

What is **research** into **typography** in Sweden today? How does typography **materialise** text? This **ONE DAY ABOUT** invites **researchers** and **practitioners** with **ongoing projects** in Sweden to **share insights** from their **diverse investigations** *into and through* typography. A generous donation of a **mobile printing press** and **type** will also be **activated** during the day.

The day will take the form of a **series of talks** that introduce **cultural** and **historical** aspects of **type**, its use in **vernacular**, **craft** contexts, **constraints** and **conventions** established through **academic** contexts, **visual entanglements**, **industrial**, **commercial** concerns, **political** constraints, **feminist** approaches, etc. The day will also **acknowledge** the generous **donation** of a **mobile letterpress** and **typesetting** unit to Konstfack's Letterpress Studio (grafikverkstad) originally made for **Riksställningar** in **1985** it will be activated over the day **culminating** in a **print**.

**Typography** is one of the few subjects and disciplines that **graphic design** claims as **its own**, it is a **visible manifestation** of language, and in its original form an **embodied activity** whose **physicality** is still present in the language used around its **digital** forms. This **gathering** is an **acknowledgement** of a growing community of researchers, a **network** that can support nascent research projects in the visual communication and graphic design department. Typography is also a **shared concern** for all interested in **language** and **communication**.

**ONE DAY ABOUT** is a **seminar** format implemented to **strengthen** the **research** environment at **Konstfack** by acting as an **incubation** environment for research ideas and **future** research **projects**. The symposium is a collaboration between **Konstfack: Visual Communication (GFIVK)** and **Södertörn University: Media Technology**.

# ONE DAY ABOUT

Typography Research  
in Sweden &  
Materiality of Text

17 September 2025  
10–18, Svarta Havet,  
Konstfack University

**10.00–10.15** Welcome and introduction **Patrick Lacey** (15 min)

SESSION 1 (10.15–11.15)

**Karin Wagner**: *From ASCII Art to Comic Sans: Typography and Popular Culture in the Digital Age* (30 min)

**Maryam Fanni & Johan Järlehed**: *The politics of typographic placemaking* (30 min)

**11.15–11.35** Coffee and Fruit Break (20 min)

SESSION 2 (11.35–12.15)

**Brita Leitmann Lindvall**: *Elizabeth at All Times: Political circumstances, typographic aesthetic hegemonies and practice of Elizabeth Friedländer (1903–1984)* (20 min)

**Arina Stoenescu**: *Typography and Politics: Entangled Histories* (20 min)

**12.15–14.00** Lunch Break & Start of **Type work in Progress** with \*a generous donation to Konstfack's **Letterpress** studio **Patrick Lacey & Arina Stoenescu** and **Ola Lindgren Community Press** (90 min)

SESSION 3 (14.00–15.00)

**Johanna Lewengard, Benedetta Crippa, Åsa Wikberg Nilsson**: *The Power of Recognition: Typography and Reading Beyond Visual Entanglements* (30 min)

**Kristina Lundblad**: *The Typography of Knowledge: Graphic Form and the Shaping of Disciplines, Academic Identities and Concepts of Science* (30 min)

**15.00–15.20** Coffee and Fruit Break (20 min)

# ONE DAY ABOUT

## SESSION 4 (15.20–16.10)

**Taurai Valerie Mtake**: *From heritage to Glyphs: Bringing Nguni symbols and chiShona to life through type design* (15 min)

**Sara Kaaman**: *Replace All*. Transformative shifts in printing and typographic labor at Dagens Nyheter's printing house during the 1970s–1990s (15 min)

**Jens Schildt, Iréne Thisner, William J. Andersson**: *Elsie Sennås* \*\* (1921–1996) and embroidered lettering (20 min)

**16.15–16.35** Conclusion (20 min)

**16.35–17.35** *End of Type work in Progress* with a generous donation\* to Konstfack's **Letterpress studio** (practical exploration of the materiality of text) **Patrick Lacey & Arina Stoenescu** and **Ola Lindgren, Community Press**

