Signs
lettering in the environment
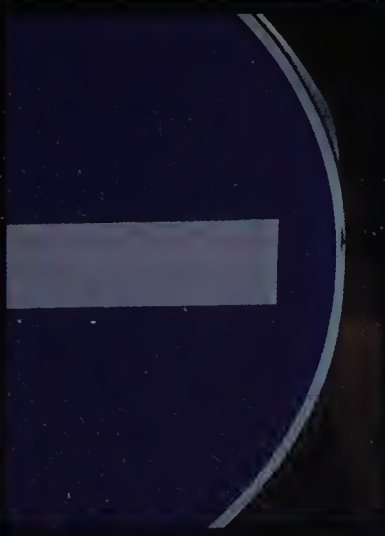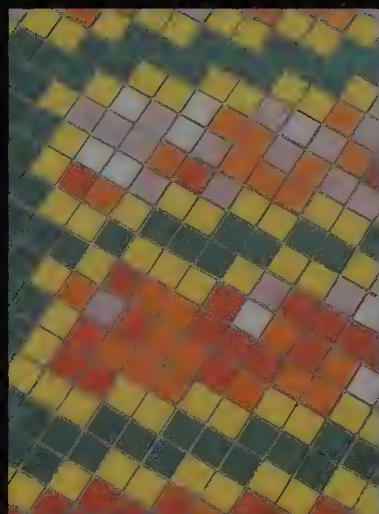
Phil Baines & Catherine Dixon

Phil Baines & Catherine Dixon

Signs: lettering in the enuironment

Letterforms surround us: inscriptions or names on buildings, directional signs for road networks or within and around buildings. This book focuses on the letterforms and typography found in public places which help us to navigate towns, cities and countryside and which contribute to a sense of place. Featuring examples from around the world, the book discusses the function and execution of signage, concentrating on the intentional rather than on the accidental or temporary.

Visually led, *Signs* contains over 700 colour images grouped thematically and described in extended captions. The best current examples are shown alongside historical material. This is the first book to give a broad overview and look at recent developments in the field. Part resource, part celebration, it brings together material that is of key interest to graphic designers, lettering artists, architects and all those who are concerned with how towns and cities look and function.

With approximately 700 colour illustrations
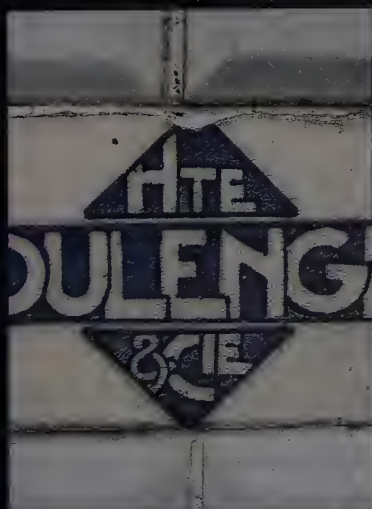
Front cover illustrations:

172/6   2   57/2   56/2   134/1   144/6

36/1   137/2   157

147/5   48/4   139/6   75/6   41/6   138/5   179/6   La Rochelle, Vendée, France, 2001
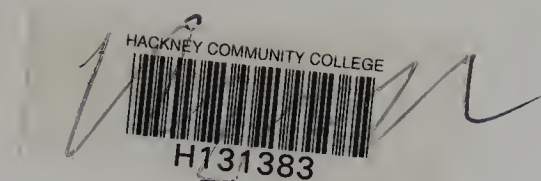
54/1   159/3   141/5   24/1   139/2   58/6

Signs: lettering in the environment

Phil Baines & Catherine Dixon

Signs: lettering in the environment

Naming places and defining spaces 96

6

Introduction

Part history, part observation and a large part opinion, this book has been shaped by the other works on this subject that we read as students, by the presentations we have given, the articles we have written and by the discussions we have had with our own students. As a collection of thoughts and images it serves as a record and a celebration of more than ten years of journeys and public lettering discoveries.

Or, put another way, this book is about seeing. It is about seeing the letters which surround us in our public spaces; about seeing that which all too often we don't see: the directional signs for road networks passed by in cars at speed; the inscriptions or names on familiar buildings; even the characters found on the most mundane functional objects of our physical environment such as access grills for public utilities. Such a diversity of material falls outside any one single discipline and includes the work of anonymous letterers, sign-writers, graphic designers, artists, artisans and engineers. What this material has in common, however, is that it all contributes to how our towns, cities and countryside work and, at a more human level, look. While history, architecture and planning all shape the broad picture of our environment, lettering is the most prominent aspect of the detail. And, however much we take this kind of work for granted (and this is no accident), the strategies informing it can be quite complex. So while this book is in part a simple celebration of the fact that such material exists – and a prompt for seeing and noticing more of it as we go about our daily lives – it also provides us with an opportunity for explaining the terms of reference which have focussed our examination of public lettering and which have helped us to understand how and why it works as it does.

Such a study is not without precedent. This book belongs to a tradition of writing about the vernacular within letterforms established during the last century by Nicolete Gray, James Mosley, Alan Bartram and Jock Kinneir. They determined something of the scope of the subject and opened it up to a much wider audience. Certainly, the collection of images and observations gathered here have been shaped by their influence. A few of the places shown will be familiar to any readers who know their books, but these texts are now out of print and a great many of the places/examples recorded have long since disappeared. More recent articles in the design press have continued the tradition of recording examples of letters in the environment, but generally without the kind of critical or contextual discussion we attempt.

This lack of recent discussion has been compounded by shifts in art and design teaching curricula. Ironically, while letters may surround us, nowhere is the subject of environmental lettering taught. Its broad nature means that it is spread too thinly across too many different courses, each with other teaching priorities. In the case of graphic design, a growing emphasis on the typographic has meant that the teaching of the more fluid subject of lettering has all but been abandoned. This, and the ability of contemporary production methods to generate types at any size on virtually any substrate, tends to blind us to the

subtle but important differences between lettering and type. Put very simply, type is an industrial product capable of duplication and automation, while lettering is a one-off, created for a specific purpose and capable of responding to the demands of scale, material and surroundings in quite a different way. There are of course exceptions to this definition, but it does provide a broadly useful starting point.

These were then some of the motivations for writing this book. That is not to say however, that this is a 'how to do it' book. Rather in its discussion of practice it aims to provide a broad-ranging and informative resource for practitioners of all kinds, including architects, lettering artists and graphic designers, as well as those who are simply concerned with how and why our environment looks and functions.

In emphasis this book is intentionally visual. To go back to the underlying idea of seeing, we simply wanted to show as many examples of signs and letters as possible. However, the content is not without narrative or structure. Two primary themes emerge when engaging with this subject, and these form the basis for the major distribution of material across the book.

The first theme is 'signing the way'. It is concerned with those elements from within both our urban and rural landscapes which we would commonly refer to as signs. Here we have documented a range of approaches to basic waymarking and direction-giving for both road-users and pedestrians, as well as sign systems developed for other kinds of travel networks. The second key theme identified is 'naming places and defining spaces'. In this section can be found examples of letters in public spaces which specifically relate to a sense of place and to the role of letters to identify, enliven and record.

The distinction made between the two primary functions of signing the way and naming places and defining spaces, while helpful, is not absolute. There are areas of some considerable overlap. The signing of stations as part of a travel network identity programme is equally part of an overall strategy for directing travellers and contributes to a sense of place. Street names similarly serve as signs to direct us as well as defining a place.

Each section comprises an introductory essay followed by illustrations arranged thematically and discussed in extended captions. The basis for discussion throughout the book is the function and execution of lettering, and it is these considerations which have informed our selection. As an awareness of context is vital to the ongoing discussions, it is important to note that all the examples shown were photographed *in situ*. Pictures throughout the book are identified by page/picture number. Location captions above the illustrations identify, as accurately as possible, when and where each example was photographed and in some instances (marked †) whether the lettering has since been removed. Contextual dates (in brackets) for construction or execution are included only when felt to be particularly helpful in discussion of the work.

While the book aims to be wide-ranging it cannot, however, hope to be comprehensive; there is just far too much work out there. What is shown directly relates to our own recording methods, determined mainly by where we have been fortunate enough to travel. That said, an awareness of key examples

37/2

123/4
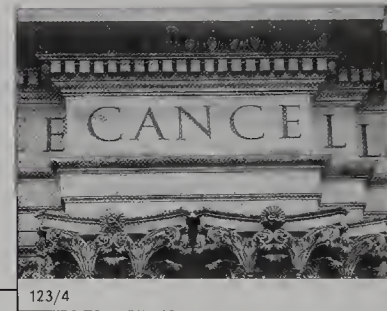
has in some instances directed our paths to designs acknowledged as important. Balanced against many grand examples we have included a body of the far more 'ordinary' kinds as well as many of the most up-to-date examples we could find. History is not forgotten although we make no attempt at a history of the subject. Many historical examples still perform their original purpose admirably and continue to inform the way we interact with our environment, with strange juxtapositions of new and old being an integral part of the contemporary landscape. Pseudo-historical nostalgia, however, is scorned whenever encountered. Our sense of history is rather about identifying a set of practices and traditions which are 'living' and adaptable to the requirements of now, and as such have much to offer the contemporary practitioner and enthusiast alike.

PB & CD

Rum

Fo

Signs to direct and instruct

Signs should contain only essential information and their significance should be clear at a glance so that the driver's attention is not distracted from the task of driving. Worboys, para.26(c).

40/3

While the term sign can mean a variety of things, many relevant to the broader discussions in this book,* we have used it a little more specifically here to refer to the signs which guide us when going somewhere, whether on foot or bicycle, in a car or using public transport. Such signs have a long history stretching back to Roman times and now form one of the most obvious graphic elements in many towns and cities.

* **Sign** *n.* **2 a** a mark, symbol, or device used to represent something or to distinguish the thing on which it is put. **3** a gesture or action used to convey information, an order, request, etc. **4** a publicly displayed board etc. giving information; a signboard or signpost (*Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 1990)

The functions of signs

While we illustrate a wide range of historic examples, our explanation of the various functions of signs focuses upon the kinds of road signs developed after World War II. They are familiar to everyone from a very early age and clearly demonstrate the key design factors to be taken into account.

Signs for roads may be divided into two main groups: 'informatory', that is, direction giving and related information; and 'regulatory', which include all signs giving instructions or warning and prohibiting certain behaviour.

'Informatory' signing

A key role of signs is that of giving directions and related information. Although the exact style of presentation differs from country to country, the principles are generally the same. The information presented by a sign system should be limited to the essentials and should be presented in a consistent manner. It should also be presented at a size suitable for the traffic using that class of road. Unlike the lettering described in the second half of the book, signs do not need to be site-specific, they need to be clearly identified for what they are and stand out from their surroundings. They work by taking into account issues of readability – scale, contrast, letterform – and practicalities such as manufacture and placement.

The scale and ambition of sign systems have a considerable impact on their appearance. While for many people, design is considered a visual activity; – witness the use of the word 'designer' as a prefix to all manner of consumer goods indicating dubious styling of no consequence to the function of the product – design in relation to signing systems is quite different. It is a rational, cerebral activity which involves the analysis and editing of information, the testing of prototypes for legibility under many different conditions, and a knowledge of the manufacturing processes and practices of a considerable number of suppliers.

The editing of information is one of the most crucial tasks in any coherent sign project for it has a bearing not only on its ease of use, but also on the size and therefore cost of the scheme as a whole. Five pieces of information are
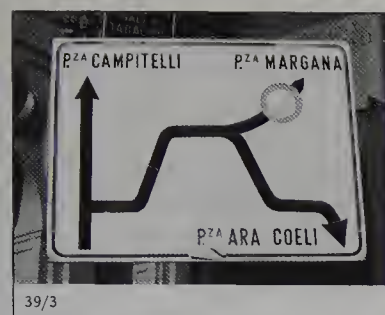
often thought to be enough to be taken in at any particular moment. On major roads there are clear hierarchies of both signs and the information contained on each. They operate on a drip-feed principle, for example, at the approach to junctions where a sequence of signs spaced half a mile apart give progressively more detailed information before the actual exit.

This approach is common throughout the world, with complicated junctions and roundabouts usually depicted in map form (with the driver at the bottom and 'ahead' at the top) and other kinds of information presented as lists or on arrow-shaped boards.

No less important than the editing of information is the choice of typeface. Having outlined a working distinction between lettering and type in the introduction, it should be clear that the letters used on contemporary signs for transport networks are – despite their scale, material and the way they need to be read – typefaces. In most cases, however, they are specially designed or adapted, and take into account all the variables to be encountered in their application. The variables include the distance from which they need to be read and the movement of the vehicle; the illumination of the sign and the particular manufacturing process used.

Beginning with details first, crucial factors in the design of such faces include the detailing of counters (ie the white enclosed spaces within such characters as b and c); the treatment of ambiguous characters (eg capital I, lower-case l and the figure 1) and the clarity of numerals.

As with any typeface, the design of the character shapes is only half the job: what helps those shapes to be read easily or not is the space around and between them. Compared to type used in books and general printed graphic design, type on large signs needs more space between characters, words and lines if it is to remain legible from a long distance. In addition to spacing, there is the problem of type printed white out of a dark background, where the white will appear to spread. A common solution here is for there to be two slightly different weights of type, one for 'black-on' and a slightly lighter and fractionally wider-spaced version for 'white-out' use. If signs are to be backlit, yet another variant may be needed.

All this attention to detail will be wasted if the type – when used on signs – is not given sufficient space from the other elements present: the lines indicating roads, pictograms and the border of the sign itself. Examples of both good and bad practice are illustrated.

In the majority of sign systems used for large transport networks since World War II the style of typeface is sans serif. The apparent merits of serifs in knitting words together at sizes used for reading in books do not seem to apply for the sizes used for signs, and the Tyne & Wear Metro* and BAA (see pages 78 & 88–9) are two rare examples of companies which use a seriffed typeface.

The discussion above has assumed signs bearing 'static' information. Today, technology allows for 'active' displays, typically using some form of modular (eg dot-matrix) letters whose message is controlled from a central information source. The advantages of this up-to-the-minute information are seen to outweigh the visual shortcomings of the lettering and the amount of
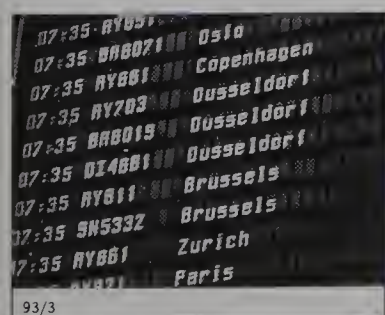
*   The typeface used for this text is Calvert, Margaret Calvert's reworking of her Tyne & Wear typeface. It was released commercially by Monotype in 1985.

13

information which can be given. The quality and reliability of the information is important here, though the initial use in Britain of 'active' displays was as temporary warnings on motorways but a mismatch of information and reality led to them often being ignored. More recent uses have been on public transport networks to indicate the arrival of the next bus (where information is provided from GPS data) or the next train (where the information comes from trackside signals). Apart from the discovery that London Underground minutes are longer than conventional minutes, these provide considerable reassurance to passengers in potentially stressful circumstances.

'Regulatory' signs

Directional signs for highways are complimented by other signs whose primary concern is with traffic management and road user behaviour rather than destination and geography. There are two main approaches used for this purpose. In the US such signs are predominantly literal but in Europe, symbolic signs have been used since 1931 following the *Geneva convention on the unification of road signals* which was later revised as a protocol in 1949. Signs based on the Geneva Protocol are part iconic, part alphabetic and part symbolic, and its principles are described fully on pages 47–58.

If this standardization across large parts of the world makes it easy for the international traveller to feel at home, its downside is the tendency for everywhere to look the same. Gratifyingly, even within countries which follow the protocol, there is a considerable variation in the drawing and implementation of these signs which allows a little of the characteristics (or aspirations) of individual countries to shine through. In addition, there are several countries which either ignore, or implement only a part of the protocol. Among these are Ireland, Germany and the United States.

Extensive use of symbols, or pictograms, has been argued for many years as it was thought that they could form the basis for an international language which transcended national barriers. More recent research has suggested that pictograms are most effective when they depict the actual thing, but far less so when they represent an idea or concept. This is because ambiguity can creep in when direct visual equivalence is lost. Even basic symbols which we in the West take for granted, for example the pictograms of a man and woman to indicate 'toilets', are understood in other countries simply as 'man and woman'. Because of this, it is now widely accepted that there is no single worldwide symbolic language and so, the use of pictograms must be carefully monitored in situations where the audience is likely to be multicultural.

Uniformity, diversity and the use of materials

In addition to their functional informational aspect, the provision and design of large scale sign systems can also be a political act. The kind of information that signs carry reflects very much the ideologies of the governments and organizations which erect them as well as the era of their introduction. The signs which greet a traveller at an airport, a ferry terminal or on the roads after a border crossing all have the aim of helping us on our way, but they also become the first words of welcome to that country: 'You can trust me', 'I am modern', or even 'You *will* be robbed'.

CÉDEZ LE PASSAGE

56/1

very Point of Deposited Goods

마사지실　转机実馆 | 환승호텔
age Rm.　　　　Transit Hotel

대한항공라운지
Korean Air Lounges

아시아나항공라운지
Asiana Airlines Lounges

91/3

14　Signs to direct and instruct

20/5

18/2

84/6

73/2

Large signing schemes are introduced ostensibly for the common good, but they often have quite totalitarian overtones. As with corporate identity programmes the implementation of a sign system can be likened to a dog marking its territory. There is a tidy-mindedness which prefers not to tolerate nonconformity. Older signs still exist on minor roads, even in countries such as Britain or France alongside well-planned contemporary systems. They often exhibit a more decorative approach than their replacement models but are usually adequate for the situations in which they are found. Pages 16–21 & 40–3 show some survivors.

One of the recurring themes of this book is that of utility versus personality (or style). This problem is perhaps most present in the issue of signage. While signing systems for roads have an element of neutrality to them, signing on other transport networks has exploited the particularity of letterform or typeface to imbue these functional objects with the role of reinforcing identity.

While much of the following description of signing presumes the use of typefaces with their implicit consistency of letterform (every 'S' the same, for instance), older forms of transport such as turnpike roads and the early railways had to use lettering, either carved or hand-drawn, if not hand-made. Signs, therefore, relied on the skill of particular makers or workshops, and while they may have had a conformity of spirit they showed a variation in their detailing.

Carving was the earliest durable method of applying lettering and was used on milestones from Roman times onwards. The Industrial Revolution introduced cast iron and an increasing use of patterns and moulds which lent a uniformity to lettering. It is important to remember, though, that casting iron, although an industrial process, was still a small-scale and localized activity. This accounts for the variety of lettering types seen on objects from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and is confirmed by makers' marks which are usually present on even the humblest of items.

20/6

Other materials exploiting the use of moulds and the principle of modularity were cast terracotta and glazed tile work. Railway companies such as the Underground Electric Railways Company of London* made extensive use of these last two, ensuring that the lettering was an integral part of their stations from 1905 onwards. In 1916, they were the first company to commission what we would now call a 'corporate typeface', Edward Johnston's sans serif, which was manufactured as metal and wood type for use on all notices, names and signing for the company.

Today sign systems are often produced in workshops staffed by workers who understand machines and printing techniques but not letterforms themselves. However, the necessity for well-produced signs has not diminished and designers working in this area of design do seem increasingly aware of both the functional needs of signing as well as the possibilities it can have for reflecting the identity of a particular organization. Rather than using existing typefaces created for print and at far smaller sizes, they commission specially drawn typefaces which take into account both practicalities and social ambitions. New type design formats and software allows this to happen more easily than before, and there is no excuse for badly made signs with illegible type.
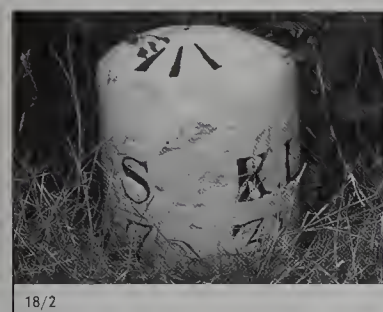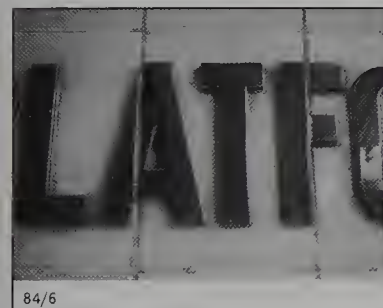
* Following amalgamation with the District and Metropolitan railways and various bus operators, this became London Transport in 1933 and is now part of Transport for London.

16 Informatory signs: milestones in Britain

The Romans marked distances along their roads with stones called 'millaries' spaced a thousand paces apart. Examples can still be found even in regions at the very edges of their empire (16/1).

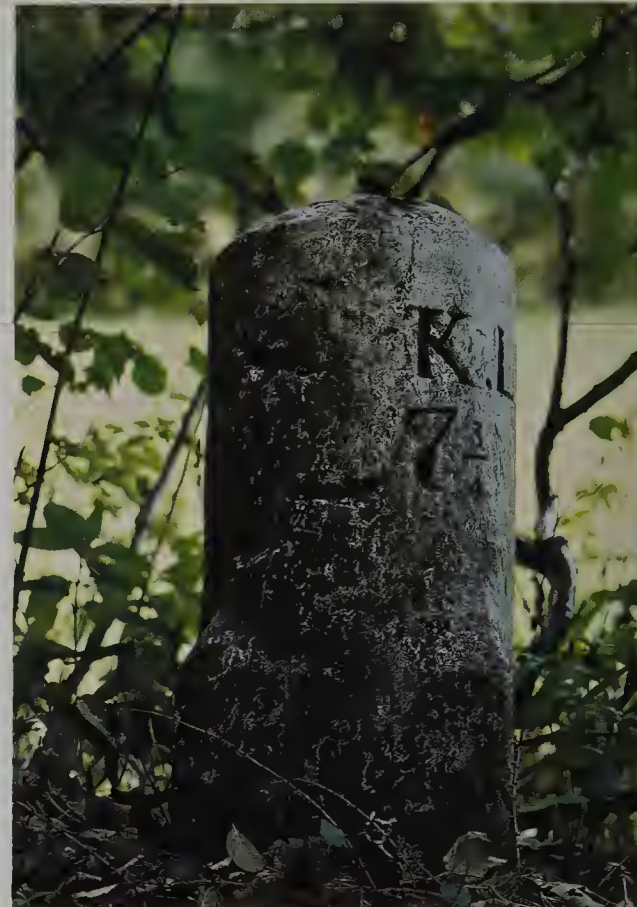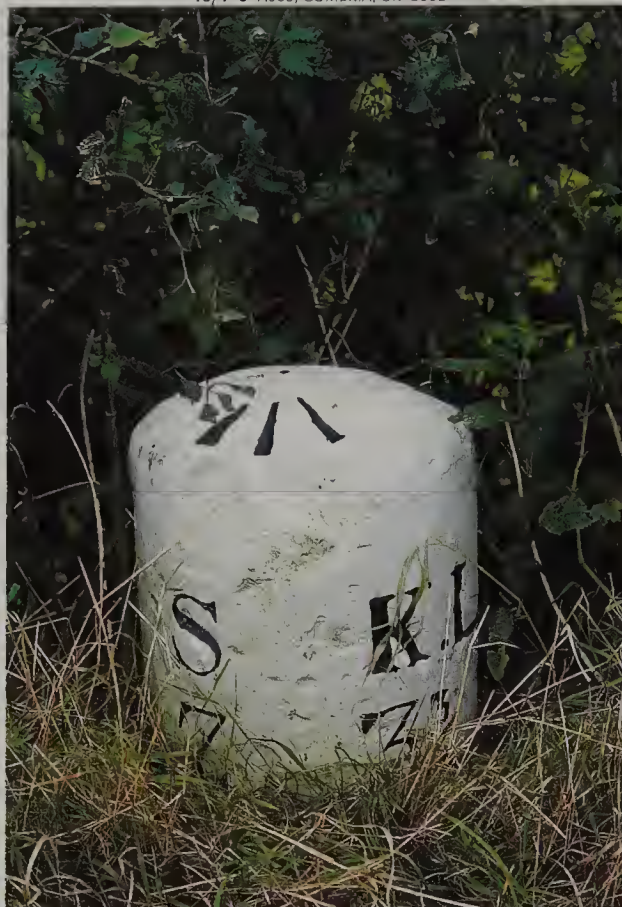Most surviving milestones or markers in Britain post-date the General Turnpike Act of 1773 which imposed a duty on the various trusts to erect guides at mile intervals in order to charge tolls. In practice, the intervals between these markers often varied as trusts interpreted the distance to their financial advantage, a practice which continued until the mile became a standard measure in 1864.

Shown here are two examples of the more elaborate kind of milepost. Too grand really for that name, these are important civic features with distance and direction almost an afterthought. More ordinary interpretations of the milestone or milepost are shown overleaf.

ONE MILE
XXIX FEET
FROM
LONDON BRIDGE

ONE MILE
CCCL FEET
FROM
FLEET STREET

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
BRASS CROSBY ESQUIRE
LORD MAYOR

THE DUKE

ONE MILE
FROM
PALACE YARD
WESTMINSTER
HALL

ERECTED IN
XI YEAR
OF THE REIGN
OF KING GEORGE
THE THIRD

MDCCLXXI

18 Milestones in Britain

A variety of pattern, material and letterform in the treotment of milestones ond mileposts is evident on even quite short sections of rood. The exomples on this poge ore oll from o 20-mile stretch of rood ond foll into three moin cotegories.

In Cumbrio, between Kirkby Lonsdole ond Sedbergh (18/1–3), stone is used, painted white with corved ond block-pointed lettering.

On the long climb from Sedbergh to Kirkby Stephen cost iron is used in ond oround Coutley, while elsewhere the morkers ore ogoin mode of stone but ore of o different style. The rood climbs to o height of 336m (1,102ft) ond the point shows the effects of both the exposed setting ond weother conditions.
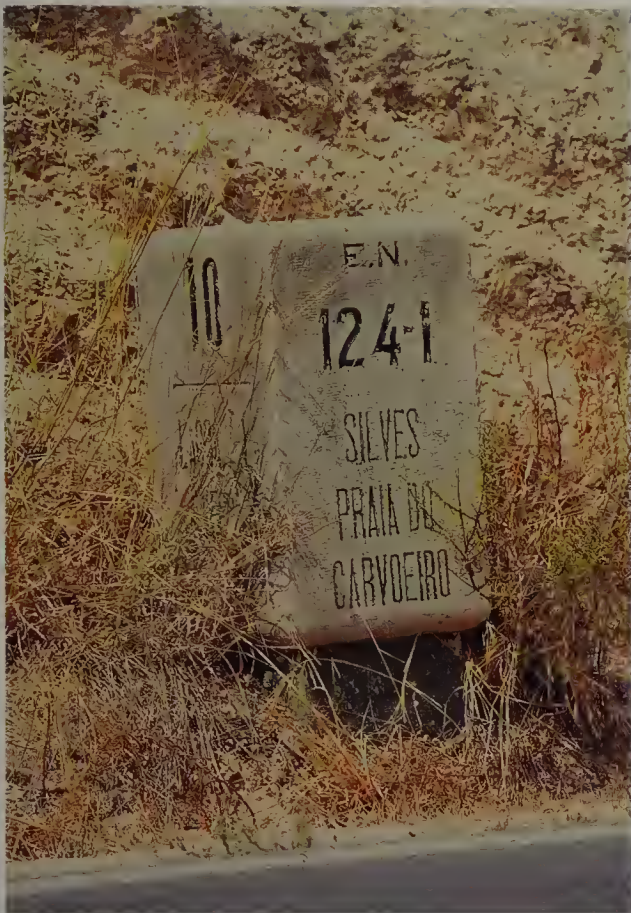
19/4 NEAR ST PAUL MONT PETIT, VENDÉE, FRANCE 2001
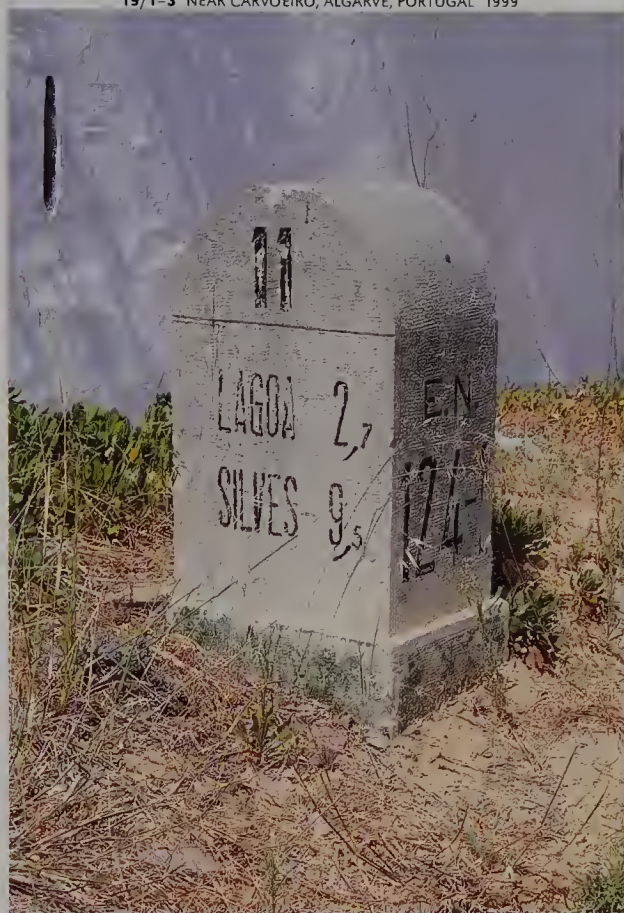
19/5 N175 NEAR AVRANCHES, NORMANDY, FRANCE 2001

19/6 KANAGAWA, JAPAN 2002

As with British examples, those in other countries exhibit considerable variety, both in their form and in the kinds of information they convey. Two of the Portuguese examples shown (19/1-2) include full route details, while the third (19/3) does no more than mark progress along the road. In France (19/4) a single figure is used to confirm the road number and the older carved numbers indicating progress are often pointed out.

A second example from France (19/5) shows one of the stones erected to celebrate the Allied invasion in June 1944. The Way of Liberty runs from the Normandy Beachhead across Northern France and ends at Bastogne in Belgium.

The final example, from Japan, is clearly contemporary in the materials of its manufacture but follows an age-old strategy in the attachment of a simple panel confirming route and distance to a fixed post.

Kilometre markers: 19
Spain, France and Japan

20/4 LINCOLNSHIRE, UK 2002

20/5 LONDON N14, UK 1999

20/6 DETAIL OF 20/3

20 Early British road signs

When the County Councils of England were created in 1889 they assumed responsibility for public highways in their areas. The signing of roads did not became obligatory until 1921 when more widespread use of the car led the Ministry of Transport to publish recommendations for the standardization of road directional signs. These, however, had no statutory force and the visual specifications offered were left quite open. Accordingly, the County Councils adopted their own designs or adapted standard items from sign manufacturers.

These 'finger posts', as they are generally known, came in a number of materials – cast iron, wood and steel – and in a subtle variety of styles which combine decorative detailing with an overall robustness.

They are comprised of three parts: a pole, the arms and a finial. The poles were seldom plain. Often, wooden examples have carefully chamfered edges and cast-iron poles could be constructed from several sections of different diameters joined by mouldings. The name of the manufacturer was also often included in the casting of the base.

The arms bear the information, which includes the name of the destination(s) in each particular direction and usually the distance.

21/1 EAST SUSSEX, UK 2000

A268
RYE 2¼
PEASMARSH
NORTHIAM
IDEN

21/2 EAST SUSSEX, UK 2000

B2087
2
6
TICEHURST
WADHURST
TUN—WELLS 12
A21 68
LAMBERHURST
LONDON
4
45
4½
A21
HURST GREEN 3
HASTINGS 17
BEXHILL 18 14

21/3 LONDON N14, UK 1999

A1003 NEW SOUTHGATE FINCHLEY
PALMERS GREEN 1
LONDON 8
A1004
A1004 BARNET 3¼
POTTERS BAR 5
Library

21/4 CAMLET WAY, LONDON EN4, UK 2002

ENFIELD
SOUTHGATE
HADLEY COMMON
BARNET

21/5 A151, LINCOLNSHIRE, UK 2002

EY
WYKEHAM
HOLBEAC
KINGS LY

21/6 B1515, HOLBEACH, LINCOLNSHIRE, UK 2002

CH ½
IG 9½
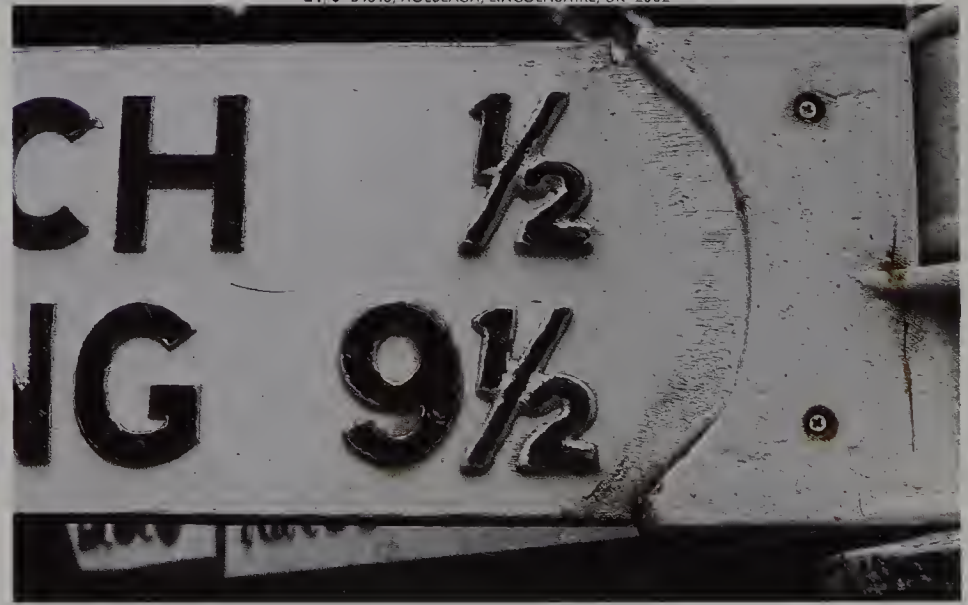
Many also carry the A or B road classification numbers first introduced in 1921. The arms were made either from wood with cast letters screwed on to them, or both lettering and arm were cast as a single unit. These arms could simply be bolted to the pale, but many slot over and around it in quite complicated arrangements.

The top of the pale was finished with a finial of some kind. Of these, the most common version is a disc containing the name of the local administrative district. Following the major alterations made to the counties in 1974, these discs often serve as reminders of counties and districts which no longer exist.

Finger posts are something of a rarity today. As with milestones, many were removed in 1940 when a German invasion threatened and were never replaced. In 1964 new signs were introduced (see pages 26–31) to reflect higher vehicle speeds and greater traffic volume. Finally, many have disappeared simply because of age. Modern signs are designed to be replaced not maintained, but older versions need maintenance to last and be effective. Many do, however, survive on local routes where their size and positioning is well suited.

Early British road signs 21

RING ROAD

AYLESBURY	A41
HATFIELD THE NORTH	A1
OXFORD SOUTH WALES	A40

RING ROAD

CAMBRIDGE	A10
NEW....	A11
CHELMSFORD	A12
TILBURY	A13

A110 ENFIELD

A111 POTTERS BAR

A111 SOUTHGATE

A404 WEMBLEY

EUSTON CITY KINGS CROSS

HOLLOWAY

GET IN LANE

A142 ELY

A142 NEWMARKET

RAC

NORTHAW	½
CUFFLEY	2½
POTTERS BAR	½
BARNET	4½
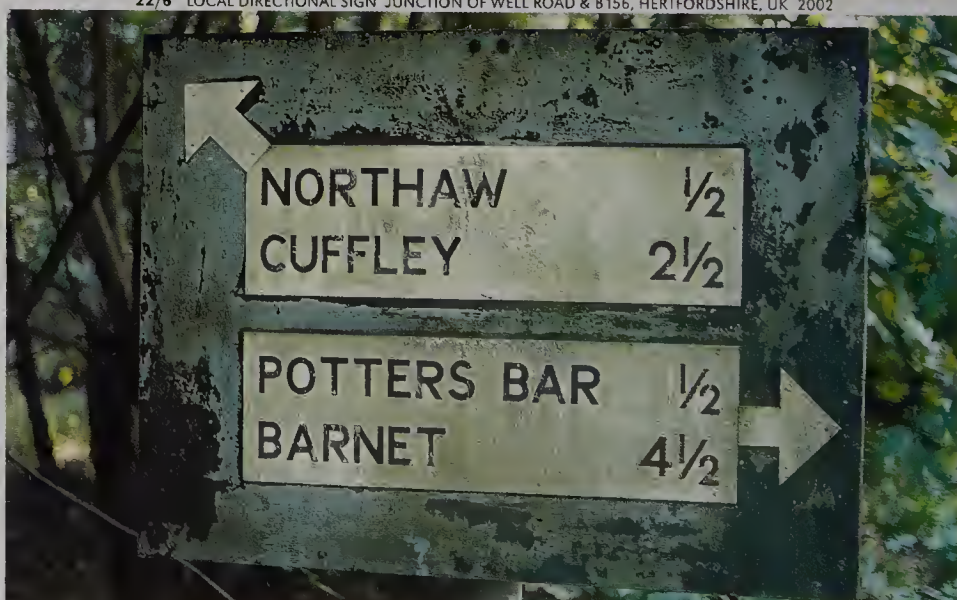
22 British 1933 and 1944 standard directional signs

In 1933 the Ministry of Transport set up a committee of twenty-six members to examine all aspects of signing. Their proposals established the standard for a national sign system which lasted until 1964. A further committee met in 1944 but only minor amendments were made to the existing scheme.

Directional signs comprised a general background panel upon which was placed smaller information panels and any other graphic elements. The background colour varied according to the class of road: yellow was used for A roads and pale blue for local routes. The information panels, which usually

contained the place name used a black all-capitals typeface on a white ground. The A or B Ministry road classifications (introduced in 1921) take precedence over place names. Other signs (22/4) were just black and white, and signs produced by motoring organizations (22/5) followed the standard pattern.

Despite their age, at the time of writing a considerable number can still be seen.

23/1 RYE, EAST SUSSEX, UK 2000

TOWN CENTRE

PARISH CHURCH

23/2 HIGH HOLBORN, LONDON WC1, UK 1999

ST. GILES CIRCUS

CAMBRIDGE CIRCUS
PICCADILLY CIRCUS
TRAFALGAR SQUARE

EUSTON

23/3 HIGH HOLBORN, LONDON WC1, UK 1999

ST. GILES
CIRCUS
PICCADILLY
CIRCUS
OXFORD ST.

ALDWYCH

EUSTON
CAMDEN TN

23/4 SOUTHAMPTON ROW, LONDON WC1, UK 1999

ALDWYCH

HOLBORN
SHOREDITCH
OXFORD ST.
BANK
ANGEL

23/5 THEOBALD'S ROAD/DRAKE STREET, LONDON WC1, UK 1999 †

ANG
SHOREDITCH

HOLBORN
BANK
OXFORD ST.

23/6 PROCTOR STREET/HIGH HOLBORN, LONDON WC1, UK 1999

BANK

EUSTON
CAMDEN TN.
ALDWYCH
OXFORD ST.

British 1933 and 1944 23
standard directional signs

24 British motorway signs: the Anderson committee 1962

In 1957 when the London–Yorkshire motorwoy (now port of the M1) wos under construction, the government set up on odvisory committee to look ot the problem of signing this new closs of road. Choired by Sir Colin Anderson, reference wos made to similar roods in the US and Europe. Practicol research wos carried out by the Road Research Loborotory in Slough and the Preston byposs (now part of the M6), which opened the following year, wos also used to test signs.

The designer, Jock Kinneir, wos opprooched to detoil the committee's broad recommendotions ond wos ossisted by Morgoret Colvert.

The Anderson report recommended o system thot was essentiolly olphobetic, offering directionol ond distonce informotion designed to be reod from 600 feet (183 metres) owoy. Junctions were to be signed three times with mop-type represen-totions, eoch with differing omounts of informotion, from the generol to the porticulor. These signs were unusuolly non-stondord in dimension, eoch being only os lorge as the. informotion it needed to convey.

Colour wos corefully thought out with oesthetic ideols bolonced by o considerotion of the use of reflective moterials ond their costs. Block wos considered for the bockground but

it wos felt ta be too funereol. The blue chosen wos the 'Americon Standard Interstate Blue' which staod out from the countryside and cantrosted well with the white type.

Fallowing European ond American proctice, the cammittee decided ta use upper and lower cose type rother than the capitol letters used on Britain's raads since 1933. The German DIN lettering was suggested, but was rejected by Kinneir. Wanting o letterfarm with open caunters and clear shapes, he wrate his own specificotion. Then, finding thot the face did not exist, he and Colvert designed one themselves. When revised for the all-purpose roods it became known as Transpart. Raute numbers were set in the Haas Cammerciol Gratesque of 1945–6 with omendments made to the figures 4, 6 & 9.

By the time the cammittee's repart was finished in December 1962, eighteen manths practicol experience had been goined at Prestan ond twelve manths an the M1. That the new signs were deemed a success con be seen by the fact that ane year loter Porlioment had appointed onather cammittee, choired by Sir Walter Worbays, ta recommend signs far all-purpase roads.

British motorway signs: 25
the Anderson committee
1962

KINGS CROSS

Ring road (E)
(A 1, A 10, A 11)

Ring road (W)
(A 400, A 41, A 40)

West End
Westminster
A 501

26 Signs for all-purpose roads in Britain: the Worboys report 1963

The signing for all-purpose roads was o mare complex tosk thon the matarwoys, but many principles established there were oble to be extropalated. The cammittee which met to discuss this tosk wos chaired by Sir Walter Warboys and Jack Kinneir was ogain appainted as designer. The signs were af twa kinds:

regulatary ond infarmotary (principolly directionol).

While the 1949 *Geneva Protocol* agreed by the United Notians (see pages 47–57)) infarmed the regulotory signs, it had na comprehensive instructians far directional signs, therefore Kinneir devised o system bosed on his matorwoy signs.

Signs used on primary routes hove green backgrounds with white type and yellaw raod numbers. The green was o campromise between the bright green Kinneir proposed and a very dark green suggested by same committee members.

As with the matorwoys, the idea wos to provide informotian in small

amounts and as needed. Junctians were signed either with mop-type signs (Kinneir's preferred aptian) ar with stock-type signs. The mop-type signs were mode mare explicit than the motarway versians by the use of lines of differing thickness to denote eoch raod's status. In order to pravide informotion in stoges and

ta ollow the driver time ta react, bath kinds con be used sequentially ot junctions, os shawn here.

Colours within the signs were kept to o minimum, white for type ond diogrom and yellow for raod numbers, the relotive visuol impoct of ploce and route being o reversol of the 1933/44 signs.

Far the typefoce, that used for the motorwoys was slightly madified ond redrawn in two weights: medium (far white ond yellaw type on dark bockgraunds) and heavy (far block type an white). The type wos originally praduced on tiles rather like the bodies of metal type. These butted up to each ather ta

ensure correct spacing by the many different cantroctars wha were then respansible for the signs' praduction.

Signs for all-purpose roads 27
in Britain:
the Worboys report 1963

28 **Signs for all-purpose roads, the Worboys report 1963: directional signs**

In addition to the map-type and stock-type signs, simpler signs were used at junctions. Green signs with white type and yellow road numbers were used on primary routes and white signs with block type on non-primary routes.

The message was reinforced here by making the signs themselves arrow shaped and by accentuating that arrow head by placing an arrow within the sign itself. These simple signs, when correctly made and positioned, are very effective.
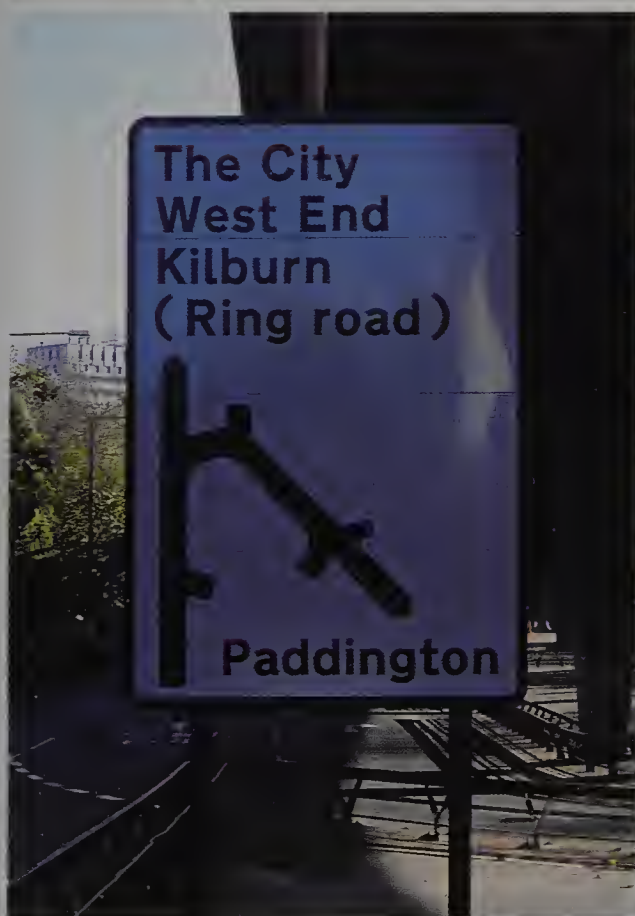
As before, the mop-type signs were laid out as though 'straight ahead' was always at the top, regardless of its true compass orientation.

This sequence of photographs shows how two adjacent urban 'roundabout' junctions ore rendered on signs on the various different approach roads.

