becomes challenging, making the text difficult to read. Even the composition leads to be assumed as an image rather than a text. It seems Brown directs himself in an asemic genre that focuses on the strokes more than the text; even the selected text is extracted from the Bible. The overall composition creates a unit appearance with a dynamic pattern perceived as a woven look. The strokes seem moving due to the floating strokes with a stark contrast between the thin and thick parts that enhance motion perception. Apart from the moves of the stroke itself, the space between and within the letters seems to be well organized, which is repeatedly underlined by Brown (2017), Mediavilla (1996), and Stevens (2013). Moreover, the overall mark of the text reminds the Far Eastern pointed brush sensibility that can create the thin and thick flowing lines with the pressure of the tip of the brush and the Middle Eastern with Brown's exaggerated ascenders and descenders of the letters and the dots. With his manipulation technique, Brown seems close enough to the richness of the Far Eastern calligraphy that can be seen within a stroke itself.



With closer examination of Brown’s works above, it is evident that the training period as a novice in a traditional sense and the historical scripts in respect of historical manuscripts, the *Book of Kells* and the Irish tradition of illuminations in particular- have provided a tremendous inspirational perspective that leads him to develop his unique attitude in a modern context in the realm of calligraphy.

As indicated before, the appreciation and perception of the calligraphy are differentiated depending on the calligrapher, who probably has been under the influence of various dynamics. However, the perception in the realm of calligraphy starts with the term that it refers to and how one identifies it; moreover, what way one perceives the writing also has a significant effect on how the history of writing and calligraphy have an impact on them. It has to be underlined that calligraphy has an accumulated nature that cannot be isolated from its roots. Even contemporary calligraphy develops a new concept in search of locating himself beyond the convention; his attitude will still carry traces from the past, which is indispensable, as it is said, due to the nature of calligraphy as a concept and as an act. As in the cases of Meulman and Brown, the past and the present interacts with each other and find a way to reflect on themselves depending on the contemporary attitude of the calligrapher himself. The more one delves into calligraphy, the more it seems to reveal itself conceptually rather than just visual interpretation of the ancient practices.

To mention, there are various works that collaborate between artists from both cultural backgrounds. Since the mutual influence between East and West calligraphy was mentioned, it will be worth mentioning the collaboration work of Brown that reveals the interaction of West-East calligraphy manifested in his work.

Fig. 77 illustrates one of Brown’s collaboration works, *the Rose of Time*, a calligraphy piece with a name after a poem by renowned Chinese author Bei Dao. It is a commission work for Rosewood Hotel in Beijing in, China. An original Chinese text and an English translation of the poem are selected on purpose due to the word rose that both the hotel and poem share. With Brown’s own interpretation of Western calligraphy styles, this work on the canvas also includes large pale abstract strokes in the foreground and layered Chinese and Western scripts.

Fig. 77. *The Rose of Time*, the Beijing Rosewood Hotel, 2013, Source: Brown, (2017: 213).



Chinese calligrapher Ma Tianbo (Fig. 78) writes two parts of the work with his traditional Chinese calligraphy training background that suits both small regular and larger running cursive scripts mentioned in Chapter IV. The small regular script on the golden background is written with black ink, and the large running cursive script on the red background is written with black ink. The flowing continuing stroke lines are executed in one movement, and each reveals the liveliness of the running cursive style as experimentation of the calligrapher. It can be observed through the images of him performing large characters of the running cursive script on watercolor paper stretched to the large table as Chinese calligraphers are accustomed to writing on papers on the floor to write larger characters comfortably.



Fig. 78. Performance of Chinese calligrapher Ma Tianbo and his writing part of the collaboration work of *The Rose of Time*, Source: Brown, (2017: 207-231).

Brown (2017) underlines that watching Tianbo's brush's performance is like watching the dance in that he achieves the characteristic known as "flying white," described as a dry brush effect that gives a lightness to the characters. It reminds the music and dance allegory of the Chinese calligraphy mentioned in Chapter IV. It will also be examined through the works of Loredana Zega, another contemporary western calligrapher who prefers to perform calligraphy as a dance practice.

Fig. 79 illustrates the other part of the work written by Brown. Brown's style was mentioned, inspired by the italic hand of western calligraphy that he fuses with his polyrhythmic style.

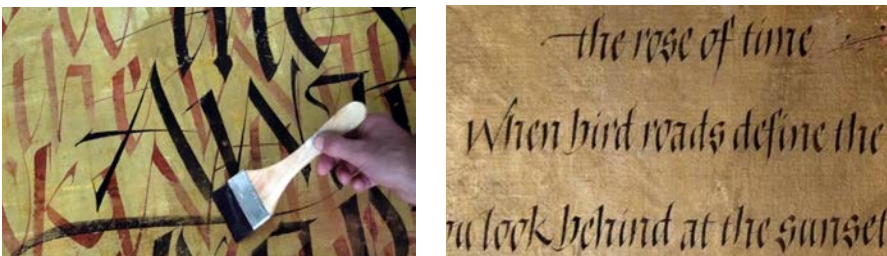


Fig. 79. Denis Brown's part of the collaboration work of *The Rose of Time*, Source: Brown, (2017: 207-213).

With the same attitude, Brown interprets the Gothic hand and creates polyrhythm in this style and calls it "Gothicised Italic" written by the larger size brush firm and broad edge like a nib quickly and freely with diluted red and black gouache. He also writes capitals and informal scripts on the canvas that both styles are layered between glazed red oil paint.

The poem can be read clearly; however, in various parts of the canvas, Brown produces a texture through various written text levels that are legible; then becomes illegible, the background of the texture written in red. The up-level has written in black still preserves its legibility. The stylized Gothic hand here seems to create a contrast with the flowing careless strokes and rhythm of the running cursive of Chinese style and complement each other with contrasting attitudes.

Moreover, in Fig. 80, various photographs can be observed that illustrate the different processes of Brown's work, apart from his writing. The large piece involved priming the canvas with gesso, painting, gilding, writing in each of the sizes required, additional thicker painting and gilding, stretching the canvas, and lots of copper wire are employed as the earlier work observed in Fig. 59.

Fig. 80. Denis Brown uses various techniques on *The Rose of Time*, Source: Brown, (2017: 207-213).





He also splashes paint over the artwork to create a texture as an additional level on his Gothic hand. Some overpainting and obliteration of calligraphy on the five meters canvas seem involved for his personal effect that also creates a sense of chaos and tension in a sense, especially the wires which construct a sense of bridge between the Western written part of the canvas and the eastern part where the red background reveals the black Chinese running hand.

The overall composition seems carefully calculated as a surface that fuses Western and Far Eastern calligraphy. What can be observed here is a broad consensus between these two as Brown's desire. The work consists of various contemporary features from both sides, particularly gestures of the hand, employing various techniques to create an image with loaded elements.

The execution of the piece seems painterly constructed as commonly encountered in the contemporary attitude of calligraphy. On the various part, through writing levels on each other, the text is considered a texture that creates a sense of different color and balance on the canvas. Hence, legibility is thought of as less important, sometimes in the background, and it can be claimed that writing undertakes two missions: a legible text and an image through illegible text.

To sum up, Brown's practices represent his influence by the Western calligraphy tradition and how he fuses them in the contemporary concept in both the overall compositions and his own styles that he created and called polyrhythm italic hand, the interpretation of the traditional italic hand in its form to not follow one constant rhythm within a letter as in its tradition but follow various rhythms within each letter.

This type of interpretation can be called a modern interpretation of the tradition that still consists of mostly recognizable letters; even a meaningful legible text, written and preserved mostly the letter's clear structure, reveals its beauty in the sense of traditional Western perception of calligraphy as discussed in Chapter II.

On the other hand, through Brown's various later works, is also observed the influences of the Western calligraphy tradition not just with the form of the ancient styles such as an insular script that he employs apart from the italic hand, but also the overall concept of calligraphic writing with its brutal and laborers practices held by ancient scribes, as well as various stories, poems such as *Pangur Ban*, or anecdotes, such as mostly focusing on the *Book of Kells* are employed and interpreted by Brown reflected the face of religious text in insular majuscule as examined Chapter III.

With time, his more painterly approach to his calligraphy evolved, particularly with the influences of calligrapher Thomas Ingmire (b. 1942), which will also be mentioned in this chapter in the part entitled "6.7. Thomas Ingmire" as a significant reference that makes him study abstract expressionism in the 1940s and 50s. As calligraphy became more and more gestural for Brown, it can be claimed that his interest started to shift through the works of Pollock, Kline, Motherwell, and

Tobey, which in the first place can be assumed as the first sign of the influences of the Far Eastern calligraphy tradition that is mentioned through the work of Meulman.

Fig. 81 illustrates one of Brown's works entitled *Inkfall*, produced by ink captured as a photograph during the ink flowing into a transparent water tank. Only initially, Brown seems to decide where and how much ink he drops into the water, then all the flowing happens without any control. It is a kind of process that Brown waits until he is satisfied with the overall composition that he sees outside of the tank, and he decides on the final image to capture. As Brown claims, even though he is not performing the actual act of writing, he believes that he allows nature to perform writing for himself and Fig. 86 captured represents the written metaphorically. There are no letters, just a red stamp by a carved stone seal seen alongside Far Eastern calligraphy. Here, the seal characters are Japanese and translated as "with a fresh feeling" (Brown, 2017: 235). He probably refers to his own fresh feeling that reveals this type of experience that is a new adventure for him.

Fig. 81. *Inkfall*, 2007,  
Source: Brown, (2017: 234).





He assesses this overall attitude as abstract calligraphy. Abstraction as a word here represented not the physical absence of the written word but the existence of the written word as a form in thought and categorized as a segment of work metaphorically calligraphy for Brown. It can be claimed that his comprehension of abstraction seems closer to the idea of abstraction in Far Eastern calligraphy due to the asserting that calligraphy is an act of revealing and representing the feelings and emotions of the calligrapher and letting nature be a part of it. Western contemporary calligraphers such as Brown seem to realize that degrading the calligraphy to the spoken language is a kind of superficial or expired idea, as discussed in Chapter II. That means contemporary calligraphers are not satisfied anymore since, as an artist, they demand to reveal personal interpretations with emotional gestures of the hand through their calligraphic practices.

Brown calls this kind of practice "reductionist calligraphy" (Brown, 2004: 235), described as a provocative, playful move that the notion of abstract calligraphy exists. He explains the abstract concept of his calligraphy with this statement: "... art with visual and symbolic calligraphic references, where lettering is not involved in the main mark making; yet where there is a conceptual engagement with text" (Brown, 2017: 239). What means for him seems the lack of the physical text or the letters does not necessarily refer to the absence of a calligraphic attitude. He claims that he still engages with the text metaphorically by employing calligraphy tools -ink mostly- and rendering the act with the calligraphic background -acquiring the traditional calligraphy as a means of the theoretical and practical way- settle with the calligraphic marks. That means regarding the act of writing, what can be revealed through the movement of the hand can still be assumed as calligraphy in a reductionist manner.

Brown assumes his attitude as reducing calligraphy to its essentials which refers to marks, stains, splits, lines, or strokes free from the letter; Western calligraphy's shifting function, which can no longer be restricted to transcriptions or meaning of the text with the desire to be beyond traditional apprehension of calligraphy. It leads us to think about the issue of the notion of writing in the Western mind discussed in Chapter II, once again as problematic and controversial, especially looking at the contemporary practices in terms of writing and calligraphy in the West.

Here, Brown seems to interrogate not just the notion of the writing or calligraphy in the West, but also by abandoning the letters and the words; he reaches one step forward that closer to Far Eastern practices such as *ensō* writing focuses on gestures of the hand mentioned in Chapter IV. It is evident that even Brown claims it is just an experiment that anyone can do; still, he advocates the conventional training and accumulated knowledge and practices which are critical to passing that stage, focusing on the rhythm and flow as essential features of calligraphy, as Steven (2013) underlines.

A striking point here is; breath, rhythm, movement, and flow seem to be appreciated and become more significant than a well-constructed letterform, which significantly refers to the spirit of calligraphy -as

called in the Far Eastern tradition- for the calligrapher. Transcending the traditional aspect in this sense leads the calligrapher to let the letters go in his works but still consists of tradition because calligraphy is an accumulated form in its nature that requires various knowledge and skill, and experience to interpret and to see beyond. Once again, it is a robust visible inspiration of the Far Eastern calligraphy concept in the sense of expressing feelings and emotions of the calligraphy by focusing on his hand and his medium and writing, which is called a calligraphically rendered act.

On the other hand, it is significant that even though Brown calls his reductionist attitude to focus on the essentials of calligraphy, he is still assessing his reductionist calligraphy as an "alternative" form for modern calligraphy. It seems controversial and evident that this kind of practice is highly different from the western calligraphy tradition; for this reason, the calligrapher tries to rationalize his actions, calling it modernist to diverge it from tradition, not deny it. It also points at the modernist approach in Western calligraphy, which mostly refers to the interpretations of the styles and the works that still consist of "beautiful" letter works with preserved letter structure, even may the ductus that still encourages the viewer to read the text or the word, at the same time appreciate beautifully written or constructed letters, and compositions.

If a calligrapher practices with "essentials" of calligraphy -probably the writing gestures and writing attitude with calligraphic rendering- and calls it as fundamentals of calligraphy, then why call it an "alternative" way of interpreting modern attitude in terms of calligraphy? The essentials of calligraphy may seem "reducing" to the calligrapher's attitude and interpretation, not the material nor the language.

However, the term reducing here is also not appropriate since contemporary calligraphers offer what fundamentals of calligraphy by focusing on its essence. It may seem as if it is a new way of interpreting calligraphy; however, it would be more appropriate to claim that Brown's reductionist calligraphy is a new way of interpreting Western calligraphy regarding the western mindset in terms of writing. It is nothing new, particularly for Far Eastern calligraphy.

Fig. 82 and 83 illustrate another practice of Brown. He engaged with the traditional Chinese ink stick, and two types of Chinese brushes with different tips and hair led him to create various effects on snow. It can be observed through the fragments of his calligraphy performance that he captures a brush loaded with ink that moves on snow. It is a highly abstract experience that Brown seems to enjoy his being in that moment by focusing on the moves and the effects that he cannot control entirely.



Fig. 82. Tools and materials of Brown (pointed brush of Far East, ink stick and ink stone, snow) for his experiments *Abstract Snow Calligraphy*, Dublin, 2010, extracted from the short video 4:36' of Denis Brown, Source: Youtube, [youtube.com/watch?v=jrMzVHdsqQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jrMzVHdsqQ), access: 05.02.2018.



Fig. 83. *Abstract Snow Calligraphy*, Dublin, 2010, extracted from the short video 4:36' of Denis Brown, Source: Youtube, [youtube.com/watch?v=jrMzVHdsqpQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jrMzVHdsqpQ), access: 05.02.2018.





As mentioned earlier, the brush's flexibility opens the possibility of creating various strokes. The diluted ink, how much water is used, and the rice paper's absorbing surface area are affected by the marks of the calligrapher's brush movement. Here, in this performance, Brown seems to want to experiment with snow as an absorbent surface; also, it reacts unpredictably to touches of the brush tip. Through the touch of the tip of a brush, he aims to capture the ink trace's effects that are left on the surface. All one can see here is just the composition of the brush strokes' spontaneous movement and touches that lack texts or recognizable letters or signs, just lively marks and traces of the ink created through calligraphic rendering.

Fig. 84 illustrates one of Brown's works that he combines a photograph of ink falling through water and his italic hand. It reminds contemporary Chinese calligrapher Wang Dongling and his calligraphy work that he also employs photography of a nude model and his style of Chinese calligraphy. In Dongling's work, his usage of the photographic image is assessed as an influence of the West. In Brown's work, what he employs is another fragment of his ink flow practice. To combine it with his italic interpretation, he has to use photography. Hence, it is believed that there is no other significant reason for him to do so. However, it is evident that he also wants to support his attitude with the message written as the readable word "mourning" written vertically as in the Chinese writing system, in italics closer to a traditional style with its one rhythm.



Fig. 84. *Mourning/Morning* and detail, 2007, Source: Brown, (2017: 238).



The word "mourning" is written in his polyrhythmic italic hand with exaggerated forms, long strokes, and sharp turns that he manipulates the nib with different angles, making him more illegible and still recognizable. The combination of his style of calligraphy and the image of ink flow is tried to be in harmony with each other as a combination. Still, his exaggerated style of italic hand and vertically written mourning word also create a kind of contrast by breaking the smoky effect of ink flow.

Brown implies that the ink falling downwards creates a negative mood, such as sadness. As he states, he is in the quest of searching "to perceive a calligraphy that appears to mourn its loss of function" but also "... celebrates freedom from function" (Brown, 2017: 239). While the word *mourning* refers to the loss of function of calligraphy in the Western concept of traditional calligraphy, the word *morning* refers to a new dawn of Western calligraphy in contemporary concepts. Significantly, Brown assesses the loss of function of calligraphy as something sad, even as "mourning," since he underlines that he reduces the calligraphy to its essentials. So what is expected here is not mourning but appreciating to perceive calligraphy with its essentials. It may be very open to discussion and entirely subjective evaluation. However, still, it seems inevitable to think of the contradiction of Brown's assessments, which causes envision whether he is still in the process of internalizing the abstract calligraphy, even though he describes it above.

Finally, Fig. 85 illustrates another example of Brown's abstract calligraphy with the same attitude, which he prefers to combine with photography and calligraphy written by his polyrhythmic italic hand in minuscule and majuscule.

Fig. 85. *Think Flow*, 2006,  
Source: Brown, (2017: 243).



The image of ink traces is created spontaneously with the brush tip's touches on the polyester film blended with water as a text of inkblot. After he touches the surface, Brown waits till the ink dries, and he states that he observes and thinks to elucidate a concept from the abstraction during this process. Hence, he comes up with the words "think" and "follow the ink flow" that lie on a backing sheet of paper, which is also wet and causes bleeding of the ink. The word "think" is written in a majuscule italic hand. After the paper dries, the word "flow" is written by his polyrhythmic italic hand with exaggerated turns once again (Fig. 86). Another "flow" is written on the black inkblots highly illegible. The word "follow," and on the bottom of the composition, "the ink flow," writing can hardly be realized in the overall composition. The ink traces dominate the composition, and the sharp turns and exaggerated form of an italic hand with its lines create a contrast once again.



Fig. 86. Details extracted from Fig. 85.

Brown seems to create a subtext that he desires his viewer to look and think through ink of these practices. The italic hand's exaggerated form, which carries a similar attitude to the cursive hand of Far Eastern calligraphy, such as written fast with mostly linked lines, also allows calligraphers to create more individual strokes and to write styles that may open a new way of personal interpretation and touch which is encouraged in the Far East. Apart from Brown's usage of splashes or traces of the ink that takes resemblance Far Eastern calligraphy, Brown's explanations and descriptions of his attitude are evident that they are influenced by not just the physical appearance of Far Eastern calligraphy as an image for Westerners who cannot read Chinese or Japanese, but also the concept, mindset and overall aesthetic consideration behind Brown's calligraphy seem close relation to Far Eastern calligraphy tradition.

As mentioned in Chapter III, the training period is a fundamental stage that begins with copying the letterforms and learning ancient styles by following the rules to reach the perfect letter; however, the next phase is to go beyond a broader sense of calligraphy. With his own statements, Brown advocates this accumulated feature of calligraphy, at the same time

illustrates the spiritual and more vivid aspects of his practices as follows:

... then you are ready to see a broader calligraphy. You see calligraphy in the action of wind on grass, in branches of trees, in lively wrinkles that animate an elder loved one's face when they laugh. Notice the calligraphy of nature that surrounds you today. Then you can start to bring this larger view to bear on how you write letters. Your calligraphy may become more lively for this broader view, and express more spirit. (Brown, 2017: 237)

This statement shows that the aesthetic consideration of Far Eastern calligraphy mentioned in Chapter IV is adopted by Brown, inspired by nature. In his statement, the metaphorical resemblance of the strokes to the grass or the flowing of the grass in the wind or the branches of trees point to the Far Eastern concept of the relation of calligraphy to nature, also assesses calligraphy as a living entity.

For this reason, it can be claimed that Brown's abstract concept of calligraphy resembles the abstract concept of Far Eastern, in which the calligraphic rendering still exists in the hand and mind of the calligrapher without excluding the tradition through practicing it. The main essence seems to interrogate the classical mindset of Western in terms of writing and its function that is assessed as a server of the text and spoken language.

This attitude still seems highly challenging where the boundaries of Western calligraphy are mostly established around the etymological definition of the word calligraphy, the term beauty, and writing; even this issue is under discussion by Mediavilla (1996), Stevens (2013), and Brown (2017), it seems still could not evaluate appropriately and comprehensively. In fact, it should not be the main goal to stay away from these discussions, about what calligraphy is or whether contemporary calligraphy means excluding the tradition or not, without addressing the essence of calligraphy in a broad framework, evaluating the idea of western writing in its broad frame, and other calligraphy traditions. Without evaluating all the prejudices and biased perspectives of the field, it does not seem possible to fully perceive and make sense of today's calligraphy practices intertwined with many other factors, calligraphy practices, and cultures.

It should be bear in mind that calligraphy is a word that is decided to refer to the other writing systems, which are executed as art forms, such as Chinese, which prefers to call it *shufa* translate as "the art and the discipline of writing," (Iezzi, 2013: 159) and Japanese prefers to call it *shodo*, which translates to "the way of Japanese calligraphic art" (Davey, 2019: np.). Contrary to the West, their calligraphy cultures are explained under the examination of various features, as mentioned earlier in this chapter. Hence, to describe what calligraphy is or today's interpretations, such as in Brown's case that examined here whether calligraphy or not, is based on the perception of how one perceives the term writing as a form of art. Once again, it leads us to interrogate whether the writing is supposed to be reduced to a spoken language, and the calligraphy is its "beautiful" form that is supposed to be read in a literal sense. Even though the answers to these questions may change, it is evident that contemporary calligraphers such as Brown are in constant search of beyond under the influence of the Far Eastern calligraphy blending with his western background.

Another significant feature that has to be underlined about Brown's calligraphy is the performative aspect that is a feature of the Far Eastern calligraphy tradition, mentioned in Chapter IV. That is summed up by Pohl (2004) by three characteristics of Chinese calligraphy mentioned earlier: the representational function of art is not that significant in the Chinese literati tradition, but how something is painted (how somebody painted) matters more than what is painted. That means the main focus is on execution, and these qualities of Far Eastern calligraphy are assessed as calligraphic rendering similar to dance and music. As can be observed in Brown's work here, the creative and expressive act becomes more significant than the outcome, and the compositional aspects of the work, the actual product, are the second. The quality of the work seems to be assessed as the marks of the tool, the tonality, and the variegated strokes, which are also emphasized by Stevens (2013), are adapted by Brown here. It is evident that Brown takes these references from the Far Eastern calligraphy tradition, which is executed with the body and mind unification in total concentration, leading to the analogy with dance as a contemporary interpretation of calligraphy.

His postmodern attitude toward the usage of the industrial materials that are produced for other purposes but employed and used in an artistic context can be seen in other contemporary artists, namely Denise Lach, who uses everyday materials, such as a fork, a knife, or a wooden comb to experiment calligraphic texture in search of similar patterns that she has inspired the nature. She is one of the significant examples that is exemplified not just using these materials for calligraphy but also just focusing on the patterns, textures, traces, or marks; she tries to imitate them with her calligraphic trials. For this reason, it will be significant to continue with Dennis Brown to see the concept's expansion in the realm of contemporary western calligraphy.

## **6.9. Denise Lach**

In this part, calligrapher Denise Lach (b. 1952 in Mulhouse, France) will be observed with her significant approach to the textures that she tries to mimic with her calligraphic work executed by her unusual tools for calligraphy, but common materials for daily lives. She illustrates one of the examples as a contemporary calligrapher who is on a quest to establish the link between the past and the present. Past comes with the calligraphy itself, and the present is embodied through her unusual trials in her calligraphic compositions. For this reason, it is significant to mention her various works and try to frame the similar and different perspectives that can be encountered in the context of contemporary western calligraphy.

As stated, Lach takes attention to her playful experiment with the textual aspect of writing and calligraphy, which becomes the dominant element of her approach. She focuses on the textual appearance of a powerful impression of the overall composition written by strokes, lines, or stains that seems to adopt images from nature and adapt them as calligraphic composition, which can be assessed as her significant contribution to consider as an inspiration in the realm of today's calligraphy understandings.

For over thirty years, Lach has been involved with calligraphy and conceptual writing –practicing, teaching lettering design, and leading workshops and courses, such as “Play on Writing/Writing Textures” workshop with the promise to stimulate creativity to open up new perspectives in the realm of calligraphic expression. Here, instead of focusing on the construction of the conventional formal alphabets, Lach prefers to practice textural and experimental writing as a result of a woven play of words, not legible from the traditional aspects but visually dynamic and challenging compositions (Society of Scribes, n.d.).

Furthermore, Lach gathered his practices in her book entitled *Calligraphy: A Book of Contemporary Inspiration* (2013), which consists of brief discussions on visual examples denoted by the juxtaposition of an image from nature inspired by and the re-creation of the same texture selected from nature.

From this point, one can claim that the book has a remarkable resemblance to the others on the market about acquiring and practicing calligraphy skills. However, neither any knowledge about traditional calligraphy is offered nor planned to serve as a guidebook describing traditional tools and materials and their technical details. Through her practices, to create the desired texture that seems to mimic the natural pattern, Lach slightly mentions the tools that she uses. The selected tools help to give the exact form of the overall composition, which will be mentioned in this part.

It will not be wrong to claim that tools selected for Lach’s experiments carry the importance of mimicking the pattern or texture that she tries to create a similar effect. Besides traditional western calligraphy tools, namely pointed nib, broad-edge nib, quill, and brush which is explained in Chapter III, Lach mostly uses to experiment with various tools that can leave a mark that she desires, such as cola pen, ruling pen, plastic knife and fork, syringe, pipet, wooden comb, various stamps. She also combines these tools and techniques, which will be observed on the following pages. This vast amount of tools can be assessed as contemporary tools employed to reflect the inquiry of an artist searching for an experiment about mark-making by writing-like gestures and calligraphic background.

One of the tools that Lach often employs is called the cola pen (Fig. 87).

Fig. 87. Cola pen,  
Source: Lach, (2013: 59).





The name is given because of the material that is made from; an empty cola can. A form of a nib is given to the can depending on the type of nib that is prepared by the calligrapher.

The way the cola pen is manipulated includes the angle held, the direction the hand follows, and the ink amount. Overall options that the cola pen provides make it a desirable option for Lach, who obtains the expressive lines that she desires. It also provides a variety of thin and thick strokes, depending on the pen's movement and angle; as mentioned, the cola pen gives Lach a chance to create aggressive, hasty thin, thick strokes with ink splashes as rust make the metal a more spontaneous way. However, it should be kept in mind that the moves of the hand of the calligrapher execute the links or strokes as a result of the trained eye, mind, and hand through practicing the traditional and contemporary approach in the realm of calligraphy. That means, once again, it is needed to underline that contemporary calligraphy/writing, as seen in Lach's experiment derived from the tradition, fused with an abstraction of the physical and thematical approach of calligraphy, as in the case of the Far Eastern calligraphy mentioned in Chapter IV.

Fig. 8 illustrates the impression of the detailed photograph of a stone (on the right) and how it is interpreted as calligraphic composition (on the left) by Lach. Using the cola pen to draw letters in this piece, Lach creates a similar visual effect with the stone in the image on the textural base. As can be observed, in the image with additional support, such as the touch of color, Lach mimics the visual appearance of the stone. In her composition, it can be said that the letters are composed dynamically with the rhythm that is considered within; even some of them can be recognizable. At least, the strokes and lines, with their powerful presence, give movement and energy. Through width and coloration, the contrast in strokes also gives that dynamic sense executed with the moves and manipulation of the cola pen. Carefully constructed within the sense of rhythm and motion, the partial form of the stone is intended to create at least it is desired to be associated with the original image through the calligraphic texture that Lach creates. Hence, in this sense, it can be said that the experiment of Lach is textural calligraphy, in which calligraphic signs -lines, strokes, letters, even stains- are employed to create a textural appearance.

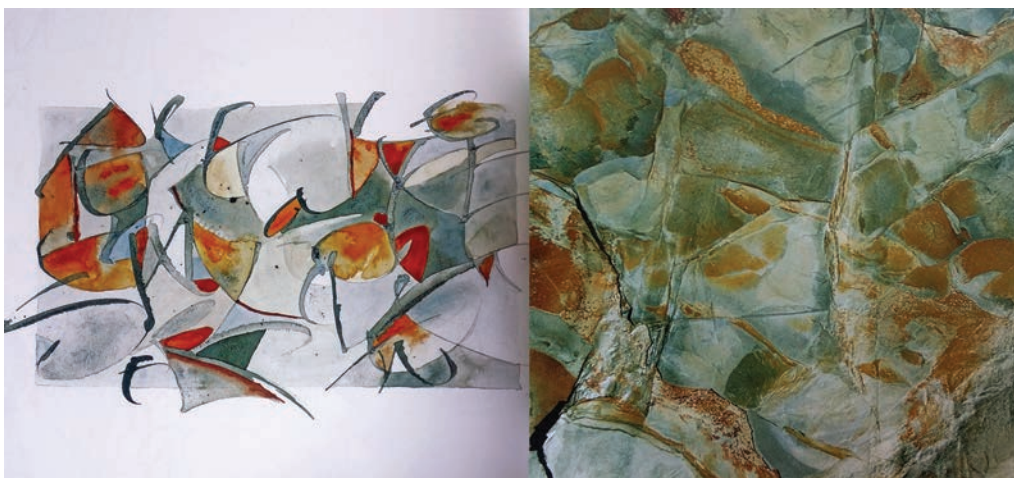


Fig. 88. *left* Mimicking the stone, ruling pen with watercolor,

*right* Detail photography of stone that is inspired, n.d., Source: Lach, (2013: 52-53).

Another tool that Lach employs is the ruling pen, as can be seen in Fig. 89, a drawing instrument used initially for technical drawings in engineering and cartography with straight rulers and curves.

Fig. 89. Ruling pen,  
Source: Lach, (2013: 43).



The ruling pen contains ink between two metal jaws in a slot. It can be rendered thin lines and line width adjusted by an adjustment screw connecting the jaws. Depending on the angle and the moves, it may splash the ink drops around the line, which leaves a trashy mark on the surface. Due to the nature of the material, the strokes have to be precise and have to be executed more aggressively at a certain speed without hesitation. For calligraphy practices, a ruling pen can be assessed as a contemporary tool that the calligrapher prefers when expressive lines and gestures are desired, which refers to more spontaneous lines that seem to be drawn embellished with stains and marks.

Fig. 90 illustrates a practice executed with the ruling pen that is tried to mimic the corroded metal appearance observed in the figure on the left.

Fig. 90. *left* Detail photography  
of corroded metal,

*right* Mimicking the corroded  
metal with cola pen, n.d.,  
Source: Lach, (2013: 48-49).



The prominent appearance of the metal is complex scribbles from the basic form seen on the metal surface. The lines and textures that seem to have been created quite randomly are tried to be given by Lach with a ruling pen. The form is shaped by manipulating the ruling pen, and Lach's hand movements resemble a texture on metal, which also refers to the appearance of metal with random ink splashes thanks to the material. As in the first practice, readability is not an issue because Lach focuses on the overall appearance of the texture to underline the textural possibility of contemporary calligraphy.

Apart from mimicking the patterns or texture of the objects from nature, Lach's search for the textual appearance is also inspired by the overall appearance of a script written on the page, which creates a certain texture on the surface. Among these, the Gothic writing system, mentioned in Chapter III, takes the attention of Lach, and she creates textural analogy work with the sixteenth-century Gothic script through its texture-looking style as Meulman and Lampas, as examined in this Chapter earlier, who also employ the textural feature of the Gothic hand as an inspiration for their work. It will not be wrong to claim that this ancient style also supports calligraphers' desire to look at words and writing as images and produce works with this understanding. With this feature, the gothic script seems to be an inspired script frequently used by the calligraphers discussed in this Chapter.

Fig. 91 illustrates two examples of an analogy of the textural appearance of the Gothic hand as seen in the figure. She once again employs the ruling pen to utilize its promising feature to create the thin and thick strokes depending on the angle that the calligrapher holds it. Experimenting with the ruling pen with the different widths to obtain thick and thin lines with huge contrast obviously points to the script's textural feature. The type of the tool and the speed and pen position changes reflect the overall appearance of textural calligraphy, and the calligraphic strokes, lines, and drops of the ink once again reflect the contemporary calligrapher's attitude towards to creates the desire to gesture in the realm of calligraphy, one of the most employed, hence dominant features in contemporary calligraphy practices.

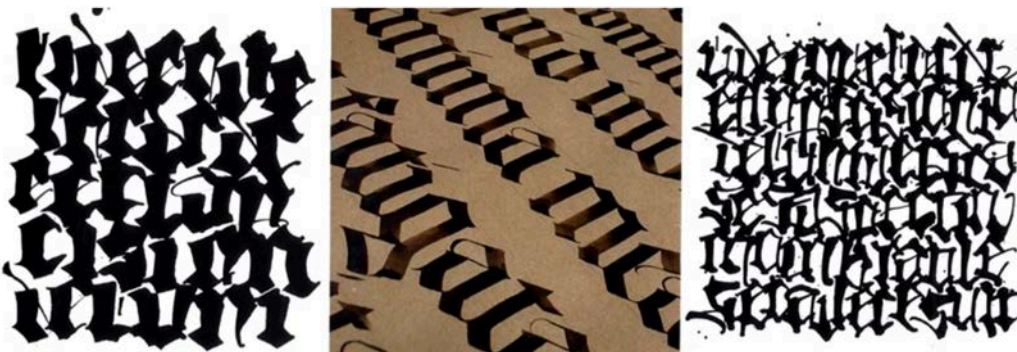


Fig. 91. The texture practice with the inspiration of Gothic script written by ruling pen, n.d., Source: Lach, (2009: 57).



Apart from the ruling pen and cola pen that Lach employs, it can be observed that she frequently continues her experiment with various objects such as a fork and knife (Fig. 92), a wooden comb (Fig. 93), a syringe, and a small wire brush (Fig. 94), which can serve as writing tools to create effective textures consists of writing-like gestures and the hand of the calligrapher.

Fig. 92. The texture practice with everyday objects, namely a plastic fork and a knife, n.d., Source: Lach, (2009: 158).



Fig. 93. The texture practice is written by wooden comb, Source: Lach, (2009: 156).



Fig. 94. The texture practice with a wire brush and syringe, n.d., Source: Lach, (2009: 156).



In these examples, once again, the textural aspect of writing is the major element of her approach. These aspects lead her works to create an impression as if she constructs the text, in which exists a certain language that she creates.

This issue reminds the asemic writing mentioned earlier in part "6.5. Niels "Shoe" Meulman." It is not an illustration of the text but rather seeking a way to evoke emotions through a word and the color of the text, in which the artist transforms her graphic vocabulary for the sake of searching beyond the literal meaning of the written word.

As seen in Fig. 95, all practices have their unique formulation created with the potential of the material and tools that Lach employs. They also have a certain repetition within a rhythm with writing-like gestures with thin and thick strokes. The overall composition here certainly has an impression of the text on the viewer, even though there exist recognizable letters which support that impression. However, it is obvious that the focus point is the textural effect constructed with the writing elements, such as letters, lines, or strokes.

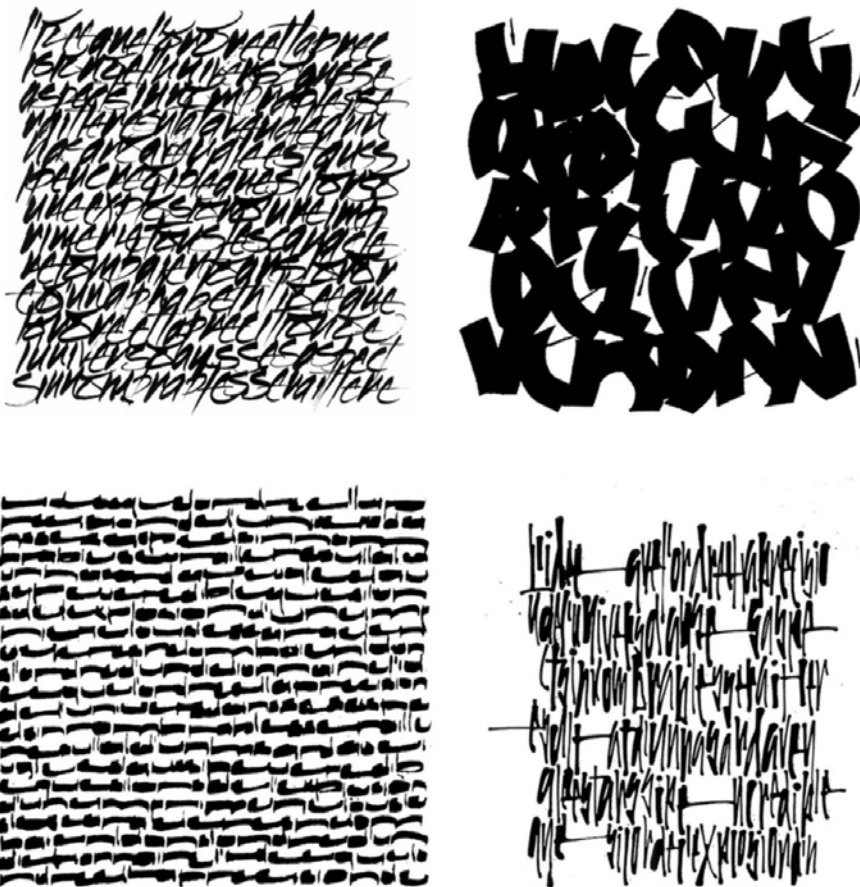


Fig. 95. Examples of *Texture* series, n.d., Source: Lach's Official Website, [deniselach.com/copie-de-calligraphie](http://deniselach.com/copie-de-calligraphie), access: 03.12.2020.



What can be understood from these examples of Lach is that her calligraphy understanding manifests itself through the textural appreciation that is seen as an image rather than a text, once again very similar to the attitudes of other contemporary calligraphers mentioned earlier, who fusing the past and the present with postmodern features. The process of creation can be approached from many different aspects, and the possibilities for creating new calligraphic pieces can be assumed to be almost limitless in contemporary western calligraphy due to the contemporary calligraphers and their attitudes. It is precise about exploring this potential of the handwritten script; with the highlighted texture, individuality, and creativity, nature is a surprisingly prolific source of ideas and closely connected with writing in various ways, as in Lach's practices.

Before discussing her works, it will be appropriate to briefly mention the conventional and non-conventional tools, how they affect the form of the letter, and the overall appearance of the text and texture. Hence, the traditional tool creates the overall textural appearance and text color, which has been affected by the script's letterform -mentioned in Chapter III- and the tool used. Considering the main traditional tools and how they affect the form, Lach's attitude toward textural calligraphic compositions will be more understandable as a contemporary concept.

At this point, to enhance the scale of the contemporary approaches, another calligrapher takes attention to her tendency to perform calligraphy, supported by her background as a dancer. Earlier, in Chapter III, through the definitions, descriptions, and statements about calligraphy, how it has been tried to describe with the analogy of Jazz music or dance such as Stevens (2017) does, also in Chapter IV in part "4.1.8. The Performative aspect of Chinese calligraphy: the analogy with dance and music," it is mentioned the similarities between calligraphy and music and dance.

As a remarkable example of this situation, Zega is a significant example to show other features of contemporary western calligraphy different from the earlier mentioned examples.

## **6.10. Loredana Zega**

In this part, a freelance calligrapher with an English National Diploma in Calligraphy, held by The Calligraphy and Lettering Art Society (CLAS)<sup>11</sup>, one of the largest western lettering societies based in the United Kingdom, and has an extensive membership in Europe and many other countries with the aims to provide educational support to its members, Loredana Zega (b. 1980, Slovakia) will be mentioned through her dance performance that dominates her calligraphy works. It is significant due to the fact that most contemporary calligraphers prefer to define calligraphy through proximity to music, especially jazz music and dance.

<sup>11</sup> CLAS includes national and international events, such as the annual Festival of Calligraphy for week-long, day and weekend workshops, and exhibitions. For more information, <https://www.clas.co.uk/>

The rhythm, harmony, and movement become embodied here through the work of Zega, which also takes resemblance with the Far Eastern calligraphy performances of Chinese dance companies and The Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan, examined in Chapter IV.

With her childhood interest in writing, Zega experiences a variety of techniques, surfaces, and alphabets that will be mentioned in this part. Attending dance and calligraphy masterclasses in Slovakia, Belgium, Ireland, the United Kingdom, and Slovenia to search for new writing possibilities, she flourishes her technique with a new work aspect, which gives a way to combine calligraphy with her performance. Working for many private clients and institutions, she creates expressive calligraphy performances, paints walls, makes calligraphic sculptures from wood and plexiglass, and creates stage performances. Among them, what takes attention is how she fuses her calligraphy practices with dance focusing on exhilarating liveliness.

As will be seen in this part, the flat tip brushes, dance, and theatre have a significant play as complementary to Zega's calligraphic performances. For this reason, she takes attention and is worth mentioning as an experience of a contemporary western calligrapher.

As mentioned in Chapter IV, the Far Eastern calligraphy is based on brushwork employed and used as a part of the calligrapher underlines the connection between the calligrapher and his materials; the calligraphy is executed as a performance with the pointed brush and ink. One of the most significant features is to achieve the vivid strokes in the compositions as a representative of a living thing, similar poise of a figure that may be standing, walking, dancing, that points at lively movements.

Hence, as mentioned about the performative aspects of Far Eastern calligraphy earlier in Chapter IV, the affiliation between Far Eastern calligraphy, dance, and music as the performance comes with this perspective underlines the writing process, the exact moment the calligrapher who executes the calligraphic work. Whereas in western calligraphy, the metal nib is the dominant material mentioned in Chapter III, the main feature was to write the text legibly to convey the word's literal meaning. However, the expressive potential of calligraphic stroke with the brush seems to be alluring to western calligraphers, who focus on the process of writing and assess the act as a performance as in the case of Far Eastern calligraphy, in which the gesture has its roots comes with the nature of the calligraphic approach.

In order to pursue these flowing lines, for Zega, the main instrument becomes the flat tip brush to construct the letterforms, which were used to write by the metal nib and perform calligraphic writing as a dance. It can be said that Zega's calligraphic performances seem to follow the analogies between dance, music, and calligraphy, which do not define the traditional aspect of western calligraphy; however, they become an inspiration and reference for contemporary western calligraphers.

Fig. 96 illustrates one of her performance fragments extracted from her performance video. With a professional videographer, Aleš Bajec, performed a project called *Dance the Letters*.

Fig. 96. *Dance the Letters*, videographer: Aleš Bajec, 2011, Source: YouTube, youtube.com/watch?v=qay6B\_aa1es, access: 25.10.2018.



In her performance, she uses flour pouring onto the surface because she seems to emphasize the magical power of calligraphy through the flour's dusty, smoky effect. With a piece of breadstick, she writes in a struggling manner on the arena, which reminds the various stories mentioned in Chapter IV. The Far Eastern painting and calligraphy are described as related to martial arts performance. Wang Xizhi's postscript to "Battle Strategy of the Brush" by his teacher, Lady Wei (1727-1775)'s descriptions are also mentioned how paper is assessed as the battle array, the brush is the knife, ink is the helmet that points at the flying strokes executed by brush appreciated as equal to the battle order of the army.

The style Zega employs resembles the italic hand that can be performed freely and fluently, as in the case of Brown with his polyrhythmic experiences with the italic hand. It can be observed through the various letters that she prefers to preserve the well-structured italic forms rather than distorting or exaggerating them because the emphasis is on the performance rather than the written word here.

The tool and the material are assumed to be the body's extension, and the written text actually follows the calligrapher's movement on the stage, clearly influenced by the Far Eastern calligraphy and how they perceive calligraphy as a performance, as a way of writing, as in the case of martial art. It comes from the word *shodo* consists of two words *sho* and *do*, the actual act of doing something, a way, and a path followed with a highly disciplined mind and body. For this reason, this type of performance of Zega is evidently highly influenced by this aspect of Far Eastern calligraphy, which cherishes the continuum.

Another example can be observed in Fig. 97, the same attitudes of Zega can be observed. In the performance, *Harmony of Calligraphy*, dancing with ribbon and writing with the brush loaded with white color on the wet rock create the perception that she is writing on water.



Fig. 97. *Harmony of Calligraphy*, n.d., videographer: Aleš Bajec, 2012, Source: YouTube, youtube.com/watch?v=8aeofXdz-Co&t=3s, access: 25.10.2018.



White color is used on the surface of the rock as if she is writing, and her writing diffuses and disappears on water; and Zega, to complement her dance, uses a black ribbon as in *Cloud Gate Dance Theatre* stage a trilogy, where the dancer uses water sleeves as an analogy to the act of writing in terms of movement. Water sleeve is a popular way to represent the motion expressed in Chinese calligraphy; however, the ribbon for western calligraphy to support the idea of movement is definitely a new concept.

Her moves and physical gesture as reflections of music accompany her calligraphy; overall, her attitude fits into the performance in a harmonious connection. For Zega, her calligraphy is an artistic medium, not just within the actual performance she does, but each calligraphy stroke preserves and reveals expressive movement immensely by lifting up and down of tools used to write. She is enthusiastic about exploring an innovative way to integrate her artistic background and interest in material manipulation, evidently inspired by the Far Eastern concept of calligraphy.

As stated earlier, experimentation with materials also plays an essential part in her performances. The diverse form of media or surfaces, as in Fig. 98, entitled *Calligraphy on Saltpans*, experimented in saltpans Secovlje, Slovenia by Zega, as a calligrapher invited by National TV. It evokes a strong creative impetus in her calligraphic performances, in which she seems more interested in the process than the result.

Fig. 98. *Calligraphy on Saltpans*, screenshots from the performance, videographer: Aleš Bajec, 2011, Source: YouTube, [youtube.com/watch?v=8aeofXdz-Co](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8aeofXdz-Co), access: 25.10.2018.



Fig. 98 consists of two types of experience; one is in the water with black paint, and the other is on dried land. Zega first prepares the surface with the salt, then starts to write as if she is carving. Both experiments are shot as a short video by director Aleš Bajec. The written calligraphy is in Zega's style of italic writing, as seen in previous performances. In the video, Zega dances during the shoot harmoniously with her italic hand/running hand. Significantly, only the process of



these performances is released; the focus point is not the writing itself but as a whole, consisting of the calligrapher and her performances.

Apart from Zega's performances mentioned above, her calligraphic writings on the Wall (Fig. 99) are also noteworthy to observe that a similar attitude reveals itself even on the static wall.



Fig. 99. Practices calligraphy on the wall, Source: Loredana Zega Instagram Account (@zegacalligraphy), access: 25.10.2021.



