

Like an engineering project, a book is a complex 3-dimensional design made up of many parts. Our goal as book makers is to intentionally integrate all aspects of the design to strengthen the structure, form, and content of the book. These challenges may be solved like any engineering problem – by the practical application of a series of considerations and techniques. That said, it is the idea, the thought, and the imagination that is at the heart of a well-made book.

## CONSIDERATIONS OF THE BOOK

### **The design is driven by the text.** Edward Johnston

Reading a text is where the initial idea for a book project begins, but a project can be inspired by any visual or conceptual idea. A story is a series of connected events written or told. Content is the information or experience contained in the story. It is the central idea of the design and informs all of the design choices made for the book. The narrative is how the story unfolds in a sequence of events, in a particular order so that when you finish reading it you feel like you have been taken on a journey or through some kind of transformative experience.

### **The Schematic Drawing**

A schematic drawing of the parts of a new book project is helpful in organizing thoughts and materials. This consists of a series of considerations around the central idea of the book. Each arrow leads to a particular topic where more detailed ideas and questions are explored. All through the book design process ask how will each of the following parts of a book support and inform the narrative. These questions may be worked in any order. Often in the process of answering one question another is answered but sometimes also leads to other questions you haven't yet considered.

Will there be a text? What type of text/story will it be? If there is no text, what conceptual idea will carry the idea through the work? What type of paper will I use to support the lettering and illustration/illumination? Often handmade paper is illustration enough. What type of lettering design will reflect the meaning of the story and which tools will help achieve the intent? Will there be illustration and how will it help to illuminate the text? What is the layout pattern of the book – where will the lettering and illustration lie on each page? What is the tempo, the rhythm - how fast or slow should the story unwind? What is the sequence of ideas that need to be revealed and how does it dictate the placement of the text, illustrations, and rests in the narrative? What three-dimensional shape will the book take? What scale and proportion of the book will make the story feel right in the hand? How will the binding give an idea of what is inside the book to invite the reader in, and to support the structure of the book? What colors and textures can be used in the book pages and binding to help support the story?

### **Page layouts**

Composing page layouts for a book is like planning a well-designed garden. You want to be welcomed into the space, be enveloped by the garden with vistas unfolding as you move through, and, be allowed to linger without getting stranded. Each new vista should portray a new scene but with enough similarities so that you know you are in the same space and story. Each page spread needs to be a successful composition and inspire the reader to continue on to the next page. The arrangement of text, type, and imagery help create a path through the story and directs the eye and the hand to turn the page. Design choices are determined by your parameters. Is this a commission where someone else chooses the content and materials? Design decisions are made for all kinds of reasons.

**One must build with the stones one has.** Danish proverb

**O is the mother of the alphabet and I is the father.**

Calligraphy is a type of visual poetry that can enhance meaning in much the same way that a text translation or a performance of a piece of music or literature can. Like visual poetry calligraphy weaves together content and form so that at first viewing there is meaning before the work is read. The sound of letters and phrases can be physically expressed by the manner in which they are made. Calligraphy slows both the writing and reading time, allowing for a deeper concentration of events, like a leisurely walk through a garden.

A calligrapher's progress is slow. We write one letter at a time, physically handling and transferring the text, the content to the page. Visually, each style of hand lettering creates its own particular texture or repeating patterns. These audible sounds and visual images become realized through the manipulation of the character and construction of an alphabet. With form and color we create patterns of letters anywhere on the page that reflect the sound, mood, and imagery of the text. We are able to letter in any size or hand, in any direction or shape, and even build up layers of overlapping letters to create interesting textures. We do this in the pursuit of telling a story and in the spirit of play.

**Geometry**

From the beginning of time humans have used geometry to build, to embellish, and to decorate their constructions. Repetition of geometric proportions brings order, unity, and visual harmony to the function and beauty of space. One does not need a thorough knowledge of mathematics and geometry to complete one of these constructions. With basic knowledge and tools of pencil, straight edge, and compass, a scribe can use the point, line, and circle as a jumping off point to create interesting designs. Like any plan, it is not a formula to plug in elements but, offers a suggested framework and structure in which to design.