

‘In Praise of Imperfection’

Line of enquiry:

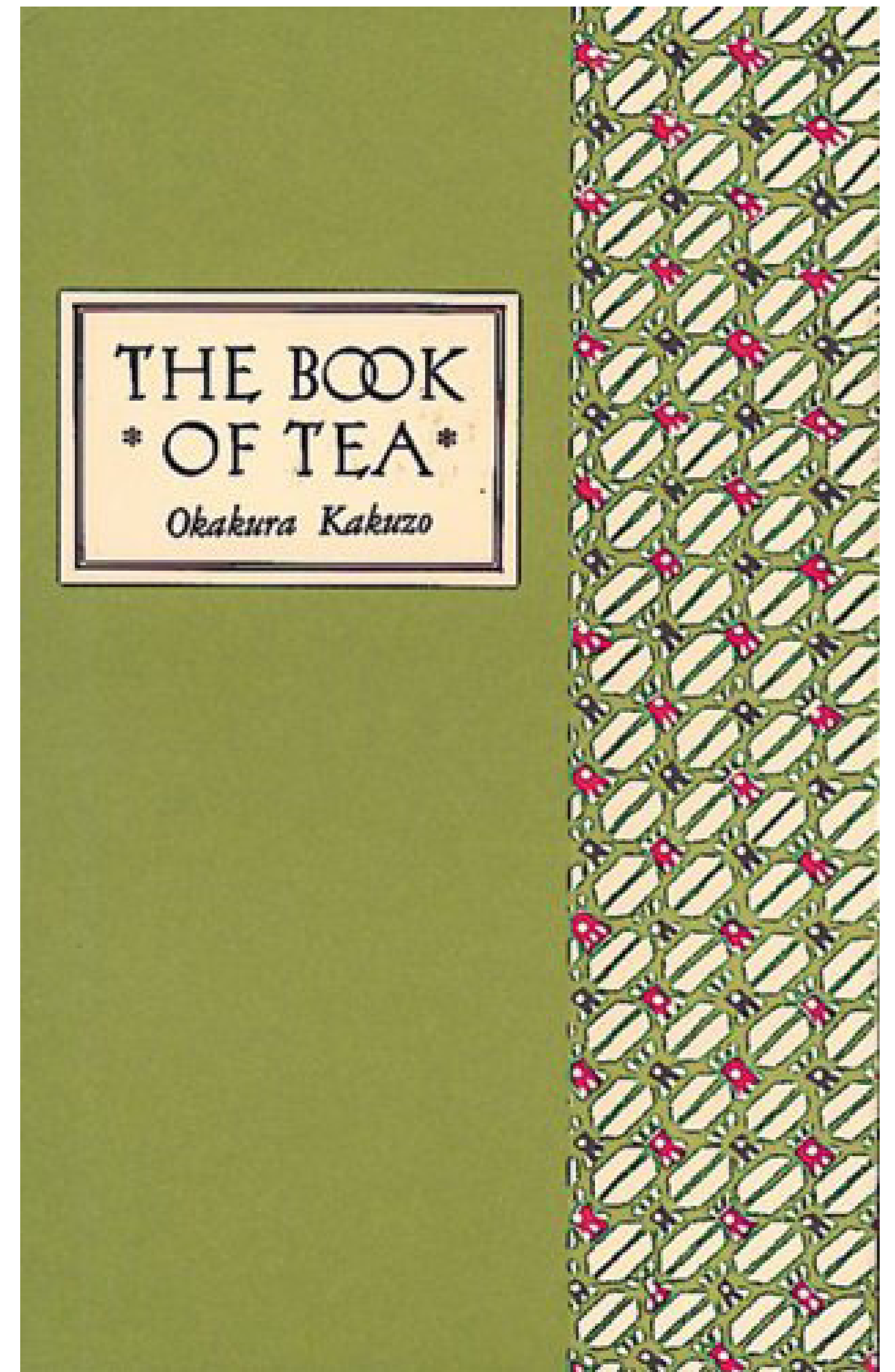
Can we challenge society's values of perfection by highlighting ancient Japanese values for imperfect beauty through typography?

Abstract

Going to a good university, working for a famous company, good-looking, having money... Sometimes people judge people using different criteria. And it seems that the more you meet each of these criteria to a large extent, the more 'perfect' and attractive you are to some people. I used to think it was important to pursue such invisible 'perfection'. However, they soon put pressure on me and made me feel suffocated.



