

TYPOGRAPHY & SOCIAL CHANGE



Tré Seals's typeface Eva, inspired by the 1957 women's demonstration in Buenos Aires, reflecting the modern suffragist movement in Argentina where women advocated for equal rights and opportunities.



Beatriz Lozano's typeface Ancho, inspired by peppers of Mexican cuisine and the architecture of Teotihuacán

Typography

&

Social

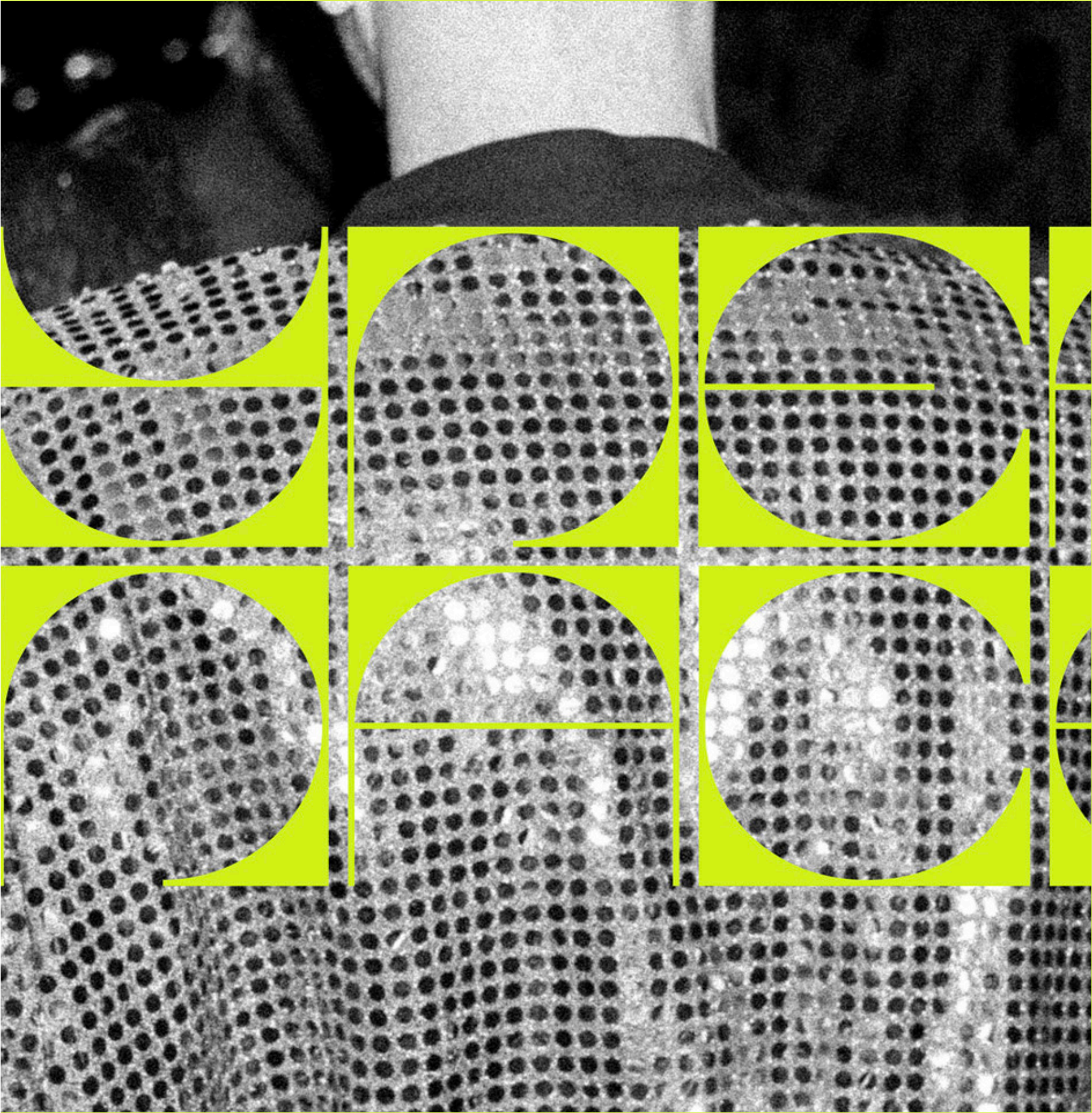
Change

COLOPHON

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 Typography One—Fall 2023
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Typefaces used:
 Termina, Mattox Shuler
 National, Kris Sowersby
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An exploration of young typographers using type as a medium for social change



