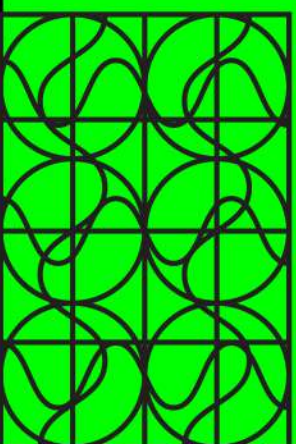


REPOLITICISING TYPOGRAPHY :



CONTESTING
UNIVERSALITY
IN TYPE DESIGN

(001)

FROM

FRAGMENTATION TO
STANDARDISATION

(002)

QUESTIONING
HARMONISATION

(003)

TOWARDS
INTERLOCAL
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*FROM
FRAGMENTATION
TO
STANDARDISATION*

(001)

IN DIGITIZATION, BY
THE NATURE OF THE
PROCESS, LETTERS
BECOME **FRAGMENTED**.

— Robin Kinross (2004)

Modern Typography: An Essay in Critical History

Throughout history, technological advancements have almost inevitably imposed forms of fragmentation onto existing writing systems, materially and/or conceptually reconstructed letters from smaller segments into new composite forms.



Rewinding to the 15th century, when typography still relied on metal type, the Greek alphabet underwent its first fragmentation when European type cutters, accustomed to Latin writings, abandoned the visual history of Byzantine scripts to avoid the complexity they posed for print production. This moment marked the beginning of Greek typography, establishing a style that would continue to shape the alphabet for centuries afterward.

European typographers, during the 15th c., failed to recognise the range of effects their subjective decisions have to, as ANDREW BLAUVELT critiqued,

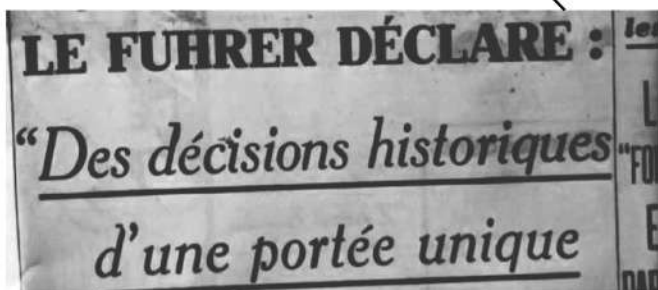
THE REPRODUCTION OF
CULTURAL VALUES
THROUGH THE WORK OF
GRAPHIC DESIGN

but...

— Visible Language (2004)

HOW DOES TYPOGRAPHY REPRODUCE VALUES?

To explore, I adopted the concept of **integral typography** to experiment with this WWII-sensitive headline. Integral typography articulates meaning through the structured arrangement of variables in a typographic environment. As I translated the headline across languages, timelines, and textures, the resulting types began to suggest different political readings of the event, altering the audience's sense of relativity and urgency, thereby shaping collective attitudes toward the subjects they communicate.



総統は、
前例のない規模の歴史
的決定がなされたと宣
言した。

5468652046c3bc687

5720d0a6465636c6

656420746861740d6

86973746f72696320

65636973696f6e732

6620756e707265636

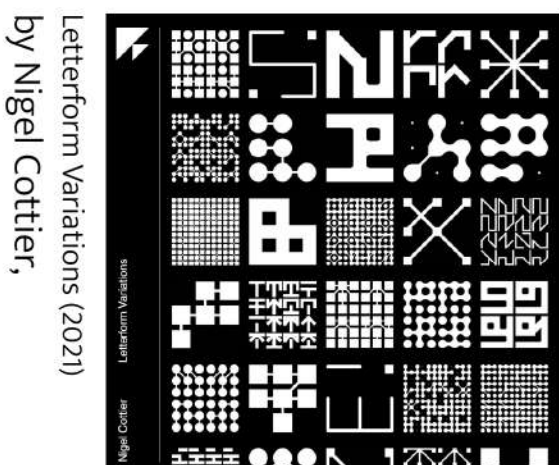
4656e74656420736c

*QUESTIONING
HARMONISATION*

Winding forward to the 21st century, type design has evolved from manuscript to metal type, phototypesetting, and, ultimately, to programmable units in computers. Letters now exist in the form of codes that constitute the Unicode systems. Each letter, regardless of its origin, is now assigned with a unique numerical value universally recognised by computers, allowing them to function within digital environments.

To avoid visual inconsistencies within a Unicode, Charles Bigelow and Kris Holmes proposed **harmonisation**¹ as a design strategy to assert uniformity across varying scripts, encouraging designers to filter out what they classified as “noises²” while retaining what they identified as “signals³” of each script.

