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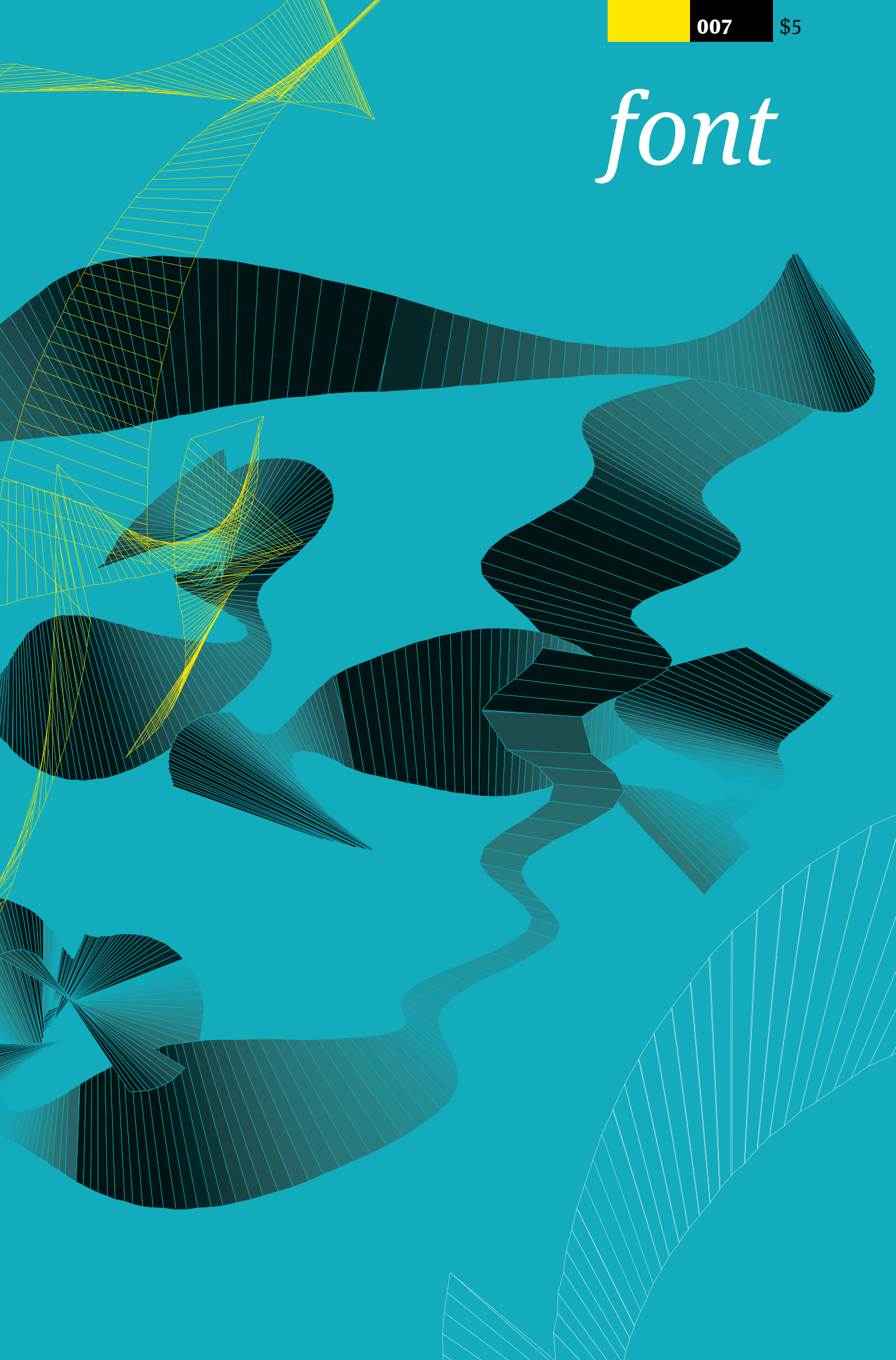
font



Font 007

04 Neue Fonts

09 Foundry Spotlight

13 Making the Rules

“It’s good to introduce non-human forces, be they mechanical or natural, in order to invigorate or question existing creative processes.”

