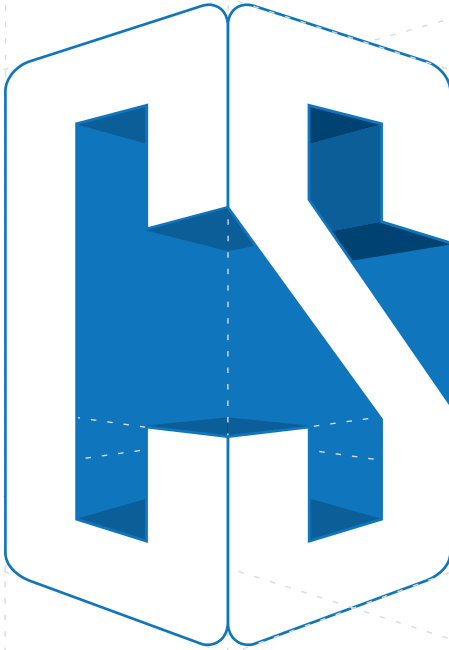




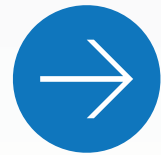
Typography Case Studies

A Four-Part SFI White Paper Series
Written By Craig Berger



Part IV

Typography Case Studies



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Four-Part Typography White Paper Series.

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We use type to support brands, define buildings and provide orientation; but how often do we recognize the craft of manipulating type to be successful in the environment? The designers and fabricators who are successful in this environment must be adept at not only the manipulation of a complex design family, but also how it can be integrated into materials, architecture and technology.

The 10 short case studies below profile design projects that feature well studied, documented and comprehensive approaches to integrating type in environmental design. Some of these projects are famous and serve as an influence for the designers of today and some are just well-conceived projects from our contemporaries. Taken together, they show how effective use of type can both shape environments and the way we look at the places we interact with. [↓](#)

HISTORIC PROJECTS

Bauhaus Projects, Germany

Herbert Bayer
1920s and 1930s

Herbert Bayer is known today as one of the most famous type designers in history, having developed the typography used in signage for the Bauhaus campus as well as a purely lower case typeface (Universal) used in many of Bauhaus communications. A unique hybrid of graphic designer and architect, Bayer approached type design with an eye for its integration into architecture and building design with an eye towards color and type.

In a series of design studies for newsstands, factories and movie theaters, Bayer stretched his simple typographic language both two and three dimensionally to show how it could impact building surfaces and empty space. These studies had a great influence on modern architects by beginning a dialogue that would expand beyond basic architectural forms to include color, type, symbols and light.



Olympics, Mexico City

Lance Wyman
1968

Lance Wyman is still a practicing designer today more than 45 years after this trendsetting project, so many people take for granted how ahead of its time it was. Not only did Wyman develop special symbols that both reflected the Olympic athletic spirit as well as the tradition native glyphic language, but Wyman also developed a typographic language that extended its tentacles into multiple environments from stamps to signs to public parks. This merger of type and an integrated visitor experience soon began to define the modern Olympic design tradition and was the inspiration behind famous Olympic designs developed for Los Angeles, Salt Lake City and London.



“Graphic design became an important visual ambassador for the 1968 Mexico Olympic Games, It was the first time the games were hosted by a Latin American nation. In planning for the games, Mexico, an emerging Third World nation, could not afford to make the extensive architectural statement made in Tokyo four years earlier. Graphic design contributed to the ambiance of the Mexican games and helped to make a meaningful visual impact for fewer pesos.”

Lance Wyman, The Olympic Image, The First 100 years



India Basin Industrial Park, San Francisco, CA

Michael Manwaring
1970

When Helvetica and other innovative font families were developed in the 1950s designers began to try to find ways of applying them to posters, signs and other environmental media, but a few daring architects and designers in the late 1960s including Robert Venturi, Chermayeff & Geismar, and Charles Moore, began expanding typography to enormous scale and integrating them in interior and public spaces. These “Supergraphics” were originally painted to interior and wall surfaces, but with advances in sign fabrication, began to become more dimensional. The India Basin Industrial Park is a leading example of this trend, and its architectural and placemaking power influenced countless office park and mall gateways over the next 40 years.

“We loved all of Pentagram’s work, though we do recommend their PR person get on the phone right away and call the Cardinals’ management, because we asked the tour guide at the end of the hour and a half walkthrough, ‘Don’t you ever mention Pentagram? They did all the design work.’ To which we were met with a blank look and a reply of, ‘Huh, no, I’ve never even heard of that.’”

Stephen Delahoyde in his design review for Unbeige Magazine



Crate & Barrel and CB2

Multiple design firms in addition to the in-house design team
1962-Today

There are brands designed around icons and there are those designed around type. Crate & Barrel is firmly in the latter camp with enormous ramifications on the design philosophy and approach of the organization. In many companies, color or architecture drives design decisions but Crate & Barrel has made the clear leap into using type to drive all their guidelines from signs to architecture. It employed the same advertising firm led by Tom Shortlidge for 40 years to ensure design quality and consistency. The company also is committed to building a strong in-house design team, yet use outside design direction from firms like Calori & Vanden Eynden, creating a design spirit that infects the culture of the organization.