**Signs for all-purpose roads, 29
the Worboys report 1963:
map-type signs**

STERNS
WEST AFRICAN
RECORD CENTRE

Chelmsford (A 12)
Cambridge (A 10)
Newmarket (A 11)

Ring Road A 501

Ring Road A 501

J

BUS STOP

FARE STAGE

134 24 163

The North (M 1)
Aylesbury (A 41)
The West
(A 4 M 4)

Tilbury
(A 13)

USSE
BELT

Sedbergh A 684

The SOUTH
Lancaster
37 M 6

The NORTH
Penrith
37 M 6

3 (M6, M69)
Leicester (A4600)
Nuneaton (A444)
Football Ground
Museum M

(M1 South, M40)
Rugby (A45)
Warwick (A46)
Coventry Airport
Whitley
Parkside

Ring Road
All
Other Traffic

Barracks
Shopmobility P

30 Signs for all-purpose roads: tinkering with the system

The association of Kinneir and his studio with the Department of Transport lasted no longer than the publication of the report (and even there, the smaller explanatory text plates were not designed by them).

When the *Traffic signs manual* was issued in 1965 several signs had been altered. Among them was the way road numbers were shown on non-primary route signs.

In Kinneir's original proposals place names and road names were simply set in black and allowed to speak for themselves. From the first applications of the signs, however, an attempt was made to reinforce the numbers by the addition of a coloured panel to denote when a route was 'primary' (an A road is not necessarily primary).

30/1 shows a particularly ugly example of this idea in practice (as well as it being an example of two transport organizations not talking to each other about siting their respective signs).

Following experiments in the Guildford area in 1989, the 1994 regulations introduced a more dramatic way of indicating the class of road that a particular destination was reached by. On the opposite page is the same sign as 30/1, now showing local destinations and with the large coloured panels of the

EUSTON UNDERPASS

Holloway
Camden Town
A400

Ring road

Ring road

(A1, A10, A11)
The City
Euston
Kings Cross
A501

(A41, A40)
Kilburn
A501
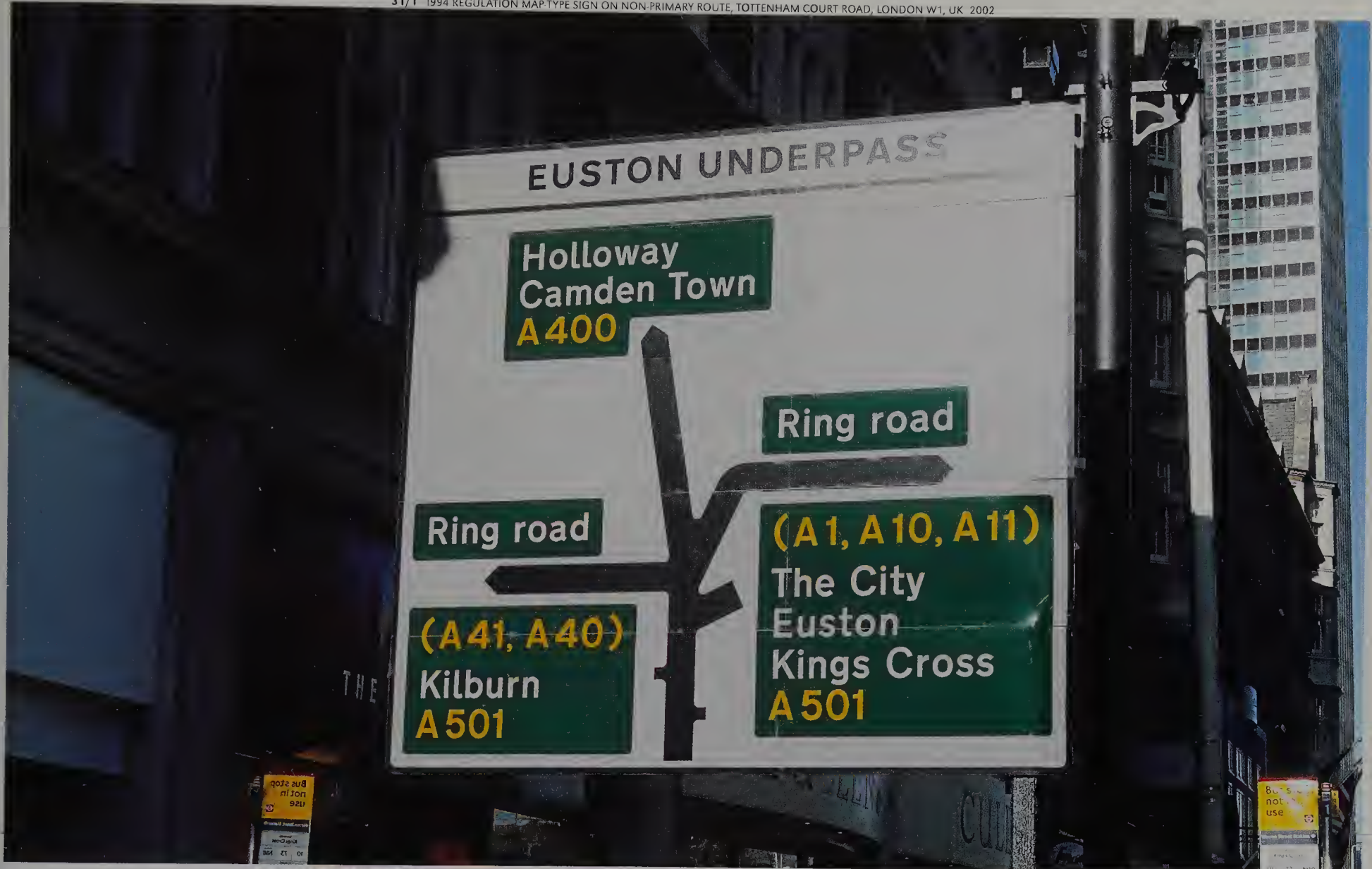
31/2 A684, CUMBRIA, UK 2001

Lambrigg
Wind Farm

31/3 JUNCTION WITH M6, CUMBRIA, UK 2001

Kendal
A684

Sedbergh
A684

Weight limit 7.5T →
A684/A683
(except for access)
No through HGV's to K'Stephen
Alternative route via M6 North

1994 regulations. The most legible element of the sign is no longer the diagram closely followed by the type, but the series of coloured boxes. They upset the visual balance of the sign, confuse the eye and destroy the sense of the junction which the diagram was intended to convey.

The other pictures here show more examples of the 1994 regulations in use. Note how, on the green primary route signs, destinations reached along minor roads are the most dominant visual aspect of the sign.

Since 1994 there has also been an increasing tendency to use coloured backgrounds (31/2 & 3) to surround signs, presumably to increase their target value. In few cases do these ever seem to be necessary, although grey is definitely the lesser of two evils. Yellow can only be described as an aesthetic and environmental disaster.

**Signs for all-purpose roads: 31
tinkering with the system**

↖ Ctra. del Centro

← ✈ aeropuerto

fontana
di trevi

piazza
di spagna

B-112

6 COLLBATÓ

C-55

Montserrat 9
MANRESA 20

32 International use of the Transport alphabet

The British Department of Transport's manual, which contained the guidelines for the Kinneir Calvert signing system, was bought by many other countries and aspects of it can now be seen across the globe. In same countries the basic design for directional signs was adopted (oppasite/3 and following pages) with allowance for an additional language.

In others, the typeface alone was used on signs of their own design. Kinneir and Calvert's typeface, known as Transport, has never been commercially available (apart from appearing an Letraset sheets in the 1960s and 1970s). The various other versions of it, and the derivative italic (see next page) and Greek display varying degrees of fidelity to their original design.

↑ 41 Seltjarnarnes 3
P Rvk-Gamla höfn

← P Rvk-Tjörn

↰ P Kolaport

City Nørreport
↑ P 347

City Vest
→ P 406

33/3 THESSALONIKI, GREECE 2002

Όσιος Δαβίδ
Μονή Λατόμου
Osios David
Monastery of
Latomou

International use of   33
the Transport alphabet

القوز
ند الشبا

Dubai
Al Sharjah
Jebel Ali
Abu Dhabi

✈

دبي
الشارقة
جبل علي
ابو ظبي

E 11

D 69
Al Quoz
Nad Al Sheba

↓

٥٠٠م
500m

↓

الصفا ٢
↑ Al Safa 2

الصفا ١
جميرا ٢٠١
↰ D 92 Al Safa 1
Jumeira 1, 2

ام سقيم ٣٠٢
D 92 Umm Suqeim 2, 3 ↱

Καβάλα   Kavala
Ξάνθη   Xanthi
Κομοτινή   Kar oti

rini
Κα...   Athina
Αθήνα
Σέρρες   Serres
Καβάλα   Kavala

An tlarthar
THE WEST
N4-N5-N6

An Deisceart
THE SOUTH
N7-N8-N9

Secure your future. fine gael ⟩

↑ N 11
An tOırdheısceart
THE SOUTHEAST

Sealink

Dún Laoghaıre

34 International use of the Transport alphabet: bilingual road signs

Following an from the previous spread, here are further examples of internotional signs which make use of the Tronspart olphobet. These examples also feoture o ronge of strategies employed ta cleorly manoge bilinguol infarmotion ond the mointain o visuol equality between two languoges.

In Soudi Arobia the sheer visual difference af the scripts used pravides o cleor distinction between the English and Arabic which is further reflected in the left and right alignment of each.

In Greece there is visuolly for less difference between the twa scripts and so colour is used os the moin mechonism of differentiotion. The exomples shown olso highlight the importonce of spocing – the legibility of (34/4) being compromised by having far too little.

In Ireland the monogement af the English ond Irish texts is severely compromised by neither ane making the best use of the Tronsport olphobet. Insteod of using the strongest upper ond lower cose setting, English is set in oll copitols and the Irish in on itolic voriotion.

International use of 35
the Transport alphabet:
bilingual road signs

36 The US 'Interstate' type

The system of signs used on American roads was one of several looked at by British engineers and Jack Kinneir in the late 1950s.

As already mentioned, the decision to use upper and lower-case setting of words was based on the belief that it creates more distinctive word shapes. Tests in California in 1950 and Germany in 1957 had suggested as much.

American directional signs feature a distinctive typeface with generous inter-character spacing. There are several characters with easily recognized features. The tail on g, the diagonal termination to the uprights of d, h, l, etc. In older versions, the letters are infilled with reflective studs (36/1).

Like the British Transport alphabet, this typeface has travelled (37/3–5) and undergone modifications along the way. In 1993–4 it was digitized by Tobias Frere-Jones and made commercially available by the Font Bureau. It is now widely used by graphic designers world-wide for purposes far removed from its origins. Although the American type was used for many years in the Netherlands (37/5) it has recently been replaced by type designed by Gerard Unger.

Not all countries subscribe to the idea of superior upper and

South Shore
Cape Cod

U. of Mass.

Loretto

Kloofnek
Round House

LWR KLOOF RD
WEG

STO

CAMPS BAY

Sultan Ismail
Bukit Bintang
Tun Razak
mban
un Cheras

LEKS BUDAYA KRAF
t Cultural Complex)

un Perak
andaraya

Doorgaand
verkeer

01812/005

ANWB

DOORGAAND
VERKEER

lui vastgoed

lower-cose legibility, however.
Fronce is one such ploce ond some
recent signs ore shown on pages
44–5. Another use of oll-copitols
is this older Dutch sign (37/6)
which uses o generic industriol
sons serif letterform.

The US 'Interstate' type 37

Pg. Sant Joan

Pl. Joanic

Pl. Joan Carles I

C. Mallorca

Diversion For Vehicles
Below 5.5 Tonnes
五公噸半以下車輛改道

High Street
高街

First Street
第一街

Queen's Road West
皇后大道西

5429

P.ZA MARGANA

VIA DELLE
BOTTEGHE-OSCURE

V. DEI POLACCHI

357G

38 Map-type direction signs: Spain, France and Italy

The use of map-type directional signs in Britain has already been described on pages 26-7 & 29. Their use is widespread but unlike the Geneva Protocol signs (see pages 47-59) there is no uniformity across countries. Those shown here are from different countries and cover a span of about forty years.

The success of these signs depends firstly on the relationship between the drawing and the road being believable and secondly on the information being presented in a comprehensible quantity. Apart perhaps from (38/3), all the signs shown on this spread fail one or other of these requirements.

La Petite
Sauvagère

La Grande
Sauvagère

La Poulière

La Casse

Le Chaume Blanc

Le Moulin de
la Gaillardière

AURAY

CARNAC

AURAY
St PHILIBERT
CRACH

SALE E
TABACCHI

P.ZA CAMPITELLI   P.ZA MARGANA

P.ZA ARA COELI

Map-type direction signs: 39
Spain, France and Italy

40 Michelin signs in France

The need for comprehensive signing for roads was recognized in France as early as 1912 by groups such as the National Office for Tourism, the Touring-Club de France and the Department for Bridges & Roads. In 1920 a circular identified that such signs had to give directional and distance information; be legible at a great distance both at night and during the day; and be durable.

Edouard and André Michelin, founders of the French tyre company, experimented with designs based on surviving Roman milestones and eighteenth-century 'borne' from the Route Royale. 'Borne Michelin' (kilometre markers or indicators) were the resulting bollard forms (41/1–5) which were made of concrete and first appeared around 1931. Other designs were named 'Plaque Michelin' (40/1–6) and 'Poteau Michelin' (posts; 41/6).

Around 70,000 of the different kinds of markers were produced by the company until 1970. Usefully, their glazed ceramic information panel carries a date and reference number in the same way that the reverse of many modern signs have some form of identifying label to indicate date and manufacturer.

In arrangement, the clear conveyance of information on all these

signs is compramised by the need to fit it within a determined area. In spite of this, hawever, there is a recagnizable hierarchy: the raad numbers, where applicable, are given priarity; and the department name – Vendée – is accentuated by the reversed-aut panel when on a classified raad. (The raads classified GC an all these examples are marked D an modern maps, VO is an unclassified road.)

Same may consider them to be toa 'decarative' taday, but with their distinctive appearance (especially when well maintained and painted white) and predictable siting, they still function efficiently, especially on raads where speed is nat the primary consideration.

Michelin signs in France 41

D 36

3 LE CH^AU D'OLONNE
13 GROSBREUIL

36 LA ROCHE SUR YON

29.7.60.165. C. 85.

LUÇON   48
FONTENAY LE COMTE 77

NIORT   108
LA ROCHELLE 99

S^T GILLES SUR VIE
LES SABLES D' OLONNE

3 III 2
1961
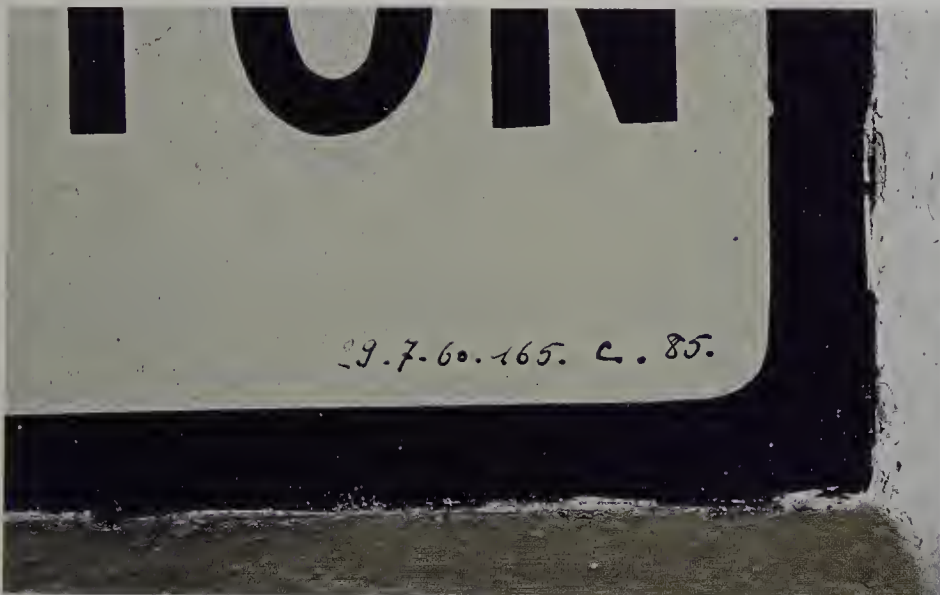
42 Michelin signs in France

The Michelin signs used from the 1950s onwards follaw a basic design which can be seen as an enlarged variation of the 'pateau' of the previaus page. Here, thaugh, the form of the sign assumes a much greater impartance. The sign itself is an arrow reinforcing the graphic element of the tapered blue arrowhead. As before, the information takes the farm of glazed ceramic panels, dated an their bottam right-hand corner, which were maunted anto pre-cast cancrete stands of a standard pattern. On the reverse, Bibendum (42/6) is cast inta the concrete together with the date af manufacture.

These later signs exhibit a far more ratianal approach ta the management af informatian, with differing sizes and weights of lettering used ta denote the relative impartance of destinations. The signs alsa vary in size accarding to the relative quantities of informatian they need to canvey.

In additian to general directional raad signs, versians alsa exist for the needs af taurists and these use an italic seriffed letterfarm (43/3, 5 & 6). Geneva Pratocal signs were alsa made in 'poteau' versians and one can be seen an page 53 (53/3).

QUIBERON
PORT-LOUIS
LORIENT

D 119

PLŒMEL 8
AURAY 12

43/3 & 4 AURAY, BRITTANY, FRANCE 2002

QUIBERON
CARNAC
PORT-LOUIS

CRACH
LOCMARIAQUER
ST PHILIBERT
LA TRINITÉ

Route
Touristique

HENNEBONT
LORIENT
PONTIVY

43/5 AURAY, BRITTANY, FRANCE 2002
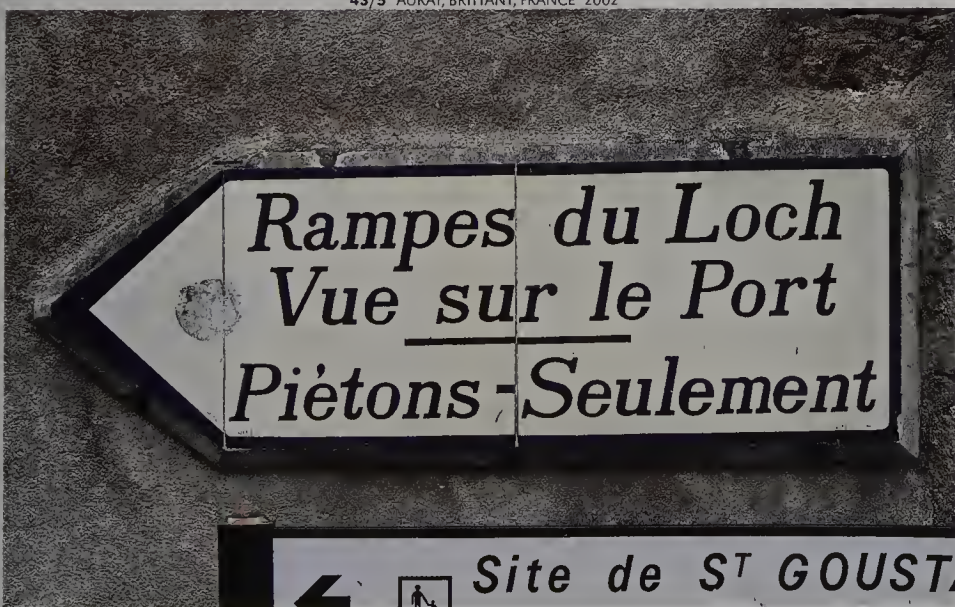
43/6 PLOUHARNEL, BRITTANY, FRANCE 2002

Rampes du Loch
Vue sur le Port
Piétons-Seulement

Site de ST GOUST.

Chapelle
N.D. des Fleurs

BEAULIEU

AIZENAY

MACHE

D 107

St MAIXENT S/ VIE

Championnat d'Europe sur Route Espoirs
CIRCUIT
CONTRE LA MONTRE • TIME TRIAL

Château
Commequiers

Les Charmes

D 948

CHALLANS   15

D 94

12 COMMEQUIERS

Château de
Commequiers

3 Les Charmes

Zone de protection
d'un Monument Historique
CAMPING INTERDIT

DÉCRET N° 60.255 DU 18-3-1960

Kervilor
Le Latz

44 France after Michelin

The basic farm of the later Michelin signs cantinued to be used in France until anly recently.

The distinctive tapered orrawhead was retoined, as was the practice of using severol signs rother than the mare elegont but less flexible practice of combining informotian on o single larger sign.

The eorliest exomples here (44/5 & 6) ore primarily oimed at tourists ond use the same serif typefoce which features on the equivolent Michelin signs. The others ore far more unifarm, using sons serif with tourist informaticn in itolics.

In cantrast ta many other countries, ond certoinly to occepted

British theory, these latest French signs (45/1–3) ore set in oll capitals. The only time such signs became difficult ta decipher, however, is when the letterspocing varies from one line ta the next as happens in the sign in Auroy (45/1).

It is olsa warth nating that these signs use anly o limited number of

standord sizes rather thon allowing the overoll size ta be dictoted by the quontity of informotion.

Whotever they lack in design subtlety, it is probable thot in this latest incornotion – of fixed sizes and in articulated panels – errors will not be neorly os opporent as with other systems.

↖ HENNEBONT
QUIBERON

LA FORÊT →

↑ BREC'H
PLUVIGNER

↑ LA GARE

⑦ 1000 m

WISSANT
GUINES

CAP GRIS-NEZ

CARRIÈRES

LANDEVIEILLE
CHALLANS   ↑

← BREM S/ MER
BRETIGNOLLES S/ MER

46 Highlighting road numbers

One way of limiting the information on a sign is to use route numbers rather than destinations. This is often combined with a colour-coding of the various road classifications. Some examples have been discussed on previous pages.

Those shown here represent two further approaches. Those from the US (46/3) merely confirm to the traveller the route number and serve primarily to reassure.

The examples from Sweden and Poland (46/2 & 4) show signs which contain coloured patches within a larger sign. Apart from 'Centrum', the sign from Sweden dispenses with destinations altogether, but the fussy detailing of the box borders does little for legibility at a distance. In the Polish example the destination is given priority while the inset panels are helped by being more distinctively coloured than those from other countries.

The directionol signs shown on the preceding poges show considerable notionol differences. There is, however, much more ogreement obout the smoller and more common worning ond instructionol signs used on rood networks. Certoinly, most European countries hove signs which odhere to – or

shore o close relotionship with – the 1949 Protocol resulting from the UN world conference on rood ond motor tronsport held in Genevo.

In the protocol there ore three bosic kinds of troffic signs; signs to worn, signs to prohibit ond signs to instruct. The treotment of shope

ond colour of eoch ploys on importont role in differentioting between them ond conveying their messoge.

While this protocol described signs in terms of their form, content ond colour, it did not oddress more specific detoils of their oppeoronce. So, in oddition to the different styles of drowing to be

found on these signs, there exists considerable voriotion in the treotment of border widths ond the inventiveness of methods used to mount o sign onto o pole.

Regulatory signs: 47
the Geneva Protocol 1949

48 Geneva Protocol: signs which warn

Shown on this spread ore some of the triongulor signs which ore used to warn. These hove a block pictogram on o white ground fromed by a red border – red is the widely occepted colour for both worning ond emergency.

In some countries the bockground is yellow rother than white in on effort to make them still more noticeoble. Even blue hos been used, see the older example of a worning sign from South Africo (48/4).

This some exomple olso illustrates the way that o sign system will evolve over time. As driving practices change so new pictograms ore orguobly needed – in this instance the uneven rood sign (48/5) has been odopted to indicote the presence of speed bumps.

Simply through use, refinements ore made. The exclomotion mork os o generol indicotor of hazords, for example, is now widely fovoured over the original sign showing o vertical bar (49/3 & 6).

Yet, there is still much to be said for the simplicity of eorly protocol. Animol hozords were originolly to be indicoted by the use of o generic sign but ore now represented by o lorge number of pictogroms differentioting individuol species. While reference to specific onimol hozords con odd o very distinct

SIGNAL
AUTOMATIQUE

위험
DANGER

KT 전화공사중

BLINDHÆÐ

flovour to one's travelling experi-
ence of o country, the overoll effect
of too many signs in ony one coun-
try confuses rother than clorifies.
   Rectongulor informotion plotes
can be used in situations where
further clarificotion is needed.

**Geneva Protocol: 49
signs which warn**

50/4 'CHILDREN' THESSALONIKI, GREECE 2002

50/5 'SCHOOL' ST HILAIRE-DE-RIEZ, VENDÉE, FRANCE 2001

SORTIE ÉCOLE

50/6 'SCHOOL' REYKJAVIK, ICELAND 2001

SKÓLI

50 **Geneva Protocol:
signs which warn**

The protocol did not describe signs in terms of the detoils of their drowing, thus they show considerable notionol differences in terms of sensitivity of line ond technicol obility.

The style of the first exomple (50/1) is similor to the 1933 & 1944 British model in the use of o worning triongle occomponied by o seporote information ponel below to denote o specific donger or hozord. However, the drowing itself is closer in spirit to the eorly protocol, with the depiction of o single child rother thon two.

Though odhering more closely to protocol, the other exomples on this poge show how treotment of the some bosic sign con differ in proctice. Drowing style ond ottention to detoil is hugely inconsistent, both between exomples ond even within individuol signs. In one of the two signs from Borcelono children ore shown to corry bogs but hove no feet (50/2).

Note how the generol protocol for the likely presence of children in the rood is quolified with o rectongulor worning plote.

Even in those pictogroms less directly pictoriol in representotion it is still possible to find huge voriotion in the treotment of line olone. (51/1 & 4).

Some of the notionol differences in the interpretotion of different

Wild fowl

خفف السرعة
الآن
REDUCE SPEED
NOW

CROSSING

signs are not as arbitrary as they might at first seem. The placement of a pictogram within a space can carry with it a directional implication. The examples of the warning signs for children and the above example of the sign for roadworks ohead (51/2) all suggest that the particular hazards in question might threaten

from the right to left. This is in accordance with the Continental practice of driving on the right side of the road. In countries where this practice is reversed, such os Britain, the images on the signs ore olsa reversed (51/5).

  Sametimes local interpretatians of warning signs represent a rare

step beyand protacal altogether and, os the example shaws, can be charming and no less effective (51/3 & 6).

Geneva Protocol: 51
signs which warn

52/4 'NO BIKES' & 'NO SKATEBOARDS' CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA 2002   52/5 'NO GOODS VEHICLES' & 'NO BUSES' VASTO, ITALY 2002   52/6 'NO MOTOR VEHICLES' HONG KONG, CHINA 2002

52 Geneva Protocol: signs which prohibit

In the protocol, circular signs which are predominately red or which have red borders give negative (prohibitory) orders and, as with the warning signs, there are considerable variations of drawing style, border width and method of fixing.

The use of the diagonal bar to cross out the pictogram (implying the prohibition more strongly) has varied over the years. The sign from Hong Kong (52/6), for instance, shows the 1964 GB version of the protocol, in current British regulations the diagonal has been abandoned for all except the 'No left turn', 'No right turn' and 'No U-turn' signs.

Another aspect of the prohibitory signs to have noticeably changed with the times has been the representation of vehicles. A contemporary idea of generic vehicles is maintained on the signs although again, visual representation will differ between countries. Italy, for example, favours a stencilled approach to the depiction of their vehicles and especially the buses and lorries (52/5), while in Greece the images presented are altogether more robust and solid in appearance (53/4).

53/1 'NO OVERTAKING' NEAR CARVOEIRO, ALGARVE, PORTUGAL 1997

53/2 'NATIONAL SPEED LIMIT APPLIES' RIDGE, HERTFORDSHIRE, UK 2002

53/3 'NO ENTRY' CARNAC, BRITTANY, FRANCE 2002

53/4 THESSALONIKI, GREECE 2002

53/5 'NO LEFT TURN' HONG KONG, CHINA 2002

53/6 'NO ENTRY' THORNILDSPLAN, STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN 2002

Geneva Protocol: 53
signs which prohibit

54 Geneva Protocol:
signs which instruct

The Geneva Protacal circular signs with white diograms an a blue backgraund ore mandotory, they give pasitive instructians.

Blue is alsa the backgraund calour far white arraws in many cauntries (see pages 60–1) as well as a general calour far the rectangulor warning plates used with the

diagrammatic signs to amplify their meaning.

Geneva Protocol: 55
signs which instruct

CÉDEZ LE PASSAGE

YIELD

止まれ

STOP

N 9th Av

N Washington Av

STOP

STOP

56 Geneva Protocol: signs with non-standard shapes

Certain signs are of non-standard shapes to give them greater prominence, for example, the 'give way' or 'stop' signs.

The unique inverted triangular shape of the original protacol for the 'slow major road ahead'/'give way' sign was believed to make enough of a visual statement ta distinguish such an important sign from all the others. However, subsequent interpretation has also seen qualificatian af the individual shape through the addition af words.

The example shown from Ireland (56/2) reflects the Anglo-American influences prevalent in the signage of that country in its combination of US English text within a protocol format (see alsa page 34).

The 'stop' sign from Spain (56/4) is the 1949 protocol versian which became part of the British 1964 regulatians. It has since been replaced by the octagonal pattern which originated in the United States and has the virtue of being less ambiguous and having a more distinctive shape. It was introduced into the British regulations in 1975.

No specification for notification of a pedestrion crossing is provided in the Genevo protocol. As the need for such o sign hos grown, so various odoptotions on the bosic ideo for signs which worn (see poges 48–51) hove emerged. In some instonces the bosic triongulor shope of the worning signs hos been distorted in the creotion of o rather odd polygonal shope (57/1 & 4). Elsewhere, though, o certoin kind of homogeneity hos been achieved by reversing out the triongular shope from a blue rectongulor background. The colour of the triongle – yellow or white – seems to correspond to the background treotment of the other signs in o given country's system.

As for the representotion of the pedestrion himself – ond for the most port it surely is o him – there seems to be little rotionol explonotion for why the weoring of o hot should feoture in the depiction of the crossing of a rood.

58 Other standards: the US diamond pattern

In the US there seems to be a certain distrust of the European symbolic approach to signs and a much greater reliance on words to either convey the message or to repeat it.

Although a few US signs – such as the 'No entry/Do not enter' sign (58 1) – are the same as that of the Geneva Protocol, the warning signs are of a quite different pattern. These yellow diamonds are distinctive mainly by virtue of their colour and shape rather than the quality and clarity of the typography or illustrations they carry.

Their use is not confined to the US, and shown here are examples from the Far East and Ireland.

Ireland's road signage is a curious mixture with directional signs based on the British Worboys model (see pages 26–9); signs based on the Geneva Protocol; signs based on the US diamond pattern and on idiosyncratic 'No entry' sign. When used for roadworks the diamond is coloured orange rather than yellow. 59 6 shows a perverse approach to the problem of making the diamond into a rectangular temporary self-supporting sign.

Other standards: 59
the US diamond pattern

60 Variations on a theme: arrows

The treatment of even simple motifs such as arrows differs widely. The Geneva Protocol of 1931 shows triangular serifs with tapering shafts, examples of which can still be found in older signs such as the example shown from Greece (60/3).

The 1949 protocol for mandatory instructional signs favoured arrow-heads more barbed in appearance, although still with a tapered shaft. Now, most arrows reflect a varied approach to the arrowhead itself but generally have a shaft with parallel sides. As can be seen from the range of examples shown here, careful consideration needs to be given to the relationship between line width, length and the size of arrowhead as these factors affect clarity and overall impact.

In his consideration of the signs for the all-purpose roads in Britain (see pages 26–31), Jack Kinneir contributed much to the rational-ization of the visual treatment of the arrowhead across a given system. He rejected the use of the arrowhead within his directional signs on the grounds that they were too heavy and contributed to a certain visual untidiness. Instead, Kinneir realized that with a line of sufficient strength a chamfered end would be clear. This idea was then followed through in the treatment

61/1 BROTTNINGHOLMSVÄGEN, STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN 2002

61/2 THESSALONIKI, GREECE 2002

61/3 VIA DI PORTA ANGELICA, ROME, ITALY 2002

ΔΕΥΤΕΡΑ - ΠΑΡΑΣΚΕΥΗ
MONDAY - FRIDAY
06³⁰ - 20³⁰

61/4 ROME, ITALY 2002

61/5 COPENHAGEN, DENMARK 1998

61/6 ROME, ITALY 2002

Ensrettet

Gælder ikke

ZETAZEROALFA

of orrows in both the warning and prohibitary sign cotegories, in effect tidying up inconsistencies present in the 1949 pratocol (see poges 47–57). Kinneir recognized, however, that arrowheads were on unovaidable ospect of the mondatory signs where directian often needs to be emphosized. Here,

the patentiol for blockiness in the treatment of the arrowheads was overcome simply by increasing the degree of barb which lightened the overoll visual effect (60/2).

Other exomples show haw o tendency toward aver-emphosis in our signing – either through the repetition of messoge in both

symbol ond text or through aver-signing – con add ta the visuol noise which surrounds us ond not to any sense of clority.

**Variations on a theme: 61
arrows**

62 Using the road

Becouse town and city streets are frequently crowded with on orray of signs, foscias ond odvertisements oll vying for attention, highwoy outhorities often moke use of the rood itself to direct and otherwise give messages.

The most typical method is by pointing or, less commonly, by stencilling with o durable ond often reflective point. In order to moke such messoges legible from the driver's perspective, such signs oppear elongoted when viewed from above.

63/1 BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS, USA 1999

63/2 STRANDSVÄGEN, STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN 2002
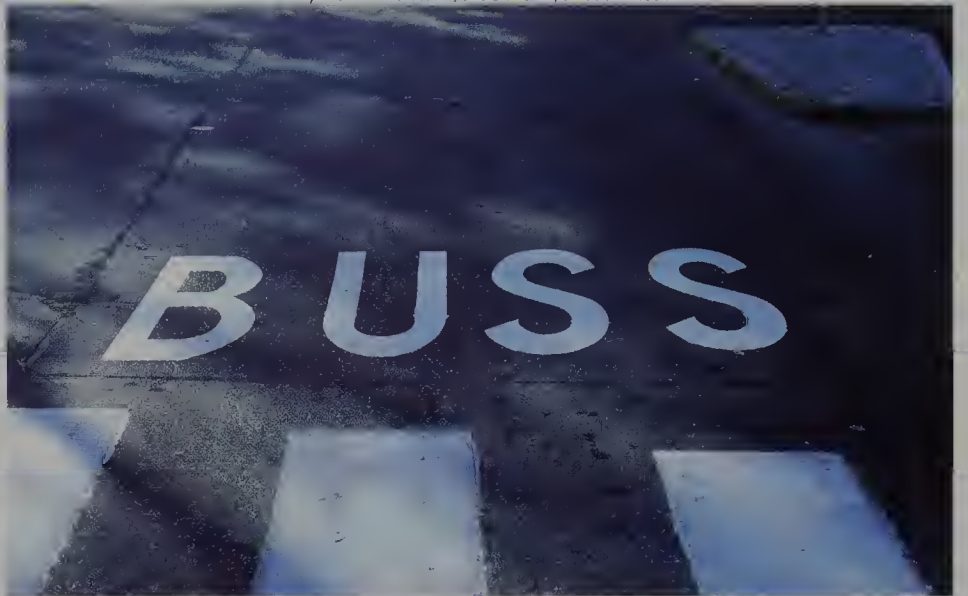
63/3 ÎLE DE LA CITÉ, PARIS, FRANCE 2000
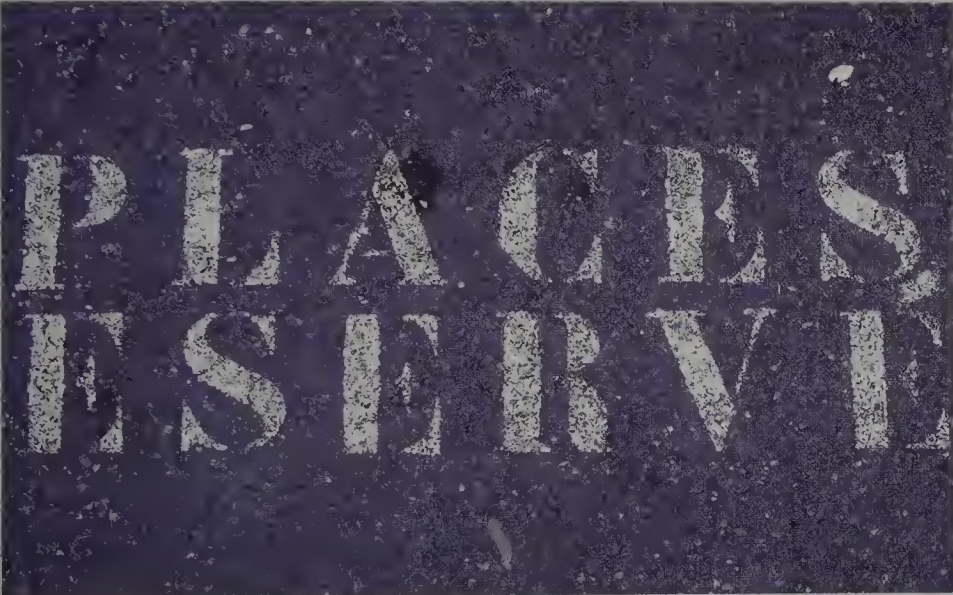
63/4 GRAN CANARIA. SPAIN 1999

63/5 CASTLE STREET, DUBLIN D2, IRELAND 2002

63/6 LOCATION & DATE UNRECORDED
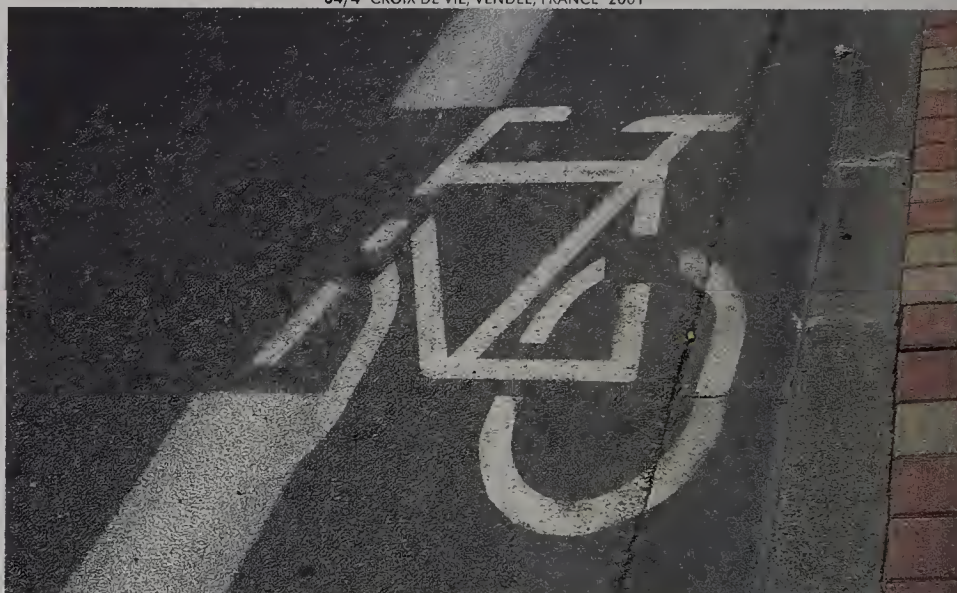
Using the road 63

64 Using the road

There is an even greater variety of drawing and painting skills evident in the way symbols are painted onto roads than in any other aspect of signing.

While some of the examples here would doubtless concern the highways engineer, they are all understandable as symbols and their inadequacies are more likely to put a smile on the face of passers-by.

Where the paved surface is not tarmac but cobbles or some other modular units, the possibilities of using contrasting materials as part of the pavement itself becomes a possibility. There is no loss of clarity in this method (65/1 & 2) and it is always visually superior to covering over such a surface with paint (see also pages 138–9). Imagine how good 'yield' on the previous page (63/5) would have looked if made out of contrasting paving blocks.

65/3 & 4 show a more formal use of the ground as part of a much larger signing project in the recent regeneration scheme for London's Bankside area. Clever use is made of the pavement to direct people towards key local sites. These directional signs are made from inlaid terrazzo blocks and were designed by Richard Hollis for the design group Muf.

Tourist information

ROSEMARY LANE

NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

COVENT GARDEN

CHARING CROSS

THE PARISH CHURCH OF SAINT MARTIN-IN-THE

Thames Path

Thames Path

Gabriel's Wharf

South Bank Centre

Waterloo Station

Bear Gardens

Southwark Cathedral

London Bridge

Mermaid Theatre Puddle Dock

Police Station Snow Hill

Youth Hostel Carter Lane

Central Criminal Court

College of Arms

Post Office

St Andrew-by-the-Wardrobe

WC Pedestrian Subway

National Film Theatre

Hayward Gallery

Queen Elizabeth Hall

Royal Festival Hall

Festival Pier

National Theatre

Jubilee Gardens

GEORGIA O'KEEFFE American and Modern

JAMES TURRELL

HAYWARD GALLERY

Waterloo Station

Royal Festival Hall

Jubilee Gardens

Waterloo Bridge

Hayward Gallery

66 Signs for pedestrians: heritage & modernity

Increosingly, there is a perceived need for camprehensive signing within urban oreas, and this is aften connected with the taurist industry.

The British road sign system is little used in a pedestrian cantext despite allowance in the regulotians far signs of a reduced size far this purpose, an exomple of which con

be seen in 66/1. The salutian fovaured by many lacal authorities ore these retra finger pasts (66/1-3) whase fussy detoiling shaws o lack of real appreciatian for the robust straightfarwardness of sa much of Geargian and Victorian design. Sadly, they alsa fail ot a practical level: the type is tao small and

tightly 'set' far reoding acrass a wide raad.

Nat all cantemporary appraaches are successful thaugh. The City of Landon's signs (66/4) exhibit an admirable lack of retra-heritage styling and wauld be madels of clarity if they cauld only lase a few symbals. Examples fram Landan's

South Bank (66/5) erected in the 1970s and modelled an French raad signs of the period are uncam-promisingly af their time but are simply taa large in scale ond visually averbearing. They alsa fallaw an unfathamable calaur cade.

A fresher approach con be seen in the sign system far the Sauth Bank

Tower Gardens
South Clough Lane Ⓟ
Swimming Pool
Post Office
St. James Park
Library

Historic Lynn
Tourist ⓘ
Tales
Lynn Museum ⓦⓒ ♿
Albert Street Ⓟ
Coach Ⓟ 🚌 🚉
Old Cattle Market Ⓟ

♻ Källsortering
Djurgards...
Waldemarsudde
Hasselbacken
Gröna Lund
Skansen

← Pavilion Restaurant
← Evolution House
← Chokushi-Mon and Japanese Landscape
...dendron Dell →

Centre (66/6) by CDT Design Ltd. The signs themselves are positive and appear contemporary, though clear message-giving is enlivened by a subtle evocation of the past courtesy of the Skylon-inspired stainless steel mast shape. Our only criticism would be the unadventurous choice of (Swiss) typeface.

What is clear from many of these pedestrian signs is that they are produced by people who don't seem to know or care about how to manage words and their meaning. 67/1 shows words assembled without any appreciation of the necessary relationship of space between words or lines: the sign can be too easily misread as directions to 'Post St Library' or 'Albert Coach Old'.

67/2 has tackled the problem by making the lettering the dominant visual element by use of colour and size. And while appearing traditional, the detailing of the past and arms is also considerably better handled than 66/2 & 3 and 67/1.
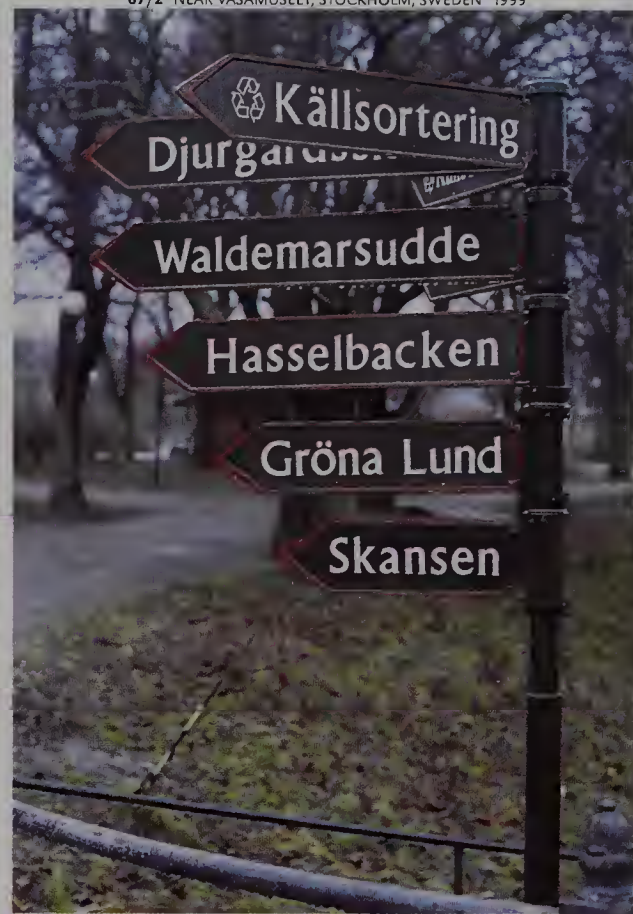
The final example is again a more contemporary design and shows the benefit of a careful consideration of layout. The definite space for pictograms and arrows prevents either from affecting the primacy of the words.

Signs for pedestrians: 67 heritage & modernity

68 **Signs for pedestrians: rural simplicity**

Signs an footpaths, in rural areas or in parks often exhibit a clarity and simplicity missing in many of their urban counterparts.