Here, employing Gothic writing, however, the stiffness of the woven-like appearance softened with the interpretation of Zega through the organized words written in a left-to-right, bottom-to-top, and top-to-bottom order, also accompanied by flowing strokes. These features employed as complementary units make the woven-like appearance of the Gothic hand more dynamic as if they are in motion, just like referring to the dance performances of Zega that are observed in calligraphy practices, as mentioned above.

In addition to the hierarchy created over the size and color between the words written in this wall practice, Zega creates a hierarchy between the size and fineness of the strokes used, enabling it to create a moving

and dynamic composition on the static wall. As if she refers to her attitude toward the relationship between calligraphy and dance. Hence, here it can be said that while the script's structure -the gothic hand- is not interfered with traditionally, Zega prefers to write the text in a readable and perceptible way. Moreover, the overall composition is thought to be appreciated as actual movement and emotion through evaluating the script outside of a traditional understanding of western calligraphy to reveal its potential.

Here, with the practices and emphasis of Zega, through her calligraphic performances, it can be observed how contemporary western calligrapher prefers to load the tools with emotions and feelings, not just the ink with the influences of the Far Eastern calligraphy mindset that is mentioned in Chapter IV. With this issue, it can be claimed that Zega does not think differently about how she perceives western calligraphy from the other contemporary calligraphers mentioned in this Chapter. The main focus point seems to appear as calligraphy is a way to express artistic concern loaded with personal appreciation free from the boundaries and limitations of the western mindset about writing and calligraphy, free from being a functional entity beyond the literal meaning that is provided through the meaning of the word or a text. However, the only striking aspect that may differ is technically the way she reflects her contemporary western calligraphy approach through actual dance and music combination. The search for the living strokes concept is supported even more by Zega's dance moves and performances.

While Zega performs her calligraphy with music and dance, one of the noteworthy calligraphers Thomas Ingmire, creates calligraphy works collaborated with the poet, as if the rhythm of the lines is reflected as lively composition throughout the interpretation of Ingmire.

As mentioned in part "6.8. Denis Brown," Ingmire is one of the calligraphers that inspires various contemporary calligraphers, and Brown is among them. In this sense, his collaboration works are worth mentioning here as an example of the collaboration of contemporary calligraphers with artists from different disciplines. That will give another perspective on the features of contemporary western calligraphy with his various interpretations within the realm of calligraphy.

### **6.11. Thomas Ingmire**

In this part, calligrapher Thomas Ingmire (b. 1942, Fort Wayne, Indiana), who is considered one of the prominent practitioners of contemporary calligraphy, is called a master-craftsman, while establishing himself as a calligrapher of note from the time of his early works with focusing on teaching and calligraphic research to explore calligraphy as a medium of fine arts, will be mentioned. He became one of the first American elected members of England's Society of Scribes and Illuminations in 1977. His eye-catching, highly abstract calligraphy pieces that are created as collaboration works are significant to mention, particularly how the work process is handled as a reflection-reaction that is occurred between Ingmire as a calligrapher and a poet (Biography, n.d.).

Ingmire has art training in Landscape Architecture at the Ohio State University and the University of California, Berkeley. He started to study calligraphy and medieval painting techniques in the early 1970s with one year of postgraduate study in the Art Department at California State, Los Angeles. He began teaching calligraphy in the 1980s and conducted workshops throughout the United States, Canada, Australia, Japan, and several European countries (Tandy, 2014).

As speaking of his works, Ingmire portrays his approach to works featured on his official website in his own words, as follows:

I like the words of the poet, Juan Ramon Jimenez, "if they give you lined paper, turn it sideways." For calligraphy to become relevant in the modern world, it seems to me that it must embrace the ideas behind these words. The works in this section of the website will represent my endeavors to explore new boundaries. (Calligraphy and poetry in collaboration, 2018)

Here, it is evident that Ingmire puts the traditional calligraphy understanding and practices at a different point from the modern understanding of calligraphy in which the idea that innovative thoughts and the search for different perspectives should be supported. He talks about the possibility of pulling the traditional into a modern understanding in this way and puts significance on creating a new perspective in the realm of calligraphy, and this understanding means that their work is the motivation and starting point that will be observed through his selected works that will be presented here.

The search for relationships with other disciplines, namely music, poetry, and calligraphy as territories of exploration and radical development to push the boundaries, is one of the ways to add a different perspective and reflects the process of Ingmire's collaboration calligraphy projects and artist book projects become a series of innovative intervening responses of each contributor who collaborates within the project.

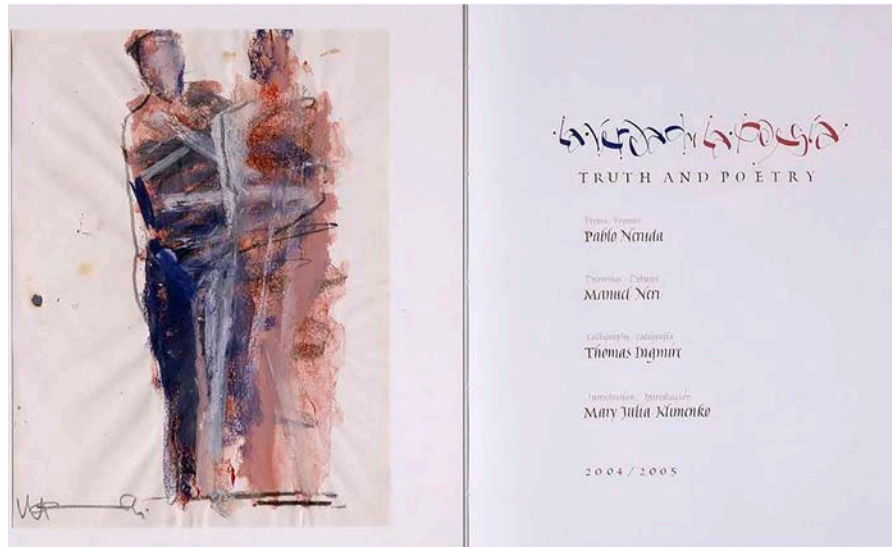
Ingmire has several collaborative works with artists and poets, a calligraphy/poetry projects, including a Chilean poet-diplomat and politician Pablo Neruda (1904-1973), a Spanish poet, playwright, and theatre director Federico Garcia Lorca (1898-1936), an American sculptor Manuel Neri, also work as an illuminator on the Saint John's Bible.

The illustrated journal, entitled *Codici 1, Visual Communication Research* (2003), addresses Ingmire's basic premise starts to establish from the beginning of his journal with its title, *Codici*, the Italian word that means "codes." The word is assumed to hold messages as well as descriptive of contemporary calligraphy research in which the visual message is underlined rather than the verbal message.

Considering the context of traditional calligraphy, legibility, "word as an image" is an alluring issue in the discourse of contemporary calligraphy due to its tendency to illegibility, as in the case of Meulman, Dokins, Brown, or Lampas and their practices. In this regard, on a quest for the possibility of discovering and deciphering the messages that might only be felt, it can be claimed that these questions and other issues related to contemporary calligraphy are collected in this illustrated journal, drawing primarily from Ingmire's teaching.

In 2004, Ingmire took part in the collaboration project (Fig. 100) as a contributor to a unique book, including American sculptor Manuel Neri's (1930-2021) original drawings combined with a poem by Chilean poet Pablo Neruda (1904-1973). The project lasted five years and resulted in the creation of sixteen books, a seven-book series with the poetry of Neruda, and nine books with the poems of a Spanish poet, playwright and theatre director Federico Garcia Lorca (1898-1936).

Fig. 100. *The Neri Collaboration*, Title Pages, 2004-2005, Source: Japan Letter Art Forum, j-laf.org/special\_english/1475.html, access: 09.07.2019.



In addition to the given drawings and the selection of poetry, the other organizational and design decisions for creating this book were made by Ingmire as well. The material, namely paper, the size and format of the book, and the page layouts, were his initial tasks. To understand the structure of the binding process and to plan the number of sheets for each section, Ingmire worked with the binder at the early stage of the project.

As Ingmire states, writing the poem in calligraphy on the pages facing Manuel Neri's drawings was one of the project's daunting tasks. He was supposed to capture Manuel Neri's subject matter in his sculptor by actually reading them, translating the colors and the characters of his lines into verbally descriptive terms. In this case, it is expected that the calligraphy would act visually as a supporting element that is supposed to be read and convey the literal meaning of the written word. At the same time, a line from the poetry, a text has roles both as a visual and signified relationship with the drawings. As he states, one of the crucial points is matching these to the sense of the atmosphere of the poetry. In his own words:

Occasionally somewhat understandable links between the two were possible, but in most instances, and particularly with the Lorca poetry, everything remained shrouded in mystery. In the beginning I struggled with this, but in time I began to see it as an advantage. I felt freer to focus on working visually, taking my clues from the drawings, their character, color, line, and particularly the shape of the figures and the spaces they occupied. I began to see the calligraphy as ultimately serving some functions. As a visual element, its function was to heighten the prominence of the drawing. And while obvious associations between word and image were not always apparent, the calligraphy in a curious way became the connector between the two. (*Thomas Ingmire Calligraphy As An Experiment Part 2*, n.d.)



Here, it is evident that the drawings lead Ingmire to interpret his calligraphic styles, considering the construction of the letters, the color, the technique, and the overall composition with the concern to support the drawing as one of the visual elements, but also legible. Ingmire intends to achieve the relation between the words and drawings as if he speaks with one voice. This transcription of texts to multilayered visual statements, using the word as a subject in an interdisciplinary way, juxtaposing word and image gives a different role to the traditional aspect of calligraphy.

As seen in Fig. 101, by observing the spread pages, the text is written on every page is legible. However, the styles and the execution are close to the idea of interpreting writing as an image, still utilizing western calligraphy as a complementary unit of the overall page creation without eliminating the legibility. That makes us consider these practices of Ingmire as modern calligraphy similar to the examples of the nineteenth and twentieth century that is mentioned in Chapter III, when western calligraphy was practiced with the solid reference from the tradition, with the concern of being functional that conveying the meaning, still consists interpretation of the writer of that time. That means the letter "a" is still recognizable but carries the preferences of the calligrapher limited by the project.

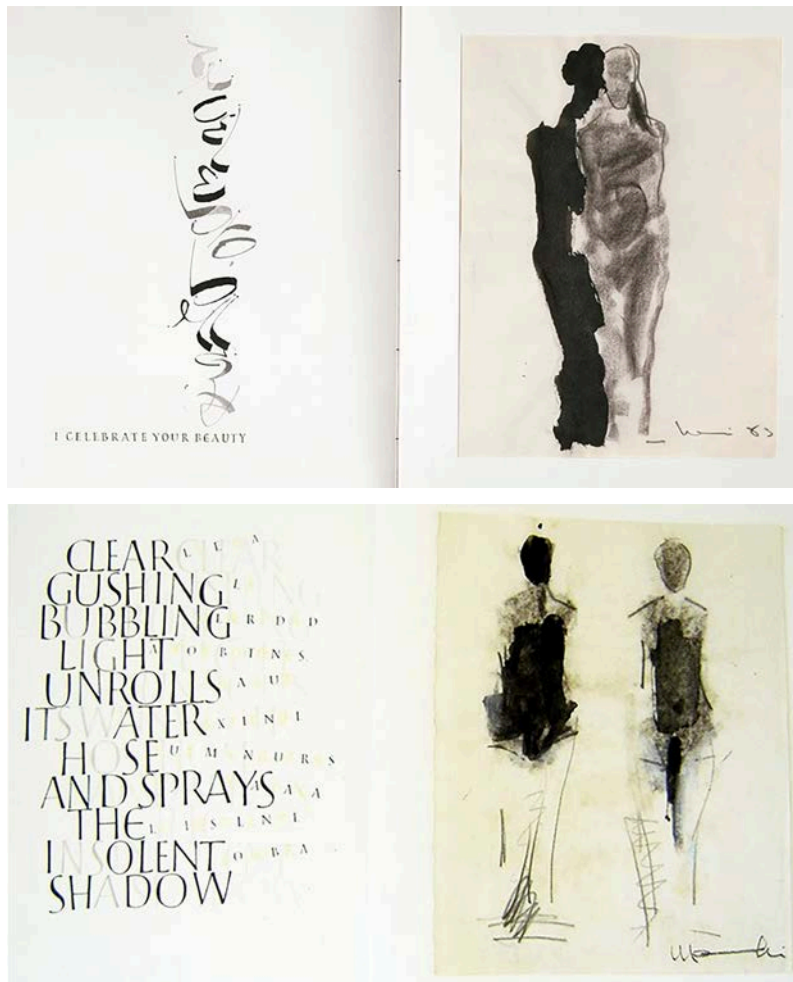


Fig. 101. *The Neri Collaboration*, Spread Pages with drawings, 2004-2005, Source: Japan Letter Art Forum, [j-laf.org/special\\_english/1475.html](http://j-laf.org/special_english/1475.html), access: 09.07.2019.



On the other hand, in addition to the legible text or a sentence on the page, more gestural, written letters are not worried about being very readable and can be called closer to abstraction -closer to contemporary calligraphy applications- which accompany the readable text. The reason for the coexistence of these two different understandings is to convey the meaning of the written word, both as a visual element and in the literary sense, which is one of the requirements of the project.

The process of the calligraphic project generally starts with the initial contributions of the poet or his collaborated artist, such as poet-critic, teacher, playwright, and performer David Annwn with whom Ingmire has collaborated works more than fifteen unique artist books, continues with the response of the other in return as a sequence.

*The Shiva of Liquid Club* (Fig. 102) is a project collaborated with poet David Annwn, which can be given as an example. Ingmire sums the experience as an exploration of how it could be related to music, poetry, and calligraphy.

Fig. 102. *The Shiva of Liquid Club*, 2013, Calligraphy and Drawings by Ingmire, Poem by David Annwn, 38x28cm, 19 pages, Source: Ingmire's Official Website, [thomasingmire.com/blog/april-17th-2015](http://thomasingmire.com/blog/april-17th-2015), access: 09.07.2019.



The project started with Annwn, who sent one of his poems to Ingmire because he assumed that Ingmire's calligraphic practices might connect with his lyrics. In response, Ingmire composed a page with marks that look like a crowded, loud piece gathering together as if a lively and loud music piece. With the music simulation through Ingsmire's visual calligraphic interpretation, he seems to create a fusion of poem and music with his calligraphy.

Hence, the emerging calligraphic work manifests itself as a more abstract image, independent of words and letters' literal meaning, closer to mark-making as a calligraphic interpretation of the poem and music, which was encountered in the works of Futurists, Dadaists, or other various avantgarde artists works that is mentioned in part "6.1. "Word as an image" concept of the modern period related to contemporary western calligraphy."

In these experiments, calligraphic forms obtain a pictorial function in general, thus deliberately blurring the distinctions between word and image. The poem undergoes some transformation according to the visual calligraphic interpretation of Ingmire reminds the sketchbook (*The Shiva of Liquid Club*, 2015).

The perception of a text still exists due to the lines observed on the pages. Also, some words and phrases are readable, even though some letters seem distorted and massively bulky and have heavy units scattered around and distract the text and the attention at some parts. Ingmire defines this work as abstract calligraphy. Probably because of the distorted handwritten letters, at some parts highly illegible, and also the elements that were not a part of the alphabet or a text he used.

Hence, he refers to this as abstract. It can be a debate since, in this doctoral thesis, it is claimed that using the terms calligraphy and abstract together is not that appropriate. However, it is still evident that contemporary calligraphers mostly prefer to define their approaches as an abstraction to indicate that they are creating something out of tradition. However, since calligraphy as a term actually refers to a form of art, and it is a writing that consists of various actions, overall mark-making basically, the process of writing calligraphy could consist of abstraction in a sense. Or, more appropriate, the process of abstraction is already a part of the act of writing, hence calligraphy in that sense.

Once again, this reminds the issue mentioned in part "6.1. Niels "Shoe" Meulman" of this chapter through the work of Meulman's, in which he appreciated a word as a unit with the allegory of the poem or the story, interpreted calligraphic writing as the image that demands a different kind of reading that goes beyond the literal meaning of the written word. It is mentioned that this approach is not the first in Western art and design history, particularly looking at the nineteenth and the twentieth century when various movements, namely Cubism, Futurism, Dada, and Surrealism, directly influenced the graphic language of form and visual communication, embrace the parallel interpretation of the word as an image.

Furthermore, in the same part, the relationship between writing, poetry, and typography is mentioned considering Lettrism and Concrete Poetry.

To sum up, it should be remembered that Ingmire is not the one that is tried to link to a poetic practice through his calligraphic experiments, in which the first step is liberating from the linearity of the verse and conformity of the sign, and poetry seems one of the main motivations that various artists employ or use as a reference. Examining the creation process in detail may provide ample support to look closer to one of the collaboration projects of Ingmire with poet Annwn again, but this time, every step with the responses to each other.

*A Pulse Walks in... Hint we know more or can, or will than we know* (Fig. 103-108) is a series of innovative intervening processes by which Ingmire begins with an initial mark of non-verbal calligraphic images, and Annwn follows with the spontaneous poetic response to these marks with lines of poetry.

In Fig. 103, it can be observed that the first stage that began with the initial marks of Ingmire consists of unrecognizable marks in different forms and widths, possibly with various materials that can leave the marks as Ingmire desires. The focus point seems to execute spontaneous gestural marks that create an impression of a kind of movement supported by various strokes, lines, and spots. In response to Ingmire's initial marks, Annwn writes a response.

Fig. 103. *A Pulse Walks in... Hint we know more or can, or will than we know, Stage 1*, 2015, Source: Ingmire's Official Website, [thomasingmire.com/blog/a-pulse-walks-in](http://thomasingmire.com/blog/a-pulse-walks-in), access: 09.07.2019.



a pulse walks in  
 slowly unfolding  
  
 a torsion, a branch  
  
 whirl open  
  
 shimmer

In a second sequence (Fig. 104), Ingmire returns to his initial page to further respond with the same attitude, unreadable to leave the interpretation of Annwn, who sees these works as images to respond as a poem.

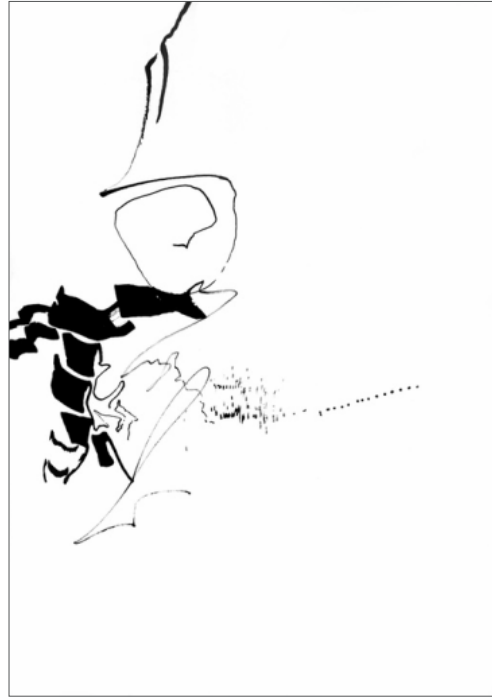


Fig. 104. *A Pulse Walks in... Hint we know more or can, or will than we know, Stage 2*, 2015, Source: Ingmire's Official Website, [thomasingmire.com/blog/a-pulse-walks-in](http://thomasingmire.com/blog/a-pulse-walks-in), access: 09.07.2019.

a scatter track  
 leaps into scintilla  
  
 and minutiae  
 glitter  
 in surface calm

The following sequences of the project can be observed in Figs. 105-109. The back-and-forth passes to create an evolutionary process in which the calligrapher's and poet's highly personal styles and perspectives present a dynamic exchange of communication that yields a kind of visualization of the written word.

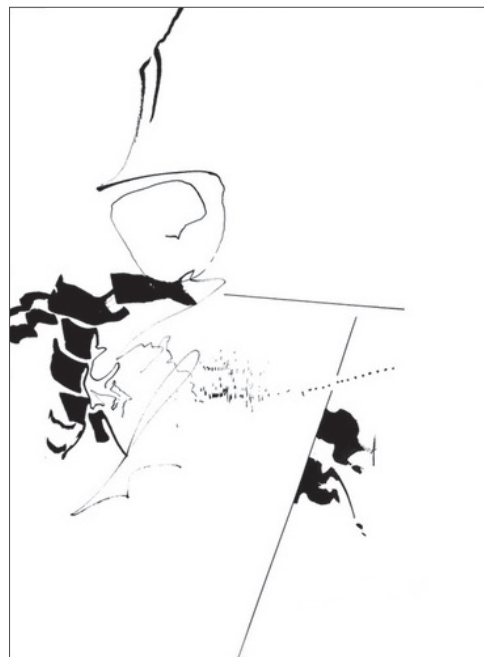


Fig. 105. *A Pulse Walks in... Hint we know more or can, or will than we know, Stage 3*, 2015, Source: Ingmire's Official Website, [thomasingmire.com/blog/a-pulse-walks-in](http://thomasingmire.com/blog/a-pulse-walks-in), access: 09.07.2019.

co-ordinates  
 emerging say  
 a known street corner  
 intersect, a  
 hazard purchase  
 on memory  
 where air or water  
 working through  
 at intervals  
 is given way

Fig. 106. *A Pulse Walks in...  
Hint we know more or can, or  
will than we know, Stage 4,*  
2015, Source: Ingmire's Official  
Website, [thomasingmire.com/  
blog/a-pulse-walks-in](http://thomasingmire.com/blog/a-pulse-walks-in),  
access: 09.07.2019.



hail-stones ricochet  
off steps  
of the words  
downpour and thrash  
off where we  
must climb  
past the sleeping  
wisp of bush -  
almost missed -  
which out-waits weather  
waits to flourish

Fig. 107. *A Pulse Walks in...  
Hint we know more or can, or  
will than we know, Stage 7,*  
2015, Source: Ingmire's Official  
Website, [thomasingmire.com/  
blog/a-pulse-walks-in](http://thomasingmire.com/blog/a-pulse-walks-in),  
access: 09.07.2019.



a scattergram  
the upheld ciphers  
opening over  
masses, cities  
lit air, pollution  
clearing in  
windshields  
the data and radial  
breezes cooling  
from high atmosphere  
freshening out

Fig. 108. *A Pulse Walks in...  
Hint we know more or can, or  
will than we know, Stage 8,*  
2015, Source: Ingmire's Official  
Website, [thomasingmire.com/  
blog/a-pulse-walks-in](http://thomasingmire.com/blog/a-pulse-walks-in),  
access: 09.07.2019.



as fragments  
disperse  
  
aerated  
gold  
rushes in  
spirals  
through



These intermedial processes result from a chain or path of responses. The sequences are recorded and assembled in a small booklet that reflects one of Ingmire's non-verbal calligraphic images. The stages of the project follow below with images and lines of the poet as a response in return. It is added in the proper order, first an image, and then the poem's lines under the image, followed by other images and the line of a poem as a response to it.

Observing the work of Ingmire, *A Pulse Walks in... Hint we know more or can, or will than we know* (Fig. 103-108); marks and their responses as a text reflect the contemporary apprehension of Ingmire about calligraphy that makes us interrogate what calligraphy is; whether it is a word or an image.

There is partly the appearance of text on the pages but not in a conventional way, much as if they were collected to create an appearance of a texture. They also help maintain the page's balance due to the solid black pieces scattered on certain parts of the page. It seems that Ingmire tries to decipher his own language in which the letter and word are shaped with dynamic straight lines, occupying the space with their sculptural existence, but still have contrast to break the spontaneity.

At the same time, Ingmire seems interested in the motions of erratic moving lines and fracture fragments floating all around the space, suggesting accelerating the vital function of static existence to their maximum. This visual correlation, as a sign of his awareness about dominion over form, rhythm, and movement, is a means of playing to see how far one can stretch it. The overall concept, of course, interacted with each other; it even seems to be described by one another to heighten the effects in the eye of viewers or readers.

In this regard here, calligraphy and poetry seem to have affinities that can be explored, and even if they may seem to compete with each other, they both take roles as complementary to create a kind of communication. It is a way of connecting calligraphy and poetry, emphasizing the contemporary understanding of writing, which means being willing to transgress the boundaries of the western understanding of a written text. It is a way of reading the writing marks and painting the words vice versa through the small units, strokes, lines, and spots, exploring the alternative way of expressing the visual legibility.

That is the understanding of Ingmire, who focuses on experiencing calligraphy as a fine arts medium, different from tradition, closer to abstract explorations that challenge a concept. His written marks are to be looked at as the earlier examples of contemporary calligraphers that have been mentioned in this chapter. Here, the word as a subject is folded into complex and layered statements, preserving the improvisational qualities of the loaded material and the hand of the writer.

## 6.12. Viktor Kams

A Madrid-based graphic designer with a graffiti background, Viktor Kams (a.k.a. Mister Kams, b.1980, Madrid), was introduced to calligraphy during his vacation in Istanbul in 2007, and it significantly impacted his calligraphy. He used to play around with letters in his graffiti works; however, he admits that he could not understand how letterforms have a particular shape, texture, and rhythm. Observing various calligraphers carried the trace with the western calligraphy, blended with the Islamic decorations freely using the nib, also broad-edge pen, and marker in spontaneous designs sparked his imagination and prompted him to focus on calligraphy (Morentz, 2022).

Furthermore, Kams claims that Denis Brown's work -is mentioned in part "6.8. Denis Brown" -particularly his running hand with his italic experimentation strikes him, including Niels "Shoe" Meulman mentioned in part "6.5. Niels "Shoe" Meulman" and led him to follow the western contemporary calligraphy.

Self-taught Kam soon started to study in person with professionals, intensive classes with Ricardo Rousselot Schmidt (myself also participated in his online course mentioned in Appendix B), Claude Mediavilla, John Stevens, Luca Barcellona (myself also participated in two of his workshop held in Istanbul that mentioned in Appendix B), and Yves Leterme, among many other well-known calligraphers to good guidance in the realm of calligraphy (Morentz, 2022).

Even with this little introduction, it is understood that contemporary calligrapher Kams, with the influence of the western tradition and Islamic calligraphy, follows classical training in calligraphy to establish a strong base for his contemporary practices. It can be stated that this issue is the same for many graphic designers, graffiti writers, and young calligraphy enthusiasts, including me, which will be mentioned in Chapter VII, in part "7.1. Earlier Proximity to Western Calligraphy."

The trigger point is mostly facing with various calligraphy/writing works and encountering various calligraphers and their contemporary interpretations.

However, as mentioned in Chapter III, also seen through my personal experience with calligraphy presented in Appendix B, the next step is delving into the fundamentals, the tradition, and the ancient scripts to gain significant practical and theoretical knowledge of western calligraphy, which will provide a vast and solid vision for calligraphers.

On the other hand, Kams is one of the members of *Calligraffiti*, the term used to describe Amsterdam-based artists; calligrapher Niels "Shoe" Meulman's technique refers to an art form, fusion of calligraphy and graffiti, which is mentioned in part "6.5. Niels "Shoe" Meulman," also a member of a group entitled "Calligraphy Master," which focuses on calligraphy, lettering, typography, and graffiti.

Before continuing with the works of Kams, it will be significant to mention the group of "Calligraphy Masters," a community of

calligraphy artists from all around the world, established in 2013 by calligrapher Milen Balbuzanov. As claimed, after seeing a review by calligrapher Theosone, who demonstrating calligraphy by the Pilot Parallel pen -one of the very first tools that I employed when I started to practice calligraphy mentioned in Chapter VII- Balbuzanov decided to gather the information and materials, such as inspirational images, videos, calligraphers and hand lettering artists with a mission of re-establishing calligraphy as a leading art and as an idea, "Calligraphy Masters" was created with a passion for calligraphy, the experience of creations, and, moreover, eagerness to share the inspiration behind the word (*About Us*, n.d.).

Along with other like-minded artists, the community intends to encourage more and more people with a rising interest in mastering their own hands and developing new experimental paths in this evolving discipline.

A group of artists, who are among the founders, probably had that impulse because of non-existing of such a community –at least from that point where they positioned themselves- a particularly online platform that one could reach some brief information with references, interviews with relatively young artists who have inspiring works engaging with the tendency of our age.

For this reason, after launching the official website in 2015, along with it they made it open for everyone. Since then, they intend to provide the latest information and event in the field of calligraphy as a non-profit organization, rather than others having commercial purposes.

In this instance, it can be stated that the "Calligraphy Masters" gradually became an internationally renowned community, partly due to their activities in the field that they took credit for.

This small but significant group of new generation apart from a vast number of followers, participates in countless calligraphy-orientated events and comes up with significant collaborations between other communities or artists, connoisseurs such as *Calligraffiti*.

Meanwhile, the community has pioneered many organizations to arouse public interest and keep many emerging calligraphy artists alert, continue to provide its presence that felt, combined with present day technical skills.

In order to review the perspective of the community, illustrating one of the contests periodically held online may be helpful in providing information. With a narrower meaning, one of the recent contests, so-called "Calligraphers do it better 2 challenge," was organized to celebrate and honor the presence of calligraphy and lettering on August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Many entries of participants flourished with their very own hands that they had already mastered, were demonstrated online and announced on the official website.

Fig. 109 illustrates three entries from different participants that are demonstrated on the websites. While the first two seem to have an inclination to create more traditional work employing the italic hand and the uncial script that is mentioned in Chapter III, the last one combines two different hands, one is the interpretation of the Gothic hand, and the other is more personal style written by the ruling pen that consists more expressive hand gestures with ink splashes.

Fig. 109. *Calligraphers Do It Better* by @filipcislak, @nutsabtcallig and @ak\_atomwrites, Source: Calligraphy Masters' Official Website, [calligraphymasters.com/top-33-entries-for-calligraphersdoitbetter2-challenge/](https://calligraphymasters.com/top-33-entries-for-calligraphersdoitbetter2-challenge/), access: 10.09.2022.



On the other hand, the word "master" here, in particular, causes various disputes among artists, such as a Barcelona-based graphic designer, Ivan Castro (ivancastro.es), who specialized in calligraphy, lettering, and typography, explains his premise convincingly in MAD, an international design event by Domestika; "...seeing a page called "Calligraphy Masters," one would expect to encounter with works of real masters, namely Hermann Zapf (1918-2015), Edward Johnston (1872-1944), Rudolf Koch (1876-1934) or Friedrich Poppl (1923-1982), who inspires artists with their works. Instead, finding the works of people that are doing "cool stuff" by a majority graffiti-oriented amateur calligraphy, with a tendency to the current trends, puts out this expectation." He follows a valid question: "...but can they really be called "Masters?" I'm not sure, maybe it's a question of point of view, but for me, a master is someone that really masters the basic and advanced scripts and tools, also the composition and the diversity in the work. And this is something I seldom see here" (MAD, n.d.).

The group claims that their names were chosen due to the reason to encourage artists to believe that "anyone can become a master in their craft," and they insist that it was chosen to inspire and excite people to want to grow, to get better, to be the best they could be (*About Us*, n.d.).

Still, there is a point where Castro is correct and cannot be ignored, which is in the long history of the evolution of calligraphy, ancient scribe to become a master was supposed to be trained for at least seven years, as mentioned in the second part of the thesis, and they were supposed to be a master of the scripts that they were dealing with, that means writing very-well constructed letters that function well. It is not that wrong to say that these requirements are still valid for contemporary calligraphers such as Castro. Hence, it still needs an arduous practice that takes long years for someone to call himself "master," whether dealing with traditional or contemporary calligraphy.

As the term calligraphy, in the mind of the calligrapher, started to expand conceptually, the term such as beauty -as mentioned in Chapter II and the term master- needs to be reconsidered while discussing the transformation of the perceived criteria. The mastery may be started to be found by mastery of the innovation of the calligraphic experiences acquired through practical and theoretical knowledge of calligraphy.

One of the "Calligraphy Masters" community members Kams, a.k.a Mr. Kams, specialized in calligraphy and lettering, focuses on the study of letterforms, gestural strokes, balance, and rhythm. His work ranges from delicate and formal letterforms to expressive brushstrokes, enviably vibrant hand reliefs, and bold tattoos created in his studio in Madrid. Teaching calligraphy and lettering both in Spain and abroad constitutes a large part of his production, along with personalized logos and graphic designs for posters and digital promotion (Morentz, 2022).

One of his online calligraphy courses that I personally participated in was entitled "Caligrafía y lettering para manos inquietas with Victor Kams," which is mentioned in Appendix B.



Fig. 110 shows one of his tattoo works, written his name, Kams, in his personalized hand inspired by Gothic hand, written by broad-edge tool, such as nib or a pilot parallel pen (Fig. 112). It is understood that his broken strokes and employed diamond shape that are the basic features of the Gothic.

Fig. 110. Calligraphic tattoo application, 2017, Source: Kam's Instagram account, [instagram.com/p/BVFLOuj6Yr/?hl=en](https://www.instagram.com/p/BVFLOuj6Yr/?hl=en), access: 12.08.2021.



However, as seen through the works of Meulman and his Gothic version of interpretation, here, the curves seem to be emphasized within the stroke, which gives a more dynamic look to this compact-looking word. The forked lines, as can be observed on the letter "s," and various embellished details as in the letter "k," "m," and "a" also support the vertical emphasis, also help to follow the imaginary moves of Kams' hand on the surface while writing.

In Fig. 111, as can be seen, the Pilot Parallel pen -which is a type of flat-cut metal-tipped pen with a cartridge is employed by Kams for sketches. It is one of the tools that can be carried easily without any need for preparation. That is why it is assessed as highly practical to use anywhere, any time to practice. This is also the first material I bought to practice calligraphy before the professional training because of the inspiration and observation of these mentioned young calligraphers, such as Viktor Kams. This issue is mentioned in Chapter VII in part "7.1. Earlier Proximity to Western Calligraphy."

Fig. 111. *Foreverless*, 2019, Sketches for the logo with Pilot Paralel Pen, Source: Kam's Instagram account, [instagram.com/p/B53GhMxqbNG/?hl=en](https://www.instagram.com/p/B53GhMxqbNG/?hl=en), access: 12.08.2021.



In this sketch, it is observed that Kams executes his interpretation of the Gothic hand, particularly the *fraktur* that is mentioned in Chapter III -one of the most inspired hands that can be an interpretation of, as in the case of Meulman. Even though Kams uses the ink, the nib seems to resist revealing sufficient ink since it can be seen in the dry-brush effect within the strokes. In this example, instead of tracing the brush hair with dry-ink, the texture is created within the stroke itself, which gives a trashy look to the written word.

Another example can be seen in Fig. 112. Contrary to the previous Gothic interpretation. In this work, Kams employs the ruling pen -mentioned earlier in part "6.9. Denise Lach"- one of the current tools that calligraphers prefer to employ to create expressive gestures because of the nature of the tool that lets calligraphers create ink splashes while writing, also with the fast and stiff moves, the tension seems to transmit to the visual appearance of the line.

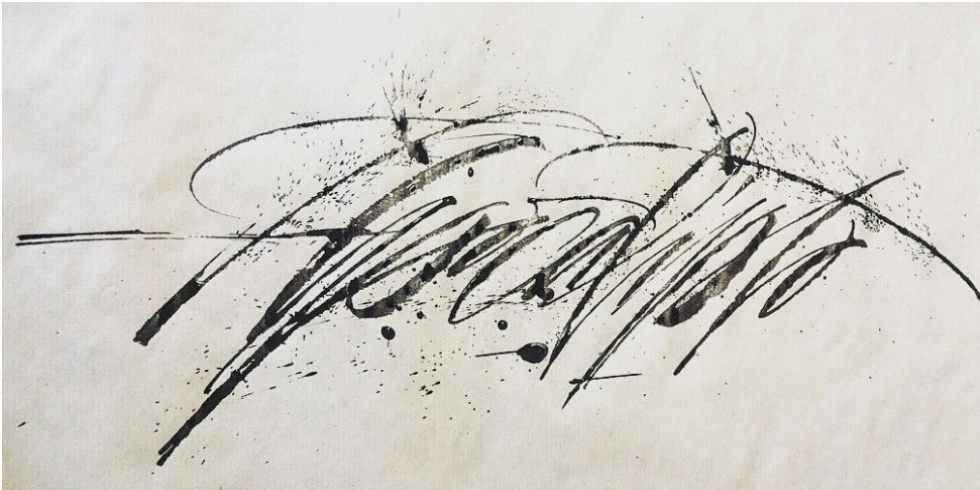


Fig. 112. The ruling pen practice, 2017, Source: Kam's Instagram account, [instagram.com/p/BZ6h\\_W9gNqJ/?hl=en](https://www.instagram.com/p/BZ6h_W9gNqJ/?hl=en), access: 12.08.2021.

In other words, as can be experienced, the moves of the calligrapher in the Far Eastern calligraphy through the trace of the brush; here, the ruling pen allows us to envisage the moves that make us perceive the finished work as a moving experience that refers to act of writing.

As in the case of the ink bomb of Meulman, the work of Kams also create a sense of chaos since the legibility of the work is almost lost; becomes a texture consists of ups and downs with horizontal lines, keeps the impression of the written word as in the case of asemic writing that mentioned in part "6.4. Asemic writing related to contemporary western calligraphy." It seems Kams with this practice tries to push the limit of the written word experiencing with the contemporary calligraphy tool.



Other ruling pen experience of Kams can be seen in Fig. 113. It is different from earlier practices that Kams seems to push the limits of writing, hence calligraphy, not just through the interpretation of the letterforms but also by leaving behind the basic rules of western writing that make it perceived as an image rather than a text.

Fig. 113. The ruling pen practice, 2019, Source: Kam's Instagram account, [instagram.com/p/B2lhB59iiAW/](https://www.instagram.com/p/B2lhB59iiAW/), access: 12.08.2021.



The linear written look becomes an irregularly written bunch of lines and curves composited to form a round cluster. This feature makes the written word even farther from the perception of the written text, rather make it closer to the randomly created abstract image. The moves of the hand are still so strong that they can transmit the tension once again, as in the case of the previous example, because of the ruling pen.

Moreover, in this example, after manually writing the piece, it is digitized and becomes a design with background layers, consisting of ghostly written lines and strokes. One detail of the layer is given with the broad edge brush with the wide hair with white paint. The hair can be observed as a nice, smooth trace of the moves that create

a contrasting feeling to the ruling pen with stiff and aggressive moves. These features make the work eclectic in a technical sense and pluralistic in a conceptual way that refers once again to the postmodern condition within contemporary calligraphic works.

Fig. 114 illustrates one of the practices similar to the previous one. However, here, a sense of order seems to be given with the fluidity of the written text in the overall composition, as well as with the rhythm within the letters achieved by employing two different materials. One is the broad edge brush, and the other is the ruling pen. While the brush provides a certain thickness to the stroke, it also gives a chance to reflect the hair as a texture.



Fig. 114. Brush and ruling pen practice, 2020, Source: Kam's Instagram account, [instagram.com/p/B9nJhLJKHCJ/](https://www.instagram.com/p/B9nJhLJKHCJ/), access: 12.08.2021.

On the other hand, the ruling pen allows for the execution of thinner lines with ink splashes created during the hand's execution. It can be claimed that the fluidity of the stroke achieved with the brush gives a sense of calm or smooth feeling compared to the ruling pen with fast execution that creates certain aggression which reminds the chaos. Hence, it seems that Kams tries to provide a balance between those two, starting with choosing the material. Moreover, with the composition, the same tendency of balance seems to be achieved with the transition of those two that are also compatible strokes with each other.

The sense of movement, as various times repeated in this research through the works of the contemporary calligraphers, are underlined mostly, as in this case with various ways. Since calligraphy is perceived as a living entity, that means with its nature, it is transformed as an accumulated practical and theoretical knowledge and depending on the calligrapher, it widens its frame.



As stated earlier, Kams has a graffiti background and, with enthusiasm, focuses on calligraphy. He continues to create graffiti works on walls by blending them with calligraphy, as can be seen in Fig. 115.

Fig. 115. Wall practice, 2020.  
Source: YouTube, youtube.com/  
watch?v=duSiQrJQLkl,  
access: 12.06.2022.



The first work is from his earlier graffiti writings with highly colorful and intricate letterforms that make it difficult to read -written "Kams." Looking at the other work, it can be seen how calligraphy is affected by Kam's graffiti style. The effects can be seen through the letterforms that are a stylized version of the Gothic hand, as seen in the previous examples with an exaggerated attitude of letterforms. It is evident that he started to engage in calligraphy more and prefers to combine the styles as in the case of Meulman, who started a movement called *calligraffiti* that is mentioned in part "6.5. Niels "Shoe" Meulman."



To sum up, it can be said that Kams, with the graffiti and graphic design background, located himself in the contemporary calligraphy world through his Gothic and italic stylized version; he employs various materials and tools, such as parallel pen, ruling pen, cola pen, pointed and broad-edge brush, or marker, he seems to like to experiment and tries various versions for his sketches without the limitation one material may cause. The practice of calligraphy steps in at that moment, when he does fifty-sixty sketches for his projects.

Mostly creating graphic design products, particularly logotypes and monograms, Kams employs calligraphy, starting with trying the ancient script, then tracing/drawing it repeatedly. That means he starts with western calligraphy, then turns it to the lettering work by treating it as an image, or he scans his original work in high resolution to digitalize it. It is obvious that all his calligraphy works have the plastic concern that is assessed as written/drawn/painted images as in the case of other examined contemporary calligraphers in this part. The eclectic attitude, personal interpretation of the letterforms, sometimes not concerning about the legibility of the word, and employing different techniques and materials refers to the diversity that is cherished by Kams, who treated lettering as a signpost to go beyond the traditional aspect of western calligraphy as Stevens (2013) states.

### **6.13. Characteristics of contemporary Western calligraphy**

In this chapter, the main concern is to observe the works and approaches of today's calligraphers, that tend to produce authentic approaches in their own way through different techniques and concepts in order to frame the current situation of western calligraphy.

It is evident that the topic is too vast to generalize to be examined; however, it is particularly engaging major points that can be observed through the selected practices of the contemporary calligraphers, namely Niels "Shoe" Meulman, Pokras Lampas, Said Dokins, Denis Brown, Denise Lach, Loredana Zega, and Thomas Ingmire with focusing the attention on the influences, dynamics, and references of their western calligraphy approach in the background, which are also assessed in respect of the accumulated information that is mentioned in previous chapters of this research.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, one of the main reasons for choosing these contemporary calligraphers is that these selected western contemporary calligraphers' individual concerns and concepts also techniques are varied in the realm of western calligraphy. Hence, all can provide sufficient insight to frame the general attitude, and it is believed that all can enable us to conduct this chapter in a wide range of calligraphic attitudes and assessments that provide ample information to evaluate the current situation.

For each selected contemporary western calligrapher, the influences, dynamics, and references are detailly examined in the part reserved for

the relevant artist earlier in this chapter. However, it can be underlined once again that each mentioned calligrapher develops their personal attitudes and techniques, supporting the conceptual idea for their calligraphic works, for which they are required.

After having analyzed the contributions of the different contemporary calligraphers in this chapter, it can be stated that contemporary calligraphy with a rich diversity of forms is mostly grounded on the concept of a word as an image. In this concept, as mentioned in part 6.1. "Word as an image" concept of the modern period related to contemporary western calligraphy is also observed through the selected calligraphers' work here writing; hence calligraphy is appreciated and assessed through its visual aspect that can provide various possibilities to the contemporary calligraphers, rather than expressing the message by the literal meaning of the text. This concept takes its roots first the Far Eastern calligraphy -mentioned in Chapter IV and the Middle Eastern calligraphy traditions -mentioned in Chapter V. It is encountered in various avant-garde movements of the modern period, such as Futurism, Dadaism, Lettresim or Concrete Poetry in which the tradition was totally abandoned. Each had its individual features; however, what was commonly seen there was the concept of the letter and typography that changed and started to be assessed through the plastic value with a willingness to push the boundaries of the art and design.

However, here at that point, one issue must be underlined again. It is the biggest difference that divides contemporary calligraphy from these avant-garde artists is the abundance of the past and habits, hence tradition. It can be stated that contemporary calligraphy, as can be seen in the postmodern concept, takes various references from the past; hence the tradition is conceptually and technically fused with the attitude of the calligrapher. That means it has an eclectic feature that cherishes the ancient scripts and scribes, also the manuscript culture that is mentioned in Chapter III. Not just as a reference but also considering the nature of calligraphy, an accumulated art form that consists of past, present, and future, regardless of the style of calligraphy practices. It can be traditional, modern, expressive, experimental, or so-called abstract calligraphy; all consists of theoretical and practical knowledge of the construction of the various styles, knowing the tools and materials, and also the manipulation techniques to construct the ancient letterforms. It is fundamental that calligraphy requires to be practiced due to the fact that, even though contemporary calligraphy is an autonomous art form and it highly differs from the tradition, which was grounded on functional reasons and transformed depending on the needs and possibilities of the time. Contemporary calligraphy preserves the craft feature, which requires tangible information and acquiring the skill following the constant practice to master the hand, also achieve muscle memory, the coordination of the mind, the arm, and the hand. For this reason, apart from observing the word as an image concept and putting forward the visual aesthetic of the written text as an art form, it still takes its reference from traditional western calligraphy and also still preserves it as more than just a reference.

This situation can be discussed for the mature work of calligraphy, which means that the calligrapher acquires the knowledge of traditional styles, and also demands extensive technical and experiment, not just to be familiar with the tradition but for the creation beyond the traditional concept and visual interpretation of the western calligraphy. It consists of the making of symbols as well as entails the making of things as in craft, which is not needed to be understood in its basic existence as physically functioning entities (Risatti, 2013). That means even the work of artistic invention/performances actually points to the departure from all routines; contemporary western calligraphy with traditional craft education still requires repetitious actions of the calligrapher to learn and internalize the calligraphy as an act to go beyond.

The root of the works of contemporary calligraphy is to be found in the signifier, which points to something other than itself as in fine arts but also consists of making actual things that reveals the period of time that calligrapher practices. As an accumulated living entity, calligraphy is the thing itself as an idea, also as the craft object mostly stands as itself in itself, still with the very basic function, which is to communicate through visual appearance. It becomes something that is supposed to be looked at, sometimes with the paintings of the calligrapher as Meulman related to the idea as well as the physical existence as an optical appearance, or as in the performances of Zega, related less on physical appearance but related to the idea, centered on the physical experience of the calligrapher as a performance-enhancing both making and physical, material existence and absence of it. However, it is obvious that contemporary calligraphy is much more about the perceptions and appearance that exists within the realm of subjectivity.

Moreover, traces, marks, unrecognizable strokes, lines, drips, and drops, as in the case of the asemic writers of the West in the 1990s -which also takes its root from Far Eastern calligraphy, contemporary calligraphy works become a shadow of the writing that demands a high-pitched reading different from the literal meaning of reading, which refers to beyond the text through gesture executed by an act of writing.