What saved me was the ancient Japanese value of finding value in the beauty of imperfection. As Okakura (1906) states, 'True beauty could be discovered only by one who mentally completed the incomplete', in the tea ceremony, an art form that was uniquely developed in Japan in the past, it was considered more beautiful to be imperfect rather than to aim for perfection. When I read this sentence, I felt that this was an important perspective for today.



Junichiro Tanizaki once wrote in *In Praise of Shadow* (1933) that he was concerned about the loss of traditional Japanese aesthetics due to the rapid changes in modern society, and praised the traditional Japanese aesthetic on light and shadow. This uniquely Japanese aesthetic influenced not only the Japanese architect Tadao Ando, but also the philosopher Michel Foucault. Inspired by Tanizaki's approach, my project '*In Praise of Imperfection*' re-focuses on the traditional Japanese aesthetic of imperfection, and I want to question the values of perfection by visualising them through typography which is my area of interest.



Tokyo National Museum (2024) Tea bowl,
shino type, Mino Ware, Tnm.jp.



I was also inspired by the *Shino Tea Bowl Furisode*, a national treasure from the 16th century when the Japanese tea ceremony culture developed. It has an asymmetrical, distorted shape and its imperfect beauty gives it a unique charm. I used clay, which is associated with tea bowls, as a material to create an original typeface. The ‘Yugami’ typeface, which was created by crushing a perfect acrylic mould, is a metaphor for people who are crushed by the invisible pressure to be perfect. Yugami means distortion in Japanese, and at first glance, this awkward typeface does not have the ubiquitous functionality of Helvetica.



However, with its various distortions and cracks, and the fact that none of the strokes are identical, the typeface reminds us that each human being is not perfect, but has a variety of personalities.

I use this imperfect 'Yugami' typeface to project a message from the past to the people of today.

'It is essentially a worship of the Imperfect, as it is a tender attempt to accomplish something possible in this impossible thing we know as life.'
(*The Book of Tea*, p5, Okakura, 1906)



Why JAPAN?