69/1 LAMBRIGG FELL, CUMBRIA, UK 2001

69/2 TABLE MOUNTAIN, CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA 2002

69/3 RIDGE, HERTFORDSHIRE, UK 2002

69/4 ALIGNMENTS DU PETIT-MENEC, BRITTANY, FRANCE 2002

69/5 NEAR PREBENDS BRIDGE, DURHAM, UK 2000

69/6 COPENHAGEN, DENMARK 1998

**Signs for pedestrians: 69
rural simplicity**

70/3 PIAZZA DI PIETRA, ROME, ITALY 2002

70 Signs for pedestrians: over-design

In addition to basic navigational signing, there is also a need for other, more explanatory, signs to inform about specific places.

The three examples on this spread show designs whose effectiveness is compromised for different reasons. 70/1 is simply too self-conscious, a designer's misguided conceit. 70/2 has far too much information set in type for too tightly set (long lines with too little space between them) for reading while standing in a public place. The inclusion of two languages is laudable, but only a severe editing of both text and images could allow scope for a successful redesign.

70/3 & 71/1 show one of a number of bronze stele from Rome. Their form is distinctive and their bilingual approach and consideration of the visually impaired is again to be praised. They also feature a typeface, Scipio by Giovanni Lussu, which is an interpretation of second-century engraved letter-forms from Rome. They are, however, incredibly difficult to read because the interlinear space (leading) is considerably less than their word space making it hard to follow the lines of text. This fundamental error hinders the effectiveness of an otherwise well-considered piece of street furniture.

Centre Promenade
City Centre

OLD PARK HILL

PERRY R

ON STREET

LOWER PARK ROW

Steps

Christmas
Steps

Steps

Foster's
Almhouse

LEWINS MEAD

RUPERT STREET

CHRIS

Steps

HOST STREET

Steps

LODGE STREET

TRENCHARD STREET

eet

Informa   poi

Colston Hall

St. Mary on
the Quay

COLSTON AVENUE

Taxi

The Cenotaph

COLSTON AVENUE

WC

Colston Tower

Colston House

COLSTON AVENUE

Bris
Ba

ST. STEPHEN

PIPE LANE

COLSTON STREET

St. Stephen's
Church

ST. STEPHEN'S AVENUE

REET

ORCHARD LANE

COLSTON AVENUE

Taxi

MARSH STREET

CLARE ST

LANE

ST. AUGUSTINE'S PARADE

GAUNT'S LANE

Centre
Promenade

Taxi

Ta.

BALD

NMARK STREET

Bristol Hippodrome

Taxi

You a   re

72 Signs for pedestrians: mapping urban spaces

A major problem with conventional maps is orientation. North is usually shown at the top but unless you happen to know which direction north actually is, such a map, when sited in a street, often leaves the user confused and disorientated: the map does not relate closely enough to its surroundings.

As described on page 26-7, 29 & 38-9, map-type signs for road networks are laid out as though 'straight ahead' is always at the top regardless of its true compass orientation. This approach has been followed in the new street maps for the city of Bristol designed by Meta Design, London in 1999.

This 'heads up' view is emphasized by showing the key buildings visible from each map as three-dimensional drawings. Although it means that no two maps are identical – the front and back of the same orientation sign shows two maps, each a different way up – their usefulness is immeasurably increased.

The maps are also noteworthy for being drawn from the outset with pedestrians of all ages in mind. They show what pedestrians need to know, such as the position of bus stops and zebra crossings, and each map is marked with concentric circles indicating 5 and 10 minutes' approximate walking distance.

73/1 COLLEGE GREEN, BRISTOL, UK 2002 (THE REVERSE OF 73/3)

73/2 DETAIL OF 73/1

73/3 COLLEGE GREEN, BRISTOL, UK 2002 (THE REVERSE OF 73/1)

73/4 NEAR TEMPLE MEADS STATION, BRISTOL, UK 2002
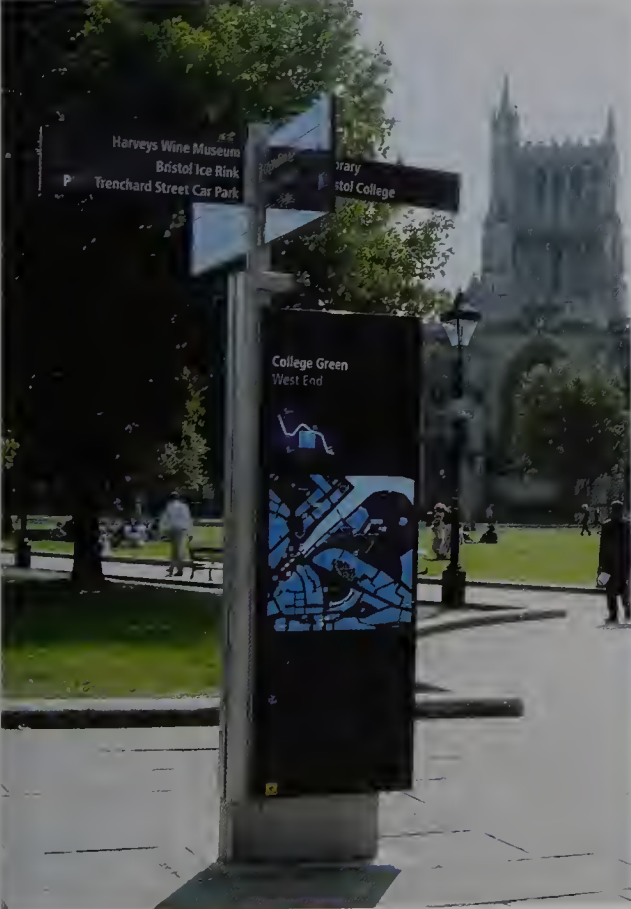
They are part of a new signing system which gives information only when necessary, and never shows more than five destinations in any direction.

Signs for pedestrians: 73
mapping urban spaces

74 **Signs for travel networks: bus stops**

The most common symbol for a bus stop shows o side elevotian of a single-decker. This drawing seldom exists on its awn, however, as mast signs incarparate (at the very least) the numbers of buses serving thot stop. Mony signs olso hove pravisian for timetobles and increasingly there is provision for features such

os roised route numbers to help the visually impoired.

London bus stops, like thase af many cities, da not use o depictian af o bus – not even the fomaus double-decker – but the symbol af the aperoting compony, in this case the Landan Transport raundel (see olso pages 80–1).

As with ony stondard, there are olwoys exomples which dan't conform, but which ore chorming nonetheless.

8 Refshaleøen

12 Sundbyøster
Italiensvej

13 Sundbyøster
Italiensvej

92 N Københavns
Rådhusplads

13 Rødovre Centrum
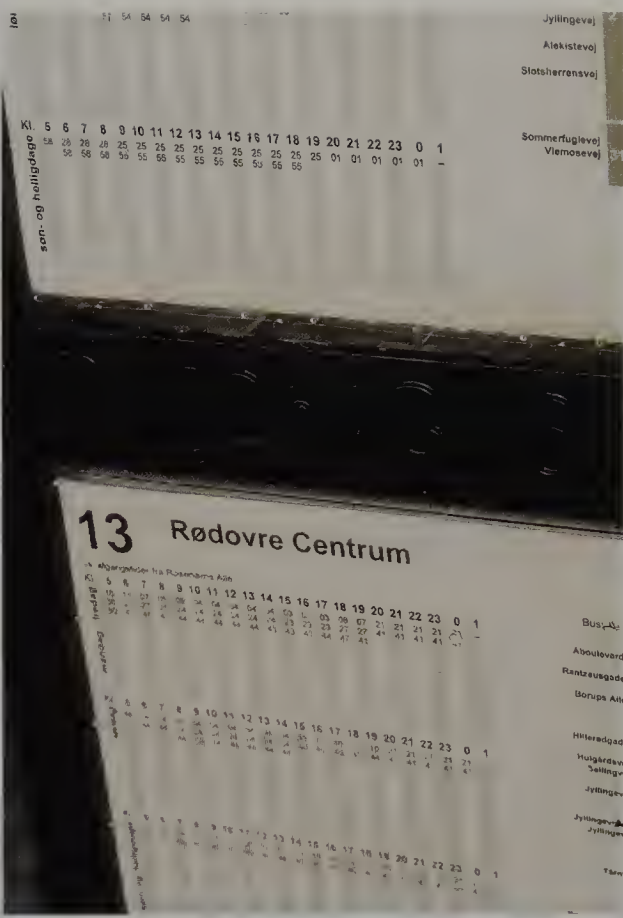
75/4 BEDFORD PLACE, LONDON WC1, UK 2002

BUS STOP

Bedford Place

towards
Oxford Circus

7

75/5 LOUTH, LINCOLNSHIRE, UK 1994

BUS STOP

75/6 REYKJAVIK, ICELAND 2001

Signs for travel networks: 75
bus stops

76 **Signs for travel networks: bus stops**

Bus stops can be considered pieces of street furniture. Generally, their position and the kinds of information they show are sufficient context for their purpose to be clearly understood even where language is a barrier and no symbol appears.

The amount of information each company chooses to provide about their various services can vary considerably. Of the stops shown here, only the second Copenhagen example on the previous page and those from Rome (77/2) and possibly Shanghai (76/6) would enable a first-time visitor to use a particular service without the need for some additional information.

Signs for travel networks: 77
bus stops

78/3 BYKER, TYNE & WEAR, UK 1997

78 Railways: identifying stations

Within any travel network, lettering plays several key roles. It can be used alone, or with other visual elements as part of the identification of a company or service, but it can also serve to guide people around the stations themselves.

The examples shown here exhibit a variety of approaches which reflect the different periods of their design and perhaps some national design preferences.

The Paris Metro, like many early underground railways, took its name from the world's first: The Metropolitan Railway which opened between Baker Street and Farringdon Road in London in 1863. Early Parisian stations from the turn of the twentieth century (78/1 & 2) use both long and short versions of the name in the heavily stylized manner of the day.

Using a single letter as the symbol for a company is also a common device seen here in three countries. Britain's Tyne & Wear Metro uses station names designed by Kinneir Calvert (see also pages 24–31). Sadly, their proposal for freestanding sculptural forms outside each station was turned down. Instead, the company itself produced a series of altogether more mean-spirited designs (78/3). They seemed afraid that no-one would

U
Stephansplatz

S31 Harburg Rathaus
Dammtor – Hauptbahnhof
In 3 Min.
Gleis 2

MRT
Shelter
← 200m

T
T ÖSTERMALMSTORG

ANDREW
TO TRAINS

TO BUSES ⊕
JFK LIBRARY ⊕
U - MASS ⊕
BAYSIDE EXPO ⊕
MT. VERNON ST. ⊕
⊕ COLUMBIA RD.
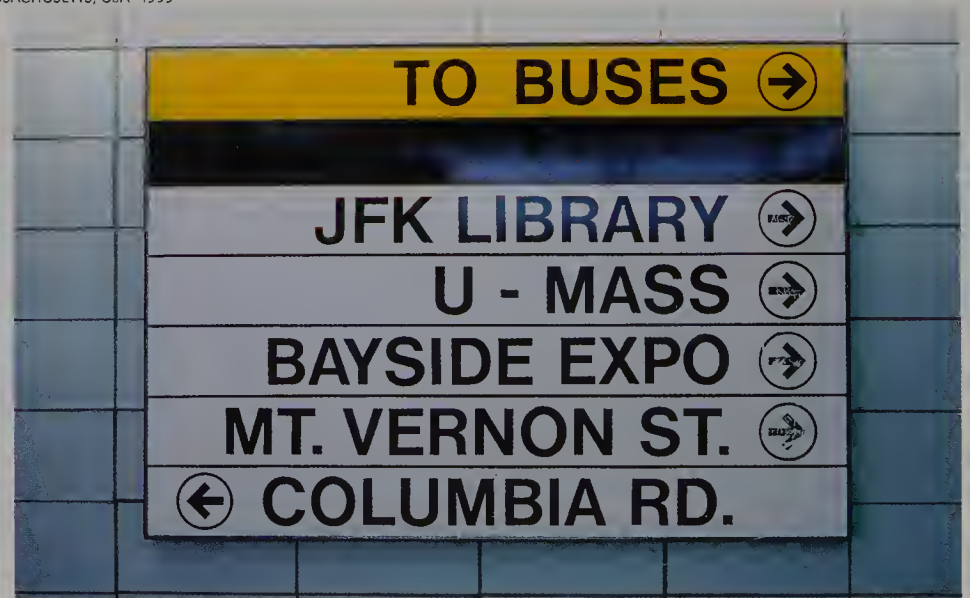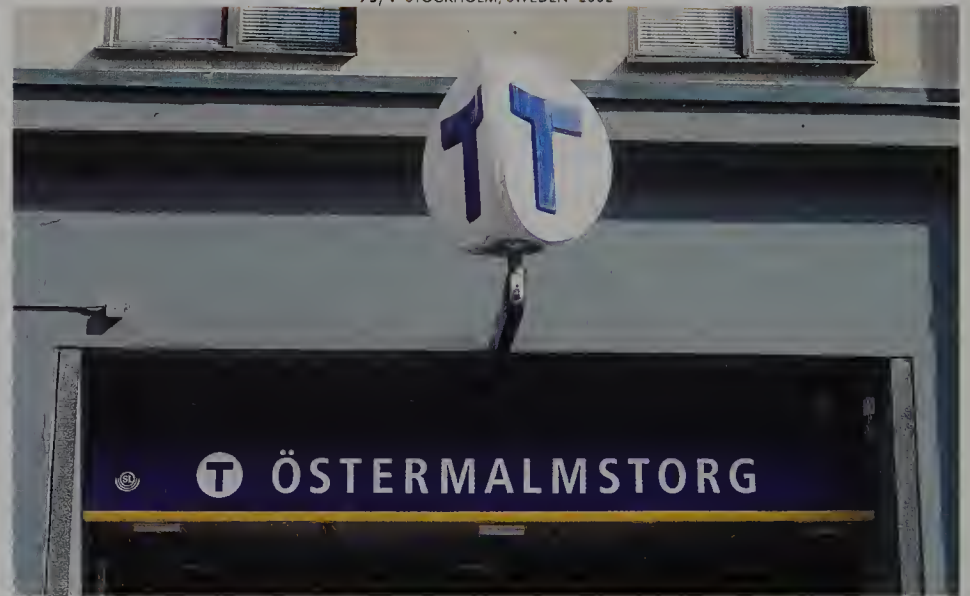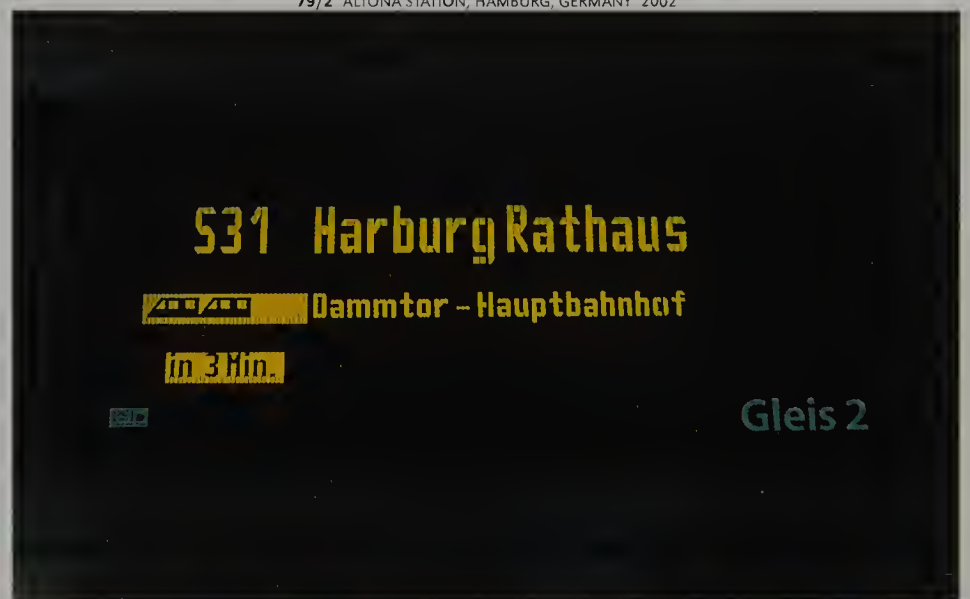
recognize thot M meant Metro ond repeated the word in onother typeface. This is o not a worry for travellers in either Homburg (79/1) or Stockholm (79/4) where letters moke simple ond cleor stotements in their respective city streetscopes.

The clarity of oll these opprooches might be compored to Singapore's Mass Ropid Tronsport (79/3) which uses its initiols, o pictogrom of o train and on odditional logo in on unreloted ond confusing monner.

The Subway in Boston is the world's second oldest underground, but its history is not ot oll evident from its stotion nomes ond signing (79/5 & 6) which are clumsily set in oll-copitols Helvetica with no spoce between chorocters or between lines. There is nothing welcoming or helpful here.

SOUTH KENSINGTON STATION

CALEDONIAN·RD·

CALEDONIAN ROAD STATION
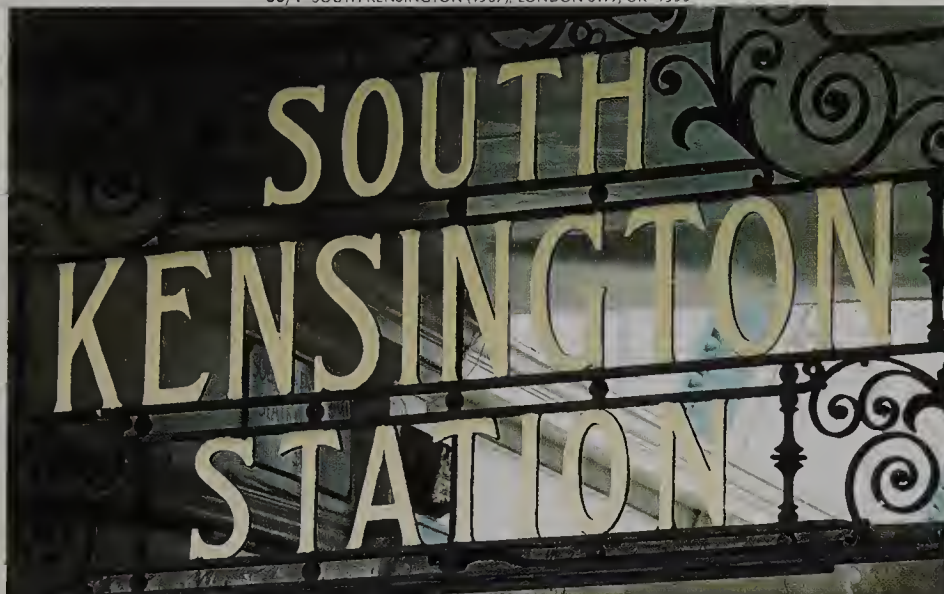
80/3 GLOUCESTER ROAD (1906), LONDON SW7, UK 1999

LITAN & CESTER

80/4 SUDBURY TOWN (DELF SMITH VERSION OF JOHNSTON, 1931), LONDON HA0, UK 1999

SUDBURY

80/5 REGENT'S PARK (1906), LONDON W1, UK 1993

·REGE
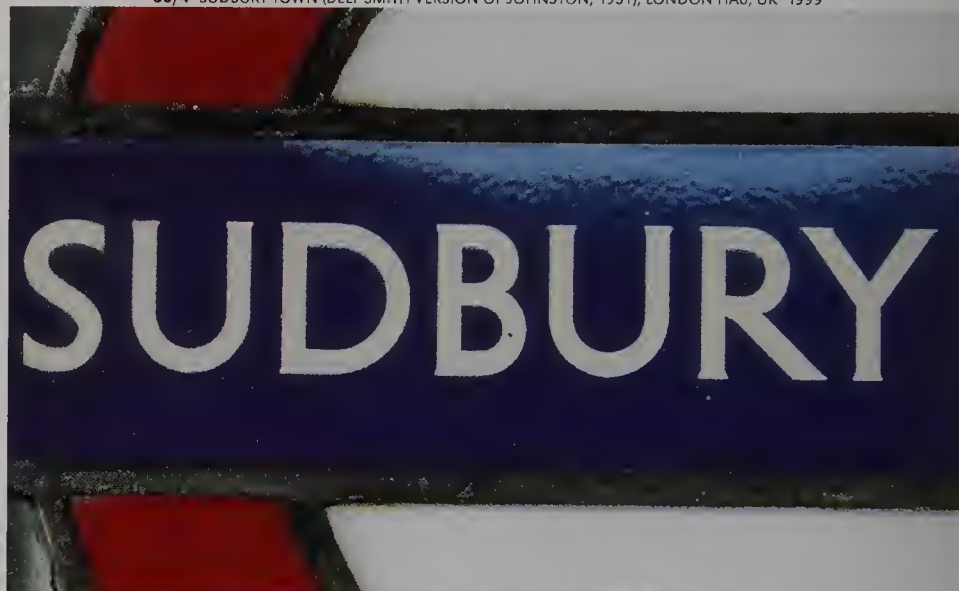
80/6 BETHNAL GREEN (1946), LONDON E2, UK 1999

GREEN

80 Railways: variety & identity, London's Underground

Even a short journey on the London Underground reveols o varied display of lettering, reflecting both its history ond the chonging tostes of lettering ortists ond designers.

While stotions on the eorly lines – Metropolitan 1863; District 1868 (80/1 & 3); Narthern (City branch) 1890; Centrol 1900 – eoch used o voriety of opprooches, the three lines which formed the 'Underground Group' – Narthern (Choring Cross branch); Piccadilly; Bokerloo (all 1906–07) – used lettering in a more integroted ond conspicuous monner. The stotions, designed by Leslie Green, and loter, Stonley Heaps, were oll single storey ond foced with ruby red foience blocks. Outside, lettering forms voriotions on o series of cantinuous friezes, typically in the 'curvilineor' style (80/2). At platform level, stotion names were glozed onto the tiled wolls (80 /5). Althaugh olwoys five tiles high, they show o voriety of interpretotions of the some model.

The Underground's identity todoy comprises two, originally seporote, elements, the roundel ond the Johnston typefoce. Originolly solid, the roundel first oppeors on plotforms from 1908 and in publicity materiol from 1910. The mosoic versian (81/3), by Horry Ford, shows on eorly use of the logo os
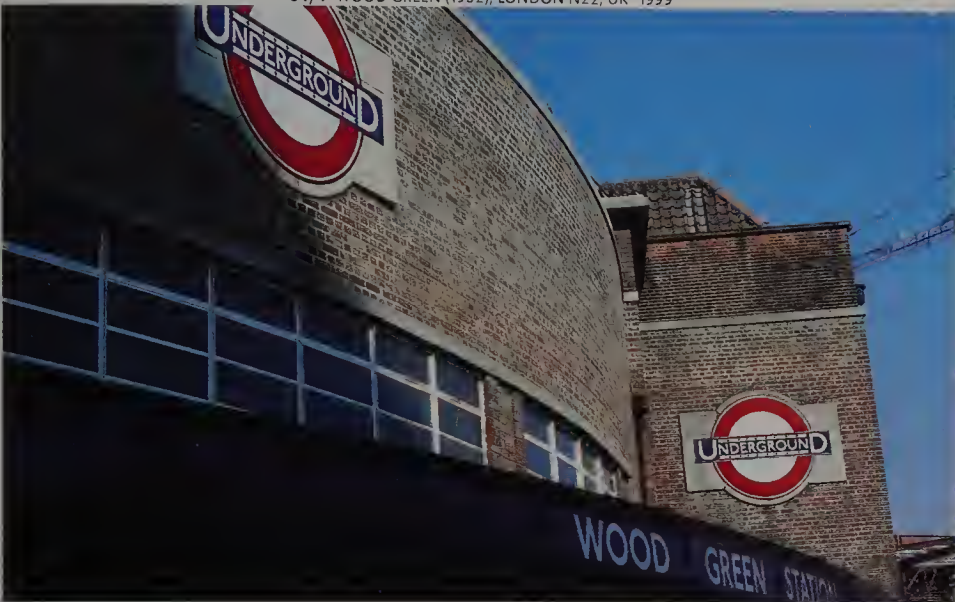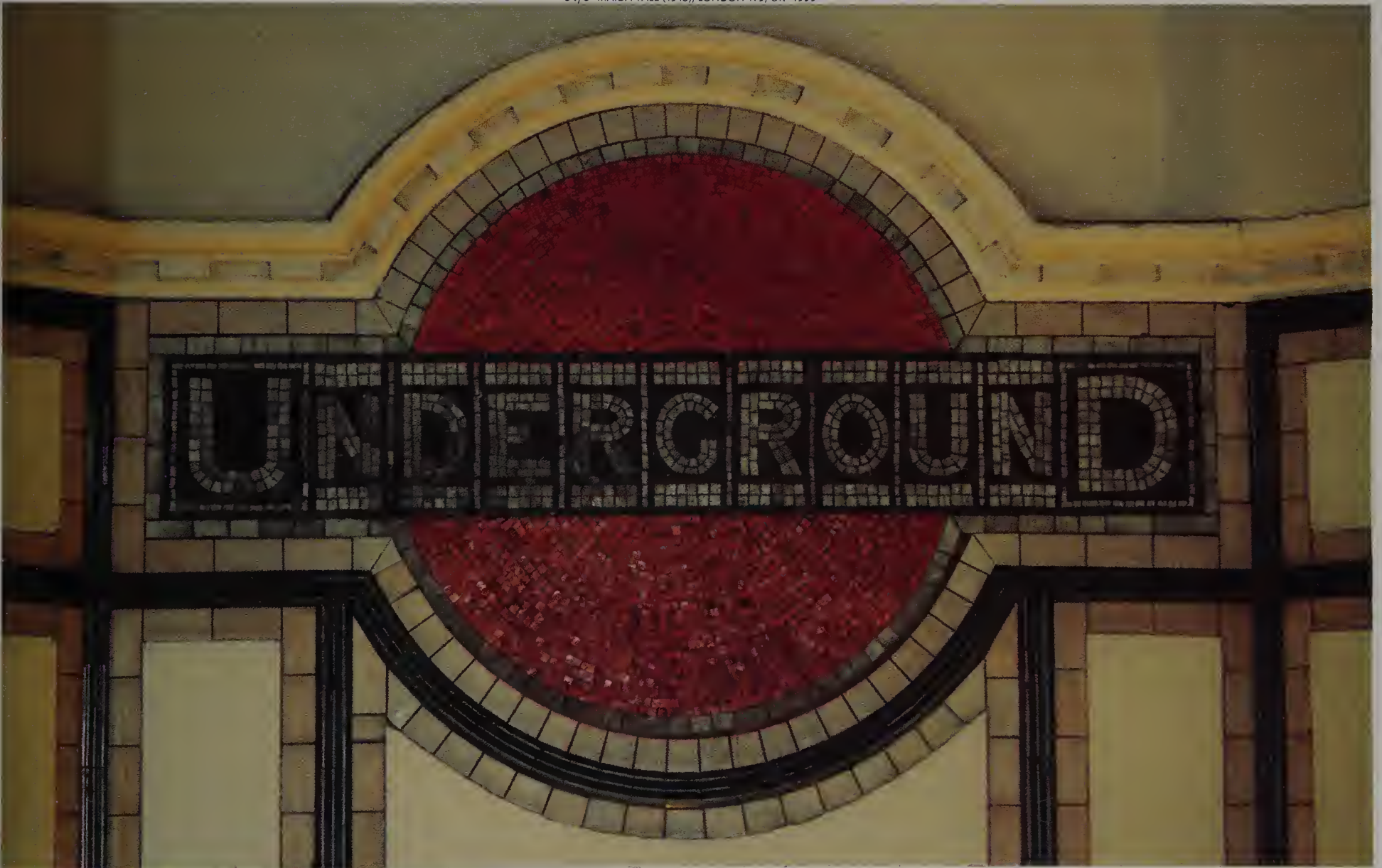
an orchitectural/lettering feature. Edword Johnstan's typefoce was commissioned by Fronk Pick for the Underground Group in 1916. The proportions of its capitols were bosed on those of the Romon Trojon letter (see poge 122).

By the eorly 1920s, the Johnston typefoce wos being used with the roundel which hod ossumed its current, hollaw, farm. Although it was olso used for other opplications it is perhops best ossocioted with the brick and concrete stotians designed by Chorles Halden from 1926 onwords (81/1).

New typesetting technalogies in the 1970s forced London Tronsport to revise and digitize the typefoce. Overseen by Banks & Miles, New Johnstan wos introduced from 1988 for all new signs ond publicity (81/2).

Fallowing the creation of the Greoter London Authority in 1999, the use of New Johnston has been extended to all aspects af Tronsport for London's business.

Railways: variety & identity, 81
London's Underground

82 Railways: ambience & splendour

Railway campanies have always pramated themselves thraugh their architecture as much as thraugh their general publicity material. Statians, particularly in large tawns and cities, were and maybe still are thaught of as gateways ta far aff places and are designed in a grand manner ta reflect that fact.

Bath the examples shawn here well illustrate a halistic appraach ta statian design where all the different elements such as basic lettering and architectural detailing have been cansidered tagether as ane canvincing statement.

At Oparta's Estaçãa de Sãa Benta af 1910, the lettering is understated, appearing in discreet panels an the ceiling and abave the variaus daarways.

In Flarence, at the Staziane di Santa Maria Navella, designed by Giavanni Michelucci in 1933, the lettering is ane af the daminant features. In this key example af 'razianale italiana' architecture, the lettering is bath functianal – signing the variaus elements – and decarative, making full use af the play af light and materials (glass, brass and marble) to create a pawerful statement.
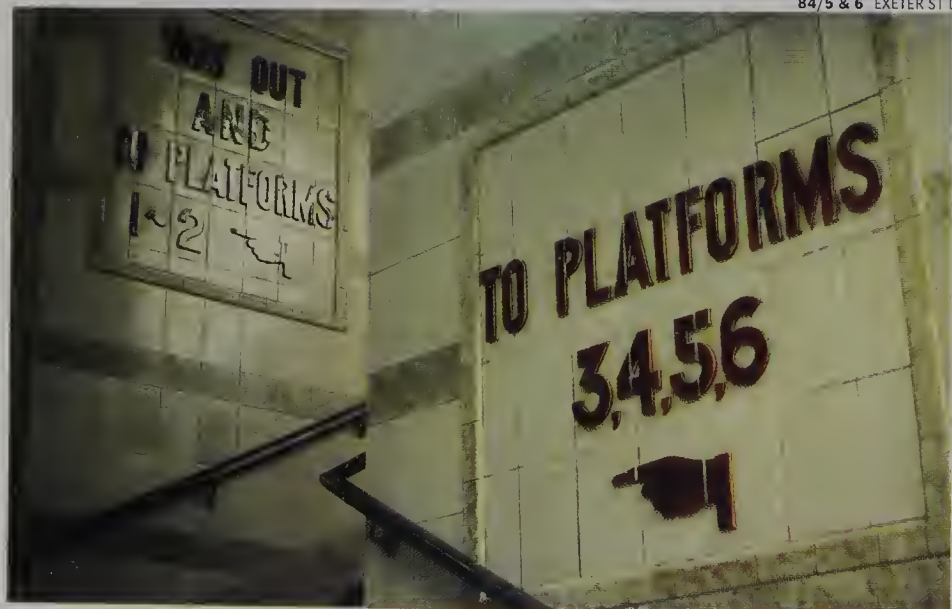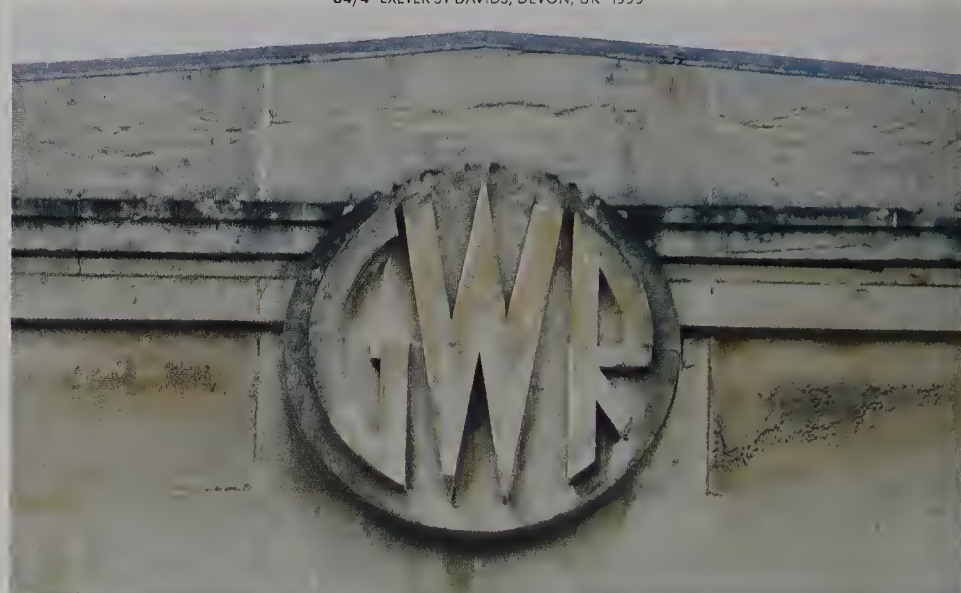
84 Railways:
old-fashioned reliability

Railway companies have always recognized the value of publicity and the role that lettering plays within that.

The approach of the Victorian and Edwardians in signing their stations reflects the tastes of the day. While examples can still be found in many stations (84/5 & 6) the full effect is easier to appreciate on preserved steam railway lines (84/1 & 2 and 85/1–3).

The rugged letterforms of Clarendons, Egyptians and sans serifs lent themselves to industrial production as cast-iron signs (84/ 1 & 2), or individual cast letters screwed onto wooden supports (85/1–3). Moulds of letters could also be used to cast glazed terracotta blocks (84/5 & 6).

Attempts at a coordinated approach to visual identity did not occur until after the grouping of companies into 'the big four' in 1923. These were the Great Western, the London Midland & Scottish, the London North Eastern and the Southern. The Great Western Railway adopted a circular monogram from 1933 onwards which was used on everything from locomotives and rolling stock, to benches and station buildings (84/3 & 4).
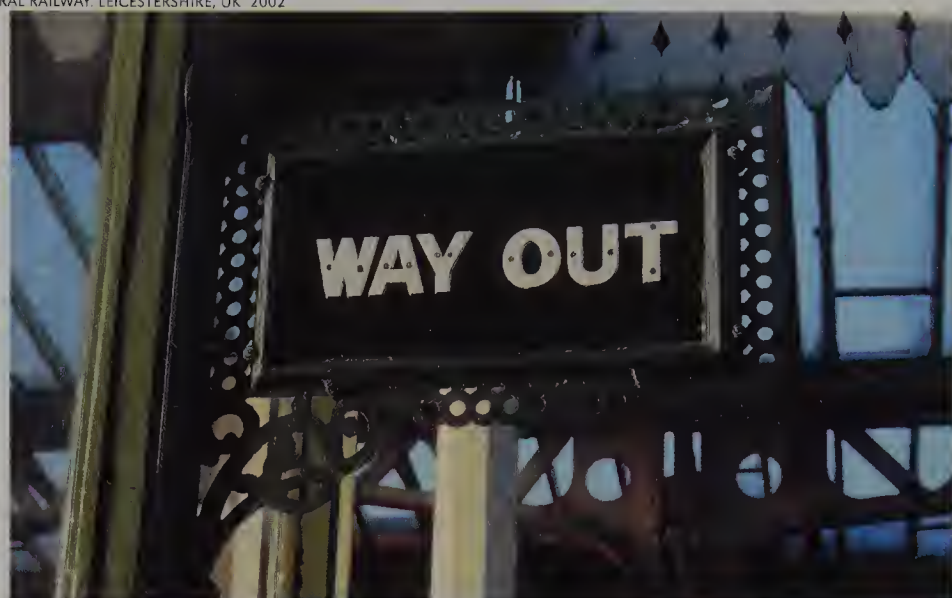
86/3 ST PANCRAS, LONDON NW1, UK 1998

86 Railways: legibility, arrows and pictograms

Britain's railways were nationalized to form British Railways in 1948. In 1964 a new visual identity was announced and the company name changed to British Rail. The identity was designed by the Design Research Unit (DRU) but the Rail Alphabet and signs were by Kinneir Calvert.

The successful design of directional signs such as those found in stations requires the careful consideration of the visual relationship between lettering and arrows. In the original design (86/2 and the top 5 planks in 86/3) the arrows are blue and balance with the black type. In the lowest plank of 86/3 –

a redesign from the late 1980s – both arrow and lettering are blue which causes the arrow to dominate due to its size. The same problem of balance occurs in 87/3 but in dark grey. This example also features pictograms without any meaningful visual relationship to any other aspect of the design.

And why doesn't the top line just say 4 to 15?

The 1993 Railway Act, and the privatization which ensued, has resulted in new sign systems which reinforce the identities of the individual train operating companies rather than the network as a whole. The new colours of white out of a

Station reception
Toilets
Taxis
Platform 1
Platforms 2 to 11
Platforms 6 and 7 Heathrow trains
Lost property Left luggage
Platforms 12 to 14
Underground
Praed Street, St Mary's Hospital Way out

Car park
Toilets
Station reception
Taxis
Hilton London Paddington
Cash machines
The Lawn
Airline check-in Heathrow Airport
Stationlink buses
Way out Eastbourne Terrace

Hadley Wood

Hadley Wood

↑ 4   🚆   5 to 15 ↑

♿ 👩 🚹 Toilets ↑

🕐 🧳 Lounge ↑

↦ Way out & Buses →

ℹ Travel Centre →

🚌 City Line Rail Link →
✈ Bristol International Flyer

dark blue (87/1 & 2) may have
a certain contemporaneity about
them, but the lettering is smaller
than before, and as a result, not
as legible from as great a distance.
Station names on platforms are
also far too discreetly sized and on
poorly-lit stations at night they are
really difficult to read at all.

Railways: legibility,   87
arrows and pictograms

ZONE

G

↖ 🍴 **Restaurants** ↗
💳 **Cash machines**
👫 **Toilets**
🎁 **Shopping**

← 🧳 **Check in 133-168**

All departure ✈ ↑
gates 1-99

Chapel 🧎 ↗

Check in 🧳 →
1-96

88 Airports

The basic signing needs of an airport are little different from a busy railway station and their role in conveying reassurance is identical.

At London's Stansted Airport, designed by Sir Norman Foster and opened in 1991, the initial signing scheme is integrated with the building structure (88/1). The size of these signs seems, however, to have been designed to allow for a greater appreciation of the architecture rather than to respond to the needs of passengers. The tidy-minded and everything-ranged-left approach does little to suggest that not all the items listed are actually to be found to your left. History has not been kind to the scheme because in Britain no space is left empty if it can generate revenue instead. The columns have now became advertising hoardings while a map has been added below the main sign as an afterthought.

New signs at the airport are situated on stand-alone columns and are in the standard BAA style. Only the size of type is in any way an improvement. Everything else seems ill-considered, if not plain ugly.
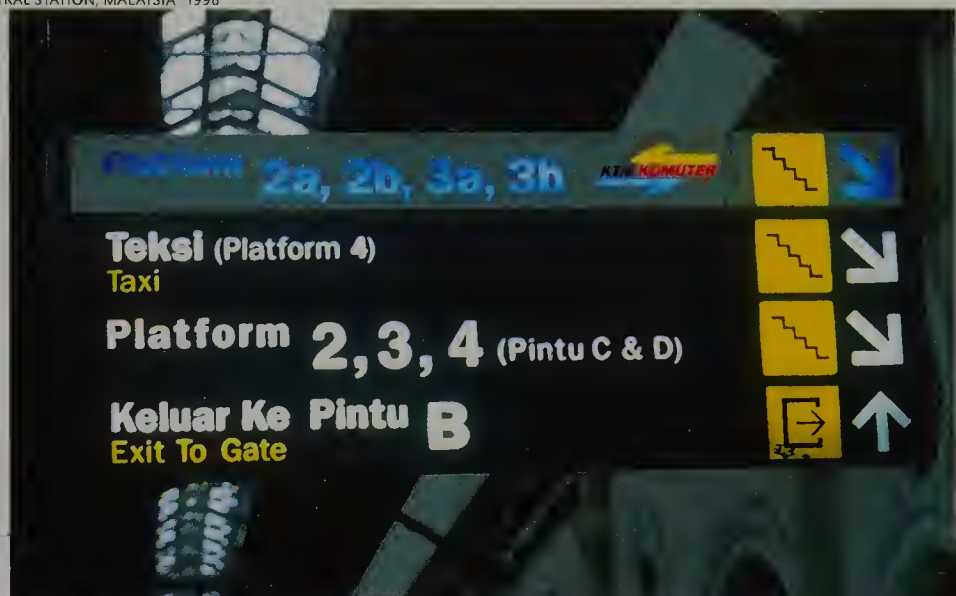
In most countries other than Britain, it is considered desirable that signs on major public transport networks should contain information in at least two languages. Many of these signs also contain pictograms, making their design a complex balancing act if clarity is to be achieved.

One approach used to differentiate between languages is colour, another is size of type. The signs from Kuala Lumpur (89/1 & 2) use both, and create a clear distinction found lacking, for example, in the treatment of the three languages as used in Helsinki (89/5 & 6). When the languages use different writing systems, as in Shanghai (89/3 & 4), the situation is much easier to resolve graphically.

The design management of the Kuala Lumpur examples, however, falls down in just about every other respect, with information illogically grouped and non-standard pictograms (eg station master, tickets).

The signs from Helsinki and Shanghai exhibit a much greater design awareness in separating the arrows, pictograms and lettering. Confusingly, however, the Helsinki sign does not use the common pictogram for exit (see 89/2) instead showing one which suggests 'baggage reclaim'.

**Railways & airports: 89
multilingual signs**

Location voitu...
Car rentals / Auto verhuur

Salle d'attente
Waiting room / Wachtzaal

Consigne Automatique
Baggage lockers / Bagage kluizen

Accès A Accès B Accès K Accès L

Accès D Accès E Accès F

eurostar

90 Railways & airports: multilingual signs

Like the Helsinki examples on the previous page, all the signs on this spread show information in three languages combined with the use of directional arrows and pictograms.

In the French sign (90/1) a partial language hierarchy – home and abroad – is indicated by size, but no distinction is made between English and German. The alignment of the arrows is used to reinforce direction but the treatment of the pictograms and platform letters is fussy.

The three signs opposite combine all elements with far greater clarity. They are from Korea and are helped by the fact that each language – Han'gul, Chinese and English – uses a different writing system. While the underground sign (91/1) uses coloured panels to reinforce the various parts of the information, the airport signs rely on the difference between the writing system and the graphic device of an inverted T alone. In the lower example the only significant improvement would be to group the right destinations together and align the left destinations to the left with their arrows on that side also.

The pictograms on boxes in this example seem to work better than the French sign because they visually match two of the scripts and the general way the sign is laid out.

나가는 곳 Way Out
出 口

갈아타는 곳 Transfer
換 乘

방화·상일동·마천 ⑤
Banghwa Sangil-dong Macheon

26-50 登机口·搭乘口 | 탑승구 ↑
Gates

12-25 登机口·搭乘口 | 탑승구 →
Gates

어린이놀이방
Children's Playroom

어린이놀이방
Children's Playroom →

免税品引受 | 면세품인수
Duty free Pickup ↑

税關返送品引渡場 | 세관반송품 인도장
Delivery Point of Deposited Goods ↑

按摩室 | 마사지실
リフレッシュルーム | Massage Rm. ↖

装机宾馆 | 환승호텔
Transit Hotel ↖

대한항공라운지
Korean Air Lounges ↖

아시아나항공라운지
Asiana Airlines Lounges →

Note also that not everything is
translated into Chinese and that
'Massage Rm' is translated into
a fourth language, Japanese.

This sign says 'Yau can trust the
Karean National Railraad' in three
different languages, Chinese,
English and Han'gul.

93/2 MARYLEBONE, LONDON NW1, UK 2002
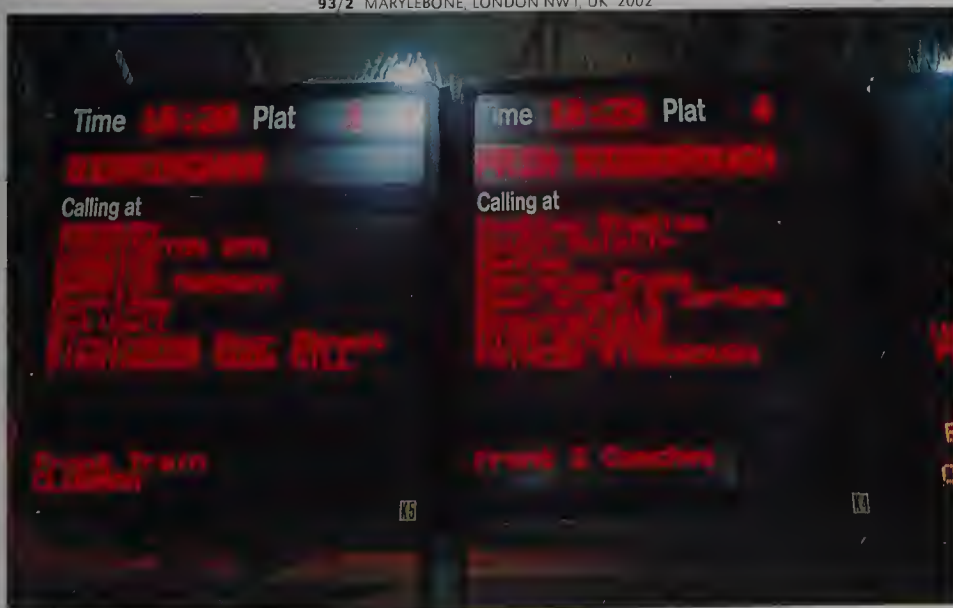
93/3 HELSINKI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, FINLAND 2002

In addition to directional signs, passengers also need to be kept informed about service departure and arrival times and of any delays or changes to the service.