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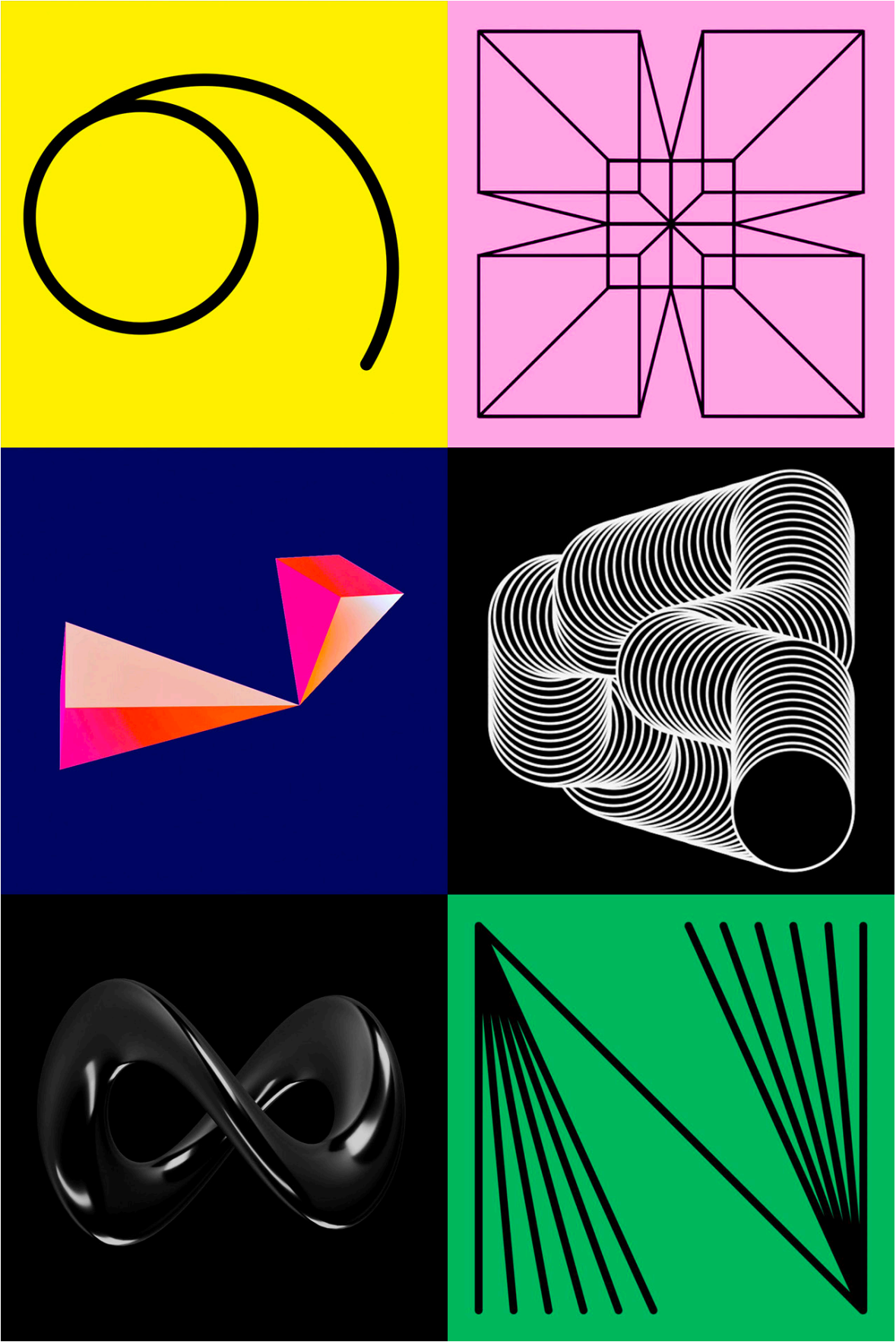
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Introduction

