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MA Graphic Communication Design
Unit 2 Positions through Triangulating

Δ3 SYNTHESIS

As globalisation continues to reshape the world in the post-pandemic era, it would be unwise for practitioners to ignore the pervasive influence that graphic communication design holds over the cultural aspects of politically marginalised countries and communities, or their vulnerability if the practice continues to be directed only by dominant parties. My project puts forth the idea of typography as a cultural and political practice, engaging in critical discussions of how visual structures participate in the establishment of cultural identities and the legitimisation of political conditions. Initially investigating the "Singaporean" identity within prints produced between 1959 and 2026 by local community members and government staff, my research gradually scrutinised individual structures within typography in an attempt to understand how non-Western designers are regularly compelled to adopt Western points of view in their practice.

My engagement with harmonisation in the grid systems used in type design reveals how cultural and political hierarchies in typography are reproduced when Latin-derived conventions are privileged as universal standards. This shifted my focus from investigating how typography expresses a non-Western identity to how the power imbalances it imposes between the West and the non-West might be challenged. I examined individual structures within typography and translated this critique into a practical design methodology that reconsiders how non-Latin writing systems could also participate in shaping the visual framework of letterforms. It views letterforms as sites of creolisation and non-Latin scripts as typographic creoles, deconstructing existing structures and introducing interlocality into letterforms, redistributing power across multilingual scripts through spatial frameworks that integrate the traditional structures of their associated writing systems. It invites a reconsideration of the assumptions underlying typographic consistency, legibility, and universality, while demonstrating the potential of typographic practice as a critical framework for fostering more reciprocal relationships between cultures. By challenging the political dynamics within a practice that disproportionately embraces Western cultures while marginalising non-Western ones, it offers a more realistic understanding of the imbalances we face and a more pragmatic perspective on moving forward.

Ultimately, my project proposes a non-Western approach to practising typography to decolonise graphic communication design and its practitioners, contributing to a more inclusive design future and a more equitable form of globalisation. At the same time, it encourages graphic designers to reevaluate their positions and contributions within global power relations, and to explore alternative strategies for continuing to benefit from international integration while becoming more aware of the risks entailed in their design choices and approaches.

Nonetheless, further questions arise from the project's current stage of development. As the project progresses, I hope to investigate other forms of typographic structures, such as graphic compositions, body text, typographic hierarchies, and multilingual layouts, and explore how cultural and political communities that remain absent from official narratives, as observed in letterforms, can be acknowledged

and challenged through these forms as well.

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