Concept

選ばれた会員様に、上質な出会いを。

東カレデートは、社会で活躍するビジネスマンの男性会員様や、厳しい入会審査に通過をした容姿端麗な女性会員様にご利用いただいている審査制婚活アプリです。



I hated my country

The grid system

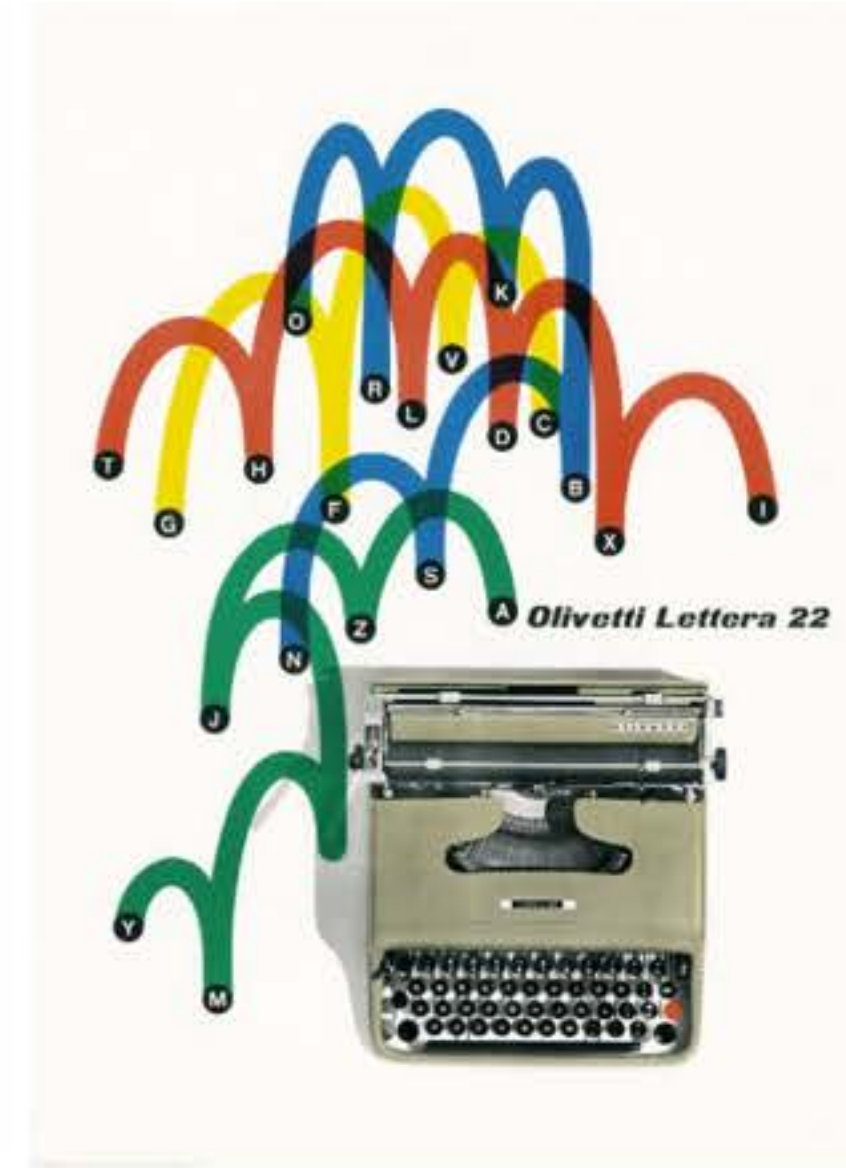
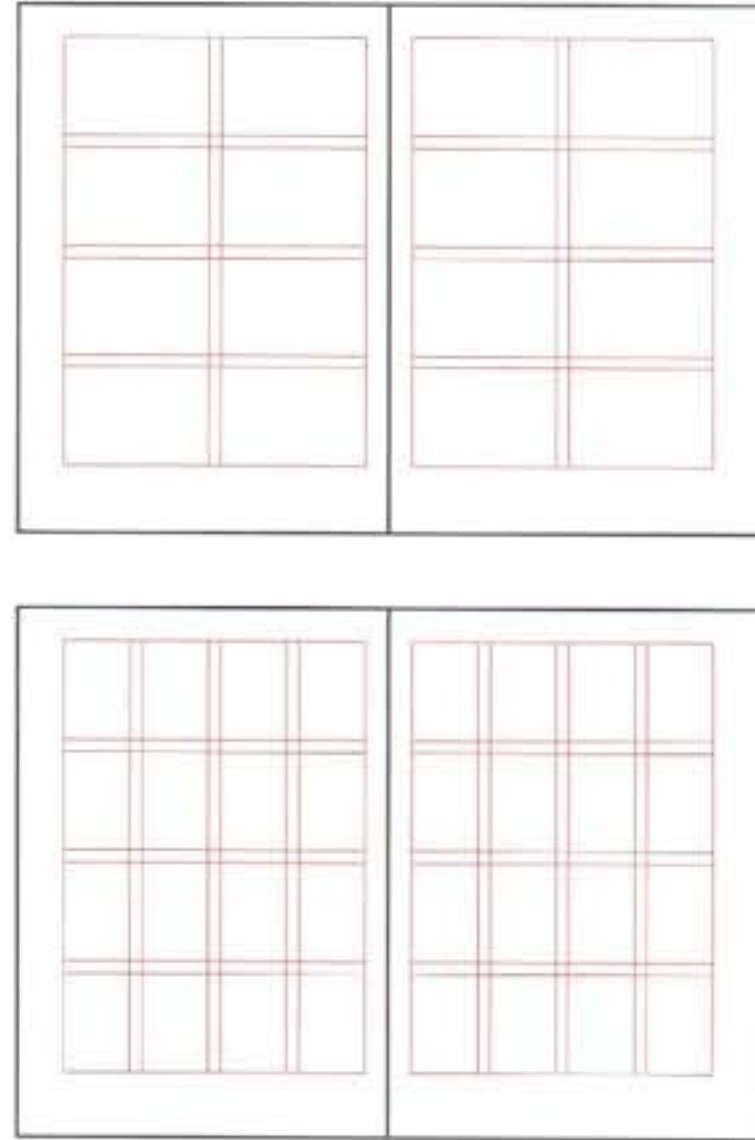
グリッドシステム

"The grid system is an aid, not a guarantee. It permits a number of possible uses and each designer can look for a solution appropriate to his personal style. But one must learn how to use the grid: it is an art that requires practice."