Not just the western tradition but the Far Eastern and Middle Eastern calligraphy traditions take crucial roles as references and influences that can be traced through these mentioned contemporary calligraphers here. The mutual interaction and influence are mentioned in Chapter IV in parts "4.3. The impact of western art on Far Eastern Contemporary Calligraphy," and "4.4. The impact of Far East art tradition on Western abstract practices," solely focusing on the western abstract painting, because the statements of these mentioned contemporary calligraphers such as Meulman, Brown, and Lampas mostly point at the abstract painters of the West. However, with this examination of Chapter IV in terms of mutual influences between the Far Eastern culture and the western abstract painting, it is seen that the abstract painters, namely Tobey, Twombly, or Motherwell, took their inspiration from this culture with a slight difference. It is the understanding of the term abstract. While western abstraction refers to eluding the references or being without reference, Far Eastern abstraction has its reference from being character-based language and its culture.

Furthermore, the root of the gesture -which is the crucial part of the abstract painting as the meaning of the gesture, gestural, or gestural painting with a general sense of loose brushstroke passes to that of brushstroke and comes from the Far Eastern calligraphy and painting traditions. While it lacks conscious control for the abstract painting of the West, there still exists control in calligraphy and painting as a result of mastering the technique, as in contemporary western calligraphy. The hand gesture, executed with the writing-like movement of the hand, becomes the fundamental way of expressing the innermost self of the contemporary calligrapher with consciousness. The contemporary calligrapher with highly abstract works looks randomly executed; still, organize, think or know where to put the next stroke or line. Accidents and errors are welcomed and become a complementary part of the composition, even sometimes a trigger to follow.

Another feature is executing calligraphy as a performance, as an act, emphasizing that it includes a process by making similarities with fields such as music and dance. In other words, as seen in the Far Eastern calligraphy mentioned in Chapter IV, the focus is on how it is executed rather than what is executed. Also, it covers the well-being and self-improvement of the calligrapher; hence, naturally, calligraphy represents both the moment of the calligrapher also the period that manifests itself through the skill of the calligrapher. It is seen that contemporary calligraphers have a very similar mentality. It is examined particularly through the works of Meulman in part "6.5. Niels "Shoe" Meulman," who starts as a graffiti writer, then calls himself a painter. Also, visually and conceptually, the transformation of his works shows that contemporary calligraphy is assessed as a living entity and can reveal the journey of the calligrapher themselves.

Their calligraphy practice becomes a movement or action through which the artist goes and leaves their authentic thinking on the surface, and their tools become their extension of the hand, as in the case of the oriental mindset. Once one realizes this situation, it is quite understandable and not surprising that abstract expressionist artists are on the radar of contemporary Western calligraphers. As underlined, it is not that difficult to realize the stylistic similarities between contemporary calligraphers' practices and abstract painters, which look like abstract calligraphy. In the context, both in the research for inner necessity in essence as in Tobey or Pollock. However, the difference lies in the abstraction concept that is carried. This issue is mentioned repeatedly, and once again, the pieces examined in this chapter reflect this fact a lot. The gesture of calligraphy comes with the loaded technical and theoretical experience, the skills that the calligraphers acquire through repeating, practicing, observing, and mastering the ancient styles of writing. Hence, it can not be accepted as similar to the concept of abstraction in western calligraphy and western painting.

As Risatti (2013) explains, fine art is "dependent on a system of visual signs that only garner meaning from the social complex in which they originated, it is always symbolic" (2013: 88), assessed through its usage of a semiotic system of visual signs and symbols. Looking at the contemporary examples that are examined here, it can be said that one of

the common attitudes seems to point to mark-making, interpreting the idea wordlessly. That means the works are composed of indexical signs, in which the main ingredients are marks, lines, strokes, stains, and gestures of the hand of the calligrapher; regardless of the type and technique, they can all be assessed as signs, rather than the actual letter or word that can be read conventionally. These marks consist of various forms, lines, elements of writing, or sometimes not elements of writing executed as a sign post of a much larger idea of conventional western mindset in the realm of calligraphy. The works do not have the same visual appearance as traditional or modern calligraphy and even seem completely abstract because of the elimination of the letters and words, which leads to primarily unrecognizable marks that are claimed in calligraphy or writing. These signs become iconic and created based on the appearance of the signified, as, in fine arts, they operate as representations of writing that conceptualize the written word as the writer's imagination. There is a web of information and assessments dependent upon systems of symbols that viewers must be able to read as calligraphy and understand if the work is to communicate at a different level.

It cannot be claimed that all contemporary attitude takes resemblance to the abstract works; however, mostly subtracting the meaning of the text from written calligraphic work and calligraphic composition/performance or piece stand up independently as an autonomous art form, as in asemic writing pieces, it is evident that contemporary calligraphy divides itself from the tradition or modern calligraphy with readable works that created with the concern to convey the message through the semantic meaning of the text. Hence, it is closer to the abstract art form performed without letters, words, texts, or any recognizable signs directly belonging to the language. For this reason, it is not easy to decipher the work and assess it as calligraphic from the audience's point of view, especially without any knowledge about calligraphy. That means these works are about the viewer and the act of viewing as much as it depends on the artist's gaze, which leads us to think the "openwork" phenomena of Eco (1989), understood as an attempt to comprehend modern artworks, which can be assumed as open by their author/creator and further completed by the viewer/audience/reader also become a performer in this sense. Its emphasis on a multiplicity of interpretations of art objects, a text, or an experience has become a value of culture, as the freedom to read offers a new way of "seeing, feeling, understanding, and accepting a universe in which traditional relationships have been shattered and new possibilities of relationship are being laboriously sketched out" (Eco, 1989: xv).

With this openness concept, artists change the formal language; instead, they create works that herald various interpretations as a reflection of a contemporary worldview that is pluralistic and less hierarchical than before (*On Open Work* by Umberto Eco, n.d.) That means multiple messages rather than a definite one and multiple possibilities as in Jazz music, improvisation, and its composition are actually never completed because it is open to interpretation of the musician that, led the potential to attempt into various abstractions. Various possibilities of the personal invention are provided by work in motion



and movement, in which the audience also can be included themselves as actual performance. Eco (1989) states that the idea of openness is an essential feature of contemporary art.

What seems certain is that contemporary calligrapher has not been that concerned directly with giving a message, rather preferring to focusing themselves own feelings and emotions. Hence, the calligrapher starts to attribute various values depending on individual experiences that come with the background. That means the more contemporary calligraphers there are, the more diversity there is; as in traditional western calligraphy, although the scribes tried to copy the same style, they inevitably reflect something of their own hand. Within the abstract image of calligraphy, the criteria become the skill and the quality of the stroke that is acquired with mastering the technique, and the rest may vary depending on the audience since it carries openness in that sense.

In addition, various features of contemporary calligraphers, as examined here, can be related to postmodernism. As mentioned in part "6.3. The postmodern condition related to contemporary western calligraphy," contemporary calligraphy practices reflects the feature of postmodernism, such as the order and chaos duality, stylistic and ideological pluralism, being eclectic technically and conceptually, referencing the past, compositing techniques, materials, or subjects that cannot be considered or brought together side by side. Another significant feature is embodying emotion in calligraphy as postmodern designers did through their particularly typographic design. Technical and conceptual references support the calligrapher's feelings or emotions depending on the work's context. All contemporary calligraphers examined here reveal this issue through their work and attitude. That means, rather than being a servant of the text as in traditional western calligraphy, contemporary calligraphers decide to focus on themselves and their personal understanding of calligraphy. That's why the more contemporary calligraphers there are, the wider varieties exist.

Furthermore, contemporary calligraphers interact with many fields and represent essential stages in a different way of collaboration with other artistic disciplines, namely poetry and music, as in the case of Ingmire.

Interdisciplinary artists' ensemble combines two or more artistic disciplines, giving them a new name as a new style, or an ensemble from different disciplines collaborate to produce a project which integrates their different art forms covertly or openly. The contemporary methods that artists employ have given a new expressive form by framing their own rules of the art form that let them invent their own mediums. Their unrestricted, free form gives them a space for movement and action. Some of the works fit into the category of traditional or modern calligraphy; sometimes, the text can be provocative and with any concern of conveying the actual message of the text, catching the lyrical elements and deciphering it in layers on the medium, accentuating the individualism of each letter, even each stroke underlining the collaboration between them.

Hence, it will not be wrong to claim that western calligraphy of the twenty-first century started to be appreciated as one of the autonomous areas that have been executed as fine art. That means contemporary practices represent a kind of transcendent experience with technique and concept, differentiating itself from the tradition of the Medieval era and the modern examples of the nineteenth and twentieth century. These situations have been effective in expanding the literature study and the change and evaluation of my personal understanding of western calligraphy as well. As a graphic designer and artist, these dynamics and features mentioned up until now are inevitably reflected in my personal practices. As these artists mentioned here, these time periods led to evolving my attitude and practice of western calligraphy in different phases as a conceptual and technical journey that can be traced through the works presented in the next chapter. In other words, features of contemporary western calligraphy that are located in this chapter through the examination of the contemporary calligraphers concerning the tradition of western calligraphy, also mutual interactions and effects of the Far Eastern and the Middle Eastern calligraphy influences, will be examined in Chapter VII, which is a representation of my personal comprehension and appreciation of western calligraphy formed during the research period. It will provide significant information about the contribution to the contemporary western calligraphy theme.



## VII. PERSONAL CALLIGRAPHY PRACTICES

This chapter covers my personal western calligraphy perception and practices based on the periods of acquiring technical and practical knowledge. These accumulated knowledge and experiences have led to a significant relationship between the theory, my perception, and practice of western calligraphy, which has been transformed by acquiring theoretical and practical knowledge about its history, techniques, and evolution visually and conceptually.

Examining the theoretical knowledge allows me to be aware of existing perspectives and assessments in the realm of western calligraphy, which is mentioned in Chapter II while examining the definition and description of western calligraphy, and in Chapter III while mentioning the tradition and technique. Also, in comparison with Far Eastern and Middle Eastern appreciation of calligraphy, which helps to understand and frame the western perspectives, all theoretical data heralds the general personal perception, attitude, and practices in the realm of contemporary calligraphy.

Apart from the historical aspect of the tradition of western calligraphy, a lifelong engagement requires a high amount of time dedicated to acquiring the skill. It leads me to consider its craft nature, which does not just belong to the tradition but also directly affects and orients the possible experiences in calligraphy.

My developed calligraphic attitude and its presence consist of its own accumulated data as a long-term experience. It also contains the combination and synchronization of all data extracted with this research, compromising its future with its observed and examined roots and trained muscle memory, the practicing the ancient styles and techniques by attending various courses and workshops in Spain, France, and Turkey that is mentioned in Appendix B. It is also formed by an awareness of the Far Eastern calligraphy examined in Chapter IV and Middle Eastern calligraphy mentioned in Chapter V and contemporary practices through the selected calligraphers to locate and frame the inspirations and features of contemporary western calligraphy examined in Chapter VII.

The interest in western calligraphy started with the earlier interest in the masters' study in typography mentioned in part "7.1. Earlier

Proximity to Western Calligraphy." As underlined in the same part, typography became more understandable with the comprehensive knowledge of calligraphy. However, the main subject became calligraphy for me rather than typography as a designer at an academic level, in which the broad perspective of the contemporary mindset provided me the room to discover and allow me to experiment as an artist/calligrapher in a more personal and autonomous way.

The term calligraphic, which I mostly employ, refers to accumulated theoretical and practical knowledge and experience. It is intended to reveal also various inspirations from history, ancient scripts and scribes, the western conception of writing, and calligraphy, also other traditions, mostly the Far Eastern understanding of writing and calligraphy, combined with my own experiences and perspective in terms of contemporary calligraphy.

While discussing tradition, the period of medieval time, before the printing period, I prefer to use the ancient writing styles with the printing period to refer to the time that ancient western writing styles were revived by calligraphers, namely Johnston or Koch. It can be called modern calligraphy since the intention was to reinterpret the ancient styles and reassess and adapt to the requirements of the time -the nineteenth and twentieth centuries- still carries the literal meaning of the word and message conveyed through the text. Hence, the letter "a" is still "a," which means the form is recognizable and readable in a conventional sense.

Looking at the current calligraphy practices, including my works, after all the investigation conducted in this doctoral research, contemporary calligraphy with a wide range of varieties blurs the boundaries between writing and painting in the sense of western mentality, which primarily refers to the expressive/abstract calligraphic forms of the twenty-first century.

Since calligraphy is an umbrella term, even though it started to be used in the sixteenth century, after the printing period, as mentioned in Chapter II, the general perception is that calligraphy covers all periods. So it may need an adjective to refer to a period that is meant to mention, such as tradition, modern or contemporary.

It can be claimed that, with the assumption of calligraphy as an umbrella term, contemporary calligraphy refers to the practices of twenty-first-century calligraphy works. Contemporary calligraphers experiment with calligraphy in spontaneous and organized ways simultaneously, creating a sort of balance between the past and present, in other words, between the tradition and the contemporary. Here balance, as Stevens (2013) states, refers to the ability to control random abstract lines, strokes, and marks that come with the current attitude through the acquired skill that is achieved by the repetitive practice of characters of historical styles, which means mastering a craft. The solid knowledge of the ancient writing styles technically, their evolution, and transformation facilitate awareness about writing and calligraphy, hence giving a wide and significant perspective and



vision to the calligraphers. Hence, traditional calligraphy is a significant part of contemporary calligraphy that is assessed as fundamental and a kind of stepping stone for the calligrapher to reveal his/her personal feelings and emotions.

I believe the contemporary calligrapher's main aim is to perform the personal interpretation and perception of calligraphy as a form of art without communicating directly through the meaning of the written word. If there is a text, it is assessed as a vehicle for personal experiments in the realm of calligraphy. With these assumptions, as Mediavilla (1996) underlines, the balance, as mentioned earlier, occurs between tradition and experimentation as eclectic entities that contribute to each other. Hence, it can be claimed that a contemporary calligraphy is an art form with accumulated theoretical and practical knowledge in the realm of calligraphy, hence writing, performing a writing-like gesture with or without recognizable signs of the language. With this feature, from the western perspective, contemporary calligraphy, liken to painterly written work, mostly cherishes the abstract form since it is unreadable in a literal sense. Here, abstraction in contemporary calligraphy does not mean performing without any sort of references; on the contrary, as underlined various times earlier in Chapter IV, an abstract feature of contemporary calligraphy still takes its' references from the calligraphy itself. With constant repetition and practice, also theoretical knowledge, the calligraphic practice becomes an intrinsic knowledge that consists of craft feature that comes with muscle memory. That means that even highly abstract forms are performed in a conscious mind.

Basically, the moves of the hand and the tool, the gesture created on the surfaces of my current practices, still reflect the basic moves and manipulation techniques acquired from the practices of ancient styles, fused with the technical and practical knowledge of the tools and materials. That is the main reason for me and for the contemporary calligraphy with highly abstract form in which there is no letter or text, but still claiming that these practices are calligraphy practices that mimic the writing gesture of the hand. In other words, it can be claimed that the craft knowledge of calligraphy does not mean that it is necessarily absent from such work.

As Risatti (2013) claims, just because the overall appearance of work such as abstract painting and abstract calligraphy are alike does not mean they are comparable either, "they may stem from different intentions, what I would also call differing generative principles" (Risatti, 2013: 130).

As underlined earlier in Chapter VI, it is one of the crucial points that contemporary calligraphy differentiates itself from abstract painting. Whether practicing abstract/experimental calligraphy, the past references in both technical and practical ways are still preserved themselves. Technically or conceptually, sometimes inspired by the form, by the period, by the scribe, or the notes of the scribe that are mentioned in Chapter III, or as Meulman claims, they even find various features in common as a graffiti writer with the scribe, hence

the influences from the tradition in one way or another manifest itself within the contemporary attitude. All these are also a source of inspiration for me to assess calligraphy, to interpret and exhibit my personal focus point, that is, the stroke, lines, stains, traces, and almost all sorts of marks that the material leaves through the writingly attitude of the hand.

With these explanations, I locate myself among the calligraphers with contemporary attitudes that reflect the fusion of the acquired data accumulated with this doctoral research about the tradition, Far Eastern and Middle Eastern mentality, also contemporary features.

It is for sure that practice and planning the structure offer control and dominate the performance to me. At the same time, I can be proceeded with this act, reflecting on my feelings and becoming more spontaneous in my practices, which is called "counterintuitive" (Mediavilla, 1996: 128). With spontaneity, it refers to working without methodology. It may be an experiment through mark-making; however, planning may occur with choosing the materials as well.

I work in this way that I make plans by choosing the materials I have already proximity to after the period of courses and workshops that is mentioned in the second phase. That means I can anticipate how they may react to my moves. It is a kind of control that one can achieve through practices, courses, workshops, sharing experiences directly participating in the process to gain tacit knowledge<sup>1</sup>. These practices may include practicing the letters, ancient styles, or just focusing on the gestures and strokes employed to construct the letterforms, as in my case. However, it has to be constant and regular to create balance and control in a way.

The other feature that dominates my personal attitude, as seen through the works of other selected and examined calligraphers in Chapter VI, is to create chaos. Chaos is used as a contrast term of the order, mostly referring to the reaction of the tools to the contra moves of the hand. In other words, since they are not welcomed in tradition, they probably would be assessed as errors or accidents; I assume them as a significant part of the process and a learning opportunity, as McNiff (1998) claims. Nevertheless, that does not necessarily mean that all abstracts like marks or stains are spontaneous or accidentally created with the calligrapher's unconscious act.

Calligrapher has to be aware of the process and every step; as Stevens (2013) underlines, knowing where to put the next stroke is a result of calligraphic training, learning the skill through practice, experiment, and constant repetition. It is different from areas that are called automatic techniques as a result of the unconscious mind. Such as the American Gesture Painters of the late 1940s and 1950s, whom Surrealism influenced. They purposely avoid any type of pre-calculated

<sup>1</sup> The term *tacit knowledge* (know-how) was coined by Michael Polanyi (1891-1976), who stated that one could know more than one could tell. It requires practice and experience related to individual skills. Procedural, implicit, unarticulated, experiential, or practical knowledge are also the terms that are used to refer to tacit knowledge (Kothari, Rudman, Dobbins, et al., 2012).

gesture or marks. Their action consists of less repetition and is more deliberate through a transcendent experience. Such as Pollock's ritualistic moves around the canvas on the studio floor causes his famous drip pictures, and as he claims, "when I am in my painting, I'm not aware of what I'm doing" (Risatti, 2013: 102) that is different for calligraphers. Hence, it can be said that, as mentioned in Chapter VI, even though various contemporary calligraphers claim that they are influenced by abstract painters, there is a clear distinction between abstract calligraphy and abstract painting.

This issue is also mostly underlined by comparing the calligraphic experience with a live performance of the musician who is expected to represent all his experience and skill to the piece at that moment. It requires confidence, practice, hence patience for acquiring that skill. As a musician in front of the audience has one chance to play it right, there is no turning back. However, as in jazz, the improvisation and reaction in action provide the opportunity for the musician to show expression, feeling, and skill.

As in this case, my contemporary understanding let me improvise during the calligraphic practice, cherishing the splits, marks, or any kind of trace to become complementary features of the composition. The artistry comes with this perspective articulated to the craft nature of calligraphy, exhibiting the plurality and eclectic structure that takes references from everywhere depending on the calligrapher. With this situation, the boundaries between writing and painting, as stated earlier, started to be blurry, which is also the core point that is needed to be accepted as a significant feature of contemporary western calligraphy that shows proximity to the Far Eastern mentality. This issue makes contemporary calligraphy universal rather than vernacular that serves a certain language, making it a piece that every audience can observe without any restriction of the language through its aesthetic plastic values. That refers to the open work term mentioned earlier. It can be claimed that contemporary calligraphy also makes the audience a part of it.

In this chapter, at first, it will be significant to mention the earlier triggers and motivations for studying western calligraphy will be mentioned, covering the period slightly before starting the doctoral research. It is noteworthy to consider due to the assumption of a creative process that has been faced during the research as a researcher/designer.

Apart from the theoretical knowledge examined in Chapters II, III, IV, and V, it is believed that practical knowledge informs the practice of calligraphers to develop one's aesthetic intelligence. For this reason, in appendix, the training period of western calligraphy in Spain, France, and Turkey -acquiring the technical and practical knowledge through various long and short-term courses and workshops between 2014-2020 will be encountered. This issue is critical in terms of contemporary western calligraphy practices with highly abstract forms in which the lines between calligraphy and painting became blurry from the point of Western perception mentioned in Chapter II. Whether it is necessary a

concrete distinction between painting and calligraphy is another issue. This last part covers my personal western calligraphy perception and practices covering the periods of acquiring technical and practical knowledge simultaneously; however, it is sincerely believed that calligraphy, whether traditional or not, has a craft nature, which is the primary point that will be discussed in this phase. With this assumption, acquiring the calligraphic skills, practicing ancient styles, and being familiar with techniques and materials are believed to be highly important for calligraphers, so it got involved as a period experienced personally in this research.

At this point, it should be underlined that the period of studying and discussing Western calligraphy benefited from her insights and experiences as an artist and lecturer, Maria Eugenia Agusti Cami. It coincides with the intense investigation and practicing of Western calligraphy in traditional and experiential ways through courses and workshops in the field. Moreover, along with the deep-rooted western tradition, examining the Far East and the Middle East traditions, sharp differences in writing and calligraphy on the West-East duality are remarkable. It reflects the efforts to create personal opinion as an artist and researcher, which I look at and evaluate from the outside while experiencing these two sharp edges. This period has been reflected in the sense of transforming my own calligraphy understanding, questioning through various dilemmas that Stevens (2013) also states, which is whether western writing, hence calligraphy, is supposed to consist of letters while practitioners constantly practicing the same forms over and over again, still what is the reason to go beyond the limitations of the perception and form that indicates as mentioned in Chapter II about the definition and perception, and Chapter III about the Western calligraphy tradition.

Finally, the last part, "7.3. Calligraphic works created focused on the strokes and texture," covers various personal practices of western calligraphy that were vastly experienced after turning to Turkey in August 2017. Here, a wide range of works will be encountered, mostly focusing on one of the essential units of calligraphy; the stroke. Even it reminds abstract marks without letters that leads to a discussion about the issue, whether it is calligraphy or not, I deeply believe that these practices belong to the genre of calligraphy grounded its roots in western calligraphy traditions, enhanced with the awareness of perception of western writing theme, also the Far Eastern and Middle Eastern calligraphy appreciation. As repeated various times, we are at the line where the borders got blurry; however, it is deeply believed that theoretical and practical knowledge of western calligraphy tradition is still crucial for calligraphers, whether practicing contemporary calligraphy or not. Because it is the point where one can justify the calligraphic quality of the line that differs itself from any random stroke or line, this issue also will be discussed in this phase.

To sum up, it can be stated that this phase involves reading, examining, questioning, and creating, which are all employed

for the research process structured around contemporary western calligraphy. I sincerely believe that it is a promising path to explore in individual ways and has to be assessed as an opportunity to discuss conceptual approaches in detail.

Before delving into the calligraphic works that will be examined in this chapter, it will be significant to mention how this understanding of western calligraphy starts. The earlier proximity, mentioned in part "7.1. Earlier proximity to western calligraphy," refers to earlier triggers and motivations for studying western calligraphy, covering the period slightly before starting the doctoral research. It is noteworthy to consider due to the assumption of a creative process faced during the research as a researcher/designer.

## **7.1. Earlier proximity to Western calligraphy**

As mentioned in the introduction, my master's thesis does not cover Western calligraphy in any sense. During that research, with a bit of background, my very first interaction with contemporary western calligraphy practices started with various calligraphers, primarily graphic designers or graffiti writers such as Niels "Shoe" Meulman, Pokras Lampas or Said Dokins, who are examined in Chapter VI. It can be said that their practices spreading on social media take the attention of newbies through their interpretations of calligraphy, mainly focusing on visual appearance and compositions.

In Chapter VI, I have commented that there is a shared interest of calligraphers in being creator-oriented actions on their calligraphy experiences, particularly on the walls or vast surfaces with various uncommon materials. I realize that even if I studied modern and experimental typography, I still have feeble knowledge about the fundamental of ancient scripts and how they evolved and transformed. In other words, various typographers and calligraphers mentioned in Chapters III and VI make me realize that knowing calligraphy provides a better understanding of typography.

Moreover, I was also very interested in exploring being involved in the creation process. That means for me learning the basics of writing, hence calligraphy, mostly focusing on the Medieval period mentioned in Chapter III, when hand-copying is the unique way to write, copy, preserve or transfer the written text, also grounded on the manuscript culture. That is why in these first calligraphic works. I started to observe these mentioned contemporary western calligraphers, their practices, and the materials in which they are involved. Since they are mostly graffiti-background artists and mostly travel for their calligraphy practices, I realized that they prefer the materials they can always have.

One of the calligraphers that mostly employ Pilot parallel pen is Viktor Kams, examined in Chapter VI, who also influenced me to practice with this material first. Furthermore, these materials do not require any preliminary preparation; hence they are efficient and functional. For this reason, instead of using the metal nib or brush and the jar full of ink or



color in the first place, tools such as the Pilot parallel pen (Fig. 1) with variable tip options and pre-made cartridges took my attention as a result of observing the contemporary western calligraphers' practices, who have led me to observe and practice the Pilot parallel pen.

Fig. 1. Practicing various words with Gothic style, Almıla Yıldırım, 2012, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



Without formal training in the ancient calligraphy writing styles, this interest has been reflected in my earlier practices, which can be seen in Figures 2 to 8.

In the beginning, as stated earlier, my knowledge of essential features of ancient calligraphy style, the basic tools and materials also, and the techniques that needed to be acquired to learn the construction of the letters depending on the styles and manipulation of the tools were feeble. Without any guide in these practices, I tried to copy the letterforms of the gothic hand, the first hand that took my attention through the works of Meulman.

The first step was the practice of the letterform following through all letters of the alphabet, as can be seen in Fig. 2, which is practiced with a Pilot parallel pen. It is a pen mimicking the broad-edged nib with a cartridge system, which is efficient for beginners, as mentioned earlier. Practicing each letter individually helps to observe the individual letters in capital and minuscule forms.

In Figs. 2 and 3, minuscule letterforms were practiced as broken forms with highly condensed and compact visual interpretation with exaggerated up and downstrokes of the letters, as seen in the minuscule a. I had tried highly amateur trials to understand the limitation of the parallel pen. Since it has a metal and broad edge nib, the thin and thick strokes can be varied; also, picking the text or statement randomly, the next step was practicing the text through consideration of the overall composition. It is more challenging due to various features that need to be considered, such as letters interacting with each other, words, and lines. This method was used in almost all courses and workshops I participated in, which will be mentioned in Appendix B.



Fig. 2. Practicing Gothic alphabeth, Almıla Yıldırım, 2012, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



Fig. 3. Practicing lettering influenced by Gothic style, Almıla Yıldırım, 2012, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

Furthermore, I realized that the squared notebook could be followed as a guideline to calculate the width and length of the letterforms, for which the guidelines are used depending on the width of the nib and the style of the selected scripts to copy. This issue is explained in Appendix A, which I first learned during the classic training in western calligraphy in Spain and France.

After practicing the individual letters, the next step was practicing any word to observe and understand the spacing and possible way of interpreting the letters depending on the word (Fig. 3), in which the letter follows the next, and whether they can interact with each other differently. It was again not the best time to search beyond the formal shape of the letter before internalizing it. I realized this issue during

my investigation of the definition of western calligraphy, examined in Chapter II and the history and the evolution examined in Chapter III.

Another material that does not require any preliminary preparation; hence efficient is the broad nib marker, which is also mostly used by these contemporary calligraphers examined in Chapter VI, particularly with the graffiti background. For this reason, apart from practicing with the Pilot Parallel pen, I continued the earlier trials with these markers, by which the thin and thick strokes can be achieved depending on the width of the marker.

Fig. 4 illustrates one of the examples written by marker, highly influenced by Meulman's letter style, that is examined in part "6.5. Niels "Shoe" Meulman," stylized mostly Fraktur form of letters, with various letters such as letter s, or e. It was once again about exploring the material and the hand moves that were needed to construct the letter form.

Fig. 4. Practicing lettering influenced by Gothic style, Almıla Yıldırım, 2013, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



As in Fig. 4, Fig. 5 illustrates a page from the earlier sketchbook and shows more angular interpretations influenced by the repetition of the strokes of the gothic letter, which is a significant feature of the *textura* mentioned in Chapter III. Here, the repeated monotonous moves were once again intended to be broken with turns and thin decorations. A word as an image motto of the contemporary western calligraphers started to be reflected on my earlier work without accurate technical and theoretical knowledge, just through observation and mimicking the visual appearance of the contemporary work. It was more like lettering than performing calligraphy, even if it was not lettering



as examined in Chapter II, in part "2.3. Lettering: a brief tour of its definitions as a term." Because without fundamental knowledge about the letterforms, even if one employs one of the ancient scripts, it is not more than mimicking the letter. It can be likened to trying to draw any human figure, following its outlines, without thinking about anatomy. It was the same time that the interrogation about the understanding of western calligraphy and the highly different features that traditional and contemporary practices cover.



Fig. 5. Practicing lettering influenced by Gothic style, Almıla Yıldırım, 2013, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

In Fig. 6, the piece is highly inspired by the early works of Meulman, mentioned and observed in part "6.5. Niels "Shoe" Meulman." I mimicked his repetitive strokes once again with a highly stylized version of *fraktur*, including the various decorations and exaggerated strokes as in the letters "e" to break the monotony and regularity of the rigid verticality of the composition. It was solely a visual concern of mine to make the overall composition more eye-catching. At the same time, I was testing the limits of the parallel pen and tried to use it in a different position. The aim is to achieve the various widths within the strokes to understand the ways to manipulate the material and how the material reacts depending on the hand's moves, the tool's angle, and various possible ways to create stroke varieties.

Fig. 6. Practicing lettering influenced by Gothic style, Almıla Yıldırım, 2013, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.





As in earlier examples, Fig. 7 and 8 also illustrate the same attitude with exaggerated forms and decorations added to the stylized Gothic hand, inspired by the gothic hand's severe strokes, which becomes challenging to read. Once again, exaggeration comes with the inspiration of Meulman and also Lampas. I realized that when the word or text is on the stage, the overall world seems to be seen as an image rather than a word with literal meaning through the works of Meulman, particularly before the detailed investigation that was held in Chapter VI. This is Meulman's motto, which took its root from the Far Eastern calligraphy examined in Chapter IV and can also be encountered in the Middle Eastern calligraphy tradition. Furthermore, looking at the West through the works of avant-garde artists, particularly Futurists and Dadaists, is also mentioned in Chapter VI; similar experiences with the visual interpretation of typography as themes took my attention. These first influences and interactions, and the realization of the tendency of the contemporary calligraphers, such as Meulman, Lampas, Brown, or Dokins, who are included in this research, lead to concern about the tendency toward plastic possibilities of the written word.



Fig. 7. Practicing Gothic style with decorative forms, Almıla Yıldırım, 2013, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

Fig. 8. Practicing exaggerated forms of Gothic style, Almıla Yıldırım, 2013, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



On the other hand, the reason for interest in stylizing the version of the scripts is an urge that comes with the willingness to push the boundaries encountered by contemporary calligraphers. Since I studied experimental typography in my master thesis, in which I investigated the typographers such as David Carson, Jonathan Barnbrook, Stefan Sagmeister, Oded Ezer, and Paula Scher, breaking the rules in terms of typography, experiencing the letters as an image context already I was aware of, I have practiced various letterforms in that sense. Hence, while practicing calligraphy, the same interest started from the beginning, since the very first inspirations came from contemporary calligraphers, such as Meulman, who also expanded the boundaries of western calligraphy.

As stated earlier, my first immersions in western calligraphy made my knowledge of basic features feeble. Without knowing the *ductus* and how to follow the forms' structures, I tried to copy the forms of these mentioned contemporary calligraphy practitioners. However, it can be said that careful observation of the work of calligraphers such as Meulman, Brown, Dokins or Kams, who used the parallel pen and explained how to write the italic hand in his online course mentioned in Appendix B, has allowed me to understand the *ductus*.

The *ductus* is a term that comes from the Latin word *digitus*, which means finger. It can be explained as "the number, the order of execution and the direction of the strokes required to be formed a letter" (Mediavilla, 1996: 21). The order and the direction of the strokes in calligraphic models are executed by a system of numbers and arrows, and in almost every source and book that consists of an instruction of a certain script of calligraphy. This issue is mentioned in Appendix A. When one knows the *ductus*, one starts to construct the form of the letter following its *ductus*. Hence, it starts to linger around the territory of calligraphy rather than drawing. Hence, it can be claimed that the importance of the *ductus* comes with achieving the exact clear shape of the style that is selected to copy. It is one of the first steps needed to be learned to understand and acquire practical knowledge of how to construct the exact shape of the letter. Since the basic aim is to write as clearly as possible, which refers to functional beauty that comes with the term *kallos* -as mentioned in Chapter II, learning the *ductus* to achieve the exact shape, is indispensable for the calligrapher.

As Rowley (1997) states, there are basic craft-learning elements through an apprenticeship which are ranked as "accumulated knowledges of past practice, individual conception, ingenious adaptation, adjustments between utility and decoration, fashioning by hand, tooling skills, close communities of taste- were displaced from the centers of our working, public, domestic and private lives" (1997: 20), which are all valid for western calligraphy training here, whether it is focused on traditional calligraphy or not. All these observations and blind imitation efforts lead me to understand the necessity of following a more professional methodology to gain insight into calligraphy. Here, it has to be underlined one issue, which Risatti (2013) points at the feature of craft objects as "morphologically/formally, technically, and functionally in ways that go well beyond accident or chance" (Risatti, 2013: 60). It can be said that this issue is the same for the calligraphy beginners while practicing the ancient styles to understand



the form. Because it is highly crucial that gaining technical knowledge, which requires constant practice through knowing the material and the ancient forms through repetition, even spontaneous looking marks, lines or strokes are probably a result of gained muscle memory through training of the eye-brain and hand in the realm of calligraphy. That begins with the practicing of ancient writing styles, as mentioned earlier in this chapter. That means once a technical skill is mastered in calligraphy, like playing a piece of music, mastery of motor control leads the writer to create in harmony with the material. As Risatti (2013) states, it becomes a "Zen-like experience" (2013: 101) that is experimented with a conscious mind. That points at even the error-like features are supposed to be done consciously by the calligrapher as a result of acquired skill.

It can be said that in the first interaction and earlier trials of mine above, the critical mistake was copying through the practices of the contemporary examples without any formal quest about the style through the ancient manuscript written by the Gothic hand. It has to be underlined that copying the stylized version of the ancient styles through any contemporary interpretation of the calligrapher is not the proper technique to catch the essence of the form of the particular style. Investigation of the history of western calligraphy shows me the facsimiles of the manuscripts and the real execution of the ancient scribes. Hence, acquiring calligraphic knowledge in technical and practical ways became indispensable.

It is deeply believed that the calligraphic technical and theoretical knowledge of ancient, modern, and contemporary practices provides a significant basis for calligraphy practitioners to expand their research and practice. With this assumption, as I have already mentioned in the introduction to this research report, I have participated in various long and short-term courses and workshops in Spain, France, and Turkey, through which calligraphic insight has evolved and advanced. These workshops and courses will be framed with information illustrated with photographs in Appendix B; however, it will be appropriate to again emphasize the craft phenomena in the realm of western calligraphy. It will give ample support in the name of my research period, which has been assessed as a continuum process in which various ancient styles, technics, and materials were studied.

In a particular calligraphy discipline, apprentices learn the skill from the instructor and, at the same time, from each other. With these groups, learners' activities are similar actions as intimate classes in craft education (Risatti, 2013); the main aim is to take participants' calligraphy skills to the next level through the ancient scripts by observing and imitating them. Moreover, not just calligraphy but also lettering helps observe the similarities and differences as disciplines.

At these courses and workshops, the aim is to provide an experience for practitioners who can experiment with a creative process as a vehicle of self-awareness and self-improvement in calligraphy, technically and theoretically. Control of the material and the recognition of the hand are both needed. I learned that one of the important issues is to practice various moves of the tools.

Throughout the research with the subjects of courses and their reflections on my calligraphy perspective and practices, the focus was

on why traditional knowledge is vital in calligraphy, even if calligrapher practices with highly abstract lines, strokes, or marks. This earlier investigation, then the practical knowledge gained through the courses and workshops, provides the significant basics reflected in my current works that will be mentioned in the following pages. Basically, the moves of the hand and the tool, the gesture created on the surfaces of my current practices, still reflect the basic moves and manipulation techniques acquired from these courses.

The most significant step is to observe and copy the letterform from the ancient manuscripts that are the significant source first to learn and then to inspire, as mentioned in Chapter VI, in which various contemporary calligraphers, namely Meulman or Brown, inspired from the ancient manuscripts and stylized the ancient form of scripts. Of course, before these calligraphers, it was crucial to be aware of the modern calligraphers mentioned in Chapter III.

Fig. 9 and 10 show Gothic hand -particularly *textura quadrata* mentioned in Chapter III, practices based on the models that the master provided, extracted from the various manuscripts or text.

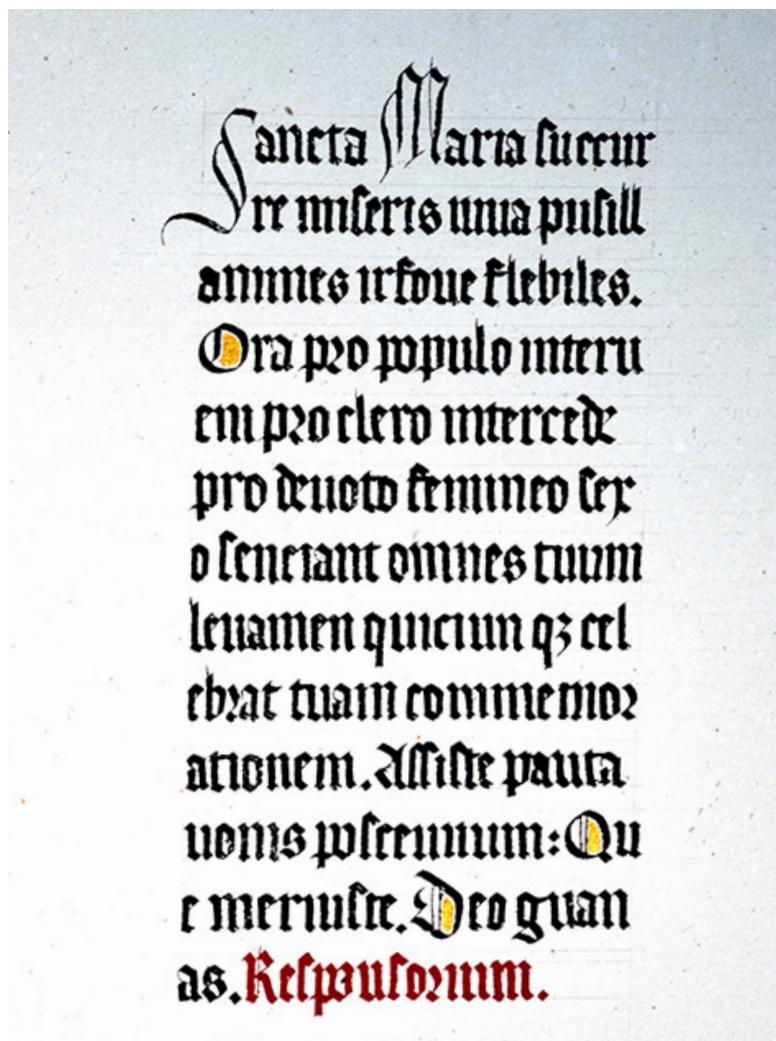
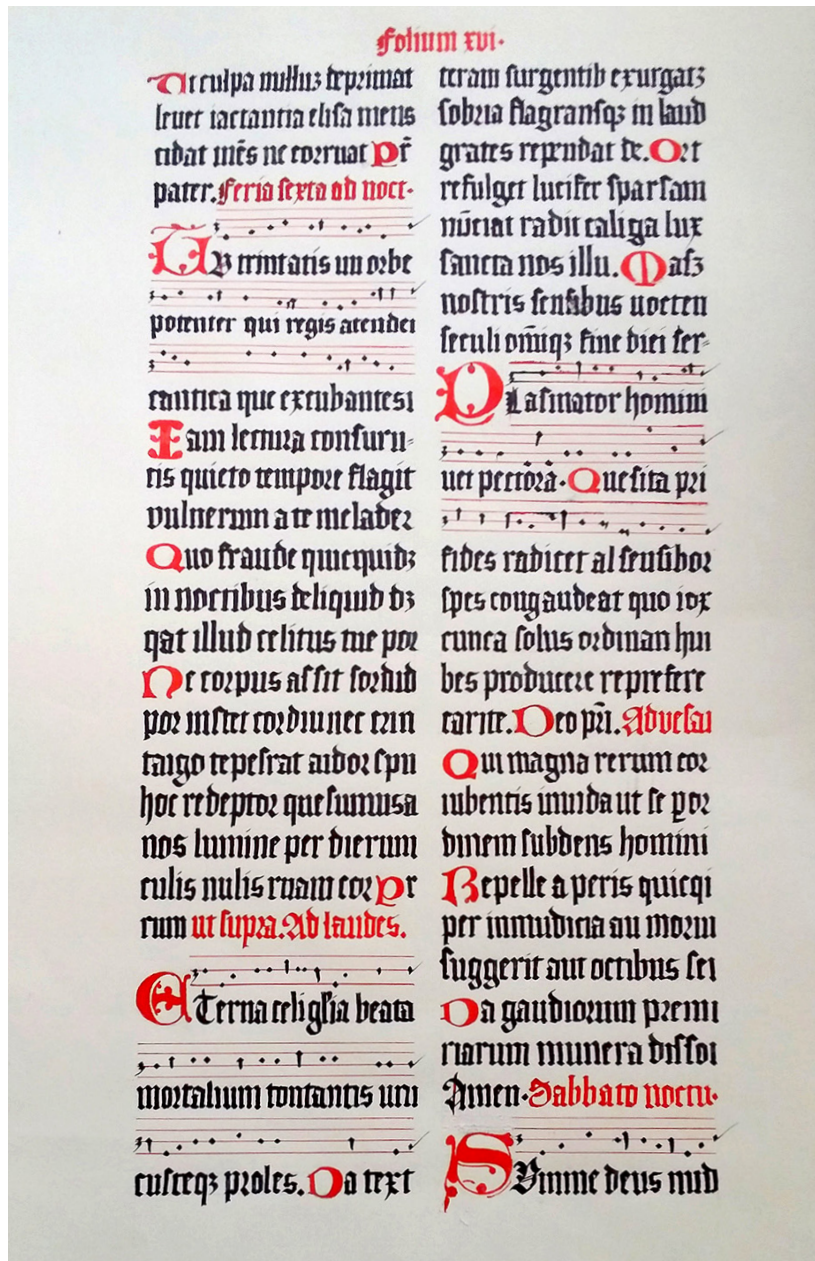


Fig. 9. *Textura Quadrata* practice, 2015, Almıla Yıldırım, studied in the workshop "Caligrafía Gótica Ornamentada with Keith Adams," *Visions Ilustración y Caligrafía*, 2015, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



Fig. 10. *Textura Quadrata* practice, Almıla Yildirim, studied in the workshop "Caligrafía con Góticas Potentes with Oriol Miró Genovart," Visions Ilustración y Caligrafía, 2015, Foto. credit: Almıla Yildirim.



Here, the attitude as stated above is observing the letter and text through the ancient models instead of mimicking the contemporary western calligraphers. This process helps to develop basic knowledge about the script, the individual letter, the interaction with each other, and the overall composition by analyzing while copying. It points to the fundamental anatomy of the form that is needed to be learned before stylizing or trying to develop a personal interpretation of that style. Hence, before focusing on my current practices of mine, it can be claimed that all these practices provided a highly significant base for my current works that are focused on these moves of the hand and the tool learned through these ancient writing styles shown in these courses and workshops. In these practices, the materials and tools also started to change. The metal nib with various widths and ink became one of the primary tools employed due to the preference of the

lecturers of these courses, who mostly prefer to follow the conventional instructions and ancient scripts, including the traditional tools and materials that are mentioned in Chapter III.

Depending on the nib width, the width and the height of the letter style are calculated in order to achieve to construct the correct letterform, which is mentioned in Appendix A. It is significant due to the catch of the exact shape of the character, not condensed or bolder form, because the main objective is to copy the whole page as similarly as possible. Furthermore, one of the significant masters or manuscripts -here as the manuscript *Les Grandes Heures du Duc de Berry* and one of the masters of modern calligraphy Koch- rather than random example sheets that can be found via the internet, become significant references for me to observe and understand his tendency toward stylization of the Gothic hand.

Fig. 11 illustrates various practices of mine, copying a Gothic interpretation of Koch that also carefully examines the provided sheets as a model; the essential practice is to copy the hand and composition as closely as possible as in the case of Fig. 10 with one difference. Here, after learning the basics of the ancient Gothic hand, the model is the interpretation of Koch. It provides to observe the personal attitude towards the Gothic hand and acquire an insight into a modern calligrapher. This repetition of the forms and the imitation of the letters are reflected in my later works as still reference forms to inspire from, adopt, and adapt the strokes as gestures as a guide or stepping point to creating a texture-like appearance.



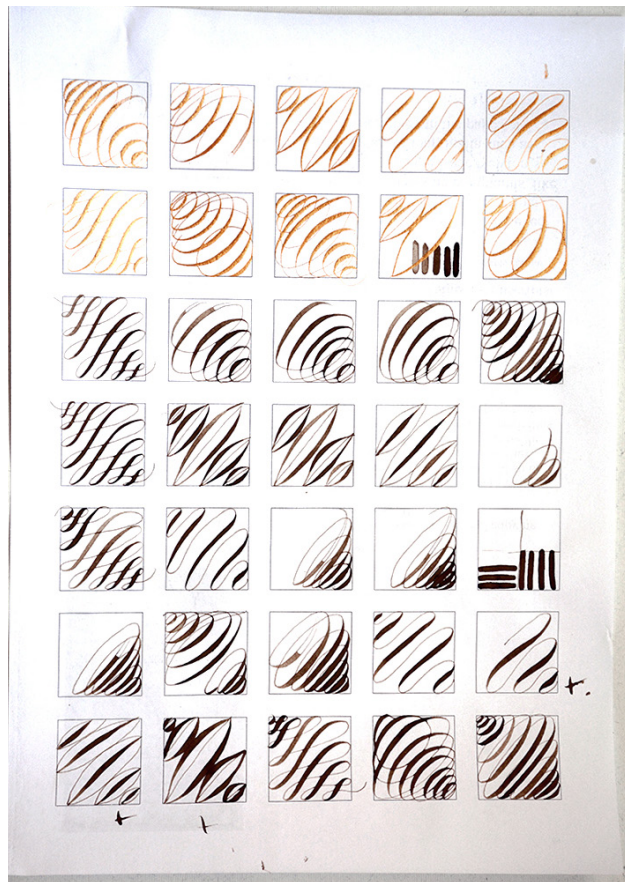
Fig. 11. Copying practices of Koch's Gothic hand, Almıla Yıldırım, 2015, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



It was the time that I simultaneously studied modern calligraphy, apart from the traditional styles mentioned in Chapter III, to see the transition from the traditional to the modern, so-called revival of calligraphy. Hence, investigating the texts of the styles and the books, Koch was significant as a modern calligrapher who interpreted the Gothic style. He differentiated himself with a more contemporary attitude than the other modern calligraphers, such as Johnston. In other words, Koch's practices carry more personal interpretation than Johnston's, as can be seen in the facsimile in Fig. 11.