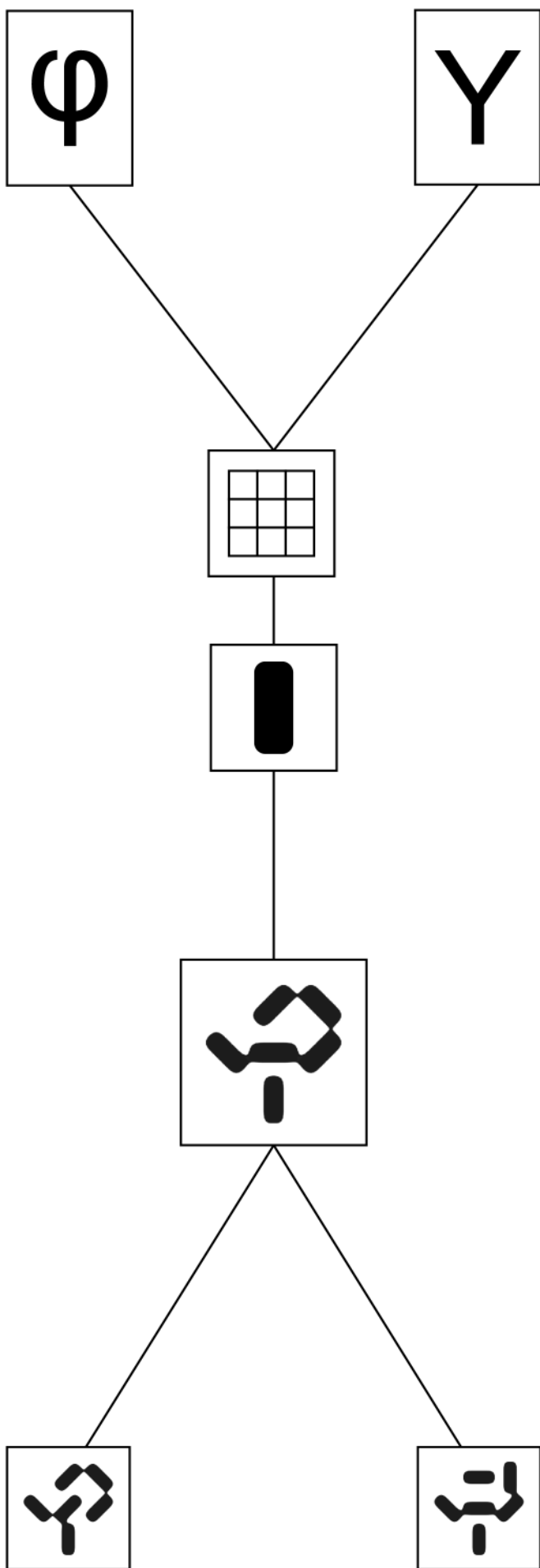
However, when I attempted to design a harmonised typeface functioning across Greek and English via a grid and module-based system demonstrated in



the flaws of harmonisation began to surface. The coexistence of Greek and English alphabet in my outcomes relied heavily on my subjective decisions to preserve or remove selective typographic features, particularly at the cost of the cursive structures in Greek due to system constraints.

1. a design strategy that regularises the basic weights and alignments of disparate alphabets, so that their inessential differences are minimised, but their essential, meaningful differences preserved.
2. the insignificant design artefacts and historical accidents found within a script.
3. the significant, essential, and meaningful characteristics of a script.

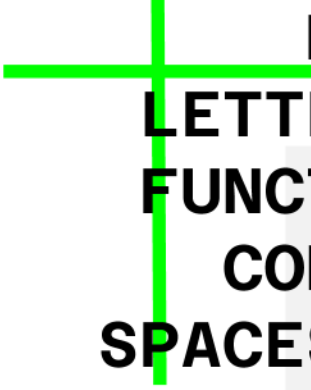
MY HARMONISED TYPES



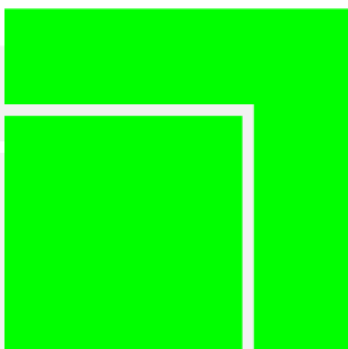
My subjective acts of retention and elimination expose the defects of harmonisation, and reimpose another stage of fragmentation in typography. My method, which compels non-Latin scripts to fit into the rectangular grids, reflects drive towards homogenisation, disregarding the necessary conditions for non-Latin scripts to be authentically constructed.

If the functionality of digital types is supported by modernist ideals of universality founded on asymmetrical globalisation, does harmonisation remain the best solution for a globalised practice such as type design?

Can, or...



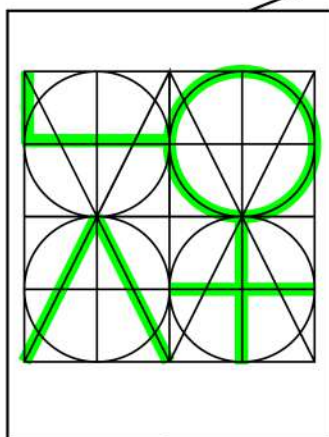
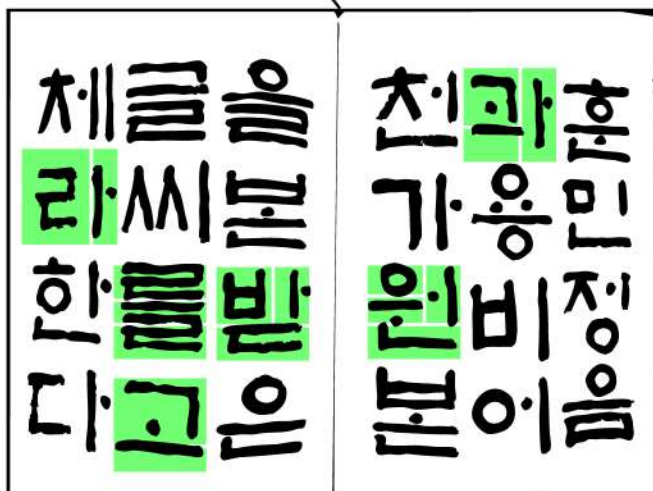
**HOW CAN
LETTERFORMS
FUNCTION AS
CONTESTED
SPACES WHERE
TYPOGRAPHIC
HIERARCHIES IN
GLOBALISED
WRITING SYSTEMS
ARE CHALLENGED?**