Josef Müller-Brockmann

本文中心のクラシクな仕上がりの証書の多くは、版面分割もしないシングルブロック、つまり1段組みとなるが、目線が多く入る場合は証書に合わせたグリッドシステムが必要となる。

グリッドによるレイアウトの考え方は古典的で有機的に見えづらくはなりがちですが、証書を意図的にコントロールするうえで、近代におけるグリッドシステムの在り方を実践を通して検証するべきものなので機会を作って授業以外でも学生同士で話し合ってみましょう。



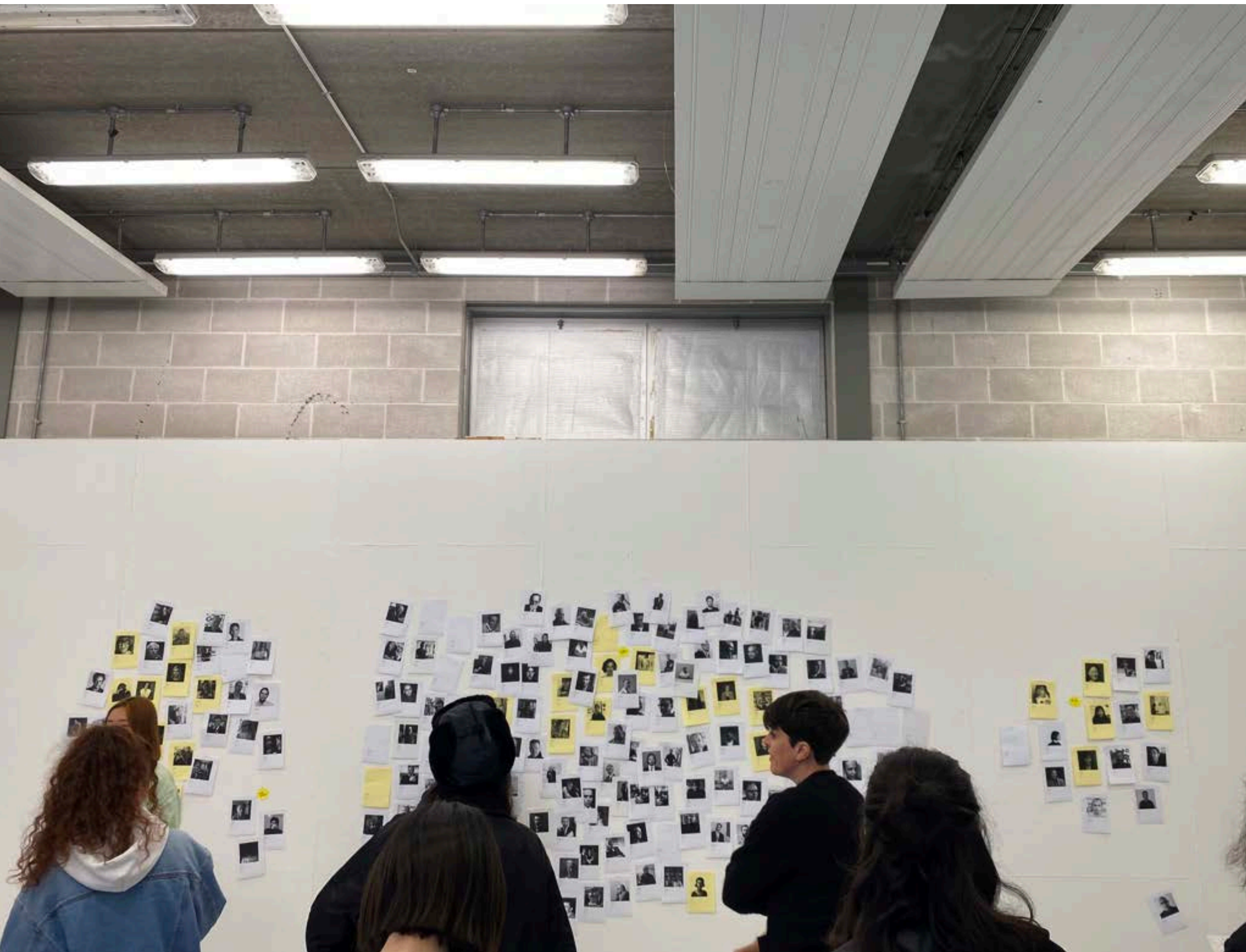
The Grid Systems
Niggli



www.swisstypefaces.com
Swiss Typefaces
Type Life is a series of printed publications about design, typography and lifestyle by Swiss Typefaces. It is packed to the brim with letterforms, and yet it is not a specimen. Type Life is a celebration of style and a wellspring of inspiration.