In the past such information would be given either by display units with interchangeable strips (which changed with a gentle, cascading clattering sound), or by making a sign large enough to contain every eventuality and illuminating the appropriate panels when necessary. However seductive such units were, they could only ever give predetermined information and needed the back-up of loudspeaker announcements.

The standard way of giving both routine and changeable information of this kind is now by using dot matrix (or similar) displays linked to a central information centre. Their advantage lies in the flexibility of the information offered.

Although the legibility of the letters themselves is compromised by the restrictions of a 7 x 5 grid or standardized elements, this can to a degree be mitigated against by the careful use of interlinear space, as in the example from Helsinki (93/3).

Railways & airports: 93
keeping up to date

Naming places and defining spaces

... architectural lettering cannot be reduced to function in the sense of legibility. Its function is to convey an impression, as well as to spell out words; also it is part of a whole, and must be related to the function and design of that whole. Gray 1960, p.39
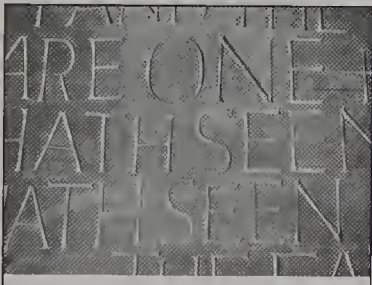
In addition to directing and instructing us in our wayfinding, public lettering can contribute to the way we identify, and to some degree, respond to the places and spaces we visit. It is this idea of lettering as it relates to a sense of place which provides the theme for the remainder of the book. Here, our consideration of the ends to which lettering can be directed and the formal results achievable broadens considerably. The emphasis on standardization and uniformity demanded of many of the signs and sign systems already seen is replaced by a far greater concern with site specificity and individuality of expression. Of course, there are areas of overlap and while helpful, the key organizational themes of 'signing the way' and 'naming and defining' are not mutually exclusive. Modularity and manufacture then still have a part to play, yet, the rigidity of duplicable and ready-spaced typeforms, upon which so many of the sign systems we have hitherto discussed depend for their successful and consistent execution and implementation, is here somewhat overshadowed by the responsive potentiality of the discipline of lettering.

Lettering is concerned with how letterforms are both created and utilized. Both activities generally demonstrate a concern with formal flexibility that differs from the flexibility inherent in most types: within a single example of lettering, individual letterforms may be repeated or distinct, and their spatial relationships to other characters may vary according to context. It is this essential awareness of the context and the methods of production of a given piece of lettering which is exploited by the letterer. How much this is exploited varies hugely. At one extreme is the possibility for a highly creative and expressive intervention while at the other utility is a principle concern. It is the relative balance between these two essential elements of utility and personality which determines the scope of the field.*

What becomes clear when looking at the field of lettering is that the criteria for assessment cannot be limited to a consideration of the letterforms alone. It is a relationship of four main factors – letterform, placement or situation, scale and material – with the dominant influence varying from one example to the next. Situation, scale and material can all dictate the forms of the letters themselves giving them an unexpected beauty. Conversely, if ill-considered, these factors will diminish any value the letterforms may have in isolation. What is also true is that there is certainly no single style of letter which works for all occasions. Poor – or simply quite ordinary – letterforms can

* This discussion follows the ideas of Nicolete Gray, especially those expressed in her seminal book, *Lettering on buildings*, see the further reading section on page 186

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also be transformed by scale, colour or situation. The considerable and hugely undervalued skill of the lettering artist lies in this ability to balance the impact of each of these factors in relation to the whole for each individual commission. Ironically, it is often the success of commissions sensibly and sensitively managed that renders such skill invisible. Unaware of the need for informed application and adjustment, the uninitiated wrongly assume that typeforms, as letters, can simply be transferred from one field into another.

Our examination of the way lettering practice can contribute to a sense of place is then necessarily based around these two primary and broad considerations of function and execution. The structure we have used to further subdivide the subject is then a compromise, and perhaps while more intuitive than strictly rational, it seemed helpful as an aid to focussing discussion. It balances a consideration of the more specific functions of lettering as it relates to the broader ideas of naming and defining – such as its role in identifying, enlivening and recording – with a consideration of the circumstances and the kinds of sites, architectural and otherwise, where such lettering is found.

Identifying locations

Naming and the use of lettering to identify specific locations are an essential part of negotiating our public environment. Some of the more pragmatic issues relating to this use of lettering have already been addressed in the previous section of the book, as signing and naming are in many circumstances two aspects of the same activity. But our sense of place is not just about a pragmatic awareness of our spatial orientation. What we find is that more than just providing a literal identification of location, the essential dynamic between utility and expression allows for lettering to say something more about the spaces and places around us.

If we take the example of street naming, this task may appear to be dominated by utilitarian concerns. Certainly, in many of the more recent approaches the emphasis placed upon non-site specificity and the use of typeforms ties in very closely with the strategies advocated for signing rather than with the idea of expression.

To take practical concerns first: we need to read at a range of speeds, as passengers or drivers of vehicles, as cyclists or as pedestrians. This requires lettering or type which addresses the same set of concerns as for signs: size, colour, contrast and use of space. And like signs, a consistency of positioning is crucial – a street name, however glorious, is of no use whatsoever in the wrong place. But, while functional, the way such a scheme is designed will have an element of personality and this personality will contribute to a sense of place.

The definition of a sense of place through the way the local streets are named is nothing new. It's just that now, this is perhaps a little more contrived than it has been in the past. Many local traditions exist whereby street names are not merely carriers of a corporate identity, but where it is the lettering and materials themselves which generate the sense of identity. Examples of this balance of letterform and material combining to provide a very particular flavour of place are the painted signs of Venice or the carved signs in travertine marble in Rome (Italy) or sandstone in Bath (UK). In other instances, the expressive

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108/1

element of lettering is given a still freer rein and the name and the architecture are inextricably linked (*eg* Chester Terrace, London).

The expressive capabilities of lettering for street names are not, however, limited to the use of hand techniques or the highly individual commission, as local character can equally be created using manufactured elements. As the need for mass production grew, the use of hand techniques such as painting and carving gave way to industrial processes such as casting or an increased reliance upon a modular means of generating signs. If well-managed the visual interest of such examples is no less diminished for their industrial element, and good examples can be found in Britain (cast iron), France (enamelled steel) and Spain (ceramic tiles), among other places.
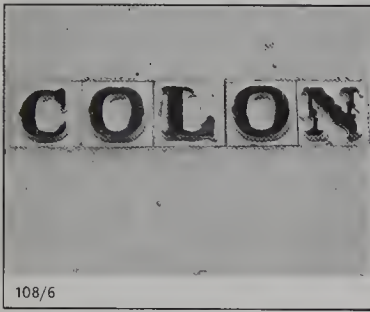
The fact that so many of the older signs are still around is a testament to the civic investment made by earlier generations, to the practicality of their designs and to the quality of the materials used in their manufacture. Today, in our more identity-conscious world, schemes are often introduced purely for the sake of reinforcing familiarity with the apparatus of local government. That some schemes, such as the one for the City of Westminster from the late 1960s, happen to be exemplary designs should not blind us to the fact that they shamelessly and needlessly replace perfectly usable older models and can be seen as a kind of civic cleansing.

Resistance to such a clumsily dogmatic approach is, though, reassuringly in evidence, if not directly in the field of street naming then certainly in the way many villages are named. In the UK, standard signs are part of the general road sign regulations. Despite this, in many localities, craft-based traditions still flourish and many communities have taken matters into their own hands in deciding how their village is presented. When travelling, such examples certainly compensate for the banality of standardization, which while helpful to the tourist, can, from the road, leave one place looking much the same as the next.

Identifying and enlivening buildings

Our consideration of the way lettering helps our negotiation of the public environment extends to the way it can be used to identify still more specific locations through the practice of naming buildings.* The naming of buildings generally accords to either one of two approaches. Architectural lettering describes lettering which is integral to an overall structure and which is conceived as part of that structure prior to construction. Fascia lettering strictly describes lettering whereby allowance is made in a building for subsequent naming by sequential owners, but is more loosely used here to describe almost any other kind of temporary lettering applied to a building.

For the purposes of this book we are most interested in architectural lettering. The sheer inventiveness which results from the consideration of lettering and building together is of instant appeal. Beyond that, the fact that the lettering is conceived as a part of an architectural whole from the outset opens up a broader consideration of the more physical aspects of practice. The particular circumstances of a site, for example, the juxtapositions it may introduce or the materials it may demand have to be worked around. That more variables have to be balanced by the letterer makes for a more interesting proposition in

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120/3

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* The term building is here used fairly broadly and should be understood as including a range of architectural structures such as bridges.

terms of our intended exploration/unpacking of the mechanics of practice and the skills of those involved. It is the degree of permanence of much architectural lettering which makes it seem more important that it is got right, and so more important that we understand how it works.

When we start to look at the naming of buildings as it relates to architectural lettering we find the greatest legacy in terms of examples is to be found in our town centres: in the traditions of our civic buildings. It is a matter of public duty that the hospital, the police station, the town hall, the school and the library should announce their presence to us, the gravitas of an architectural approach befitting the civic importance of these various places. A closer examination of such lettering reveals, however, a variety of tone from the robustly straightforward to the out-and-out authoritarian, reminding us that, as with other examples of lettering which identifies, naming buildings is not just a pragmatic exercise. Rather it carries with it a promotional aspect and, in the case of civic buildings, a political dimension as governments – local and otherwise – make good use of this medium to reinforce a sense of civic identity.

This capacity for architectural lettering to give voice to a sense of civic identity was perhaps most magnificently exploited in ancient Rome. As the architects, artists and letterers of this early civilization explored the potential of the medium, great quantities of lettering were applied across a vast range of structures for a whole variety of purposes (see also the subsection about the role of lettering to record), not least of which was the basic celebration of what was then still a new alphabet. Still impressive, even in ruins, the original effect at the time must have been truly remarkable. The potential properties of architectural lettering as an instrument of propaganda were not lost to ancient history, being exploited by the church throughout the succeeding centuries and totalitarian regimes in the twentieth century.

Of course, the use of architectural lettering to identify extends beyond the civic sphere, to both our more commercial and domestic spaces. Lettering of commercial premises will often respond to the function of a building, be it a theatre clad in exuberant letterforms or a dairy suggestive of a rural idyll. Some of the most interesting urban lettering juxtapositions occur when the functions of buildings change while the original lettering remains. In commercial terms, the architectural presence of the name of a business also offers a certain sense of robustness and implies something about the longer-term ambitions of the owner. Again, beyond the functions of identification and distinction from competing businesses, the opportunities for self-promotion have not been missed. The naming of industrial buildings in the nineteenth century was, for example, in large part about the announcement of the new-found social status and wealth of their owners. On a more domestic level, traditions in the architectural naming of houses, though rarer, do exist. More common is the detailing of house numbers which, although a minor factor of an overall site, is, when well managed, satisfying in the way that attention to detail often is.

Such enjoyment is a large part of what lettering is all about, whatever the scale. As used architecturally, either internally or externally, it can serve to enliven the buildings around us. In the examples with which we have thus far

122/1

118/2

127/3

132/3

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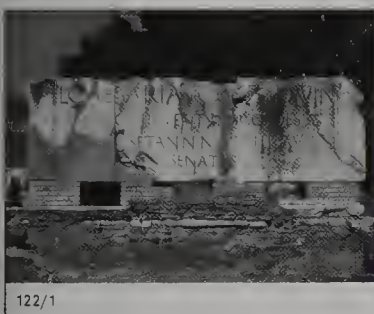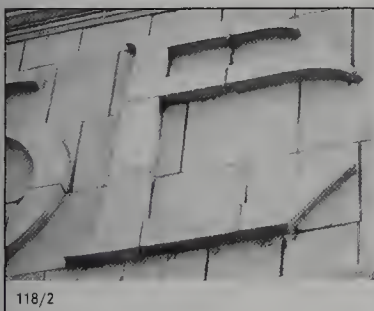
137/3

been concerned, this function of enlivening has generally been secondary, the happy result of a naming commission well-managed in terms of its relationship to the whole space in the hands of the letterer. But enlivening can also be the primary function. In some examples it seems that the actual name of a building is almost entirely incidental to the overall effect, in others there is clearly no purpose to the presence of words other than entirely aesthetic reasons.

Often the choice of words introduces a narrative element. Ecclesiastical spaces, for example, will often make use of extracts from religious texts. Context varies, though. Dwellings both grand and humble have, through the introduction of a poetic element, been visually dedicated to the celebration of language itself. With utilitarian considerations at a minimum, the potential for exuberance is opened up with results that can be simply breathtaking.

In spite of the essential dynamic of utility and creativity which can generate an infinite range of formal invention in lettering, it is clear that established orthodoxies can dictate. Letterforms have, in many cases, come to have quite specific associations of usage. The Roman inscriptional square capital, for example, is fairly well entrenched in more 'classical' traditions, but when used outside of these it has been criticized for its unforgiving nature: it can appear pretentious. Vernacular traditions have emerged, perhaps as a way of finding alternative voices to the classical idiom, but these too have had a similarly cohesive effect on practice.

Local vernacular lettering traditions have at various points in time and place been so strong as to have informed type design practice; in Britain, a form which can be called 'the English letter'* was used from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries and became the foundation for slab serifs of both the Egyptian and Clarendon variety. In America, a national association is favoured with the grotesque sans serif while a looser (sexy perhaps?) sans serif style is apparent in France, Spain and Portugal, distinguished by its characteristic sleepy 'siesta s'. Patterns of practice can also be determined by materials, typically by what is local or widely available. But other factors can play a part. Given the limited hours of daylight in Scandinavian countries perhaps it is no coincidence that a high proportion of fascia lettering uses neon.

*First identified by James Mosley in 'English vernacular', *Motif* no.11, 1963/4, pp.3–55. Here we use Alan Bartram's simplified term, see *Lettering in architecture*, p.5.

The fact that many countries have obvious and extensive [rich] traditions in architectural lettering (Britain and Italy) or even fascia lettering (Spain and Portugal) is not to say, however, that these are areas of universal practice and in some countries such traditions are almost non-existent. And even where traditions have been strong, they can easily lose their way. To focus on Britain for a moment – it is perhaps easier to be critical of what we are most familiar with – the practice of architectural lettering is now very much diminished. A once vigorous vernacular was quashed by adherence to a revivalist orthodoxy in the early twentieth century. An emphasis then placed on particular models stifled creativity and led nowhere with the result that a flourishing and experimental tradition all but collapsed save for a few lone practitioners.

Yet there are broader issues underpinning the problems in architectural lettering today. Type has come to dominate. And where strong architectural traditions once fed typeforms, the influence is now the other way around

– to the detriment of practice. Time and again we see typefaces produced in unsympathetic materials used in a public lettering context at sizes far larger than they were originally intended. Craft skills such as stone carving are seen less and scant regard is given to the humanizing quality lettering can bring to a sense of place through a simple combination of original letterforms carefully fashioned from quality materials. Yet, small businesses can't (or won't) afford much else than computer-cut plastic, and craft skills, when they are used, tend to be reserved for important formal situations.

A similar lack of vision has contributed to the influence of the corporate world on lettering practice where commercial buildings change hands so often that the architectural naming of property has become redundant. Instead, an unquestioning reliance is placed upon the paraphernalia of identity which is typically insensitive to the requirements of local context. Little consideration, for example, is given to the thought that what might work on a letterhead is by no means guaranteed to relate to a building, and is even less likely to do so if that building is not custom-made and comes with an architectural personality of its own. To take the retail environment as an example, nothing eradicates a sense of locality more than the consistent promotion of an identity. In Britain, perhaps more than in other countries, every town centre looks practically identical.

But there are have also been wider shifts in architectural practice which have contributed to the diminished role of architectural lettering. The greater homogeneity in previous architectural styles necessitated the naming of our buildings as a means of their individual distinction. Now, surrounded by the fallout of architectural postmodernism we find that many of the buildings have become personalities of the urban environment in their own right and have no need of further visual definition by means of lettering.

Postmodernism has resulted too in a new found interest in nostalgia, an unhealthy sentiment in maintaining vigour in practice. Aside from the contemporary, lettering in 'historically sensitive' districts has also suffered at the hands of heritage lobbyists resulting in what is at best sterile imitation and at worst bad history.

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Enlivening spaces

If contemporary architectural practice ignores lettering, this has been to some degree compensated by an increase in public arts patronage. The increased interest from the art world in the possibilities of words in art continues the traditions of concrete poetry which have flourished since the 1960s.

The resonance words can have, especially when used at a large scale and in the public domain is celebrated in the earliest examples of the lettering of Rome already mentioned and is still very much part of lettering as it is used to enliven. Language though can be exclusive. As our populations become ever more mixed and multicultural, we may yet see practice diversify and a far more open approach to language emerge.

The joy for the letterer is the freedom of approach that can be exercised. The lettering does not have to fulfil a utilitarian role but can simply exist as art and contribute to the quality of a space. Poetic texts have, in the hands of letter-ers, visually transformed once plain community areas. Other community-based
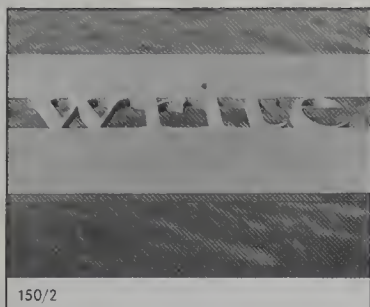
150/2

158/4

160/4

projects have seen the involvement of designers, usually through the out-working of projects managed in a more environmental way than is generally the norm. Pavements, walks and the various civic spaces through which people pass have all provided particular areas of focus for projects.

As a relatively new area, however, there is far less ground to cover than for other areas of public lettering, and like architectural lettering, this aspect of practice is not universal. Some national distinctions are also beginning to emerge, and this may be for practical reasons as much as anything else. In a country such as the Netherlands, a percentage of the budget allocated for new building projects is designated for art projects, and so funding opportunities are greater. But it is also a wider cultural issue. Some of the most significant work we cover is from Barcelona, the city which introduced us to a considera-tion of this whole dimension of lettering practice and a city which clearly has a very healthy tradition of public art patronage. We can learn much from the work of two sculptors in particular, Josep María Subirachs and Joan Brossa. Their pieces exhibit a freedom of form and application quite different from any of the other work we have shown, and yet never become so indulgent that they fail to make positive contributions to the surrounding architecture, townscape and the broader study of lettering itself.

Recording

Lettering has long served as a means of recording for the benefit of a wider audience, and for posterity, the scope of human achievement from the triumphant to the trivial. And while this section cannot hope to be comprehensive in terms of the material it covers, it will attempt to represent something of the diversity of circumstances under which memorial lettering is commissioned and the diversity of practice which can result.

Triumphalism is perhaps best represented by the so-called triumphal arches of the Romans, dedicated to battle victories in the cause of their empire or simple vainglory. Triumphalism is equally the determining factor in record-ing the achievements in the name of later empires, the victory bridge to the Battle of Waterloo in Betwys-y-coed, North Wales being an eccentric but wholeheartedly pleasing such nineteenth-century example.

In the century after that which witnessed the two most devastating wars in living history, the desire to record battle is no less diminished, but the ration-ale is less partial in spirit. Lettering no longer serves to publicly declare a victor, rather it becomes the simple instrument by which the presence (often more accurately the absence) of hundreds of thousands of individuals is recorded.

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In these memorial records of war and atrocity the great power in the simple ex-pression of an individual name is perhaps felt only by those who have lost loved ones, but the power of the expression of names or numbers *en masse* is intense and further testimony to the resonance words can have in our environment.

Gravestones make an interesting subject of study in lettering terms, not least because they represent one aspect of lettering practice which attracts a wider critical audience than simply enthusiasts such as ourselves. People actu-ally visit graveyards to look at the lettering and read the inscriptions for fun. Aside from the soullessly mass-produced stones of today, gravestones are also

179/6
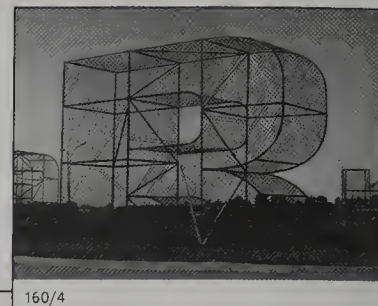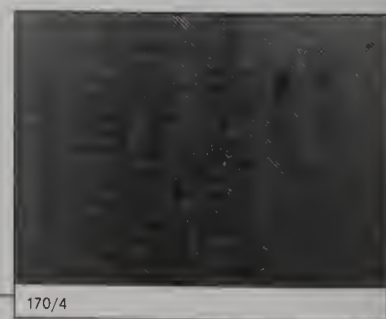
interesting because the letterforms used are among some of the most immedi-ate – many of the much older examples are intuitively cut and have quite a story to tell concerning vernacular practice. Yet, that is a subject for the specialist book. Here, our representation of gravestones is small and is focussed upon more recent and highly individual examples or an unfamiliar choice of material.

And then to the other many lettering incidentals which surround us: the many plaques which record the historical fact or cultural significance of the places and spaces around us; the marks left by builders, architects and crafts-people proud of their work; the detailing added to a downpipe or some other such utilitarian part of a building to record a year; the manufacturer's name on a manhole cover to promote their trade. To this list of incidentals which record can be added those other lettering incidentals which, strictly speaking, fulfil other kinds of functions, but which are so similar in scale it is helpful to con-sider them altogether: the lettering clues which alert us to the presence of, among other things, gas pipes, telephone cables and water hydrants.

These individual elements may seem insignificant on their own, yet while small and typically undramatic in function they are often surprising in terms of how well designed and detailed they are. Collectively, it is the details such as these which determine the visual texture of our public environment and in doing so contribute much to our sense of place.

Possibilities

There is so much that is uninspiring and unsuccessful in lettering terms that it is all to easy too become used to bad practice and simply accept it. In the past there was certainly a greater variety of letterforms and materials used, but rather than wearing 'heritage-tinted' glasses and feeling nostalgic, we should look to them for inspiration and remind ourselves of the multitude of possibilities of both letterform and material. In the recent examples we have found – which do visually enrich our experience of letterforms and the environment – there is still much to catch the eye.

QUEENS - LANE

NICHOL-HILL
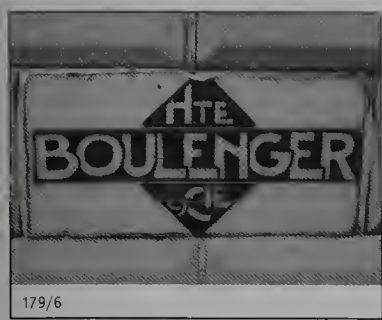
104/3 HORNCASTLE, LINCOLNSHIRE, UK 1992

BANKS ST.

104/4 WILLESDEN GREEN, LONDON NW2, UK 1993

LINACRE ROAD, N.W. 2

104/5 BARNET, LONDON EN4, UK 1992

CAT HILL A 110

104/6 CAMBRIDGE, UK 1995

KING'S PARADE

104 Identifying locations: street names, individuality & standardization

Many of the individuol signs by which we identify our streets ore elements of wider sign systems. Such systems necessarily reflect o non-site-specific opprooch to design; eoch sign is required to function – be visible ond cleor to reod ot o variety of speeds – wherever it is ploced.

While not responding directly to individual sites, however, o locol system moy well be able to toke into account brooder consider- otions of architectural style or widely-used building moteriols resulting in systems visuolly sympo- thetic to their context. As shown, colour con provide o useful tool for distinguishing signs from a bock- ground, with blue being especiolly successful ogoinst brick.

A visuol sympathy between street names ond a locol areo moy also derive from using local monu- focturers whose work is rooted in on apprecio tion of thot locolity. As the exomples show, the visuol resononce of such locolly mode signs is no less diminished for them hoving been industriolly monufoc- tured. The use of costing techniques (104/1, 2 & 4) and vitreous stove enomelling (104/3) certoinly brings with them o degree of robustness which meons thot mony older exomples ore still in use today.

Reflecting the twentieth century's trend towards the centralization and standardization of industrial manufacture generally, some attempts have been made to produce notional (cheap) solutions. At one end of the spectrum are matter-of-fact signs using pre-1964 Department of Transport lettering (104/5) while at the other are letterforms designed by David Kindersley (104/6). Of these last two, 104/5 has a no-frills approach which seems to suit manufacture in pressed-steel, while Kindersley's letters, derived from curved Roman forms, seem far too civilized (not to mention cramped in the space) for that treatment.

In contrast to such lame attempts at uniformity, the gesture of the individual can seem all the more invigorating. One of the grandest of all such gestures is surely John Nash's wonderfully robust statement from his Chester Terrace development of c.1825.

106 **Street names:**
materials & letterforms

Nowhere in Britoin is the visuol sympothy between street nomes ond locol context more cohesively demonstroted thon in the city of Both. A combinotion of the city's scole, o certoin homogeneity in orchitecturol style ond use of build-ing moteriols os it developed in the eighteenth ond nineteenth

centuries hove oll ollowed for o con-sistency of opprooch to this most bosic civic orientotion problem.

The street nomes ore inscribed directly onto the buildings in letter-forms contemporory with the style of orchitecture. The immediocy of this technique offords these signs on orchitecturol sensitivity which

is difficult to ochieve with signs thot ore physicolly ottoched to o build-ing. Even ot the consideroble scole required for eose of reoding, the inscriptionol nomes never seem visuolly invosive.

While consistent in opprooch, their execution is never pedontic. Letterforms do differ. Most typicol

is o squore romon letter identified os 'the English letter' (see poge 100) whose simple proportions compli-ment the stroightforword robustness of the dominont Georgion style (106/1 & 3). In controst, o loter belt of terroced cottoges on the outskirts of town hove been opproprietely identified with nineteenth-century

ST JAMESS-PARADE

TRIM-STREET

S.M.P.S.P.P.P.

BELGRAVE CRESCENT.

MALVERN TERRACE

PORTLAND Square

UNION STREET
MDCCCXX
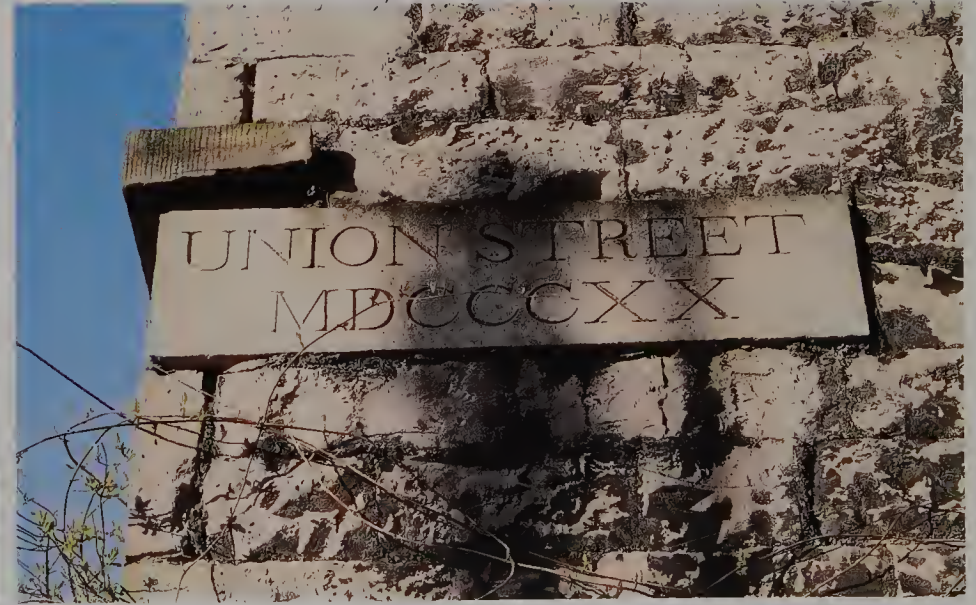
sons serif forms (107/3 & 4). In some instances the differences in letterforms ore due to loter recutting. 106/2, for exomple, is on oltogether horsher form thon the simpler vernoculor letter with longer ond much shorper triongulor serifs. Mony eorly idiosyncrosies of cutting do, though, still remoin os is

illustroted by the deviotion to o sloped form in 107/1 ond the simple lock of surety of 107/2. For from detrocting the eye, however, the difference thot such detoils make to the overoll visuol texture of the city only seems to odd to one's sense of the chorocter of the ploce.

Though most cohesively demon-

stroted in Both, the benefits of this opprooch to street noming hove been copitolized upon by o number of other towns ond cities (107/5 & 6), ond in some coses very for ofield (see overleof).
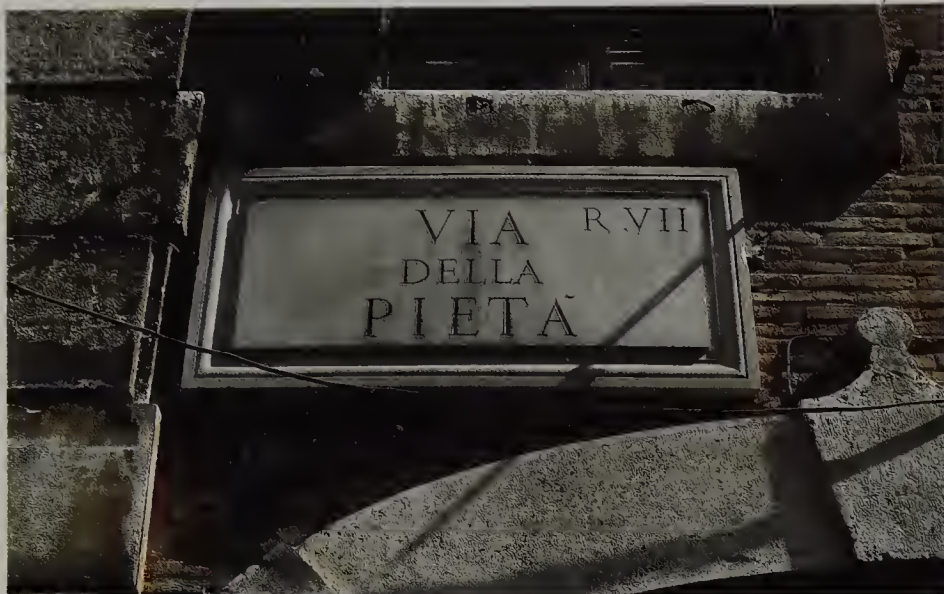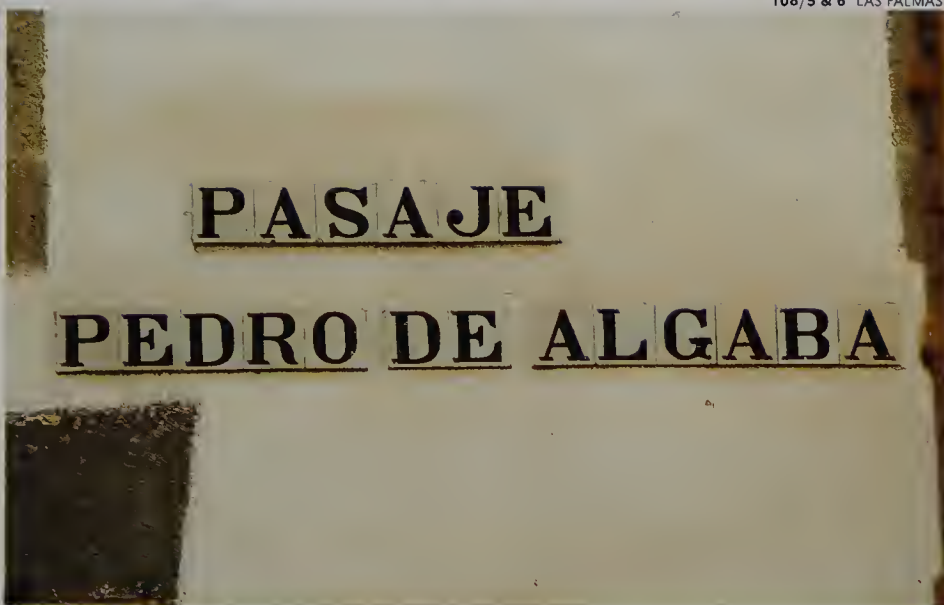
108 Street names: materials & letterforms

The use of particular materials provides cities and even countries much further afield with a certain visual identity and sense of place.

As in Bath, the street names of Rome are inscriptional (108/1 & 2), but are not cut directly into the buildings themselves, rather into marble slabs either set into walls or, less satisfactorily, mounted on posts. The lettering is consistent in its general approach across the city, but the borders are significantly more ornate on signs in more important locations.

Throughout Portugal tiles are commonly used in the manufacture of street names and the examples shown (108/3 & 4) originate from both the north and the south of the country. These typical tiled plaques are visually very much in keeping with the decorative tiled façades which are a common national architectural feature.

An altogether more typical approach to the use of tiles in street naming can be seen in the modular examples shown from Spain. While the flat glazed example (108/5) is representative of a method common in other countries including Britain, the relief-cast example (108/6) is far more unusual.

Elsewhere it is not so much the materials which distinguish

PRINS WILLEM-ALEXANDERHOF

DISTRITO 1º.
BARRIO 5º.
CALLE DE
HERCULES.

RUE
LE REGRATTIER

RUE
SAINT-LOUIS
EN L'ILE

KEPPEL STREET

CASA MVSEº
D
COLON

ESPIRITU
SANTO

a particular approach to street naming, but the actual letterforms themselves. The squarely geometric style of sans serif letterform is certainly the defining feature of the street names in The Hague (109/1), while the ornate stencilled letterforms of 109/2 combine with a distinct shape of plaque to create a visual characteristic particular to Barcelona.

But while a given approach to materials or letterforms may well be relatively coherent across a city or even a country, there are always exceptions. Of the more local and individual examples, those shown here all illustrate the way colour and texture can be utilized to add to a given sign's sense of presence on the street. The results may be sophisticated (109/3 & 4) but even when less surely executed (109/5 & 6) the end product can often demonstrate the charm to be found in simplicity.

Street names: 109
materials & letterforms

RUE
BOUTAREL

10

CALLE
DE
PELOTA

Skólavörðustígun

35

Hafnar Stræti
Reipslagarabraut
Strandgáta

Naustin

HOP
GARDENS WC2

CITY OF WESTMINSTER

WINCHESTER WALK SE1
BANKSIDE

⇌ ⊖ LONDON BRIDGE →

VINOPOLIS ←

110 Street names: physical presence

In the mojority of instonces, systems for street naming simply involve signs which ore applied ta existing buildings or custom-mode posts or structures.

As the signs ore required to be cleorly identifioble in spite of the voriety of bockgrounds upan which they might appear ond the varying degrees of visuol noise which might surround them, physicol presence is on impartant design considerotian.

This sense af presence is often ochieved thraugh the coreful considerotion of the sign in relief ond, in porticulor, the treatment of surfoce. A widely opplicable strotegy, os shown in the examples here, is ta be found in a simple ottention to contouring ond the use of materiols, such os vitreous stove enomelling which cotches the light.

The exomples from Icelond olso serve to show o recent troit of visuol over-articulotion in the kinds af signs used in different parts of the city (110/3 & 4). The lineor blue enomelled signs ore found widely throughout Reykjovik, whereas the red ond supposedly heritoge-friendly signs are found in areos designoted as historicolly sensitive.

Among the best postwor British signs ore those in the City of Westminster (110/5) designed by Chris Tinings ot the DRU circo 1968.

111/1 BIRMINGHAM, UK 1996

111/2 VALENCIA, CALIFORNIA, USA 1992

111/3 PETALING JAYA, MALAYSIA 1998

111/4 VALENCIA, CALIFORNIA, USA 1992

The clear typographic arrangement uses Univers Bold Condensed on enamelled steel with a 25mm return. This gives these signs considerable physical presence. The more recent example from London (110/6) shows a reassuring restraint in promoting a particular area. In addition to its depth, it olsa illustrotes the benefits of o barder in distinguishing sign fram backgraund.

In mony schemes a sense of physical presence is achieved thraugh the use af custam-made posts or structures which can bath impase and allaw far o greater degree af cantrol aver where signs might be positianed ond therefare distinguished.

Primary cansiderotians in the design and manufocture af such pasts and structures include detailing, overall shope and height.

Approoches ta detoiling con range fram the arnomentol and impasing (111/1) ta the straightfarwardly ploin (111/3). Again, as with most signing situotions, it is simplicity which often warks best (111/2 & 4). The past, fastening ond ecanamy of space and layaut af the sign far Chiquello Lone is exemplary in its brutal efficiency.

Street names: 111
physical presence

GREENMARKET SQUARE
GROENTEMARK PLEIN

ASCAL SAN NIOCLÁS
NICHOLAS AVENUE

HING HON ROAD
道漢興

ΟΔΟΣ
ΦΙΛΙΠΠΟΥ
FILIPPOU

53 → 55

شارع أم الشيف
Umm Al Sheif Rd

← القسائم 29- 3 PLOTS

20b Street

Upp Cross St
克罗士街上段

112 **Street names:
bilingual signs**

The main problem of bilingual signs has been mentioned earlier (see pages 34–5 & 89–92) – the need to clearly differentiate between two languages.

As with the directional signs, colour is useful when two languages are written in the same writing systems, as can be seen in the example from Cape Town (112/1) where no attempt at distinguishing between English and Afrikaans has been made.

All the other signs have names written in two different alphabets or writing systems which tend to differentiate themselves more naturally. While the Irish example (112/2) commits basic typographic crimes – word spaces too large (a problem in 112/3 also) and leading too tight – the remainder are much clearer simply because of the difference in script.

Often, as part of same scheme of civic enhancement, or perhaps because administrative boundaries and names have changed, local authorities decide that an indiscriminate replacement or duplication of perfectly serviceable –and often quite beautiful – signs is in order. One has to ask 'Why?'

In the EUR suburb of Rome, cheap steel poles sit alongside carved marble (113/1).

In London's West End, a sign easily readable across the street (see also 109/3 far size) is taken down and replaced by a twee 'heritage' label (113/2) which is only legible at half the distance.

In the City of London, a serviceable old sign is joined by a corporate model of 1988 vintage. The coat of arms on the new sign may be heraldically correct but is quite overbearing and the frame swamps everything, the simple use of the crest on the older sign is far better.

Street names: 113
a dog marking its territory

BOUNDARY
OF
WESTMORLAND
LANCASHIRE

OLD PRESTON
HUTTON PATRICK

24 VICT

Harpenden Rural
Harpenden Urban

RIONE·V
PONTE
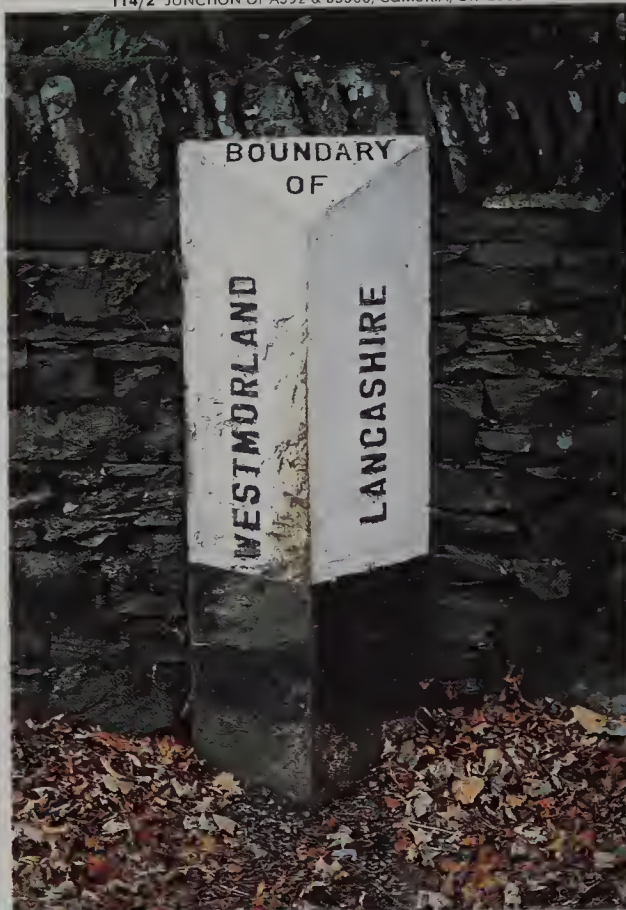
114 Boundary markers

Related to signs for streets and signs for places are boundary markers, which can denote any level of administrative area from parish to country.

Their form varies considerably and shown here are examples from Rome (114/6) which match the city's street names (see page 108),

and from Cumbria (114/2 & 3) which match the milestones to be found there (see page 18).

Like milestones, the size and situation of these boundary markers makes them easy to miss when travelling on roads, also many old markers remain indicating boundaries or places which no longer exist.

114/2 indicates Westmorland, a county which ceased to exist in 1974. 114/1 stands at the original meeting point of Cumberland, Lancashire and Westmorland, while it is now quite firmly in Cumbria.

In addition to directional and other signs, there is also the need to announce towns and villages. Sometimes this announcement sign is paired with a departure sign, as shown here (115/1–4).

Signs erected by the authorities tend towards uniformity, although the 1931/44 British versions were more helpful than most in their inclusion of distances to the two next destinations along a particular road (115/5). Note also in this example, reflectors in the letters which have since been painted out.

In addition to official signs there is considerable tolerance of local initiatives. 115/6 shows a variant of a 1951 Festival of Britain sign and shows how a simple change of shape can give a more welcoming aspect to the sign, while its situation and upkeep are an indication of civic pride.

Names for towns and villages: the official and the home-made 115

30

NORTHAW

Please drive carefully

1 2 1

NORTHAW

BABINGLEY

HARPENDEN

WEST NEWTON

E R

PARAT USE TFIDELIS

TERRINGTON St CLEMENT
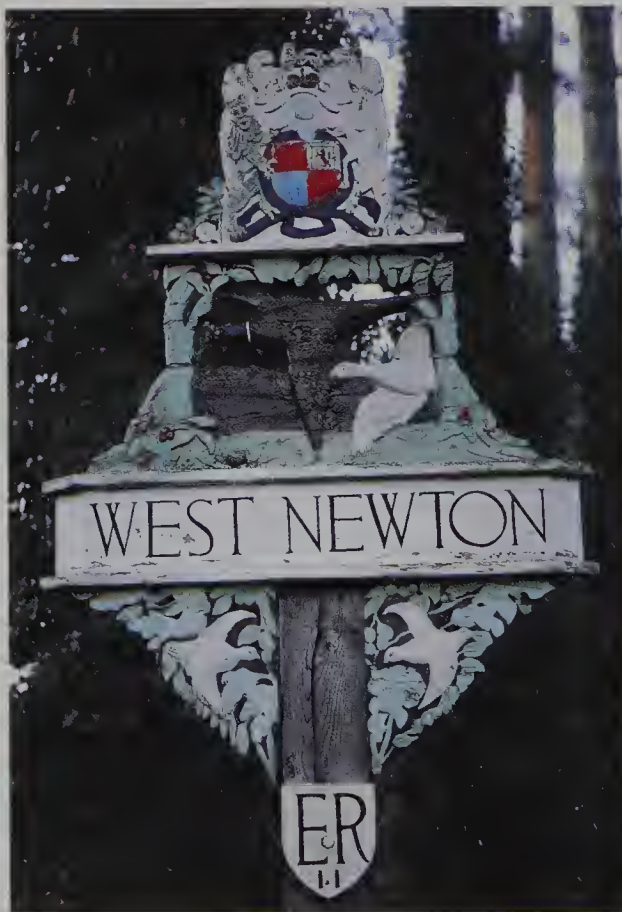
116 **Names for towns and villages: the official and the home-made**

Many local signs are not strictly functional in that they are often sited near the centre of a village rather than at its approach, but they have different goals. The official sign is about legislation, the local sign is about life, history and pride. The pair of signs from Northaw serves to illustrate the difference. By combining a speed restriction with the name, the official version suggests that the village is little more than a hindrance to traffic, its lower message is a sad indictment of driver standards and attitudes. The local sign says 'we live here' and 'we made this' which are far worthier sentiments.

Such home-made signs occur widely, but despite increasing car usage they are seen by less people because roads tend to bypass village and town centres. Most of these signs are made from carved and painted wood or wrought iron. They celebrate local history, forgotten heraldry and local scenes.

The King's Lynn sign (117/2 & 3) is the only surviving one of three different 'home-made' signs on the various approaches to the town. It depicts St Margaret on one side, and on the other side the architect and 1683 mayor of the town, Henry Bell, shown standing in front of the Custom House. It was designed and

WIGGENHALL ST GERMANS

KING'S LYNN

KING'S LYNN

HOLBEACH

SUTTON BRIDGE

LA TRINITÉ sur MER
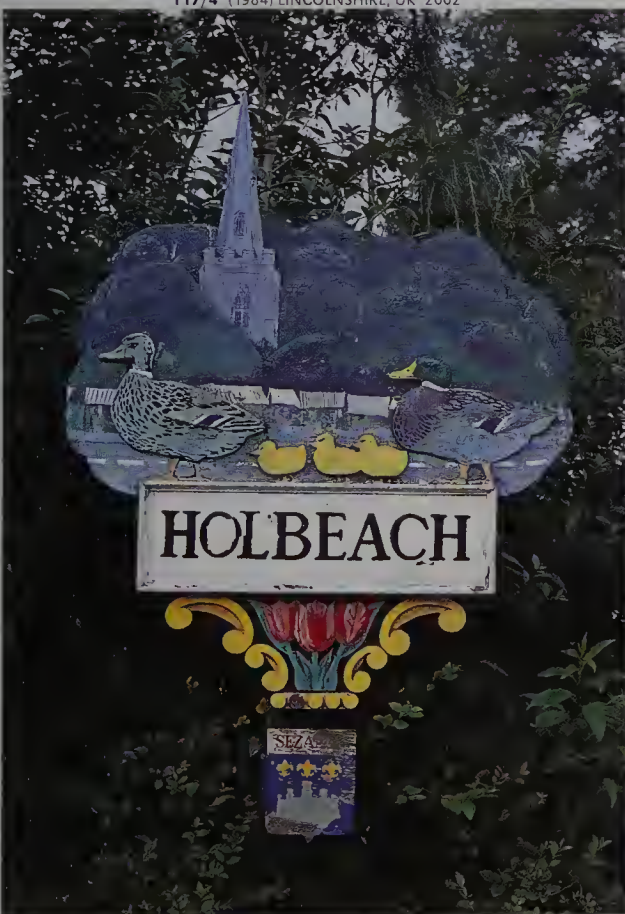
carved by Harry Carter in 1959 who was also responsible for the signs at Bobingley, West Newton, and Wiggenholl St Germons.