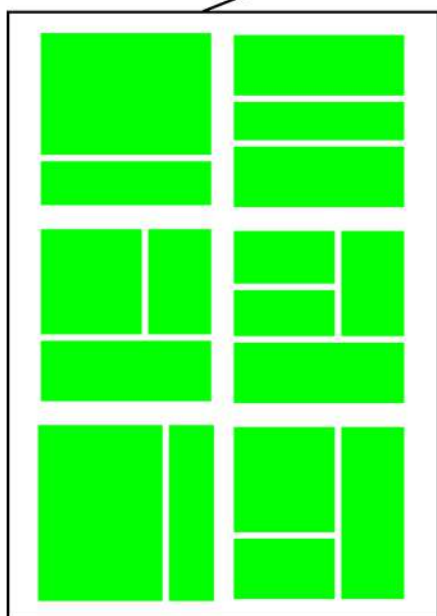
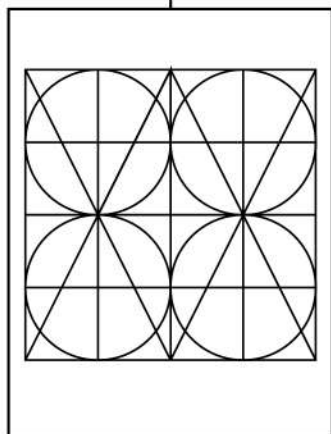
*TOWARDS
INTERLOCAL
FUTURES*

(003)

In resistance to harmonisation, I introduce **interlocality**⁴ into the grid system. Interlocality acknowledges the value of diversity, and resists Eurocentric ideals by celebrating the local characteristics of marginalised scripts. It generates letters via grids whose spatial frameworks integrate the traditional typographic structures of its associated writing systems.

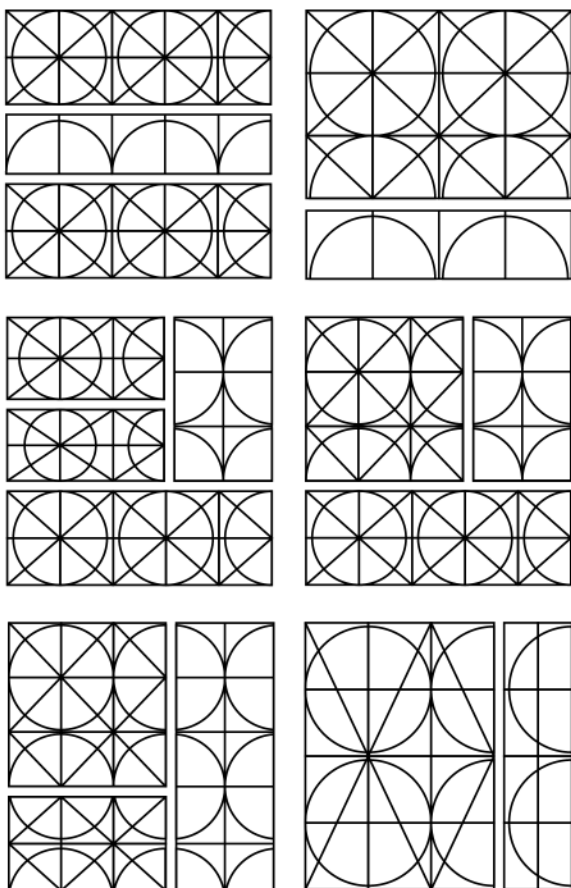


4. a design concept proposed by Jiwon Yu in her interview 'The Interlocality of Typography' (2021) with Rachel Jung.



INTERLOCAL GRIDS FOR KOREAN⁵, MANDARIN⁶ AND GREEK⁷

5.



└
(nieun)

人
(siot)

—
(eu)

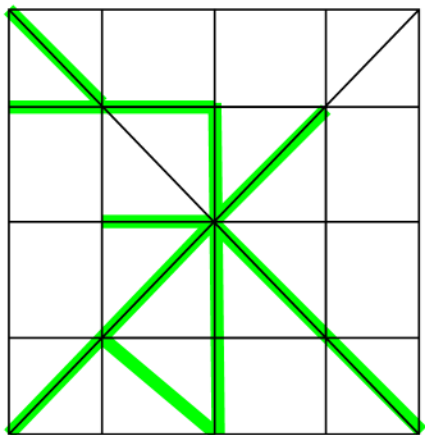
┆
(i)

and

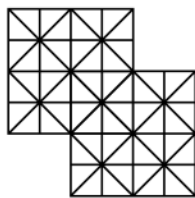
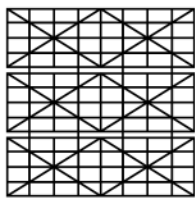
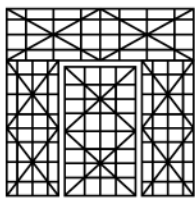
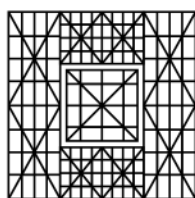
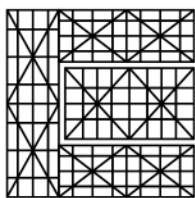
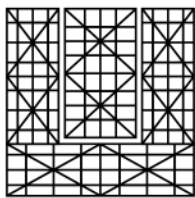
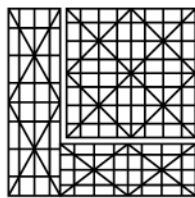
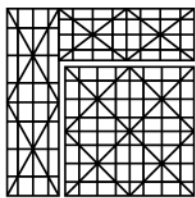
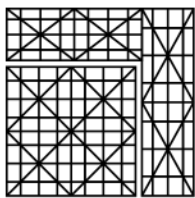
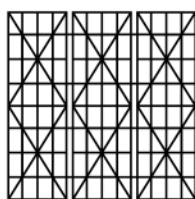
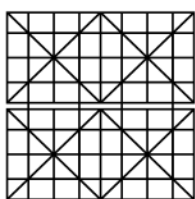
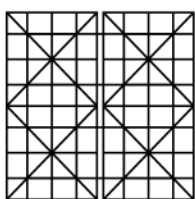
○
(ieung)

The pattern of interlocal grids for the Korean alphabet (Hangul) is based primarily on the articulatory features of consonants and the geometric composition of vowels, mainly:

6.