University of Phoenix (Arizona Cardinals) Stadium, Phoenix, Arizona

Pentagram (Michael Gericke, lead designer)
Fabricated by Zumar Industries
2008

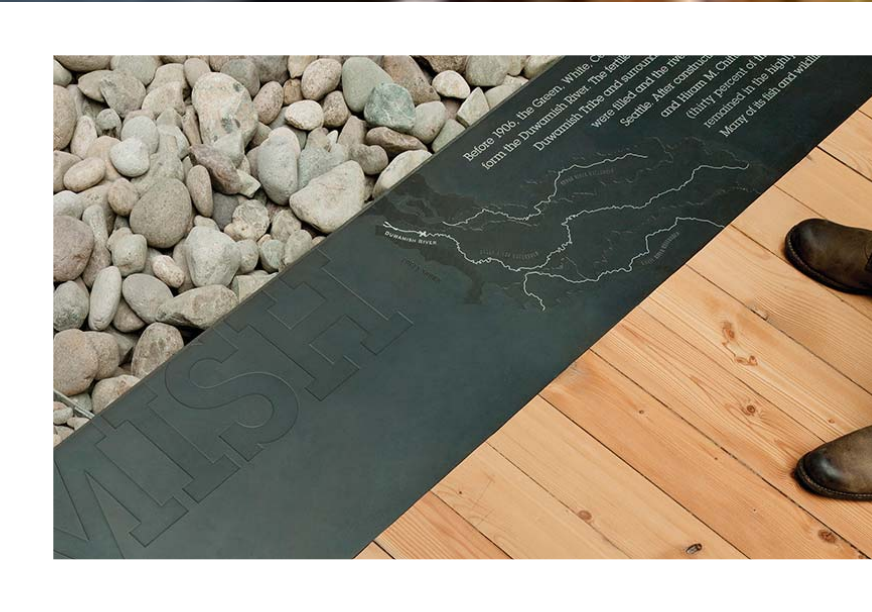
Over the last 15 years architectural style has shifted to an aggressive modernism of sculptural forms and advanced materials. At the same time an equally powerful trend in brand environments has integrated typography into corporate and institutional architecture through materials and lighting. The collision of these two design ideologies can be seen at work in the Arizona Cardinals Stadium. The building, designed by Peter Eisenman, is a monument to clean and no apologies technological modernism, yet graphics developed by Michael Gericke of Pentagram somehow both complements the monumental forms and supports an immersive experience that heightens the power of the building.



Federal Center South, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Seattle, Washington

Studio SC
Fabricated by Trade-Marx Sign & Display Corp.
2013

This is the most recent project listed, but also one that perfectly reflects the direction for environmental typography in the future. Modern design has evolved into an exploration of diverse material applications, and environmental graphics has picked up on these cues. At the Federal Center, type is inlaid in wood floors and walls, etched into glass, cut through metal and carved into granite. The result is typography with weight. Where the visitor can feel and experience the strokes and counters, and can analyze the impact of diverse materials on graphics. This will be an influential project for years to come.



Virtua Hospital, Marlton, NJ

Ex;it
Fabricated by AGS
2012

Wayfinding programs for facilities like large hospitals are mainly planning projects that where the signs and graphics serve a crucial but understated support role. In addition these wayfinding programs must meet the specific requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, which requires that all signs meet strict typography standards. With restrictions like these it is inspiring to see messaging so refined with an understated yet effective hierarchy of scale, color contrast and material that guides the



NPR Headquarters, Washington D.C.

Poulin + Morris (Fabricated by Boyd Signs)
2013

To promote the image of a dynamic news organization, Poulin + Morris developed a dynamic approach to typography at every. From room numbers that “vibrate” with different color strokes to notification screens throughout the building the type reflects the free flow of information befitting a national news outlet. In addition, type is both expanded and compressed to represent identification and directory information throughout the building.