A coreful inspection of other signs sometimes reveals who made them, and when. For example, Sutton Bridge, 'Plinth designed and erected by Victor Day & Louis Whitcombe. Sign designed & made by John Borker & Eric Talliday, re-sited 1992'; Halbeoch, 'Built and painted by Crispin Tylor from John Wolfenden's prize winning design 1984. Re-painted 1993 and 1998'.

The finol example of o town nome is from France and shows how it is possible far locol author-ities to produce signs which can both laak official ond alsa respond to locol situations. It soys welcome, not the opposite.

**Names for towns and 117
villages: the official and
the home-made**
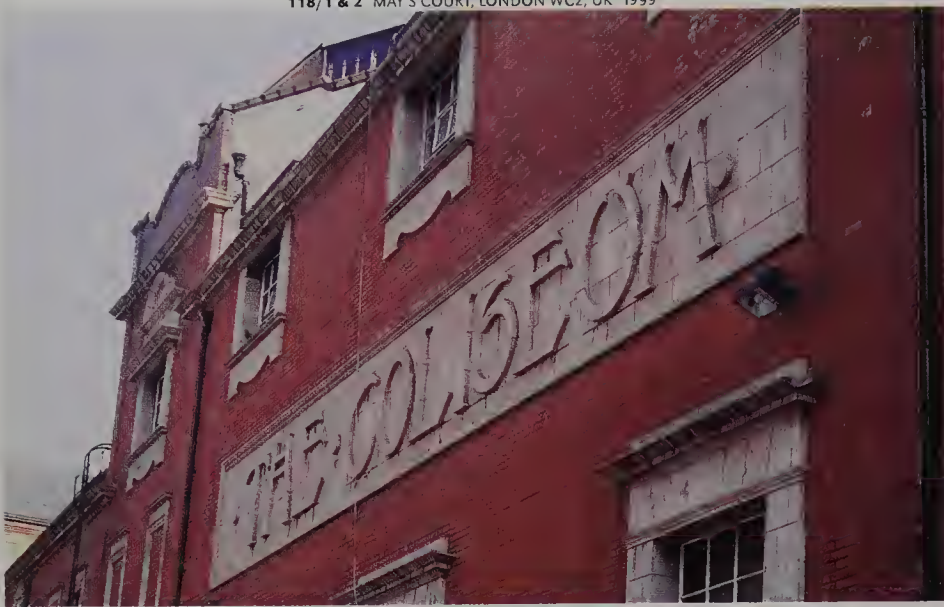
118 **Identifying and enlivening buildings: architectural (permanent) and fascia (temporary) lettering**

There ore fundamentol differences of purpose and opprooch between orchitectural ond foscio lettering.

As o generol rule, architecturol lettering is conceived with, ond is designed to last os long os the building. Neither the building nor the lettering should look quite right without the other.

The lettering on the Coliseum, home to the English Notionol Opero compony is o good exomple. Like oll of the window surrounds ond cornice work, it is formed from pale terracotto blocks which con-trost well with the red brickwork. Those forming the letters ore eoch about 52cm (19 in) high. Despite

the foct thot the circulor chorocters ore only os high as the flot-topped ones ond therefore oppeor smoller, this example is successful becouse of its sheer scale, the design of the letterforms – very typicol of 1904 when the theotre wos built – ond their relationship to the orchitec-ture. Another factor in their success

is the unexpectedness of their pos-ition: one would expect effort ond expense to be lovished on the front of the theotre, but this is the side woll focing o norrow olleywoy.

Foscio lettering is applied to o building ofter construction and hos o life independent of the building: shopfronts are perhops the most

119/1 LONDON NW10, UK 1999 † (REMOVED FOLLOWING OWNER'S RETIREMENT IN 2002)

119/2 BARCELONA, SPAIN 1999

119/3 NEAR NYTORV, COPENHAGEN, DENMARK 1998

119/4 (CIRCA 1857) 53 NEW OXFORD STREET, LONDON WC1, UK 2001

119/5 & 6 SYNTAGMA SQUARE, ATHENS, GREECE 2000 & 2002

typical examples of this. When buildings are planned as shops, a defined place is usually assigned for the purpose (119/1 & 2) and this helps to lend a street or group of shops some unity.

Sometimes fascia displays spill over onto other parts of the building, ignoring the architecture. There are different degrees to which this happens, from the subtle (119/3) to the overbearing (119/5).

There are many different views about what is acceptable, and in which particular areas. In Athens in the run-up to the 2004 Olympic Games, large areas of the city have been cleansed of their fascia signing and advertising (119/6). Whatever the horrors of the old signs, such a radical removal has left a soulless streetscape.

Identifying and enlivening buildings: architectural (permanent) and fascia (temporary) lettering 119

120 Architectural lettering: considerations of letterform, position, scale and material

The criteria for ossessing orchitectural lettering cannot be limited to o consideration of the letterforms olone, as 120/1 & 2 show. Here fine letters following the Trajan Romon model ore incised and pointed in Portlond stone, but they connot compete with the monumentol blandness of the wall.

Success depends on the relotionship of four moin foctors – letterform, position, scole ond moteriol – with the dominont influence vorying from one exomple to the next. In oll the other examples on this spreod the letterforms ond orchitecture motch each other perfectly in spirit ond in execution.

At the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (120/3 & 4), the letters shore a directness with the orchitecture, but their execution – in relief within o relief border – ollows them to catch the light ond, with the laurel wreaths, they form the most decorotive element on the whole façade.

Both the Bonk of Finsbury (120/5 & 6) ond Soint Mortin's Schools (121/1 & 2) hove lettering which Bortrom colls the 'English letter': robust, with even proportions for oll the letters (unlike the Romon model), ond o strong controst between thick ond thin strokes. At the bank the lettering runs in two

TINS NATIONA

D THE GIFT

MDCCCXXX.
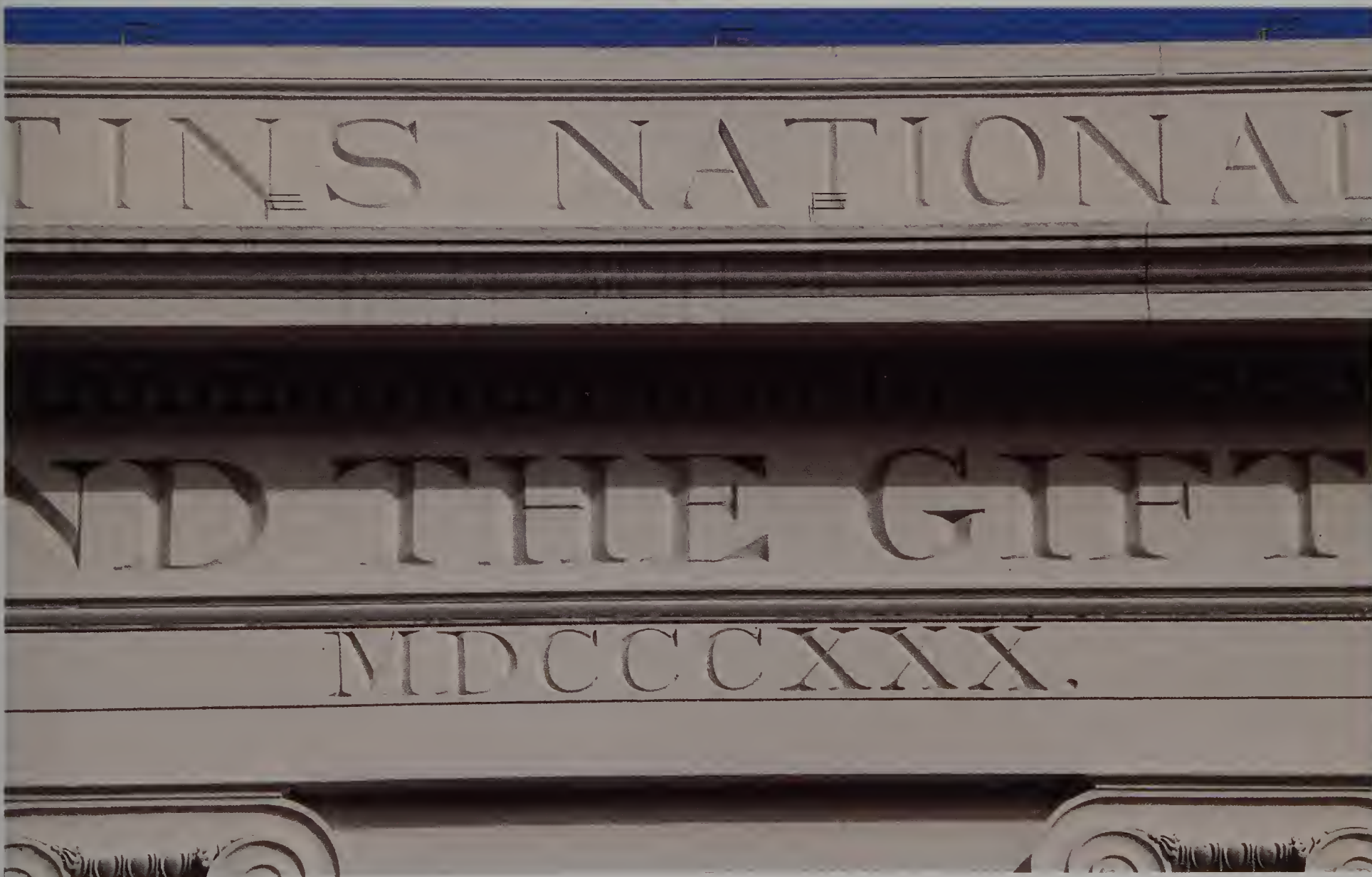
friezes created for that purpose. They are cast in stucco and were originally presumably painted or gilded for better effect.

The letters an Saint Martin's Schools are incised. The three lines make a good teaching aid, explaining precisely what good and bad architectural lettering is. The top line is well positioned but has weak letterfarms, the date has good letters but is incredibly cramped. The middle line is near perfect: rich letterforms, well-spaced, and elegantly arranged in their setting.
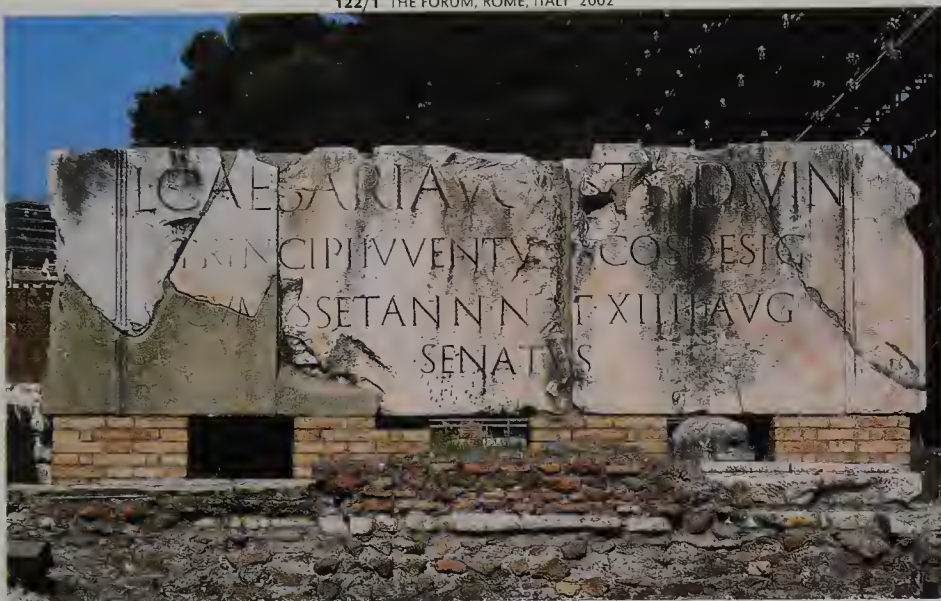
122 Architectural lettering: Italy, from the Republic to the Renaissance

Widely recognized for their extensive and early contribution to the field of architectural lettering, the ancient Romans certainly established a precedent for a tradition of monumental inscription which continues today.

Letterforms were incorporated into a vast range of structures across Rome (and later the empire) from bridges to triumphal arches (see page 162), tombs and places of worship. In part this can be seen as a simple celebration of what was then still a new alphabet. Yet what is also clearly evident, even in the ruined structures remaining, is the remarkable potential of the medium of lettering as a tool for promoting civic identity.

The basic letterform employed can be broadly identified as a square Roman capital letter. That is to say, the widest letters are based on square proportions with the proportions of the others observing a loose set of geometrical derivations.

However, changing materials and sensibilities were to result in a huge degree of variation upon this basic formal theme which only becomes more evident as history progresses.

The inscription on the Ponte Fabricio (122/3), which announces the date of its construction, mostly illustrates a simple form of letter,
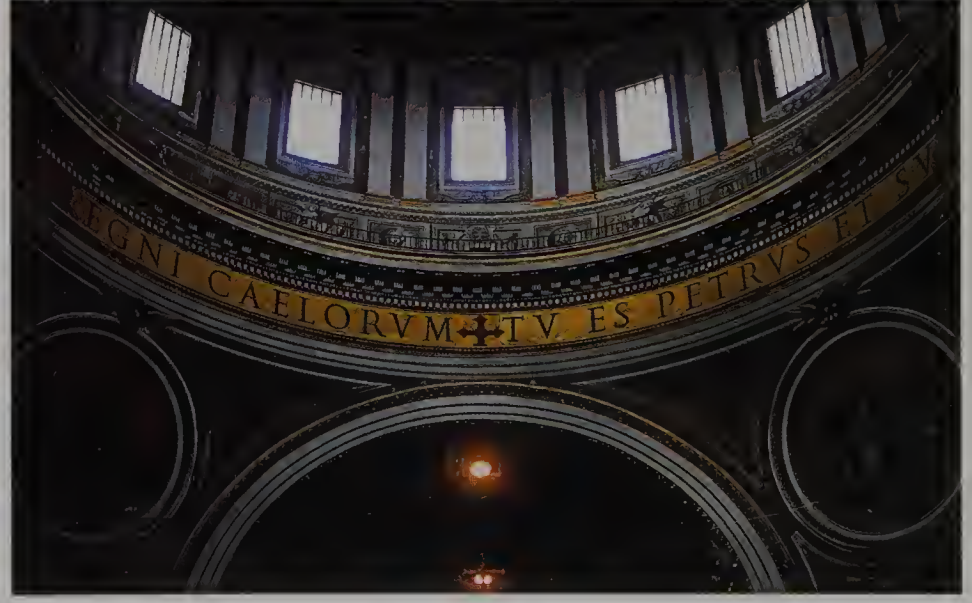
in contrast to the more detoiled forms – greotly helped by the loter use of morble – on the inscription to Augustus' nephew, Lucius (122/1).

The lettering on the Pontheon (122/2) illustrotes onother common proctice, thot of infilling squore-cut letters with bronze. The inscription dotes from AD 120–5 but the letters shown result from restorotion work in the lote nineteenth century.

This strong use of lettering ocross the frieze of o temple wos loter echoed ond become the norm for lettering on the foçodes of poloces and churches from the Renoissonce onwords. Still further reconsiderotions of the bosic Romon letter followed with the sensitivity of Renoissonce forms (123/1–3) ond with the more ston-dordized ideos of the Boroque (123 /4–6). Seen *in situ*, this letterform rorely foils to impress, even when, os in 123/4, it is (in terms of sense) opplied olmost in spite of the build-ing itself.

Architectural lettering: 123
Italy, from the Republic
to the Renaissance

124/1 OPORTO, PORTUGAL 2001

124/2 STROUD, GLOUCESTERSHIRE, UK 2001

124/3 KING'S LYNN, NORFOLK, UK 2001

124/4 BRISTOL, UK 2002

124/5 CORN STREET, BRISTOL, UK 2002

124/6 KING'S LYNN, NORFOLK, UK 2001

124 Architectural lettering: civic and industrial uses

In the increasingly urbanized society of post-industrial England, a new wave of building introduced new interpretations of the Roman precedent for using lettering as a vehicle for reinforcing civic identity.

What is remarkable about this particular 'English tradition' is its sheer formal inventiveness. The basic English roman letter (see also page 121) is exemplified in the robust square regularity and generous curves of the inscriptional letterforms of 124/4. Other key vernacular letterforms followed, with the Egyptian slab-serif (124/2) and the grotesque, a nineteenth-century idea of a sans serif (124/3 & 5) being especially successful architectural forms. These letters could be incised in traditional fashion, and could even be gilded should the purpose demand (124 /5). This example alone is testimony to the superior visual resonance of an architectural letter solidly executed in sympathetic materials over a plastic corporate identity superficially applied. Yet, the simple strength of line of both Egyptians and grotesques was also well-suited to the newer but effective practice of using forms in relief (124/2 & 3).

Vernacular lettering traditions are not, however, exclusive to England. The process of industrialization

125/3 KING'S LYNN, NORFOLK, UK 2002

broadened the need to announce public buildings. 124/1, for example, shows a continental version of a vernacular sans serif on a public transport depot.

As architectural tastes in civic building changed, so these simpler vernacular forms were often forsaken for newer fashions (124/6).

This reminds us that, as with other examples of lettering which identify, naming buildings is about promotion just as much as pragmatism.

Being seen to be 'in vogue' certainly seems to characterize 125/2. Of the range of styles and materials illustrated, the sheer commitment and exuberance of its faience work

make it one of the most enjoyable examples in the book.

The letters on the Oxo tower (125 /1) are similarly immodest. Here the *raison d'être* was to bypass a law preventing advertising on the riverfront. Recently refurbished, they are now illuminated at night.

**Architectural lettering: 125
civic and industrial uses**

126 Architectural lettering: the grand gesture and humble details

The grand gesture in architectural lettering terms is not restricted to civic and commercial buildings but has also been extended to domestic properties.

Of these, one of the grandest is Castle Ashby where a rare use of balustrade lettering – an extract from Psalm 127 – can be found surrounding the house (126/1 & 3). By virtue of the extent of this scheme and the solid simple form used – strong in line and minimal of serif – the different architectural styles of the building are seemingly bridged with ease.

The eccentricity of the original scheme was then exaggerated still further when, during the nineteenth century, a series of terraces was added to the house (126/2). The balustrade lettering was continued – though in a slightly more con-densed form than on the house – with regimented walls of text which articulate the grounds and vistas with a series of pronouncements concerning the nature of life itself, and conclude with a dedication to the dead wife of the patron.

This is not to say, however, that architectural lettering has to be undertaken at a grand scale to be successful. Great visual satisfaction is to be found in the humbler use of letters as an aspect of detailing.

The following examples illustrate the way that careful consideration of scale, position, materials and letterforms can combine to create unique visual experiences within increasingly bland cityscapes.

Despite being 60cm (2 ft) high, the lettering (almost Gill Sans) which identifies Parson's Library

(127/1 & 2) is the most reticent. Relief-carved and projecting about 2·5cm (1 in) from the wall itself, it forms an easily missed frieze just below parapet level.

As an example of thoroughness the Dairy Supply Company premises (127/3 & 4) are hard to beat. There are seven places on the two

façades where the company name or initials appear. The lettering which is such an integral part of the original building has happily survived changes in ownership and has recently been refurbished.

The carved and raised name on Faraday House (127/5 & 6) shows one of the more playful approaches

to our subject, some letters being reduced to abstraction making them legible as letters only when seen in the context of the rest. The letters are carved from the blocks making up the wall and, until 1995, were self-coloured. Unpainted, they were emphatically part of the wall, a fact since disguised by colour.

Architectural lettering: 127
the grand gesture and
humble details

128 Architectural lettering: success & failure

One of the mistokes mode in architectural lettering today is the simple enlargement of typeforms in the folse hope that scole olone con creote the required impression.

Sir Normon Foster's transform-ation of the areo encircling the former Reoding Room at the British Museum exemplifies this. With its

flot, slightly blue light ond swim-ming pool acoustics, it feels as though you're wolking through a computer-generoted imoge. The drum of the Reoding Room is sur-mounted by on inscription soying: THIS GREAT COURT CELEBRATING THE NEW MILLENNIUM IS DEDICATED TO HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II AD 2000.

Square-cut by mochine in Rotis (to the architect's instructions) it fails at severol levels. The letterforms were never designed for use at this size and, without modificotion, look weok; the shallow cut is insufficient to ottract doylight; ond they are set too close to the lights to be visible when they ore on.

Lower down on the 'drum' the sponsors' nomes were cut by Mortin Cook, who wos able to persuode the orchitect that o V-cut would ottract the light more, ond thot modified letterforms would look far better than Rotis, while still matching the moin inscription which hod olreody been storted.
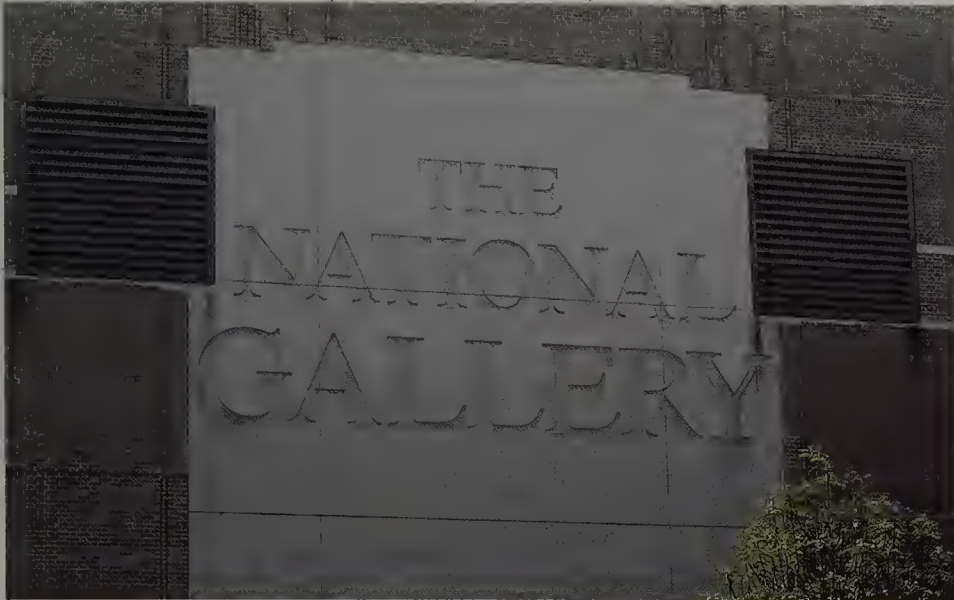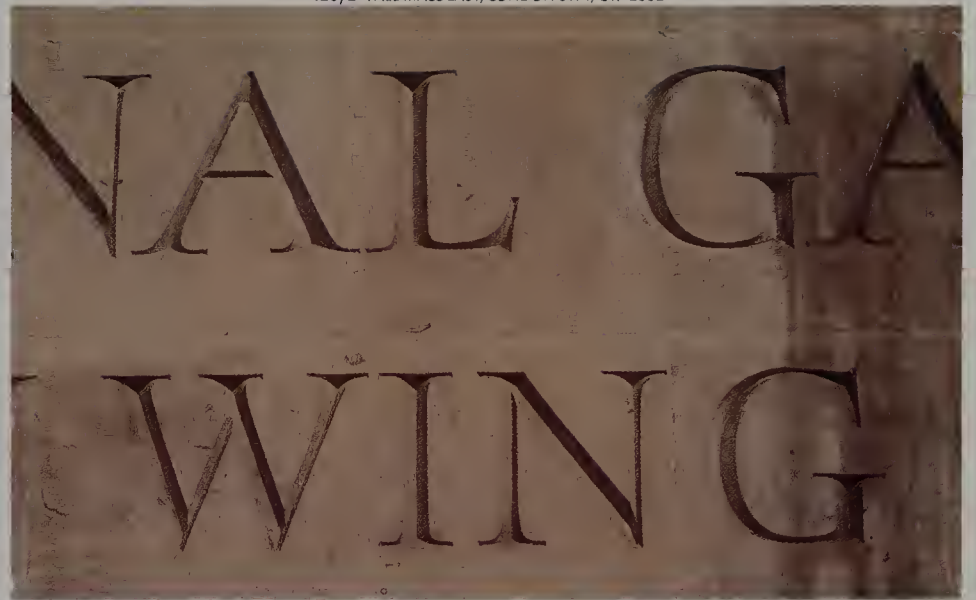
The back of the Sainsbury Wing extension to the National Gallery (129/1) shows another example of an architect not fully understanding the difference between lettering and type. The font Times New Roman was square-cut in sizes which bear no relationship to the sense of the words themselves.

Happily, the external lettering at the front of the building (129/2) was more sensitively managed. The stone-cutter Michael Harvey used a deep V-cut in his own interpretation of an English roman letterform. Harvey also carved the magnificent frieze of artists' names alongside the staircase inside the gallery.

At Olympia (129/3) muscular letters reflect the masculinity of the architecture. As with Faraday House (see page 127) this has suffered by being painted (black, in 1975) but has since been restored to something like its original condition and has regained much of its glorious sculptural effect.

Architectural lettering: 129
success & failure
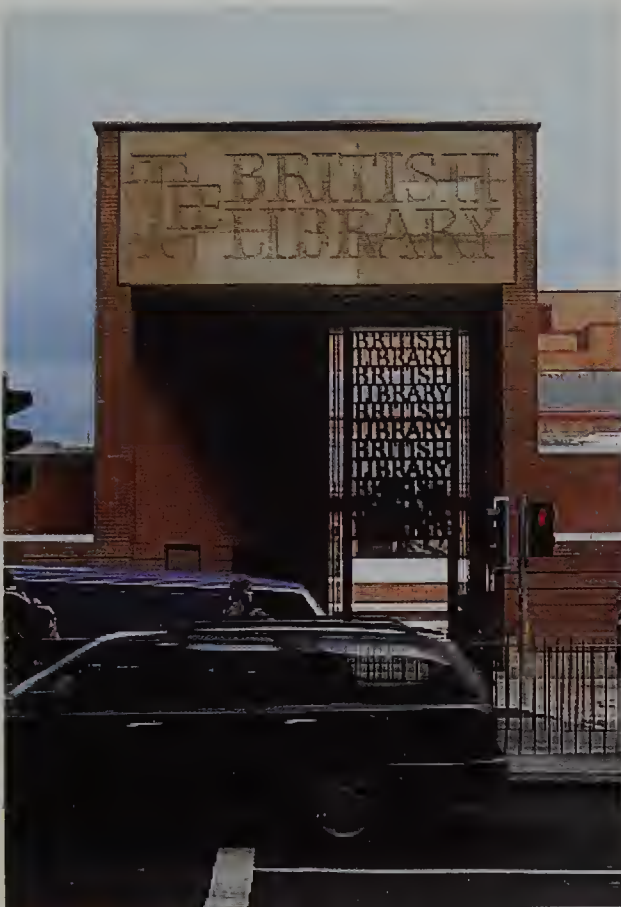
130 **Architectural lettering:
success & failure,
the British Library**

The British Library, designed by
Colin St John Wilson, sits back
from the road and is approached
through the dramatic gates and
across an enclosed garden.

The large lintel of the gatehouse
features carved, raised letters on
red sandstone. The work of David
Kindersley's workshop, its individual

letters and words are well formed,
but the composition as a whole is
fatally flawed because the aver-
large definite article dominates
quite unnecessarily.

However, below, the gates them-
selves – cut out of heavy sheet steel
– are much more successful: they
do not contain lettering, they are

lettering. BRITISH LIBRARY is repeated
eight times and progresses in
weight from 'light' to 'ultra black'.

131/3 MON. TO F. MACIÀ (1991, DETAIL), PL. DE CATALUNYA, BARCELONA, SPAIN 2002

Josep María Subirachs, born in Barcelona in 1927, was apprenticed as a sculptor in the studio of Enrico Casanovas, and sculpture has thus remained central to his working life. Through the 1960s and 1970s he became the city's best known, and most commissioned, sculptor working in a variety of ways – relief and three dimensional carving, concrete and bronze casting – and for both civic and business clients.

Letterforms have appeared in many of his works, the earliest example being the mural for the Faculty of Law (131/1: a collaboration with Antonio Cumella) where Roman numerals simply suggest the ten commandments: three for God and seven for man.

A much later sculpture, the Manument to Francesc Macià (131/3), shows another approach with lettering used in the manner of a caption both on the side of the bronze as well as on the back of the huge stone abstraction behind.

The Argos Publishers' building (131/3) shows Subirachs' interest in casting and the use of positive and negative forms. Unfortunately, a change in the building's ownership has led to the panels at the lower levels being destroyed at what must have been considerable expense.

**Architectural lettering: 131
Josep María Subirachs
in Barcelona**
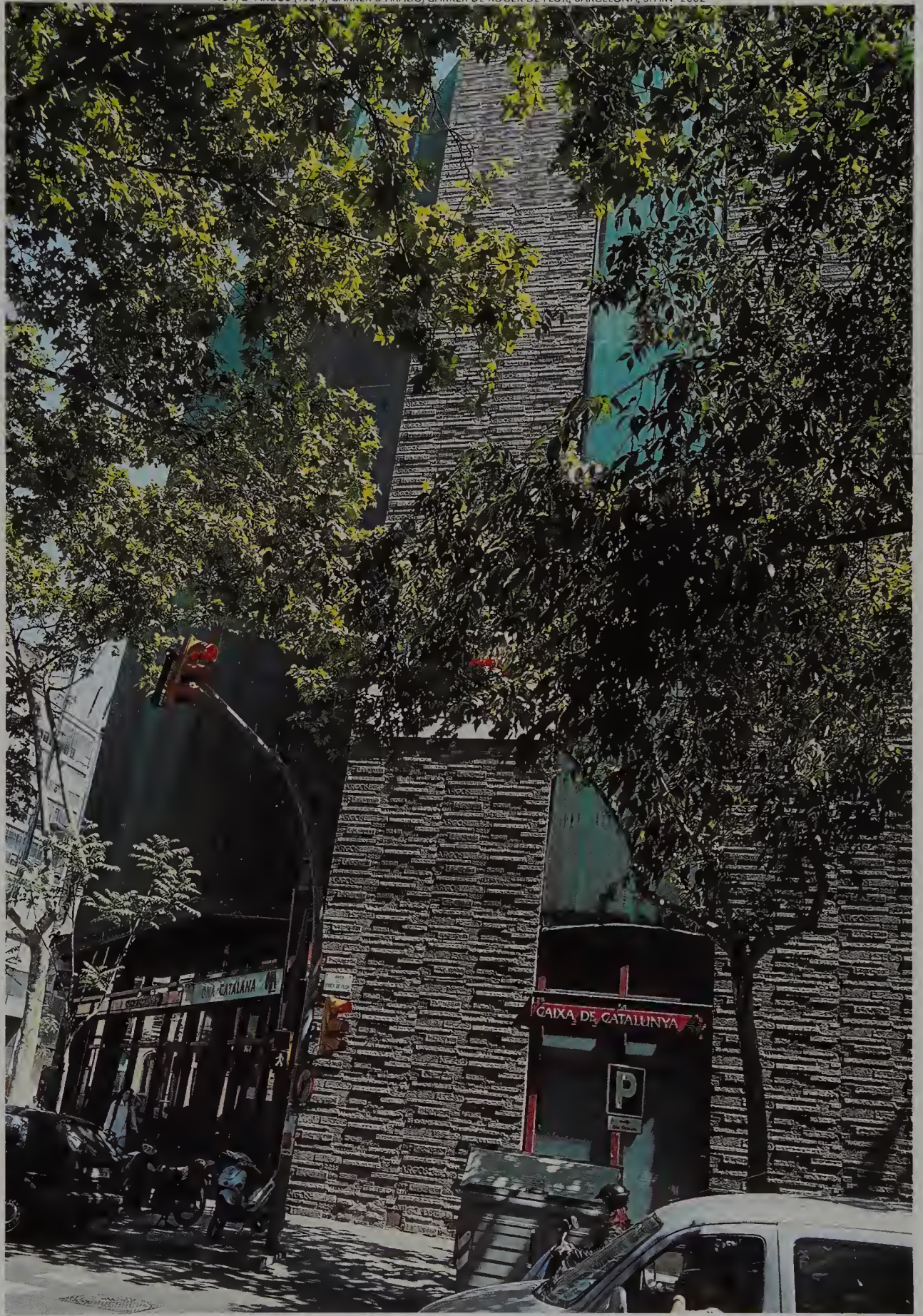
132 **Architectural lettering:**
Josep María Subirachs,
Barcelona New Town Hall
and related work

The New Town Hall is Subirochs' lorgest cost concrete work ond with o number of other sculptures it represents o subtle, intelligent (ond non-commissioned) civic bronding.

In the design, Subirochs brings together elements ond themes from severol of his eorlier works, and loter goes on to 'quote' this work.

The complete mural is 2·5 x 45m (8ft 4in x 148ft) with the moin design comprising the word 'Barcelono' ond o mop of the city. For the lettering, Subirochs experimented more with the forms themselves, obstrocting them to lines ond circulor shopes and forcing the viewer to discover them so thot ot

first glonce you miss the word 'Borcelono'. At the town holl the circles are filled with motifs relating to ospects of the city's history or to the construction of the building itself.

Like the lettering, the map (133 2) is not immedately obvous. The city is turned 45° anticlockwise allowing the gridded street pattern

of the l'Eixomple district to oppeor 'squore' and the Barri Gotic district is simplified to a hexogon.

These two elements were reworked for two loter commissions. At Sants railway station, the letterforms reappear with the background being mode of costs of railway carriage wheels with

related items worked into them.
The 'mop' is reused os a mural in
one of the subwoy entronces to
Diagonal Metro station (133/1).

Architectural lettering: 133
Josep María Subirachs,
Barcelona New Town Hall
and related work
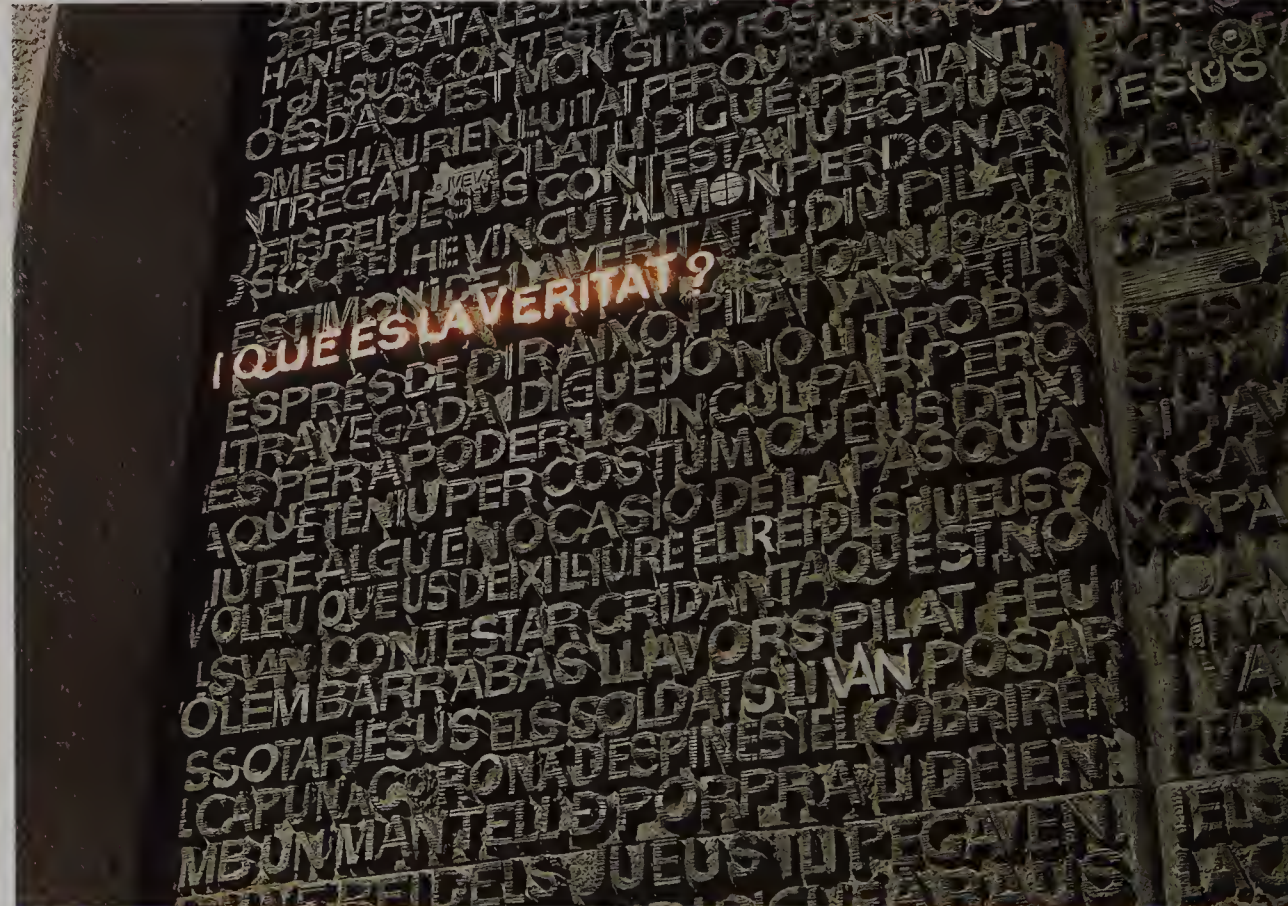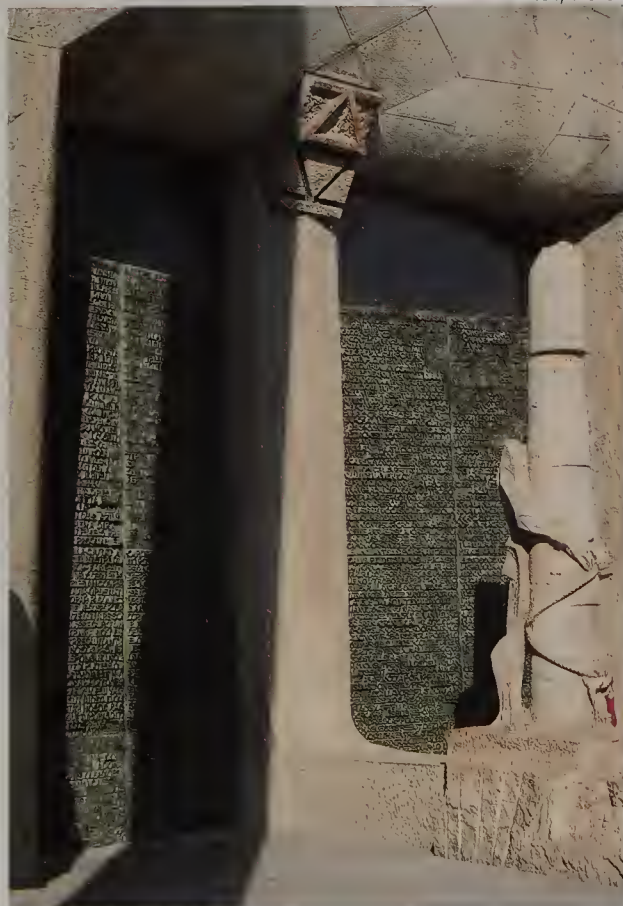
134 Architectural lettering: Josep María Subirachs at Gaudí's Sagrada Familia

The cantinuance af building works at the church af Sagrada Familia after Antania Gaudí's death in 1926 has been a source of much heated debate in architectural circles, not least because Gaudí left na detailed drawings. Since the 1950s, the pace af work has increased and by the 1980s four

new spires at the Passian end af the church were well an the way ta campletian.

Subirachs was commissianed to pravide sculptures acrass the façade to illustrate the Passian narrative; to carve the four disciples on the towers named after them; and ta design faur pairs af branze

daars. For the duratian of the cammission (1987-2001), he lived and worked an the site.

While the outer pair of doors are mainly pictarial with shart quotes fram the Gaspels, it is the twa inner pairs which provide the main interest. fram a lettering paint af view. Each of the inner pairs cantains an

entire Passian narrative in Catalan (same 8,500 characters). The Saint Matthew daor was installed in 1999, fallawed twa years later by the Saint Jahn daar.

Each daar began life as plaster casts of individual letters (135/1) which were then assembled inta words an a grid, raised ar set back
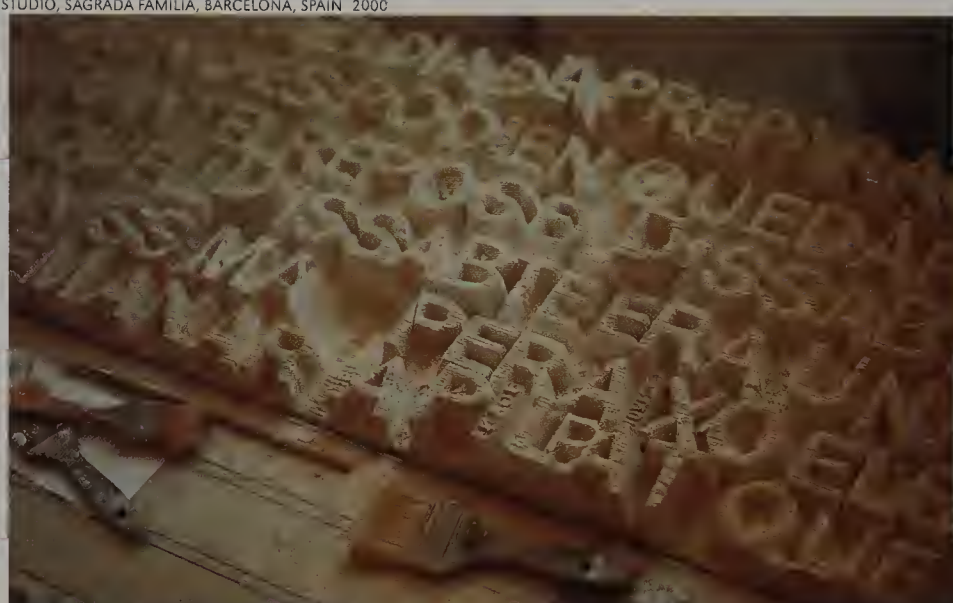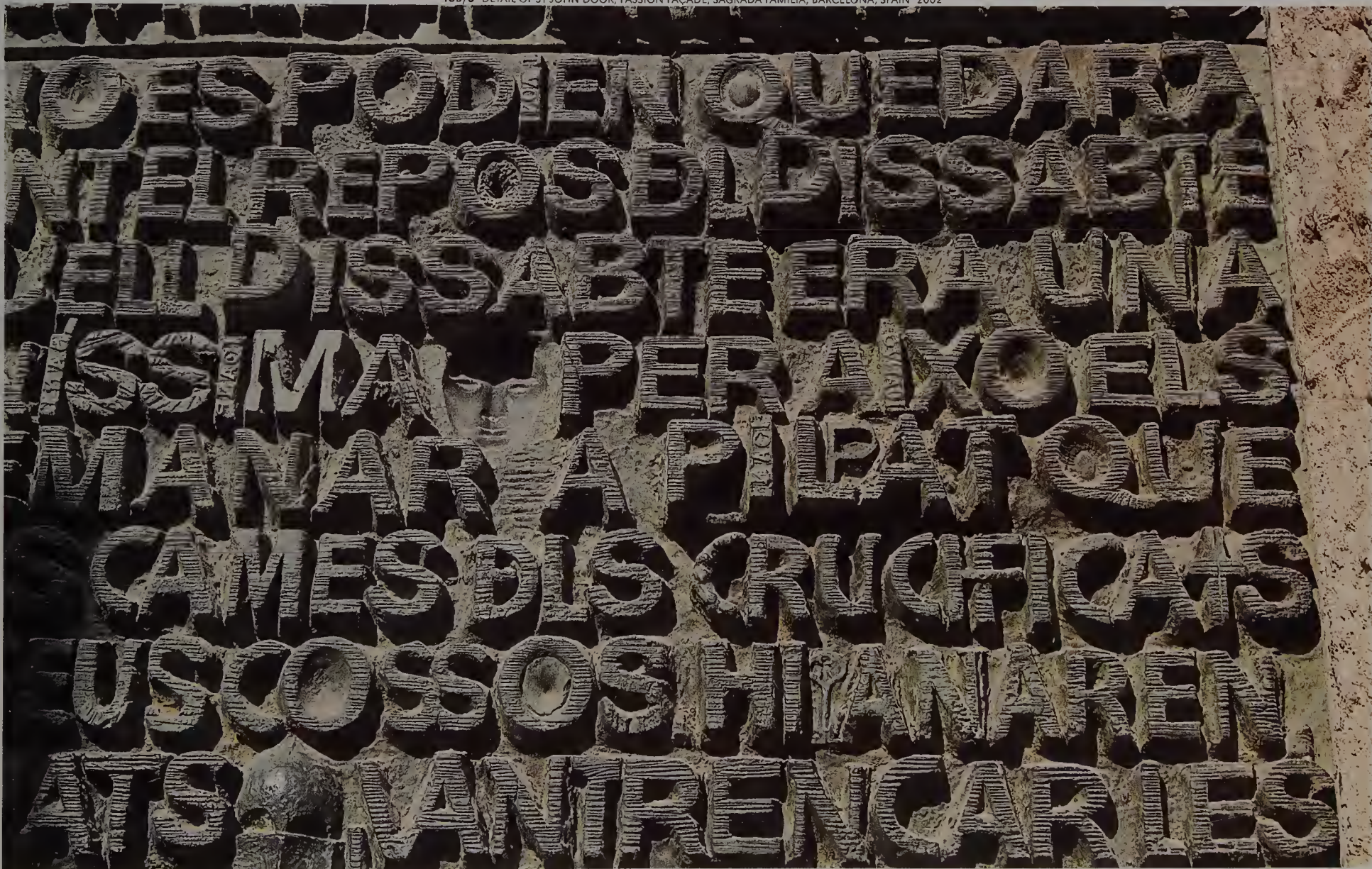
far emphasis ar otherwise, ond then worked an with variaus gravers (135/2). When a section 60 cm (2 ft) deep was campleted it wos assembled with ather sectians until the design wos complete. From the casts o wax mauld was made, and from this, the bronze doars were cast. 135/3 shaws the completed sectian shawn in 135/2. Subirachs checked each stoge and made adjustments os necessary. After the doars were installed, certoin words ond phrases were selected for polishing (134/5).