ROB MEEK PAGE 28

I need restrictions to be creative; it’s when I have restrictions that I can perform my ‘art’.

JEAN FRANÇOIS PORCHEZ PAGE 9

The mainstream accessibility of the computer has publicly lowered the accepted general standards and value of good design, while professionally it has considerably magnified the designer’s abilities. When you have tensions like these at play in any field, the result is usually mixed, but a little more good than bad.”

ALEJANDRO PAUL PAGE 10

Ideas can be works of art; they are in a chain of development that may eventually find some form. All ideas need not be made physical.

SOL LEWITT PAGE 14

Rule Makers / Rule Breakers

20 Breaking the Rules

29 New FontFonts

34 FontStruct: Built with Bricks

AFTER A LONG DAY of scanning web pages and deleting junk email, I might sit back and soak in the latest entertainment news from Hollywood or reflect on national opinion with the chatter of pundits and their eternal polls that never seem to get the story right. I like to think that it's my obligation to the media industrial complex to absorb as much information as possible or risk, like excess carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, a dangerous buildup of ones and zeros.

Things sure have changed in the last decade. When I think about the trajectory of our contemporary society, with all the tools and applications we use to publish, move, and manage information, I'm immediately reminded of Henry David Thoreau. I can picture him sitting outside his small cabin, quietly meditating on the breakneck speed of social and economic progress as the last rays of the day sparkle across Walden Pond. Like us, Thoreau was experiencing a profound shift. His, defined by rapid industrial expansion and a final push across the frontier; ours, by the release of the latest smart phone or praise for the next big viral video. But unlike Thoreau, who saw a need to retreat from the rules and systems that were quickly reshaping his world, we've embraced ours as solutions to organize physical and electronic space or to fulfill a personal identity within the gathering storm of the data we face every day.

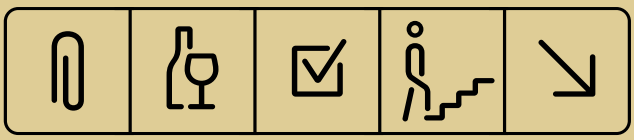
Where Thoreau wasn't impressed with change, writing that, "There is an incessant flow of novelty into the world and yet we tolerate incredible dullness," curator and art critic Glen Helfand finds inspiration. Recognizing ours as an age of convergence, Helfand focuses this issue of *Font* on the work of a wide cross section of artists and designers who are "making the rules" by channeling that incessant flow through filters and toward the creation of generative art. He convinces us that processing information is not only a reflection of our time but a celebratory act that can result in beautiful thought-provoking images and objects. We also focus on six additional projects that feature graphic designers and typographers who are "breaking the rules" by using generative concepts to map ideas, from individual letters to complex narratives. Finally, we toot our own horn for FontStruct, a new online portal for building and sharing fonts that's been getting plenty of blog buzz.

If it's true that everything has its proper place, then we can rest assured that Thoreau found his at Walden and those extra ones and zeros (and all that they represent) have found a comfortable home in *Font* magazine. To get started, here are a few simple rules: read, share, and recycle.