**17.35–18.00** Refreshments and goodbye!

### ACTIVATING A GENEROUS DONATION

\* The **generous donation** to Konstfack's Letterpress studio was provided by **Arina Stoenescu** (Konstfack GFI alumna 1994) and comes from **Riksställningar** via **Skansen, Jonas Domej** (grand child of **Simon Söderstam** 1882–1952, **Royal printer** and **founder** of the Swedish printing house **Nordisk Rotogravyr**), and **Gunilla Lundgren** (**writer** and **founder** of the annually event **Nobel in Rinkeby**) who used the donated material to print **poems** and **books** during the 1980s together **with children** in Rinkeby in the spirit of **Célestin Freinet**.

### A NOTE ABOUT THE TYPE

\*\* **ES Colour Beta** typeface designed by **Jens Schildt** is **inspired** by the letterforms drawn **by Elsie Sennås** (1921–1996) in one of her popular **embroidery books** “**Märkbok 2**” (A **handbook** of **lettering** for **stitchers**, 1959) **published** in many editions and languages **all over the world**.

# BIOGRAPHIES

**William J. Andersson** is a Stockholm-based graphic designer specialising in communication for printed, digital, and spatial media, and co-founder of Otsium books and Projektrum Augsburg.

**Benedetta Crippa** is a graphic designer running her own studio practice in Stockholm. Through her work, teaching, and research she is part of a new generation of designers leading the evolution of the field. Formerly graphic design lead at the Stockholm Environment Institute, her practice-based research on "visual sustainability" is recognised as a seminal contribution to the discourse on sustainable practice in design. She is visiting teacher at several design institutions and an engaging speaker, advocating for an evolved design field grounded in the transformative power of aesthetics.

**Maryam Fanni** is a designer, educator and PhD student in Design at HDK-Valand focusing on printed matter and typography, co-editor of *Natural Enemies of Books – A Messy History of Women in Printing and Typography*.

**Johan Järlehed** is a professor at the University of Gothenburg, working with multilingualism and visual communication, with research on typographic placemaking.

**Sara Kaaman** is a graphic designer, artist and Senior Lecturer in Graphic Design at Konstfack. Her work explores the intersections of publishing, performance, print technologies/histories and language. Her practice encompasses design, teaching, performance, and various forms of printing and publishing. As a member of MMS, a research collective tracing woman's labor histories in graphic design she is a co-editor of *Natural Enemies of Books – A Messy History of Women in Printing and Typography*. She runs the community library and reading room Munnen in Bagarmossen, dedicated to artistic and activist ways of using publishing. She holds an MFA in Choreography from Stockholm University of the Arts.

**Patrick Lacey** is a professor of visual communication at Konstfack and member of the transdisciplinary design collective Åbåke, focusing on the social aspects of design.

**Brita Lindvall Leitmann** is a PhD student in visual communication at Konstfack, with a research focus on graphic design and typography. Lindvall Leitmann graduated from Gerrit Rietveld Academy in Amsterdam in 2007 and has been employed as a senior lecturer in visual communication at Beckmans School of Design. Lindvall Leitmann is an internationally acclaimed graphic designer with 25 years of professional activity. Since 2012, Lindvall Leitmann has run the design studio Bastion, where they explore how intersectional and postcolonial theory can be translated into methods and practices within visual communication.

**Johanna Lewengard** is a designer, professor, and researcher based in Stockholm with a longstanding engagement in the development of graphic design as an artistic and academic field. As former Professor of Graphic Design at Konstfack, she led major institutional and curricular reforms, including the establishment of Sweden's first artistic doctoral positions in visual communication. Her internationally recognised design practice intersects with strategic advisory work across arts, culture, and industry. Currently Adjunct Professor at Luleå University of Technology, she and her team were awarded a research grant from the Swedish Research Council in 2025, the first ever in graphic design.

**Ola Lindgren** is a graphic designer and artist, interested in working with the material and physical qualities of text, typography and messages.