I was shocked at how little reference there is on minorities in the CCW literature, for example Asian designers and female designers.

Workshop 'classify' by Laura Knight 2022





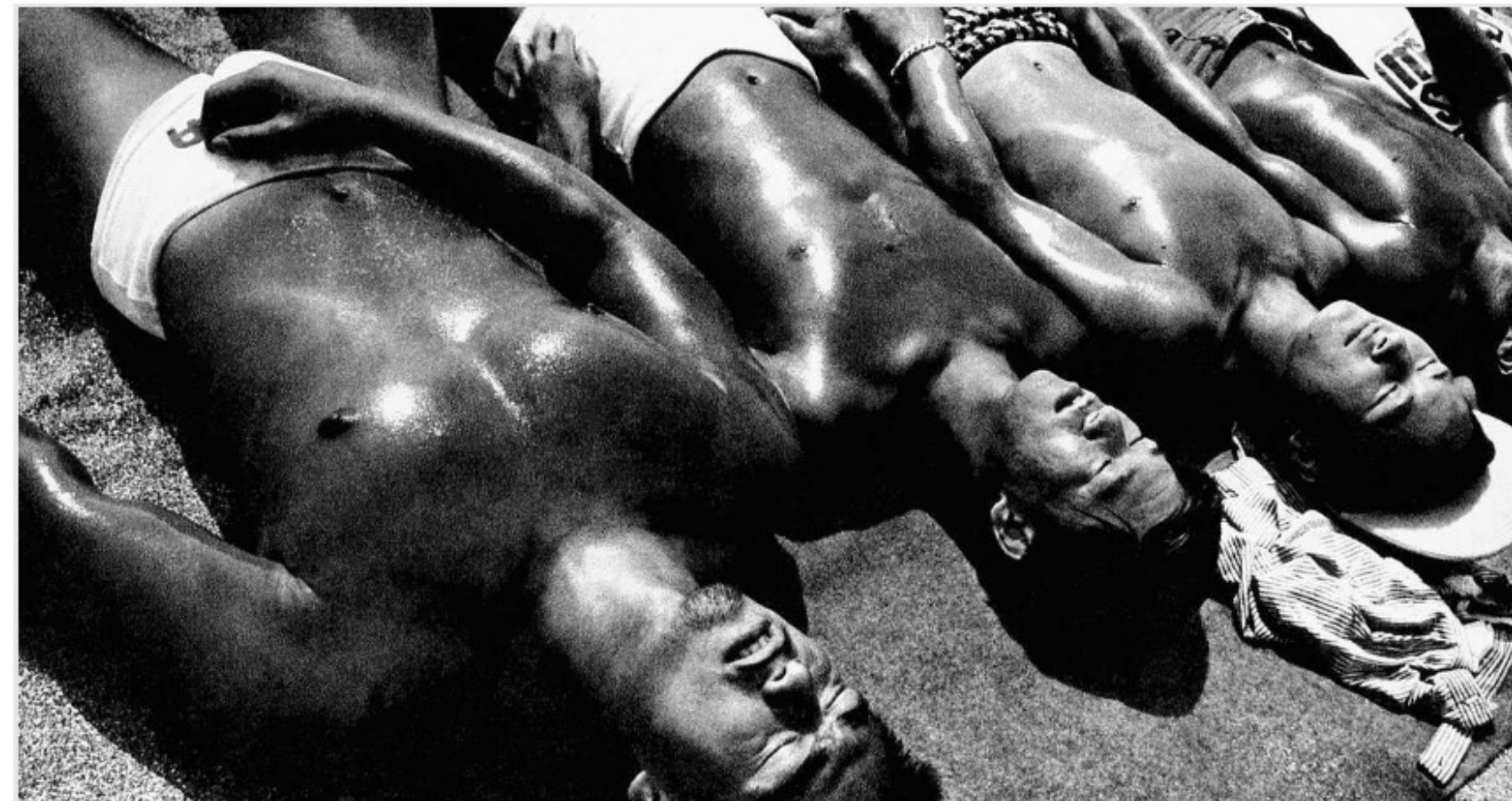
Decolonizing Design History

The work designers make is inspired by taste, and taste is often derived from what we're exposed to during our upbringing. But design values and history is taught through a canon; that accepted pantheon of work by predominantly European and American male designers that sets the basis for what is deemed "good" or "bad." The authority of the canon has undermined the work produced by non-Western cultures and those from poorer backgrounds so that Ghanaian textiles, for example, get cast as craft rather than design. Classifying traditional craft as different from modern design deems the histories and practices of design from many cultures inferior. We should aim to eliminate the false distinctions between craft and design, in order to recognize all culturally important forms of making. Design thinking rhetoric is