Apart from the Gothic hand, another example that shows the relation between the acquired knowledge from the courses and how they are reflected in my current practices can be observed in Fig. 12.

Fig. 12. Examples of line practicing, Almıla Yıldırım, studied in the workshop "Copperplate with Amanda Adams," Barcelona, 2014, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



It illustrates one of the examples that is done with the pointed nib pen. It was crucial to repeat various turns, ups, and downs of the pointed nib pen to dominate the material before starting to write or perform any kind of practice with it. That help to warm the finger and the hand, also learning the pressure of the nib that will provide the desired thin and thick strokes. These various moves are mostly the moves that are employed to write a copperplate letter. That means the various combination of these moves helps to construct the letter, and I also take references from this perspective to create my calligraphy pieces. Hence, it can be stated that constant repetition of the material moves triggers the muscle memory mentioned before. These moves help control the nib to write

the copperplate style, as shown in Fig. 13. It was the time that I studied copperplate style with Amanda Adams, which can be seen in Appendix B.

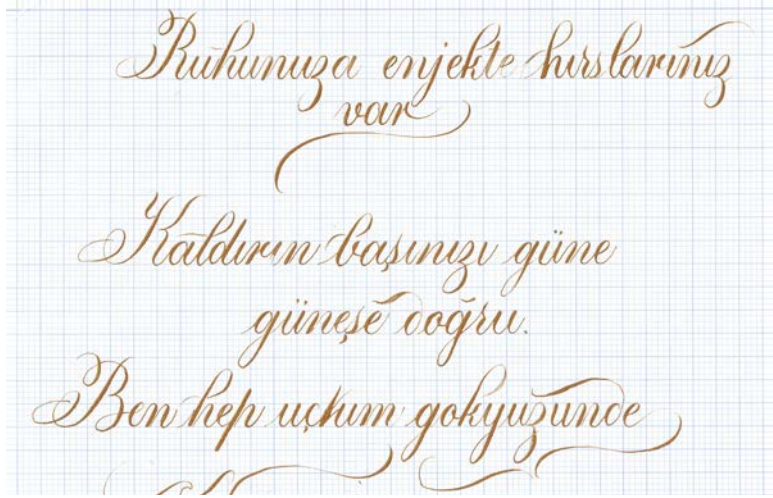


Fig. 13. Practicing *Copperplate*, Almıla Yıldırım, studied in the workshop "Copperplate with Amanda Adams," Barcelona, 2014, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

During this period, apart from practicing the classical forms, searching for the limits of the material and form through concentration on the moves rather than the letters started to be one of the dominant tendencies within my practices. Instead of copying any written text, supposedly to catch a much more accurate letterform which seems like preliminary work, I realized that the main work itself is starting to turn practicing certain movements over and over again become the main work itself. With this tendency, again, the exaggeration of the letterforms is tried after the practicing of the actual style during the course can be seen in Fig. 14.

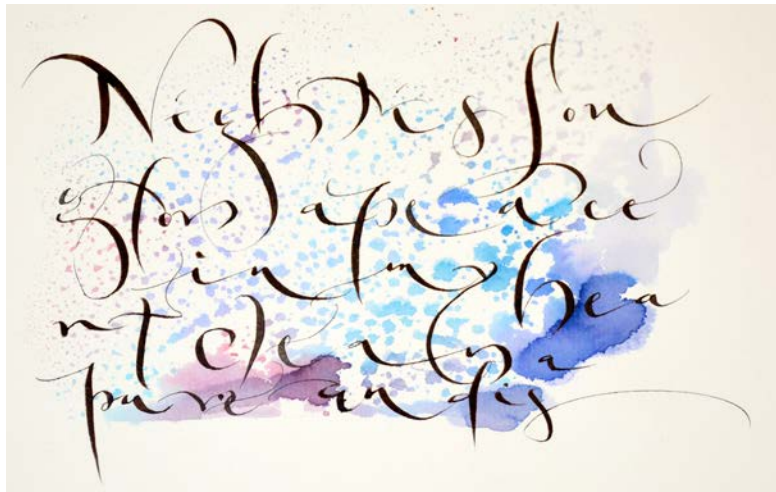


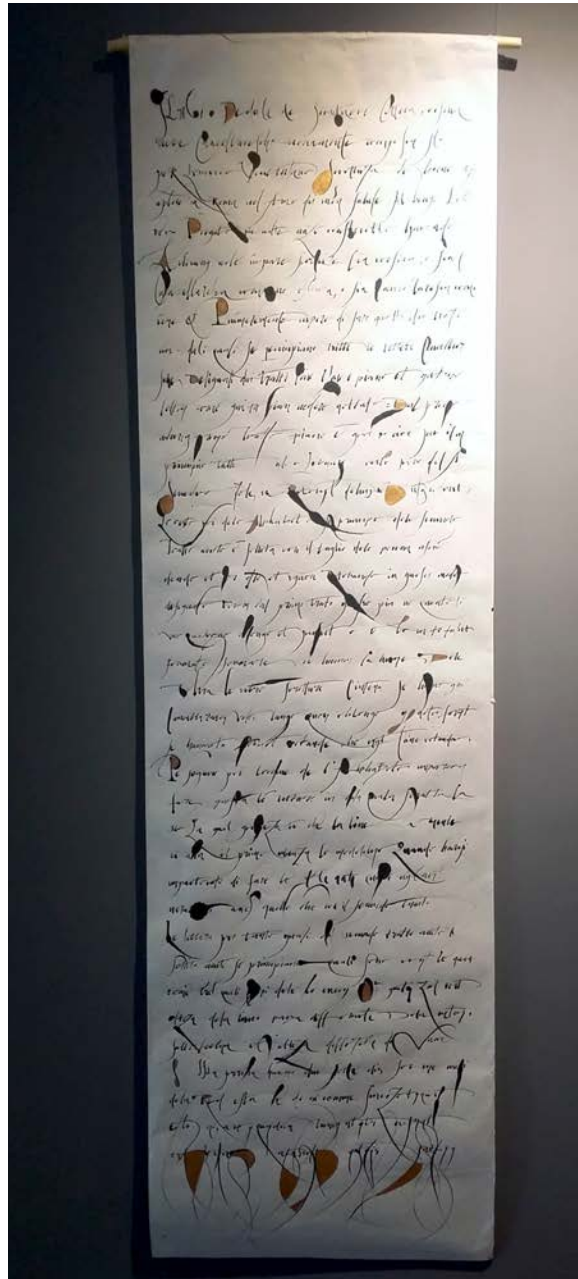
Fig. 14. Experimenting with the pointed nib, Almıla Yıldırım, 2014, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

Here in this example, the classic copperplate letters are not followed; instead, more spontaneous moves with the nib, without concentration on one rhythm, some various rhythms and moves create a kind of disorder-appearance, making it hard to read or even recognize the letter. In this perspective it takes a similar attitude to Brown's polyrhythmic italic hand, mentioned in Chapter VI. The polyrhythm offers many more options and possibilities within the work, contrary to the conventional practices

grounded on one rhythm provided through the parallel following lines or strokes with the same angle. Also, breaking the monotonous regularity comes with the classical approach of the styles, in which the regularity carries high importance, as mentioned in Chapter III. Here, even if the exaggerated and polyrhythmic approaches are utilized here, it is still possible to recognize the letters, even to read the statement. However, writing readable text to convey the message is not the primary concern anymore, as in the case of contemporary calligraphers observed in Chapter VI.

These exaggerated attitudes were later reflected in my works within the strokes or lines without the letters. However, it will be conserved to elongate the moment of the act of writing and the gesture depending on the size of the surface, as can be seen in Figs. 15 and 16.

Fig. 15. Experimenting with the pointed nib on rice paper, Almıla Yıldırım, 2016, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım





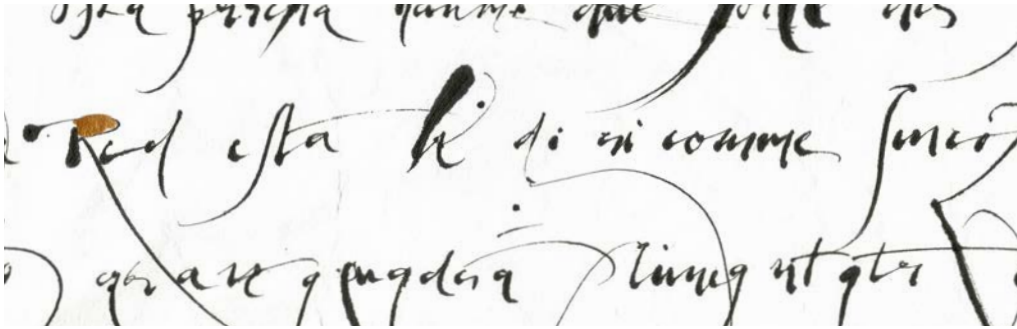


Fig. 16. Detail extracted from Fig. 15, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

This practice started with the idea of the text and continued without concentrating on any particular readable text. The main goal was once again to practice the moves, copying not the text but mimicking the moves employed to construct the letterforms.

So, it was mainly related to the practice of the hand and its ductus to gain technical skill and muscle memory, which is the starting point of studying the traditional aspect of western calligraphy. When the focus point is each move and stroke of the letterforms, the written word or a letter becomes a constructed image because the initial concern is to apprehend each stroke. The overall letter becomes the second concern as a whole image that consists of each stroke. In other words, as an idea, calligraphic practice starts with considering each letter as an image that contains various pieces to construct it. "A word as an image" concept here is reached through this tendency of mine while the traditional aspect of western calligraphy was practiced. Hence, rather than focusing on what is written, the main issue becomes how it is written, as mentioned earlier in Chapter IV through examining the Far Eastern calligraphy.

Eliminating the meaning of the text and focusing on the moves, heralding the unreadable textural appearance that encourages the eye to read in a literal sense.

The tool was the pointed nib; the paper was the rice paper used for Chinese calligraphy. It was the time that I also studied Chinese calligraphy to gain insight into the concept and the appreciation of it, to locate the difference between the western, and interrogate the influences of the Far Eastern calligraphy culture on contemporary western calligraphy practices as stated in Chapter IV.

As stated earlier, this example is an early practice still focusing on the moves to dominate the nib, but the overall idea of creating a text-like appearance without actual readable text started to take my attention with the idea of mark-making comes with the definition of calligraphy, particularly with the term *-grapheia* meaning to write, also carve, crab and crawl -as mentioned in Chapter II.

The noteworthy issue is that repeating the various moves repeatedly creates a stroke point at the term quality that shows the mastery of the calligraphy mentioned in Chapter II while discussing the definition of the calligraphy, but particularly in Chapter IV while examining the Chinese calligraphy. The quality of the line or the stroke is one of the

significant features assessed as the criteria for the contemporary calligraphy. The repetition and constant practice seem to be the key to this mastery.

That idea of the practice, repetition strokes, as seen through the works of the contemporary western calligraphers examined in Chapter VI, such as Meulman, Lampas, and Dokins, which have textural visual appearances, reflect this core idea. Also, it has found its way into my current work through long sheets of paper that reveal the constant repetition of the moves to create a concentration of a texture, basically taking its references from these phenomena.

## **7.2. Choosing the materials for the personal practices**

It should be stated that preparation for the work technically and choosing the suitable material are essential forms and practices in order to support the perspective as mentioned earlier of contemporary calligraphy, which requires various practices, and experiences for a better understanding of the material, its' potential and how it reacts to my certain moves and hand gestures. The chosen tools and materials will be mentioned in detail while examining the works in the following part.

I am actually in quest of a way to transform and transfer the accumulated technical and practical knowledge gained during the research period as a vivid experience of the act of calligraphic seeing, evoking heightened awareness of this discipline with individual perception.

It is undeniable that calligraphy is required theoretical and practical knowledge because it has in its nature as an accumulated skill to be internalized even for abstract calligraphy. For this reason, it can be said that this early period of the research provided ample support during my own interrogation in the realm of western calligraphy while considering all the accumulated data, observation, and examination of various contemporary calligraphers through their practices and concept that is tried to be located through various inspirations such as primarily the Far Eastern and the Middle Eastern calligraphy culture and western abstract painters.

Here, I often employ three main tools: the broad-edged brush, the ruling pen, and the Chinese brush for my current calligraphy practices, which will be mentioned in the following pages. How I decided on these materials and how I experienced them first will be mentioned here with the first interaction that happened during the period of calligraphy courses and workshops that can be observed in Appendix B.

Roman Capitals is one of the first styles that I practiced in this course period. The reason to mention it here is the material used to create the style and the way it is manipulated rather than the style itself.

The choice of material gains importance to achieve the desired effect in the text image obtained in this sense. Searches with different materials come because of this need. Examples are examined through the works of Meulman's or Lampas's creations as broom-like brushes that they think could fit into their projects or the materials used by Lach, who

works on calligraphic patterns, and the natural textures that she imitates with these selected and experienced materials.

As mentioned in Chapter III, Roman Capitals is first written by brush, then carved on the stone by following the letters written with a brush on the stone. It is worth mentioning because, to learn to copy the Roman Capital letters, it is necessary to practice the brush's certain moves, which have different manipulation techniques based on twisting the brush. It is the technical part that differentiates itself from using the nib. Almost none of the other ancient styles have required this type of manipulation technique that is utilized to write the Roman Capitals. It amazed me; hence I also started to focus on the moves of the brush, as mentioned through Catic's basic brush strokes in Chapter III, which later became one of the main features that I mainly employ for my calligraphy works that will be mentioned in the following pages.

I started to employ a broad-edge brush to practice the Roman Capitals as shown in figures 17 and 18. Fig.

Fig. 17 was one of the first pieces practiced with just the letters to understand the material's manipulation and the letters' morphology. Apart from the different manipulation techniques through the brush, Roman Capital must be written on the wall, or if it is on the table, one must stand up to provide constant distance to achieve these turns of the brush tip with the wrist and arm.



Fig. 17. Practicing the Roman Capitals, Almıla Yıldırım, studied in the workshop "Maýúsculas. Letras Capitales with Keith Adams," Visions Ilustración y Caligrafía, Barcelona, 2014. Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



These features are also different from other ancient writing styles of western, such as the earlier mentioned Gothic hand practiced by the nib. While Fig. 17 was practiced on the table, just focusing on different letters with complete focus on the forms, Fig. 18 was practiced on the wall with different sizes of the broad edge brush. Once again, the main goal was to understand the moves to perform the exact stroke shape with the guidance of various letterforms.

Fig. 18. Practicing the Roman Capitals, Almıla Yıldırım, 2015, Barcelona, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



In the contemporary attitude, a broad edge brush is commonly employed, such as in the case of Meulman and his fraktur interpretation. Broad edge brush basically mimics the broad edge nib. It provides considerable flexibility to the moves of the hand, the arm, or the body, which provides a wide variety of fluidity of the strokes that underlines the movement.

Stevens (2013) states, "...for structure I choose the pen; for freeform, the brush" (2013: 59). Here is what Stevens means by freedom, I use the term running, fluid moves. Because brush gives more room to create a wide range of moves for the hand and literally follows the moves of the hand, the wrist, or body, which seems it gives freedom in that sense. These features were not the concern of the convention until the rising need for written text; hence the scribe had to finish copying in a short time. However, within the structure of the ancient letterform, the fluidity and flexibility that the brush offers were not an issue that was considered.

That flexible brush structure causes the gothic style's general broken structure to shift to a more flexible appearance. When the strokes are created without raising a hand, it reminds an italic hand in a vertical style. The diamond form used in the compositions becomes a reference to the Gothic style. Hence, it can be claimed that brush also requires more advanced knowledge, which contemporary calligraphers appreciate as a challenge. The flexibility of the hair of the brush, which gives room for the calligrapher to experiment with gestures different from the nib, also takes my attention. Hence, this alluring issue is reflected in my later work, in which I mostly employ the broad edge brush and create concentrated gesture textures in the search for visual possibilities through the calligraphic moves of the hand.

Different brush widths allow the brush to create diversity and hierarchy between the strokes, as shown in Fig. 19. It helps achieve a visually diverse composition by breaking the uniformity created with a fixed width.

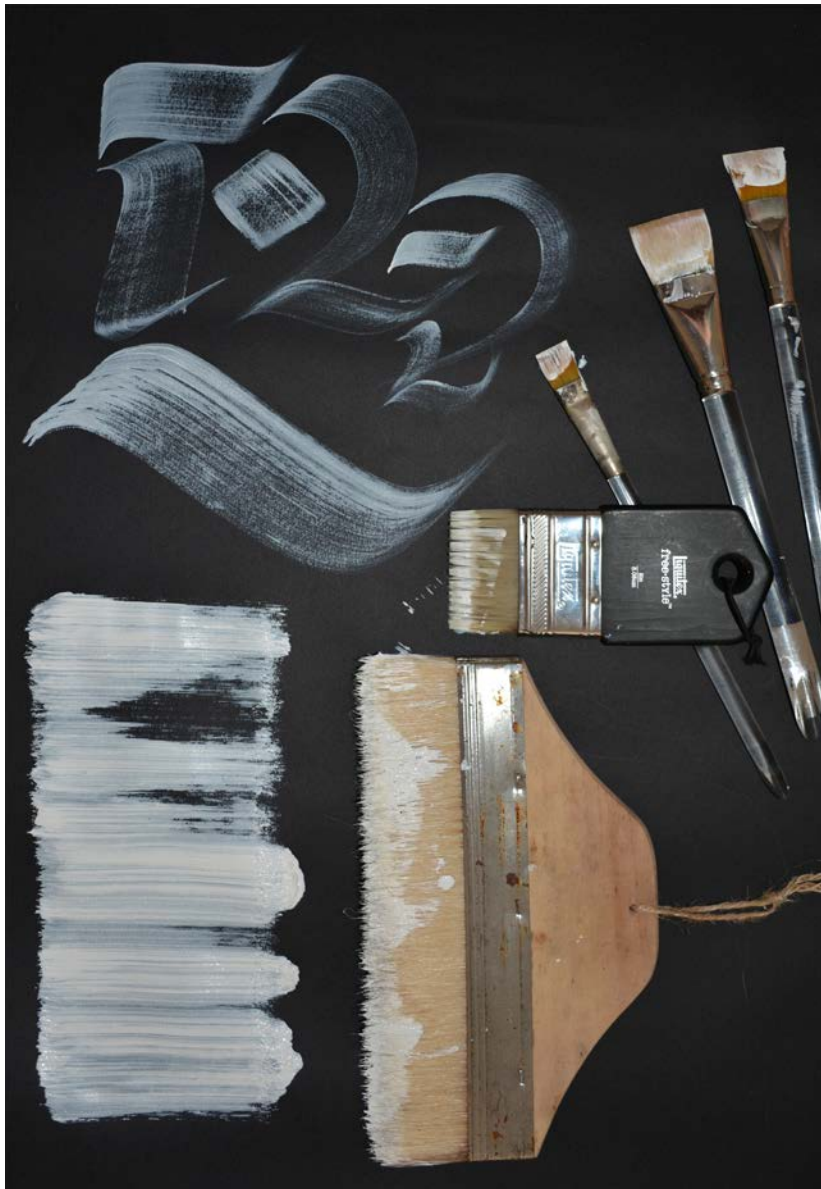


Fig. 19. Experiencing the strokes with broad edge brushes, Almıla Yıldırım, 2017, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

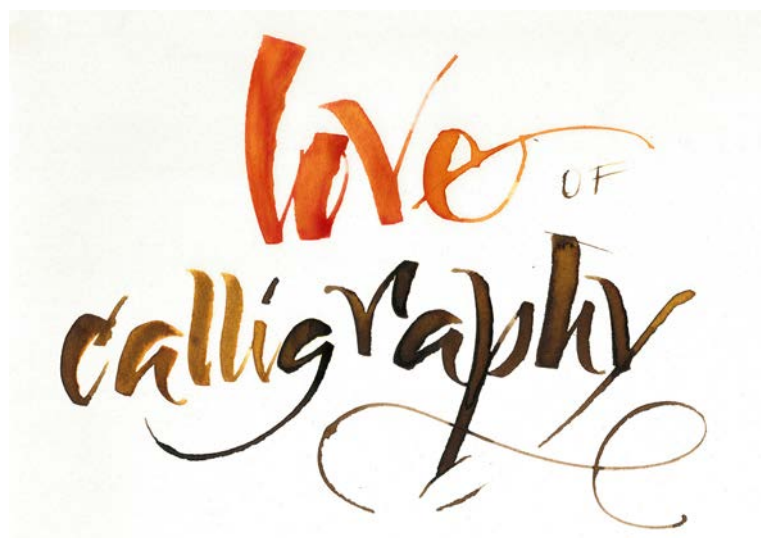


Furthermore, the various widths give dimension and movement as the contemporary calligrapher involves themselves in the act of writing, which started to be assessed as the performance and reveal the period they practice. Also, it underlines the assumption of calligraphy as a living entity, as mentioned in Chapters II and VI. That means calligraphy is in constant transformation within the conceptual and visual approaches that are blended with the interpretation of the calligrapher.

This idea of calligraphy being alive seems to be stressed through the visual diversity and movement effect that can be achieved through the diversity of the strokes and within the strokes technically in that sense. Hence, dealing with the hierarchy is preferred to reveal this background through the composition of the calligrapher. With the broad-edged brush, the cut hair provides to construct the strokes created by the metal nib, but the flexibility of the hair gives a place to enhance the width and chance to create a follow the hair, which appears as a texture within the stroke. This type of practice requires the involvement of the whole body and the capacity to dominate a whole composition, which can be acquired with practice in time.

Apart from the brush, the other tool that I mostly employ is the ruling pen (Fig. 20), which is mentioned in Chapter VI; while examining the works of Lach, who preferred to experiment with uncommon materials such as knife, fork, comb, or pipette, also examined in Chapter VI.

Fig. 20. Learning the basic strokes with ruling pen, Almila Yıldırım, practiced in the workshop "Cal·ligrafia Expressiva with Rodolfo Fernández Álvarez," Col·legi Oficial de Disseny Gràfic de Catalunya, Barcelona, 2016, Foto. credit: Almila Yıldırım.



Lach (2019) states that the ruling pen is a material originally designed for technical drawing. However, it gives me a chance to experiment with more gestural forms and structures, which are the themes that I also studied in the course *Caligrafía Expressiva* Rodolfo Fernández Álvarez in 2016, mentioned in Appendix B.

As illustrated in Fig. 20, starting with the basic strokes is required to apprehend the potential of the ruling pen. A wide variety of thin and thick strokes can be achieved depending on the material's angle and holding position. The ruling pen reacts to the moves of the hand, and inclinations are features that are required constant practice. The pen generally moves from top to bottom; hence, pulling from the bottom to the top creates a reverse movement. The metal nib of the ruling pen shows a different resistance from the surface while drawing the line or stroke that causes scattering of the ink in its reservoir uncontrollably. This material feature has caused me to use the ruling pen for my recent works mostly, which will be encountered in the following pages.

Apart from the controlling and dominating the ruling pen, and being aware of its' potential visual capabilities, the contra moves and the scatters are not welcomed in the realm of traditional calligraphy since the aim is to copy the text as clearly as possible without making any kind of mistakes, as mentioned in Chapter III.

If the scribes made mistakes, for example, repeating or skipping the letter, words, skipping, or a line, they were supposed to write the whole page, or if the vellum was used, there was a chance to scab the layer and rewrite again. It was all about functional reasons. However, as examined in Chapter VI, through the contemporary western calligraphers, one of the most desirable features was observed beyond cherishing the mistakes, adding them as part of the composition, including stains, splashes, scratches, or traces. All become a significant part of the work. In addition to adding emotion to work done, it also emotionally impacts the eye that sees it. This feature, as mentioned in Chapter IV while examining Far Eastern calligraphy and in Chapter VI through observation of the contemporary calligraphers, reflects the mindset of Far Eastern calligraphy.

Moreover, it resembles the twentieth-century postmodern attitude, in which the artists emphasized the importance of embodying emotions in their works. As mentioned in parts "6.3. The postmodern condition related to contemporary western calligraphy" and "6.12. Characteristics of contemporary western calligraphy," contemporary calligraphers emphasize the concept of chaos as in the case of Meulman.

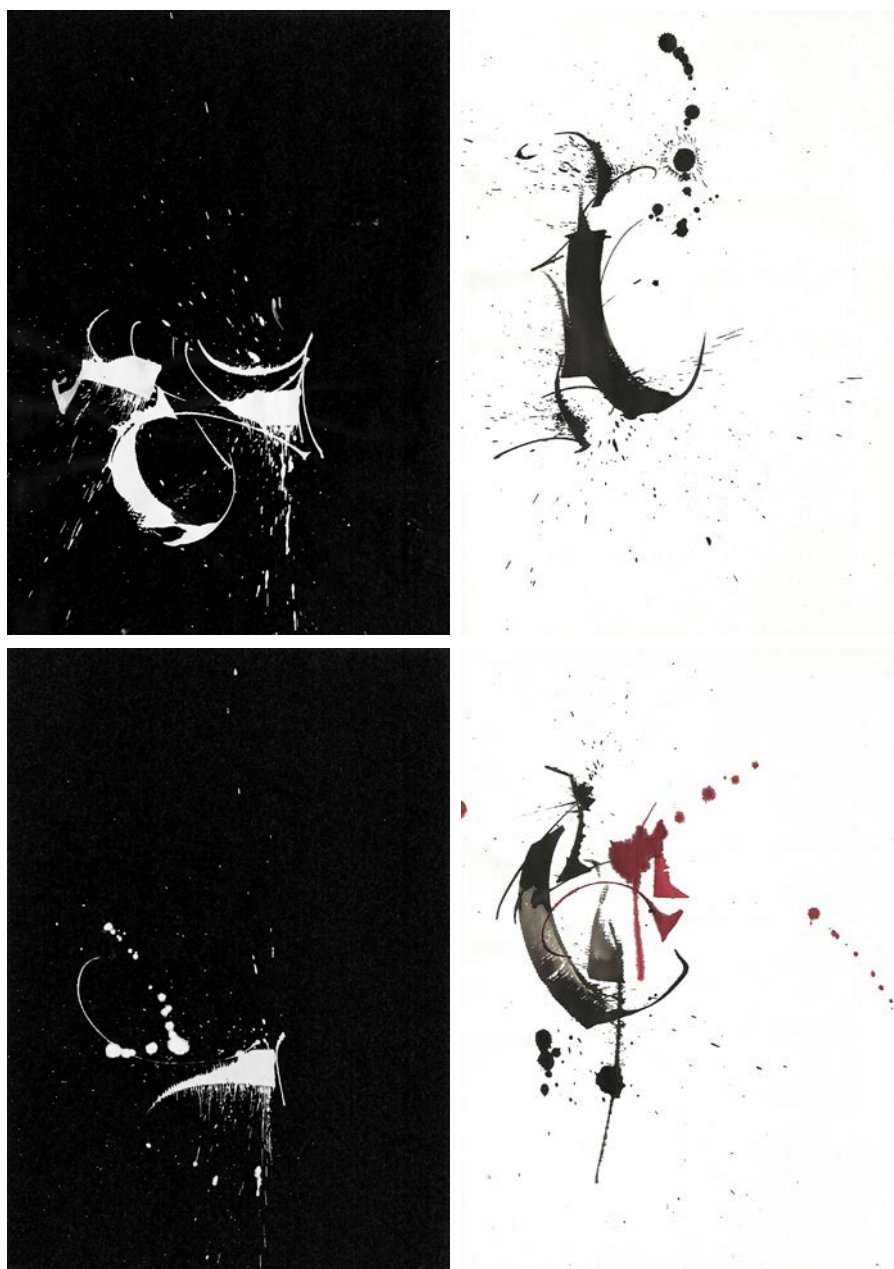
Considering the theme of everything technically being perfect in the digital era, as Pelta (2004) mentions, accidents and errors, in this sense, started to be valued in a way with the idea of humanizing the work. It riches the term to the artist/calligrapher's hand related to self-expression and the importance of emotion, which are the critical elements of the postmodern conditions.

As Stevens (2013) states, after practicing traditional calligraphy, even modern with the conventional perception of writing, calligraphers may start to "look to explore something outside of our norm, even

invent and think more freely about line and form and the images we've created" (2013: 121). That means calligrapher starts to force and discover by using unconventional tools, such as a ruling pen in unconventional ways to experiment. This also comes with the postmodern mindset and is related to being in the state of beyond.

The ruling pen allows one to create more spontaneous/less conventional lines and strokes. As illustrated in Fig. 21, various moves practices are experienced with a ruling pen, loaded with ink to explore how to react the ink-loaded tool to surface with fast and mostly contra moves, which causes the ink to split around naturally. This is an experiment that the ruling pen allows because there is no need to retouch to have that visual effect on the surface; these splits sometimes support and sometimes balance the heavy contrast created with both forms and colors.

Fig. 21. Various experiment with ruling pen, Almıla Yıldırım, 2018, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



This issue reminds what Mediavilla (1996), Stevens (2013), and Brown (2017) claim about the expressive calligraphy and the quality of the strokes that are valued for the calligraphy works-mentioned in Chapters II and VI.

As already stated earlier, related to my master thesis's research, experimental typography was one of the focus points related to the postmodern era, located and framed by the designers' statements and works, namely Carson, Brody, or Sagmeister, with the belief that design conveys the emotion, beyond its concerns. This feature has been tried to adhere through the visual interpretation of the letter that is treated not just as a word but also as an image. The same attitude is valid for contemporary calligraphy. With this attitude, the act is searching for the technical and conceptual way to reveal this assessment of the artists. It is neither a challenge to the tradition nor rejecting it or assessed as a mistake; all are assessed as the plastic value that is contributed to the composition and underlines the act of writing through the hand gesture as a performance.

In that sense, the ruling pen, mentioned here, is one of the materials that provide the possibility to stress this part of the perception of contemporary calligraphy through the visual contribution of the drops or the stains of the pen. These effects cannot be achieved with a conventional metal nib. Hence, here, not the material itself but the idea of focusing on the writing like moves and gestures has become easier with such materials.

As mentioned earlier, here, the drops are not accepted as mistakes; instead, as McNiff (1998) states, they take place in the creative environment and accept as a part of the process, in which they are assessed as "opportunities for learning" (1998: 197). Calligrapher repeats strokes and moves to learn; while doing that, various opportunities come with the material, as in this case with the ruling pen, and prefers to utilize it as a manifestation of the contemporary calligraphy mindset. This will be seen through my current work in the following pages as well.

As Stevens (2013) underlines, a new tool or method may be perceived as an opportunity to be "confronted with new ways of making calligraphic marks and images" (2013: 133). According to him, it can be seen as an experiment, a discovery to be getting inspired that is accumulated as a piece of personal knowledge. This is one of the main features of the contemporary attitude in the realm of western calligraphy as observed and examined in Chapter VI through the works of calligraphers in the quest for a more genuine interpretation and understanding of the calligraphy, hence writing.

Of course, using these materials also requires familiarity and constant practice. As Dormer (1994) underlines, knowing the material and how it will behave can be assumed to be a critical factor in achieving the artist's goal. It is the part of tactile knowledge of craft education of calligraphy, which is claimed as a crucial period, as stressed before. That issue manifested itself through textural practices that consist of various moves of the material that comes from the knowledge of traditional construction of the letter form that varies depending on the style.

Practicing the ruling pen tool and its possibilities by creating the rhythmic structure between the line, stain, and texture is the main aim of each movement and individual gesture. The speed of the pen, its tilt,



and even the structure of the paper may affect the expression of the lines with the ruling pen.

On the other hand, to write more controlled letters with the ruling pen, it is required to write slowly and be aware of these features to prevent the resistance of the ruling pen. For example, suppose the paper is heavily grained. In that case, the ruling pen resists the flow, or if the movement of the pen in the opposite direction to the natural flow, it will cause splatters of the ink, which indicates the movement of the hand as a trace. These are the methods I later primarily practiced and utilized for my calligraphy work due to the visual appearance and overall visual effects, which seems to convey a more personal and efficient impact and feel that I am willing to convey.

Apart from the potential of this material, the emphasis on the moves of the hand through the splatters of the ink is another main reason to choose it, which puts more emphasis on the moves that underline and reveal the performances of the writer at that time. Hence, a ruling pen, with its potential to create highly expressive lines and writing gestures, is one of the primary materials I employ for my works, which will be examined in the following pages. With these assumptions and beliefs, the ruling pen becomes one of the main materials that I also employ for various practices of calligraphy that provide an opportunity to embody my thoughts and assessment of mine, which will be examined in the following pages.

Fig. 22 illustrates earlier trials with the ruling pen with ink and handmade paper. While the heavy texture of the paper resists the flow of the ruling pen on the surface, as mentioned above, the extra gain provided by reverse movements causes the mentioned effect to increase. It is once again related to investigating the possibilities that these materials offer. There is no written word or text here, only focused on the moves and gestures. The moves come with the traditional training of the various ancient scripts that are mentioned earlier, also explained in Appendix B.

Fig. 22. An experiment with ruling pen, Almıla Yıldırım, 2018, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.





The idea of mastering the script with constant repetition of the strokes is a core requirement of the tradition. Risatti (2013) states the main point is that "the traditional craft education requires only repetitious actions" while the work of artistic invention "depends upon departures from all routine" (2013: 104). As Risatti underlines, practicing with unconventional material, even if it seems departing from the tradition, is not departing but being beyond it -as can be seen in the postmodern graphic design works, which allows expanding the boundaries of the tradition and gives an opportunity to assess the calligraphy from various perspectives that the material offers. Hence, the idea is not far from the conventional method; moreover, closer to the abstract calligraphy practices of the Far Eastern calligraphy that cherishes the past and demands a different level of reading with no semantic meaning.

On the other hand, as discussed through examining the Far Eastern calligraphy in Chapter IV, which helps to locate and frame Western calligraphy through the common and different features, acquiring the knowledge about various other writing/lettering techniques makes calligraphers aware of Western calligraphy better in a sense. Moreover, working interdisciplinary without discriminating within the umbrella term writing can be accepted as one of the main features of today's calligraphers, as I sincerely believe. With this assumption, one of the significant contributions of the period of practicing calligraphy is to face training the Chinese calligraphy at the beginner level, which is highly different from Western calligraphy, as well as its understanding of calligraphy as a primary component of the culture. The pointed brush of Chinese calligraphy becomes another material that I mostly employ to practice the gestural calligraphic forms. The first trigger was the research of the Far Eastern calligraphy that is mentioned in Chapter IV, and the other was the Chinese Calligraphy workshop with Jenny Chih-Chieh, the founder of Mellow Sheng -a culture and gastronomy platform with an emphasis on natural and Asian food- making processes, oriental tea culture and Chinese calligraphy that I participated in 2017.

Fig. 23 shows the character spring as an example that is performed with a Chinese brush, in which the first object is learning the use of the brush and executing the basic strokes by following the instructions.

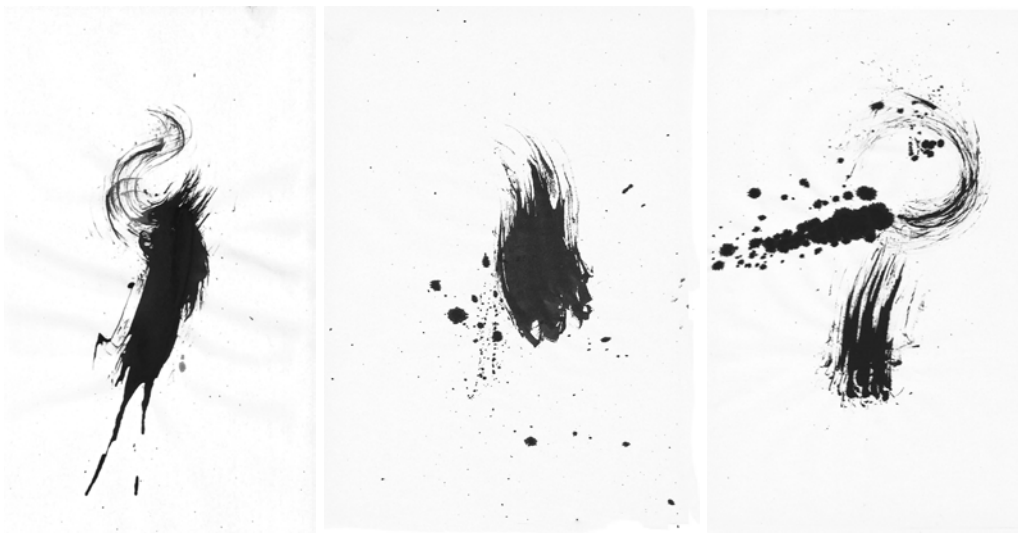


Fig. 23. Various practices of the Chinese character "spring," Almıla Yıldırım, studied in workshop "Introducción de la Caligrafía China with Jenny Chih-Chieh," Barcelona, 2017, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

The material, a Chinese brush, Sumi-ink, and rice paper, and the technique mentioned in Chapter IV are highly different from the western calligrapher tradition. Apart from the differences, the mutual influences are also mentioned that occurred mostly in the nineteenth century, which reflects the works of western painters, particularly abstract expressionists focusing on gestures. Hence, the inspiration for the Chinese calligraphy conceptually and technically is already discussed, which is also observed through the work of Brown, and his abstract calligraphy performances with a brush on snow explained in Chapter VI. Brown is among the calligrapher that also utilized Chinese brush because of its potential as a material that can create a wide range of strokes through its flexibility and the reaction to the moves of the hand.

To remind, one of the series Brown called "Abstract calligraphy" without using a letter, just focusing on the marks and stains of the ink, created with the Chinese brush due to its expressive potential and the possible perception that Chinese calligraphy is a performance. Hence, using a pointed brush like Chinese does become appealing to experiment. All led me to practice and experiment with the pointed brush, Sumi ink, and rice paper, as seen in Fig 24.

Fig. 24. Practices with Chinese brush and Sumi-ink, Almıla, Yıldırım, 2018, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



With this interaction, the material of the Chinese calligraphy, the pointed brush, Sumi-ink, and the rice paper, as mentioned in Chapter IV, become other materials that I occasionally employ to experiment. Various works that will be encountered in the following pages reflect the gestures of the hand through these materials to experiment with the unconventional tools and materials in the Western calligraphy tradition.

Fig. 24 illustrates my various experiments with a Chinese brush, and Sumi-ink consists of various touches of the hand on the paper by allowing the ink's dropping. It is a kind of mark-making practice to understand how the materials react and reflect the exact moves. This practice aims to experiment with the material to discover the potential that can be adopted for later experiences.

That means, it is a kind of practice that is mentioned earlier related to repeating the strokes of letterforms to gain muscle memory with one difference, that is the spontaneity and assessing the writing beyond the literal sense that is mentioned in Chapter II, not setting the boundaries within the speaking language. It lacks a predetermined composition or movement. Instead, it involves constantly repetitive work to follow with small but fast and effective touches to the paper.

The first example of Fig. 24 consists of two touches: the top moves mimicking the circle, and the second is the brutal touch of a downward stroke. The second example is a small slight touch move to the downward, while the third example consists of basically three moves; the contra circle moves on the tip of the brush, upward stroke touch, and the last moves without touching the paper, letting the overloaded ink poured on the page. All are spontaneously written to apprehend and appreciate the simple gesture of the hand with the Chinese brush and Sumi-ink.

Even though they do not reflect any recognizable letter or signs, the focus point is the simple gesture and moves of the brush as an instrument needed to be communicated here because it is the first step, to begin with, material to gain the tactile knowledge about the discipline such as calligraphy which has a craft nature.

Furthermore, with the contemporary attitude, this craft gains a new level that reflects the calligrapher's feelings and emotions of the calligrapher in the eye of the viewer. This can be possible with that gesture underlined repeatedly coming with the artist's touch. That means the scribe becomes an artist who employs gestures mentioned earlier, takes their' root from the Far Eastern culture, and is seen through the works of modern western artists stated earlier, namely Tobey, Motherwell, and Twombly. Their gesture without any particular references mostly points to the abstract concept of the western painting; however, the gesture of the calligraphy here, even if it consists of abstract-like strokes or lines, references come with the convention of western calligraphy.

Also, other calligraphy cultures blended with the background of the calligrapher manifested themselves through the gesture of the calligrapher. Hence, it can be said that here, the gesture is related to the idea of the Far Eastern calligraphy that symbolizes the personal interpretation of the artists that makes the calligraphy piece autonomous and unique rather than a copy.

As stated in Chapter III, western writing and calligraphy evolved around broad-edged tools to achieve an even rhythm and weight within the styles. However, the Far Eastern calligraphy evolved with a pointed brush created on a different weighting system and rhythm that allows variations through the level of pressure of the hand, as mentioned in Chapter IV.

Thus, it can be said that these two materials are quite different from each other. For this reason, a pointed brush becomes alluring for a western calligrapher to experiment with, particularly when the quality

or the character of the strokes and the marks becomes critical to the calligrapher's works, as in the case of my practices that I present in this chapter.

To remind, the quality of the line becomes a significant feature for abstract calligraphy, which depends on how well the delivery of ink depends on how one writes, how it influences the form or composition, and hence how it feels on the surface. All require a certain amount of mastery, knowing the materials and manipulating them that will reveal through the stroke or the line of the calligrapher. This feature is mentioned in Chapter IV in part "4.1.4. Aesthetic Considerations and the Term Beauty of Chinese Calligraphy." For Chinese calligraphy, the quality of the stroke carries various attributions, such as providing knowledge about the calligrapher's personality.

Furthermore, the liveliness of the work comes with the vital energy performed in a one-shot without retouching. The transformation of a symbolic to non-symbolic form, as in abstract stroke, eliminates the calligraphic text's literal functionality. It becomes a medium of self-expression in both calligraphers' and spectators' eyes, as seen in modern art in the West.

On the other hand, looking at contemporary western calligraphy, parallel concepts through eliminating the words and the letters also provide a platform for self-expression through a gesture of the hand, as can be seen in the works of Meulman or Lampas with the ink splashes that he performs as a calligraphic act. With this concept, the quality of the line or a stroke comes to the fore, a determinant or a criterion for evaluating the calligraphic quality of the work in contemporary calligraphy.

Looking at the tradition of western calligraphy, the quality was not a concern in the same sense. Rather than the line or a single stroke, the well-constructed letterforms were the goal achieved to convey the text's message. The mastery of the scribes would be criticized through how many scripts they wrote and how well they copied. Hence, the master of the ancient West could be assessed as a qualified writer to be employed, and the criteria were objective and related to more tangible proofs and the quantitative side, contrary to the contemporary calligraphers, for whom the quality comes with the mastery as well, however, contains more objective and subjective values to be observed. Objectivity comes with the craft nature of the calligraphy, and subjectivity comes with the expanded border, transformed mentality within the realm of calligraphy that heralds the expressiveness, feelings, and emotions that address artistry.

Through these features, it seems western calligraphy enhances its limits and forces us to think or reevaluate our perceptions and understanding of western calligraphy. It also puts it at a different level for the path of achieving the universal line and strokes, in which calligraphy becomes a timeless living entity. That means, as described above, without any readable texts, words, or recognizable letters, the line or a stroke becomes the entity that addresses wider audiences who can observe, interpret or assess the calligraphic work through them and

can appeal to certain senses. It refers to the open border than vernacular values means consisting of the past and presents rather than pointing at any specific time. This feature makes contemporary calligraphy timeless. As one can enjoy Chinese calligraphy without reading it, through the quality of the stroke and assessing them as an image, western calligraphy with only one stroke can be appreciated in the same sense that calling on the audiences to play an active role as well.

As can be seen in Fig. 25, these mentioned issues embodied themselves through various practices, just revealing the stains of the Sumi-ink on the rice papers. Before performing the touches, all three papers were framed and composed as a trilogy, which is planned as compatible images with each other. All reflect the heavily stain formed differently depending on the touch of the Chinese brush on the rice papers, also depending on the pressure and the intensity of meeting with the surface.



Fig. 25. Practices with Chinese brush and Sumi-ink, Almıla Yıldırım, 2020, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

Even without creating a Chinese calligraphy work, employing the pointed nib brush gives the feeling of convergence and transition, as Stevens (2013) claims, helps to "expanding our moves" (2013: 71).



As shown in Fig. 26 with a closer look at the works, the frame limits the gesture, trying to tame the ink that spreads around as if domesticating it. This concept, while representing the gestural interpretation of the calligraphic attitude that comes with all theoretical and practical training, also symbolizes the period of being a mere copyist and gaining space for individual interpretations. Domestication refers to training the hand and gaining muscle memory points at the traditional aspect of western calligraphy still relevant today. Through practice, it arrives at the next step, mostly allowing oneself to be spontaneous as if he is out of control. However, this spontaneity is actually tamed as explained through constant practices of the moves, and letterforms, trying to understand the relationship between the space and forms' interactivity.

Fig. 26. Closer look to the Fig. 25, Almıla Yıldırım, 2020, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



As long as it is labeled as a first step in the realm of calligraphy, as observed in Chapter VI through the works of western contemporary calligraphers, the next step seems to push the boundaries and notions that were attributed to western calligraphy and expand it, even transform the perception of western calligraphy technically, and conceptually. It can be claimed that this issue is manifested itself through the splashes of the gesture of the hand that can be observed on the sides of the white frame. Overall assessment here shows that calligraphy has become an autonomous discipline that can be considered and expanded both technically and conceptually from the point of the calligrapher. It can reflect various references from the past, and the present also heralds the personal understanding that can reach larger audiences who are not supposed to decipher the exact language, but to look and observe, which points to the universal level of assessment within the realm of calligraphy. Hence, while cherishing the vernacular features that comes with the past, calligrapher wants to go

beyond the calligraphic interpretation that will reach broad audiences. These features describe the contemporary tendency that covers the expanded gesture of the hand of the calligrapher.

All these previous interactions and experiences are reflected in my current works as a stepping point technically and practically, by which I started to practice strokes solely, the moves of the hand and the materials, also the combination of the strokes and lines. I realize that practicing traditional calligraphy means practicing all the moves needed to be employed to construct the exact letter style to acquire them as a muscle memory mentioned in Chapter III.

To sum up, this period carries me to face the shifting perspective, a highly crucial and noteworthy period from different levels that will be examined through my personal works.

### **7.3. Calligraphic works created focused on the strokes and texture**

The works discussed in this section are produced with approaches that eliminate the words and letters, focusing on the strokes and the texture with the proximity to the abstract concept of calligraphy after a considerable amount of practice and exploration.

The works will be handled chronologically by considering the creation date, which will also reveal the transformation during the last two years period of research. Technical, visual, and conceptual considerations will be examined with various images.