AMOS KLAUSNER
Editor

The New FontFonts

FF Clan™ Italic ŁUKASZ DZIEDZIC



FF Netto™ DANIEL UTZ

And so it gøes on

FF Max™ 4 MORTEN OLSEN

Hex

Dampfbahn *Furka-Bergstrecke* **DFB**

FF Chambers™ Sans VERENA GERLACH

Comptoir des Marchands

FF Netto™ DANIEL UTZ

Cavallino ***Rampan***

FF Enzo™ TOBIAS KVANT

Torre pendente di

FF Tisa™ MITJA MIKLAVČIČ

tax

FF Quadraat® Sans Bold Italic FRED SMEIJERS

FAI

'Twas a frisky fish,

Nicht on your NELLY, guv'

FF Unit™ Rounded ERIK SPIEKERMANN & CHRISTIAN SCHWARTZ

Formal

ahedron

FF Cube™ JAN MAACK

Trill *symbiont*

FF Daxline™ Italic HANS REICHEL

te *Aesthetic Fulfillment*

FF Pitu™ ŁUKASZ DZIEDZIC

Pisa **(LEANING POWER OF TISA)**

R PLAY à vous

FF Utility™ LUKAS SCHNEIDER

methinks A HADDOCK

FF Nuvo™ SIEGFRIED RÜCKEL

Boot loader

FF Milo™ 3 MIKE ABBINK

characteristics

FF Polymorph™ STEFANIE SCHWARZ

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THROUGHOUT THE 1990S, Erik Spiekermann made several attempts at designing a companion for his original **FF Meta, arguably one of the most ubiquitous fonts of the past two decades.** Colleagues had often asked which serif face would best fit with Meta, ***and after years of recommending a variety of suitable faces,*** Spiekermann realized that he should just make his own serif companion.

INTRODUCING ⇢

FF Meta Headline Compressed
FF Meta Headline Condensed
FF Meta Headline
FF Meta Hairline
FF Meta Condensed & *Italic*
FF Meta Correspondence & *Italic*
FF Meta & *Italic*
FF Meta Serif & *Italic*

Extended

Meta
tąme
måté
ţɛám
MĚĀŢ

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*"The whole Meta system is supposed to solve **separate typographic problems** while keeping A FAMILY RESEMBLANCE. This is not a family of identical triplets, but **sisters and brothers** or even **nieces and nephews**."*

ERIK SPIEKERMANN

The OpenType version of **FF Meta Serif** offers book, **medium, bold,** and **black** weights, each including *italics*, SMALL CAPS, alternate numeral styles – proportional, tabular, lining, oldstyle – extra ligatures, case-sensitive punctuation, and a range of arrows and other symbols. *(The Pro version also supports Eastern European languages.)*

While the serif design can stand on its own in a wide range of applications, the extra benefit is its close relationship to the original FF Meta, its sans serif sister. *The two families can be mixed in the same line,* ***and one can be used to accentuate the other.*** Using both on the same page adds VARIETY *AND MEANING* TO A TEXT.

FONTSTRUCT HAS SWEPT ACROSS THE BLOGOSPHERE. **STEPHEN COLES** CHATS WITH ITS CREATOR AND CHIEF BRICKMEISTER **ROB MEEK**.

Built With Bricks

So, what exactly is this FontStruct thing?

FontStruct is a free online platform for creating and sharing modular grid-based fonts which FontShop International launched in early April 2008.

Where did the idea come from?

In many ways, the starting point was really the Meek FM *(also see page 28)*, which was my first contribution to the world of grid-based design tools, and initially appeared in 2000. I was relatively new to the world of graphic design, having just switched from the programming to the design department at the agency where I was working. I was completely ignorant of the world of typography, but soon became fascinated by it, and wanted to design a font; a grid-based modular font seemed like an easy way in.

How did the project come about?

I started laying out shapes in Freehand. My lack of experience led to a lot of hesitancy in making creative choices. I kept changing my mind about the forms I wanted to use – should they be spaced out or flush next to each other, that kind of thing. At some point, I moved from Freehand to Flash so that I could automate changes, and gradually built a tool to cater to my indecision. That's where the Meek FM came from.

There were also a number of comparable projects under development at about the same time – evidence of a broader interest in grid-based design tools.

Really? Who was behind them?