Architectural lettering: 135
Josep María Subirachs
at Gaudí's Sagrada Familia

MARIA ESCLASANS

MUEBLES

FARMACIA

DE LA ESTRELLA
C. MALLOL · BALMAÑA

SALON DE THE

VIDAL

CONFEITARIA BAPTISTA 285
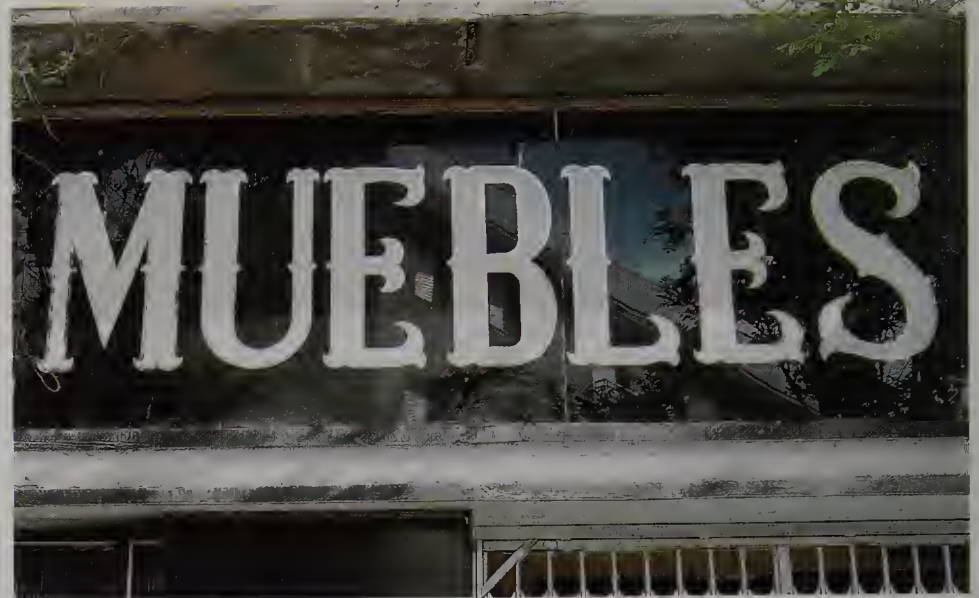
136 Fascia lettering

Because of the restrictions of their setting, fascia displays have to work hard to be noticed and at their best they show considerable verve in their combination of letterform and material, as can be seen both here and on the following pages.

Only one of the twelve examples on this spread is from Britain (137

/1), a country whose high streets have been blighted by chain stores with their corporate, one-size-fits-all approach to shopfront design. The remainder are from France, Portugal and Spain, countries where small businesses seem to thrive and sign-makers really know about letters, rather than simply knowing

how to connect a computer to a vinyl-cutting device.

Everything here has been drawn to suit the shape and size of the fascia, the material used, and many reflect the period of their creation.

The first six examples from Barcelona and Oporto (136/1–6) all make great use of mirrored and

reverse-gilded and printed glass. Both the thickness of the glass itself and the reflections achieved give the illusion of an even greater depth. In 136/4 this illusion is heightened by the trompe-l'oeil three-dimensional letterforms.

Despite the restrictions of a fascia, it is still possible to use real

Fascia lettering 137

three-dimensional letters as 137 /1–6 show. These are even more visually satisfying because of the play of light and shade which varies according to the time of day. Even plastic letters, if their forms and spacing are treated carefully, can look good, as 137/5 & 6 prove. Like 137/2 & 3, their forms exhibit a southern European approach to geometric sans serifs which can be seen also on pages 164–7. Among the typical features of this approach are exaggerated bowls to the letters B, P and R, and a low crossbar to A. On some Spanish examples – and 137/3 is the best we've seen – there is the distinctive 'siesta S'.

138/3 RAMBLA SANT JOSEP 83, BARCELONA, SPAIN 2002

138/4 ST JEAN DE MONTS, VENDÉE, FRANCE 2001

138/5 BOULANGERIE, LE MARAIS, PARIS 2002

138/6 LE MARAIS, PARIS, FRANCE 2001

138 Materials & techniques: tiles, faience, mosaic and modular units

Ceramic mosaics have been a popular material for decorative purposes since Roman times. Their use is related to, and sometimes combined with, glazed tile work or moulded glazed terracotta blocks, known as faience (138/1–2).

There are two basic approaches to mosaic work proper, and both are shown on these pages. The first is to use broken or specially cut pieces in order to create any desired pattern, and thus preserve the integrity of the letterform (138/1–6 and 139/3 & 5).

The second is perhaps more interesting and involves using the material 'as bought', accepting its regularity and contorting the letter-form to that 'grid' This approach is similar to the overall effect which can be achieved using the units of regular building materials such as cobbles or bricks. 139/1, 2, 4 & 6 are all examples of this approach.
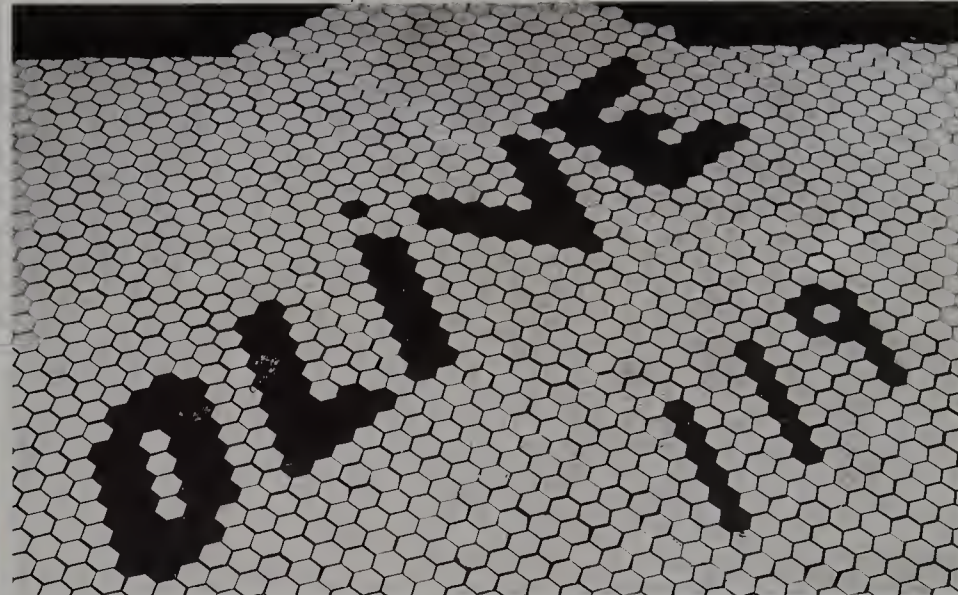
139/3 WALL OF HOTEL ABC, EGNATIA, THESSALONIKI, GREECE 2002

139/4 CERRADOS PIOS, CARVOEIRO, ALGARVE, PORTUGAL 1997

139/5 PARC GÜELL, BARCELONA, SPAIN 2002

139/6 UNDERFOOT AT ENTRANCE TO VALENCIA TOWN CENTRE, VALENCIA, CALIFORNIA, USA 1992
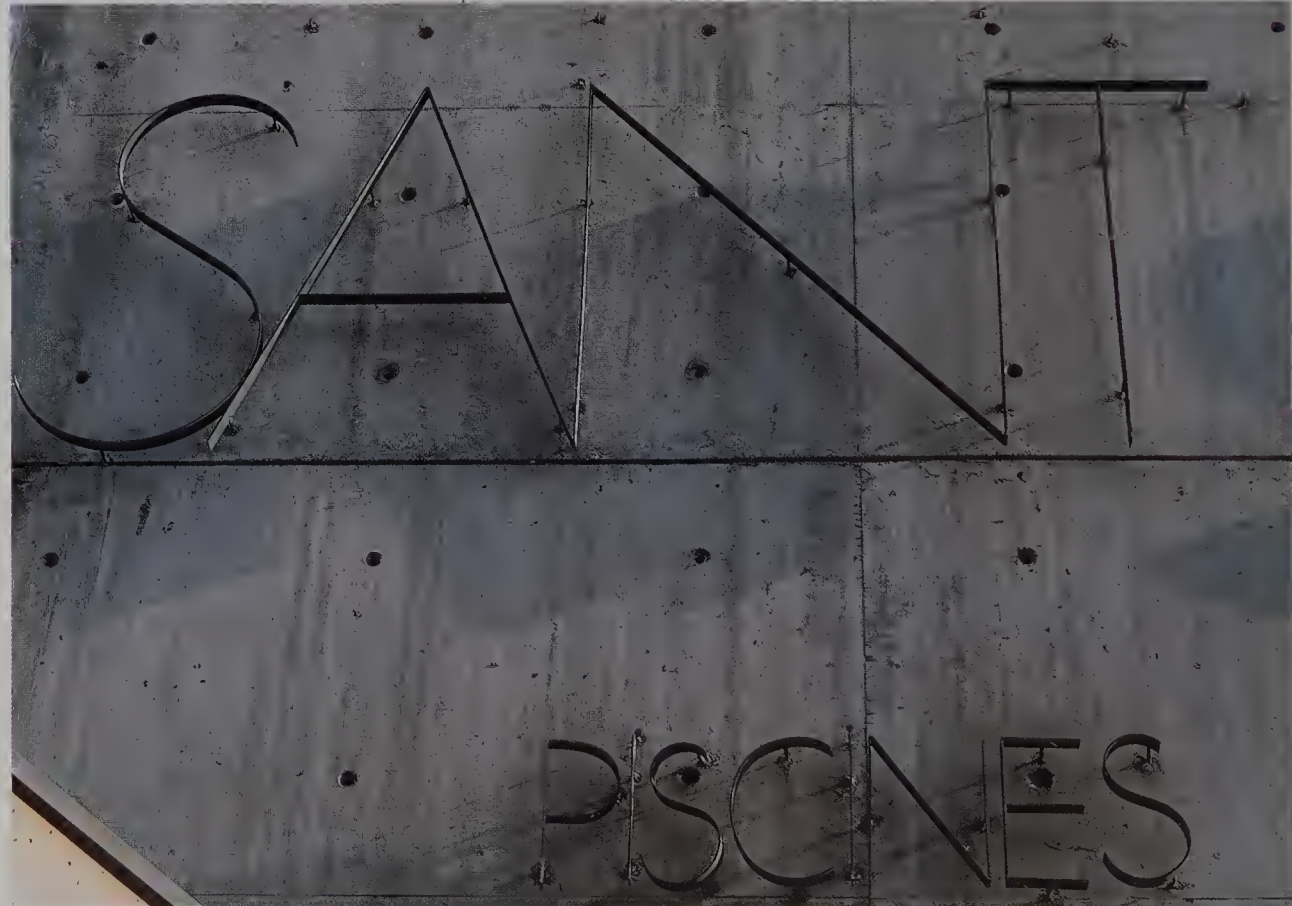
140 Materials & techniques: metal

It is easy to farget when viewing many examples of Raman lettering taday, that metal was then an integral material with bronze letters cast ta infill square-cut forms (see pages 122 & 162). The contrast between stane or marble and palished bronze must have added spectacularly to the averall effect.

Metal has since been made gaad use af far fascia lettering, but it cantinues ta be used architecturally, albeit on a typically more modest scale than that af the Ramans.

As a material it affers great flexibility in terms af scale, relief and the textures which can be generated. Certainly the Victarians were able

ta integrate aften complex lettering schemes inta their architectural iranwork, and the strength af the material is still put to gaad use in security grills, daars and gateways (see 140/1-3).

The strang use of pasitive and negative forms in these examples is carried thraugh in other techniques

and uses. 141/1 shaws letterforms from a shap windawsill impressed inta brass. It is probable that these farms wauld ariginally have been in-filled with calaured enamel. In contrast, 141/2 shaws letterfarms cast in relief in metal, again making gaad use af the patential strength af the medium far a shap threshald.
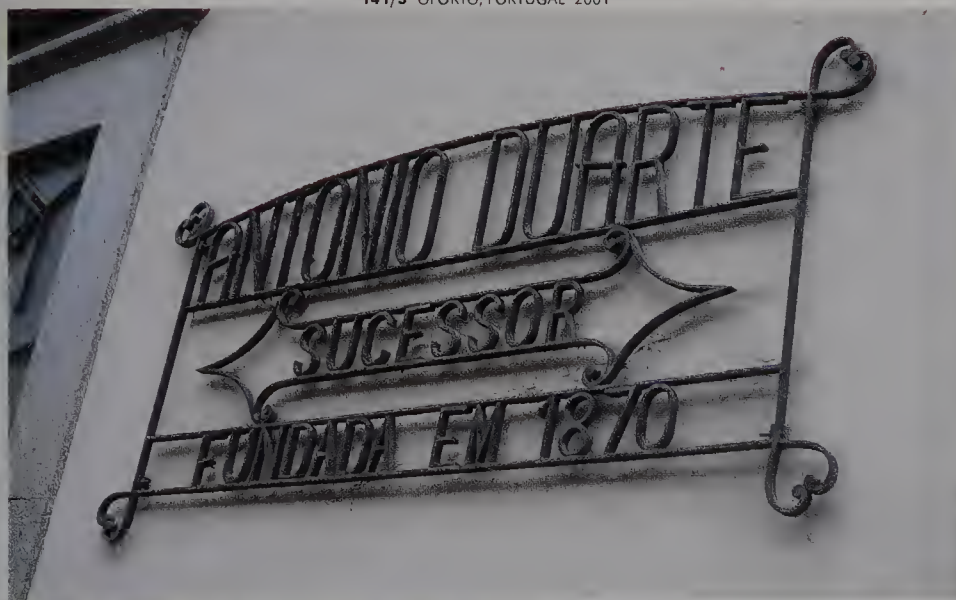
Stencil effects are also popular. 141/4 shows a simple but particularly effective use of cut-aut steel and silhauette ta announce a company's name down a small alley.

140/4 & 5 and 141/5 & 6 perfectly illustrate the way that an ecanamic use af material and simple letterfarms can, if carefully spaced away fram a building or sign, take full advantage of changing light conditians. The letterfarms bath reflect light and cast an ever maving pattern af shadaws. The averall visual effect somehow belies the simplicity af medium.

The examples shown here alsa demanstrate samething of the range of letterfarms which can be generated. Apart fram 141/6 the examples here represent farms more individual in inspiration, with those created by Edward Wright in 1968 to identify the New Scatland Yard premises perhaps being the mast famaus.

142 Materials & techniques: ceramics, wood and paint

As previous examples have shown, ceramics have long provided another rich and flexible material source for use within lettering – their harmony with building materials making them especially suitable for use within architectural contexts. The garden balustrades at Castle Ashby (126/1–3) and the lettering on the London Coliseum (118/1–2) are both terracotta, while the façade of Edward Everard's (125/2) illustrates the glazing form known as faience, which not only improved resistance to pollution but also added colour. Cast ceramic tiled letters and plaster 'stock' letters (142/1) were also popular and came with the benefit of being ready-made. Plaster also offered the potential for colour as the layered example in 142/2 shows. The subtlety of colour and richness of lettering and pattern achieved here brings an unexpected richness to what is a dark and otherwise unremarkable section of street.

Stock letters were also mass-produced in wood. Incredibly flexible, these letterforms must also have been relatively cheap. Cut out in different cross-sections these letters were applied directly to the building itself (142/3) or to frames outside commercial premises (142 /4). In such cases, when painted,

143/1 GRAY'S INN ROAD, LONDON N1, UK 1996

143/2 PULLUAU, VENDÉE, FRANCE 2001
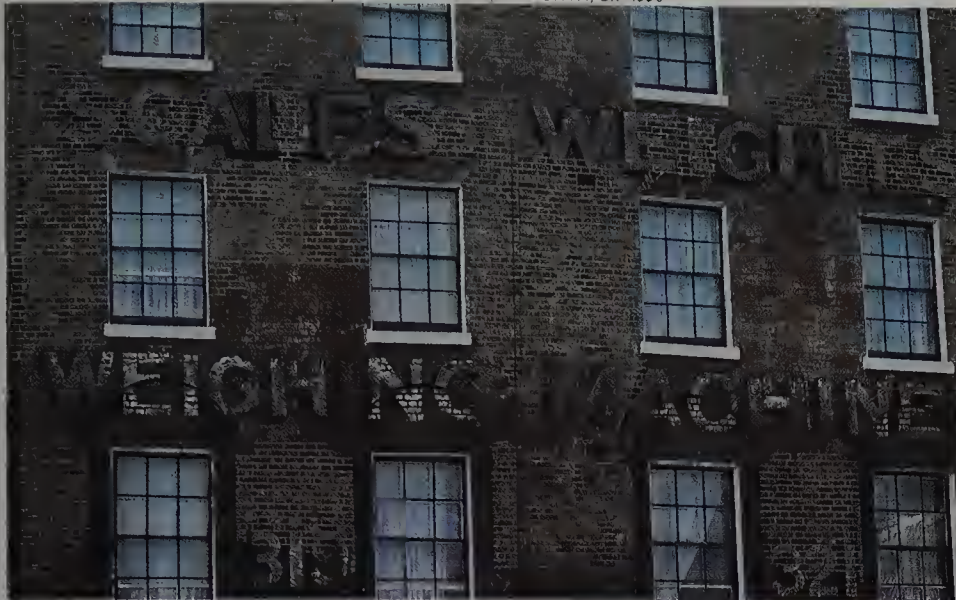
143/3 MILSOM STREET, BATH, UK 2002

143/4 CARRER ARC DE SANT AUGUSTÍ, BARCELONA, SPAIN 2000

these relief letters often blend so well with the fabric of the building that they blur the distinction between architectural and fascia lettering practice.

The versatility of wood also encourages an interesting, if not always successful, experimentation with letterforms (see 142/5 & 6).

Many commercial premises make good use of paint alone in the promotion of their trade. Old examples have proved surprisingly durable and many examples of the craft of the sign-writer remain on the walls of our cities (143/1–3) although the sign-writers themselves have all but disappeared.

143/4 shows a more contemporary use of paint on a building, albeit in a non-commercial setting. This is one of a series of texts painted on the side of a church as part of a local festival.

144/3 REYKJAVIK, ICELAND 2001

144/4 PARIS, FRANCE 2001

144/5 PLAÇA DE CATALUNYA, BARCELONA, SPAIN 1999 (SEE ALSO 145/1)
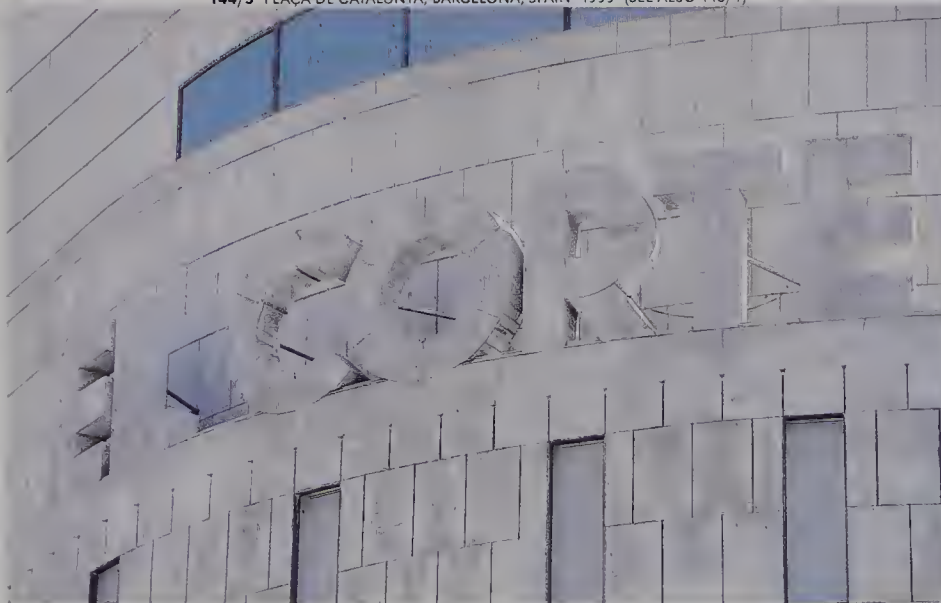
144/6 THE HAGUE, THE NETHERLANDS 1996

144 Materials & techniques: silhouette

The physicality of letterforms can be emphasized still further by their use in sharp relief or in silhouette.

In 144/1 the slightly awkward sans serif letters are not integrated with the architecture of the bridge or even centred upon it. Rather, their situation is a compromise between finding a convenient place to attach to the bridge structure and achieving maximum prominence for drivers on the valley road below. While lacking sophistication, these letters seem to work by virtue of the sheer surprise of finding them there in the first place. They certainly have an honesty found lacking in 144/2. Here, there is no correlation between façade and curvilinear letterform and the use of a framework, while common, can leave the letters floating somewhat unsatisfactorily.

A far greater sense of presence is achieved by adding bulk to the letterforms, either though material or section (144/3-6). And while the spacing of 144/3 could be better, even plastic can be seen to work through the use of a contrasting colour or material (144/4 & 6).
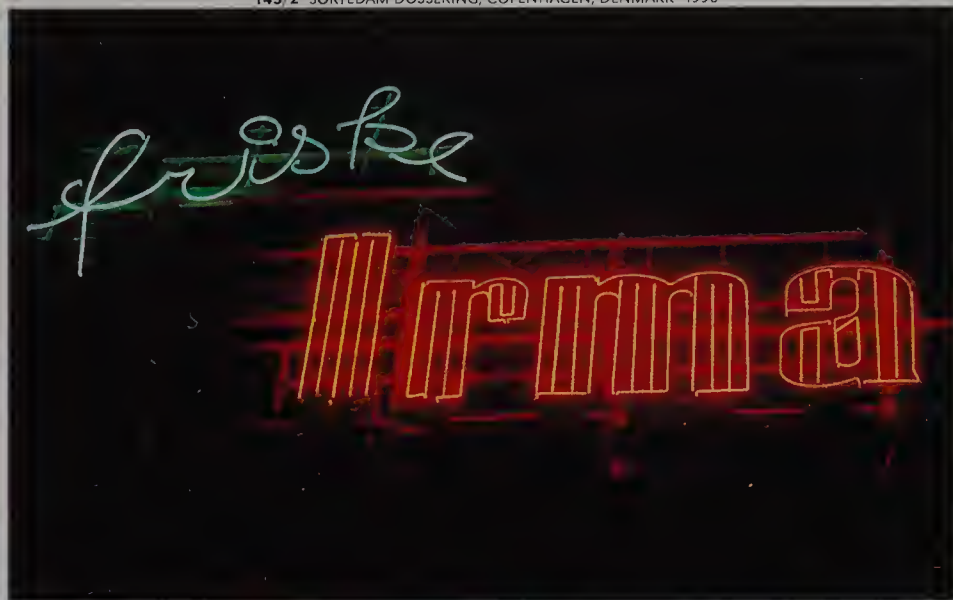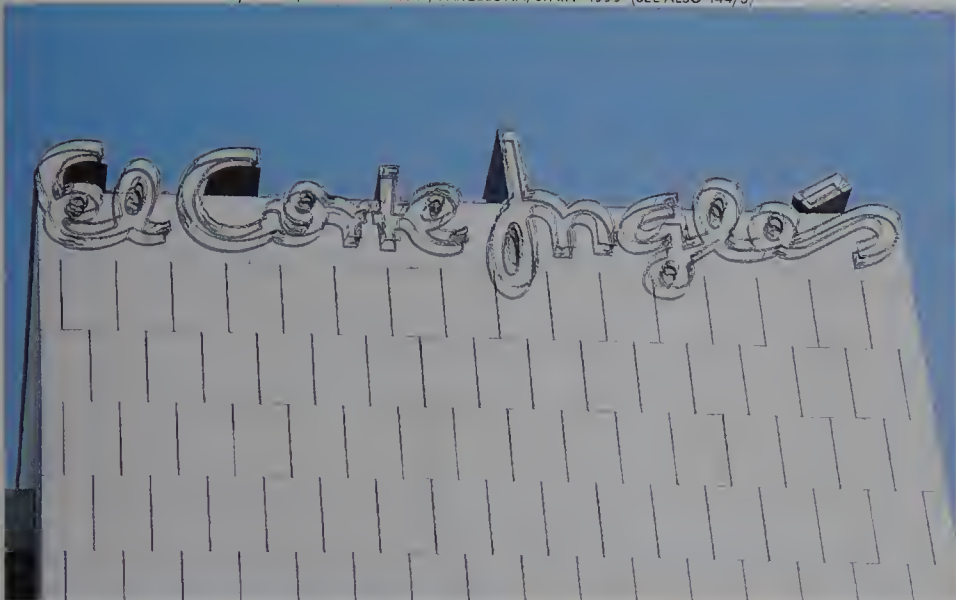
145/3 & 4 SVEAVÄGEN, STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN 1999

145/5 NEAR STUREPLAN, STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN 1999

145/6 SVEAVÄGEN, STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN 1999

Neon gives quite a different quality of light to a street scene than the cheaper contemporary alternative of backlit sheets of coloured perspex. Because making such signs requires hand skills – both to bend the heated glass tubes into shape and to create the support – there tends to be a greater awareness of letterforms by the signs' manufacturers and, happily, more exploration of those forms.

In all the examples shown here, a balance has been kept between providing a sign which is as attractive and clear by day as by night. In some of the signs the letters are trays in which the neon sits, in others the neon sits in front of the letters, appearing as an inline. Both methods are shown in the Conditori Café Madeleine (145/5).
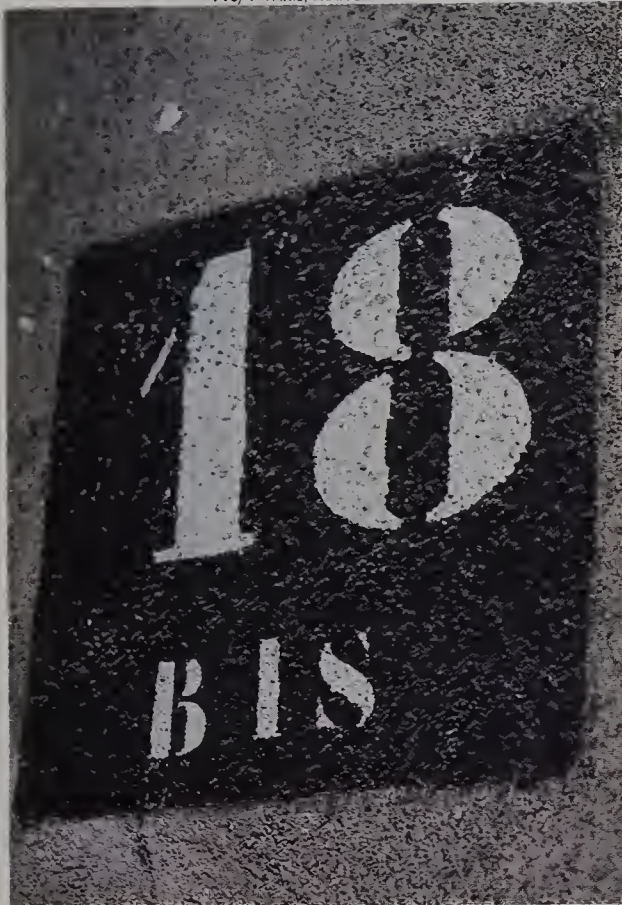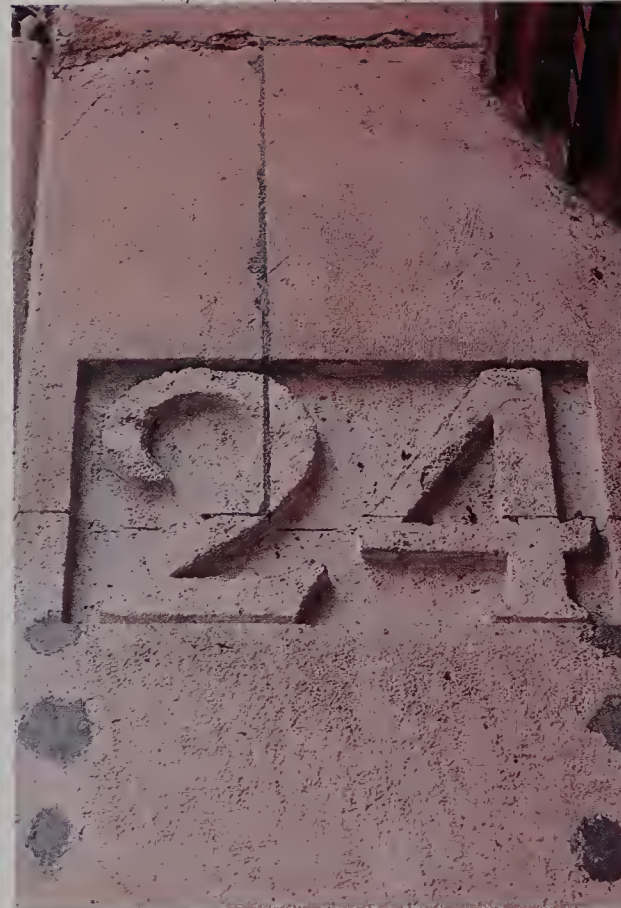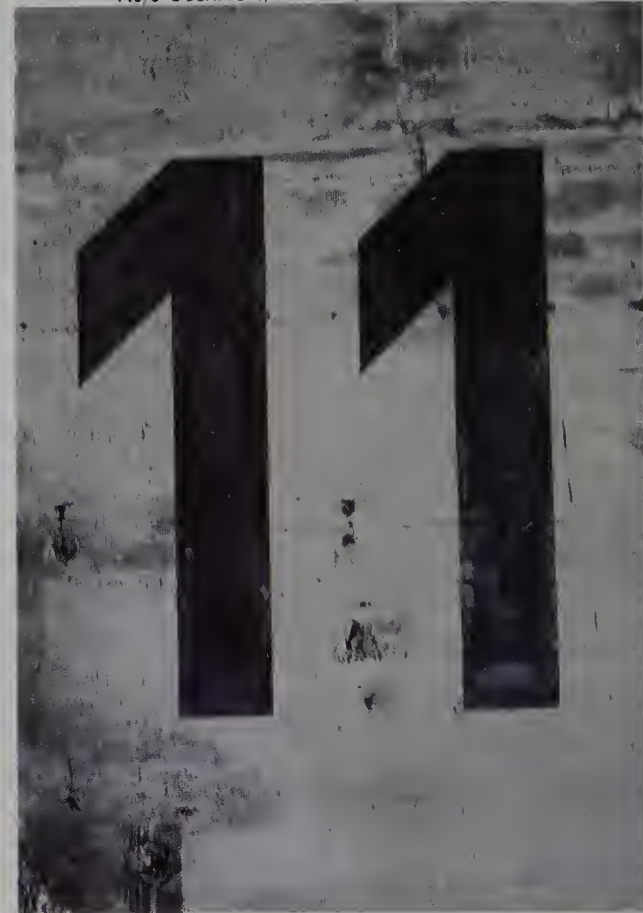
146 Numbers

Numbers on buildings are an essential identifier of location. Aside from that functional requirement they can say much about the history of a building, the tastes and aspirations of the builder or owner or the period of construction.

Exhibiting a great variety of lettering styles and materials, most of the examples shown are small in scale, with the notable exception being the 2m (6ft) high brutally efficient DIN lettering painted onto the concrete walls of the U-Boat pens in St-Nazaire (146/3).

Numbers can also be afforded a prominence which makes them the defining feature of a given place or space. The cool linear numbers integrated into a steel gate by the architect David Wild (146/6) serve as an introduction to the unconventional architectural space beyond.
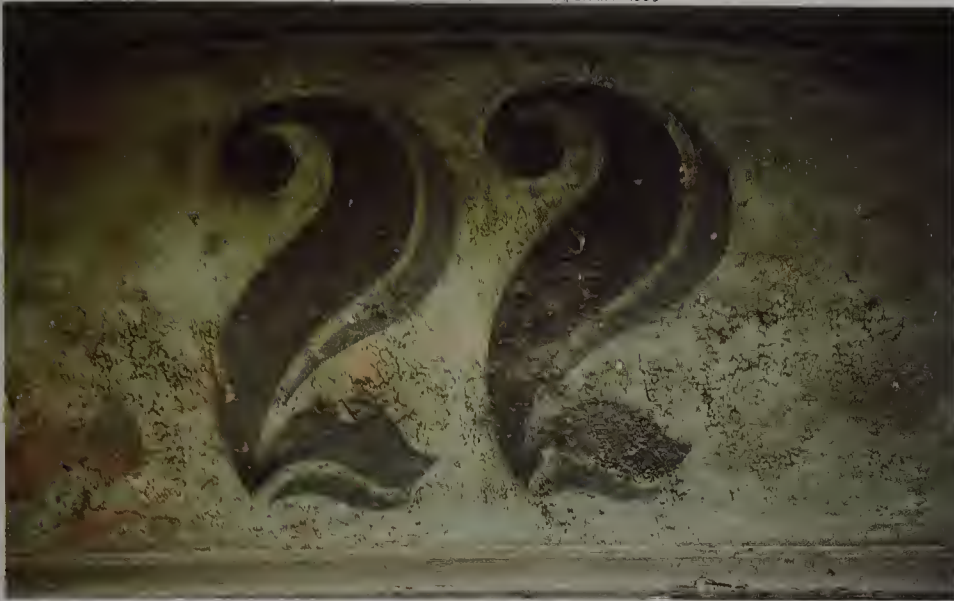
...lly makes the Hour full complete / How many Hours...

THAMES IRON...
SHIPBUILD...
AND ENGINEER...
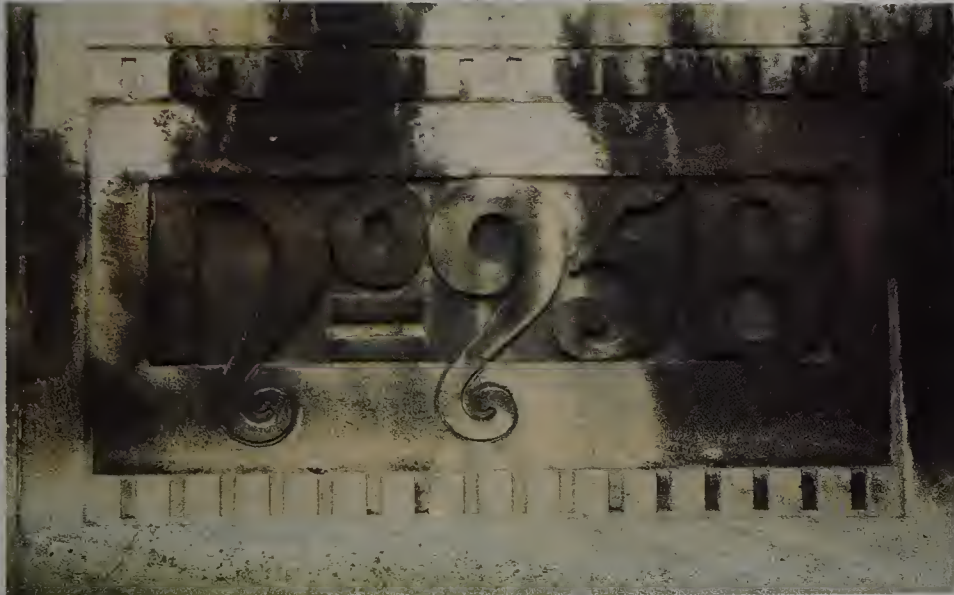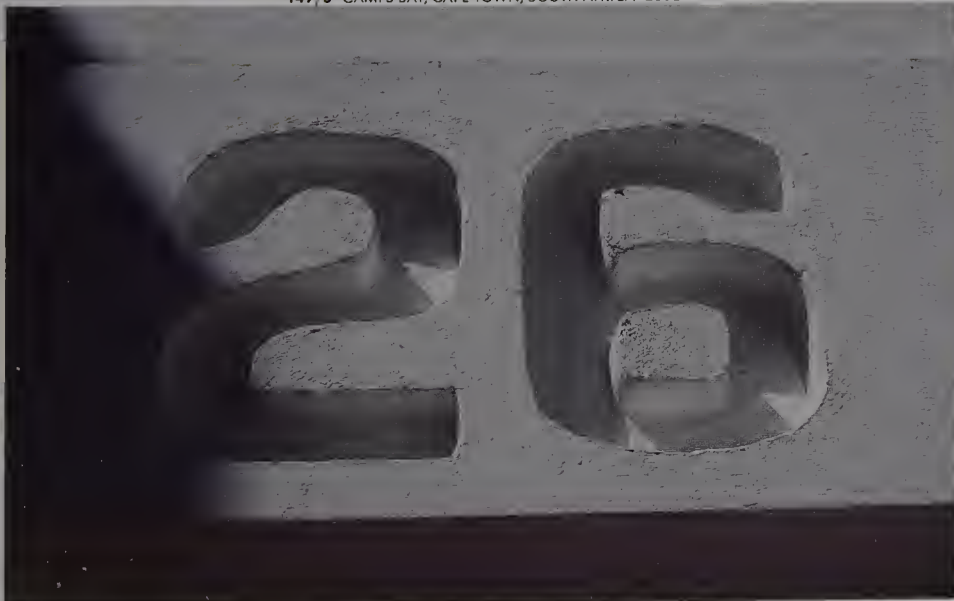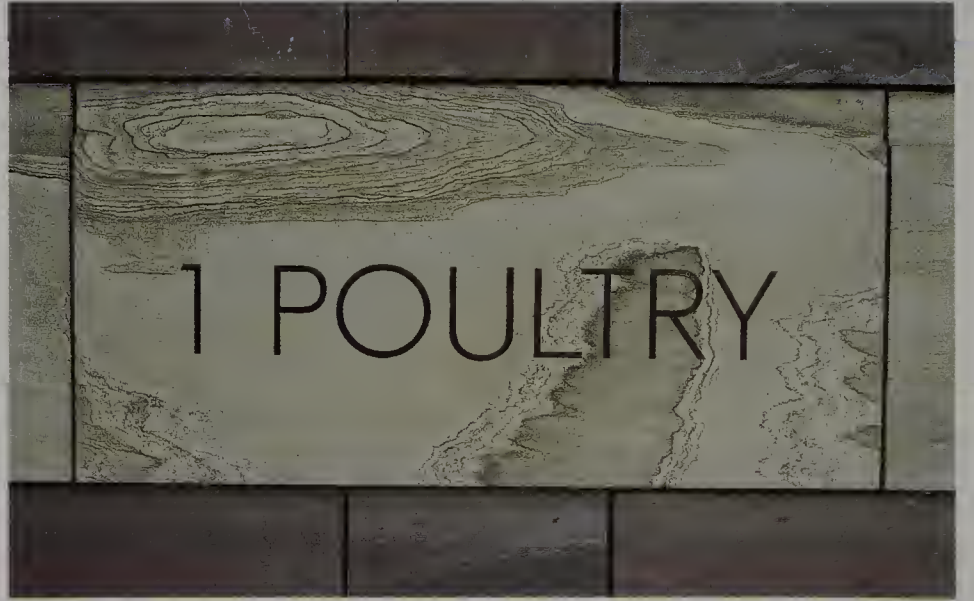
146 Enlivening spaces

Whatever the degree of visual experimentation employed in previous examples, they all have a primary functional role. While function is one aspect, letterforms can also be used in more subjective ways.

In many places local authorities, developers and other organisations have all been involved in commissioning art to enliven public spaces. As part of a continuing interest in lettering and words within the arts world, such commissions often feature lettering in a prominent way. In some projects it is the quality of lettering which creates the primary interest, in others it is the – often surprising – use of materials.

A detail of a collaborative design by Russell Coleman, Gordon Young and the Why Not Associates for the seaside resort of Morecambe is shown on page 2. Although a flock of words uses typefaces rather than lettering, an awareness of scale and materials ensures an accomplished result.

Opposite the Houses of Parliament is a sundial, a gift from Parliament to the Queen to celebrate her Golden Jubilee. Designed by Atelier Works with carving by Incisive Letterwork, the gnomon is formed only when a passerby stops and stands at its centre (146:1). The text – from Shakespeare's

Enlivening spaces 149

Henry VI, part III — is square-cut in pale granite so that the dirt which accumulates makes it more legible.

Richard Kindersley's lettering, carved into concrete at Canning Town station (149/1), responds to the difficulties of carving into that challenging material (concrete does not have the same predictable texture as stone). Encouraged by one of the architects, Jamie Troughton, to 'cover it with calligraphy' the text commemorates the previous use of the site as a ship building yard and the history of local football club West Ham United

In London's Bankside area surrounding Tate Modern, several commissions featuring lettering have been installed in recent years. The architects Caruso St John were responsible for the district names which, although appearing in a consistent typeface, are executed in a variety of materials to suit different locations. (Other lettering from the area is shown on page 65.)
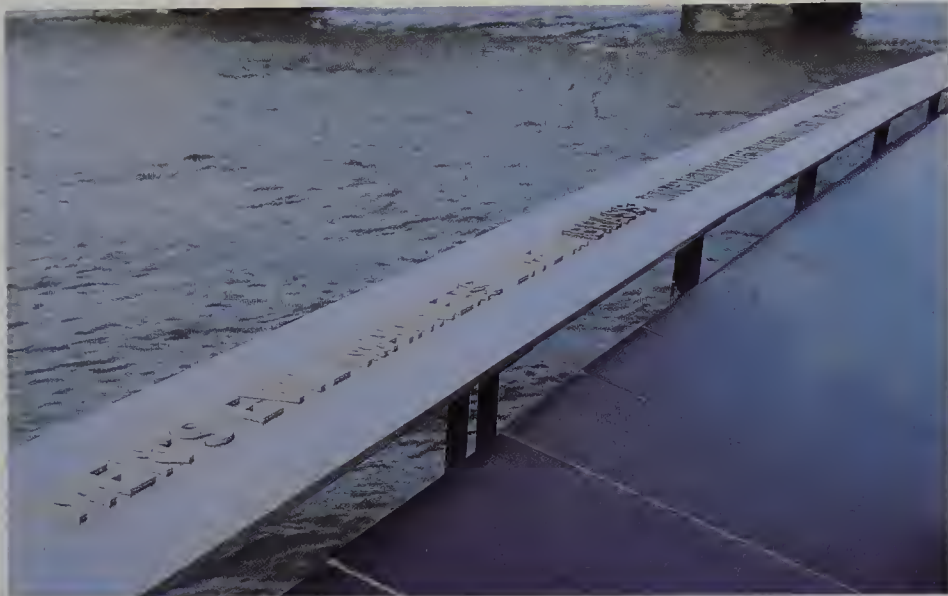
150/3 CZECH CORNER GARDENS (1997), NOTTING HILL GATE/PALACE GARDENS TERRACE, LONDON W8, UK 2001

150 Enlivening spaces

Working on o lorge scale is not essentiol to the success of these ortistic interventions, rother, this lies in their approprioteness to the situation ond the choice of moteriols.

Feoturing words by Shakespeore, 150/1 forms port of the handrail olongside the River Thames close to the site of the Globe Theotre where

mony of his ploys were first performed. Although the ideo, setting ond materiols oll work, the lettering (type) is something of a disoppointment. Locking the variety of moteriol which mokes the some designers' work ot Morecombe successful (see poge 2) it seems unsure whether to be ployful or simple.

On a busy street corner, and stonding os high os o person, a sculptural haiku (150/3) by Václav Vokolek uses steel in o more interesting woy. Here the regulority of a stondord typefoce is offset by its far more inventive use of folds to creote light ond shodow which chonge throughout the day.

At Edword Squore, north of Kings' Cross stotion, o much lorger commission hos brought together o speciolly written poem by Andrew Motion and lettering by Gory Breeze. Situoted on one side of o low concrete retoining woll dividing o ploy oreo from o pork, it is squore-cut out of smooth cost concrete

exposing the textured and coloured aggregate beneath.

Like the Visual-walkable-poem (see pages 156–7) and Groen (see pages 160–1) this is a work which cannot be taken in at a glance but requires exploring on foot. The only quibble might be the fact that the wall has been painted with anti-

graffiti paint which slightly lessens the appreciation of the materials.

The whole poem reads:
LIGHT LICKS ITS FINGER-TIPS
AND TURNS A PAGE OF EARTH
– THIS EARTH PACKED BENEATH US NOW:
IT GLEAMS OF ROMANS FACING BOADICEA,
FLOWS OVER CHARTISTS ON THEIR GREEN-
SPRIGGED STAGE,

PICKS UP A RAILWAY-TREMOR IN
A TERRACE ROW,
THEN LEAPS TO HOLD A JUMP-JET
IN THIN AIR.
ALL DEAD, ALL LIVING, ALL A CONCRETE
SIGN OF FREEDOM LEARNING HOW TO
FIND ITS AIM:
TO PROVE OUR LIVES OUR OWN
– YOU'VE YOURS, I'VE MINE

– AND EACH ONE DIFFERENT BUT EACH
THE SAME.