www.sugimotohiroshi.com

Hiroshi Sugimoto



thephotographersgallery.org.uk

Daido Moriyama: A Retrospective

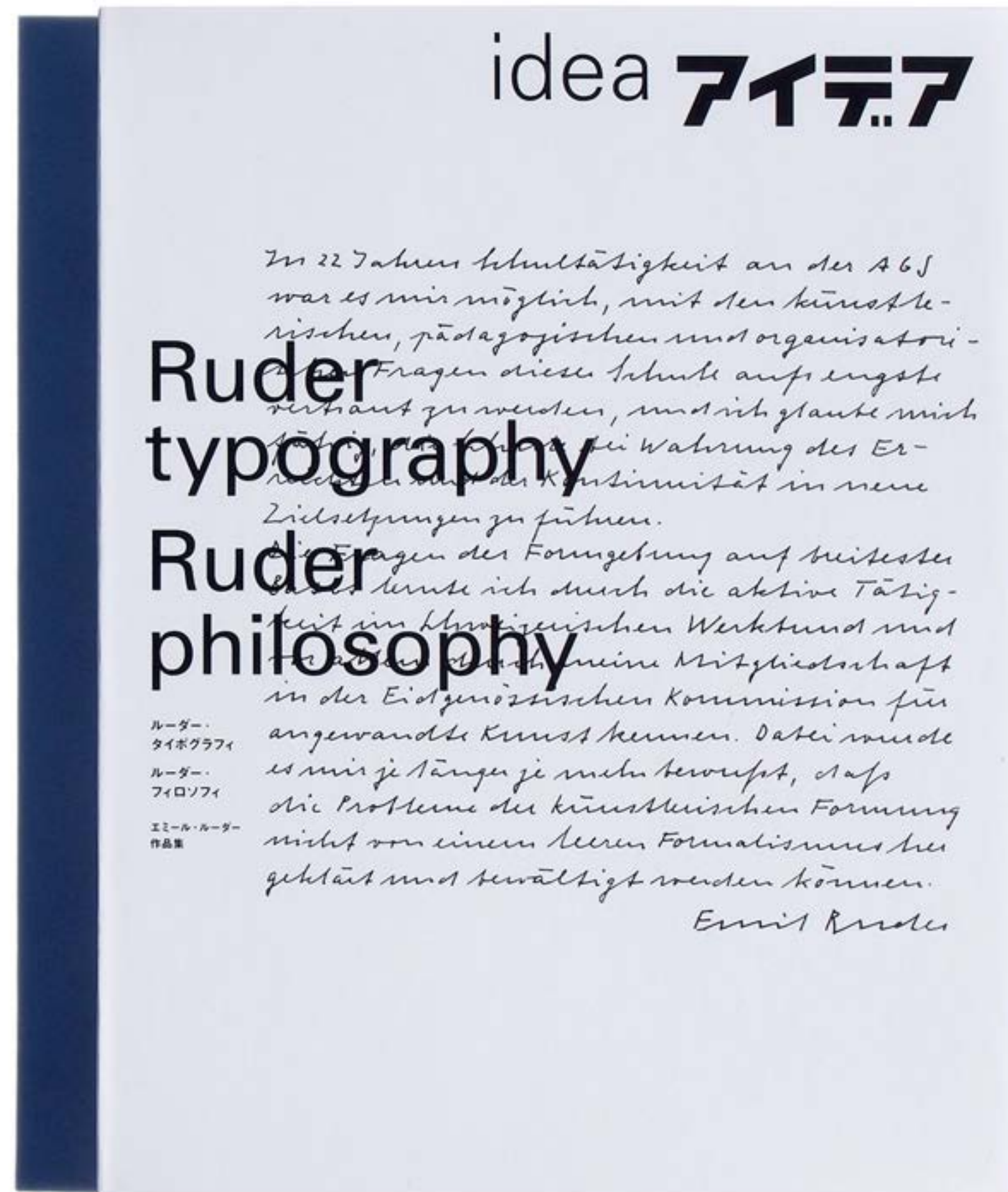
"Unmissable" (The Guardian)



medium.com

Kenya Hara on MUJI Design-The Japanese Aesthetics in 'Emptiness'

Kenya Hara, born in 1958, is a graphic designer, professor at Musashino Art University, and president of the Nippon Design Center. In...