Here, it should be considered a part of an ongoing and already accumulating, transforming process to evaluate the theoretical and practical knowledge obtained during the doctoral study. It can be considered a beginning to progress as part of the ongoing evaluation rather than a result, which has proximity with the mindset of the Far Eastern calligraphy that is focused on interested in how it is done rather than what is done, focused on the personal development of the calligrapher, interested in his feelings and emotions.

Considering this doctoral research period, these works can be assessed as reflections not just the moment but the passage of time as a continuum manifested itself through my work, and it forms the core of my approach. Even the viewer sees a piece, the effect that is tried to be evoked is a cumulative process of calligraphy. This refers to performing calligraphy emphasizing the process rather than the result. At the same time, the works I produce with the belief that this approach best represents the nature of calligraphy, which basically starts with a single unit stroke and with the contemporary mindset that is examined in Chapter VI, this unit, as in the case of the Far Eastern calligraphy, reveal multiple-meaning through its eclectic structure similar to the postmodern period.

These practices that will be the observed focus on one of the essential units of calligraphy, the stroke mostly, the tactile experience with actual

tools and materials. The letter or any recognizable signs are eliminated to avoid orienting the audience to traditionally read the sign or letter/words. Hence, it can be claimed that these works can be included in the asemic writing/calligraphy or abstract calligraphy genre.

As mentioned earlier, calligraphy training involves mastering the various scripts through copying the models taken from ancient manuscripts to observe and understand the formal construction of the exact script style. Copying needs good observation and learning of the *ductus*, as defined before, as well as the materials and tools to manipulate them appropriately. This mastery process requires constant practice and repetitions of the letters, starting with learning the basic units -strokes- that construct the letterform. Hence, basically, practice means repeating these strokes over and over again. When calligraphers achieve the skill to perform the right form of a letter, their writings are assessed as beautiful in a conventional sense, in which the beauty is based on the well-constructed letterforms that will convey the text's message.

Once again, I reached the point that I literally left behind the meaning of the text by creating unreadable text-like mark-making with the calligraphic background. Because, from the beginning, even though I very first started to practice the ancient writing scripts and traditional western calligraphy mindset, I realized that I focused on the line or stroke solely, rather than the overall appearance of the word or a text. As stated earlier, it also will be seen in Appendix B, in which the courses and workshops that I participated in Spain, France, and Turkey will be held; the first step is to learn the *ductus*, the formulation of the letterform of that ancient style. That starts with the basic stroke, mostly the letter "i," continues with the other letters with learning the vertical, horizontal, and diagonal moves or curves, if they exist; but the main focus is the letter itself, then it becomes the word and the overall text that is needed to be written neatly to be read in that ancient style. However, in my case, focusing on the first stroke, "i" seems to be valid for every move of my hand and reached until today and result to create writing-like gestures or texture, which makes me interested in asemic writing.

However, as mentioned earlier and observed in Chapter VI through the examination of the contemporary western calligraphers' works, calligraphy has evolved into an autonomous art form that cherishes the personal interpretation of the calligrapher and involves feelings and emotions beyond the traditional definition and description of the calligrapher that is mentioned in Chapter II. That means contemporary calligraphers, started with the modern approaches of the nineteenth century mentioned in Chapter III, have begun to search to reveal these personal interpretations through their calligraphic experiments, in which the letter and the word started to be eliminated. The basic reason seems to diminish, even transform the idea of a text that is supposed to be read with the desire to be perceived as something to be looked at as an open work.

All these issues have already been mentioned; however, it is crucial to remind here that my personal works have a share of these features and are shaped through these considerations provided with the earlier investigations of the traditional calligraphy, the Far Eastern and the Middle Eastern calligraphy cultures, also observing the contemporary

attitudes to frame the dynamics and influences behind it, which have proximity with the various modern movements that treated to the written word as an image. Hence, it can be claimed that the elimination of the word or a letter is a situation that takes place in the natural flow of research and stands out with the desire to reflect the personal attitude, which was strictly forbidden in the tradition of calligraphy mentioned in Chapter III.

As I sincerely believe, it is an artistic process that covers reflection as it is explained, "Without reflection art is just making and not responding. Things that are done artfully are not done automatically. This is why artists must reflect. Art without reflection is not quality. Art is not so much about making but more about responding" (Moniko, nd.: 34). This issue led me to think through the time that I practiced calligraphy, which finds its description through the moment that it is performed. Since contemporary calligraphy is practiced as an art form, with the accumulated theoretical and practical knowledge of calligraphy with this doctoral research, the making process, as Moniko (n.d.) mentions, has already begun to form, as well as the response as seen almost all contemporary calligraphers examined in Chapter VI, comes after image, assessed through textural experiences.

It is a process "more unpredictable, complex, perverse, subtle, and intimately associated with the idiosyncratic landscapes of the personal imagination" (McNiff, 1998: 2). As McNiff (1998) states, inspiration and affirmation feed creation rather than direction, which points to his statement, "Travelers through the process of creation also realize that the truly essential spirits are experienced "on the way"" (Ibid.). According to him, the creation process forms with time. It offers transformation, changes through a series of actions, and even fluctuations -as observed through this research, it is divided into four phases. This period may offer the quality of a process, and the notion of this process is meant to be perceived as an opportunity, consisting of a multiplicity of components that also carries a unity within itself that all experiences come together in this creative process which actually knows where to go.

While, as mentioned earlier, planning and methodology may have a significant role in the creation process, as McNiff states, "...the total process of creation is permeated by hidden turns, elusive searches, and subtle appearances" (1998: 3).

In other words, in the time that the calligraphers perform calligraphy, the piece sometimes finds itself through the way as a response of the calligrapher. Response to the stroke that has been done or any other compositional elements may lead the calligrapher to decide how to react or how and where to put the next stroke. Hence, it can be claimed that it is cherished both the spontaneity and the mastery that comes with practice and repetition. All is manifested through my personal attitude through the repeated strokes that are followed by the form learned through the training process, also continued as a reaction to the work.

The process-oriented approach here puts the final products less critical; instead, it puts value on the process without being attached to what the one does. Even blends with chance, this process still consists of planning

the materials and knowing how they react; hence anticipating provides a calligrapher to establish a quality of planned/unplanned gestures and combinations that emerged through the process of creating the calligraphic work. There is no surprise to following the script; instead, delivering the performance through unplanned expressions with spontaneous gestures elevates vitality that is hard to preconceive. Therefore, there is always the beyond with the accumulation over time, and for me, it eliminates the words and letters and focuses on the writing like gestures, lines, and strokes acquired with calligraphy training. No matter how different and radical in a sense it looks, calligraphy remains in new-looking images and actions accompanied by old.

What I offer to the spectator who is looking at my work is not just an image but also an interpretation of the calligraphic-based creation process with the determined dynamics of features of inspirations that may be considered some kind of invention of illusion created through the potential of mark-making that reflect the whole period. This period is already mentioned in the earlier phases of this chapter.

### 7.3.1. The series of *Pen Testing*

As stressed various times, practice and repetition become a kind of ritual of the calligrapher that occurs every day to master the hand and may create a unique style. Before practicing the piece that is created, the calligrapher starts preparing the materials and tools and also warm the hand, the wrist, or in some cases, the whole body depending on the size of the pieces. It is called *probatio penna* of the medieval scribe.

According to the *Native English Web Dictionary* (n.d.), *probatio penna*, in Medieval Latin, also written "probatio penn" literally means *pen test*. The term is used to indicate "breaking in a new pen," and also refers to "text written to test a newly cut pen." A scribe used to test a newly cut pen to control whether it wrote well by drawing a few lines on the piece of paper. This issue provided to chance to dominate the tool as well as gain confidence and competence over time for the ancient scribe, and for the contemporary calligrapher, it increases the awareness of the richness of variations that can be produced with the knowledge of the tool in many ways, which leads the calligrapher to create more spontaneous but at the same time controlled strokes with quality and calligraphic sensibility within the strokes.

It reminds the *siyah mashq* (black writing) of Iran, which refers to the calligraphic exercise pages written by traditional calligraphers in Iran. It also started to practice as an artistic experience by various contemporary calligraphers such as Charles Hossein Zenderoudi, is mentioned in Chapter V. It is also mentioned that the various contemporary western calligraphers' repetition of the strokes on the surface of their calligraphic works takes resemblance with this practices, namely Meulman and his constant repetition of the basic stroke that is employed for the letter "i."

This concept is reflected in my earlier series that I practiced in 2019 called "Pen Testing." Mainly focusing on the moves of the hand, mimicking the strokes engaged through constructing a letter that mainly resembles this warming hand concept that I aim to advance.



The overall composition creates a pattern or texture-like appearance, with a closer look at the detail, as in the case of *siyah mashq* "black writing" (in Arabic, *musawwada* (blackened), in Turkish *karalama* derived from a verbal noun *kara* (black)) a specific practice and exercise of calligraphy, in which calligraphers use all available space on paper that makes paper all black (*kara*) and the overall outcome becomes a visually comparable to abstract art.

In my *Pen Testing* series, even if the aim is not to use all the surfaces as in *siyah mashq*, these practices can be considered closer to the concept of *probatio penna*.

Every stroke piece is thought of individually without planning to write a meaningful text. It can be claimed that, as explained earlier, it may be ranked as an abstract calligraphic work that has proximity with the examples of Lach and her textural calligraphy that is examined in Chapter VI. However, here, the determining feature is not creating a primary textural appearance mimicking nature as Lach does; instead, the emphasis on the primary entity; stroke, and the repetition of strokes within the limitation of the ruling pen allowed depending on its' nib, also how it reacts to the moves/contra moves on the surface.

Apart from the exaggerated touches of the ascender and descender forms, the overall composition is meant to be an everyday practice through the simplicity of the overall look, which also creates contrasting feelings such as elegance with the delicate rice paper and the various gold touches as in the case of illuminated manuscripts. Hence, it can be said that it consists of contra rhythms employed here because the main concern is actually the practice and constant repetition of the forms employing the long sheets of the paper. With practicing, as underlined, the calligrapher gains confidence in the form to act more spontaneously. It provides more freedom and space without focusing on the word's meaning instead of considering the concept visually and conceptually. With these assessments, without referring to any type of text, writing the letter-like forms starts spontaneously and continues depending on the overall consideration of the composition and the feeling of the moves. It is, as Stevens (2013) claims, a sort of "working along the continuum" (2013: 121).

While textural appearance becomes dominant, it is also assumed to open to different readings due to its lack of text or a word. This part allows the viewer to interpret. It states between looking-decoding text constructed to encourage the viewer to consider the new combinations of the strokes with contra moves. It cherishes the viewer, not just as a passive participant but also in the sense of the producer of a text with an open-ended flow.

It reminds Eco (1989)'s notion of "open work," understood as an attempt to comprehend modern artworks, which can be assumed as open by their author/creator and further completed by the viewer/audience/reader also become a performer in this sense, which as mentioned earlier, as related to the contemporary western calligraphy mindset, in which there is no definite message, instead multiple possibilities can be encountered. Hence, this feature may lead to creating a work that takes its motivation from pluralism, which may lead to a kind of chaos, which

can be seen through the compositions; irregular-looking stroke piles, ink spatters, and piles with the thickness and thinness variety within themselves, apart from stroke movements. All also take their place through the series of works that will be seen in the following pages.

As stated, in the arts, "multiple meanings are seen as an asset rather than a weakness" (Rust, 2007: 71), which refers to the multiple interpretations of a calligraphic work here, which the viewer may complete in a sense. These multiple meanings come with an eclectic feature that can be traced through contemporary calligraphy, which takes various references and inspirations, as examined and stated in this doctoral research. Hence, once calligraphy departed from the notion of being a servant of the text<sup>2</sup>, it started to shift the perception depending on every calligrapher themselves, and the more contemporary calligraphers there are, the more different approaches, technical and conceptual evaluations have emerged, which has led to a multitude of meanings.

One of the very first practices of mine with the calligraphy background is illustrated in Fig. 27, to explore the potential of the material -ruling pen, how it reacts to the moves of the hand.

Fig. 27. *Pen Testing Initial*, Almıla Yıldırım, 2019, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



<sup>2</sup> The phrase "servant of the text" has been utilized by scribes because they had an obligation to emphasize clear communication over artistic aspiration. It had been perceived as a mere duty, not just for the calligrapher but also typographer that Johnston stated as a traditional view that assessed the text with its leading role and guided the calligrapher. Moreover, this issue was discussed in a book arts symposium titled "Servi Textus: Servants of the Text," held at Saint John's Abbey and University in Collegeville, Minnesota, in 1996. According to Brown (2017), this commission intends to preserve scriptural values above artistic concerns; however, it also discussed at the same time whether calligraphy should always be a servant of the text (Brown, 2017).

These three practices consist of various strokes made by the ruling pen on paper with a wide range of the width of the strokes, illustrating a visual variation of the same attitude. As mentioned earlier, the ruling pen offers the thinnest and thickest lines depending on the width of the nib, which creates a considerable contrast within the stroke and the composition.

The practice starts with the first stroke, shown in Fig. 28, and advances with an accumulation of the various strokes following one another.



Fig. 28. Starting the first stroke with the ruling pen, Almıla Yıldırım, 2019, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

While the piles, which progress by piling up and are oriented by the relationship of the material with the surface, continue with different hand movements, visual integrity and complementarity are formed among themselves by deciding according to the current situation.

In other words, while there is a somewhat irregular and chaotic structure in their work, the craft part and references that come with traditional education seem to trigger a particular order in themselves. This points to the basic feature of the contemporary calligraphy attitude, as an open to the response of both an artist and an audience.

*Pen Testing 1-2-3* is a triple work that consists of various strokes that are typically employed to construct the letterforms; changes depending on the styles practiced by the ruling pen can be seen in Fig. 29.

Fig. 29. *Pen Testing 1-2-3*, Almıla Yıldırım, 2019, ink and acrylic with ruling pen on paper, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



Each long unit is created with certain holding angles of the ruling pen, which is almost 90 degrees to the surface that allows the various stains around the fast-written strokes due to the fast-meeting of the ink with paper. A heavily loaded tip of the ruling pen allows the ink to spread around the stroke after the rapid movement.

The texture-like writing gesture, written as a series, creates an impression as if it is an ongoing text, and the overall appearance is sufficient to make that impact. It starts with the repetition of familiar, simple repetition of the theme; strokes, and together with gestures and the help of the ruling pen, it becomes an overall texture. Constructed composition, without a letter or a word, only strokes, can be considered as treating the calligraphic writing as an image and the pattern created with stroke, the most basic unit of calligraphy.

Fig. 30 illustrates how the practice begins. It is a highly spontaneous process that is decided at the moment as a performance. Mainly focusing on each stroke first, then considering the relations with each other and the overall appearance, assessing how they interact with



each other and how they locate in the space are features that lead to deciding where and how to put the next stroke. With each stroke and move, their stains can be located in the beginning. However, soon after, as the strokes continue to pile up, it becomes impossible to decipher which stains belong to which stroke or moves. Touches of the ruling pen create a texture-like appearance.



Fig. 30. Beginnig the practice with ruling pen, Almıla Yıldırım, 2019, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

Through Fig. 31, the strokes and stains that occurred and accumulated on the paper closely can be observed.

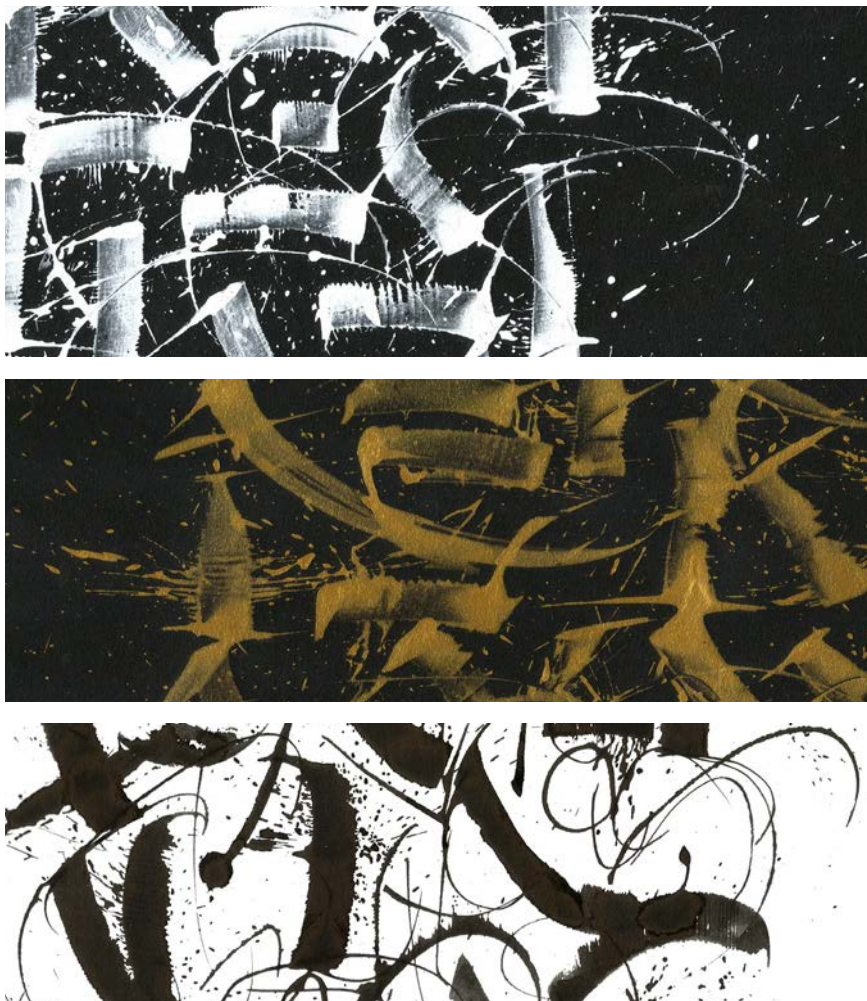


Fig. 31. Details from *Pen Testing 1-2-3*, Almıla Yıldırım, 2019, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



Every stain of ink creates a dust cloud around these stacks of strokes. As Lach (2014) states, the creative potential of calligraphy even manifests itself through these blots or stains, which “become a design element, as long as you let it be” (2014: 186).

In some practices, as in mine here, they even become an essential part of the whole due to the reason to reflect the personal touches of the artists that are individual and unique, as in the attitude of the postmodern graphic designers who cherishes conveying the feelings and emotions through their design that is mentioned earlier. Rather than being considered as a decorative element, these stains attempt to be understood as a natural reflection of the ruling pen here that reacts to my moves and becomes a part of the composition. They also, in a way, provide the opposite support in obtaining a clean stroke, which symbolizes for me that western calligraphy has already transformed into a constantly ongoing process, which means it is far from having a constant rigid perception that the tradition had.

As underlined before, they are born with the hand mine, where errors and accidents are welcome and become a significant feature here. Rather than copying what is written, calligraphic writing became an experience, not an automatic execution in a sense, as in the traditional mindset. It cherishes depending on the attitude of the calligrapher technically and conceptually, reflecting the accumulated knowledge and experience in the realm of calligraphy. as well as the moment of the execution leads us to attribute various aesthetic values on the stroke that indispensable create a sort of feeling in the mind of the viewer.

Moreover, it can be stated that the ruling pen here leads the creative process in various possible directions within the limitations of its physical technicalities, as Nimkulrat (2010) states. However, the material -the ruling pen- has not had the main emphasis here, even if it becomes a significant part of the creation and serves as a material inspiration. Hence, it generates a new kind of knowledge -how the ruling pen reacts to certain hand moves, embedded in the practice here and embodied in these three long sheets of paper.

For this reason, as Nimkulrat (2010) states, understanding the ruling pen and its possible offers means understanding its elements, which comes with this experience that becomes a part of the personal awareness as a calligrapher.

Here, another issue that is needed to be underlined is that when this awareness is achieved, the material becomes something that acts as an extension of the hands and arms that reflects their motions and emotions, as in the case of the Far Eastern calligraphy mindset that is mentioned in Chapter IV.

Risatti (2013) underlines that it relates closely to craft objects and the concept of the hand, handwork, also craft, mentioned earlier, “a skill has traditionally implied” (2013: 51). The ruling pen demands the manipulative skill of the calligrapher to perform and direct by the ability of the hands and arms that control the tool. Here it involves motions and movements, and the work is designed around the sensitivity of the hand that understands how the ruling pen reacts.

As underlined earlier, movement, as a concept, refers to the liveliness of the calligraphic work for Far Eastern calligraphy. A similar attitude can be observed through the contemporary mindset of western calligraphy inspired by this tradition, which was not a concern of the scribe of medieval times.

However, as seen in Chapter VI, contemporary attitude started to build around this concept; movement and motion of the calligraphic work, not just the work itself, but it includes calligraphers as well as an actor in the process of creation. It comes with the assessment of calligraphy as an autonomous art form, and the calligrapher as an artist reflects the personal attitude and understanding of western calligraphy through unique touches of the hand, the line, or a stroke that manifested through the quality within.

Since contemporary calligraphy is mostly practiced as a performance, as seen through the works of Meulman, Lampas, Zega, Dokins, Ingmire, or Brown examined in Chapter VI; also, various analogies have been made with the comparison with the music or dance, as seen in Chinese calligraphy, also as in the examples of Zega, it is inevitable to consider the movement or motion of calligraphy. Hence, it can be claimed that the motion and movement/liveliness of calligraphy comes from both a physical sense and a conceptual sense that can be sensed and observed through the visual interpretation of the work and also through the attitude of the calligrapher.

For me, as well, as underlined earlier, one of the very first trigger points were to be involved in the process, which means understanding the roots and fundamentals, also the evolution and transformation of the calligraphy visually and conceptually, furthermore reflecting these transformations by practicing with the materials -such as ruling pen as in these practices- which provide to experiment all this concept.

On the other hand, the color selection -gold ink on black paper, white acrylic paint on black paper, and black ink on white paper is made on purpose considering the visual contrast to provide these stains more visible within and out of the texture appearance. As mentioned earlier in Chapters III, IV, and V, the color -particularly gold has symbolic meanings that are related to various values depending on the belief systems, such as richness, wisdom, light, or God, hence mostly employed while writing a manuscript to emphasize or underline these values.

However, here, my choice of colors only related to the visual experiment to see the effect that appears on the surface. Also, even if the attitudes are the same, the color changes create a different visual interaction with the material and surface with the aim of the experiment. However, it does not hurt to think that it is a reference to the use of the color gold in the past, for it is inevitable that it is quite interesting as a subject and that I acquired it as knowledge and used the color gold while working in traditional calligraphy, triggering my desire to use gold in my works in these current practices of mine.

As stated earlier, even it consists of the repetition of the same strokes, and repeated gestures emanate various qualities every time written.

It is like it regenerates every time, on every different surface with different colors as in these three pieces, a new creation.

Long hanging stroll-like paper manifests the long, arduous practices of calligraphy and the repetitions of the forms, following the ductus of the letter repeatedly until catching the desired form. As McNiff (1998) states, the one that opens oneself to the process as a free playing in personal artistic expression, even with the same beginning, the process will help the artist to generate endless varieties in compositions. The artistic expression covers here both the craft/tactile knowledge and theoretical knowledge about the western tradition of calligraphy; also to locate it better, being aware of the other dominant calligraphy cultures, such as the Far Eastern and Middle East calligraphy, as this doctoral research covers all these parts.

Apart from that, artistry in calligraphy requires spontaneity while practicing calligraphy to welcome the various possible opportunities of the calligraphic performance, which is observed through the statement of contemporary calligraphers, who define calligraphy by describing these features.

On the other hand, Escande (2019) explains, "In the structure of this long horizontal scroll, the viewer feels a circular continuity from right to left, which gives breath to the painting; it is the effect of the lines of force that mark the rhythm of the composition. From that point of view, in works built in width, like this one, the formal elements tend to develop horizontally, giving a sense of stability ..." (2019: para. 6).

Here, the contra moves tent to break this stability of the texture, which is observed particularly in *textura quadrata* -one of the gothic hands. The text written by it has a compact woven-like textural appearance. Even if the text turns upside down, the appearance of the text changes little. That means its textural appearance creates an intricate image that makes it difficult to decipher. This may be assessed as one of the most compact and, in this sense, stabile ancient hand lack curves. This feature may make it considered monotonous, which is desired to change with spontaneity within the contemporary calligraphy, which provides the breath as in the painting that Escande (2019) mentions. In other words, the rhythm of calligraphy, both within the stroke or the overall composition, is closely related to this stability.

The calligraphy here in this ongoing hanging rolls turns into an action that consists of a captured privileged moment which makes it captured as a whole event through this strategy. Repetition of movements as if repetition of that privileged moment emancipates that repeated images and forms, but still, every movement counts and carries the trace of calligrapher's hand. It also lets us transcend the anonymity rather than witness collective calligraphic rituals and collective memories, thus evokes the personal memory -in this case, my personal memory that is explained in part "7.1. Earlier Proximity to Western Calligraphy."

With this assumption, these three hanging rolls of paper, with the repetition of familiar rhythms, different variations through repetitions are generated. This notion of repetition also comes from the nature of

the calligraphy -also tradition, which requires practice, repetition of the strokes, the ductus, the construction of the letterforms, and the text to acquire the skill.

Here, accumulated practical and technical knowledge of calligraphy becomes highly significant for this process to act responsively during the creation. With the internalization of this calligraphic knowledge, my works presented in this phase represent these unplanned gestures in the search for expression. Actually, it is not an invention; instead, it can be said that it is searching for the authentic and sincere expression that one can liberate personal perception of calligraphy.

In this triple work, the familiar unit, the stroke becomes unfamiliar, detached from the letter or any kind of text that conveys the literal meaning of the word in order to see western calligraphy and writing with as minor pre-perception -western bias- as possible.

As Brown (2017) asks, "Where is my comfort zone between control and fluency?" (2017: 107), or "How far am I prepared to go beyond that zone and try a less comfortable method?" (Ibid.). This statement remains the chaos and order theme mentioned as the feature of the postmodern works, also underlined by various contemporary calligraphers such as Meulman. The comfort zone comes with the domination of the material and hands -which means tactile knowledge- and the chaos comes when the calligrapher starts to think about going beyond this comfort zone.

This triple experience can be assessed as stepping outside of the comfort zone, and in my case, it can be stated that I never became entirely comfortable copying the master's hand that is mentioned in the second phase while practicing them in the courses or workshops, also manipulating the material as I emulate their approaches. Because from the beginning, my personal aim is to interrogate the western perception of writing and letters -serving as a functional, neutral entity; for this reason, I always try to focus on the fundamental features -lines or strokes- to appreciate their potential through different levels of communication. It reaches the issue that Stevens (2013) underlines by using the letter or a text as a springboard to experiment and see the beyond.

In my own work that is presented here, also it is evident to be detected the influences of this mindset, such as focusing on the process/the continuum/the period as a calligrapher rather than the result, assessing calligraphy as a form of a living entity that is manifested itself through this period help to mature as an artist, moreover, attributed various values, emotions even categorizing the overall work or a piece of stroke through the sensation that evokes.

Hence, it can be said that the mindset and how calligraphy, primarily writing, is assessed as an art form in the Far Eastern culture become values that are adapted for my own personal attitude toward contemporary western calligraphy, and it can be said that the major reason for it; the inquires about writing, as seen in the graphic design and typography, while designers started to create something beyond the literal meaning of the letters, calligraphy still mostly understood as a functional, beautiful entity of the past.

*Pen Testing 4-5* are practiced with a similar attitude to the earlier triple work -repetition of the strokes as practicing the basic unit of calligraphy; stroke (Fig. 32), thought as visually complementary works that are hung together because the attitude is similar and it is thought that the colors were chosen as white and black and the reverse application complement each other. Even if they have a similar approach or even the same movements, each uniqueness and its richness as line and stroke has been tried to be revealed.

Fig. 32. *Pen Testing 4-5*, acrylic with brush, Almıla Yıldırım, 2019, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.







While one is practiced by the broad-edged brush with black and gold acrylic paint on the white scroll paper, the other is practiced by again the broad-edged brush with white and gold acrylic paint on black scroll paper. The reason to experience a brush is to utilize its flexibility as a material through various smooth turns on the contrast of the ruling pen, as explained in part entitled "7.2. Choosing the materials for the personal practices."

Moreover, Stevens (2013) explains brushed marks as "that speaks of speed, urgency, excitement and humanity," and he adds, "Brushed strokes also suggest individuality, nonconformity, and freedom" (2013: 231). He claims brush strokes can potentially communicate a level of information/emotion. With the same belief, after experiencing the ruling pen and its stiff, metal nib, experimenting with a brush is the next step to reflect through the work here.

Fig. 33 illustrates how it begins to practice with the broad-edge brush. Here, primarily the moves of the brushes are based on the moves made while practicing the Roman Capital letters with exaggerated moves, such as elongated tails. I learned these moves and manipulations during the courses mentioned in Appendix B, also stated in part "7.2. Choosing the materials for the personal practices."

Fig. 33. Beginning the practice with broad-edge brush with acrylic, Almıla Yıldırım, 2019, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



The acrylic paint with a specific density provides a chance to create a gradient within the stroke, which also gives a chance to observe each hair. Even within one stroke, these tonalities can vary depending on the quantity of paint on the brush and the hand's pressure. This attitude also has similarities with the traditional Chinese calligraphy or ink-wash brush, which can produce a range of expressive qualities through a single brushstroke of black ink that can reveal a wide variety of shades and tonalities of color expression (Shusterman, 2017). It also reminds various practices of Meulman that emphasize the brush stroke literally.

Fig. 34 shows one of the detailed parts of the piece. Apart from the broad-edge brush, the pointed brush is employed here. So, here basically

combining the tools and letting them reveal their own physical properties; as Lach (2014) states, it is believed that it is an opportunity to create a piece with the potential for interesting variations, as observed. These variations are also strengthened with the gold color on the black surface and white brush traces. Hence, these multiple usages of the brush are chosen to create a contrast between opposites of the forms, such as large-small, thin-thick, narrow-broad, and weak-strong. It is, as stressed, a way of creating strong accents that can be added with a comprehensive tool and for a more delicate feel with a pointed nib or fine line felt tip (Lach, 2014).



Fig. 34. The detail from *Pen Testing 5*, Almıla Yıldırım, 2019, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

This textural appearance and disappearance here break the strong contrast between the black and white contrast, and the gold paint provides a kind of balance located at the heart of the textural woven composition. Once again, the gold is not used for the direct reference to the concept of the gold that is used in an ancient manuscript. Instead, all services for the compositional compatibility as plastic units. As the triple practices mentioned earlier, these two works, through focusing on the strokes and their accumulation, form the main point of these pieces. The issue becomes when to finish the piece while giving significance to the process.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter about the skill, accumulated theoretical and practical knowledge through craft education, the process becomes noteworthy. It transforms something that needs to be trusted through accumulated technical and practical knowledge and skill, which is about initiation, as well as responsiveness in creation.

McNiff states, "Trusting the process is based on a belief that something valuable will emerge when we step into the unknown" (McNiff, 1998: 27), underlines "flexibility" and "the ability to change direction" (Ibid.). With this consideration, all the moves and strokes are decisions taken as a part of the process. With the awareness of this process, mistakes, accidents, and even failures may be assessed as significant contributions to this creative process. According to McNiff (1998), one can only learn how to cooperate with this process with practice.

Hence, allowing the materials and unplanned gestures may lead the artists and herald successful expressions. That means artists do not have to know how he goes at the beginning of the creative act (McNiff, 1998). Actually, this assumption is not significant to use the term errors since there are no errors; only unpleasant strokes or accidents may occur. As stated earlier, there is no retouch in calligraphy; hence, with each stroke, the next moves may vary or become something that is needed to be reconsidered by calligraphy before putting the hand on the surface.

McNiff (1998) summarizes this issue with this statement: "I try to leave things fluid, and I have learned how easy it is to overwork a painting and arrest its free movement and "striking power" with stiffness or excessive effort. Therefore, I tend to stop as soon as the picture is able to stand on its own and as soon as it suggests the first sense of completeness" (1998: 202). He stresses that a decision to stop becomes something like a biological activity, such as eating or drinking. He claims one can sense when to stop through practice, which leads the artist's judgment to advance instinctively. A similar point is mentioned earlier about gaining muscle memory, which comes with repetition and practice of the strokes, the letter construction, and the text to learn the style, which is also gained as muscle memory and becomes something that calligraphers can perform without thinking. In other words, where to put the next stroke and when to stop are two crucial points learned/sensed through time.

Hence, here in these works, it can be said that one move leads to another, and the outcome is formed as a chain of expression that is hardly difficult to plan in advance as a creative process. Being present during this creation process is one of the crucial and essential points of these practices. It starts with small openings and turns into the calligraphic event that manifests the nature of calligraphy as a craft, cherishing the tradition. It is also an open-ended work that leads to various interpretations from the viewer's perspective by detaching itself from the western perception of calligraphy and writing.

Fig. 35 illustrates two works created with a concept and attitude parallel to the previous examples. A broad-edged brush with a wider tip is preferred for both of these works to further increase the contrast through the width of the brushes. Then, the ruling pen and pointed brush are employed to leave textual marks for small details.





Fig. 35. *Pen Testing 6-7*, acrylic and brush, Almıla Yıldırım, 2019, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



Here, it should be noted that, as in the case of earlier works, the textural appearance takes higher importance since the contrast is extended. They move away from the image of a single flowing text, as observed in previous examples, and begin to take on the appearance of a more dominant stain on their own rather than parts of a whole formed with a similar rhythm.

The first drawback that comes to mind may be that it moves away from the text image, that an already abstract approach goes to even more extreme points and turns into a blotchy image, and its connection with the text is further broken. However, with the calligraphic background and writing-like gestures that are employed here, like the rest of the works presented in this chapter, as Stevens (2013) and Brown (2017) through their practices and statements, also Mediavilla (1996) and his detections about the calligraphy and abstract painting, it is believed that this drawback becomes something positive to discuss and interrogate here.

Fig. 36 illustrates the steps of the work of *Pen Testing 6*.

Fig. 36. The process of writing *Pen Testing 6*, Almıla Yıldırım, 2019, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



The process proceeds the same for the other work. For this reason, it is deemed appropriate to detail only one study. It starts with practicing the moves of the brush loaded with thick black acrylic; after the overall piece is completed with it, the details are created with the ruling pen loaded with gold paint.

While the ruling pen allows us to obtain stroke with a different feature, besides the limited but delicate details that the thick brush allows in itself, the integration with different materials -a kind of east and west synthesis, which Stevens (2013) called hybrid, has been tried to be given in the studies here. It is also underlined the eclectic nature of contemporary calligraphy of the desire to experiment with various materials separately, or as in this case, on the same work, which heralds various different possibilities to discover for calligrapher comes with the postmodern mindset.

As a reminder, while each stroke building on one another forms the composition, as McNiff (1998) states, "the empty space calls for attention" (1998: 200).

I start with the top of the paper as if writing a page and build open forms with strokes that progressively cover the entire paper. As the strokes appear on the surface, calligraphic accumulated technical and practical knowledge offers the intuitive critique that informs me where to stop and when to move on to another or which line/stroke is left alone. This issue is described by McNiff (1998) as follows:

The process of making art is a mode of critical thinking that is kinesthetic, tactile, and visual. Decisions are "part of the process" and imbued in every gesture and its relationship to what went before it and what will ensue. The critical judgments of the creator tend to more improvisational than strategic. The process is an impromptu performance in which the creator receives direction from the material. Critical thinking in the arts is always a process of "sensing" what needs to be done. (McNiff, 1998: 200)

As stated here, the process consists of kinesthetic, which refers to the awareness of the artist about the position and movement of the body parts by means of sensory organs in the muscles and joints, also tactile that is mentioned earlier for calligraphy that carries it in its nature; also, a visual feature that is included to critical thinking of the calligrapher.

All decisions made during the process are assessed as a part of the process and can be thought of as a judgment of the calligrapher, whose intention is to create more spontaneously.

During this process, the material, as mentioned, informs the calligrapher and is actively involved in the decision-making process, which is assessed by McNiff (1998) as an experience, "responding," and "initiating intelligence" (1998: 201) that means while these materials maintain their existing qualities, the artist finds a way to creating something new through them.

Fig. 37 shows fragments from the two works mentioned above. While on the left, for *Pen Testing 6*, the white paper, black, and gold acrylic paint are selected; Fig. 38 for *Pen Testing 7*, white acrylic on black paper is employed. Once again, the contrast is intended to be created through the colors and the width of the materials, as can be observed here.

Fig. 37. Details of *Pen Testing 6*, Almıla Yıldırım, 2019, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.







Fig. 38. Details of *Pen Testing 7*, Almıla Yıldırım, 2019, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

In order to capture the detail within the strokes, it is intended to use highly thick paint so that the details that will emerge with each stroke can be observed created by the brush's hair. This appearance also supports the movement of the hand and the brush, hence highlighting the calligraphy as an act. The calligraphic work preserves all the action of the calligrapher as explained through the continuum and the period that is inspired chiefly by the Far Eastern calligraphy understanding.

Figs 39 and 40 illustrate similar practices with parallel concepts and understanding of western contemporary calligraphy with previous ones. Hence, it will be encountered here with the focused work on stroke and the overall composition of the strokes considering the tactile and theoretical knowledge blended with accumulated acquired calligraphic sensibility reflected on the long sheets of paper.

Fig. 39. *Pen Testing 8*, Almıla Yıldırım, walnut ink, acrylic, coffee, colorante and gold leaf, 2019, Foto. Credit: Almıla Yıldırım.







Fig. 40. *Pen Testing 9*, Almıla Yıldırım, walnut ink, acrylic, coffee, colorante and gold leaf, 2019, Foto. Credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

It is the act of "organizing the marks," as Stevens (2013) uses the term for describing calligraphy, needed to be "well made, and organized, the natural harmony vibrate" (2013: 100). This statement has its proximity to my understanding of calligraphy and also frames well my works that are presented in this chapter, as in *Pen Testing 8-9*.

As Stevens (2013) describes, this process becomes like playing and experimenting without expectations, and predetermined outcomes, which lead to new things, and some can be valued within themselves. "You don't make it happen, you let it happen" (2013: 46); just while working, trying to find and maintain the balance between the expected with unexpected outcomes becomes crucial here.

Hence, it can be claimed that "beauty" or quality in calligraphic work as a term evolves as a balance in the calligraphic action of a calligrapher, as a goal that can be acquired with time and practice.

Here, basically employing the same material, these two works changes in size for no particular reason. These are assessed as experiences and experiments with material, performing on the surface with a different material than before, which are walnut ink, coffee, *colorante* and gold leaves.

Walnut is a tree food that has been recognized as one of the oldest tree food, dating back to about 7000 BC, and the juice of walnut husk has been used extensively as a dye. In the Middle Ages, it was one of the first skills that medieval scribes learned to prepare their ink and paint, and it is claimed that walnut was used by scribes in the Middle Ages for a multitude of purposes (Nevell, 2012).

On the other hand, walnut is the ink that we mostly preferred during the courses and workshops in Spain and France, but not in Turkey; it is not easy to obtain as a pigment since it is not very common to use for practicing. Their pigments are relatively cheap than manufactured ones, which -I should state here as a personal observation- are mostly preferred in Turkey.

Moreover, with the suggestion of Oriol Miró and Keith Adams -calligraphers that are mentioned in Appendix B through the courses and workshops that I participated in, we also commonly apply coffee as a retouch on the wet stroke written by walnut ink, just for the create the transition through the color of sepia walnut tones as decoration purposes.

Fig. 41 shows the technical steps of the process to create *Pen Testing 8* and *Pen Testing 9*. It starts with the building of the strokes, beginning with the top of the paper by loaded brush with walnut ink. While the paint is still wet, the next step is touching the coffee on the wet part of the walnut to create a striking blend through the sepia tones. After coffee, the vivid color of *colorante*, which is yellow, the stroke is completed.

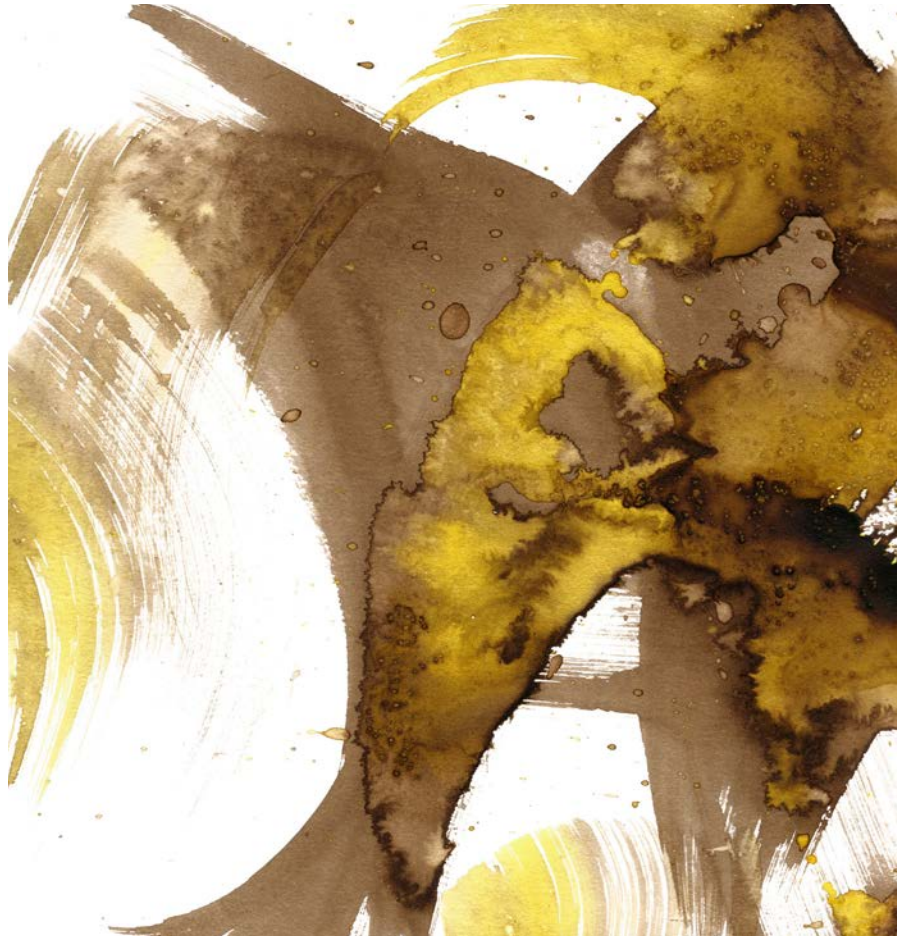


Fig. 41. The process of writing *Pen Testing 8-9*, Almıla Yıldırım, 2019, Foto. Credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



Fig. 42 shows the close-up image taken from *Pen Testing 8*. It can be observed the energetic moves within the strokes created with the coffee and colorante as a field of activity, at the same time a repository that is heightened the sense of expression in a way.

Fig. 42. Details from *Pen Testing 8*, Almıla Yıldırım, 2019, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



When evaluated in terms of the works here, the choice of color also means allowing a transformation that completely complements each other in a way and allows a transitional stage within the stroke itself. The walnut ink -even its translucent nature- does not allow stroke layers here, as in the previous acrylic paint, because the brushes are overloaded with ink, and even small touches of the brush create a wet bulk on the paper. While a detailed hairy image can be observed in previous practices created with acrylic paint in which even the bristles of the brush can be observed, this detail and formation have been tried to be achieved by the interaction of colors for the works in a sense. These sepia tones that are created remind the old manuscript pages and give a sense of old nostalgia with this reference.

On the other hand, the final touch is made with gold leaves, except for the stroke work created with color transitions. Gold as a color, pigment, or leaves, as mentioned in Chapter III, is employed for illuminated manuscripts, assessed as the page's lightning. The other reasons are explained in relation to the light in Chapter III again. Here, in my work,



as final touches, gold leaves are applied highly spontaneously with the intuitive decisions expressed above through the statement of McNiff (1998) as a compensatory element. However, it can be claimed that the appearance of the gold leaves on the paper, created with the walnut-coffee-colorante trio in performance, seems to evoke a sense of contrast with the sepia tones, which evoke the old.

Fig. 43 is a work entitled *Pen Testing 10*, practiced with a similar attitude to the works observed in *Pen Testing 4-5*, in which the basic units are strokes created by the broad edge brush employed for the Roman Capitals. The basic moves that are followed here also come with the inspiration of the manipulation technique of the brush while writing the Roman Capitals, as stated earlier.



Fig. 43. *Pen Testing 10*, Almıla Yıldırım, acrylic and brush on handmade paper, 2019, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

Apart from the broad edge brush, another noteworthy material here is the handmade paper, which has a highly thick texture on the surface that can be assessed as challenging due to the possibility of breaking the fluidity of the brush. The reason to employ handmade paper is to emphasize the tactile nature of the calligraphy and also make it enriches the textual appearance of the intricate moves of the brush within through the possible created texture by the hair. Due to the heavy texture of the paper, the paint is needed to be thick acrylic paint to avoid causing uncontrolled absorption of a highly fluid dye such as ink. When the paint is finished on the hair of the brush, it creates a dry brush effect that makes the stroke disappear.

Another different attitude here is using the horizontal composition instead of the vertical. The main reason is to consider the composition horizontally this time through observing the moves and overall compositions created as a reaction of each unit of the strokes.

The gold is once again employed for visually appealing and also creates a kind of contrast on the surface of the primitivity of the handmade paper. Furthermore, it mimics the moves done by the black paint to create a dimension and emphasis in which the part starts to diminish itself from the lower part of the composition.



By primitivity, I refer to the paper's highly rough surface that creates a challenge for the calligrapher. Because, the rough surface of the paper resists the material. With the move of the hand, whether it is a contra move or not, a sort of chaos is created on the surface depending on the type of tools and materials. As seen in the earlier example (Figs. 27 and 28), if it is the ruling pen with ink on the hand-made paper, the moves will create ink splashes which become a part of the overall composition. Or, as in the case of Fig. 41, when the material is the brush, the texture will appear within the stroke. It is even possible to see the trace of the hair of the brush depending on the thickness of the paint. These features even seem details become a significant part of the practices that give the viewer a more tangible experience through the visual appearance. It is important feeling for me to convey the viewer in order to underline the action aspect of calligraphy practices, in which I personally involved and focus on how rather than what.

Presenting the work without a frame also emphasizes primitivity; on the other hand, it is believed that it increases the tactile experience of the audience who observe the work with the sense of a kind of accessibility. This is another significant feeling I want to create as a contemporary western calligrapher intended to transfer to the audience. Only one size of broad edge brush is used, contrary to the earlier example above. That means the hierarchy between the thick and thin strokes is not that dramatic; however, the intensity of the integrated strokes with highly exaggerated up and down strokes with curves create a considerable rhythm within the composition that is believed as appropriate for this surface.