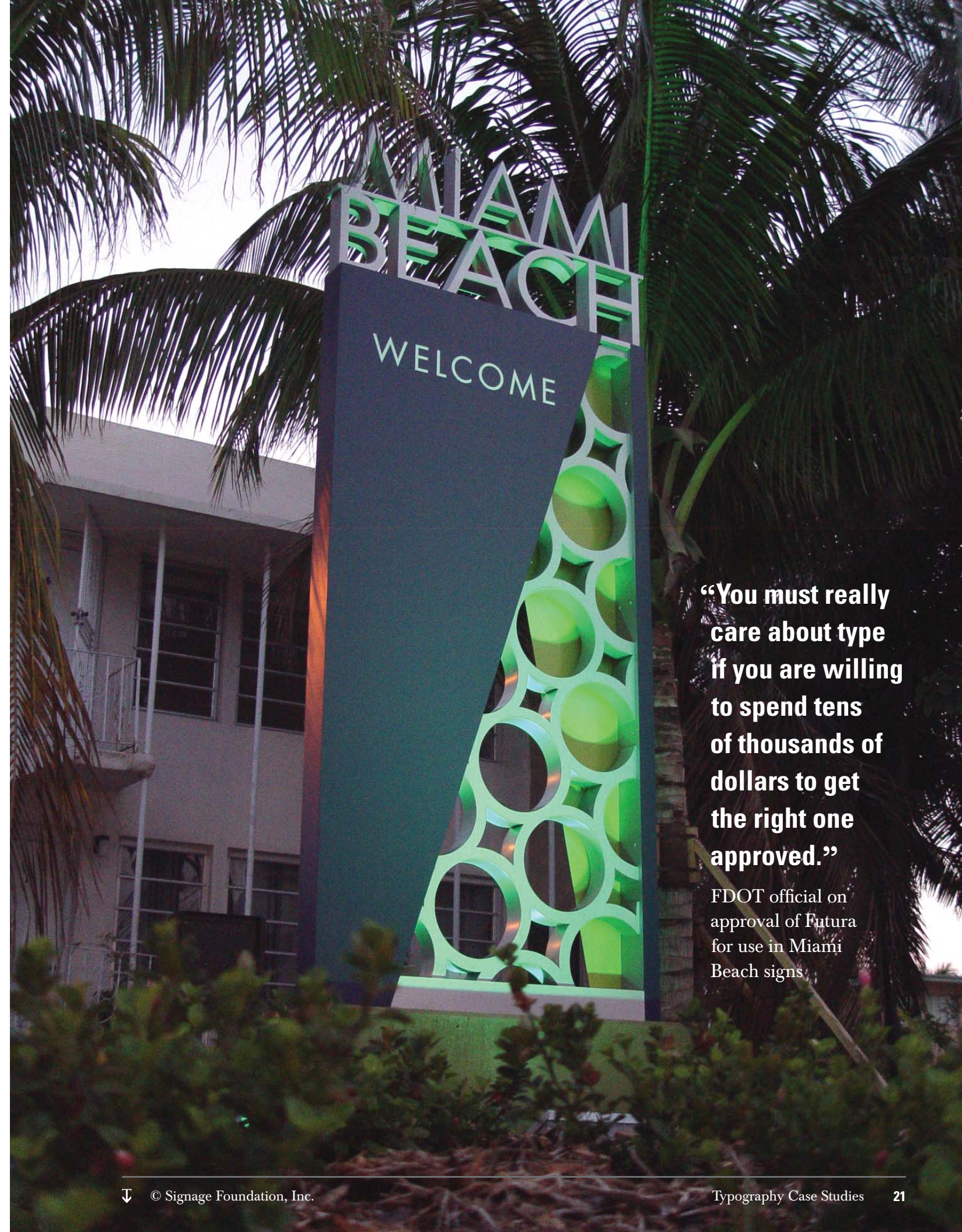
Miami Beach

MERJE

Fabricated by Gable Signs

2001-2008

A bit of a confession: This was one of the first urban wayfinding projects that I helped develop. This program has had a great influence on the great number of urban wayfinding programs that have come along since it was designed and installed. To ensure the selected Futura font was approved, the firm developed a research process with the Pennsylvania State University to show the effectiveness of type that deviated from the required Highway Gothic. In addition, the design process explored the linkage between typography, identity and legibility resulting in both a highly effective program, and one that defines the unique character of Miami Beach.



“You must really care about type if you are willing to spend tens of thousands of dollars to get the right one approved.”

FDOT official on approval of Futura for use in Miami Beach signs.

Pencils to Pixels

Monotype and Lippincott
2013

It is not surprising that a travelling exhibition celebrating 100 years of typeface design and innovation would also meet such high standards for excellence. Type here is reduced to its simplest form: black on white, (or white on glass) and then through scale, pattern and dynamism creates a narrative that is carried through the entire space. An exhibition that is both beautiful and a wonderful teaching tool.



Resources

SEGD Design Awards, SEG D

Far and away the greatest source of sign and environmental graphic design inspiration. The Design awards served as inspiration for many of the projects seen in this paper. An incredible teaching tool for young designers

Lance Wyman Interview for DesignBoom

This enlightening interview provides insights into one of the most perceptive environmental graphic designers of the last 50 years.

(<http://www.designboom.com/design/lance-wyman-interview/>)

Bauhaus, Jeannine Fiedler

Hundreds of books have been written on the Bauhaus movement, but this recently released text covers the material from every point of view from the academic to the political.

“Let us therefore create a new guild of craftsmen without the class-distinctions that raise an arrogant barrier between craftsmen and artists! Let us desire, conceive and create the new building of the future together. It will combine architecture, sculpture and painting in a single form, and will one day rise towards the heavens from the hands of a million workers as the crystalline symbol of a new and coming faith.”

Walter Gropius, Founder of the Bauhaus