

Easy type modification tricks

.... I've been asked many times, how to do various tricks I show in my work. This one's no exception. When I submitted my art for an e-mail article about to be published I was asked how it was done. I liked the font "Phoebe" (this month's font selection) from Silver Graphics, so I had decided to use it in this piece. If you've been in any of my workshops, you'll know I always advocate "looking for opportunities." Phoebe offered opportunities I couldn't resist. Since the font already had some very nice characteristics, the modifications almost suggested themselves.



My hard and fast rule is:

Always use elements contained in the font you're manipulating!

This helps guarantee compatibility of the changes you make. You probably already know it's tremendously difficult to invent type elements. I don't. I go shopping in the font for elements I can borrow.

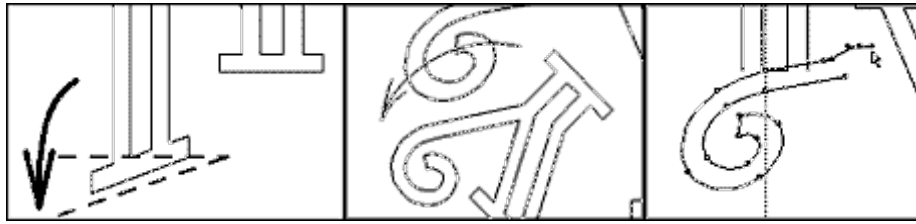
.... In the examples below we see the easy quick modifications I made. First, convert the type to paths. Silver's fonts are so clean, it's a joy working with them. Never do this on a FontBank font! After sizing the general layout, I looked for opportunity. The square, flat feet offered a quick slant using the "shear" tool in Adobe Illustrator.

.... This is so easy it's embarrassing. Select the parts you want to shear, hold down the shift key and drag to the desired position. In the process I dragged the whole base down a bit so it projected below the base line.

.... This worked so well, I then did the same technique to the U in yours except this time I dragged up. I also stretched the S a bit, but I'll probably put that back.

Now, let's go shopping.

Now, we look for parts that we can use on other parts. That wonderful swash on the upper case Y was just the thing we needed. A quick copy/drag, or duplicate gave us another Y to work with, and the rotate tool brought the swash around to where we could work on it.



Quick, clip the part away, once in position, then change a few characteristics about the flourish in order to make it a new "part." Note, here, we've removed the foot of the large P all together, to get it out of the way.

A similar move was put on the R in Yours, this time aligning the stroke with the existing down stroke of the leg. Sweet. You can do all sorts of techniques like this, just keep in mind:

A) Carefully look at the character set when looking for type to modify. -- All type offers opportunities, but try to match the look and feeling to the "theme" for "flavor" you're trying to portray. In this case the article was comparing e-mail to old fashioned, personal letter-writing correspondence. So, we wanted something with a home-sweet-home, old fashioned look.

B) Convert the type to paths

C) Always use existing elements -- Find them in the font, and look carefully in the italics sets of many fonts, where the best opportunities exist!

D) Use the software tools available rather than drawing from scratch. -- The rotate, scale, shear, flip and blend tools all offer good possibilities. Additionally, in Illustrator 5+ there are filter tools that open a whole world of modifications!

E) Never overlook the possibilities of type as art source!

Send us your type manipulation masterpieces. Don't forget to tell us how you did them, and why you found your techniques handy!