**Kristina Lundblad** is an associate professor in book history at Lund University, researching the production of meaning in relation to the materiality and form of books.

**Moa Matthis** is an author and critic, with a PhD in Literature. She is senior lecturer at the Dept of Visual Communication/Graphic Design and Illustration, Konstfack.

**Taurai Valerie Mtake** is an award-winning graphic designer and Google Font type designer, known for creating the Madimi One typeface.

**Jens Schildt** is a senior lecturer in visual communication at Konstfack and an independent graphic designer, specialising in typography, type design, and research. He is the co-founder of the internationally renowned graphic design studio Our Polite Society and type foundry OPS Type.

**Arina Stoenescu** is a graphic designer and lecturer in media technology at Södertörn University, focusing on typography and its political implications and a PhD student in book history at Lund University.

**Irène Thisner** is a graphic designer and educator specialising in graphic design and typography.

**Karin Wagner** is a professor in art history and visual studies at the University of Gothenburg. Her main research interests are digital media, design and photography. Previous research involves packaging design and sustainability, a subject she is going to return to in a book she is currently writing. In 2023 she published the book *From ASCII Art to Comic Sans: Typography and Popular Culture in the Digital Age*.

**Åsa Wikberg Nilsson** is a designer and Professor of Design at Luleå University of Technology, specializing in critical design, visual communication, co-design, and user experience. Her research and teaching center on inclusive, collaborative processes that use art, design, and creativity as catalysts for change. With a background in visual communication, she combines norm-critical and norm-creative approaches with methodological development. One example is NOVA (2016) – a toolkit of methods and tools for norm-creative innovation – now part of the permanent Design Stories exhibition at the Röhsska Museum.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

**Johanna Lewengard, Benedetta Crippa, Åsa Wikberg Nilsson**  
*The Power of Recognition*

*The Power of Recognition* is a three-year artistic research project exploring how typography shapes the perception of value. At its core lies the question: what exactly is the power at play when we recognise something? Through playful experimentation with type's materiality the project investigates the subtle threshold between the known and the new, revealing how aesthetics function as a fundamental interface with our world. *The Power of Recognition* seeks to deepen society's understanding of visibility's influence, making the unseen mechanisms of recognition visible, and highlighting the vital role of design in everyday life. The project is funded by the Swedish Research Council, and hosted by Luleå University of Technology.

**Karin Wagner**

*From ASCII Art to Comic Sans: Typography and Popular Culture in the Digital Age*

The history of graphic design mostly consists of success stories. Great names and great works are in focus, creating a canon that leaves out important parts of the history. This project was about typography that does not "fit in" in mainstream historiography. The four typographical phenomena presented in the book *From ASCII Art to Comic Sans: Typography and Popular Culture in the Digital Age* highlight the cultural clashes that have occurred between the emergent computer technology and the traditional field of typography—the nerdy practice of making images out of letters, the strange-looking machine-readable typefaces, the poor-quality letters of dot matrix printers, and the contempt directed against the typeface Comic Sans. The book paints a cultural history of how technologies developed for a functional purpose can find their way to popular culture by being used in ways that are unintended and unforeseen by the original creators.



## Ola Lindgren

### *The Community Press*

The work *The Community Press* explores the role of graphic design, public communication, and written language in relation to urgent societal challenges. Set within a speculative scenario without access to electricity or modern technology, the project employs self-made primitive graphic tools to visualize and mediate the narrative. The DIY printing press is constructed from easily accessible materials such as birch wood and scrap metal, while the custom-designed typeface is made in 12 cicero wood type crafted out of end grain hard maple. The outcome is the concept of a “community press,” presented as a hybrid between an installation of a functional printing workshop, and a live printing performance with participatory elements. The Community Press has been awarded the Gurmund & Neuberghs Scholarship for Artistic Education, STA100 for Typographic Excellence, and Young Swedish Design.