Another vertical design, Fig. 44, is written with a broad edge brush on rice paper with the same attitude as earlier works. It is used the same size as the brush tip, thinner than the earlier example mentioned above. The thickness of the brush once again gives a chance to observe the hair texture of the brush and also creates a fading effect within the strokes that provide a visual dimension to work. This feature can be likened to the Far Eastern calligraphy mindset in which the ink is diluted. Depending on the pressure and the movement, it creates a wide range of black colors. It is believed to reveal the richness of the strokes and the hand of the calligrapher, which is related to the postmodern idea of diversity and pluralism that refer to each practice's uniqueness and authentic feature. For this reason, the hand of the calligrapher becomes a vehicle to convey the moment; also, the accumulated time period consists of all practical, technical and theoretical knowledge acquired during the calligraphic training.



Fig. 44. *Pen Testing 11*, Almıla Yıldırım, acrylic by brush, gold leaf on indian paper, 2019, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

As can be observed, the degradation also creates a kind of motion in a sense that points to the rhythm feature of the calligraphy, which is basically tried to achieve through the variations of the strokes and moves of the hand. The motion points to the idea of the calligraphic experience that consists of a time period as a continuum that is mentioned earlier in Chapter VI through the works of Zega, who fuses her calligraphy with dance, basically emphasizing the rhythm and motion of the calligraphic practices; the moving hand, arm, body, even mind alluded to music and dance as in the Far Eastern mentality.

Another significant issue comes with the overall observation of the composition, which is highly intricate with exaggerated moves, creating a compact image that seems to be executed as if it is organized or preplanned due to the reason that there are fewer overlapping strokes, almost all seem to find their own place on the surface like filling the blanks. With this attitude, the overall composition likens to decorative practices of the Middle Eastern calligraphy, particularly the Kufic script that one of the earlier scripts used in architecture, carved on stone or wrought into tile mosaics, as mentioned in Chapter V.

Here, once again, the gold leaves are employed as the last touches that are seemingly carelessly left. I realized that no matter how sloppy or primitive of the work is, the effect of gold is on the page; when applied by painting or with gold leaves, it creates a contrasting situation and manages to evoke feelings of luster, attention, richness, and lightness that come with gold in the eye of the beholder.

A similar gold leaves application can be observed in Fig. 45, *Pen Testing 12*, written by broad edge brush as an example above. This time, different sizes of brushes are employed, as seen in the work. The paper is handmade with a heavy texture that can be seen in Fig. 46. For this reason, the paint used here is thick to prevent the high absorption of the paper, as explained before. This heavy texture once again causes the visibility of the hair of the brush also the degradation of the color that gives dimension to work. Here, the composition is written on one piece of paper with actual letters, such as the letter o and the letter "i," the various moves are more recognizable, added with a diamond shape that is belonged to the Gothic hand mentioned in Chapter III. After performing the piece, I decided to cut it into three pieces and mount it as separate three pieces at a considerable distance. The separation makes it challenging to recognize the moves or the letters; however, the trained eye can easily recognize them. The reason to act like this is solely to experiment and to see the result's visual appearance. The division seems to be related to assessing each stroke individually, which may be understood as the destruction of the letter.



Fig. 45. *Pen Testing 12*, Almıla Yıldırım, acrylic with brush, gold leaf on handmade paper, 2019, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

However, as stated earlier, the stroke, as a basic unit of calligraphy, calligraphy training, and practice, is also a significant core piece of the letterforms, here, appreciated as fundamental of the calligraphy, even in this piece of calligraphy itself, rather than disassembling, smashing or deconstructing the letter. Because in the first place, I appreciated western calligraphy with its potential that is not dependent on the boundaries of the language or any kind of semantic text written by the phonetic alphabet, as mentioned in Chapter II. Hence, all these experiences aim to reflect this perception and interpretation of the calligraphy, which can be assessed as one of the main features of the contemporary concept in western calligraphy.



Fig. 46 is another example created as a one-piece by using the broad edge brush with thick paint on the handmade paper. The visual effect is highly similar to the earlier examples mentioned above due to the same materials and techniques employed. The main difference is the total composition, which is also created as a reflection-in-action; as mentioned earlier, the work actually happened when I practiced. In other words, I decided on the next moves after finishing earlier. It is a process highly dependent on eye and hand training, which I started to gain in my bachelor years in the Faculty of Fine Arts at Hacettepe University, Ankara, Turkey; however, particularly during the period of my doctoral research with technical and practical practices, also the tactile knowledge helped to decide how to react while I am on the surface.

Fig. 46. *Pen Testing 13*, Almıla Yıldırım, acrylic by brush on handmade paper, 2019, Foto. Credit: Almıla Yıldırım.





Here, in *Pen Testing 13*, the background is written by the vast broad edge brush with a small amount of loaded thick acrylic paint, which leads to an enormous texture of the hair of the brush. The detailed look can be seen in Fig. 47.



Fig. 47. Details from *Pen Testing 13*, Almıla Yıldırım, 2019, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

Other black moves of the smaller broad edge brush follow the same path in a vertical position, and the last touch is made by the gold acrylic, which can be said to stand out and make the work visually brighter in a way. Even though all strokes technically overlap each other, the texture and the dry technique provide to capture all strokes, which avoids the chaos while actually creating chaos with its accumulated and eclectic features.

As a last piece of the *Pen Testing Series*, Fig. 48 shows twin couple of exercises written with the same attitude -one size broad edge brush with heavy acrylic black and gold paint on the heavily textured handmade paper.



Fig. 48. *Pen Testing 14-15*, Almıla Yıldırım, acrylic with brush on handmade paper, 2019, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

These two pieces are not identical in the sense of moves; however, the concept and the techniques are the same; hence they are like twins in a sense. In both pieces, strokes are determined while practicing, starting with the black as a background; then, the gold layer is added, giving movement and dimension with the same attitude.

To sum up, in this series, the various compositions are experimented with a broad edge brush and the ruling pen, focusing on the strokes and their compositions. The approach is basically the same, although the different materials and combinations vary from situation to situation. For example, while the dry technique is used in hand-made papers, fabricated ones allow the use of dyes with a more liquid concentration since the resistance of the surface is more robust. However, the diluted pigment ink is difficult to load to the brush, and it requires quick moves; otherwise, it can create a mass and cause various accidents batch that appears unintentionally. Sometimes these kinds of accidents may create a desired visual appeal, sometimes not.

*Online Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines the term *accident* as "(1) an unforeseen and unplanned event or circumstance, lack of intention or necessity," "(2) an unfortunate event resulting especially from carelessness or ignorance," "(3) a nonessential property or quality of an entity or circumstance" (Ibid.). Moreover, it defines *error* as "(1) an act or condition of ignorant or imprudent deviation from a code of behavior, an act involving an unintentional deviation from truth or accuracy, an act that through ignorance, deficiency, or accident departs from or fails to achieve what should be done, a mistake in the proceedings of a court of record in matters of law or of fact," "(2) the quality or state of erring, *Christian Science*: illusion about the nature of reality that is the cause of human suffering: the contradiction of truth, an instance of false belief," "(3) something produced by mistake," "(4) the difference between an observed or calculated value and a true value, *specifically*: variation in measurements, calculations, or observations of a quantity due to mistakes or to uncontrollable factors, the amount of deviation from a standard or specification," "(5) a deficiency or imperfection in structure or function" (Ibid.). So, as stated earlier in part "7.3.1. The Series of *Pen Testing*" the main issue here is being aware of the process and the deliberate ink blow; even if seen as an error from a conventional perspective, it is assessed as a part of the process, not to be assumed as errors or mistakes, on the contrary, they are appreciated in a sense as a part of the process and considered their possible contribution to the work as McNiff (1998) states. Also, as mentioned earlier, to remind the statements of Turner:

Throughout history the blot has been the rawest and most blatant expression of artistic debates about interpretation. If all art is, in one way or another, "seeing things", and if all art criticism is interpretation –or, as Susan Sontag says, against it– then blots and stains and graphic accidents are, as Alberti suggested, the basis of all art. The meaningless stain, which invites the universal urge to project meaning, is the humble stage on which all arguments about art are rehearsed. (Turner, 2011: para. 21)

Hence, with these practices of the *Pen Testing* series, it is aimed to reflect the understanding and perception of my personal calligraphy, which is an art form based on lines, strokes, and their organization, then blots and stains or any kind of so-called accidents are part of

this art form. By eliminating the letters, words, or readable text, instead of focusing on these bases of calligraphy, the stain ceases to be meaningless or completely abstract. Instead, this mindset transforms calligraphy into a universal stage, and, in a way, it can also eliminate the east-west dichotomy. As presented in this chapter, the unique thing that exists becomes calligraphic quality and sensibility gained through the long and arduous period.

After creating this series, in 2020 and 2021, I practiced intensely with the pointed brush of the Chinese calligraphy and the Sumi-ink, mostly for the sake of discovery and the visual and conceptual possibilities with the background I have gained, technically and theoretically, so far. For this reason, it would be appropriate the mention in the following pages another series that I studied and called "Moments and Periods."

### **7.3.2. The series of Moments and Periods**

In this part, the works presented here are called "Moments and Periods," the second series of works created in 2021. The title of this series comes with the nature of the calligraphy, which is assessed as accumulated technical, theoretical, and practical knowledge that points to the period that needs to be utilized to mastery.

This period for me started with the first earlier proximity mentioned in part "7.1. Earlier Proximity to Western Calligraphy" continues up until now as an ongoing journey in the realm of calligraphy, from the traditional to the contemporary.

Furthermore, it has to be stated that the concept is to capture the moment, which also reflects the period. It basically defines what calligraphy is from my point of view, particularly where it arrives through contemporary interpretations, reassessing and interrogating various perceptions, definitions, or descriptions of western writing and calligraphy examined in Chapter II and Chapter III.

The period consists of moments of the calligrapher, who acquires the calligraphic skill over a considerable amount of time. As repeated earlier, it signifies the accumulated nature of the calligraphy, whether it is conventional or contemporary.

It is a moment that seems to have proximity to the term called "decisive moment" by the photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson<sup>3</sup> (1908-2004). It is the moment that occurs, in a real-life scene, spontaneously and briefly, when people's visual and psychological elements get together in a way that reflects the essence of that situation.

Suler (n.d.) states that it is the unique purpose of some photographers who mention decisive moments with similar ideas about capturing the essence of this moment to describe their work. Although it is claimed

<sup>3</sup> Cartier-Bresson, a founder of modern photojournalism, published his first photobook under the name *The Decisive Moment* in 1952, which consists of a collection of his images, proposed "decisive moment" as a concept. In 1952 Cartier-Bresson published *Images à la Sauvette*, which roughly translates as "images on the run" or "stolen images," and Cartier-Bresson states, "There is nothing in this world that does not have a decisive moment" (Suler, n.d.: para. 6).

to be a controversial<sup>4</sup> concept by Suler (n.d.), he states that he is very impressed with Cartier-Bresson's ideas and summarizes various key features of the perfect decisive moment for photos. Some of these features also touch on many common issues that I have framed about contemporary calligraphy; hence, it can be claimed that it is inevitable to establish a close relationship between the calligraphy works presented here.

Hence, I find it appropriate to expends on this idea in my calligraphy works in these underlined quoted statements.

\*A sophisticated composition in which the visual coalescence of the photographed scene capitalizes on the principles of Gestalt psychology to create a "prägnanz"<sup>5</sup> atmosphere of balance, harmony, simplicity, and unity.

\*A sophisticated background to the subject that interacts both visually and psychologically with the subject in a synergistically meaningful figure/ground relationship.

\*An element of ambiguity, uncertainty, and even contradiction that rouses the viewer's curiosity about the meaning or outcome of the scene depicted.

\* The capture of a unique, fleeting, and meaningful moment, ideally one involving movement and action.

\* A precisely timed, unrepeatable, one-chance shot.

\* The DM photo as a product of a unique set of technical, cognitive, and emotional skills developed from extensive training and experience in photography, as well as from a psychological knowledge of people. (Suler, n.d.: para. 5)

Considering these statements, while examining each point in detail, it is not wrong to say that all fall within what most the contemporary calligrapher may say.

Cartier-Bresson describes his attitude as "I kept walking the streets, high-strung, and eager to snap scenes of convincing reality, but mainly I wanted to capture the quintessence of the phenomenon in a single image" (Suler, n.d.: para. 7). Just as Cartier-Bresson forgets that he carries a camera while capturing the decisive moment, for the calligrapher, his material becomes an extension of himself. It is like instant drawing, instant writing in a sense; however, in reality, it carries and reflects the period that the one deals with and internalizes calligraphy.

For this reason, being a photojournalist is preferred by Cartier-Bresson due to the unwillingness to deal with manufactured or staged

<sup>4</sup> The misunderstanding of the concept of "decisive moment" attached to Henri Cartier-Bresson is linked to the issue that it started to be assessed as a kind of standard, which is thought as if there is only one right moment and only geometrically falls into place. It is stated that this issue leads many photographers to attempt to imitate that balance; however, they lose the impulsiveness of a desire that creates personal anxiety. Hence, the concept of the "decisive moment" is somehow distorted (*Henri Cartier-Bresson Images À La Sauvette*, 2017).

<sup>5</sup> According to the concept of *prägnanz*, experience is organized related to several basic perceptual laws for the sake of creating balance, simplicity, unity. It is what Cartier-Bresson called geometry. For photography, when the photographer talks about composition, it is mostly referred to these visual coalescence laws (Suler, n.d.: para. 17). Balance, simplicity, harmony and unity are also repeatedly mentioned in calligraphy that were crucial for traditional calligraphy to increase legibility. As long as readable text is no longer a goal, these notions started to be assessed as critical for visual coalescence as well.



photography; for me as well, in this series, being instant, spontaneous, but conscious about the process is like the one that prefers to organize the whole composition the other is preferring the discover and experience calligraphy as a sketchbook sense, an instrument of intuition and spontaneity.

Searching, questioning, and decisions all happen simultaneously as a reaction to the action that is mentioned earlier. This issue still requires concentration, a discipline of mind, and calligraphic sensibility as a great economy of means that can be achieved through simplicity of expression, as Cartier-Bresson states (Suler, n.d.).

From my personal point of view, the truly decisive factor for calligraphy can be assessed as capturing the quality of line or stroke, which is created with a conscious mind in terms of calligraphy embodied on the surface and occupying space. The interaction depends upon the calligrapher's ability to achieve it whenever he concerns with his creative process, which depends on the awareness of the calligrapher, and the practice helps the calligrapher to capture the essence of the calligraphic action and reflects through a single act, or image, as can be observed in my series of *Moments and Periods* represented here.

Basically, the concept of this series is similar to the Pen Testing series, but the tools and materials are different. They are practiced with the pointed brush -the Chinese calligraphy brush, and mostly Sumi-ink as dominant tools and materials that can be observed in Fig. 49.



Fig. 49. Practicing with pointed brush pen with Sumi-ink on the rice paper, Almıla Yıldırım, 2020, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

As a reminder, Chinese literary culture is described as a brush culture in contrast to the West, where writing is practiced by the stylus or pen. Here it should be stated that as a term, a *stylus* is based on the Latin word *stilus*, which refers to a pointed stake or hard-pointed instrument -often metal- that is employed to write on a wax tablet. Moreover, the French word *stylo* is used for it and derives from this term, and the English word *pen* derived from the Latin *penna* or *pinna* for a feather. In contrast to the hard instrument, the Chinese word *fengge*, refers to various types or styles of ancient Chinese odes and has its base on the word *feng*, which means wind. That refers to life and a moving spirit. As wind, *feng* can be assessed as the external expression of the *qi* within a person. Hence, it is stated that if the inner *qi* of the artist creates the work that represents its external expression, then, in turn, this expression shows dynamic energy in terms of the *feng* of the work, its style, or atmosphere. That also conveys the moving energy like wind. Considering Chinese calligraphy, personal writing styles are assessed as so influential that it defines more generic styles. Here, it is designated by the term *ti*, which signifies body and is used for pointing at the limbs of the body. That is assumed as further evidence of the link of calligraphy to the body, as if the style of the hand is identified with the creation of the artist's bodily limbs (Shusterman, 2017).

Under these explanations, it can be stated that the reason for choosing the Chinese brush is basically to experience a material that is not conventional in the West, also employing its offered gestures that are totally different from the materials that are employed works as mentioned earlier in part "7.2. Choosing the materials for the personal practices."

Apart from the Chinese brush, the *Sumi ink* and rice paper were also included in this experiment to manage the close interaction with the Far Eastern calligraphy materials in a contemporary western manner of my own.

Fig. 50 exhibits various trials of the strokes, which basically consist of one touch of the brush.

Fig. 50. Various stroke practices with Sumi ink on rice paper, Almıla Yıldırım, 2020, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



It starts with the loaded brush with a hard touch on the paper to obtain the splashes that give visual support to this attitude, which reflects the energy within the brush that is transmitted through the hand of a skilled calligrapher. This concept is highly influenced by the Far Eastern calligraphy mindset, examined in Chapter IV.

Moreover, similar to the earlier works, stains or splashes are assessed as a part of the process, also the composition due to the supportive mission of the movement of a calligraphic act. They are a part of the act of the material, hence the hand, rather than the accident. In other words, the reaction of the ink on the surface to the act of the calligrapher. For this reason, they are complementary and show, reveal, sometimes stress, or underline the gesture of the hand.

The first trials, as shown in Fig. 49, start with the hand gesture on the rice paper. Various moves of the hand are experienced and observed, also prepared for the next step of the composition, which is decided at that moment depending on my decision formed by accumulated technical and practical knowledge. As mentioned earlier, it is a process in action, as in the earlier examples.

Fig. 51 illustrates one of the first pairs created within this concept.



Fig. 51. *Moments and Periods vol. 1*, Sumi ink and colorante on rice paper and handmade paper, Almıla Yıldırım, 2020, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

Since they are thought to be complementary to each other both conceptually and visually, it was deemed appropriate to display them in this way as an exhibited pair. Basically, it consists of simple acts of the hand, a stroke, and splashes; it tends to create tension here to represent the energy of the loaded brush and the moment. This type of tension that is tried to be reflected through the visual appearance also seems to underline the instant but carries the period within itself.

In a sense, it can be compared with Meulman and his throw-up ink practices on the wall or the canvas mentioned in Chapter VI. In his practices, there exists the tension of the ink throws; however, throwing an ink bomb can be assumed literally as an attack that concerns former graffiti artists in his provocative practices. Whereas, in my work, the ink splashes are not represented as attacks; instead, they are supposed to be assessed as settlements with the material and their nature between the calligrapher to search for a kind of visual balance and contribution, as mentioned earlier. Here, the other difference is how these two works are preferred to exhibit. The aim is to be attentive to the background and how to locate the frames in the space to contribute to the overall composition. Hence, another issue is to be in focus or, if not, at least clear enough to offer a simple visual location that contributes to the composition of the frames.

Each photo of the paired-up frames taken to reflect the depth of field to emphasize a central subject; they are not decisive moment shots; however, it is believed that indeed the space can activate work/background interactions in a sense and captures the moment of completion that is perceptually satisfying as if it completes a visual scene or the moment with the impression of balance and simplicity. The calligraphic action seems to be explored and suspended in space within a moment and period as well, just like typography, for which the assessment of the space is highly crucial to understanding the form and how to composite.

In Fig. 52, it can be observed that various compositions consist of a single touch -a splash or a single stroke, and various compositions consist of extra touch with colorante, as a complementary element in search of visual balance.

Fig. 52. Preparing the frames for fragments, Almıla Yıldırım, 2020, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.





As the notion of Cartier-Bresson, these compositions are captured quickly, in a moment of calligraphic action, as suggested by him captured on the run literally. Spontaneously executed works are organized considering the moments and periods concepts, which is believed only come with good training, lots of experience, and intuition. It is a kind of developed instinct that represents the research period of this paper.

Balance and harmony are significant factors that orient my decisions while organizing the quadrage of these works. Balance becomes a perceived form here that consists of various factors, such as visual forms, shapes, space, and the senses reflected through the materials and the hand of the calligrapher. Moreover, simplicity comes with the limited units employed here, such as a single stroke and a splash with limited color -black and yellow. While these features are well-organized, it can be said that the overall composition has its unique harmony and also implies action and process rather than the result. Hence, the aim here, when this moment occurs, the work is supposed to represent the essence of this concept in perfect resonance. It is a part of a life of a calligrapher that is occurred through the flow of calligraphic act as a transitory moment, which can be utilized to describe these works.

Another scene consists of five works, organized as shown in Fig. 53, under the same strategy and concept. Here, I proposed these decisive strokes in the same concept, expanded and revised than *Moments and Periods vol. 1* (Fig. 51), because while it was planned as only two trials; the desire for more review and experimentation gives the courage to continue and that results with the rest of the works presented here.

*Moments and Periods vol. 2* (Fig. 53) consists of five frames of works that basically consist of one touch of the Chinese brush. While only one pair of work consists of strokes, the others show small but effective touches of the loaded brush.

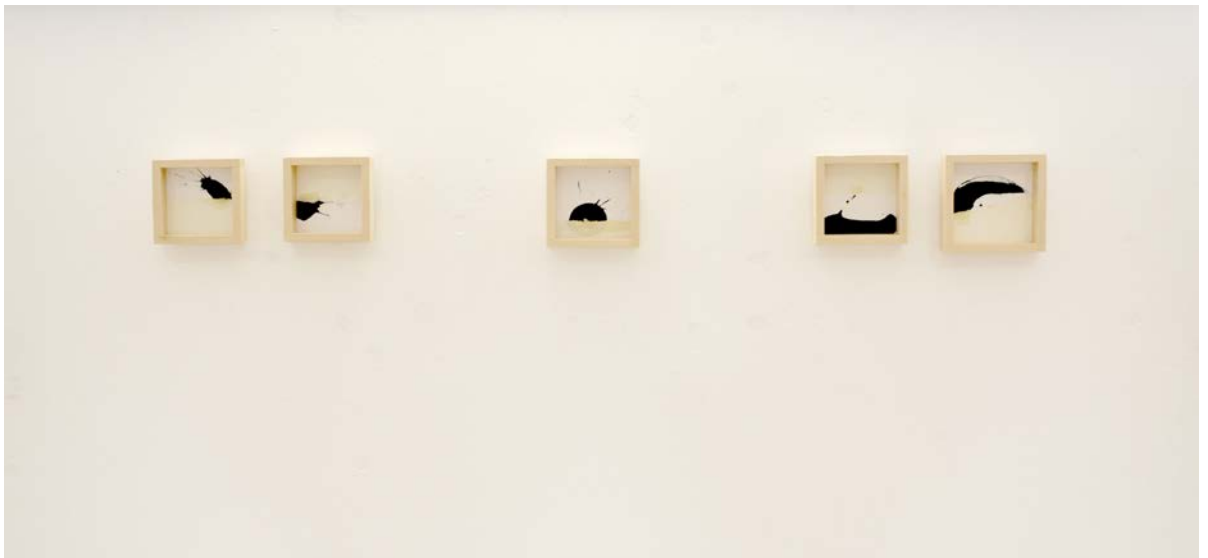
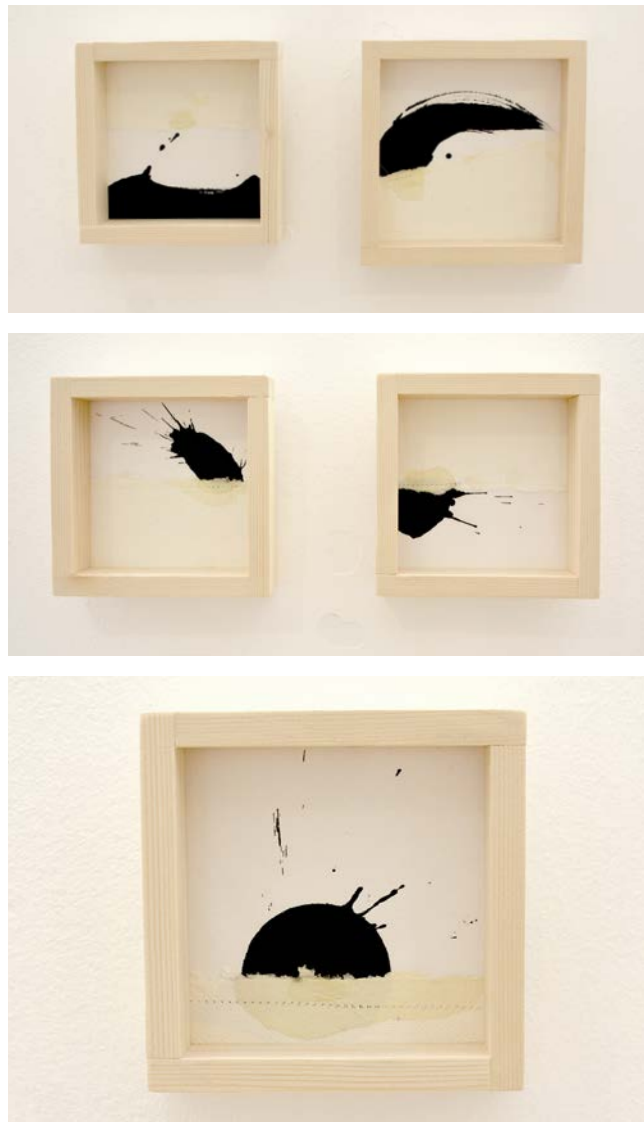


Fig. 53. *Moments and Periods vol. 2*, Almıla Yıldırım, Sumi ink on rice paper and handmade paper 2021, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

Once again, these five frames of work are located as the first pair of works, single works, and last pair of works. The pairs of frames are visually complemented each other as a kind of contra-symmetrical unit to give the sense of action complementing each other as if the action is continuing in these pairs of frames. Intervals between the works have underlined this categorization as a visual gap as well and can be assumed as a type of negative space that takes a significant role in calligraphic actions, as in a musical composition or dance choreography; even it may remind space between the words as if it helps to increase the readability of the works.

In order to look closer, Fig. 54 shows each of the works in detail, and the contra-moves as complementary gestures here can be observed easily. As a reminder, each pair are not planned from the beginning as complementary frames. Instead, after a certain amount of repetition of various moves, the compositions are determined as a unique quadrate, as shown above in Fig. 52, then decided to get various of them as pairs to support the calligraphic act visually stronger than a single frame.

Fig. 54. Details from *Moments and Periods vol.2*, Almıla Yıldırım, 2021, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



It has to be stated that deciding the quadrate is not just done by framing the overall composition but also by framing the work with the paper itself. It gives an extra dimension to the visual appearance and attaches an extra texture to the overall look. At the same time, depending on the decided quadrate, this extra level is limited as if a controlled visual effect is created through spontaneous brush splashes. Here, it reaches the concept of control-out-of-control features of Stevens (2013) about his sense of control over what he is doing, but simultaneously he has a desire to be a bit surprised and out of control. It can be assumed as a paradox that contemporary calligrapher over and over faces. That means the one practice constantly to command, yet, the one has a desire to be free to experiment and express, which is a concept that is mentioned in the works of the postmodern designers in Chapter VI.

Considering these statements of Stevens (2013), through my personal experiences and practices, I can claim that I, myself, also have an attitude to dominate the material and control the hand after the long calligraphy training mentioned in the second phase of this chapter. It is the core feature of calligraphy that needs training and practice to gain awareness of the form and the construction of the letter, and at each step, I prefer to be conscious of the process, including each move with the anticipation of the reaction of the material depending on the attitude of mine, which refers to control here. Apart from that, in my case, out-of-control started during and after the period of the second phase with the calligraphic training and the time of interrogations that were held during the research period. Thus, it has been reflected through searching for a way to develop a new perspective in terms of calligraphy with respect to various themes held in previous chapters, then eliminating the text, the word, and the letters. At last, as stated earlier, even the ductus is considered out of focus for my calligraphic works. However, still, it has to be underlined that this issue is not rejecting the tradition nor the styles or traditional training, instead of cherishing them and utilizing them as a reference and function as a stepping point that heralds establishing a personal understanding of calligraphy, which is summarized as organizing marks through calligraphic awareness and conscious.

Fig. 55 illustrates *Moments and Periods vol. 3*, created within the same concept, exhibited as single and pair frames of works.



Fig. 55. *Moments and Periods vol. 3*, Almıla Yıldırım, Sumi ink and colorante on rice paper and handmade paper 2021, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

Following the features of the decisive moment notion, cherished contra-moves are believed to qualify in the sense of whether there is the completion to occur. These features also exist within the nature of calligraphy, as explained earlier. Here, the fleeting moment is captured with the quadrage of the paper and the frame of the works. They are like a kind of event, in brief, unrepeatable moments representing the essence of that particular time. It is in proximity with the theme of "hunting the words" mentioned in Chapter VI while examining the works of Meulman and Brown, whose theme is located around the title "Turning darkness into light," the Irish Gaelic poem called *Pangur Bán* of the sixth century. The poem consists of a metaphor between a cat hunting the mice and a monk hunting the words all night long because he writes the manuscript. As seen by Sontag in photography that hunt, here first with the calligraphic act, then the decision of the quadrage and the frame, I feel proximity with this concept as if I am hunting the decisive moment of my calligraphic practices.

Fig.s 56 and 57 show each of the works in detail for a closer look.

Fig. 56. Details from *Moments and Periods vol. 3*, Almıla Yıldırım, Sumi ink and colorante on rice paper and handmade paper 2021, Foto. Credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



Fig. 57. Details from *Moments and Periods vol. 3*, Almıla Yıldırım, Sumi ink and colorante on rice paper and handmade paper 2021, Foto. Credit: Almıla Yıldırım.





As discussed earlier, in photography, there are many decisive moments that one can capture, particularly in street photography; as in these works of mine, there are various possibilities in terms of interpretation conceptually and visually. It is like choosing a scene that also strikes emotionally, as in the case of Far Eastern calligraphy practices, in which the calligrapher assesses his practices as a sign of mentally maturing as well. As in this research, particularly with this chapter, it is believed that this transformation period well presents this issue.

Fig. 58 illustrates *Moments and Periods vol. 4*, created within the same concept as a pair that complemented each other, the last pieces of this series. Both works consist of a touch of the brush as a simulation of a stroke written spontaneously.



Fig. 58. *Moments and Periods vol. 4*, Almıla Yıldırım, Sumi ink on rice paper and handmade paper 2021, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

With a closer look, Fig. 59 shows each of the works in detail.



Fig. 59. Details from *Moments and Periods vol. 4*, Almıla Yıldırım, 2021, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

It can be observed there are layers of paper that are a part of the composition, attributed as a visual dimension, which also refers to the layers of the mind of the calligrapher that the knowledge of calligraphy is accumulated with time. All create a unique level that may lead to transforming the calligraphic understanding of the artists that will manifest itself through the works. These imaginary layers are seen through the works of Meulman and witnessed how his calligraphy perception transformed from the time he started with the graffiti writers' calligraphic works till the painter's calligraphic attitude in Chapter VI. His transformation was one of the more visible ones examined in chronological order. However, this transformation does not literally mean shifting the perspective but accumulating with the time and all cherished and existing within the work at the imagery level. Hence, here with the different level of the paper, the transformation and the accumulated calligraphic understanding is tried through the physical application of the surfaces, as seen in Fig. 59.

For the last examples of the series of *Moments and Periods*, Fig.s 60-62 can be observed, created with the very same materials and with the very same attitude and concept.

Fig. 60. *Moments and Periods* vol. 5, Almıla Yıldırım, Sumi ink on rice and handmade paper, 2021, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



Fig. 61. *Moments and Periods* vol. 6, Almıla Yıldırım, Sumi ink on rice and handmade paper 2021, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.





Fig. 62. *Moments and Periods* vol. 7, Almıla Yıldırım, Sumi ink on rice and handmade paper 2021, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

While Figs 60 and 61 illustrate the hard one-touch of the Chinese brush, Fig. 62 shows one-stroke moves of the brush with the highly dark black color of the Sumi-ink. It should be underlined that, in this series, the Sumi-ink is not diluted with water, so the color black is conserved. However, in Chinese calligraphy, dilution of the ink is significant to attribute a dimension to the black color within one gesture of the hand. In my works, I focus on the bold moves and avoid interrupting this boldness of the touch with any kind of degradation to capture the intense image of the brush that is the main emphasis here. These moves are created by a kind of harsh gesture of the hand to achieve the material's sharp interaction and the ink's reflection while meeting with the surface.

Here, it may be appropriate to mention the accident or chance, which belongs to modernity. Because once again, this mentioned interaction may be considered an accident because of the splashes or stains.

Particularly the fabrication of accidents -as in the case of Francis Bacon (1561-1626) and his throwing of paint at the canvas, is assessed as a key feature and component of modern art; however, it has been carried to the present day and has been used by contemporary calligraphers, namely Meulman, Lampas or Dokins, and their splashes, ink drops created as a last touch of the composition, as well. Hence, in these works, accidents do not literally cover the term in the same sense as the work of the contemporary calligrapher since the calligrapher is fully aware of the process even if he experiments.

According to Turner (2011), all of these can be assumed as the state between "accident and intention, how the eye and brain work together, ..., create "accidental" or "multi-stable images"" (2011: para. 21).

In this series, it can be claimed that there are various fabricated accidents through anticipating the reaction of the material with respect to the moves of the hand. Even the exact reaction cannot be organized; still, the experience and repetition give a chance to dominate the material for the sake of fabrication in this sense.

As McNiff (1998) claims, "A complicated expressive gesture cannot be broken down into a lesson plan. It can only be learned through practice and repetition, with the goal of reaching a point when it happens instinctively" (1998: 173). And the skilled calligrapher here becomes the one that is responding and balancing the winds of the creative process. For this reason, it is significant to try various moves to maintain confidence with the material, as well as with the moves, and also learn to act out of control consciously.

Apart from the employed materials, the primary difference with earlier works of this series is that any of the moves here do not refer to the basic strokes to construct any script. That means there is no ductus as a reference that is followed. Hence, after eliminating the text, the word, and the letter in the earlier practices, it can be said that through the practices presented in this part, the next step is determined as stripped of any representative strokes of known script styles followed by any type of letterforms. It can be seen as an effort to reflect the parts of a whole spontaneously with a calligraphy background that has unique touches. It is preferred to repeat the first stroke touches with slightly different moves, creating visual varieties within the strokes.

Moreover, as Brown's abstract calligraphy works -not involving letters, instead consisting of ink moves and photo shots of these moves -that is examined in Chapter VI, these series of work also may not be accepted by some as calligraphy, especially considering the word calligraphy, that derives from Greek *kallos* and *graphos*, which is examined in Chapter II.

Apart from the interpretation of the word literally, the common expectation about calligraphy, hence writing that involves lettering, as Brown (2017) states, is "to expectations that all painting must be figurative" (2017: 237). Moreover, as shown with the discussion of Far Eastern calligraphy in Chapter IV and the Middle Eastern calligraphy in Chapter V, this premise is denied. It is important to remember that the latter general notion of writing and calligraphy was widespread before abstraction started to be embraced in these genres.

On the other hand, as Mediavilla (1996) notes, if one wants to establish a hierarchy of styles of calligraphy and divides them into categories such as the classic styles that follow the line of tradition, modern styles based on cursive letterforms also may contain gestural strokes as in the nineteenth century. The purely abstract style, which cherishes numerous new plastic possibilities, also welcomes the aspect of inventiveness that reflects the skill, the experiment, and the competence of the calligrapher with the tools and materials. In this genre, it can be claimed that the calligraphic works are highly personal in which each feature may contribute its originality without losing attention to shapes, lines, or any visual elements of calligraphy. Hence, it is not wrong to claim that these strokes or images are also written with



a calligraphic background. Even it seems that it creates contradictions, as stated earlier, as in the case of my works that are presented here, western contemporary calligraphy practices have become open works as in the notion of Eco (1989), that consists and cherish ambiguity, as well as personal interpretations that are open to discuss.

With the very same attitude, I practiced another series called "Strikes vs. Strokes" in 2022 and used all the materials that I mentioned in part "7.2. Choosing the materials for the personal practices," namely the ruling pen, the broad edge brush, and the Chinese brush. In the next part, it will be significant to observe and examine this series to frame where I arrive at contemporary calligraphy conceptually and practically.

### **7.3.3. The series of *Strikes vs. Strokes***

This is the part where the "Strikes vs. Strokes" series will be examined, which was created in 2022, as a kind of expansion of the attitude of my earlier series that are mentioned before. It is the expansion because of a similar perception of western calligraphy that can be observed through the works I presented in this part. Some works present various texture practices as I created in the first series, "Pen Testing," and some present similar practices with the series of "Moments and Periods" with the stiff touch of the Chinese brush on the surface of the rice paper with condensed Sumi-ink, while others focus on the broad edge brush stroke that created with the Sumi-ink in order to reflect the energy of the moment.

The title of this series, "Strikes vs. Strokes," refers to what basically these exhibited works cover in this series. While strike represents a more aggressive attitude toward the surface, it helps to trigger the chaos mentioned earlier as a feature that exists in the postmodern mindset and the practices of contemporary western calligraphers. Chaos, for me, refers to a kind of wild spontaneity of the hand that is created through the performance of calligraphic works. When there is no control or order/anticipation in calligraphy, it may send an invitation to the experimentation and unique, unrepeatable, or non-reproducible (cannot be copied) effect that may evoke a kind of tension or transmit that tension to the audience. However, it should be underlined that there may still exist a kind of control within this unrepeatable act due to the calligraphic training and trained muscles that become an intrinsic knowledge of the mind and the muscle. It is the feature that excited me as I observed that other contemporary calligraphers such as Meulman, Dokins, or Lampas also share.

Furthermore, the stroke here is an indispensable, basic, and fundamental unit of calligraphy for me that carries the essence and the core of the calligraphy, particularly when the calligraphy is perceived as the extended meaning of the writing, including mark-making. Strikes and strokes seem versus each other through the title here. However, both are complementary in these compositions, even if one may invite chaos, and the other, when controlled, establishes order on the surface.

All are kinds of calligraphic marks -without any specific letter or text- that are left on the surface with the knowledge that is accumulated during the doctoral research.

Jackson (1981) states:

When we make things with our hands we put into them energy which comes from our innermost self. When we see and feel objects which were made by craftsmen long dead I believe we can still sense their energy lying beneath each brush-stroke or sweep of the pen, and we can respond this energy as much as to the object's surface beauty or ingenuity of design. When we ourselves write we not only communicate information by the choice and sequence of the words; we also reveal something of our inner spirit with every tremor of the hand. (Jackson, 1981: 13)

What Jackson underlines here is that the marks that remain from the beginning of the human's experiment, even before the alphabet, apart from being physical evidence of ingenuity and skill, also provide a significant link between "heart and mind" (Jackson, 1981: 13), that points at the feelings and emotions that are mentioned above.

Eventually, here in my works, eliminating the letter and text, creating a work with just one touch of the brush or one stroke, even if they carry various references, comes with the tradition, technical knowledge, tacit knowledge, also mindset of the Far Eastern or the Middle Eastern calligraphy, the act is basically to leave a mark by a writing-like gesture of the hand. It comes from the calligraphic background; hence, it is claimed here that there is no bias about calling them calligraphic marks.

Another significant issue that is needed to be underlined here is the proximity of Jackson's statements with the Far Eastern art and calligraphy mindset, which can be seen through the various works of the contemporary calligraphers that are examined in Chapter VI, also through my practices that are observed in this chapter. For this reason, it will be useful to underline once again the significant features of the mindset that can be traced to the marks through the works presented here.

As stated earlier in Chapters III, IV, and VI, the line between the West and East in terms of calligraphy has already started to be blurry. That means numerous western artists have been influenced by Japanese and Chinese landscapes, particularly the application of ink painting. While Chinese ink painting focuses on the image on the surface, rather than reproducing the appearance of what is represented, they prefer to follow their own understanding; in contrast, the western artist who had been reproduced objects objectively by utilizing scientific methods such as perspective, anatomy, light, and color. Moreover, oriental artists do not separate painting from calligraphy, which is highly difficult to understand and conceive from the point of the West. However, the influence of oriental calligraphy and painting in the West started to be felt in the twentieth century (González, 2020), as mentioned in Chapter IV. Even though some find these influences calligraphic, it is debatable, as mentioned earlier, without calligraphic insight, whether these artists manage to relate to their brush and ink movement to express the relationship to writing. That is why I stress the calligraphic term, which refers to the artist's background gained through practical and theoretical knowledge.

Looking at the contemporary western calligrapher, various common features detached here as influenced by the Far Eastern mindset, which seems to be a significant feature of contemporary western calligraphy in the search for more expressive marks and images that already exist in the Far Eastern calligraphy in Chapter VI.

Stevens (2013) greets the interest in non-western attitudes toward calligraphy as an impetus to free creativity. That reveals how the western tradition lacked the freedom to interpret and create a unique attitude mentioned in Chapter III.

From the beginning, with my early interaction with the calligraphy, without sufficient knowledge of Far Eastern calligraphy, I realized that my intention was to focus on the strokes, and assessing it as an image, as mentioned before, comes with the experimental typography interest and research during my master thesis research. With the knowledge gained about the mindset behind Far Eastern art, particularly calligraphy, I started to connect the relation between the western abstract artists; also, I managed to locate the contemporary western calligraphy attitudes in the sense of calligraphy. With this technical, practical, and theoretical information, the calligraphers, willing to attribute adhesive value to their calligraphy perception, will have an extended vision and awareness of that issue. The interest in non-western attitudes toward calligraphy, as Steven mentions, is assessed as essential to gaining insight for artistic experiments. For this reason, Far Eastern calligraphy is a significant part of this doctoral research.

What is observed, as examined in Chapter VI, through various works of contemporary western calligraphers, calligraphy started to be considered as something in which the tools and materials are used as channels to transmit the current energy and emotion of the calligrapher. The gesture of the hand, arm, wrist, and even the finger started to be significant to consider, which are basically the fundamental features of Far Eastern calligraphy and speaking of gestural painting, as (González, 2017) underlines, being in the East since the thirteenth century, without being entirely abstract, such as the *ensō* of Zen art that is mentioned in Chapter IV. It is not an ideogram and has no specific meaning; however, it is a significant part of Japanese calligraphy and is appreciated for its symbolic meaning as the gesture, shape, and movement of the ink through its simple appearance. This issue is also cherished in my calligraphic understanding, in which the focus point is not the work itself initially but the energy and the emotion that are revealed. That means the calligrapher starts to be the determining feature, contrary to the traditional calligrapher, in which the scribes were anonymous primarily, or even known by name, still didn't exist as an artist but rather a copyist.

On the other hand, looking at the differences between the concept of a word and an image also relates to a basic difference between East and West. While the word can conceptualize the image as a poem in the West, the word or letter is assessed as neutral physically as in González (2020)'s words; there exists "mortalidad visual" (*visual mortality*) (2020: para. 23) in text, words, or letters. In this sense, when I write a Word that can be read, the first impulsive act is to read. Whenever I started to focus on the stroke, the viewer started to assess the work in a different way because there were no recognizable signs or a pre-assigned meaning on it. It leads to observing my work as open-ended that the viewer may catch various features depending on their background. This is the highly trigger point of the contemporary concept of calligraphy that leaves space for calligraphers to move.

The literal content of the written character is not the only meaningful thing in a written word for Far Eastern calligraphy. The way a word is written is as important as what the word itself is meant to convey as a concept, which leads us to the pictorial aspect that is narrated with the written word, as significant as what is written. However, contemporary calligraphers, as in the case of asemic writers mentioned in part "6.4. Asemic writing related to contemporary western calligraphy," through their practices that are eliminated the letter, word, or text, not being a servant of the text, evidently want to highlight the features inherent in Far Eastern calligraphy in their own works and even make it a focal point as in the case of my own works that are presented here.

Furthermore, González (2020) summarizes oriental art as slow, non-linear, focused on composition and thought, and inspired artists who moved in different political, formal, and expressive directions. He continues to assess it as a source of images, shapes, and patterns, which also become inspiration points for contemporary western calligraphers to reflect on the depth of their work. Here, Stevens (2013) defines depth as his statements about the quality of the line and the calligraphic sensibility of western calligraphy, which are explained in Chapter VI. For sure, he refers to contemporary western calligraphy. Hence, once again, it is observed that Far Eastern and contemporary western calligraphy mindsets started to be likened to each other with the intention of the contemporary western calligraphers, me included. However, it is more appropriate to detect this similarity as calligraphy that started to reach a universal language rather than vernacular as in the traditional western calligraphy, or rather than copying or mimicking the Far Eastern calligraphy.

Meanwhile, the pictorial feature in Far Eastern is privileged over the narrative, contrary to the West, and it can be seen in the calligraphy and ideograms that exist many variants that the same ideogram can have to relate to the way it is written, and calligraphy, a vital practice of Chinese culture, which is also a part of the contemporary art, has an aesthetic appeal through its strokes (Yegorova, 2020). With its pictorial feature, it is focused on the vital energy that circulates both in painting and calligraphy through the strokes, which is a two-dimensional space depending on the writing of the character. It is assessed as the interaction between the calligrapher's activity and the material, also "the comings and goings between the support and the body of the calligrapher" (Escande, 2019: para. 5).

These are basically pointing at the understanding of the contemporary western calligrapher, who practices his works as a performance, moves with its material as an instrument, and reacts according to the moment.

Escande (2019) underlines, "The brush strokes are not perceived as separations or borders between themselves or between the lines and the surface, but as rhythmic "moving strokes," linked together in an organic relationship. That is why, although the appreciation may seem centered on the stroke of the brush, rather it rests on the relationship between the observer and the artist" (Escande, 2019: para. 5).



All these explanations reveal my insistence on experiencing calligraphy as an image focused on plastic values, independent of letters and words. Strokes are the fundamental unit of calligraphy that interact with the surface also other entities on the surfaces, such as stains or lines. All create moving energy that is intended to convey to the observer. Hence the relation or interaction between the observer and the artist may be established. It points to Eco's open work, once again, as mentioned earlier, in which the audience also has an active role here.

Fig. 63 is a series that is created with these above-mentioned attitudes -to trigger various plastic values or emotions in the name of the audiences through the calligraphic plastic units, namely bold marks, stains, and writing-like scribbles.