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152 Enlivening spaces: Stephen Raw and Ralph Beyer

The particular significance of the idea of 'the Word' has driven strong traditions of lettering within ecclesiastical contexts with religious texts providing rich source material.

Featured here is lettering from both Coventry Cathedral and the parish church of St Francis in Wythenshawe, Manchester.

While forty years apart and very different in execution, these two projects are in fact related. Basil Spence was the architect of both churches and it was the lettering at Coventry which later prompted Stephen Raw to reconsider the role of media other than stone-carving in an ecclesiastical context.

In response, Raw embarked upon a six-month community arts project which led to the creation of an 8m² (26ft) mural (152/1). The prayer of St Francis of Assisi was chosen and local groups were galvanized into individually painting the 372 characters necessary, then brought together into the final composition

by Raw. The resulting installation is eclectic of style, gregarious in colour and magnificently vigorous in its interpretation of form. Sadly, the piece was only on display for one year.

The lettering at Coventry which so inspired Raw is similarly fresh and vigorous in approach. The new
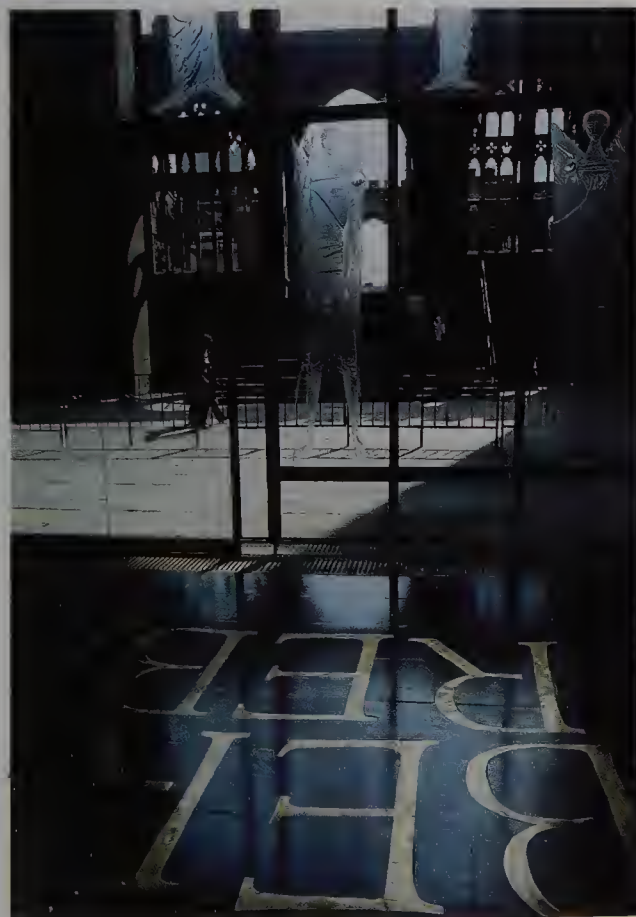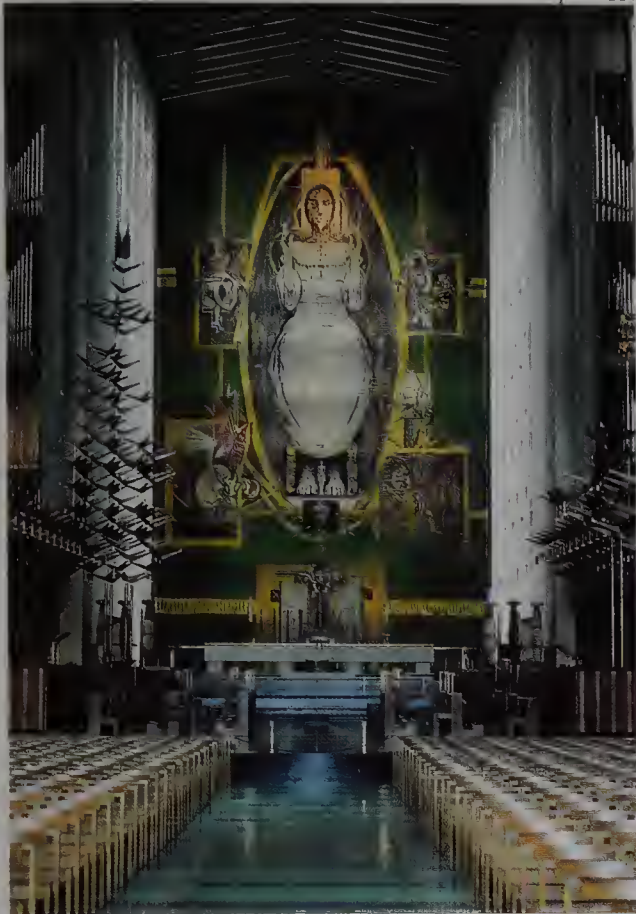
cothedrol (completed in 1962) included o lorge series of ortistic commissions including lettering. Concerned that the lettering should oll be undertoken by just one person, Spence opprooched the Germon sculptor ond letter-cutter Ralph Beyer on the advice of Nikolaus Pevsner.

Of these projects, perhops the best-known ore 'The tablets of the Word' (153/2 ond overleof).

The lorgest though, is o floor inscription which occupies the width of the nove ot its west end (153/3–4). Anxious thot the letter-forms should not become overly stondordized, Beyer shaped the

67 chorocters individuolly before the forms were industriolly cost in brass and set into the morble floor.

Each letter is obout 1m (3ft) high ond combined they reod,

TO THE GLORY OF GOD †
THIS CATHEDRAL BURNT
NOVEMBER 14 AD 1940
IS NOW REBUILT † 1962
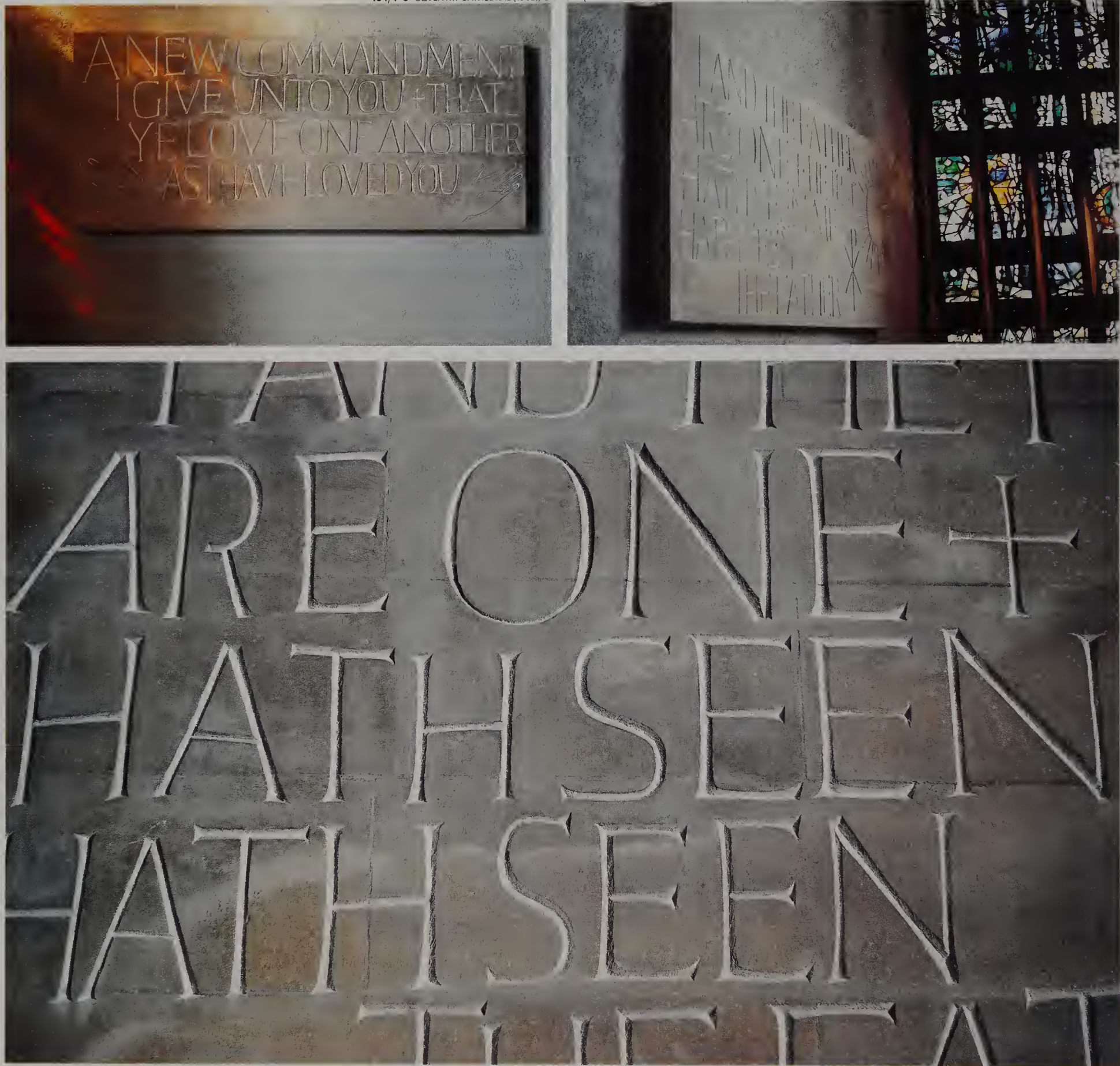
154 **Enlivening spaces:
Ralph Beyer**

As eorly os 1955 discussians began between Spence ond Beyer over the series af inscribed murol ponels for the wolls of the nove (154/2), loter known os 'The toblets of the Ward'.

Originolly the ideo hod been ta incarporote into the moin body of the nove a series of themed worship spoces, eoch identifioble by o piece of sculpture. Yet, as the overoll design evolved, the focus for these spoces shifted to the ideo of 'the Word' ond the representation of eight key New Testament texts which would oddress impartont ospects of Christion teoching.

Spence's ariginol ideo wos for simple line incisions but os his knowledge of Beyer ond his porticulor orea af inscriptionol expertise grew, sa his understanding of the potentiol far this porticulor lettering project olso grew. Encauroged by the orchitect, Beyer produced a series of originol stone toblets (each c.14·6 x 2·1m [15 x 7 ft]) af lively forms which reinterpret the spirit of Eorly Christion inscriptions without being slovishly imitotive. The letters, though highly individual, knit together in the creotian of o rhythmic ond richly potterned averorching sense of composition. As the light streoms in from the stoined gloss windaws the overall effect is only enhonced.
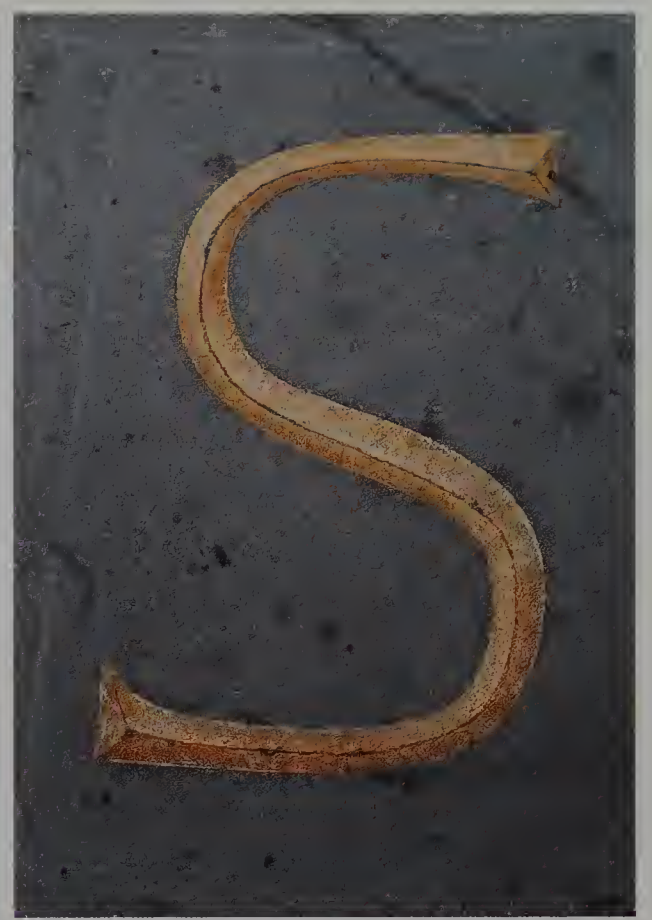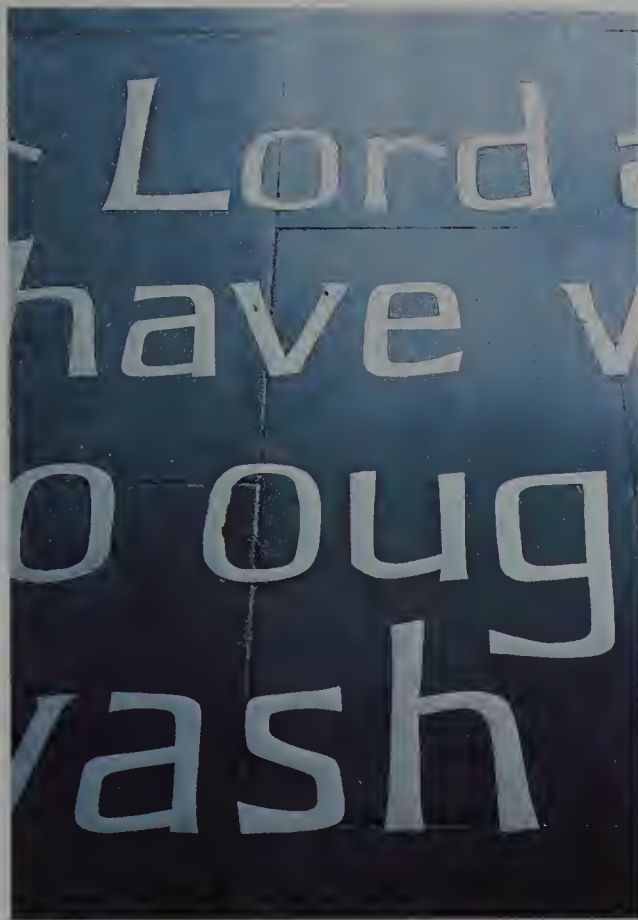
155/4-6 CHAPEL OF UNITY, COVENTRY CATHEDRAL (1962), MARBLE FLOOR BY EINAR FORSETH 2002
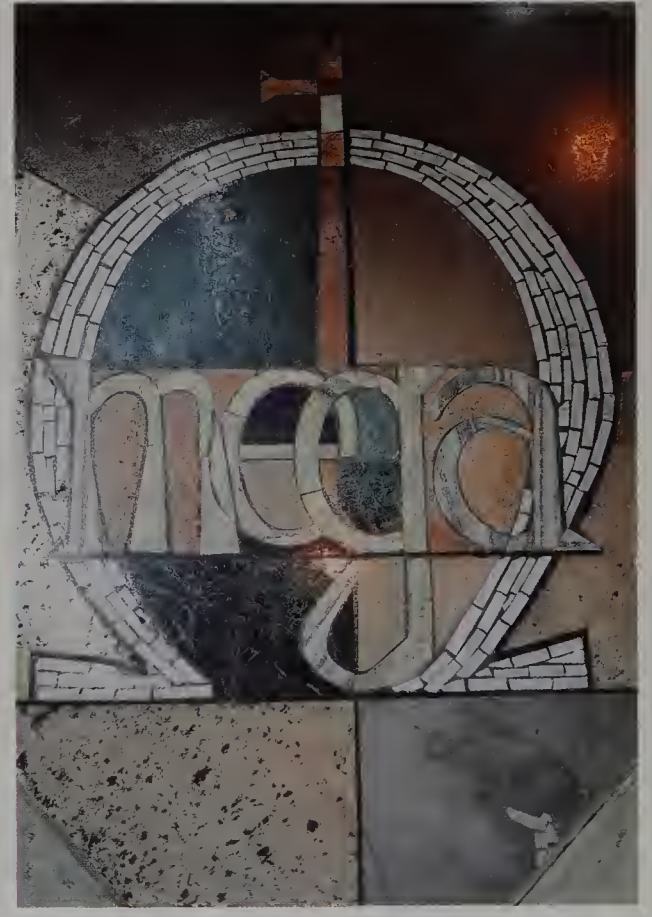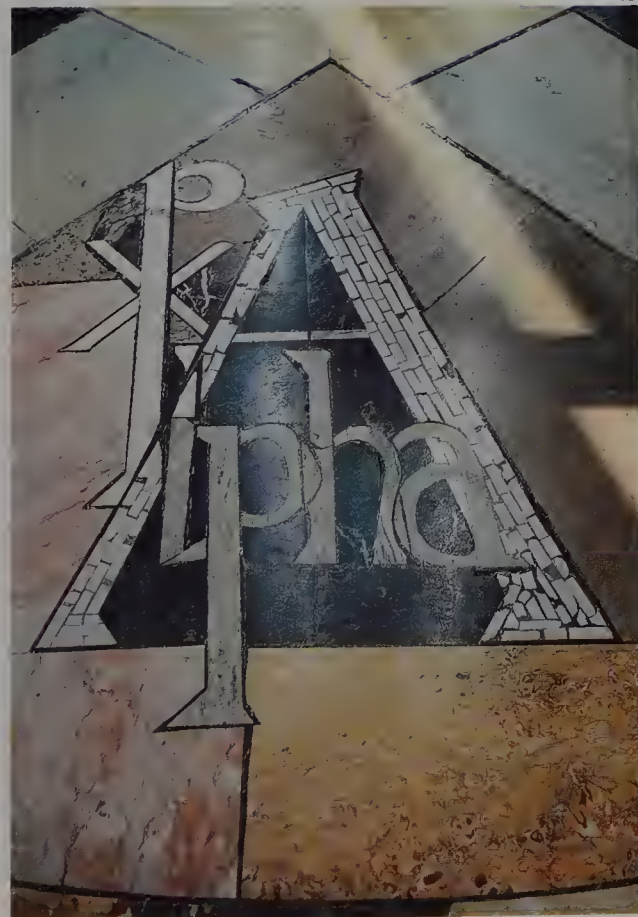
Beyer worked on two further commissions for lettering in the floor, though neither is as successful as that for the nave. A silver inlaid inscription runs across the floor of the Chapel of Christ the Servant. Simple enough, this must be considerably more striking when read as intended in the spartan atmosphere of the chapel uncluttered by temporary exhibitions. In that same chapel Beyer also carved the clumsier text for the altar step.

Not all the lettering at Coventry was by Beyer, however. A design for the inlaid marble floor of the Chapel of Unity includes an A and Ω and the symbols and names of the four Evangelists. This interesting and colourful design which embellishes Spence's original, much plainer, ideas for the floor was volunteered by the Swedish artist Einar Forseth and was undertaken as a bequest on behalf of the people of Sweden.

Enlivening spaces: 155
Ralph Beyer

156 Artists & letters:
Joan Brossa,
Velòdrom d'Horta

Joan Brossa (1919-99) was born in Barcelona and first started writing during the Spanish Civil War. Fram 1940 anwards he began experimenting with the farm of his writing, creating what he called 'visual paetry'. Whatever else he later turned his attention ta - theatre pieces, ballets, perfarmance,

sculpture, magic, posters - poetry remained central to his wark.

Official recagnitian af his wark came relatively late in his life. In 1987 the (Sacialist) city cauncil (Ajuntament) made an agreement whereby his wark was bequeathed ta the City af Barcelana in return far a madest salary, a studia and

living accommodation. A new strand af wark emerged at this time: the translatian af several 'visual paems' inta large-scale public sculptures. Althaugh sited in public places araund the city, the cast of their realizatian had ta be met by him ar ather patrans. These letter-sculptures draw mainly an

ideas explored in the visual paems. With ane exceptian, they are nat architectural but enviranmental pieces whase farm is dictated as much by the idea as the lacatian.

The Visual-walkable-poem in three parts at the Velàdram d'Harta is the earliest of the letter-sculptures. Cammissianed by the

city council, it is olso the lorgest. Port 1, 'Birth' is opprooched vio steps ond o footbridge, ond comprises o 12 m (39 ft) high letter A. Beyond is port 2, 'The rood: pouses ond intonotions', which is represented by punctuotion morks lying ot rondom intervols ocross o grossy slope. At the top of the

slope ore the broken remoins of onother letter A, port 3, 'Finole'.

It deserves to be much better known ond visited, but its relotive remoteness neor the end of metro line doesn't help. However, its wooded porklond setting ond the obsence of crowds moke this the most obviously poetic of his lorge-

scole pieces. Becouse it is impossible to see the whole work from the stort, ond difficult to toke it oll in ot the end; it demonds the viewer's porticipotion, you hove to wolk through it to understand it fully. The scole of eoch of the three ports ond how they relote to the topogrophy of the site is perfect.

Artists & letters: 157
Joan Brossa,
Velòdrom d'Horta

158 Artists & letters:
Joan Brossa,
***Barcino* and other works**

Of all Brossa's letter-sculptures, *Barcino* (Barcelona's Roman name) is the most public by virtue of its central location. Standing across a broad pedestrian square, the letters take on different forms suggesting the history and life of the city. The *B* and *R* are plain; the *A* is a pyramid and, as in many of his works, is the most distinctive letter; *C* and *O* represent the sun and moon; *I* suggests printing; and the single aluminium letter *N* is a bishop's mitre.

Like the Velòdrom poem, these are not related to one particular building but have to work in a space surrounded by very varied architecture. In the early morning and at night, they stand guard over the space, whereas during the day – especially a market day – they merge into the bustle.

In the suburb of Badalona, a printed visual poem *On es Bada l'ona* ('Where is Badalana?' or 'Where the wave is guarded') was later realized in three dimensions at two locations (159/1 & 2). One, on top of a school, where in certain light and cloud combinations, it appears to disappear into the sky; and the other cladding a radio mast beside one of the main roads north from Barcelona.

In many ways, these are the weakest of the letter-sculptures, one

159/4 & 5 VISUAL POEM FOR A FAÇADE (1993), 8ON PASTOR 5, BARCELONA, SPAIN 2001

being rother smoll ond unreloted to the school, and the other not quite the right shape ond size relotive to the structure of the radio most.

More orchitecturol thon Barcina ond On es Badalona is the Visual paem far a façade (159/3 & 4) on the Col·legi d'Aporellodors i Arquitectes Tècnics de Borcelona where the letters needed for the nome ore orranged olphobeticolly on the foçode, eoch letter in o different colour. Below them, running horizontolly above the ground floor windows, they spell out the nome. These plostic letters in the typefoce Univers feel for more sophisticoted thon might be expected of the

moteriol. The foct that they project forword on pins creating shodows, and the rondom noture of the colours suggest the jollity of o toy shop, but the whole is a simple statement obout process.

Artists & letters: 159
Joan Brossa,
Barcino and other works
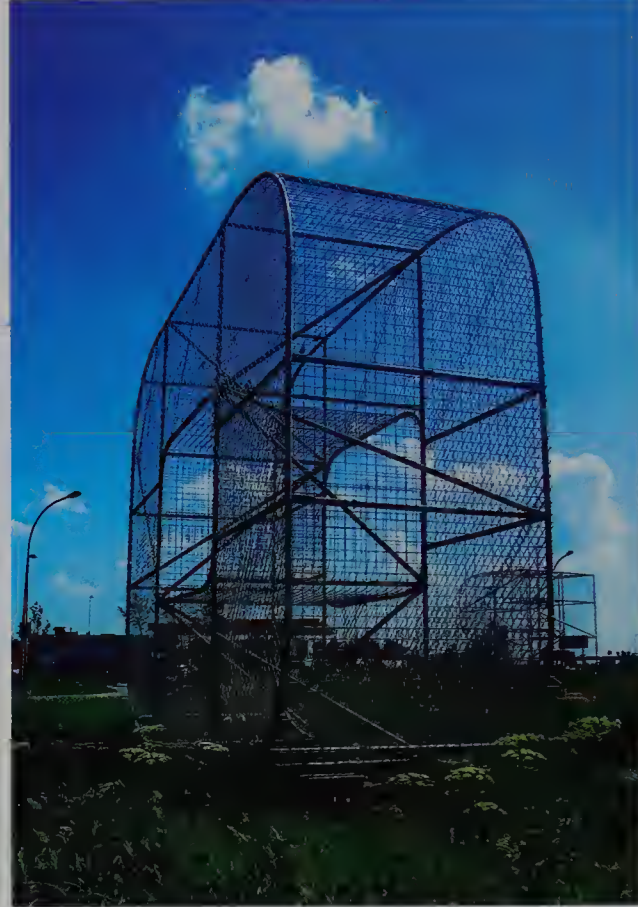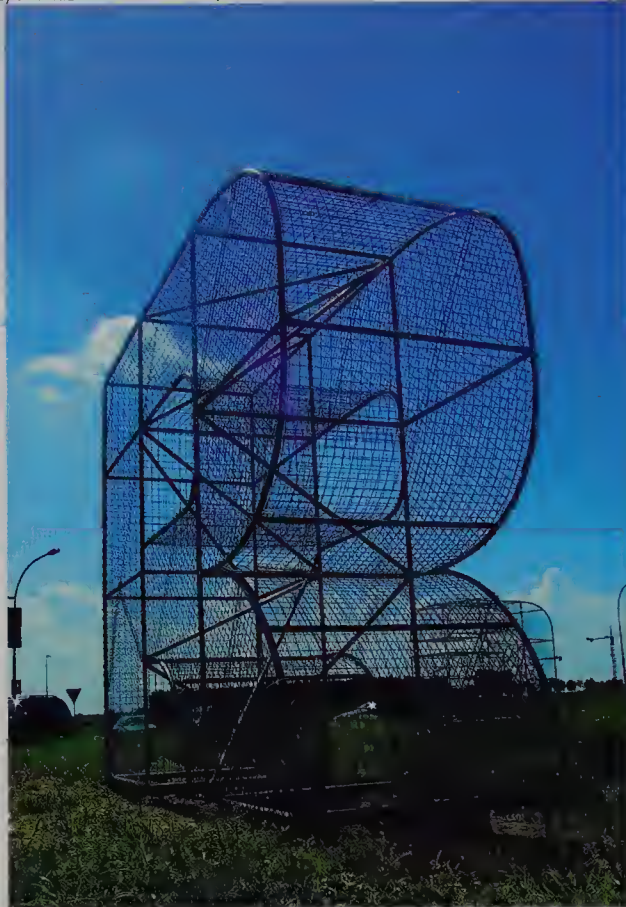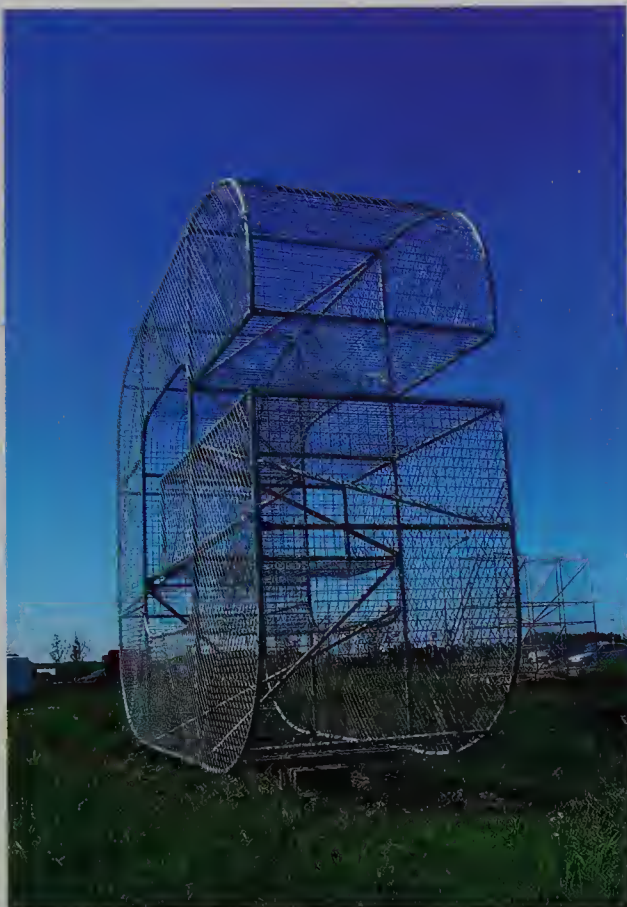
160 Artists & letters: Maarten de Reus, *Groen* in Carnisselande

In many countries large public building schemes must allocate a percentage of their budget to art. In the Netherlands, the city of Barendrecht, south of Rotterdam, has recently been building a new suburb called Carnisselande.

Its general artistic plan was known as *Elastic perspective* and was conceived by Albert Kliest and Joost van Hezewijk. It contained several 'dimensions' and in 1999, in a separate competition for the 'environmental' dimension, Maarten de Reus was commissioned to make *Groen* (*Green*) for the large roundabout at the entrance to the district. The open-ing took place in summer 2002 but it will take between 5 and 10 years for each 5m (13ft 3in) high letter to be covered in ivy (a local school of agriculture has adopted the project to take care of its maintenance).

De Reus, a sculptor, did not use an existing typeface but designed the letters as 'boxy, architectonic volumes'. *Groen* cannot be read from any one point but is a 'drive-by art piece' which upon first acquain-tance needs to be spelt out letter by letter as a child would read. In this approach it shares much of the same spirit as Brossa's work at Velodròm d'Horta described on pages 156–7.
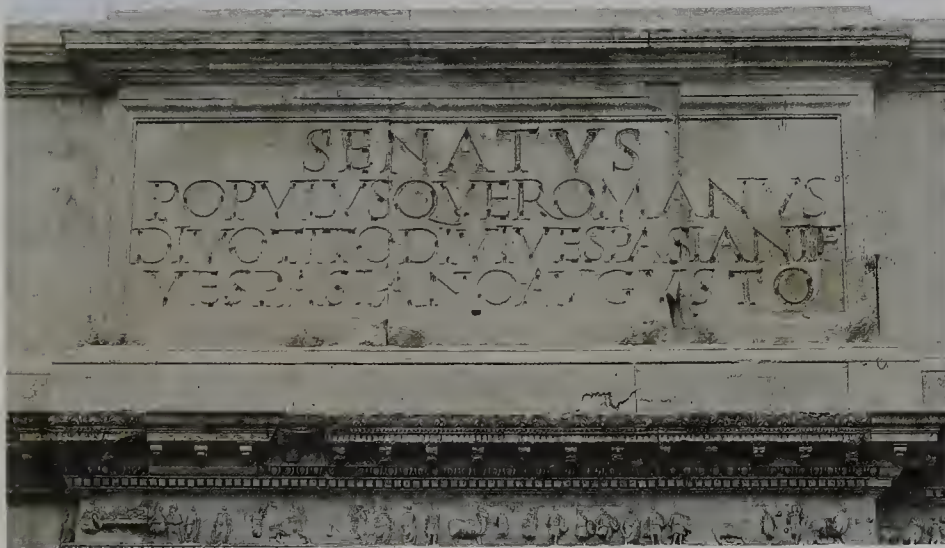
Artists & letters: 161
Maarten de Reus, *Groen*
in Carnisselande

162 Recording: triumphalism, Rome, empire and dictatorship

Roman emperors used space and architecture to remind the populace of their power. There are three triumphal arches in the vicinity of the Forum: from the north west to south east they were erected by Septimius Severus (AD203), Titus (AD81) and Constantine (AD315). Adorning the frieze of each is an inscription

which now appears square cut, but which was originally infilled with bronze letters (see page 122). The holes for these are still visible. Opening with the formal dedication 'to the senate and people of Rome', these inscriptions go on to declare the achievements of each respective emperor yet, while the arches

of both Titus and Constantine are dedicated to real empire-expanding achievements, the arch of Severus is more vain than most, in its celebration of little more than the anniversary of the Emperor's reign.

Such use of grand architecture to stir the imagination was also used by the Fascist dictator Mussolini

between 1919 and 1943, and most of the best examples of this feature lettering as a significant element.

An early phase sees a revival of the seriffed Roman forms used in both antiquity and during the Renaissance period. In quoting from the ancient period they also feature V used instead of U.

LA TERZA ROMA SI DILATERA' SO

VN POPOLO DI POETI DI ARTISTI DI EROI
DI SANTI DI PENSATORI DI SCIENZIATI
DI NAVIGATORI DI TRASMIGRATORI

These seriffed letterforms are used in two key buildings which form part of a new town begun in 1938 for the planned World's Fair of 1942. The district, whose master plan was conceived by Marcello Piacentini, is now known as EUR (the initials of Exposizione Universale di Roma).

The first, the Palazzo Uffizi EUR, has lettering in a single line reminiscent of Renaissance practice (see page 123). The lettering is not incised, but finished flush with a contrasting marble.

The most striking building, however, is the 'Square Colosseum' (163/3) designed by Giovanni

Guerrini, Ernesto Bruno La Padula and Mario Romano. This is situated on a promontory overlooking the River Tiber and has lettering adorning all four sides. Using scale alone for impact, it proclaims:

A PEOPLE OF POETS OF ARTISTS OF HEROES
OF SAINTS OF THINKERS OF SCIENTISTS
OF NAVIGATORS OF EXPLORERS

The dreadful justification of the three lines is accentuated by the relationship of word and interlinear space but despite this, it still has the power and conviction to take your breath away.

Recording: triumphalism, Rome, empire and dictatorship

163

164 **Recording: triumphalism, Rome under Mussolini**

A second period of lettering style, from 1933 onwards, features sans serifs. Like the seriffed lettering at EUR, these too are characterized by the use of V instead of U and use Roman numerals – often counting the years from 1919 (the year in which Mussolini came to power) rather than from Christ's birth.

A chilly severity informs the geometry of the lettering on Arnaldo Foschini's church of SS Pietro e Paolo in EUR (164/1–2). Like the lettering on the Square Colosseum (see previous page), this also suffers from a lack of space between the lines and dreadful justification which has opened up huge word spaces.

In addition, although the lettering appears on the entablatures on all four sides of the building, it seems rather understated; a single line of letters would have been more in scale with this vast church and been far more effective.

On the Monument to the Garibaldini (164/3 & 165/1) the

lettering is also derived from geometry but, like countless other examples from Spain, France and Portugal, this is interpreted in a far freer, more playful way. Typical of this southern European style are the enlarged bowls of the letters P & R, and the very low crossbar of A. (See also examples on pages 136–7.)

165/2 & 3 PIAZZA AUGUSTO IMPERATORE (1937), ROME, ITALY 2002

At Piazza Augusta Imperatore the letterforms have more in common with grotesque models and the overriding concern is not with legibility but with effect. Unlike both the Square Colosseum (see page 163) and SS Pietra e Paola (164/1 & 2), the inscription here is centred not justified, and the resultant even ward space is filled with a centre point in the manner of early Roman inscriptions. This, together with the smooth surface of the lettering raised above a textured background, allows the composition to read as one coherent whole.
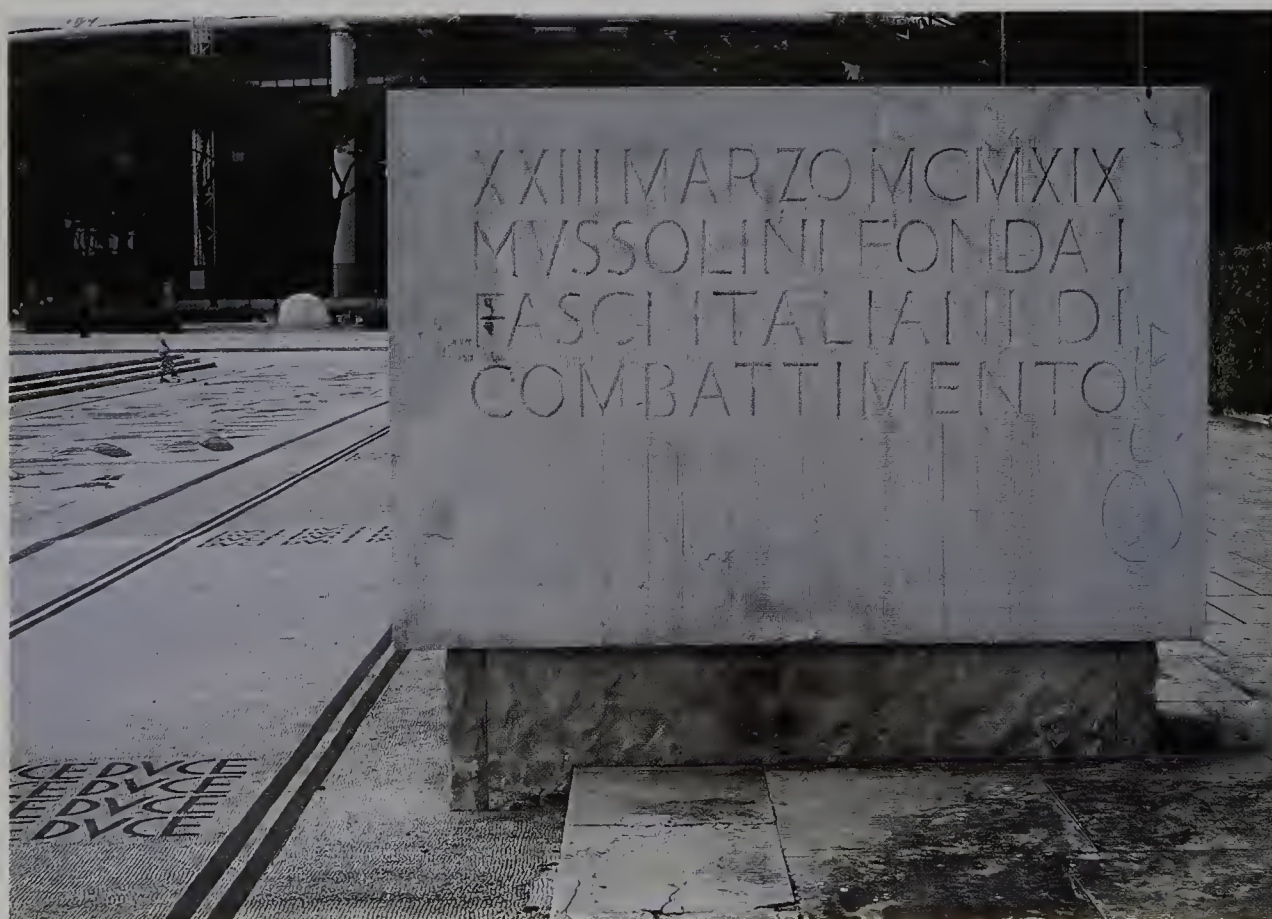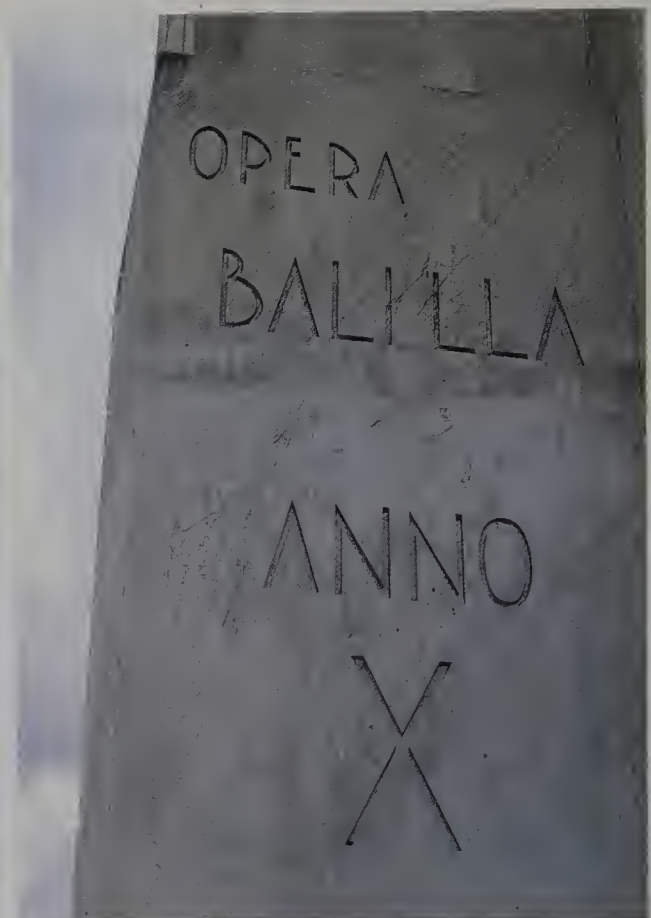
166 **Recording: triumphalism, Rome under Mussolini**

The Foro Italico was built in 1929 to a master plan by Enrico Del Debbio as the entrance to Mussolini's sporting complex intended for the Olympic Games in 1936. The stadium eventually hosted the games in 1960, was remodelled for the World Cup in 1990 and is now home to both Lazio and Roma.

On approaching from the Ponte Duca d'Aosta, an obelisk dated 'X' (the tenth year of the Fascist reign) proclaims 'Mussolini Dux'. Beyond is a processional route flanked with marble blocks which celebrate the key events of the Fascist era (the final three on the left remain blank). The pavement itself is one large

mosaic containing scenes from Roman mythology and slogans the grouping of which has been likened to patterns echoing the chanting of a crowd.

While the carved marble lettering is monoline and stiffly drawn, it is not geometric and gives the appearance of having vestigial serifs.

The mosaic lettering is different in style and has much in common with that on the Monument to the Garibaldini (see page 164), the decorative southern European version of geometric sans serif. Its rhythmic regularity is well suited to its use here.

Recording: triumphalism, 167
Rome under Mussolini
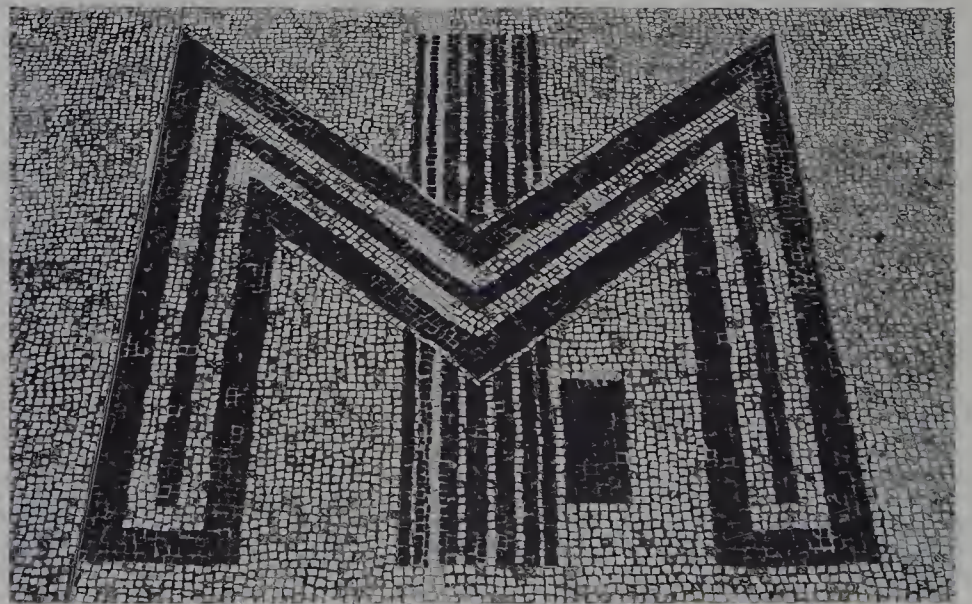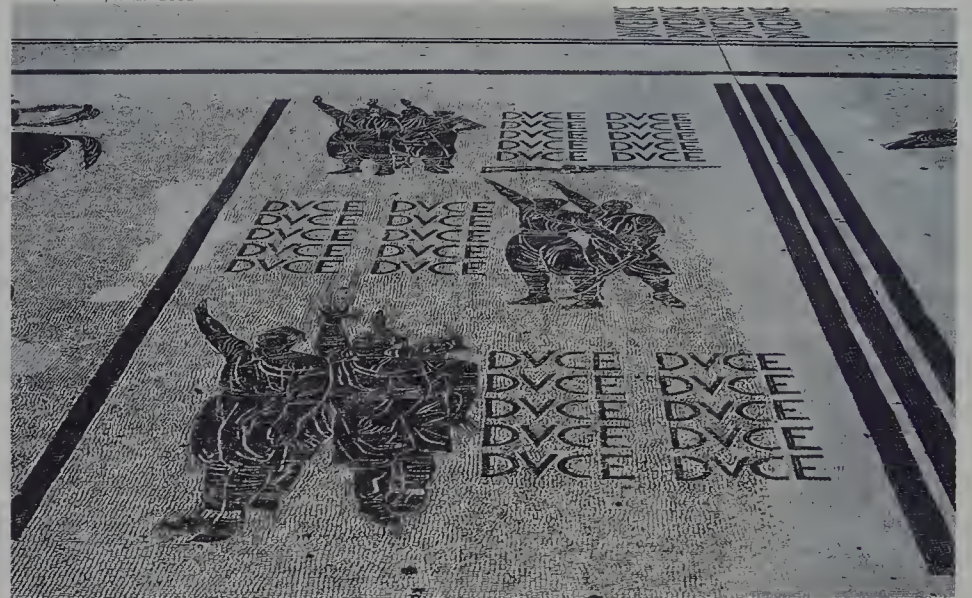
168 Recording:
triumphalism & reflection

The commemoration of battle has, in the tradition of triumphalism so well practiced by the Romans, been rather more partial in spirit in the past than is often the case now.

Thomas Telford's bridge on his Shrewsbury-Halyhead turnpike road in Wales is a splendid example of nineteenth-century triumphalism.

Built in 1815, this bridge is also known as the Waterloo Bridge owing to the text it bears, declaring: THIS ARCH WAS CONSTRUCTED IN THE SAME YEAR THE BATTLE OF WATERLOO WAS FOUGHT (and, by implication, one could almost add, 'and won').

Constructed from cast iron, the lettering, repeated on both sides, is in open-metal form, not dissimilar in effect to the balustrade lettering found at Castle Ashby (see page 126). The robust forms of the Clarendon letter are perfectly suited to their context and appear not so much to have been applied to the bridge but rather to be physically part of the structure.