Michael Gianfreda, Lorenz "Lopetz" Gianfreda, and Kaspar Lüthi at Büro Destruct were working on BDD (Büro Destruct Designer) between 1999 and 2003. A tribute to Swiss design of the 1960s, it's certainly a classic of the genre, encouraging the user to make a virtue of limitation. Strict adherence to a grid, a simple point and click interface, and a selection of simple geometric shapes to choose from were its key ingredients. The ability to export creations in a usable format was also an important feature.

Another inspirational piece of Swiss work was Lineto's Lego Font Creator (circa 1999), by Urs Lehni, Rafael Koch, and Jürg Lehni. This was more explicitly a type builder, but was again based on principles of grid-constrained construction using a palette of predefined shapes.

Fast-forward to 2005, and there was BitFontMaker from Japan. (I actually only became aware of this after I first pitched FontStruct to FontShop in May 2006.) It shares many characteristics with FontStruct: one hundred percent online; a simple intuitive interface for grid-based font creation; a gallery; and downloadable TrueType fonts.

FONT USED FF NUVO™ **FONTSTRUCTIONS USED** BLOCPARTY TEXTURE TUSCAN RADAR

I think FontStruct offers a lot more than BitFontMaker, but it's very well executed nonetheless.

So there's definitely a clear precedent for grid-based design tools, and a tradition of designers trying to create their own more specialized tools.

Perhaps it's also partly a reaction to the complex interfaces offered by the likes of Fontlab and Adobe.

Yes, it's good to have – or at least imagine – alternatives, whether they are more specialized tools or simply tools which defamiliarize the creative process.

How does the Meek FM differ from FontStruct?

The Meek FM is about tweaking an existing design; I wanted to do something that was about constructing grid-based typefaces from scratch. Also the Meek FM, and, to a certain extent, the other projects I've referenced, are more toys than tools. There's an emphasis on playfulness rather than earnest practical production. The output is of limited quality and practical value. I wanted to make something that could really stand up as a useful tool to enable modular type design.

I saw the opportunity, particularly when approaching FontShop with the idea, to create an online font-sharing community around a modular font editor; a kind of mini-Flickr for fonts, if you will. Font design really lends itself to the online environment. The file sizes are small, and the relatively simple systematic nature of the data make the creation of an online font design tool much more straightforward than an image, video, or music editor.

I'd wanted to pursue the project for quite some time and had initially imagined an offline application. However, as Web 2.0 apps continued to get more sophisticated and powerful, I felt a sudden panic that someone else was bound to do this and realized that I needed a partner with clout, with typographic expertise…

Enter FontShop.

Yes. It's been a great match as far as I'm concerned. I've effectively been paid for what I wanted to do in my spare time anyway, with no compromising of the original idea. FontShop had an immediate understanding of the potential for an online font-building and sharing platform. I think it's quite brave and forward-thinking for a font vendor to give people the chance to make their own fonts for free.

FontShop's vision for FontStruct really focused on developing a community site rather than a pure font editor. Sharing, rating, and discussion capabilities are all right there in the browser.

It feels unique having the creation and editing together with the community features. I don't think there are many online applications which integrate both. It's as if people were actually recording music in MySpace or taking pictures in Flickr. There's a very close relationship between the creation and exchange with others.

Absolutely. Ask even the most seasoned expert and they'll more than likely say they're still learning. That's probably what keeps so many people so interested in drawing and redrawing the alphabet over and over again. You're always learning and your context is always changing.

Indeed. My main goal when creating the interface was to keep it accessible for beginners but also powerful enough to interest seasoned typographers. I wanted to remove everything that would inhibit a novice. You start with a very simple metaphor – drawing on a grid of squared graph paper – and you don't have to bother with any specialist terminology or concepts. More advanced features are available from menus and with keyboard shortcuts.

The first two months have borne out your vision and FontShop's foresight. FontStruct has been unexpectedly popular, resulting in some very high quality work and tremendous diversity. Hey, we even got a mention in *The New York Times*! So, what's next?