### Brita Leitmann Lindvall

#### *Elizabeth at All Times*

The starting point of my research project revolves around the typographer Elizabeth Friedlander, born 1903, Berlin – and her typeface “Elizabeth”, released in 1939. Friedlander plans to launch this typeface under the name of “Friedlander-Antiqua”, but she is forced to rebrand it using her first name. The authorities do not accept her Jewish surname due to the political currents that dominated Germany at the time. Elizabeth Friedlander, an upcoming name in typographic circles, is forbidden to practice her profession for the same reason. She manages to obtain a visa to Italy, which becomes a temporary safe haven until Mussolini’s Fascist racial laws come into effect, forcing her to uproot once again. She flees the country just before the outbreak of war. Based on Elizabeth Friedlander’s interrupted work and canceled premise, my project has its beginning. *Elizabeth at All Times* constitutes an ongoing study of typography as a visual language and graphic design craft by exploring how time and circumstance affect aesthetic hegemonies and practice. By historicising how technological, political, economic, and sociocultural currents intersect, intertwine, and create conditions for Elizabeth Friedlander’s present, I seek to try out methods for aesthetic and mental shifts that lead to other ways of perceiving and reanimating the past – setting other conditions and futures for my practice.

### Arina Stoenescu

#### *Typography and Politics: Entangled Histories*

This presentation, based on PhD research, explores the entanglement of typography and politics in Communist Romania (1948–1989), focusing on how typographic practice was shaped by centralisation, standardisation, and ideological control. Type specimens, newspaper design, and the work of tehoredactors (the Communist counterpart to the graphic designer) reveal how typography reinforced political messages. Drawing on the materiality of text, archival sources, and oral history, the project uses the Romanian case to identify patterns of similar approaches in contemporary typographic practice. It highlights how typography functioned simultaneously as a material practice and as a political instrument.

### Taurai Valerie Mtake

#### *The Madimi project*

*The Madimi project* is an award-winning design initiative by Taurai Valerie Mtake born from her frustration with the reduction of Southern Afrikan scripts, symbols and visual heritage to mere decoration. Determined to preserve their depth and meaning she developed Madimi One a contemporary typeface inspired by Nguni symbols and Southern African cultural narratives designed to authentically support Afrikan languages. More than a font, Madimi is a cultural preservation effort, reviving and reimagining indigenous communication systems while integrating them into modern design. It ensures traditional visual languages remain functional, respected and relevant safeguarding them as living heritage for future generations.

## Sara Kaaman

### *Replace All*

What are the effects on working bodies, identities, and labor politics when the tools of (typo)graphic production radically change? This talk introduces a recently initiated research project on the transformative shifts at Dagens Nyheter’s printing house during the 1970s–1990s — a period when typesetters and printers navigated seismic technological changes in their roles. Drawing from the DN staff magazine *Humlan* as a primary source, and the writings of typesetter Karen Brodine as a poetic lens, the project explores how histories of typographic work can influence and inspire our imaginations of its futures. The presentation will open up the early stages of the research process and share archival finds, inviting reflection on how typographers and designers document and process technological shifts in their work. The project is currently in the stage of seeking funding and institutional support for its continuation.

### Jens Schildt, Irène Thisner, William J. Andersson

#### *Elsie Svernås – Textile marking and type design*

Elsie Svernås (1921–1996) was a Swedish textile artist, graphic designer, and teacher, known for her books on textile marking from the 1950s and 60s. Svernås’ ambition was to renew the traditional craft of marking textiles with initials, monograms, and patterns. The books combined typographic precision with artistic playfulness and introduced modernist letterforms adapted to the material and techniques of textiles. Despite these books being published in very large editions and in numerous languages, Svernås remains a largely unknown name in the history of typography and design. In addition to her publications, Svernås worked for many years as a teacher of drawing and composition at Konstfack in Stockholm. This research project, initiated in 2024/2025, aims to rediscover and reappraise Svernås’ artistic work. The project focuses on both biographical and artistic research, and seeks to bring attention to questions of tacit knowledge and marginalized art forms and craft traditions.

### Moa Matthis

*Conclusion* – A poetic but sharp summary, with questions reaching into the future.

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