Emil Ruder was a Swiss graphic designer and educator of the 20th century. He was one of the key pioneers of modernist design theory and practice and is particularly known for his work on the Swiss grid system.

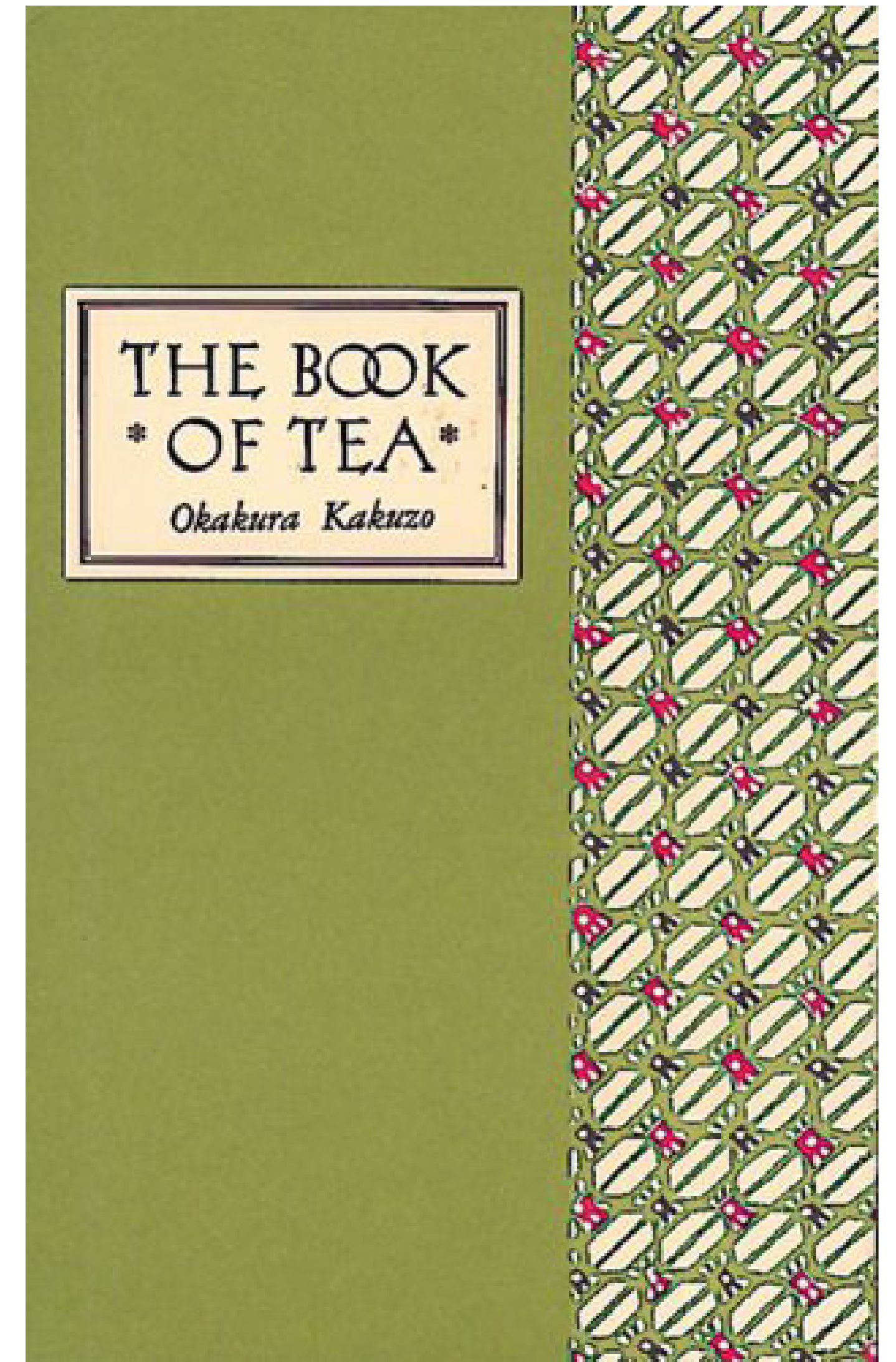
In 1906 Okakura's *The Book of Tea* was published, in which he, as a Japanese, introduced to Europe the depth and refinement of Far Eastern culture..