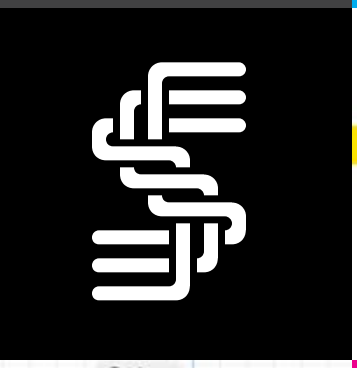
We have a lot of ideas, many of them from the user community, and we're adding features steadily. The highest priority at the moment is fixing minor bugs and annoyances, and adding some control over horizontal metrics so people can define how their letters are spaced. We also want to bolster the community features, such as incorporating proper user homepages.

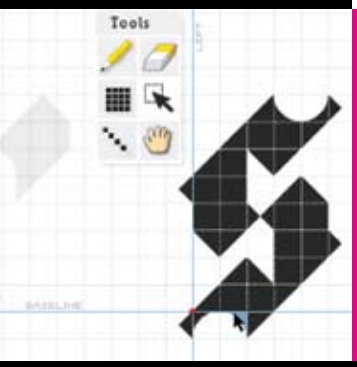
Are you concerned that free FontStructions devalue commercial type and might harm FontShop's business?

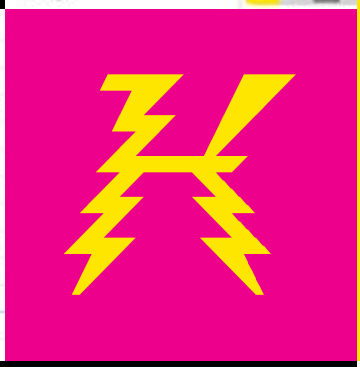
Quite the opposite, actually. FontStruct is fun and easy partly because it is very limited. I think it nurtures not only the pleasures of type design but also an understanding of how much work is involved in making a font and why 'real' fonts cost money. FontStructions have too many limitations (everything has to be based on a grid, there's no kerning, no hinting, no OpenType features, and so forth) to be any real threat to FontShop's retail sales.

GIVE THE TIRES A KICK FOR YOURSELF AT WWW.FONTSTRUCT.COM

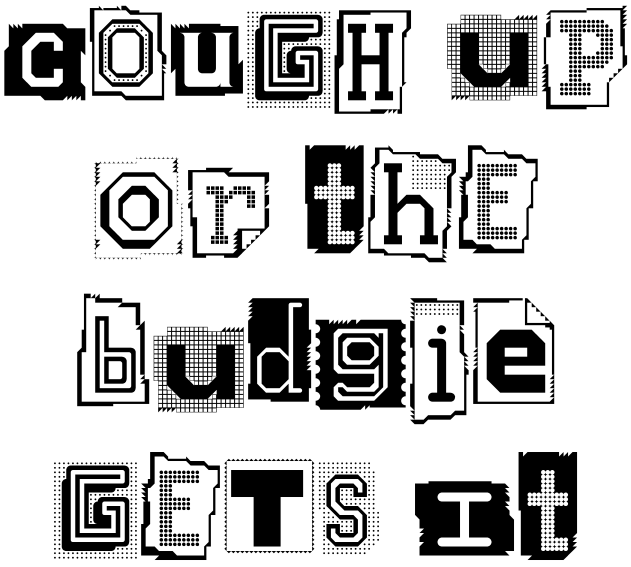
Unique







> "FontStruct shows how easy it is to play around with type, and how difficult it is to make real type."
>
> **ERIK SPIEKERMANN**



CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP
Featured FontStructions include Epiorque Joined, SlabStruct Too, Ransom Note, Tight, Bolt, Texture (shown within the FontStructor), and Tristeak Ribbon.