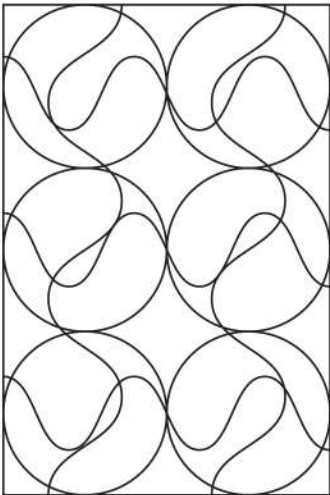


The pattern of interlocal grids for Mandarin (Traditional Chinese) is based on the character 永 (yǒng), a character that encompasses the eight most fundamental strokes used across the entire Chinese writing system.



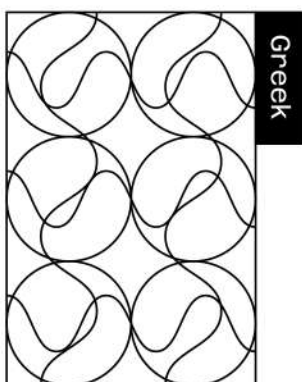
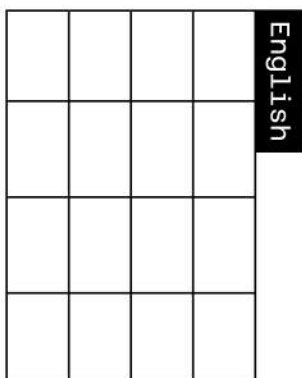
The pattern of interlocking grids for Greek accentuates the cursive, fluid character of Byzantine script, with gently curved lines that reflect the rhythm and continuity of the handwritten letters.

7.

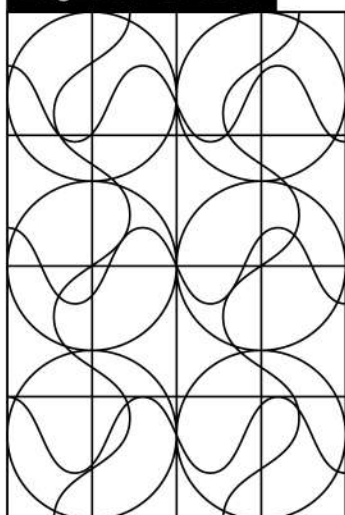


INTERLOCAL GRIDS FOR ENGLISH + (LATIN) GREEK (NON-LATIN)

Interlocal types see letterforms as sites of **creolisation**. Creolisation refers to the entanglement of cultures within a constrained space, resulting in linguistic forms known as **creoles**, which embody elements drawn from all originating cultures that are irrecoverable to their original forms. As scripts of diverse origins are forced into cohabitation, they gradually transform away from their historical selves, producing typographic creoles that retain linguistic meanings but are no longer visually identical to their local cultures.



English+Greek!



An interlocal type embraces this process of transculturation as a method for non-Latin scripts to reclaim domination in this vernacular space marked by the fusion of cultures and languages.

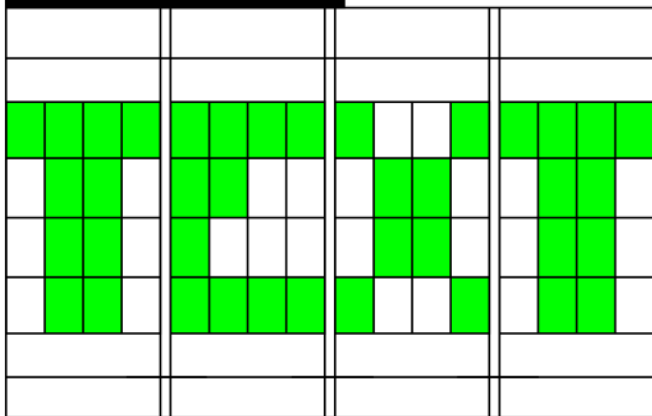
An interlocal grid system deconstructs the structural principles of originating writing systems into three configurations: composition, frame, and pattern.

Composition refers to the directional logic through which a character or letter is formed. For example, English and Greek letters are organised linearly along a single axis to form a text, whereas Korean and Mandarin writing traditionally employ the concept of 天圓地方 (Tiān yuán dìfāng / Cheonwon-Jibang), utilising both x- and y-axes to form a character.

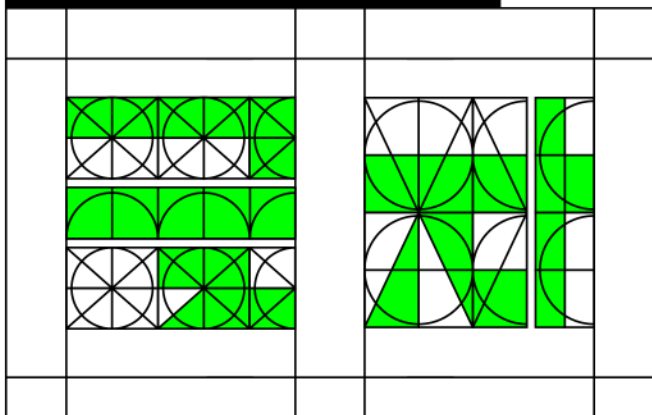
Frame refers to the spatial boundary required for a character or letter to take form. English and Greek letters typically occupy rectangular spaces, whilst Korean and Mandarin characters traditionally exist within square frames.

Pattern refers to the internal structures that facilitate the formation of a character or letter, contained within the frame. As previously discussed, these structures are informed by the traditional typographic structures of the scripts for which the grid is designed.