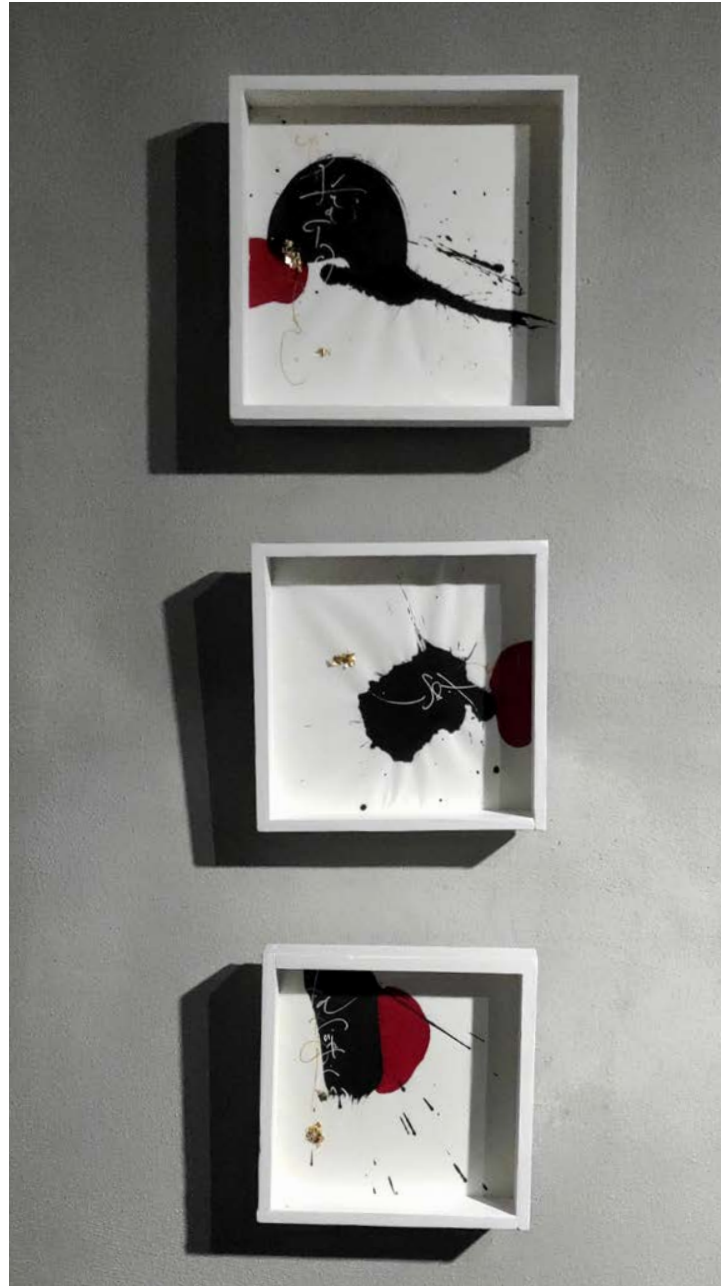


Fig. 63. *Strikes vs. Strokes vol. 1*, Almıla Yıldırım, Sumi ink, marker ink, gold leaf on rice paper, 2022, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

This trilogy started with just bold marks and stains, as seen in Fig. 64, and is exhibited in a horizontal representation in 2021. At this time, the main point that I wanted to achieve was the bold representations of calligraphic marks and how to organize the composition limited by the white frames to decrease the feeling of being constrained. As mentioned in part "7.3.2. The Series of *Moments and Periods*" was the time that was captured and exhibited as a moment of the hand of the calligrapher representing the time that heralds the long, arduous period of acquiring calligraphic knowledge.

Fig. 64. Starting *Strikes vs. Strokes vol. 1*, Almıla Yıldırım, 2022, Foto. Credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



Sumi-ink and red marker ink were employed on the rice paper. With two bold colors, it is aimed to create a visually strong impact with the energy of these two colors and also the depth and dimension to the simple surface of the work. Only a tiny touch of the Chinese brush creates an enormous stain than the first touch due to the absorption of the rice paper. Hence, it was difficult to anticipate where the stain or marks stopped. That represents the spontaneity and the accidental expectation. After a year, I reevaluated this trio and decided to adhere to more units, such as writing-like scribbles, because it was the time that I delved into the asemic writers' mindset, which is obviously reflected in my works here, also with the gold leaves, randomly replaced, the fragility seems to create a significant contrast with the bold gesture of the Chinese brush.

Fig. 65 illustrates *Strikes vs. Strokes vol. 2*, which consists of two main gestures: the curve and the vertical.

Fig. 65. *Strikes vs. Strokes vol. 2*, Almıla Yıldırım, Sumi ink on coated paper, 2022, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



The stains support the vertical movement that reveals a certain energy level of the Sumi-ink. After creating a gesture, here, once again, the second issue is to decide the composition and how to locate the frame.

The movement of the stain and the gesture are vertical. Hence, the most appropriate angle is to give a breath at the bottom of the composition to stress this movement and rhythm. The tension can be sensed through the splashes around the mark, which has a similar mindset to creating an alive calligraphic gesture that contemporary calligraphers, also Far Eastern calligraphy masters, seek for. It symbolizes that calligraphy can manifest itself through this kind of writing-like gesture with the calligraphic background of the calligrapher through just two simple tools; brush and ink. It is part of the Far Eastern mentality.

On the other hand, as seen through the practices of Lach examined in Chapter VI in part "6.9. Denise Lach," any kind of tool that can leave a mark on the surface can be utilized for calligraphic work. That means even the tools and materials affect the calligraphic work visually and technically; the main issue is the calligraphic perception and action of the hand of the calligrapher. For this reason, here in my works as well, calligraphic gestures can be appreciated as an abstract entity and even can be perceived as painting, which is not a significant concern of me, since writing, as an act, can cover painterly attitude as examined in Chapter VI through the work of Meulman.

Fig. 66 illustrates a group of works that carry a similar aim, concern, and attitude to the work mentioned in Fig. 65.



Fig. 66. *Strikes vs. Strokes vol. 3*, Almıla Yıldırım, Sumi ink on coated and handmade paper, 2022, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

There are five different pieces of gestures consisting of strikes and strokes of the Chinese calligraphy brush with Sumi ink. The ink, once again, is not diluted; hence the gesture can reveal a bold stroke and stains that are heavy but at the same time in motion that compliment each other.

With a closer look in Fig. 67, all surfaces have a second level of paper that is handmade with a heavy texture with the aim of articulate an extra level and dimension to the works, as mentioned in the series of *Moments and Periods*.

Fig. 67. Closer look to *Strikes* vs. *Strokes vol. 3*, Almıla Yıldırım, 2022, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.





The extra level or dimension here is not utilized as necessary units; however, it is aimed to benefit from its' contribution as it refers to its eclectic concept, versatility, plurality, past and present references, which manifest themselves through each work presented here, which is one of the significant features of contemporary western calligraphy.

Fig. 68 shows the third practice of this series, consisting of two pieces representing a moment of the one-stroke written by a broad edge brush.



Fig. 68. *Strikes vs. Strokes vol. 4*, Almıla Yıldırım, Sumi ink on coated paper, 2022, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

The preparation for this gesture can be seen in various hand moves that are illustrated in Fig. 69. It is not the same gesture of the hand; however, it will give insight into the technique and material, also the process of creating and later deciding how to represent the stroke and how to exhibit.

Fig. 69. Practice for creating *Strikes vs. Strokes vol. 4*, Almıla Yıldırım, 2022, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



The brush is broad-edge with a highly large tip, loaded with undiluted Sumi ink, hence the bold black color can be seen through the stroke. Nevertheless, still, at the end of the movement, the hair starts to appear and create a texture, also giving a hint about the tool employed here.

The appearance of the hair of the brush happens uncontrollably; hence, with every try, the vision varies, making it unique and unable to be

reproduced once again, which is one of the significant claims of the contemporary calligraphy mindset with its artistic practices. It can also relate to traditional western calligraphy, as explained in Chapter III. Even if the scribes copied the same style, they had hands that could be realized while comparing the various hands of the scribes or observing the manuscripts written by more than one scribe.

The hand and script differ from each other and are explained as the script copied and the hand something varies depending on the scribe. Hence, even though it is not easy to detach, every copied letter "a" had its unique trace reflected by the scribe. Still, it is not right to assess it as an artistic trace since the scribe was unaware of it, or the calligraphic practice was not assessed as it is today.

Fig. 70 reveals the whole stroke just before deciding the quadrate, which is totally determined by the trained eye of a designer and a calligrapher. Locating the frames is as significant as the calligraphic performance because it may decrease or increase the energy or feeling of the brush gesture that is transferred to the audience.



Fig. 70. Creating process of *Strikes vs. Strokes vol. 4*, Almıla Yıldırım, 2022, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

Through the concept of capturing the moment, as underlined in the second series, "Moments and Periods," *Strikes vs. Strokes vol. 4* is decided to frame as seen in Fig. 68.

In this kind of practice, there is only one shot, even if I practice the stroke over and over again. That means there are no retouches or the second touch that overlap or have a role as a complementary unit, as in the earlier examples that I presented in this chapter. Hence, after a couple of arm and muscle warming, the start and the end point seem to convey the character of the stroke in a sense. It is not slowly written, so this tension is required to be delivered through the splashes of the ink and the movement of the stroke.

Here, it can be claimed that calligraphy manifested itself in an expanded concept of western writing, cherishing the trace of the tool. Hence, the hand with a writing-like gesture that attributes aesthetic value to the personal interpretation gained through the technical, practical, and conceptual research and training that is evidently inspired by the Far Eastern mindset of calligraphy with an eclectic sense that can be traced even in the postmodern typographers, with the concept of the word as an image. That means without rejecting the tradition, depending on the artists' point of view, all can be utilized as references to experiment in the realm of calligraphy.

Fig. 71 shows similar practice to Fig. 68, performed with the Chinese brush, this time with the same concept. As can be observed here, *Strikes vs. Strokes vol. 5* consists of two-piece of the one stroke, exhibited horizontally. Once again, Sumi-ink is used without diluting, so the bold black color is achieved as a heavy block on the white surface. It is a kind of eliminating the intermediate color values, which stress the contrast between the stroke and the surface; hence, it seems to attach a certain level of tension to the harsh gesture of the hand.

Fig. 71. *Strikes vs. Strokes vol. 5*, Almıla Yıldırım, Sumi ink on coated paper, 2022, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.





Fig. 72 illustrates how I performed this piece, starting with the heavily loaded Chinese brush meeting the surface and leaving the overloaded Sumi-ink on the paper by promoting the movement. It seems similar to the paint bomb of Meulman examined in part "6.5. Niels "Shoe" Meulman" in Chapter VI. Meulman directly references his graffiti background when he bombed the street with his graffiti piece. He is like attacking the wall, whereas I try to pursue to capture the harsh energy of the ink when it meets the surface with my hand. In other words, it is more like interacting rather than attacking. The second step is to move as if marking to see the movement that will appear with the hand gesture here.



Fig. 72. Practice for creating *Strikes vs. Strokes vol. 5*, Almıla Yıldırım, 2022, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

Fig. 73 shows one of the significant parts of locating the fragments of the stroke. Once again, the beginning and the ending point of the movement are decided to be captured and exhibited by frames. While the first frame puts forward the strike of the brush, the second frame emphasizes the ongoing stroke, and both basically marks reveal the calligraphic interpretation of my perception of western writing and hence calligraphy.

Fig. 73. Creating process of *Strikes vs. Strokes vol. 5*, Almıla Yıldırım, 2022, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



Fig. 74 illustrates work entitled *Strikes vs. Strokes vol. 6*, a two-piece of work planned and exhibited as seen in the figure. The Chinese brush with Sumi-ink is employed with a very similar attitude to the earlier example above. Here, both compositions also have the second layer of the paper, which is a handmade paper used as a complementary element once again to stress the work's tactile sense, also underlining the plurality of the contemporary mindset of western calligraphy, as mentioned earlier.

Fig. 74. *Strikes vs. Strokes vol. 6*, Almıla Yıldırım, Sumi ink on coated and handmade paper, 2022, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



Two different movements are placed to complement each other, and this is a placement intended to be perceived as a single whole. The piece works, which are placed to provide unity in each series individually or together, are the continuing parts of practice in themselves. As for contemporary calligraphers examined in Chapter VI, even when all their works contain different concepts and techniques, it will not be wrong to claim that they are the continuation of the accumulated technical and theoretical knowledge and that each piece of work is a fragment of a whole.

A closer look at a different angle can be seen in Fig. 75 of the work *Strikes vs. Strokes vol. 6*, which reveals the tension of the gesture, the movement, and my feeling while practicing these gestures. Being able to exist individually is at the core of calligraphic performances as an art form. For this reason, the personal touch becomes a differentiation contemporary from the tradition of western calligraphy. Even if I practice the strokes over and over again, it is evident that the performance consists of spontaneous and unpredictable parts. It is a significant feature of the contemporary calligraphy mindset, which refers to the artistic feature of western calligraphy that the calligrapher interacts with the work and the material without focusing on the result.



Fig. 75. Closer look to *Strikes vs. Strokes vol. 6*, Almıla Yıldırım, 2022, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

However, the result is the part that may interact with the audience since it is a kind of open work that the audience participates in through observing and interpreting or assessing the work depending on his background of him. It becomes crucial to reflect on my presence in the event and the way I am involved and a part of it to the audience. Because in these works, where I search for artistic expression, being an individual with my own existence and calligraphy understanding and experience comes first in these works, contrary to being an anonymous scribe of the past. This reflects one of the main features of the contemporary calligraphy mindset that varies with the calligrapher's perception. All these issues seem to convey through the tension and the stress of the movement and energy that the stroke, line, or mark transmit, in which writing, hence calligraphy, is beyond being a tool that serves, instead an autonomous art form and platform to convey personal interpretations that are formed during this doctoral research.

Fig. 76 presents the trilogy of works entitled *Strikes vs. Strokes vol. 7*, which consists of three pieces planned as complementary with each other through the movement of the Chinese brush that creates a stain on the surface, also through the exhibiting way that makes it perceived as fragments of the one unit, once again. However, each unit is created with one touch of the brush on the surface. The fragments are decided by focusing on the marks of the brush that reflect the tension of the interaction here. The hand's action and the tool's reaction are rough; we can say that this series, and indeed many contemporary calligraphers, reflect their calligraphic experiences and practices within these interactions.

Fig. 76. *Strikes vs. Strokes vol. 7*, Almıla Yıldırım, Sumi ink on rice paper, 2022, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.





Lastly, Fig. 77 and 78 show the last and only pieces of this series written by ruling pen with the same concept as the earlier examples observed in part "7.3.1. The Series of *Pen Testing*." The idea of experiencing the ruling pen with the same concept but with a different attitude in the sense of presenting, exhibiting, or framing them, in which the visual image of them will differ from the earlier, is a trigger point to perform it once again. While in the first series, "*Pen Testing*," it is preferred to create it as an ongoing activity on long paper sheets to take attention to how a calligraphy is an arduous form of art that is needed to do constant practice over and over again, for long hours; however, here, it is decided to capture a fragment from it, in which the strokes with stains seem to be in motion, and the energy is intended to be transmitted to the audiences through this visuality. Because apart from constant practices to acquire the skill, the dominance of the material, and gaining muscle memory, contemporary calligraphy cherishes the spontaneity that calligraphers can experience and focus on the exact moment.

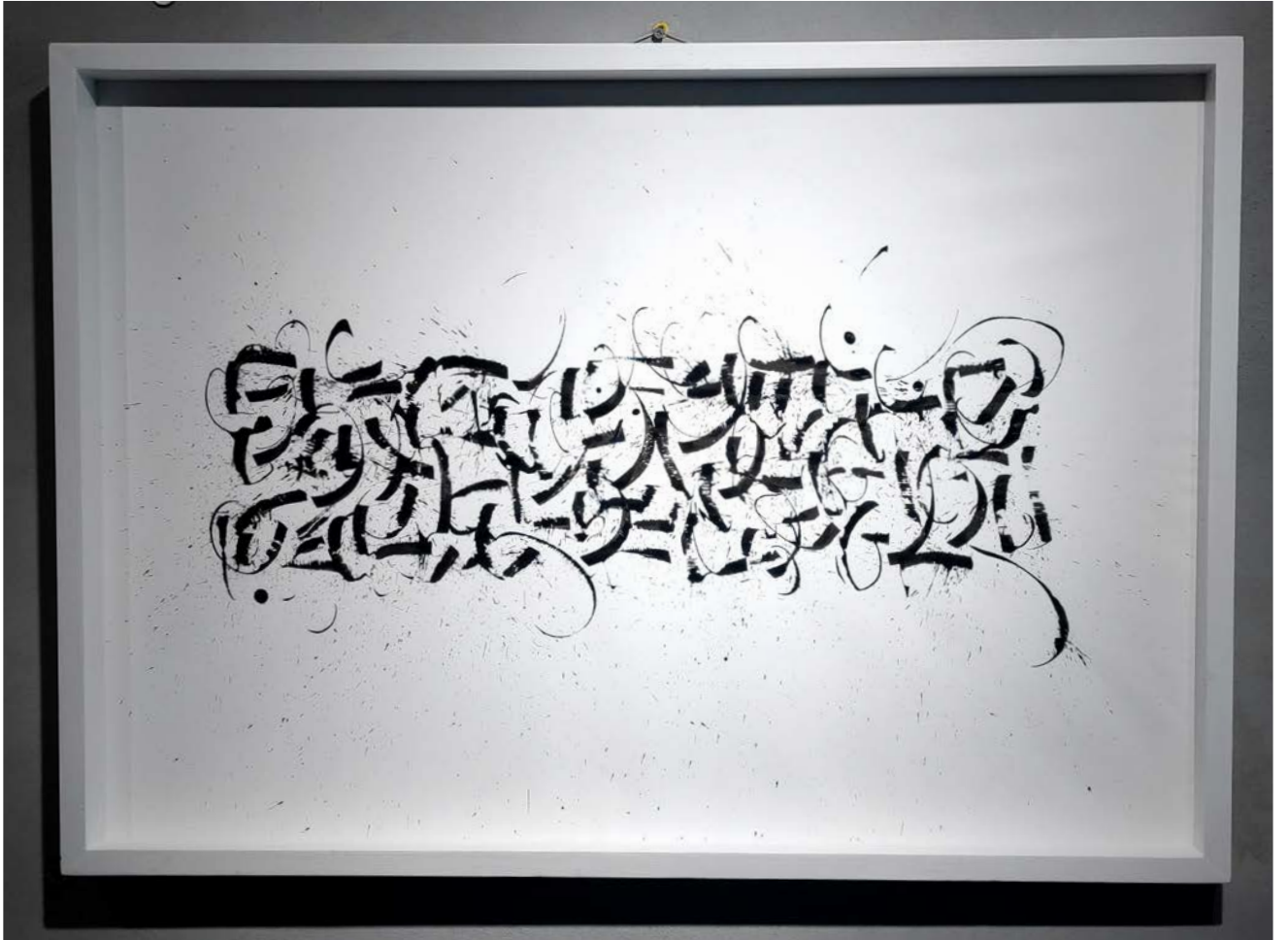


Fig. 77. *Strikes vs. Strokes vol. 8*, acrylic on coated paper with ruling pen, Almıla Yıldırım, 2022, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

While Fig. 77 is appreciated as a whole piece, Fig. 78 presents the three separate fragments of the works that are written by the ruling pen. However, with the replacement of these three pieces, it is intended to be perceived as one piece. In other words, the different pieces of three different performances were tried to be exhibited with the perception that they complement each other and aimed to convey the results of the whole research as a conceptual and visual experience to make a reference from the piece to the whole.



Fig. 78. *Strikes vs. Strokes vol. 9*, Almıla Yildirim, Sumi ink on coated paper with ruling pen, 2022, Foto. credit: Almıla Yildirim.

With my personal calligraphy practices, we have seen how contemporary calligraphy can provide an artistic platform that relates to the background and understanding of the calligraphers as artists themselves.

As presented and examined here, my tendency in contemporary calligraphy is to focus on gestures that can be assessed as extended calligraphic understanding in the realm of the western mindset that covers past and present as references. Various features and dynamics carry a similar attitude to the Far Eastern calligraphy tradition conceptually and practically but take their roots from the traditional aspect of calligraphy. That means my own personal attitude is also inspired by the western calligraphy tradition, as well as carrying the features of Far Eastern and Middle Eastern calligraphy.

While I practice writing with calligraphic background and mostly calligraphic tools, when the image or a mark appears, that image or mark lets me decide how to put the next move or gesture of the hand as a process-oriented work. There is spontaneity as well as foresight that comes with constant practice and tactile knowledge about western calligraphy. I prefer to be familiar with the materials; hence, I envision how it reacts on the surface. The word is not a springboard for me; instead, I prefer to focus on the stroke itself, which is the fundamental part of the writing, hence calligraphy. Because I prefer to focus on the process rather than the result, that means, without considering the composition as a final result, I intend to perform writing-like gestures as an act that reveals the moment, as well as the accumulated skill and competence as an artist.

It is not a reductionist approach; on the contrary, it is the base of the writing, hence calligraphy, which is classified under the act of writing.

After presenting an in-depth technical and conceptual explanation of my own work, I, as a designer, prefer to call myself a writer since all my gestures are a part of the writing process. That means the broad range of my work conceptually and technically has one common point: the idea of writing with a calligraphy background. Hence, rather than classify my work depending on the technique or materials, I chose the main concept of writing, which means the act and action is the determinant to define. As mentioned earlier, my theoretical and practical knowledge provides a vision to combine the past and present with my personal interpretation of writing, which is a kind of mark-making. The core point is the intention to write of the hand.

As a final conclusion of my personal practices of calligraphy, the goal of proposing authentic approaches to the question about contemporary calligraphy was achieved, and my own strategy and language was developed in relation to analyzed contemporary calligraphy practices, as well as traditional western calligraphy, Far Eastern and Middle Eastern calligraphy cultures.

## CONCLUSION

This research offers a comprehensive examination and broad perspectives of contemporary western calligraphy. The conclusions that emerge after the investigation presented in this part show that all hypotheses pointed at in the Introduction are supported due to the accumulated theoretical and practical study conducted through this research. This issue will be discussed in detail in this part, and the conclusions reached on the hypotheses will be presented.

As stated in the introduction, one of my research hypotheses was that "The boundaries between calligraphy and artistic practices have dissolved by the practices of the current calligrapher, who reflect the expression through calligraphic practices. That means the contemporary calligraphy mindset represents freedom from its traditional limitations of technical and conceptual burdens." Conceptual and technical differences between the tradition and contemporary calligraphy that is discussed in Chapters II, III and VI point at this hypothesis.

It can be stated that contemporary and traditional western calligraphy, visually and conceptually, represent different features. These differences were determined through the current calligraphy practices observed from various perspectives that were examined in Chapter VI through the studying of calligraphic works of selected calligraphers and their statements with cross references with the accumulated knowledge gained from Chapters II and III about the definition, description of western calligraphy, and also the dynamics and features of the traditional western calligraphy.

What was encountered through the current calligraphy practices is that there is no single meaning or mission as in the traditional western calligraphy, in which ancient scripts were utilized to write/copy, preserve and convey the written text mostly in the form of manuscripts -particularly in the Medieval periods when ancient writing tradition was in its heyday. This issue was discussed in Chapter II and Chapter III.

In the meantime, this issue refers to the shifting attributed position of the calligrapher/scribe/writer. As mentioned in Chapters II and III, ancient scribes were craftsmen assigned with writing/copying the text, whether they were enslaved people, monks/nuns, or laypeople. They were supposed to execute their mission by following the rules related to the task of writing. The text was meant to be read. Thus, the exact script form was required to be written well, according to the script's and the form's ductus. A specific technique and skill needed to be practiced and acquired by ancient scribes to become skilled ones. It was a duty in which the scribe was not allowed to interpret or reflect personal attitudes.

On the other hand, as Chapter VI shows, contemporary calligraphers mostly subtract the text's literal meaning. One of the most significant common features of contemporary calligraphy are employing gestures -the core units are mostly seen as lines, strokes, marks, and traces contributes as complementary elements of the calligraphic



composition. In other words, rather than writing a readable text, calligraphers practice the gesture of the hand/tool, which became one of the main features of contemporary calligraphy.

Even if various contemporary western calligraphy works consist of recognizable letters, words, or text, it is observed that these recognizable written signs are used as springboards or channels to express and convey the individual perception of writing/calligraphy. Some may not employ any readable/semantically understandable text that does not refer to any kind of language or a writing system but is still assumed to be related to calligraphy through the idea of writing that communicates and interacts with the viewer/audience unconventionally -without demanding an act of literal reading.

Eliminating the text or any other readable or recognizable signs points to the shifting mission attributed to the calligraphy, not just visually but conceptually. It seems calligraphy being more related to the individual who becomes a performer of writing/calligraphy in their unique way by offering complex conceptual and technical ideas, as well as feelings and emotions through these gestures, rather than the verbal meaning of the writing does.

Moreover, the differences between tradition and contemporary are seen through technical execution, as well. Chapter III shows that Western calligraphy evolved around tools and materials, mostly related to the broad edge material -feather, bamboo or metal nib- called manuscript culture. The scripts were also transformed based on the necessities and the available materials' physical features. Hence, it can be said that the techniques and possibilities were limited and strictly related to the materials and tools. However, as Chapter VI shows, current calligraphers have various opportunities to employ a broad range of tools and materials that can leave a mark since they mainly focus on the gesture of the hand/tool. Using different materials that satisfy the calligraphers depending on their calligraphy works allows us to witness quite a variety of applications technically. In other words, the more calligraphers there are, the more different concepts and techniques are encountered.

For these calligraphers, the conventional way of using the word becomes something insufficient to express personal attitude, which seems to start to illustrate the calligraphy through the visual factors of the writing gestures, strokes, lines even stains. When the readable text may provide or at least intend to convey the thought or the message of the written text, it seems it is not enough to reveal the emotion of the calligrapher; however, through the visual power of the gestures that are loaded with the tendency is preferred to convey beyond the literal meaning of the text.

For this reason, it can be claimed that the contemporary calligraphy mindset represents freedom from its traditional limitations of technical and conceptual burdens of ancient writing perception that mentioned above. That means the boundaries between calligraphy and artistic practices have dissolved by the practices of the current calligrapher, who reflect the expression through calligraphic practices that have been discussed in Chapter VI.

Furthermore, as stated in the introduction, one of my research hypotheses was that "Contemporary calligraphy, even with its highly abstract forms that are close to the abstract painting visually, still takes its references and inspirations from its traditions, also the Far Eastern and Middle Eastern calligraphy traditions and interactions with the other art discipline."

As the examined calligraphy works of the contemporary calligraphers in Chapter VI show that personal interpretations and gestures of the concept of a word as an image where grammar, syntax, and logic were often eliminated, makes contemporary calligraphy to be considered close visual resemblance with the abstract painting, also the practices of various modern avant-garde movements, such as Dada, Futurism or Lettrism. When talking about the process and actively being in it, as well as the claims of the calligrapher about their abstract painters' influences on their work, the attention turns to the relation of contemporary calligraphy with abstract painting of the West.

This research shows that (as examined in the interaction between the West-East in Chapters IV, V, and VI), the resemblance can only be discussed in the visual rather than the conceptual. The visual similarity is not determined enough to put contemporary calligraphy and western abstract painting in the same position, even if various contemporary western calligraphers prefer to call themselves painters, such as Niels "Shoe" Meulman.

As shown and discussed through my personal calligraphy works in Chapter VII as well, even contemporary calligraphy employs gestures also accepts drips and drops -accidents or errors- as an opportunity for expressiveness; it differs from automatization or unconscious spontaneity of the western abstraction concept as mentioned in Chapter IV.

Chapters VI and VII show that contemporary calligraphy study is a long process that starts with studying ancient scripts, tools, and techniques to gain calligraphic skills. Because even talking about contemporary calligraphy, the first step begins with acquiring insight into theoretical and practical knowledge about traditional calligraphy, as seen in Chapters III and VI, also mentioned in Appendix B.

As stated in this research, calligraphy, in its nature, consists of accumulated knowledge, also craft, and tacit knowledge concept as well as artistic expressions. That means whether a calligrapher creates highly abstract forms that closely resemble western abstract paintings, due to the strong relationship with its tradition and references from various cultures and disciplines, it cannot be said that the abstraction of calligraphy is the same as a western abstraction. Through the concept of process-oriented practices, the phenomenon of mistakes of distortion, in which the accidental blot, mark, or naturally occurring stain can be assessed as a starting point for some extraordinary interpretation. This is the issue found through the various contemporary calligraphers, as well as mine, that appreciation of calligraphy started evolving around. Calligraphers start with the tradition of going beyond. That

does not mean rejecting the tradition; instead, it covers the tradition and advances in an accumulation manner. That comes with constant practice to gain conceptual and technical competence. No matter how spontaneous their works look, contemporary western calligraphers still know or envisage where to put the next stroke with the writing attitude. In other words, whether the piece looks like a painting or not, it contains the act of writing at its core.

Furthermore, looking at the abstract painters of the West, Chapter IV shows that various western abstract painters of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were inspired by Far Eastern culture, painting, and calligraphy. The gesture started to be employed consciously by these painters through the loose brushstrokes, which reveals contemporary western calligraphers who point at these painters as inspirations, subtly discussing the Far Eastern influence indeed.

For contemporary calligraphy, abstraction, in a sense, became a vehicle to convey the expression. However, it is crucial to be careful whether focusing on the stroke or a line is necessarily assessed as a reflection of the tendency to create an abstract form as in Western abstract art's context.

As presented in Chapter IV, the abstraction concepts are totally different between the East and the West. Western painters employ gestures in the program of abstract expressionism with a lack of conscious control that became a fundamental way of expressing the unconscious, the innermost of the artists. In addition to the lack of reference to the western abstract understanding, the solid and sharp reference of the Far Eastern abstract concept from the past and culture showed the diametrically opposite of both abstract themes directly related to calligraphy. Hence, it can be claimed that these mentioned abstract feature of contemporary calligraphy concept closely resembles Far Eastern calligraphy rather than abstract expressionism. That means even the contemporary calligraphy, by various calligraphers, called abstract calligraphy, it should be understood from the framework of Far Eastern calligraphy, where there is no rigid distinction between writing and painting as discussed in Chapter IV.

In other words, it can be claimed that contemporary calligraphy, even with its highly abstract forms that are close to the abstract painting visually, still takes its references and inspirations from its traditions, also the Far Eastern and Middle Eastern calligraphy traditions and interactions with the other art discipline.

First, it will be appropriate to show the references and inspirations from the past -the tradition of western calligraphy that is demonstrated in Chapter III and VI with the accumulated knowledge to discuss the part of the hypotheses that is underlined as "Contemporary calligraphy, even with its highly abstract forms that are close to the abstract painting visually, still takes its references and inspirations from its traditions."

With its highly abstract forms, contemporary calligraphy cannot be assessed as a departure or rejection of the tradition. Even if it seems the rigid boundaries are disappeared between calligraphy and western

abstract painting, contemporary practices still take their references from the past both in a practical and technical sense also still treat them as a craft, which is the core of the nature of the calligraphy, whether it is traditional, modern or contemporary. So, it is highly significant to underline this because this issue directly points to the difference between abstract painting and abstract calligraphy, as well.

Technically, a calligrapher is supposed to apprehend and understand the ancient scripts, the forms how they evolved and transformed to understand the mindset of the West in the sense of writing and calligraphy. It is indispensable to acquire the skill because, in its nature, calligraphy is an accumulated theoretical and practical knowledge, an alive entity that continues and evolves its transformation with time depending on the perception of the calligrapher. That means calligraphy consists of the past, the present, and the future theoretical and practical knowledge, open to experiment and interpretation of the calligrapher. It is mentioned that acquired skills and knowledge start with tradition.

Practical knowledge can be exemplified as craft knowledge, in which making or doing is assumed as the main activity. The work is related to tacit knowledge and connoisseurship. It can be claimed that experiential knowledge is highly significant for contemporary calligraphy because it consists of observation and provides data that can lead generate practical and theoretical conjectures, ideas, or suppositions. In the context of research, the experience can be employed as a process and concept. For example, in the process of brush writing, one needs to know how it reacts according to the calligraphy's way of manipulation and so forth. These values are not measured scientifically, but some cases are verbally described or defined. While these definitions provide a general idea and understanding of a specific material, the calligrapher needs another set of information acquired experientially. Even if one is informed, he/she can only understand fully through experience. Calligraphy practices can be included in this. Both types of knowledge are essential and must be assessed as complementary to calligraphy, which is gained through these research processes and reflected, as well as examined, through my personal calligraphy works in Chapter VII.

As shown in Chapter III, ancient writing practices were a part of the apprentice system, in which a master was supposed to train his apprentices in a particular craft discipline generally for seven years until his apprentice was qualified enough to proceed with his writing duty as a scribe.

And looking at the present situation, we all embrace the same system to train participants, as shown in Appendix B, in which various courses and workshops participated by me to gain this tacit knowledge within the process. Hence, it will not be wrong to claim that calligraphy training is a long process that requires demonstrating face-to-face by a master or skilled practitioner and can be improved through constant repetition and practice. All point to the issue that western calligraphy cannot be a part of its history and technique, whether one practices traditional or contemporary calligraphy that supports the abovementioned hypothesis.



Contemporary calligrapher knows where to put the next stroke or marks as muscle memory. Since the constant practice provides mastering the technique, knowing and dominating the material, the knowledge of the tradition always exists as an intrinsic tactile knowledge which can refer to the craft nature of western calligraphy. That means there is a kind of preparation in advance and a kind of foreseeing, as well as acting spontaneously that comes with the muscle memory that started with the practices of ancient styles and continues with constant practices. For this reason, it can be claimed that calligraphy preserves the craft feature that requires tangible information and acquiring the skill following the constant practice to master the hand to achieve muscle memory, the coordination of the mind, the arm, and the hand. It brings the consciousness of spontaneity that comes with this knowledge. That proves that contemporary calligraphy does not reject the tradition or the past; on the contrary, it puts it on and advances. This, once again, points to the core difference between abstract painting and abstract calligraphy as a concept.

Apart from mastering the skills and techniques, the creative interpretations and practices are dominated the contemporary Western calligraphy genre, and tradition is assessed as seeing convention as a way of enhancing the perspective of the calligraphic mind. This issue is presented and discussed through the works of contemporary calligraphers in Chapter VI and my personal works presented in Chapter VII.

The strategies of the contemporary calligraphers, which seem to focus on an untrammled, impulsive, artistic expression that has been put into –consist of using the writing instruments and using techniques–fundamentally derived from the individual interpretation of a long-time physical training of calligraphy, the result of which is supposed to come across with natural ease, still looking at the calligraphy heritage –the technical, theoretical and practical knowledge to make it is more personal and authentic.

The creative process once became constant, concentration is supposed to have remained, and the rhythm, hence concentration, leads the motion of the hand to provide establish in the mind of a craft artist. Direct experience, personal envisioning, and also dominating a medium means mastery of it; hence, the nature of the craft and calligraphy can be included in this category for which practitioners tend to create both functional and aesthetic artifacts of their own time, as presented in my personal understanding of calligraphy examined in Chapter VII.

A hand of a contemporary calligrapher presents the gesture as a reflection of accumulated technical and theoretical knowledge of the tradition. It means that when the hand is skilled and executes technique, the mind itself investigates and experiments with the material to create viable or/and functional form in/through the hand. Here, the skilled hand not only makes but also measures and introduces the scale and proportion to form. Thus, proper technique is supposed to be acquired, employed, and combined with appropriate material through skills that establish an echo as an extension of mind and body, whether a calligrapher practices traditional or contemporary calligraphy.

Apart from being a part of the tradition, the ancient scripts are also assessed as inspirations to experiment with new versions that show the established link between the tradition and current practices. These ancient styles are a stepping point to reveal the context of calligraphers' understanding of calligraphy. The ancient scripts and writing tools, and materials provide an opportunity to experiment. However, using a cane or quill pen is a new concept, including the circumstances of the scribes and in what condition they were supposed to work, not coinciding with the time that the contemporary calligrapher was born. That means experimenting with calligraphy in a way that the ancient scribe did to experiment with a new horizon; as Stevens claims (2013), even the ancient writing or manuscript can be expressive from the point of contemporary, which seems to depend on the perception and appreciation of it.

In the meantime, as shown in Chapter VI, Meulman mostly employs fraktur style, stylizing it and mostly repeating the strokes in his own hand, sometimes picks various known scribes and his story, or a poem, a sentence directly or subtly, works as a subject in his works. As a graffiti-based artist, he establishes a close relationship with the ancient scribes and expresses this as a lifestyle, reflects the subjects that tell or emphasize this, and bears traces of the past in their works. It is pretty much the same for Brown, who inspired the italic hand, stylized it, created contemporary versions, also mostly employed the insular script, and take advantage of the Book of Kells -a ninth-century manuscript- as an inspiration. All shows that the tradition is not just a part of contemporary calligraphy with its theoretical and practical parts but is also assessed as a source of inspiration for contemporary calligraphers.

It may raise the question of whether technological developments can be considered one of the significant influences that reflect and even cause the shape of the contemporary interpretation of the Western calligraphers. However, it is a matter of questioning the perception of western thinking in terms of calligraphy. It is evident that technological advances offer various possibilities to comprehensively reach the knowledge about the roots, which is mentioned here as one of the significant effects on contemporary calligraphy. Examining the ancient scripts, structure, form, and historical references that contemporary calligraphers encounter during their practices and research is provided through the facilities of today. Besides that, technological advances cannot be perceived as a major effect of technology on the contemporary mindset. The tacit or bodily experiences, such as calligraphers Meulman, Lampas, or Zega, examined in Chapter VI, seem to describe their embodied experiences of performing calligraphy, in which they have actively involved the process, also present these processes as an act of calligraphy that reminds the action painting of Pollock. It is one of the reasons that these calligraphers feel close to these abstract expressionist painters.

Another part of the hypothesis was "Contemporary calligraphy, even with its highly abstract forms that are close to the abstract painting visually, still takes its references and inspirations from ... the Far Eastern and Middle Eastern calligraphy traditions and interactions with the other art discipline."

As discussed in Chapters IV and V about the mutual interaction between the East and West, and shown in Chapter VI as well, just as western artists emulated and applied gestures from the Far East, the source of performing calligraphy comes from the Far East understanding, too.

*Shufa* (Chinese calligraphy) and *shodo* (Japanese calligraphy) are examined and explained, showing how calligraphy is appreciated and examined as a way of expressing the calligraphy, and calligraphers' well-being, focusing on a process than the result. It is also seen that calligraphy is described with the analogy of music or dance emphasizing a period of performing. Hence, understanding Western calligraphy as a performance and being actively involved in work as an artist has its roots in the Far Eastern mentality. Since painting and calligraphy are not assessed as two different disciplines in the Far East, also the same tools -brush and ink- are utilized to perform. The image-based writing or painting is assessed through the quality of line/stroke and the skill of the calligrapher, the division between writing/calligraphy and painting in the West, particularly related to contemporary calligraphy with wordly images, loses its verdict, and borders dissolve. In other words, calligraphy can be written or painted. The main issue is the writing-like gesture that is executed by skilled artists with calligraphy backgrounds.

As mentioned earlier, the execution of the word as an image has become a common feature of the contemporary mindset. Spontaneous drips and drops of ink, a splatter of the paint create layered marks, a sort of texture that can be compared with the Far Eastern calligraphers, also the gestures of the abstract expressionist with the loose brushstroke that bodily experience with the full participation of the calligrapher. It is evident that influenced by the mindset of Far Eastern calligraphy, in which there is no distinction between painting and calligraphy. Hence, the painter and the writer can be used interchangeably without rigid distinction or contradiction and dispute in the sense of western contemporary calligraphy.

Furthermore, contemporary calligraphers interact with many fields and represent essential stages in collaboration with other artistic disciplines, namely graffiti, graphic design, poetry, music, and dance. Interdisciplinary artists' ensemble combines various artistic discipline under a new name or style, or ensemble from different disciplines collaborate to produce a project which integrates their different art forms covertly or openly, as shown in Chapter VI. The contemporary methods that artists employ have given a new expressive form by framing their own rules of art that let them invent their mediums. Their free form gives space for movement and action. Some of the works fit into the category of traditional or modern calligraphy; sometimes, the text can be provocative and with any concern of conveying the actual message of the text, catching the lyrical elements and deciphering it in layers on the medium, accentuating the individualism of each letter, even each stroke underlining the collaboration between them. Considering the mentioned features of contemporary calligraphy, its eclectic feature, and multi-layer meanings that present open work concept refers to another hypothesis that is presented in the Introduction.

As mentioned in the Introduction, another hypothesis was that "Contemporary calligraphy is accepted as an autonomous discipline that can be assessed as an open area to interpret depending on the calligrapher, including the reader/viewer, demand from them a different level of reading through the image of the word. It represents an eclectic fusion of multi-layer meanings through the open work concept."

In Chapter VI, the practices of various calligraphers discussed and their visually abstract arrangement and plastic expression of writing/ the idea of writing confirms that they carry the perception of a western calligrapher to open the interpretations of the reader/viewer that will reach the broad and beyond meaning from the visual appearance of the idea of contemporary western calligraphy. It is highly dynamic that can be varied and related to the contemporary calligrapher, his/ her understanding of writing/calligraphy fused with the background as well, as practiced and performed as an artistic field that open to interpretation of both the artists and the viewer/reader/audiences.

A multi-layered meaning with its eclectic features causes another issue from the audience's point of view: it becomes highly challenging to decipher the work and assess it as calligraphic, particularly without any background or knowledge about calligraphy. That means contemporary practices are also related to the viewer/audience/reader and the act of seeing; the interpretation depends on the artists' gaze, led to consider an openwork of Eco (1989), which can be assessed as an attempt to comprehend artwork that is considered as open by their author/creator.

Further, it is completed by the viewer/audience/reader, who also becomes a performer in this sense. The works invite the reader/ audience to read the unreadable written signs/gestures on a different level as in the concept open work of Eco (1989), in which there is no definite message but multiple possibilities. It seems to demand from their audiences look through the written work and interpret as well, a different kind of meaning and visual pleasure depending on their background that compels the audience to look at the visual composition rather than try to read.

Contemporary calligraphy offers a new way of seeing/reading the work pluralistic with multiple messages rather than a definite one. This multiplicity provided by the personal interpretations makes the work perceived as in motion and movement that the audience/viewer can participate in as an actual actor. It refers to calligraphy as being a living entity, as in the case of the Far Eastern calligraphy. Hence, it can be claimed that the more contemporary calligraphers there are, the more diversity and interpretations will be. It has become an indispensable feature of contemporary western calligraphy.

This open-work concept of contemporary calligraphy causes terminology confusion, which also probably occurs due to the sharp separation between calligraphy, writing, and painting that is discussed in Chapter II. While ancient writing/calligraphy can be defined easily, contemporary calligraphy is even more difficult to describe or classify.



Writing, hence calligraphy is no longer dependent on recognizable written signs, letters, words, or text.

As stated in the introduction, another hypothesis was that "Contemporary calligraphy has become an art form that stands out with its performance aspect, in which the process and its calligrapher are personally involved in this process as active figures who reflect the feeling and emotion through the gesture of the hand."

As Chapter VI shows, the practices of the contemporary calligraphers also their attitudes present that calligraphy started to be performed as an art form that calligrapher is free to reflect personal interpretation. It becomes a platform to express the feelings and emotions of the calligrapher, which are highly personally related to the calligraphers, their understanding, and their interpretations of the calligraphy. That heralds the multi-layered practices, which do not consist of only one mission or meaning as in traditional calligraphy. In other words, while traditional calligraphy was solely executed as a craft, contemporary calligraphy is performed with a multi-layered approach of calligraphers that heralds multi-meaning in an eclectic way. That means there is no concrete functional aim as in the case of traditional western calligraphy.

Employing the gesture as a representation of the feelings and emotions of the calligrapher is already mentioned; however, as seen in Chapters VI and VII, in which various calligraphers and my personal calligraphic works were discussed, western calligraphy is no longer assessed as a servant of the text; instead, getting close to the idea of an instrument of the calligraphic composition -a visual structure that is encountered as an emotional reaction of the calligrapher. It points to calligraphy performing as an autonomous art form in which the process and its calligrapher are personally involved in this process as active figures who reflect the feeling and emotion through the gesture of the hand.

As seen through the works of Ingmire, Zega, Meulman, Lampas, and Dokins, contemporary calligraphers, creating their own materials and techniques, started to be involved from the beginning. As Zega and Ingmire, some prefer to create an analogy with dance, music, or poetry, transform the calligraphic experiences as a continuum and show this calligraphic experience as an act. That makes us consider calligraphy as a performance, as in Far Eastern calligraphy. This process depends on the calligrapher, the moment, the act, the material, and the techniques, which becomes an activity that the calligrapher tries to control and act spontaneously as an actor simultaneously.

Another research hypothesis as stated in the introduction was that "Since there are no concrete criteria as in the case of traditional calligraphy, contemporary calligraphy has its own genuine criteria that can be ranked as the skill of the hand, which can be able to perform the quality of the gesture."

In chapter II, the definition of calligraphy was discussed in respect of etymological meaning of the word calligraphy, also examined various books from twentieth and twenty-first century. Among all, what was significant the effort of the writer/calligrapher to define, more appropriately, to

describe what calligraphy is. That refers how these writers/calligraphers perceive calligraphy, mostly contemporary calligraphy.

As discussed in Chapter II, calligraphy, as a word while mostly defined as beautiful handwriting or the art of writing beautifully, it refers to the traditional aspect of calligraphy. However, it should be underlined that the word calligraphy was started to be utilized in the sixteenth century, after the time of the printing period, directly affected the scribe and the tradition. That means calligraphy was not used to refer to ancient writing scripts before the sixteenth century. That means calligraphy, as a word, not solely refer to the tradition.

In the meantime, since the perception of writing (*graphos*) and beauty (*kallos*) can be interpreted depending on the time, means while talking about medieval time, beauty is related to function, and writing is related to the spoken word. For today, writing and beauty are dynamic and can represent various perceptions and executions of the calligrapher. That means calligraphy, as a term, can be sufficient enough to use today. The only significant adjective can be the term traditional, modern or contemporary to make the division between the aim and execution of the calligraphy due to the reason that calligraphy can be used as an umbrella term as the term writing.

There are various common points found among the discussion of contemporary calligraphers, namely assessing calligraphy as an art form, a way to express the feeling and emotions of the calligrapher, and calligraphy being beyond representing the literal meaning of the written text. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter VI, contemporary calligraphers present their individual understanding of western calligraphy in a wide range of concepts, both technical and conceptual sense, which lead to a multi-layered meaning that represent by eclectic forms. This situation led the calligrapher to focus on individual concerns and criteria in the realm of contemporary calligraphy.

That means there are no concrete criteria as in the case of traditional calligraphy, which can be determined through the well-constructed letterforms of the utilized script, the same rhythm within the text, that affect the recognition and readability of the script and text. However, the multiplicity cannot provide this one-sided criterion to determine the calligrapher, whether it is calligraphic or not, as well as whether it is a good/true/appropriate calligraphic work or not. It can be claimed that contemporary calligraphy has its own genuine criteria that can be ranked as the skill of the hand, which can be able to perform the quality of the gesture. Hence, the adjectives good/true/appropriate lost their validations. The quality here kind of refers to the good work that represents the sufficiency of the calligrapher that represents the crafty nature of contemporary calligraphy.

On the other hand, the expressiveness and artistry as an art form directly depend how calligraphers understand, appreciate and practice calligraphy. Authenticity, creativity, and uniqueness, both in a technical and conceptual way, become the significant criteria. In other words, the calligraphers themselves become the decisive point, as well as the viewers/readers/audiences.

Calligraphers create their own criteria based on the work and concept. Viewers determine it based on their backgrounds and perspectives that may be transmitted through the lines, strokes, or marks, which points to the openness of the calligraphic mindset of today, which is based on searching for ways to attach a deeper meaning to practices rather than functional reasons, tried to describe their calligraphic practices beyond the traditional concept, which is motivated by the personal perception in the field that requires artistry, vision, and a sense of design. The visual forms and the aesthetic criteria of practices are redefined because of the tendency to abstraction that is seen, which is challenging to call calligraphy in the sense of the traditional aspect. Hence, defining contemporary calligraphy became challenging; however, it can be described through the calligraphers' practices rather than defining what it is.