We should not put aside *The Book of Tea* without first reading what Okakura has to say about taking refuge from the present and historicism'

Asiatic youth are flocking to Western colleges for equipment of modern education...

Some of my compatriots have adopted too much of your customs and too much of your etiquette,... comprised the attainment of your civilisation. Pathetic and deplorable as such affections are, they evince our willingness to approach the West on our knees.

Tenshin Okakura, 1906, *The Book of Tea* (Japanese Edition) (p. 8)



Once identities exist, people tend to form a picture of a typical member of the group. Stereotypes develop. They may have more or less foundation in reality, but they are almost always critically wrong about something.

Appiah, K. A. (2021) *The Lies that Bind: Rethinking Identity*. p.19

Let us stop the continents from hurling epigrams at each other, and be sadder if not wiser by the mutual gain of half a hemisphere. We have developed along different lines, but there is no reason why one should not supplement the other.

Tenshin Okakura, 1906, *The Book of Tea* (Japanese Edition) (p. 9)

Visual experiment

Visual reference

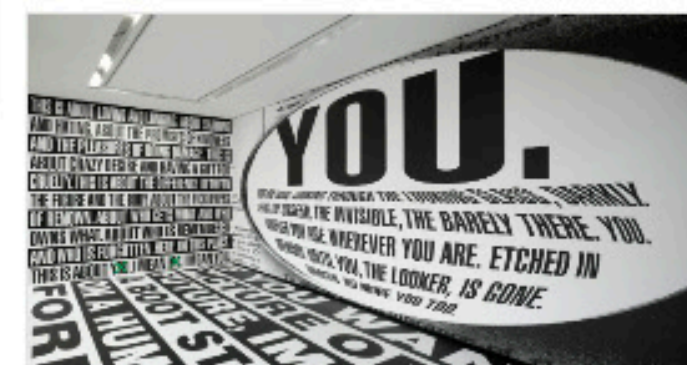
In order to make my visual communicate itself, I searched some visual references using some keywords such as typography, hierarchy, anti elitism, message to society and I found some artists who are related to my projects.



Barbara Kruger

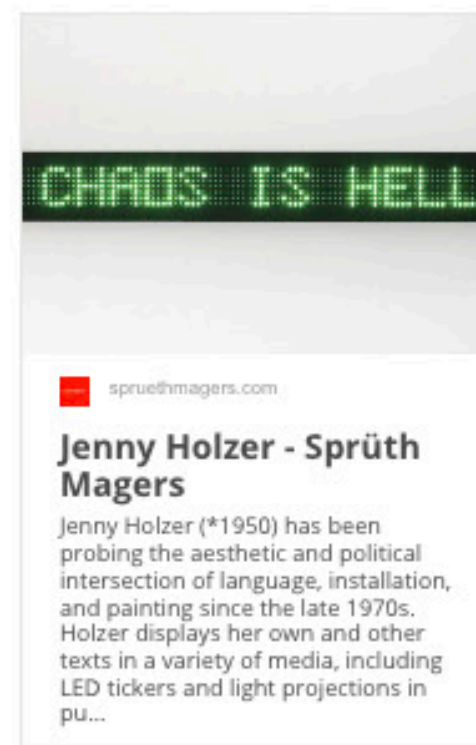


Barbara Kruger, 1989 Untitled (Your body is a battleground)



Barbara Kruger: Thinking of You. I Mean Me. I Mean You.
 The artist's first solo exhibition in London in 20 years, featuring a unique selection of installations alongside moving image works and multiple soundscapes.

Jenny Holzer



Jenny Holzer - Sprüth Magers
 Jenny Holzer (*1950) has been probing the aesthetic and political intersection of language, installation, and painting since the late 1970s. Holzer displays her own and other texts in a variety of media, including LED tickers and light projections in pu...



Comme des Garçons, Tsuguya Inoue