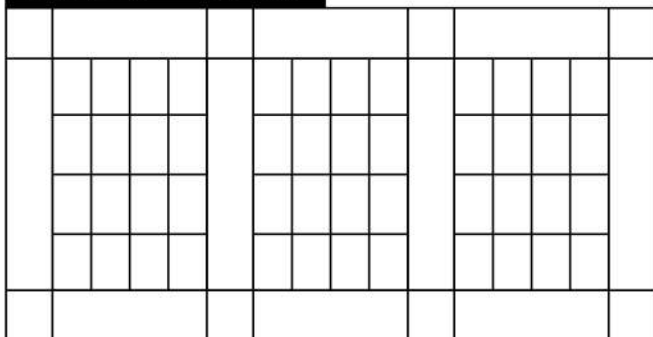
“Text” in English



“글자”, or “Text” in Korean

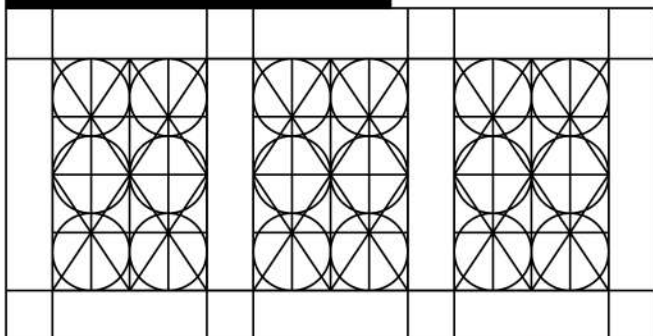


English > Korean



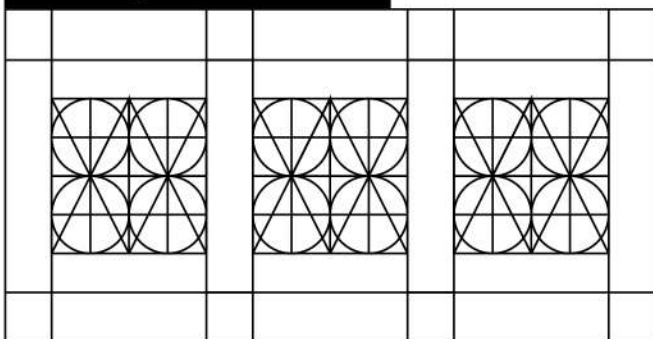
Pattern: English
Composition: English
Frame: English

English + Korean,
but English > Korean



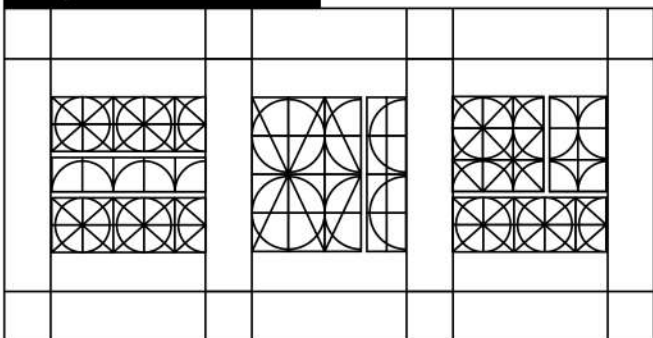
Pattern: English + **Korean**
Composition: English
Frame: English

English + Korean,
and English = Korean



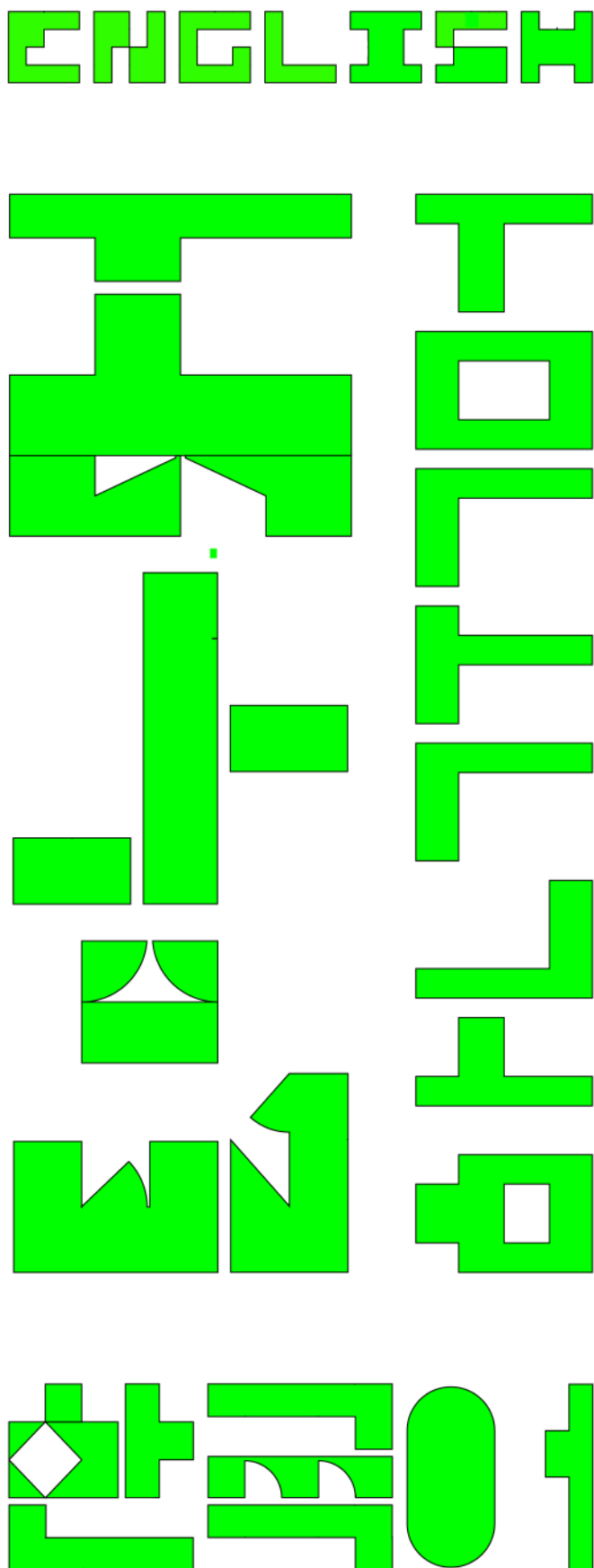
Pattern: English + **Korean**
Composition: English
Frame: **Korean**