To sum up, the study of this research focuses on contemporary western calligraphy, which shows that calligraphy is an area and a vast research topic; however, there is a lack of comprehensive studies, which the literature review of this research provides a good collection of western calligraphy as a subject. This literature review, beyond understanding the basics of western calligraphy, shows inadequate evaluations in terms of terminology, and confusion prevails in the realm of calligraphy starting in the past. This research provides an adequate discussion of this confusion and contributes to better framing the terminology in terms of calligraphy under the umbrella term of writing.

Furthermore, this research shows that calligraphy has not changed; instead, the perception of writing, hence calligraphy, has changed, affecting the execution of the calligraphers who are constantly interacting with the world itself, past, present, and future. Hence, discussing the changing face of calligraphy is a wrong assessment because what has changed is not that calligraphy or writing as a potential art platform, but the mentality with the way it perceives and performs calligraphy is the determining feature of the transformation of the calligraphic works today.

Moreover, this is highly significant research to consider contemporary western calligraphy, technically and conceptually, with various perspectives that are presented and underlined to be discussed and considered to understand fundamental features and dynamics behind contemporary western calligraphy.

As demonstrated in the present study, contemporary calligraphy has been strongly linked to the complex historical and cultural background itself, as well as others, which were different from the background in other calligraphy cultures examined in this research. In other words, contemporary calligraphy is already addressed in other calligraphy cultures, principally the Far Eastern and Middle Eastern. That means the Far Eastern and Middle Eastern calligraphy cultures, mindset and practices, and the traditional mindset of western calligraphy are significant reference points to generate the critical approaches to the features and dynamics of contemporary western calligraphy. It will provide a better understanding and comprehend the western mentality

that starts with the concept of writing and reaches today with highly abstract forms that are challenging to call calligraphy. Hence, for contemporary calligraphers, learning the mindset behind these cultures is essential.

With this perspective, it is believed that western calligraphy is assessed from broader perspectives, first understanding the writing as a concept and idea in the West. Furthermore, a better understanding of contemporary western calligraphy depends on a better understanding of Far Eastern and Middle Eastern calligraphy, its history, evolution, and concept, particularly how calligraphy is perceived and appreciated. Rather than focusing on finding various names to describe the contemporary practices of calligraphy, it is crucial to understand the interactions, links, and relations from a comprehensive perspective as presented in this research. It is highly believed that this comprehensive study will guide the calligraphers, newbies, and researchers in the realm of calligraphy to look at and assess from various perspectives, which is seen as a gap in existing calligraphy literature.

Since calligraphy is a living entity, a multi-layered discipline that takes its references from various disciplines, it can be claimed that the research about contemporary western calligraphy is a promising area that can be transformed related to the features of the era and the mindset of the calligrapher/artists/writers.





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## FIGURES LIST

### II. DEFINING THE TERMS: WRITING, LETTERING, TYPOGRAPHY AND CALLIGRAPHY

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- Fig. 113: misterkams. (2019, September 19). Instagram. Retrieved August 12, 2021, from <https://www.instagram.com/p/B2lhB59ilAW/>
- Fig. 114: misterkams. (2020, March 12). Instagram. Retrieved August 12, 2021, from <https://www.instagram.com/p/B9nJhLJKHCJ/>
- Fig. 115: Society of Scribes. (2022). *Viktor Kams: "Journey of a Scribe."* Youtube. Retrieved June 12, 2022, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=duSiQrJQLkI>.

## APPENDIX A

Fig. 1: Harris, D. (1995). *The art of calligraphy: A practical guide to the skills and techniques*, DK Adult.

# APPENDIXS

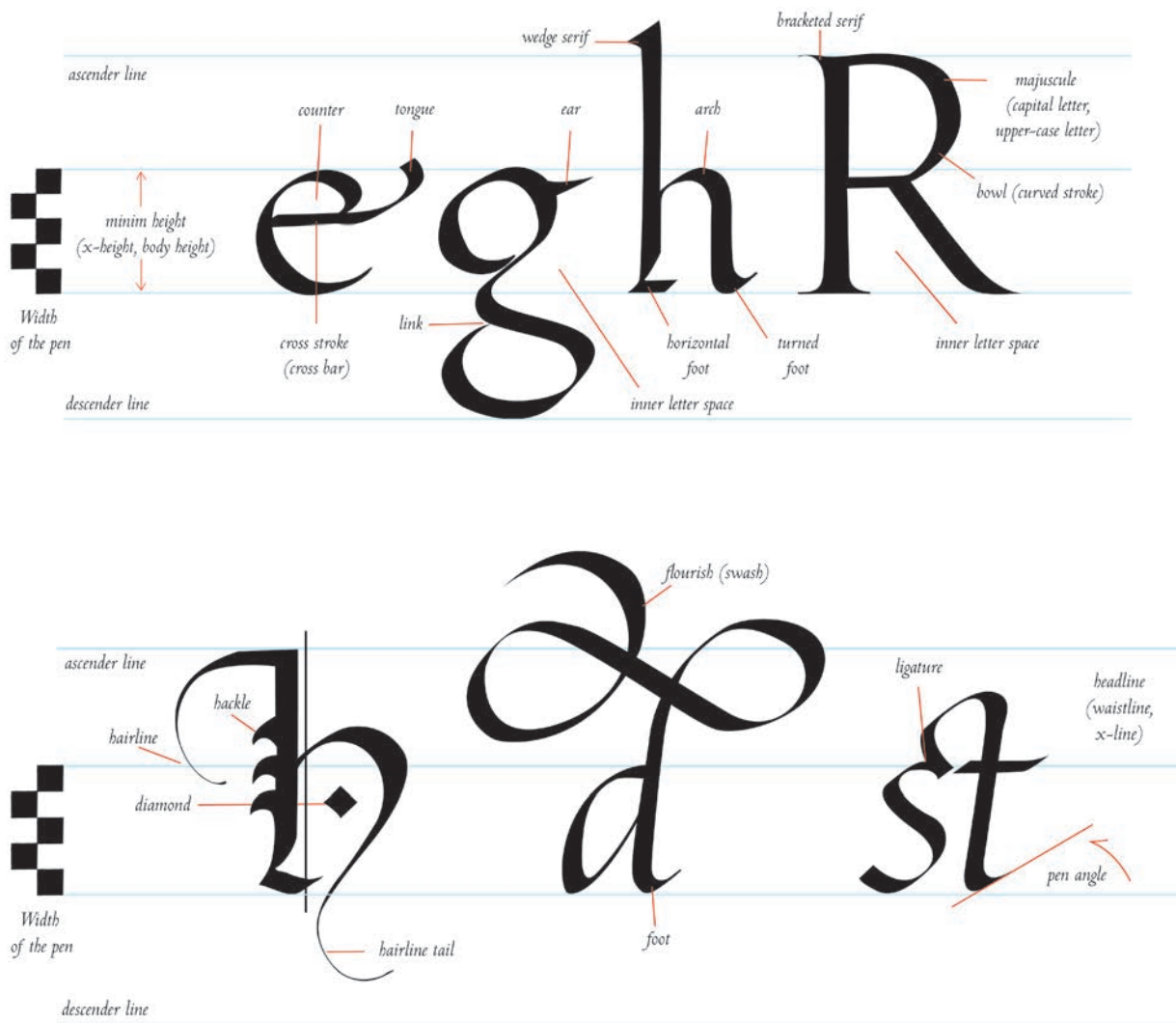
## APPENDIX A

### The vocabulary of pen

It is essential to become familiar with the vocabulary of calligraphy, which will provide information to construct scripts, acquire the skill and practice regularly, moreover identify and determine the influence of western calligraphy tradition on contemporary calligraphy practices.

Fig. 1 shows parts of the calligraphic letterforms.

Fig. 1. Vocabulary of the pen,  
Source: Harris, (1995: 6).



## Building calligraphic stroke

Each letter in any letterform is created by a series of strokes drawn in a particular order. They may be straight or curved. Considering the letterform of the Latin alphabet, many basic strokes that construct the form of a letter are similar. Practicing these basic strokes will facilitate the construction of the letterform with the basic movements of one's hand.

The examples of the strokes illustrated in Fig. 2 can be tried out with broad-edge writing material. The basic strokes that shown below are the essential components of all calligraphic letterforms. The shapes and angles vary depending on some features such as the types of the alphabet.



Fig. 2. Basic pen strokes and the direction of pen movement, Fig. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

## Pen angle

Every western ancient script is performed with the writing material held at a specific angle. While writing the letterform, holding the writing material at a specific angle consistently create thick and thin strokes on each letter automatically, which gives the letter its specific distinctive and characteristic feature.

Thick and thin strokes of calligraphic letters are produced with the movement of the pen. When the pen is moved parallel to the edge of the nib, it produces the thinnest possible stroke. Whereas moving the nib at  $90^\circ$  with respect to the thin stroke, it produces the widest thick stroke as shown in Fig. 3.

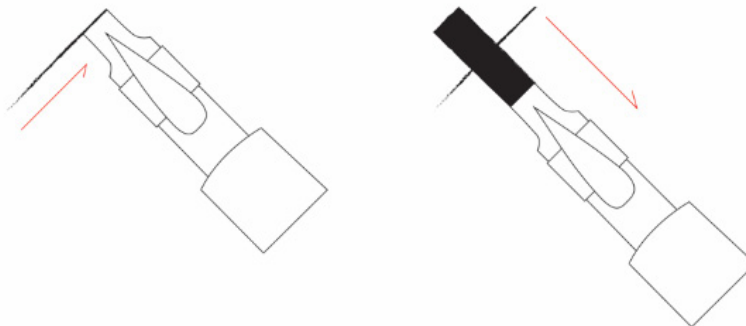
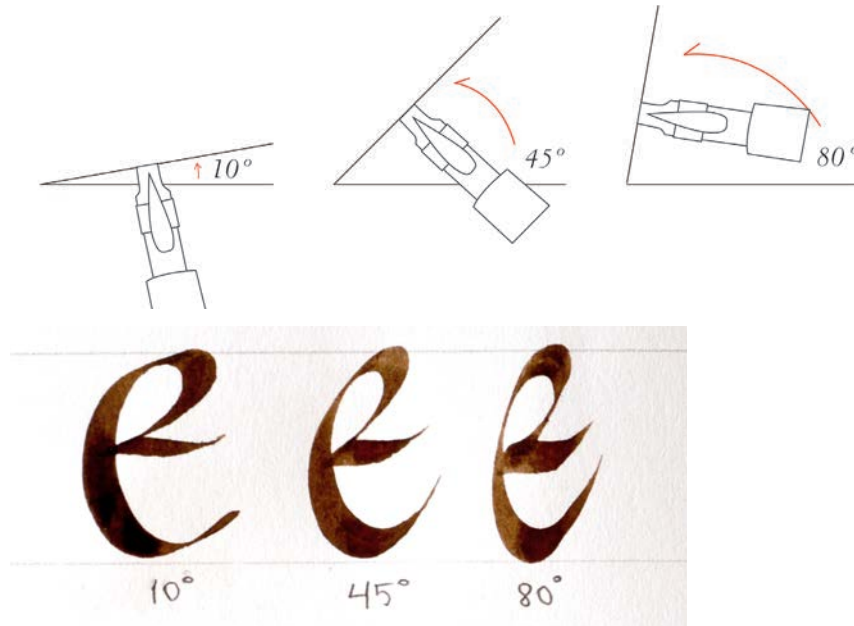


Fig. 3. Writing the thin and thick strokes, Fig. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

Thick lines are drawn by using the entire width of the nib by keeping the nib edge flat on the surface. The aim is to make a smooth and even line. Thin lines are drawn by holding the nib at a certain angle and sliding it sideways along the thin nib edge.

Fig. 4 illustrates the letter "e" in three angles: 10°, 45°, and 80°. It can be observed that these specific angles give different forms to the letter "e." While writing with a 10° angle, the form of the letter "e" is much broader and round than the letter "e" written with an 80° angle. For this reason, when writing a text, a change in the writing angle will entirely cause a change in the appearance of the written text.

Fig. 4. A letter "e" is constructed by different pen angles, Fig. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



**Making a ladder and drawing the guide-line**

Every alphabet has its unique standard height that is usually written based on the width of the nib chosen. While learning and practicing a new letterform, the nib width and pen angle are given as a guide to constructing that specific letter.

Making a "ladder" is one of the first steps before starting to write a calligraphic letter. Holding the pen nib horizontally, making a series of modules (squares) that each set next to the other, as shown in Fig. 5, creates the ladder that can be performed in both ways shown. Each square here is precisely equal to the width of the nib used; thus, each module is called "nib width."

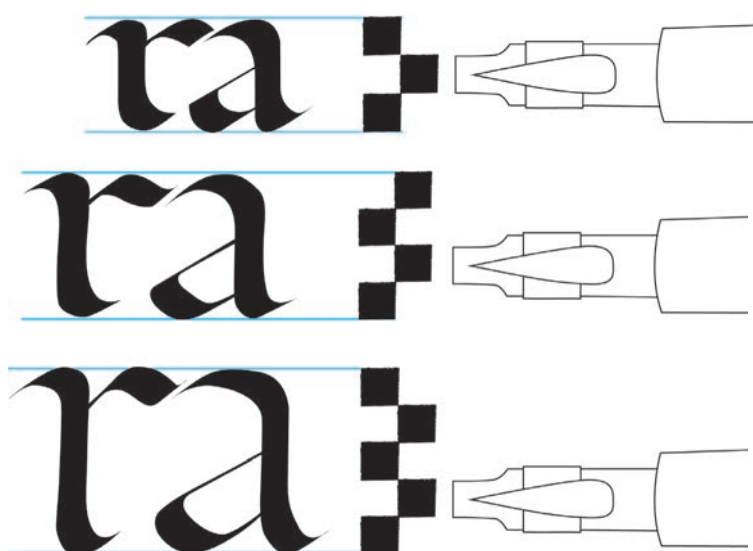


Fig. 5. The letter "r," and "a" written 3, 4, and 5 nib module, Fig. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

As can be observed, establishing the nib width by using the ladder helps to determine the height of the writing lines on the page. It will be guaranteed to draw the correct proportion of the letter forms in respect of the style and the nib width is chosen, namely 2 mm, 3 mm, or 4 mm, etc.

Furthermore, as seen in Fig. 5, the number of the module used directly affect the width and length of the letterforms.

### Ductus

The order and the direction of the strokes in calligraphic models are executed by a system of numbers and arrows as can be observed in Fig. 6 in almost every source and books that consist an instruction of the certain script of calligraphy and called *ductus*.

Fig. 6 illustrates the ductus of the letters "a" and "e" as examples, and it shows the ductus of the letter "g" in an alternative way. The numbers indicate the total strokes required to form the letter, and the arrows with direction show which way the pen is supposed to move. The letters "a" and "e" both is required three strokes and can be constructed by following the number in a given order.

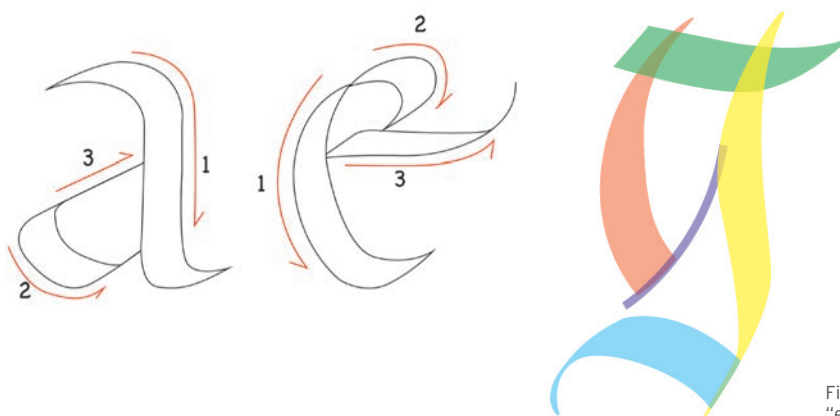


Fig. 6. The ductus of letter "a," "e," and "g," Fig. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



On the other hand, the letter "g" is expressed with colors. The rank of the strokes is not presented; however, it is possible to see the strokes and how many moves are needed to construct the letter "g."

The choice of the model alphabets in an attempt to illustrate the influences of the historical scripts of calligraphy on contemporary practices takes particular attention in this part.

As mentioned before, the study of an accurate historical script as a model has high importance in the education of practitioners, not just at the beginning of their training. However, even professionals regularly consult the historical script for various reasons that is mentioned in Chapter III and VI.

## APPENDIX B

During the research period, after the first interaction as a designer with contemporary practices in the field of calligraphy with growing interest, observing the current courses, workshops, and online training programs prepared by professionals working in the field, became crucial to examine and gain practical knowledge of Western calligraphy. For this reason, the following pages of this part consist of workshops, courses, and various online courses I participated in as an apprentice that are mentioned in Introduction and Chapter VII. There will be a piece of brief information on their context as references for future investigators.

Courses here can be grouped under two headings. One focuses on the practices of ancient writing styles, and the other focuses on modern and contemporary practices of writing styles. However, it can be claimed that even for experimental practices, learning the basic principle of the related script's history and form is given a significant emphasis in classes and assumed as the first point that is needed to be considered.

Courses conducted in the workshops based on apprentice-master relations and traditional experiences in the medieval time, mentioned in Chapter III, apart from today's technical advances, will be ranked here in chronological order on the following pages.

In these courses, after a slightly theoretical background about the history of the letterform, the next step is knowing the tools and materials that have significant roles that affect the form of the letters, and they can be assumed as extensions of the practitioners, who are supposed to learn to manipulate them.

The fundamental focus is on understanding and executing the *ductus* and form of the letterform of the script.

Practices start with learning the form of all letters, then practicing the alphabet, following the details, and constantly writing the words or texts.

### **Copperplate with Amanda Adams**

04.09.2014, Barcelona, <https://sites.google.com/site/keith7amanda2/>

#### *Class Description*

This is the first workshop that I had participated in Barcelona with Amanda Adams<sup>1</sup>. The style that is practiced Copperplate scripts, a calligraphic writing of the seventeenth and the eighteenth century, particularly known through the writing master and engraver George Bickham (1684-1758).

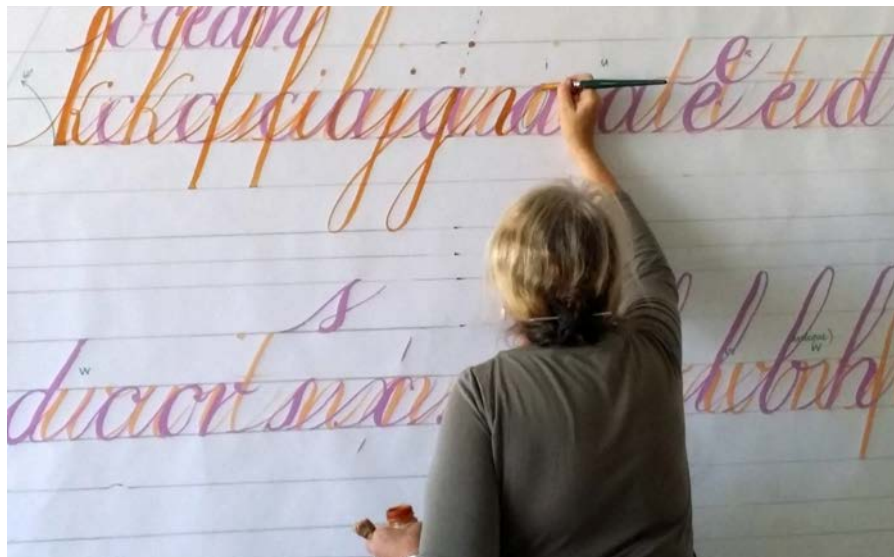
<sup>1</sup> Amanda Adams, an American based calligrapher, studied with Fellows of the Society of Scribes and Illuminators (SSI), handling many calligraphy courses and workshops in France and Spain with his working partner and husband Keith Adams. For more information: <https://sites.google.com/site/keith7amanda2/>.

With brief historical information about the script and the alternative styles with its' flourishing, the class starts with the ductus of the hand, and practices each individual letter form, as shown in Fig. 7, both minuscules and majuscules following with the alternative forms of capitals with various flourishes. Here, it is essential to learn how to hold a pen, with what angle and what amount of pressure to perform the thick-thin strokes of the letterforms, which is mainly affected by the construction of the letterform.

It can be claimed that Copperplate is not suggested to practice as the first hand to be learned due to its techniques that is required advanced knowledge about the manipulation of the material, which is not easy to begin with, especially with the pointed nib.

It is believed that it is better to start with the broad edge nib rather than the pointed brush, which needs to be selected appropriately depending on the nib's flexibility -hard, medium, soft- and the hand pressure, which may vary for each writer.

Fig. 7. Showing the copperplate alphabeth, Amanda Adams, Barcelona, 2014, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



## Art Nouveau Capitals with Keith Adams

05.09.2014, Barcelona, <https://sites.google.com/site/keith7amanda2/>

### Class Description

The second workshop I participated in was practicing the capital letters of decorative Art Nouveau with Keith Adams.<sup>2</sup>

Here, once again, as seen in Fig. 8, it started with the individual letterforms of the alphabet, and their distinct structure as an international style, especially with its decorative features, also known as the Modern Style, which belongs to the nineteenth century.



Fig. 8. Showing the Art Nouveau Capitals, Keith Adams, Barcelona, 2014, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



<sup>2</sup> Keith Adams, England based calligrapher, studied with Fellows of the Society of Scribes and Illuminators (SSI), handling many calligraphy courses and workshops in England, Belgium, France and Spain. For more information <https://sites.google.com/site/keith7amanda2/>

## Maýusculas. Letras Capiales with Keith Adams

06.09-08.12.2014, Barcelona, <http://www.bcn-visions.com/es/category/cursos-professionals/>

### Class Description

The subject of this course was traditionally practicing the majuscules (upper-case) letters to learn the form, structure, and *ductus* of the scripts. Also, brief information about the history of scripts and the tools and techniques are presented with some detailed tips.

As shown in Fig. 9, majuscule forms cover various hands, including modern letterforms written by pointed nib in a monoline manner and uncial form written with Bamboo, prepared by the teacher during the course. Roman Capitals are another capital style practiced in this course, written with a brush. As mentioned earlier, the technique is highly different from broad-edge, which needs constant repetition of specific moves, as examined in Chapter III.

This course also includes various traditional preparation techniques of the pen and the ink, a remarkable experience that opens the door to experimenting.

Fig. 9. Showing the ductus of various capital letters of the ancient scripts, Keith Adams, Barcelona, 2014, Foto. credit: Almila Yıldırım.





## Caligrafia Gotica Ornamentada with Keith Adams

16.02-04.05.2015, Barcelona, <http://www.bcn-visions.com/es/category/cursos-professionals/>

### Class Description

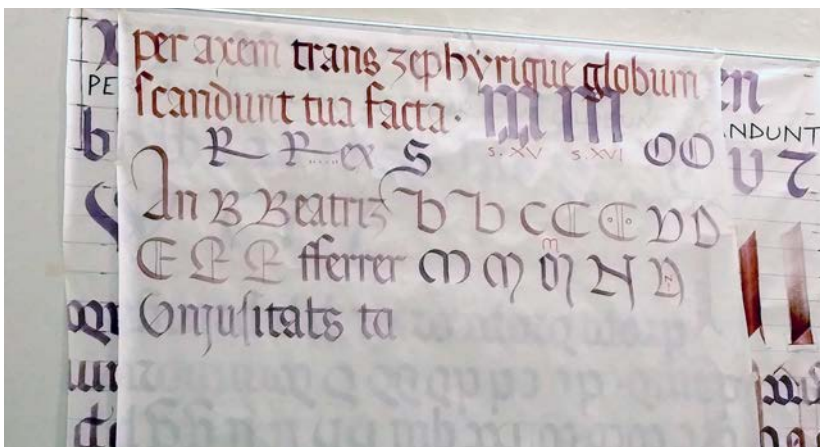
In this course, practicing Gothic writing systems, both formal and informal types, with a selection of decorations, applying with broad edge nib on paper is the subject. Participants, once again, are supposed to explore the *ductus* of the styles.

The learning process started with the basic strokes (Fig. 10) and practiced the individual letters, then words. The teacher provides the example sheets. However, it should be kept in mind that these sheets are generally extracted from ancient manuscripts. For this reason, it should be understood that copying the letterforms of these manuscripts is highly important to understand the exact form of the hand.

Once again, the bamboo is prepared to be used to write Gothic hands due to the appropriates of the material as a broad edge.



Fig. 10. Showing the ductus of various capital letters of the ancient scripts, Keith Adams, Barcelona, 2015, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



## Caligrafía Expresiva with Oriol Miró Genovart

18.03-20.05.2015, Barcelona, <http://www.bcn-visions.com/es/category/cursos-professionals>

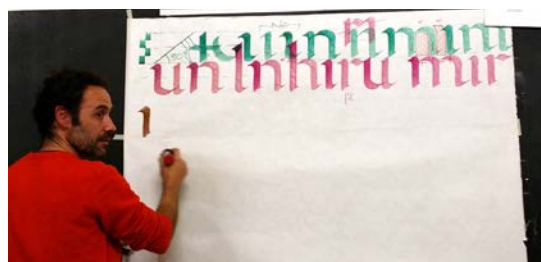
### Class Description

The aim was learning different formal structures, various techniques, and writing materials with Oriol Miró Genovart.<sup>3</sup>

First, it started with the basic structure and formulation of Carolingian minuscule to consolidate the technical bases and knowledge that was applied in preparing expressive calligraphy. After studying the formal interpretation of texts, composition, and color, the second step is experimentation with alternative materials such as feathers, drawing pen, cane, brush, or hand made "cola pen," which gives a chance to experiment with more gestural forms and structures. Recognizing these alternative materials and the possible manipulation techniques were essential.

After practicing the ancient style selected by the teacher with its traditional rules and practices, the next step was to discover the various forms inspired by the ancient styles and interpretation of the calligrapher considering the essential compositional elements, such as space between the letters and words, the color of the page, the overall rhythm, and harmony of the forms of letters. Here, the term expressive covers these features but is still loyal to the form of a letter, reflecting its function as a semantic entity (Fig. 11).

Fig. 11. Showing the ductus and materials, Oriol Miró, Barcelona, 2015, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



<sup>3</sup> Oriol Miró Genovart is a professional calligrapher since 1994 with a graphic design background. During his bachelor, one of the main subjects was Calligraphy that has passionate enough to dedicate his life looking for the perfect opposite forms and immaculate spaces. For more information: <http://www.urimiro.com/>

## Caligrafía con Góticas Potentes with Oriol Miró Genovart

Domestika, <http://www.domestika.org/es/courses/42-caligrafia-con-goticas-potentes>

### Online Class Description

This is the online course<sup>4</sup> of Oriol Miró Genovart, experiencing the Gothic writing system. With the admiration of *Les Grandes Heures du Duc de Berry* -manuscript belongs to the year 1409- and the letters of the great models of German calligrapher Rudolf Koch (1876-1934) -mentioned in Chapter III, exploring all possibilities of the Gothic script (expression, gesture, delicacy, strength, power) are the theme.

The basic structure of the course is the same as the face-to-face courses: recognizing the material depending on the style and the aim of the course, moreover, exploring the alternative hand-made materials -here mimicking the broad edge pen with parallel cut, which is utilized for a Gothic system of writings- are described as in Fig. 12.



Fig. 12. Gothic hand practice, Oriol Miró, Domestika, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



<sup>4</sup> Online workshops are available for everyone and affordable with reasonable expenses. The professional instructors are mostly graphic designers specializing in calligraphy, lettering, and typography, who also actively work in the field. The number of participants in these courses can be observed on the website, and these statistics demonstrate the popularity of these options. These courses aim to provide sufficient knowledge and support the willingness of participants who wish to trace the roots from the world of antiquity through the period that we live in.





## Caligrafia para un Exlibris with Ricardo Rousselot Schmidt

Domestika, <http://www.domestika.org/es/courses/65-caligrafia-para-un-exlibris>

### Online Class Description

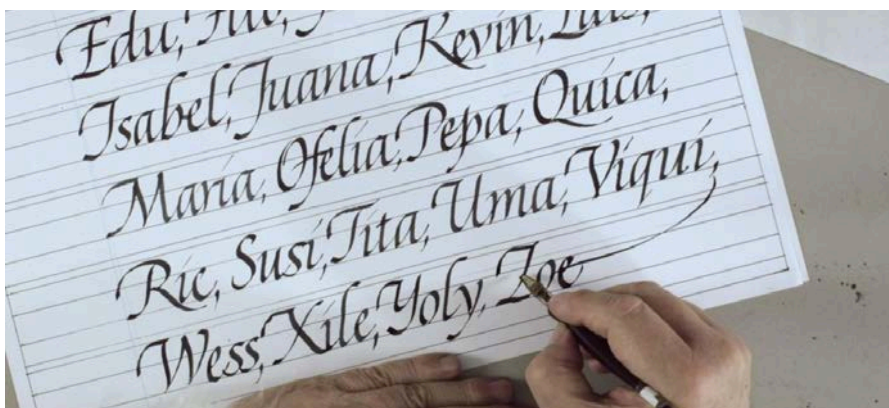
This is an online course about the italic hand that Ricardo Rousselot Schmidt<sup>5</sup> prepares. After numerous exercises, the final project is designing an exlibris written by italic hand.

Discovering the history of script and the necessary tools for writing: pens, ink, and paper is the first step of this course, as the others mentioned before. Thoroughly example sheets provided by the teacher, the participant is expected to follow the instruction to learn the ductus of the script –mode, direction, sequence, and speed at which the strokes or traits that make up the letters are drawn.

As shown in Fig. 14, starting with the individual minuscule letters, then continuing with the random word, including majuscules; the course aims to teach the basic features of the italic hand.



Fig. 14. Italic hand practices, Rousselot, Domestika, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



<sup>5</sup> Ricardo Rousselot Schmidt is an Argentinean calligrapher, specialized in writing, creating and designing fonts, working especially in the field of packaging with his distinguished use of letters.



## Caligrafía y lettering para manos inquietas with Victor Kams

Domestika, <http://www.domestika.org/es/courses/38-caligrafia-y-lettering-para-manos-inquietas>

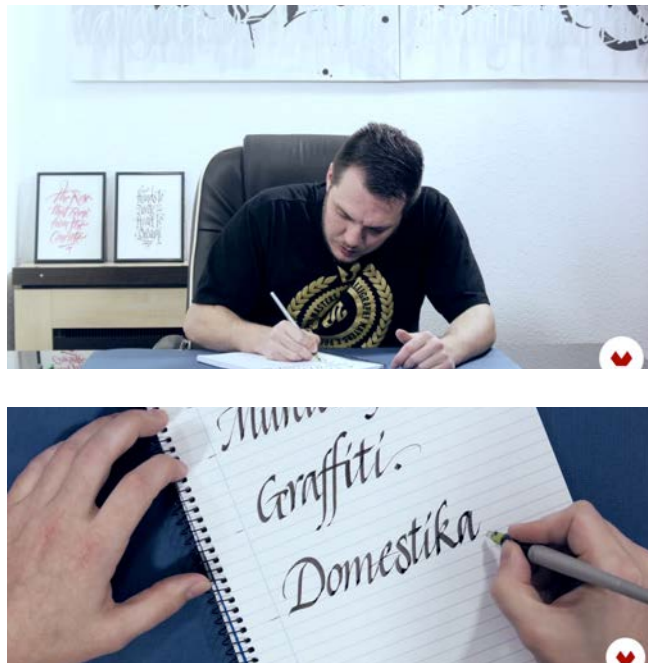
### Online Class Description

Another online course about an italic hand I participated in was the course of Victor Kams (Mister Kams).<sup>6</sup>

The aim was to perform lettering for a printing project. First, it was started with the basics of italics hand. Introduction to the process of drawing and vectorization of lettering from a calligraphic sketch was the second step with learning to use the tool with some basic exercises to write clean shape to be traced. Final step was the digital level where the draft was vectorized and exported. Here, Kams employs the parallel pen that is more compact and practical than the traditional metal nib, as mentioned in Chapter VI. Moreover, rather than using the pre-arranged practice sheets calculated depending on the width of the nib and the style of the writing mentioned in Appendix A, Kams prefers to use a regular notebook with lines without giving so much importance to the exact size and dimension of letterforms as the earlier courses did about the italic hand. Instead, Kams tries to teach the general features such as the inclination of the hand, moves, and movements of the pen, and simple decorative touches inspired by the italic hand. (Fig. 15)

Kams is one of the first designers, and the calligrapher leads me to practice parallel pilot pen at the earlier stage of my calligraphy proximity.

Fig. 15. Italic hand practices, Mr. Kams, Domestika, Foto. credit: Almila Yıldırım.



<sup>6</sup> Madrid based graphic designer, focuses on calligraphy, lettering, typography and graffiti, also one of the members of *Calligrafitti*. For more information: <http://misterkams.com/>

## Insular Script & Celtic Decoration with Amanda Adams

10-17.08.2015, Saint-Antoine L'Abbaye, Isere, France, <https://antebathnotes.wordpress.com/tag/saint-antoine-labbaye/>

### Class Description

The theme of this course is experiencing practicing "Insular Script & Celtic Decoration" in the monastery of Saint Antoine in France.

In the workshop (Fig. 16), much time is expected to be devoted to working on the best piece to present as a course's final project. The complementary methods, likewise the range of materials, provide a solid and informative study that will be valuable in general and furnish some unique insights of our own. The first aim is to learn the basic strokes to structure the insular letterforms, then the ductus of each letter of the alphabet. Here are the basic model and practice sheets, once again provided by the teacher, which are prepared by consulting the various ancient manuscripts. Great importance is given the historical formation and evolution as well.

The personal practices during the courses consist of both the hand and the decoration -the page decoration and the letter decoration. Apart from apprehending the structure of the hand, the paramount importance is learning how to formulate these intricate decorations and understanding their preparation as a composition, which also requires patience and attention.



Fig. 16. Insular Script & Celtic Decoration, Isere, 2015, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



## **Calligrafia Expressiva with Rodolfo Fernández Álvarez**

11-12.11.2016, Col·legi Oficial de Disseny Gràfic de Catalunya, Barcelona,  
<http://www.dissenygrafic.org/catala/home.php>

### *Class Description*

The theme of this workshop is expressive calligraphy with Rodolfo Fernández Álvarez<sup>7</sup>. As mentioned in Chapter VI, it is an umbrella term comprising a wide range of practices of contemporary calligraphers.

In this workshop, pupils explore the processes, evolution, and execution between the sign and the expressive letters to reflect the message. It is focused on writing with a ruling pen. As Lach (2013) states, it is a material originally designed for technical drawing, but now, various types are available to employ for calligraphers. Practicing the ruling pen tool and its possibilities by creating the rhythmic structure between the line, the stain, and the texture is the main aim of each participant's movement and individual gesture.

As in the earlier workshops and courses, the starting point here is to learn the tool, and the manipulation techniques, mainly focusing on how it reacts depending on the various holdings and movements. The nature of this material is totally different compared to the traditional nib, which is supposed to hold on a constant angle that is not meant to change during the writing process of the ancient styles. However, with the ruling pen, different holdings and moves can react differently through the channel of the nib of the ruling pen that allows the regulate the ink flow and determine the line of the weight. Hence, the material, its technique and the possibilities of its potential promises are highly different from tradition. For this reason, it is called expressive here.

The speed of the pen, its tilt, and even the structure of the paper may affect the expression of the lines with the ruling pen. For example, if the paper is heavily grained, the ruling pen resists the flow, or if the movement of the pen is in the opposite direction to the natural flow, it will cause splatters of the ink, which indicates the movement of the hand as a trace.

On the other hand, to write more controlled letters with the ruling pen, one is required to write slowly and be aware of these features to prevent the resistance of the ruling pen. Apart from the potential of this material, the emphasis on the moves of the hand through the splatters of the ink is another main reason to choose it, which puts more emphasis on the moves that underline and reveal the performances of the writer at that time.

Starting with the basic strokes is required to apprehend the potential of the ruling pen. The wide variety of the thin and thick strokes, and how it reacts to the moves and inclinations are features that are required constant practice (Fig. 17).

<sup>7</sup> The professional experiences of Álvarez focuses mainly on visual communication that the experimental and creative feature of his design expressed in the diverse graphic fields he works in. For more information: <http://www.xignica.com/index.php?/about-this-site/#.WQs6oCN97-k>



Fig. 17. Expressive calligraphy practices with ruling pen, Isere, 2016, Foto. credit: Almila Yıldırım.



## Lettering y Rotulacion a Pincel por Deletrista, Adrián Pérez

28-29.01.2017, Martillo Fine Arts Workshop, Barcelona

### Class Description

The theme of this workshop is to learn the technique of sign painting with Adrián Pérez (aka "El Deletrista")<sup>8</sup>.

The practice begins with learning the basic movements employed to construct the letterforms, then practicing the whole letters of the alphabet by following the teacher's instruction and observing the model provided by the teacher (Fig. 18).

Sign Painting has highly different materials and manipulation techniques than western calligraphy. The primary material is the brush with long hair pointed or broad edge tip. The critical point is to learn the movement of the brush through the fingers, which is not the case for Western calligraphy. For this reason, constant repetition is highly needed to get accustomed to this technique. Hence, it can be stated that recognizing the basic rules about the materials and the writing techniques are highly crucial for sign painting.

It should be noted that this process provides a valuable contribution to understanding the evident distinction between calligraphy and sign painting -basically a form of lettering that is discussed and examines the differences in Chapter II. Hence, it is sincerely believed that contemporary calligrapher, to gain the skill and vision, is recommended to feed through various disciplines apart from calligraphy in theoretical and technical ways. Moreover, considering the current situation of the contemporary calligraphy practices examined in Chapter VI, the theoretical and technical knowledge about lettering can provide valuable inside, which makes it possible to adapt or adopt a technique or concept for the future project, since working interdisciplinary without discriminating within the umbrella term writing can be accepted as one of the main features of today's calligraphers. With this assumption, it is appropriate to include the workshops I participated in in this part.

Fig. 18. Sign painting practice, Adrián Pérez, Barcelona, 2017, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



<sup>8</sup> Graphic designer dedicated himself to lettering fulltime, also regularly teaches intensive courses about sign making' and gold leaf application in sign making. He has taught courses at 'Tokyo Letterheads' (2019) and Singapore Signs (2020) as well.



## Lettering Sobre Piedra with Stephen Watts

11-12.02.2017, *Visions Ilustración y Caligrafía*, Barcelona

### Class Description

The theme of this workshop is letter carving on stone with Stephen Watts.<sup>9</sup> First, the participant decides what to write as a word and which style to study. It is required to understand the process, being aware of the material, such as the structure of the stone, the manual labor that is also needed the crucial holding of the chisel, the pressure of the hammer, which angle that is needed to be held, also how deep the one needs to go to achieve the inner shape, the exact dimension that is needed, etc. This is the technique that consists of various differences and details depending on the styles of the letterforms as well.

To study for this workshop, I chose the Roman Capitals, which is the capital style that is first painted on the walls and then carved, as mentioned in Chapter III. I already had participated in the course to learn how to write Roman Capitals with brush (Fig. 19).

Once again with the assumption of gaining a different perspective through learning different techniques and disciplines about lettering, calligrapher can be utilized the process and technique of stone carving, which can lead to a rich interpretation that reflects the future projects in the realm of contemporary calligraphy.



Fig. 19. Lettering carving practice, Stephen Watts, Barcelona, 2017, Foto. credit: Almila Yıldırım.



<sup>9</sup> Stephen Watts is a United Kingdom-based sculptor who studies hand carving. For more information <http://stephenwattssculpture.co.uk/about-4/>

## Introduccion de la Caligrafia China with Jenny Chih-Chieh

02.03.2017, Espai Egg, Barcelona.

### Class Description

The theme of the course is to learn the fundamentals of Chinese Calligraphy with Jenny Chih-Chieh.<sup>10</sup> After the brief introduction about Chinese calligraphy and its evolution, it is crucial to recognize the material for practicing.

As mentioned in Chapter IV, Far Eastern calligraphy's tools, materials, and techniques are highly different from Western calligraphy, as well as its understanding of calligraphy as a primary component of the culture.

The class was focused on just recognizing the materials, learning to use the brush and the basic strokes by following the instructions by performing with Chinese brush, Sumi-ink on rice paper as illustrated in Fig. 20.

Fig. 20. Practicing the Chinese character, Barcelona, 2017, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



<sup>10</sup> The founder of Mellow Sheng - a culture and gastronomy platform with emphasis on natural and Asian food-making processes, oriental tea culture and Chinese calligraphy. For more information <http://www.foodandfun.is/jenny-chihchieh-teng>

## Taller de Rotulacion with Jakob Engberg

03-04.03.2017, *Visions Ilustración y Caligrafía*, Barcelona.

### Class Description

This is another sign painting workshop that I participated in Barcelona in 2017 with Jakob Engberg.<sup>11</sup> It started with the basic information about the material and the technique, following with practicing the letters and the words (Fig. 21).

The focus was on learning the technique, and through various repetitions, the aim was to gain competence and confidence about the material. For this reason, the words are picked randomly here.

Once again, utilizing the valuable experience and theoretical and technical knowledge provides significant motivations and perspectives for the participant regarding lettering. It has to be seen as a possible opportunity for a calligrapher to adapt and adopt various features here to practices in contemporary calligraphy.



Fig. 21. Practicing letterforms, Jakob Engberg Barcelona, 2017. Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



<sup>11</sup> A Denmark-based designer, founder of Copenhagen Signs, with the graphic design background, working with printing, photography, street art and painting, among other fields. For more information: <https://www.copenhagensigns.dk/>

## Brushwriting workshop with Luca Barcellona

30-31.01.2020, *Kaligrafist 2020*, Istanbul, <https://kucukcekmece.istanbul/icerikler/haberler/luca-barcellona-kaligrafist-te-yazi-meraklilariyla-bulustu/31240>

### Class Description:

The theme of the class was to learn the basics of brush writing/brush lettering with Luca Barcellona.<sup>12</sup>

It starts with the presentation of the material. Even though it is called brush writing, the material is not a brush; instead, it is used pen called "Aqua pen graphix" - dual felt-tips, contour point and flexible brush, dye-based and water-soluble pen, mimicking the flexibility of the brush in some level. As in the case of the parallel pen, this brush pen is efficient and easy to carry to use without requiring any type of preparation.

After the brief presentation of the materials, the workshop starts with practicing the basic strokes and then continues with the construction of each letter of the alphabet, with subtle details and alternative forms (Fig. 22).

Fig. 22. Practicing letterforms with Luca Barcellona, Istanbul, 2020, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.



<sup>12</sup> Italian-based freelance designer and calligrapher, also teaches calligraphy with the Italian Calligraphic Association and holds workshops in various European cities. For more information <https://www.lucabarcellona.com>



## Caligrafía y Rock'n'Roll with Ivan Castro

Domestika, <http://www.domestika.org/es/courses/7-caligrafia-y-rock-n-roll>

### Online Class Description

Exploring the possibilities and the expressiveness of the brush through the individual project -making the logo for one of the music bands- and adapting the design to the aesthetic language of the musicians, fusing them with the acquired skills, is a central point of this online course of Ivan Castro.<sup>13</sup> Even though the title is "Caligrafía y Rock'n'Roll," the theme is lettering with a water brush pen. This is another common type used for lettering, with the cartridge system required to be filled with water-based ink (Fig. 23).

As mentioned in Chapter II, while examining the definition of calligraphy and lettering, it is explained that even though these two forms of writing can be ranked under the same umbrella; writing, there are fundamental differences between the two, such as no retouch the letter that is written in calligraphy. For this reason, it can be said that the title as calligraphy may cause confusion in the first place.

In this online course, participants learn techniques of writing with a brush from the hand of Castro, starting with the basic strokes and the possible potential of the brush that led the writer to explore a wide range of different sizes and weight of the lines depending on the pressure of the hand. Hence, it can be said that, as I valued here, different instructors, with their accumulated technical and practical knowledge, can promise a wide range of perspectives to be utilized by participants, even if the theme is the same as it is here.



Fig. 23. Practicing letterforms, Ivan Castro, Domestika, Foto. credit: Almila Yıldırım.

<sup>13</sup> Ivan Castro is a graphic designer based in Barcelona, who specializes in calligraphy, lettering, and typography. For more information <http://www.ivancastro.es/>



## Blackletter, calligraphy workshop with Luca Barcellona

01-02.02.2020 Kaligrafist 2020, Istanbul, <https://kucukcekmece.istanbul/icerikler/haberler/luca-barcellona-kaligrafist-te-yazi-meraklilariyla-bulustu/31240>

### Class Description

The last workshop included in this part is the Blackletter workshop with Luca Barcellona. As underlined above, utilizing the experiences of these masters are supposed to be assumed as a valuable opportunity. Hence, with this assumption, the Blackletter workshop provided a time to discuss and practice the Gothic writing system again with a different professional calligrapher (Fig. 24).

First of all, it has to be noted that "Blackletter," as a theme, is a vast title for a short workshop that takes just two days. As examined in Chapter III, numerous Gothic hands were practiced in Europe between the twelfth and nineteenth centuries, evolving and transforming depending on various features of cultural and social issues. Hence, to be more specific and concrete, it might be better to decide on a more appropriate title.

The instructor provided the practiced forms of Gothic hand here, created with his interpretation inspired by basically Gothic textura and Fraktur styles. The steps are the same as the rest of the courses and workshops mentioned above, starting with the basic strokes, ductus of the hand, and learning the structure of all individual letters of the alphabet, then practicing with letters to apprehend the spacing between the letters and words.

Furthermore, Luca offers various tools to practice, such as a brush with broad-cut hair and a metal nib. This style is his interpretation inspired by the ancient Gothic writing styles, fused with his hand, which requires constant repetition and practice to acquire the skill, internalize and interpret to become one's hand.



Fig. 24. Practicing Gothic hand, Luca Barcellona, İstanbul, 2020, Foto. credit: Almıla Yıldırım.

Hence, it can be stated that this type of face-to-face training in calligraphy is highly significant, as mentioned earlier at the beginning of this phase, for the calligraphy practitioners as a starting point to advance.

They provide a chance to observe and interact with both the master and another participant to utilize the experiences and also an opportunity to learn how one should start to practice calligraphy more efficiently and appropriately today.

It is undeniable that calligraphy is required theoretical and practical knowledge because it has it in its nature as an accumulated skill to be internalized even for abstract calligraphy.

For this reason, it can be said that these studies provides ample support and vast perspective during my own interrogation in the realm of western calligraphy while considering all the accumulated data, observation, and examination of various contemporary calligraphers through their practices and concept that is tried to be located through various inspirations such as primarily Far Eastern and Middle Eastern calligraphy culture and western abstract painters.

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