Learning about what typography is has made me interested in exploring how it can be used as a medium to tell stories and make change. I want to explore the idea that making change, in different forms, can be influenced by the characters we read and the typefaces we see everyday, without even thinking about it. I learned about the Vocal Type foundry and was fascinated by the many typefaces Tre Seals has created and how each one is inspired by influential figures or movements, turning typography into a powerful

medium for storytelling and advocacy. He's a contemporary designer from Washington D.C. who finds ways to increase diversity and empathy in the design industry. I'm interested in his passion for diversifying the design industry and using typography as a means for that. I was also drawn to Beatriz Lozano and how she uses technology to push creating typography that exists in the physical and digital world. I think that it's interesting how she uses different technologies like AR to push boundaries of design.

Tré Seals's Characters exhibit at The Branch Museum of Architecture & Design



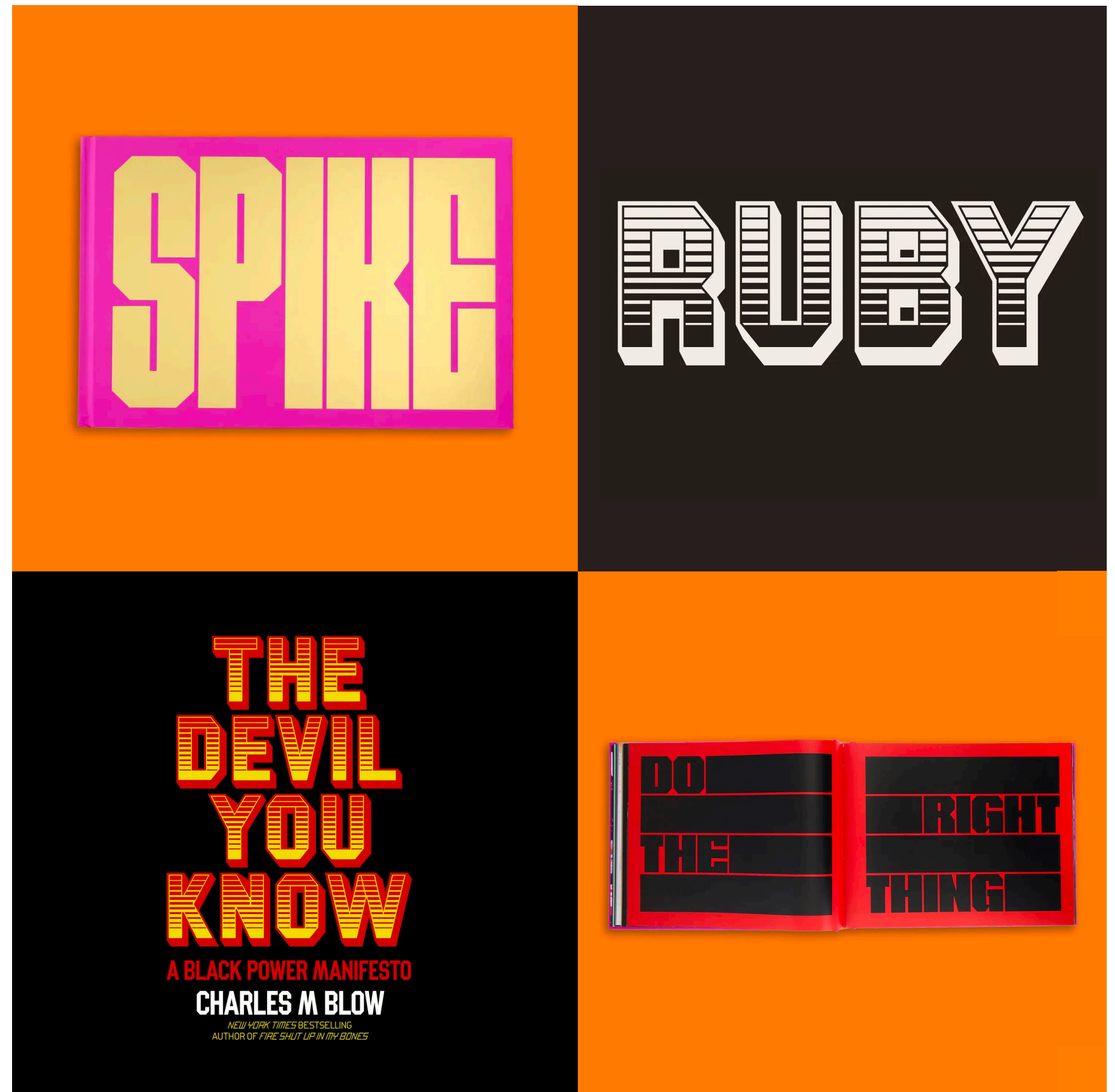
Beatriz Lozano's 36 Days of Type project