English < Korean



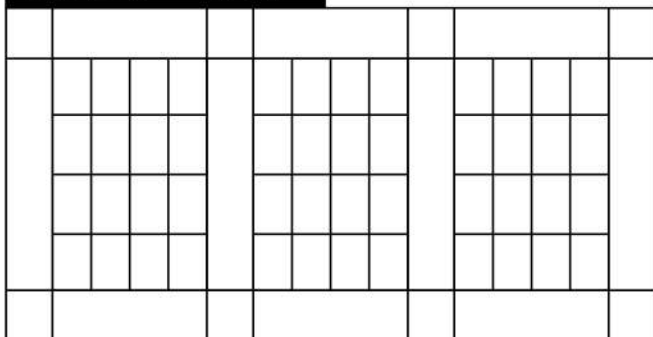
Pattern: **Korean**
Composition: **Korean**
Frame: **Korean**

8.



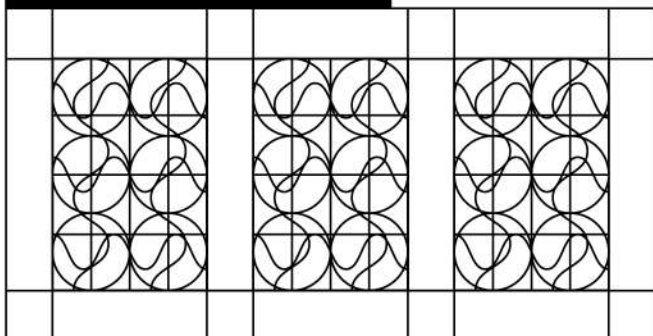
8. the words “English” and “한국어” (“Korean” in Korean) generated through, respectively, the English > Korean and English < Korean grids.

English > Greek



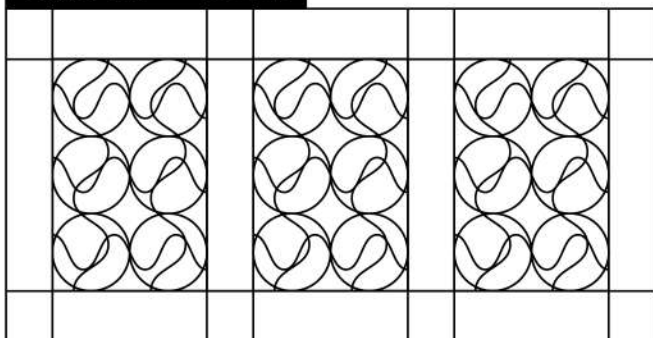
Pattern: English
Composition: English = Greek
Frame: English = Greek

English + Greek,
and English = Greek

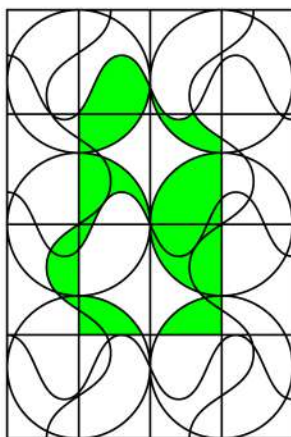


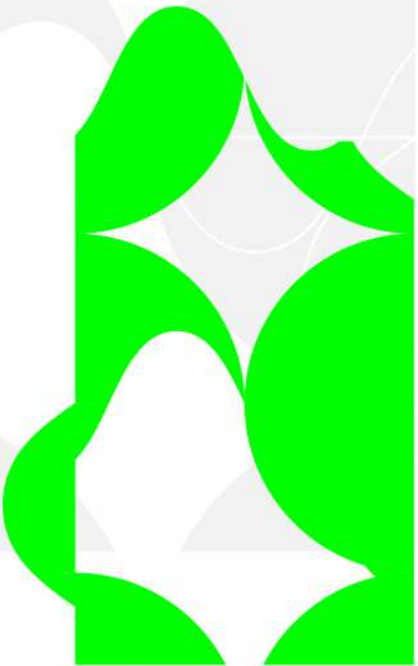
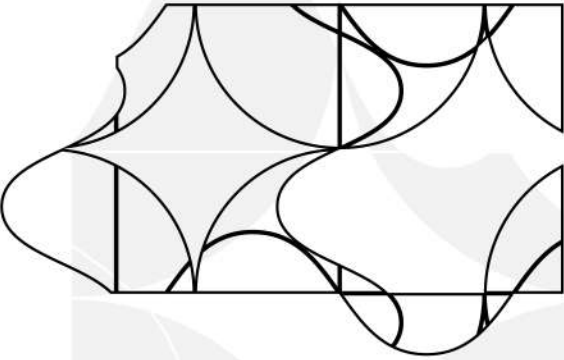
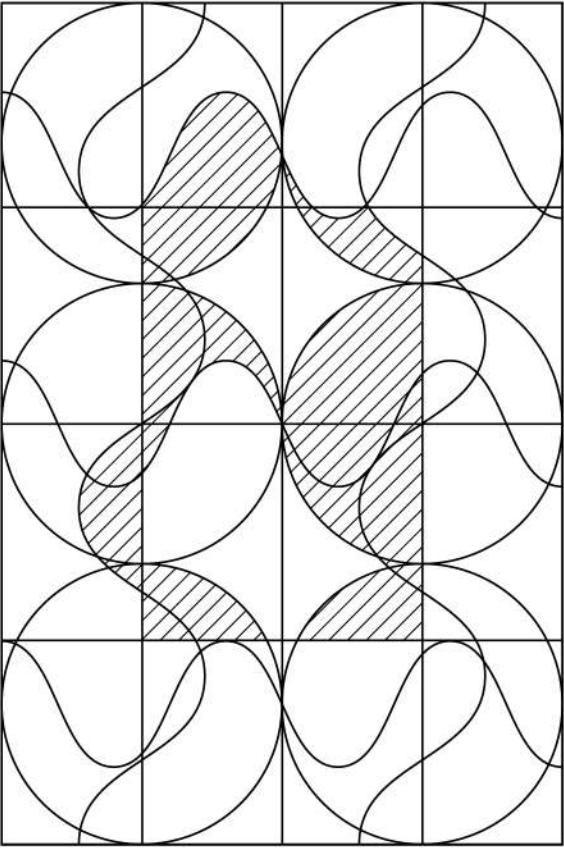
Pattern: English + Greek
Composition: English = Greek
Frame: English = Greek