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kol'a-fon(t)

COVER

Outputs from *Meek* FM, courtesy of Rob Meek

INTRODUCTION

2 Typeface sketch courtesy of Tomáš Brousil, Suitcase Type Foundry

2/3 Other images credited below

NEUE FONTS

4–8 Images © their creators
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MAKING THE RULES

14 **Sol LeWitt:** *Incomplete Open Cubes*, 1974
Painted wood structure, gelatin silver prints, and drawings on paper
12" × 120" × 216"
(30.48 cm × 304.8 cm × 548.64 cm)
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art Accessions Committee Fund: gift of Emily L. Carroll and Thomas Weisel, Jean and James E. Douglas, Jr., Susan and Robert Green, Evelyn Haas, Mimi and Peter Haas, Eve and Harvey Masonek, Elaine McKeon, the Modern Art Council, Phyllis and Stuart G. Moldaw, Christine and Michael Murray, Danielle and Brooks Walker Jr., and Phyllis Wattis.
© Estate of Sol LeWitt/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

15 **Brian Eno:** *77 Million Paintings*
© Scott Beale and laughingsquid.com

15 **Roxy Paine:** *Erosion Machine*, 2005
Stainless steel, rubber, felt, glass, galvanized steel, silicon carbide, electronics, dust collector, reclaimer, robot, and air
11'5" × 21' × 11'5"
© Roxy Paine, image courtesy of James Cohan Gallery, New York

15 **Roxy Paine:** *Erosion Machine Stone #3 (Crime Statistics)*, 2006
Limestone
10" × 32" × 19"
© Roxy Paine, image courtesy of James Cohan Gallery, New York

16 **Danica Phelps:** *Stripe Factory Sample for Sister (20,000 stripes)*, 2007
Watercolor, gouache, and pencil on cut paper mounted to wood panel
20" × 15"
Image courtesy of Sister, Los Angeles

17 **Lee Walton:** *Angels vs Boston – 3 Game Series, April 22, 23, 24*, 2008
Ink and paint on paper
24" × 54"
Image courtesy of Lee Walton and Kraushaar Galleries

18 **Alex Dragulescu:** *Spam Architecture Series*
Images courtesy of the artist

19 **Mark Napier:** *Spire*, 2007
Image courtesy of the artist

FONTS USED

FF Balance™ and **FF Scribble™**

FF Balance marked the beginning of FontFont designer Evert Bloemsma's decade-long exploration into readability. Its peculiar horizontal stress and four weights of equal widths put it in a class of its own. FF Scribble is inspired by the era of pre-digital composition and an ironic play on the design truth that sketches are often more pleasing than the computer-processed final.

BREAKING THE RULES

21 **Boris Müller:** *Poetry on the Road*, 2002–2008
Images courtesy of the artist

22 **Cinthia Wen:** *504 Hours*, 2003
Image courtesy of the artist

23 **Marek Walczak:** *Noplace*, 2007
Images courtesy of the artist

24 **Benedikt Groß:** *Seelenlose Automaten*, 2007
Images courtesy of the artist

26 **Catalogtree:** *Typopath 1.0*, 2002
Image courtesy of the artists

28 **Rob Meek:** *Meek* FM, 2007
Images courtesy of the artist

FONTS USED

FF Airport™ and **FF Tisa™**

FF Airport is the Lineto studio's tribute to the charm of LCD displays, freight waybills, and boarding passes. The FF Gateway™ fonts are based on the electronic display systems at Tegel and Schönefeld airports in Berlin. For FF Tisa, Slovenian designer Mitja Miklavcic set out to create a more subtle and dynamic slab serif. He succeeded, earning the Type Directors Club's Certificate of Excellence in Type Design for 2007.

BUILT WITH BRICKS

FONT USED

FF Nuvo™

During a stay in Paris, the elegance and extravagance of French magazines inspired Siegfried Rückel to create a typeface of his own. The result isn't nearly as ostentatious as his muses, yet is sublimely usable for editorial design in its own right. FF Nuvo has a soft calligraphic touch with a set of alternates that offer stylistic versatility.