Tré Seals

Typography inspired by Movements

Tré Seals is a graphic designer from Washington D.C. He is the founder of Vocal Type Co., a type foundry that focuses on highlighting the contributions of marginalized communities in history through typography. He is known for creating typefaces that celebrate the voices of underrepresented groups by often drawing inspiration from historical movements to storytell the people and communities that might have been overlooked in traditional typographic design. He is known for not only for his design work but also for his commitment to social justice and using design as a medium to amplify various diverse voices. He wanted a way to increase diversity and empathy in the design industry, and has done so through his unique and powerful typefaces. Tré Seals found his passion for design and typography while he was studying graphic design in college. He became fascinated not just with the aesthetics of type and letterforms, but also the stories and histories behind many different fonts and typefaces. As a young Black artist fresh out of college, he experienced the extreme lack of diversity in the design field, driving his determination to do something about it. He was also inspired by an essay he came across called *Black*

Designers: Still Missing in Action, written Dr. Cheryl D. Holmes-Miller from 1986. This drove to his founding of Vocal Type Co. after graduation. Through Vocal Type, Tré creates original typefaces that shine light on marginalized communities and stories that are often overlooked, but need to be heard. He had come across a quote that inspired the name for the Vocal Type Co.: *Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about the things that matter*. The first typeface Tré knew he wanted to make when starting Vocal Type was Martin, a non-violent typeface inspired by the Memphis Sanitation Strike of 1968. Typefaces he has made, such as Martin, that were inspired by the civil rights movement have become part of protests and movements like the Black Lives Matter Movement. He has created various typefaces inspired by influential movements and figures such as **Martin, Marsha, Du Bois, Bayard, and Eva**. One of his goals is to design typefaces inspired by protests and movements from other countries, such as the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989 and Japanese Internment Camps in the 30s and 40s. Tré Seals advocacy for diverse and inclusive design world continues to inspire future generations of designers.



Tré Seals's Spike and Ruby typefaces



Java Sans by Beatriz Lozano, an interactive brush typeface designed in p5.

Beatriz Lozano

Exploring Type with Technology

Beatriz Lozano is a designer, typographer, and educator exploring the bounds of typography by looking into how technology can push typography to exist in the physical and digital worlds. Although she was initially pursuing a career in mechanical engineering, Beatriz switched over into a career in the field of graphic design after her involvement in immigrant rights activism exposed her to how powerful and influential visual communication can be. She has a passion for using design as a medium to create social change. She has worked with various clients including ESPN, Target, and NPR. Recognition for her work has come from various organizations like the Art Directors Club, Type Directors Club, PRINT, and Communication Arts. Recently, she was honored with the Art Directors Club Young

Gun Award in 2022, which honors the top creative talents under 30 worldwide. In 2023, she was chosen as a Type Directors Club Ascenders Award winner, as well as a recipient of the Cooper Hewitt National Design Award. She currently teaches Interaction Design at the Parsons School of Design and previously worked at Sunday Afternoon as a design director. She explores type design through unique mediums such as AR, 3D, and motion. She has also designed many typefaces such as **Aguas**, **Java Sans**, and **Ancho**. She participated in a 36 Days of Type challenge, where she explored different methods of digital lettering in both 2D and 3D forms to create 36 unique designs. Beatriz Lozano continues to push the boundaries of typography, exploring the power of visual communication.



This is an illustration Beatriz Lozano made for Shamira Ibrahim’s article “Fictions of History” where she visually conveys the concept of ‘undisciplining data’ and explores the dehumanizing effect of modern data-collection and surveillance on marginalized communities.