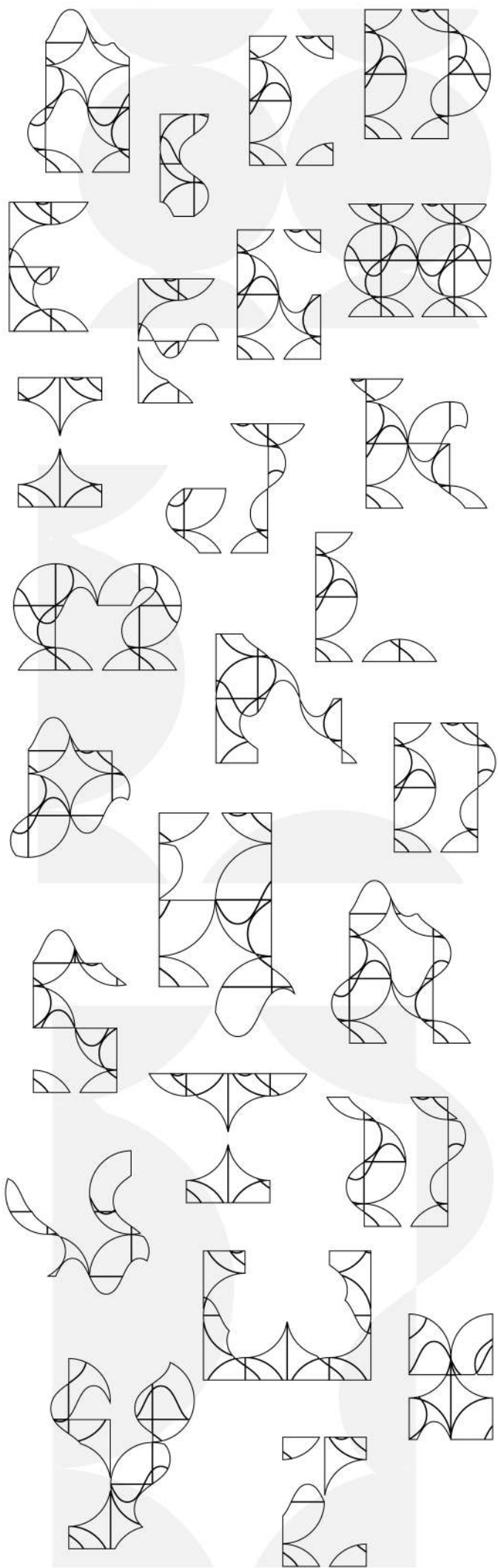
English < Greek

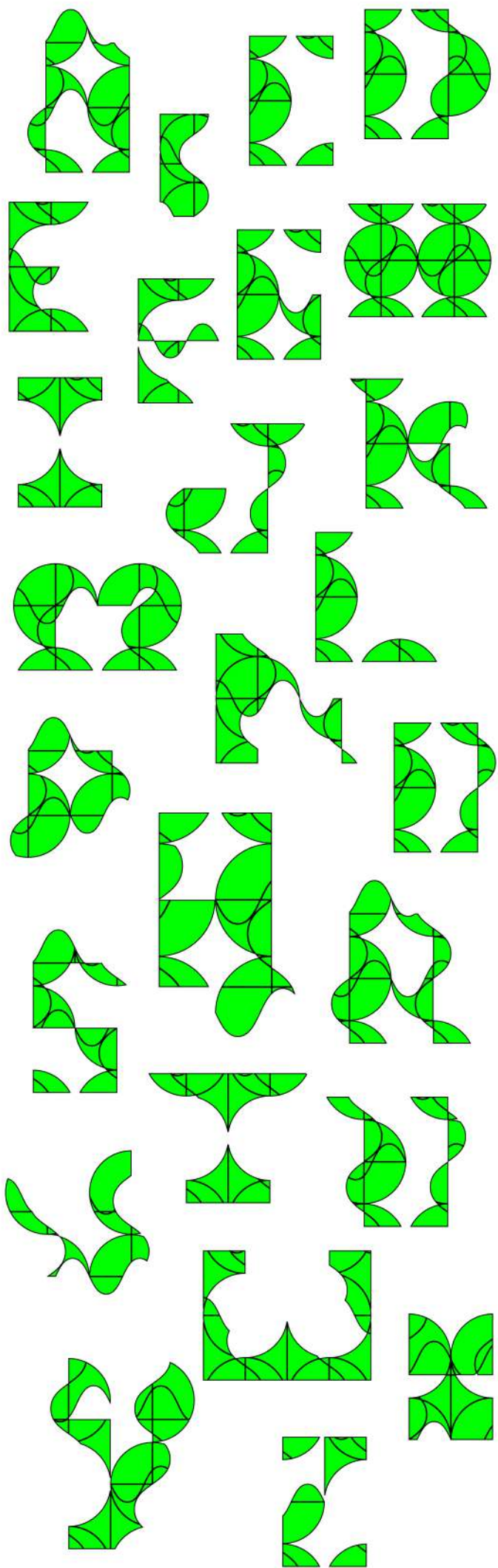


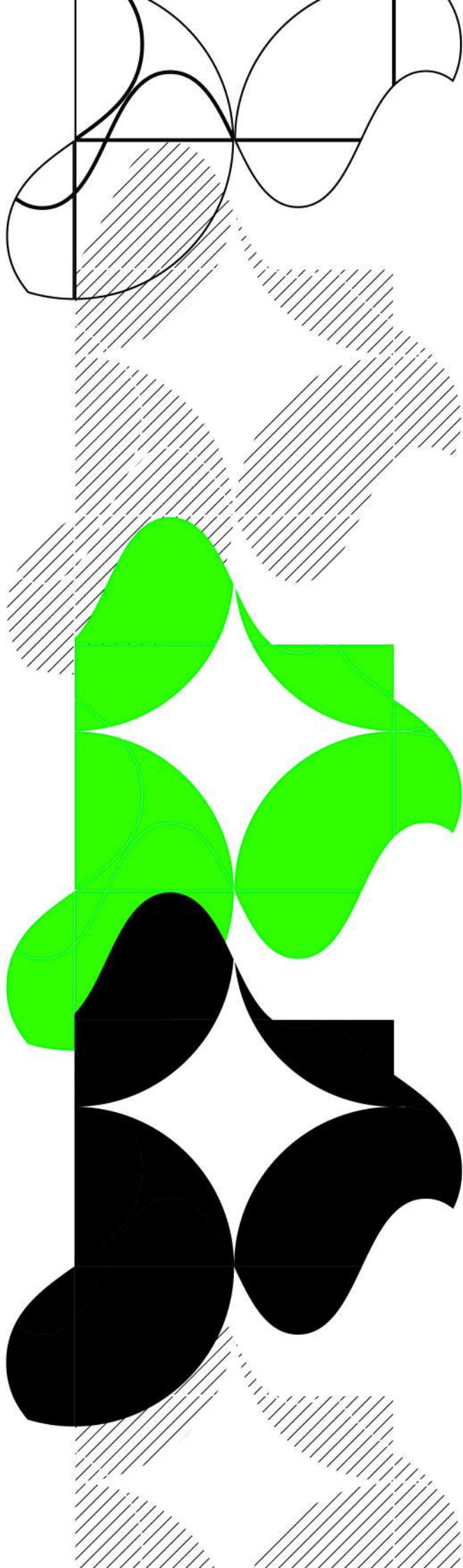
Pattern: Greek
Composition: English = Greek
Frame: English = Greek

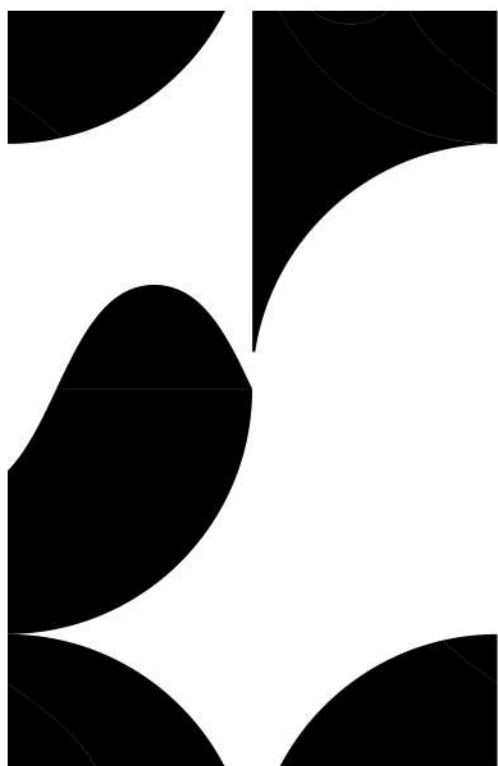
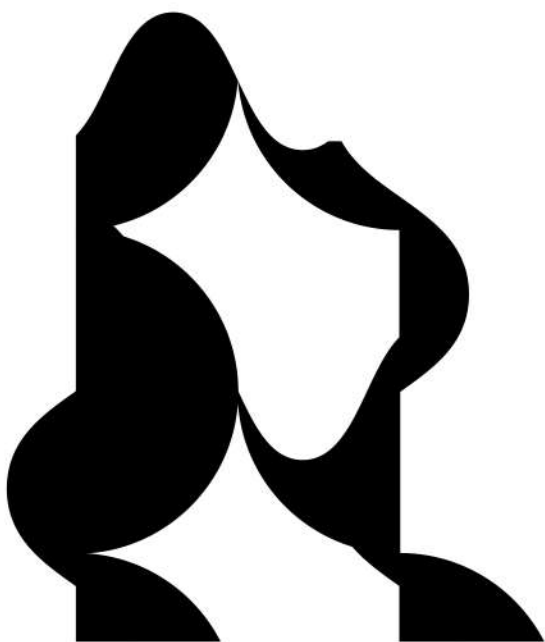












As the visual weight of each overlapping grid shifts between writing systems, the continuous transitions in hierarchy showcase a fluid mode of cohabitation, exposing the incompetence of a unilateral grid system while offering prospective models for a more inclusive design future.

THROUGH INTERLOCAL
TYPES, I AM

CHALLENGING
PRESUMED
TYPOGRAPHIC
HIERARCHIES WITHIN
MODERN TYPOGRAPHY,

DEFINING LETTEFORMS
AS SPACES OF
CONTESTATION, WHILE

QUESTIONING
GLOBALISATION AS A
FAÇADE FOR
IDEOLOGICAL
CONTROL, AND

GRAPHIC
COMMUNICATION
DESIGN AS A SYSTEM
THAT REINFORCES
CULTURAL AND SOCIAL
INEQUALITY.

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