Announcing Letterform Archive Publication No. 1

W. A. Dwiggins: A Life in Design

An illustrated biography written and designed by Bruce Kennett

Foreword by Steven Heller

ABOUT DWIGGINS

William Addison Dwiggins (1880–1956) was among the most influential and innovative designers of the twentieth century. He was a master calligrapher, type designer, illustrator, private press printer, and a pioneer of advertising and book design. He was the quintessential maker — fabricating his own tools, mastering old and inventing new techniques, and experimenting with design in areas as wide-ranging as modular ornament, stamps, currency, furniture, kites, marionettes, and theatrical sets and lighting. More than any of his contemporaries, Dwiggins united the full range of applied arts into a single profession: designer.

Dwiggins’s visual inventiveness was matched by his verbal wit: he wrote playful but potent essays that helped to define the field of graphic design, along with charming short stories and book-length fiction. A collection of his writing is appended to this groundbreaking monograph. Moreover, Dwiggins is still respected and beloved in the world of puppetry: the book features a generous sampling of his work in this realm. Gathered together, all these aspects provide a vivid overview of the artist’s life in design.

Bruce Kennett’s careful research, warm prose, and inclusion of numerous personal accounts from Dwiggins’s friends and contemporaries portray not only a brilliant designer, but a truly likable character. Original artwork, printed pieces, photographs, and other objects from three major collections (Boston Public Library, Letterform Archive, and the author’s holdings) have been carefully photographed with raking light, then printed via high-resolution offset lithography with stochastic screening for pop-off-the-page immediacy.

Bruce Kennett understands Dwiggins’s wit, his original sense of humor and unique obliquity of approach, and his ability to transform those ingredients into graphic images that still intrigue, astound, and captivate. Bruce’s book is a marvelous presentation of the man, his work, and his imperishable contribution to the graphic arts.       David R. Godine

PUBLICAtION

The book will be made available soon through a crowd-funding campaign on Kickstarter. To explore sample spreads from the book and to gain access to the lowest early bird price, sign up now at letterformarchive.org/dwiggins. For libraries and other institutions needing to reserve a copy by purchase order, please contact publications@letterformarchive.org.
Bruce Kennett discovered the work of Dwiggins in 1972 and has drawn inspiration from it ever since. Kennett designs books and exhibitions, teaches and lectures on book design and printing history, and works as a landscape photographer. He studied calligraphy and book design with the Austrian artist Friedrich Neugebauer, and later translated Neugebauer’s book The Mystic Art of Written Forms. In the 1980s he served as managing director and designer at the Anthoensen Press, Maine’s storied book printer. He now lives and works in rural Vermont. For the past fourteen years Bruce has been steadily researching, writing, and photographing for this book, which Letterform Archive is thrilled to announce as its inaugural publication.

This book is many things, but most of all it is proof positive that if there is any doubt about the origin theory of graphic design, Dwiggins did more to promote, diversify, and integrate the graphic, typographic, and printing-arts disciplines than anyone of his generation.

Steven Heller

ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND DESIGNER

ABOUT THE PUBLISHER

Letterform Archive is a nonprofit center for inspiration, education, and community in the graphic arts. Through tours, public events, courses, workshops, lectures, exhibitions, and an online archive featuring state-of-the-art photography, we share our world-class collection with a global audience that includes practicing and student designers along with general enthusiasts of typography, calligraphy, graphic design, and the history of letters.

With this book, we launch a publishing program that will expand access to our collections through careful curation and scholarship. Your support of this publication will help further the full range of programs and outreach at Letterform Archive and allow us to bring the material and cultural history of graphic design and the letter arts to as wide an audience as possible. As an independent publisher, Letterform Archive is committed to producing a diverse range of titles that will bring lesser-known or forgotten letter artists, designers, typographers, and calligraphers to the awareness of our community across the globe. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, we welcome your donations in support of Letterform Archive’s mission. Learn more about becoming a supporter here: http://letterformarchive.org/give.

Please visit our website and join the Letterform Archive mailing list to receive updates and special offers on our forthcoming programs, events, and publications: www.letterformarchive.org.
would create eleven titles (printed in thirty volumes) for the Limited Editions Club and various designs for Macy's and other companies, such as display type for Pictorial Review.

After the success of *Jekyll and Hyde*, Random House was eager to have Dwiggins design another book. Once again the author the publishing company proposed turned out to be one of Dwiggins's favorites: H. G. Wells. Dwiggins was now in full swing with stencil production, so *The Time Machine* was filled with "discharges" from his celluloid sheets. Generous-size illustrations printed in multiple flat colors alternated with black-only stencil patterns built on a smaller scale that worked in harmony with the type. Random House issued two hundred deluxe copies and soon followed with a much larger trade edition. Dwiggins later wrote, "This was a good chance to take a dive into the future."

Dwiggins's second and third projects for the Limited Editions Club appeared in 1932. Balzac's *Droll Stories*...
STANDARD AND DELUXE EDITIONS

W. A. Dwiggins: A Life in Design will be 480 pages, 9 x 11 inches, printed in full color throughout, 88,000 words of text with end notes and index, 1200 illustrations (of these, over 200 reproduced at actual size), Smyth sewn, case bound with full-color endpapers.

Standard Edition  Bound with full-color photographic covers and satin mylar protective lamination.

Deluxe Edition  Book and letterpress portfolio, housed together in a slipcase. The deluxe book will have Dwiggins-designed decorated paper over boards and a genuine leather spine. The portfolio will present a collection of Dwiggins’s essays and fiction, set hot-metal in types of his design and printed letterpress. (These letterpress pages will be photographed in raking light to preserve quality of printing and type design; offset facsimiles will be included in all copies of the monograph, standard and deluxe.) Every portfolio will be individually numbered and signed.

Penmor Lithographers, Lewiston, Maine, will print the book, using precision stochastic screens to preserve fine details and ensure wide color gamut.

The paper will be Sappi Opus Dull, a direct descendant of Warren’s Lustro Dull; endpapers will be Strathmore Text. (Warren and Strathmore were steady Dwiggins clients for decades.)

Acme Bookbinding, Boston, will bind both editions. The deluxe edition will feature a Saderra leather spine stamped with Dwiggins ornaments and lettering by Rich Lipton.

The letterpress portfolio will contain twenty pages of Linotype composition set by Michael Babcock of interrobang letterpress, Boston, and Andrew Steeves of Gaspereau Press, Nova Scotia. All of Dwiggins’s commercially issued designs will be present: Caledonia, Eldorado, Electra, Falcon, and Metro types, combined with Caravan ornaments. Line illustrations, initials, and lettering (all by Dwiggins) will be printed from twenty-two copper engravings on Mohawk Superfine. Presswork by Darrell Hyder at the Sun Hill Press, North Brookfield, Massachusetts. The cover will be Strathmore Grandee with a blind-stamped Dwiggins ornament.

The monograph text will be set by the author in a revival of Dwiggins’s Electra type, made by Jim Parkinson especially for this project. Kickstarter backers will have an opportunity to acquire these types for their own use.

For more information go to: letterformarchive.org/dwiggins.