TankMan

Tank Man is a typeface inspired by the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests in China. The design of the first installment of the typeface was inspired by 2 banners that were carried during the peaceful protest. The banners featured English and Chinese text reading "Give me democracy or give me death" alongside "Qingdao student single petition group to help Beijing". The flowing script and bold style of the protest signs influenced the letterforms. Tré was drawn to how genius the students were in the protest

and how many phrases from the banners came from movements before it such as the Civil Rights Movement, Black Panther Party, and a quote from Abraham Lincoln. Beyond the powerful slogans from banners, there was also a "Goddess of Democracy" statue created by art students to resonate powerfully with both the protesting students and the outside world. The name of the typeface was inspired by the nickname given to an unidentified Chinese man who stood his ground in

front of the tanks leaving Tianamen Square the day after the protests were crushed. Images of "Tank Man" confronting the armed vehicles have become an iconic symbol of resistance and Tank Man remains an icon and mystery. Tré created the typeface to reflect the spirit of protest - using shapes inspired by rally banners and naming the typeface after the resistance embodied by Tank Man. He not only memorializes the Tiananmen Square protests, but also represents the voices of those who resisted oppression.

"Tank Man" standing in front of the tanks on June 5, 1989 in Beijing



Tré Seals' Typefaces

Martin

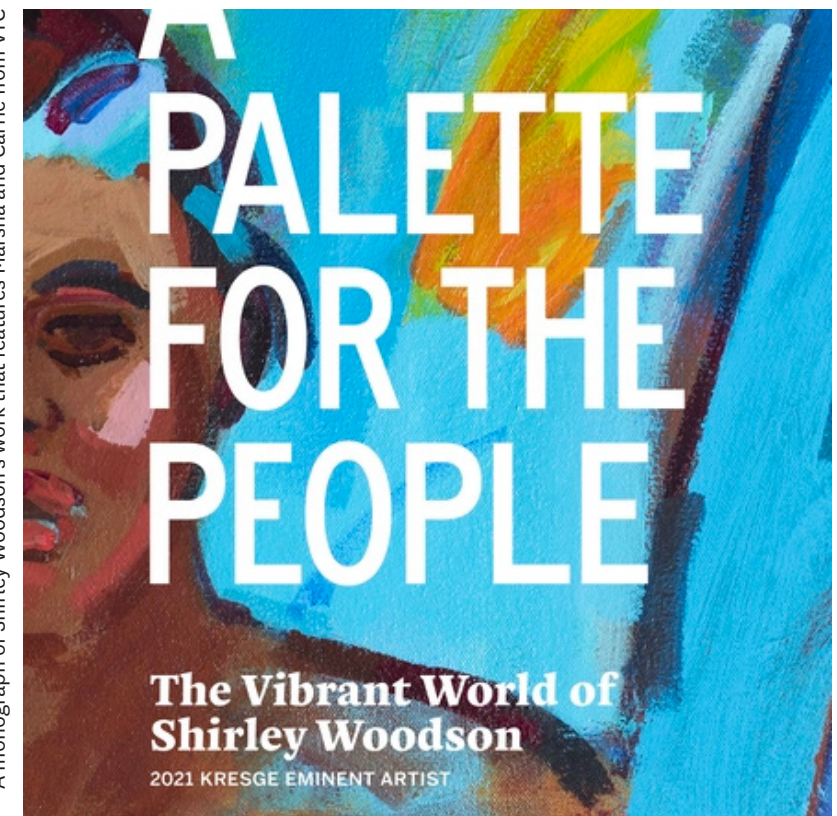
Mural designed the Martin typeface in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement in Newark.



The first typeface Tré knew he wanted to make when starting Vocal Type was Martin, a non-violent typeface inspired by the Memphis Sanitation Strike of 1968. Martin is a powerful typeface that has been widely used in designs and protests. The typeface was inspired by the civil rights movement and became part of the Black Lives Matter Movement. Martin was used to write out “Abolish White Supremacy” and “All Black Lives Matter” on the streets of Newark, New Jersey and other places. Tré's commitment to social justice through typography is evident in his work, and Martin continues to serve as a powerful symbol of resistance and inclusivity.