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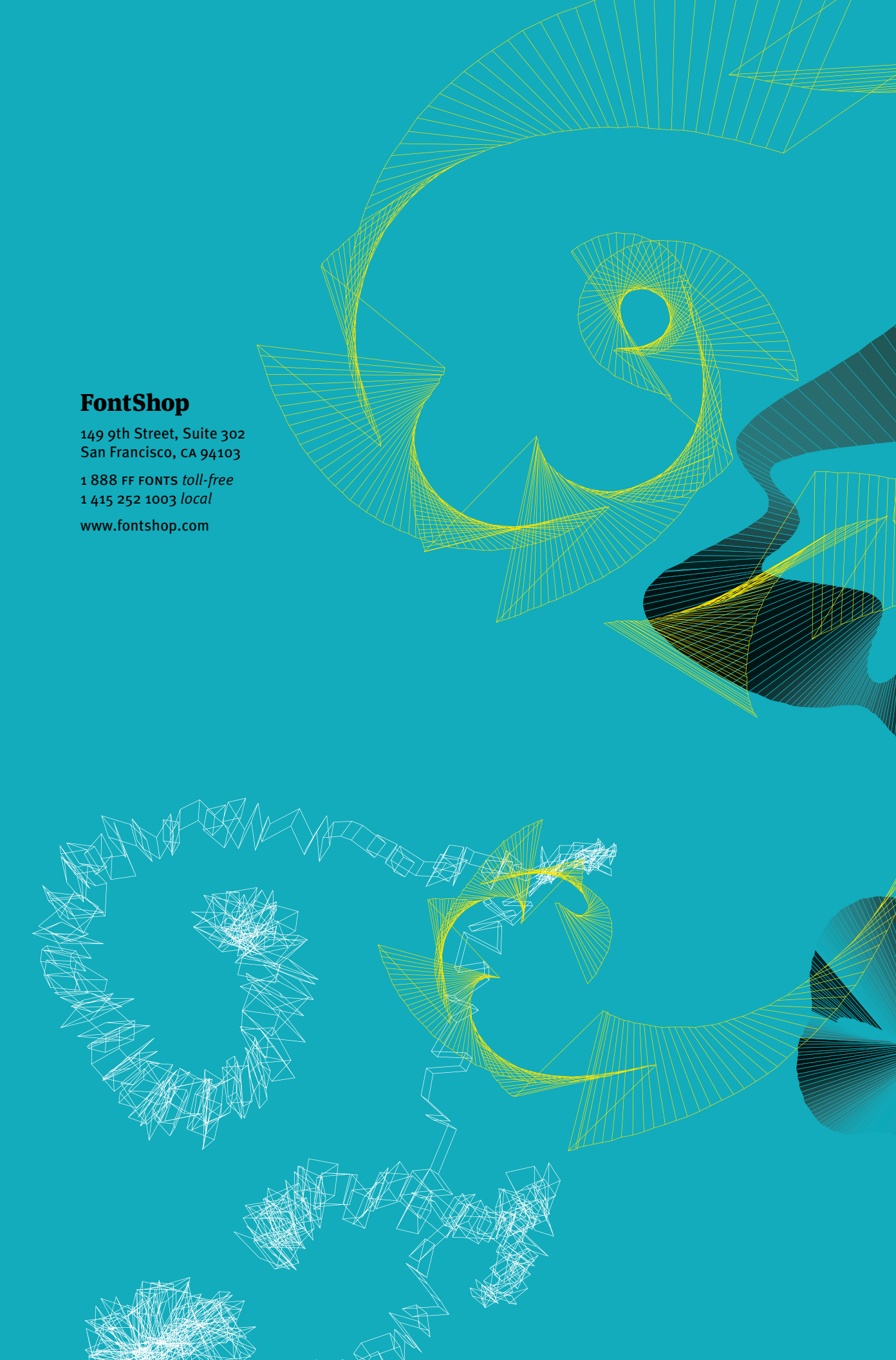
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