The Marsha typeface is named after Marsha P. Johnson, a Black transgender activist who played a powerful role in the Stonewall uprising of 1969, advocating for LGBTQ+ rights and co-founding the Gay Liberation Front and the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR). The typeface's design is inspired by a vertical sign that once hung outside of Stonewall. Marsha P. Johnson courageously fought against injustice and discrimination, paving the way for future generations and for greater acceptance and equality. The typeface was designed by Tré as an a tribute to Marsha P. Johnson and her pivotal role in LGBTQ+ history.

A monograph of Shirley Woodson's work that features Marsha and Carrie from VTC



Marsha

Bayard

Bayard is a sans-serif typeface that is inspired by signs created during the March On Washington For Jobs and Freedom in 1963. Named after Bayard Rustin, a key advisor to Martin Luther King Jr. and a prominent figure in the civil rights movement, the typeface reflects the spirit of activism and social change from that era. Taking inspiration from the visual language of historical protests, Bayard embodies the principles of nonviolence and unity that were pivotal in the fight against racial discrimination during the 1960s.



Poster designed using VTC Bayard, created in response to the 2022 Australian federal election that resulted in a new generation of women being elected to parliament.

Beatriz Lozano's Typefaces

Java Sans is an interactive, customizable typeface created by designer Beatriz Lozano using the p5 javascript library. Taking inspiration from the proportions of the Futura typeface, Java Sans allows people to adjust the shape, color, rotation, and other characteristics of each letter. As part of 36 Days of Type in 2021, Lozano released one new letter per day over the course of 36 days. The typeface also lets users upload their own images to create the letters, making Java Sans a very unique and personalizable

typographic experience. Its flexible and interactive approach is an example of Beatriz Lozano's creative approach to type design in the digital world. Since the Java Sans typeface is so customizable, it gives a creative opportunity for people to make the typeface their own. Designing the typeface for it to be customized by users by giving them unique features such as adjustable shape, color, rotation, etc. options has led to many unique and different designs be created from the same typeface.

The Java Sans typeface is an interactive brush typeface based on the proportions of Futura designed to be customized by each user.



Aguas typeface by Beatriz Lozano, inspired by hand lettered signs in Mexican markets & calligraphic pen strokes

Agua is a typeface Beatriz Lozano created, inspired by the hand lettered signs in Mexican markets and calligraphic pen strokes. The letterforms have a unique, playful curvature design and encapsulate the handmade, artistic design of traditional sign painting, as the typeface takes inspiration from the hand painted signs in Mexican markets. It consists of two fonts, Aguas Regular and Aguas Black. The typeface has unique designs for ligatures, seen in letter pairings such as "fl", "ft", "tt", and "ff".



Ligatures in Aguas

Conclusion

Learning about Tré Seals and Beatriz Lozano, and how these young typographers have used typography as mediums for change has been really interesting and inspiring to me. As I looked through their portfolios and learned more about their work, I started thinking about how their creations are often influenced by their identity and lived experiences. This made me think about my Nepali identity and made me curious to explore if there are any [Nepali typographers](#) out there. I started searching on the Internet to look at Nepali typography and discover Nepali typographers. I came

across a typeface called [Noto Sans Newa](#), which is a sans serif font for texts in Newari script. I learned that Noto is known for creating many global typefaces of writing in both ancient and modern languages. I also learned about some interesting websites that share Nepali typefaces that have been created by typographers. I came across a typographer from Kathmandu, Nepal named [Ananda Kumar Marharjan](#) who makes typefaces inspired by the Nepali Devanagari script. It was exciting to learn about typography in the context of my own identity and culture.

सकलम

Noto Sans is a global typeface with many different modern and ancient languages. The typeface is Noto Sans Newa, a unmodulated design for texts in Newari script.



Neptouch 2 typeface by Ananda Maharjan inspired by Nepali Devanagari Script, featured on his project of kite designs for Changa Chet, a kite festival.

Bibliography



Vocal Type Foundry



Beatriz Lozano's Portfolio



Ananda Maharjan's Portfolio



I made this cover design using Beatriz Lopez's typeface, Java Sans. Scan the QR code to explore the typeface and create your own design!