168/3 shows a far simpler commemoration to battle. Proclaiming four victories of the Crimean War, (Inkerpal, Sebastapal and Alma are the other three), the use of the canon is certainly triumphal but is offset against the stark and somewhat unsettling incised and widely spaced sans serif letterforms.
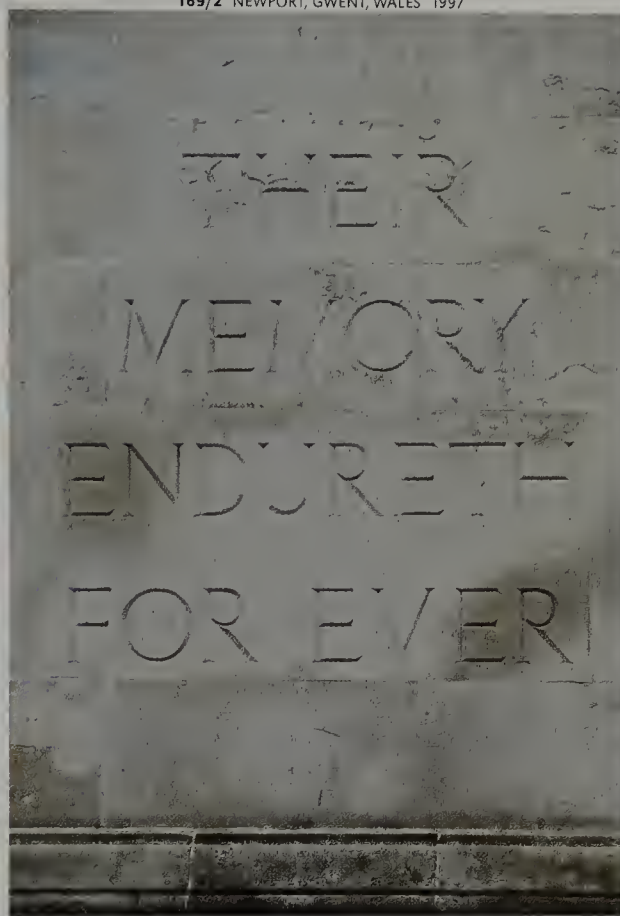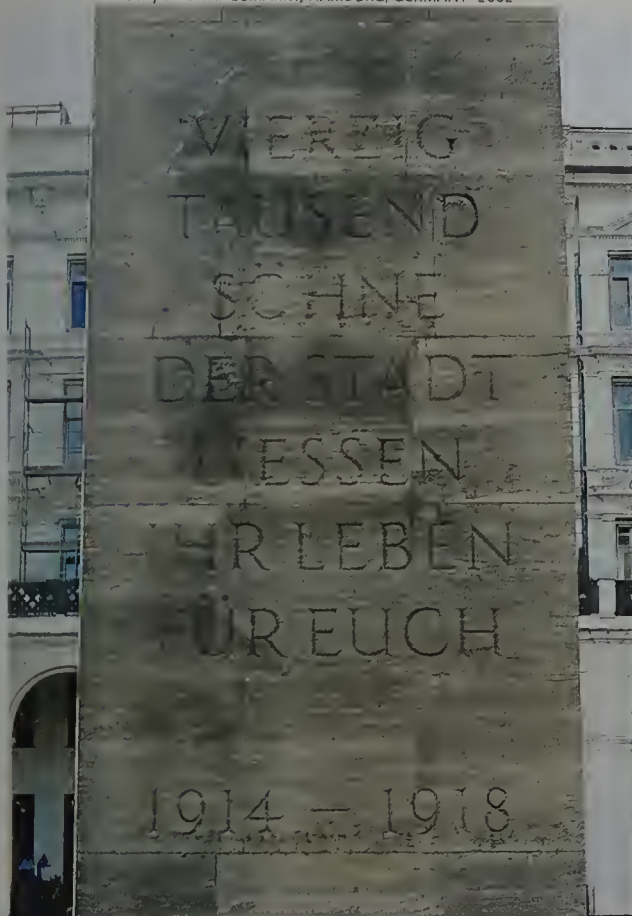
VIERZIG
TAUSEND
SÖHNE
DER STADT
DESSEN
IHR LEBEN
FÜR EUCH

1914 – 1918

THEIR
MEMORY
ENDURETH
FOR EVER

MARTYRS FRANÇAIS
DE LA DÉPORTATION

1945
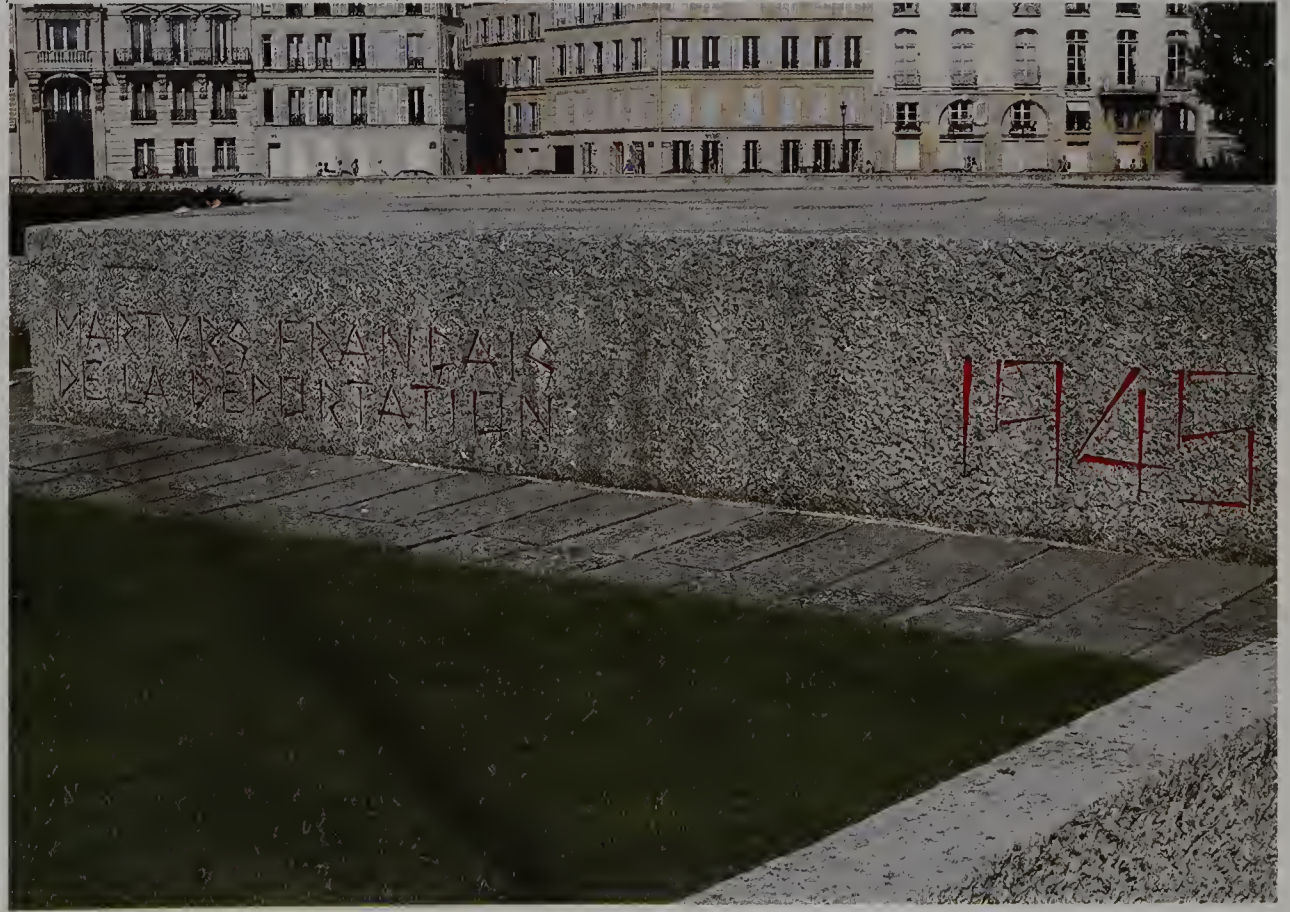
More recent memorials to battle are no less monumental in sensibility yet, in the wake of the devastating wars of the twentieth century, they are more sombre, dedicated to the commemoration of injustice and the loss of life rather than to proclaiming victory (169/1 & 2). The German example (169/1) simply records that:

40,000 | SONS OF | THE CITY
LOST | THEIR LIVES
FOR YOU.

Lettering plays a key role in introducing the Monument to the Martyrs of the Deportation in Paris which itself is at a lower level and is reliant upon pattern and texture alone as tools of communication. The harsh and spiky letterforms are cut into the concrete walls and are made more dramatic still through the use of colour. Yet, the drama has not been overplayed, the fineness and overall lightness of the letterforms offsetting well the brutality of the concrete.

Recording: 169
triumphalism & reflection
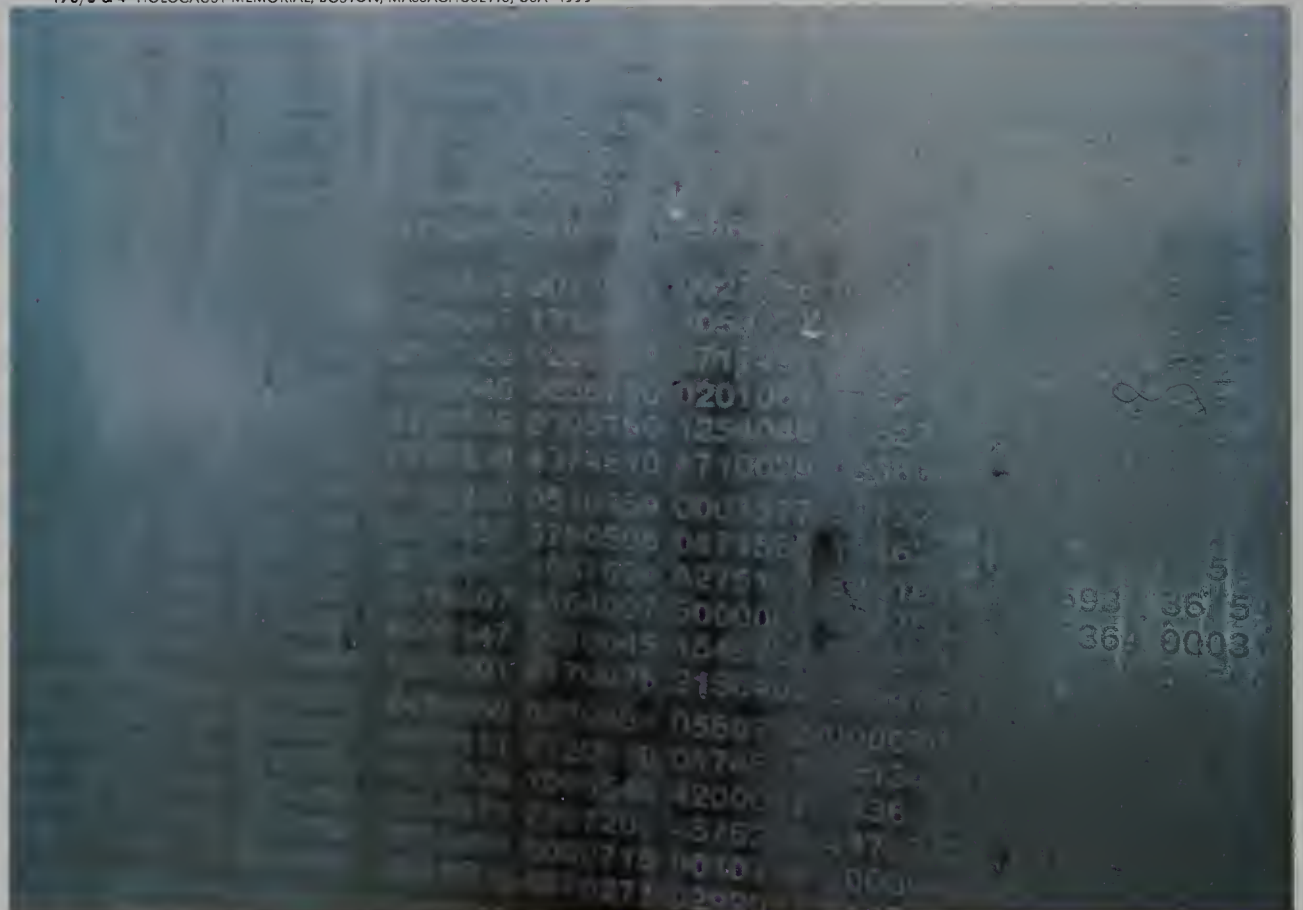
170 Recording: commemoration

The scale of the major conflicts of the twentieth century has also brought about a change in the nature and locality of wor memorials. The Coen Memoriol (170/1 & 2) is o memorial to those who died during the Allied invasion of Fronce, but it is olso o visitor centre which exploins whot hoppened ot thot time ond where in the oreo the sites of bottle, other memoriols ond wor grove ore. Samehow it monoges to achieve bath aims with considerable dignity, the enormity of humon cast being orticuloted by spoce, lighting ond simple lettering.

The Holocoust memoriol in Boston (170/3 & 4) mokes use of a ronge of lettering techniques. The steel ond gloss structure is introduced and concluded by inscribed morble blocks. Metol grills on the floor then articulote the transition through the spoce, eoch incorporoting the nome of o porticulor concentrotion comp. The numbers of inmotes ore etched into the gloss wolls. In terms of execution oll this is pretty stondord fore – competent but o little self-owore ond for from overwhelming. Whot is moving, however, is the simple oct of recording, in this case by numbers nat nomes, the millions of lives token. It serves to remind us ogoin of the resononce thot text olone con hove.

Recording: commemoration 171
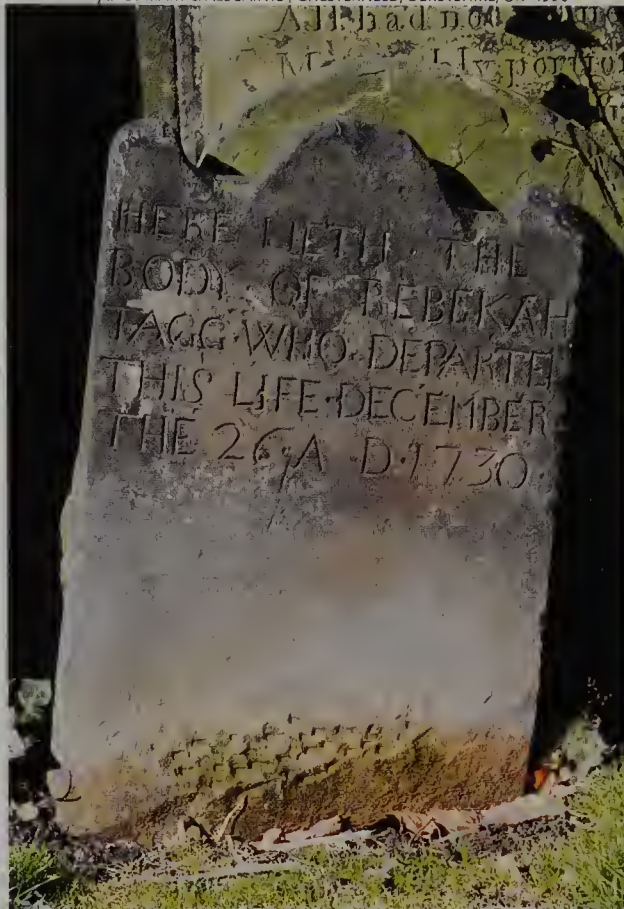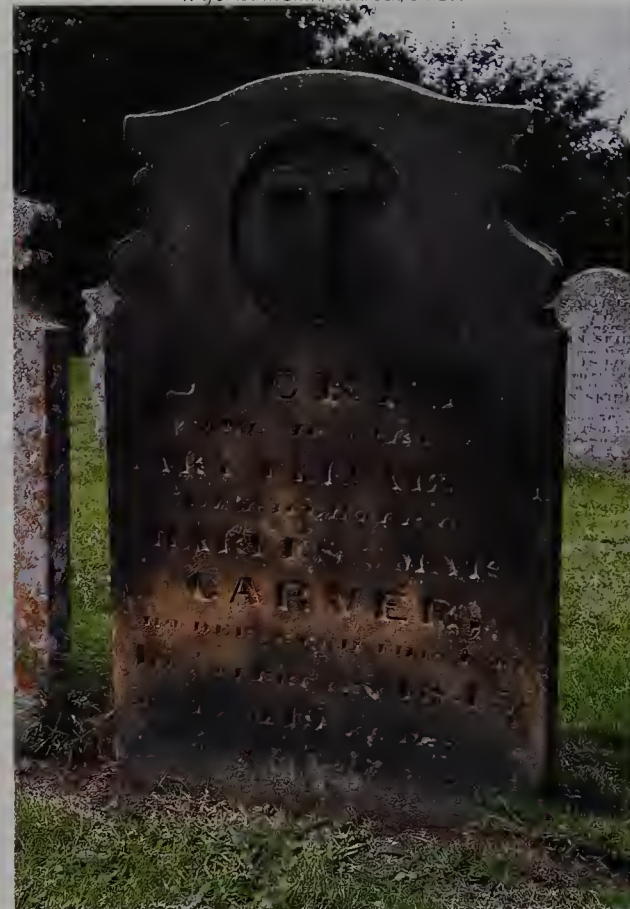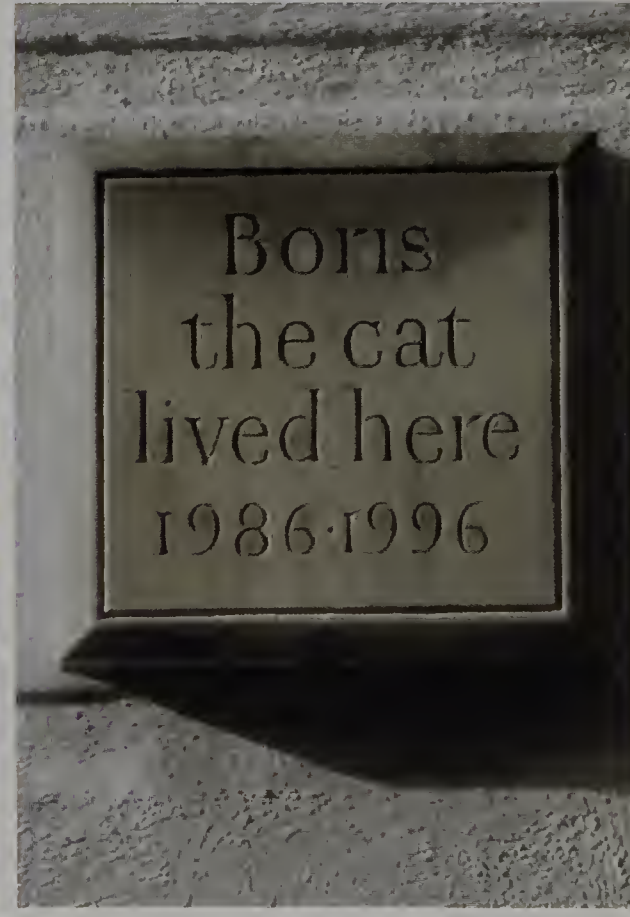
The recording of hundreds or thousands of dead in wor cemeteries olso ochieves o certain paignoncy through the repetition of heod-stones. In this cemetery in Fronce (171/1), some distinction between foiths in the treotment of the groves at leost bestows some sense of indi-viduolity to those commemoroted.

Ordinory groveyords provide an opportunity for o more individuol commemorotion of o life lived. The lettering on older stones show chonging tostes combined with the individuol interests of stone-cutters. For example, the lorger letters of 171/3 combine ospects of both Egyption ond Clorendon forms.

Todoy most gravestones ore soul-lessly moss-produced. A look ot the troditions of other countries reveols the stoleness of our own ideos, espe-ciolly concerning moteriols (171/4). Hoppily though, o revivol of interest in hond lettering hos more recently resulted in on increose in individu-olly considered stones (171/5).
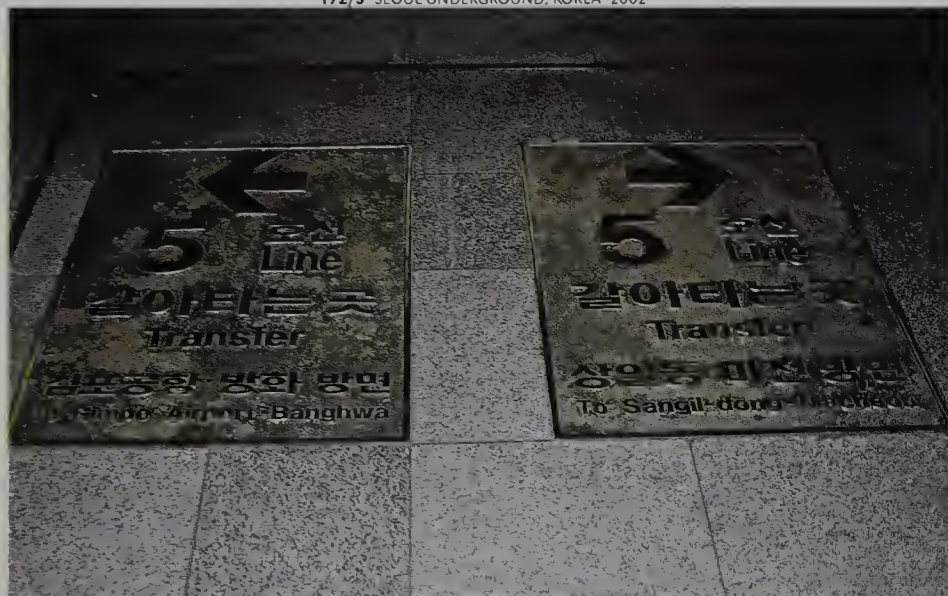
PÅ DENNA PLATS MÖRDADES
SVERIGES
STATSMINISTER
OLOF PALME
DEN 28 FEBRUARI 1986

AJUNTAMENT
DE BARCELONA
EN RECONEIXEMENT
Camiseria
Bonet
1890   1993
ALS SEUS ANYS DE
SERVEI A LA CIUTAT

5 Line
Transfer

5 Line
Transfer
To Sangil-dong

CLIFTON & COOPER
PAVIORS
&
ASPHALTERS
DUBLIN

1904
ABERTHAW CO
A
CONCRETE
BOSTON
RANSOME PAT.
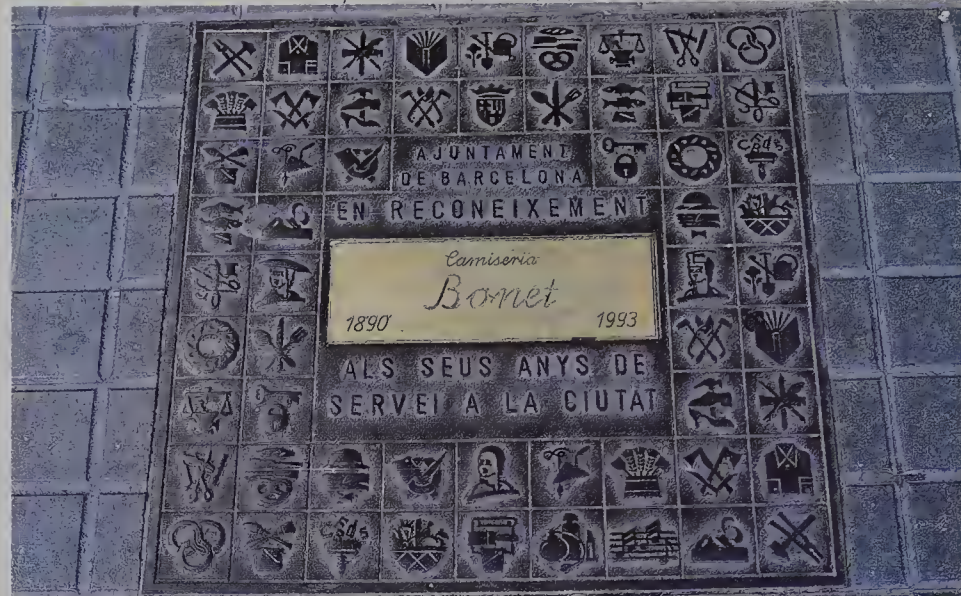
172 **Incidentals: recording, instructing, advertising**

Lettering on the road itself is aften used ta reinfarce instructions far drivers (see pages 62–3) but it can alsa be used in more visually subtle ways in a pedestrian cantext. Same of these are shawn here and an the following six pages.

In a busy street, the graund sometimes praves the mast mast

abvious place ta record significant events or cultural locatians (172/1 & 2), ta give directians (172/3 & 4) or to state a manufacturer's name (172/5 & 6), far instance.

If such items are cast in cancrete, as with the last twa examples, lettering can be intraduced in the form of a brass inlay which will be

kept palished by pedestrian traffic. Where service cavers are made fram a slippery material, such as cast iran, there is the need ta pravide same farm of grip, usually by creating a textured pattern. On the caal-hole cavers autside Geargian ar Victorian hauses (172/1–6) advantage was aften taken af this

fact and a simple advertisement in the farm af the manufacturer's name (and sametimes address) was used ta create the required textured surface. In additian ta their visual interest, these names can tell us much abaut the number af lacal manufacturers in a given tawn ar city.

173/1 PEMBROKE STREET UPPER, DUBLIN 2, IRELAND 2002

173/2 MERRION STREET UPPER, DUBLIN 2, IRELAND 2002

173/3 MERRION STREET UPPER, DUBLIN 2, IRELAND 2002

173/4 HIGH ROAD, WILLESDEN GREEN, LONDON NW10, UK 2002

173/5 & 6 UPPER MONTAGU STREET, LONDON W1, UK 2001

174/3 WILLESDEN GREEN, LONDON NW10, UK 1992

174/4 CARRER DE ROGER DE FLOR, BARCELONA, SPAIN 2002

174/5 SAN LORENZO, FLORENCE, ITALY 1996
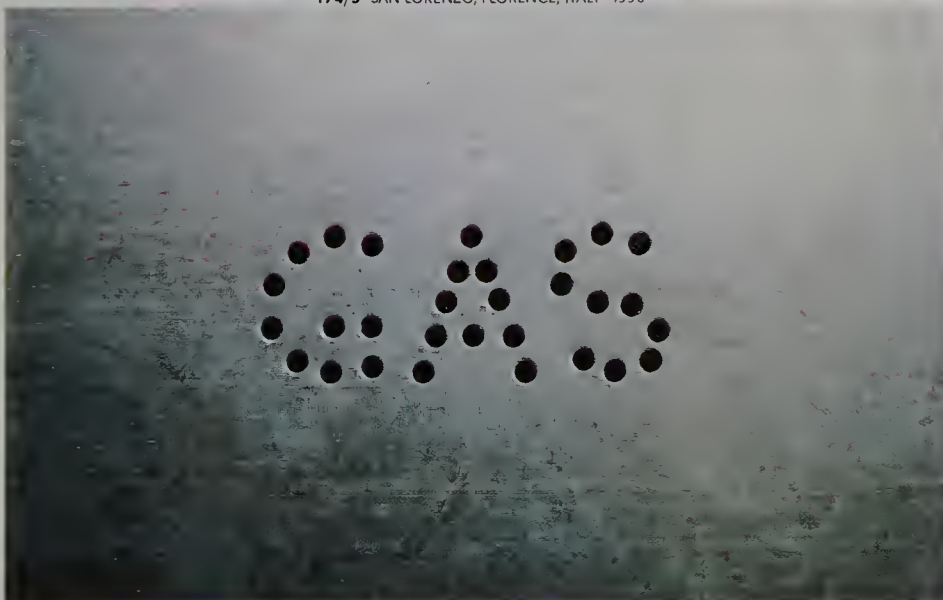
174/6 ST NICHOLAS STREET, KING'S LYNN, NORFOLK, UK 2001
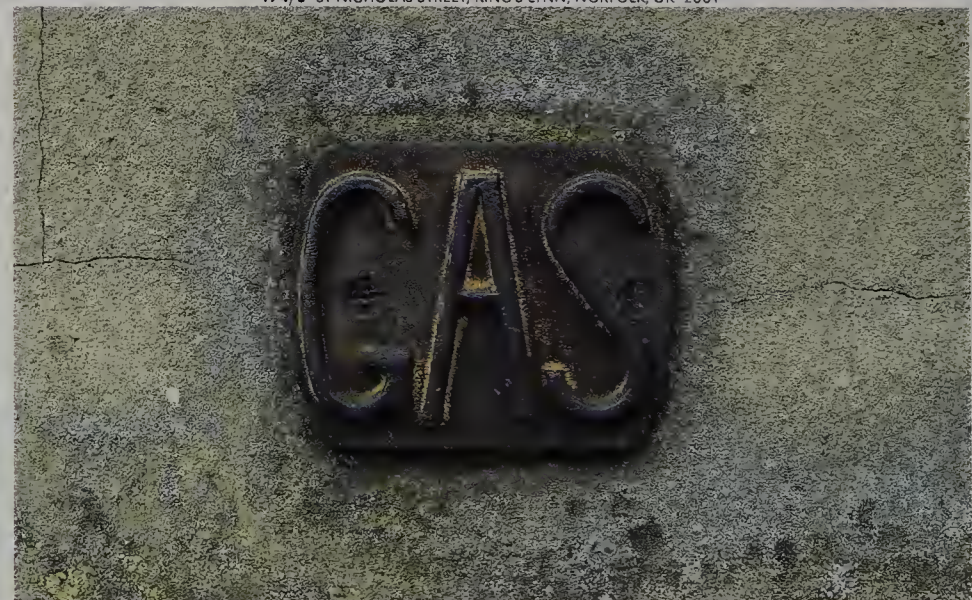
174 Incidentals: recording, instructing, advertising

While there will always be the need or desire to make grand statements, it is often the small details which determine the visual texture and contribute to a sense of place.

The examples on this page are all utility markers. In each case, considerable care has been taken in making either a simple statement of their purpose, or in stating the company or manufacturer's name. Just as the coal-hole covers on the previous page carried the names of long gone manufacturers, 174/1 & 2 indicate suppliers now amalgamated into larger concerns, while 174/3 shows a once standard pattern now replaced by a mundane plastic alternative. While most examples shown can only state what lies behind or below, the form of 175/2, in addition to some unusual lettering, is particularly demonstrative.

Even in the first half of the twentieth century, it was possible for councils and even local builders to order manhole covers with their own name on from a local manufacturer (175/1). Today it tends only to be larger companies who customize standard products with their own name or design. With the changes in manufacturing practice throughout the twentieth century, the production of standard gratings and manhole

covers shows much less locol diversity with only o hondful of componies supplying such items throughout the whole of western Europe. The company which mode 175/2, Pont-o-Mousson of Fronce, is o partner in the multinotionol Compognie ò Soint-Goboin which owns mojor monufocturers in Britoin, Germony, Itoly, Portugol ond Spoin omongst other places. The bridge symbol or the initiols PAM on o groting ore becoming more ond more commonploce.

Incidentals: recording, 175
instructing, advertising

176 Incidentals: recording, instructing, advertising

Many older examples of utility markers exist (176/1–3), and like the old road signs in Britain (see pages 20–1) or France (pages 40–3) their removal is quite unnecessary.

Elsewhere, items with lettering such as the time switch (176/4) or pump (176/5) seem to survive more by accident than design, but their presence adds to the unique experience of a place as well as telling us something about its history.

Occasionally, objects can be pressed into reuse, these ornamental plinths (176/6) support contemporary telephone kiosks, albeit in a somewhat incongruous manner.

177/1 ROME, ITALY 2002

177/2 VIA DI PORTA ANGELICA, ROME, ITALY 2002

177/3 ROADWORKS BARRIER NEAR TEATRO DI MARCELLO, ROME, ITALY 2002

177/4 PIAZZA DI PIETRO, ROME, ITALY 2002

177/5 PONTE GIUSEPPE MAZZINI, ROME, ITALY 2002

177/6 NEAR PONTE GIUSEPPE MAZZINI, ROME, ITALY 2002

In Rome, the introductory wards used on triumphol orches – Senotvs Popvlvs Qve Romonvs (to the Senote ond people of Rome), see poge 162 – were sometimes obbrevioted to four letters: *S*, *P*, *Q* and *R*. These hove since been used in whot omounts to o corporote identity for the city in the some woy thot other cities use o coat of orms or some form af logotype.

Whot mokes Rome interesting is thot the essentiol ospect is the letters ond not their form, ond the diversity of objects which they odorn. This diversity is reflected in mony different woys ond moterials to suit the style of on ero or building, or the moteriol they are made from (177/1–6).

178/3 RAMBLA ST JOSEP 83, BARCELONA, SPAIN 2002

178/4 HORNCASTLE CHURCH, LINCOLNSHIRE, UK 1992

178/5 JOHN'S LANE WEST, DUBLIN 8, IRELAND 2002
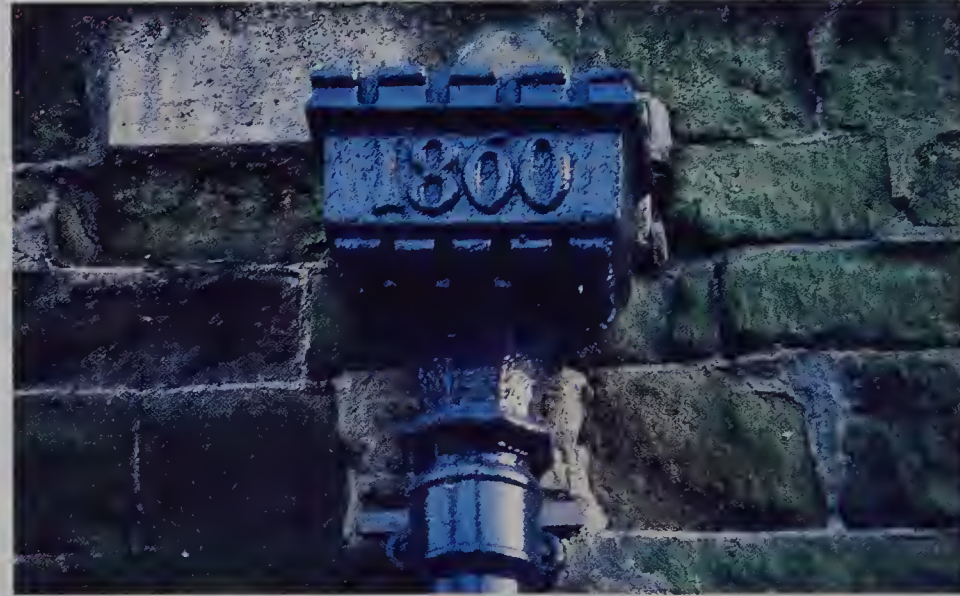
178/6 MACKLIN STREET, LONDON WC2, UK 1997

178 Incidentals: dates & makers

Althaugh the mativatian may be mixed, the desire ta sign and dote o piece af wark af which you are praud gaes back o lang way.

The exomples shawn here range fram the prominent and the extra-vert ta the olmast invisible, and unlike the exomples af lettering shown on the previaus six pages, most of these require yaur eyes ta be facing upwards.

In camparisan to the dates shown here, recent attempts by develapers ta fulfil a similar purpase aften fail because they exhibit na genuine understanding af letterfarms ar sympathy far materials.

179/1 EAMONT BRIDGE, CUMBRIA, UK 2002
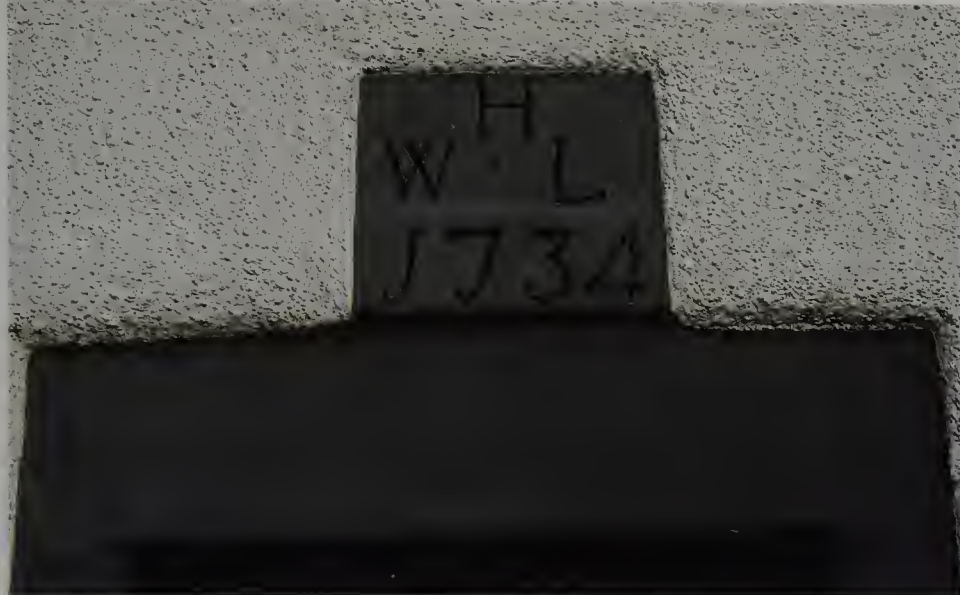
179/2 BLANCHE LANE, SOUTH MIMMS, HERTFORDSHIRE, UK 2002

179/3 EXETER, DEVON, UK 1999
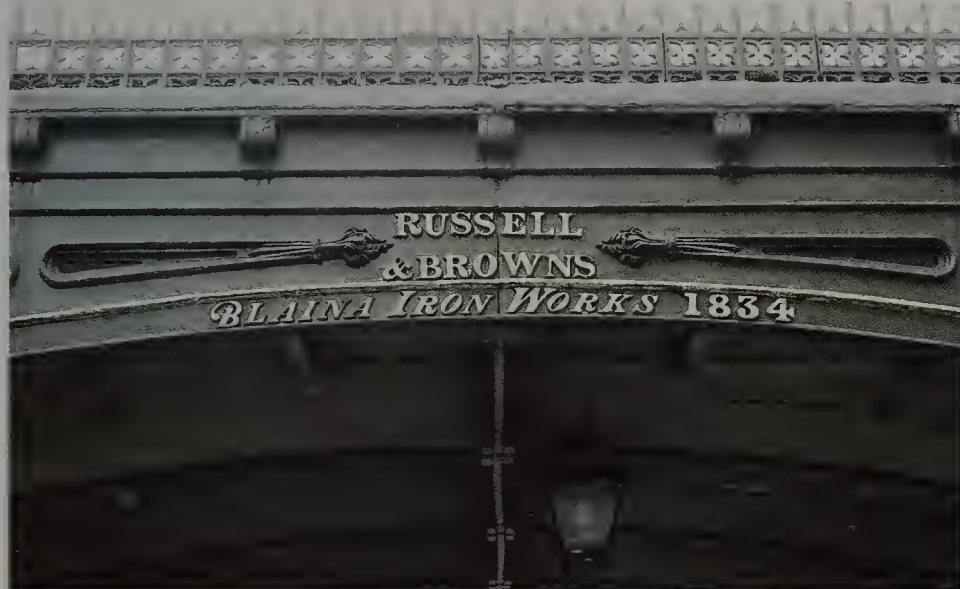
179/4 CROSS KEYS BRIDGE, SUTTON BRIDGE, LINCOLNSHIRE, UK 1992

179/5 MARQUEE AT THE HENRY MOORE FOUNDATION, PERRY GREEN, HERTFORDSHIRE, UK 1999

179/6 HOTEL DE VILLE METRO, PARIS, FRANCE 2000

Incidentals: 179
dates & makers

180 **Twelve pictures which wouldn't fit anywhere else**

Some favourites, enough said.

181/1 MUSEUM OF LIBERTY, COPENHAGEN, DENMARK 1998

181/2 BREWERY ARTS CENTRE, KENDAL, CUMBRIA, UK 1992

181/3 HIGH ROAD, WOOD GREEN, LONDON N22, UK 1995

181/4 ON STRADA NO.439 BETWEEN PONTEDERA AND VOLTERRA, ITALY 2002

181/5 RUE DU PÈRE-ETERNAL, AURAY, BRITTANY, FRANCE 2002

181/6 MÖLLE, SWEDEN 2002

Twelve pictures which 181
wouldn't fit anywhere else

Dom Sanch

RESTAURANTE - PIZZERIA
Bella Napoli
VALE CENTIANES · 1.8Km

PASTELARIA TROPICAL
COFFEE SHOP
CENTRO COMERCIAL ALGARVESOL
VALE CENTIANE

iris **Kodak** 30
FOTO REVELAÇÃO / DEVELOPING SISTEM
1 FILM · 1 ALBUM · 1 FOTO 15x20
CENTRO COMERCIAL CERRO DOS PIOS

centro comercial
cerro dos pios
Boutique
Passerelle
loja 4
tel.:356462

3 Kms

TRAFALGAR HOUSE EUROPE
ROCHA BRAVA

CABELEIREIRA
estudio 2000
HAIRDRESSER

...rte - interior
...e do Milho

...MERCIAL CENTER
O FAROL

FERNANDO'S
Stone-Steak
PALMGARDENS 1 KM

DE MERGULHO
UCHBASIS
DIVING CENTER 1000m
PARADISE CLUB

EL
...AL
palmansor

Campo de Golfe do Vale de Milho

Colina Village

Restaurante Colina
Típico

RESTAURANTE CENTIANES
HAUTE CUISINE
2.5km

MUNG●'S

RESTAURANTE O CANTINHO
300m

RESTAURANTE VALE DO MILHO
3.5Km

ESTRADA
DO
FAROL

← Escadinhas
← Miradouro
← Ermida
← Escola

← Praia Carvalho
← Praia Vale Centeanes
← Praia Vale Covo
← Farol-Alfanzina
← Algar Seco
← Mercado

RFUMARIA
COLONIA

↑ 100 mts

RESTAURANTE CHINÊS
"Grande Muralha"
長城 Tel.

Glossary 1: parts of a letter

Alphabeta x

cap-height · ascender height · ascender · x-height · baseline · descender · depth of descender · thin · thick · bracket · stem · counters · bowl · tail · head serif · foot serif · crossbar
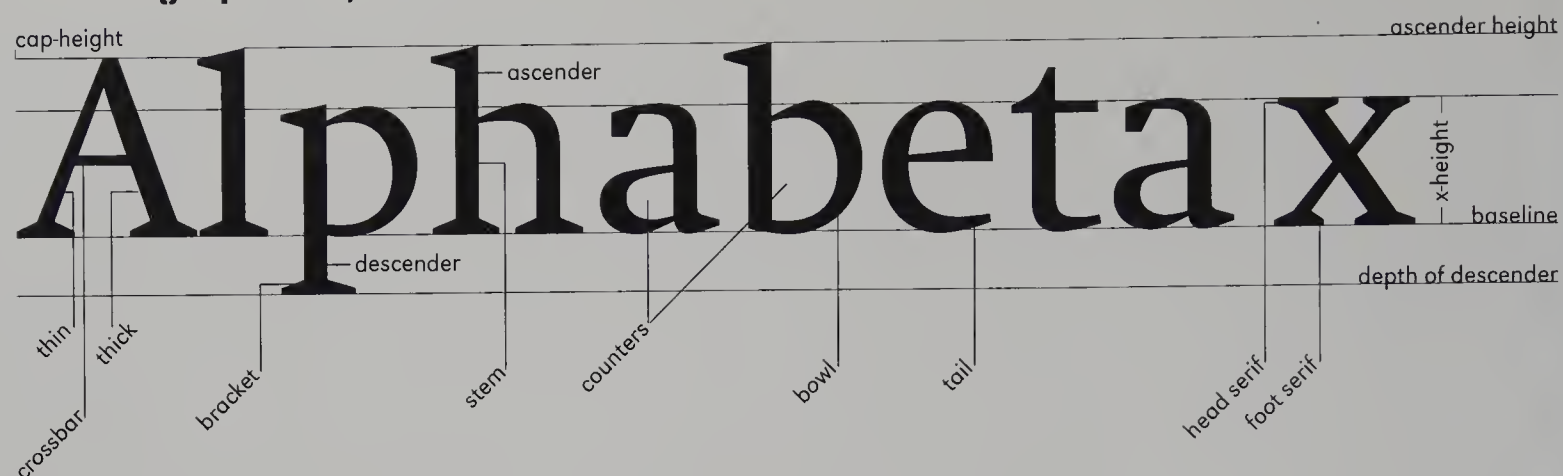
Glossary 2: terms, materials & techniques

Italics refer to other glossary entries, **bold** to photographs.

Anderson (Sir Colin) Chairman of the committee which advised British parliament on traffic signs for motorways. Its findings, published in 1962 (see Sources & further reading), were accepted and introduced immediately. See pages 24–5.
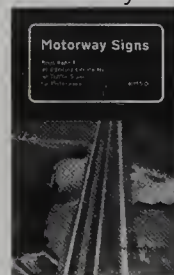
Architectural ceramics A broad term covering all building materials made from fired clay. While including bricks, chimney pots, etc., for our purposes it is limited to three main kinds: terracotta, faience and tiles. Both *terracotta* and *faience* are used to describe three-dimensional hollow blocks, cast from a mould, which can – when filled with concrete – form structural elements and be used with brick or other building materials. When unglazed (or with a transparent glaze) these are known as terracotta, see **118/1–2**. (Below, Hanway Place, London W1, UK 1992.)
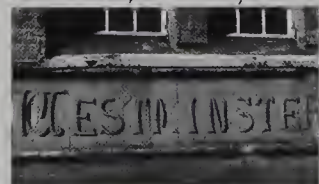
When glazed they are known as faience (after the Italian town of Faenza, an important centre for glazed pottery). See **80/2** & **84/5–6**. (Below, Paris Metro, France 2000.)

Tiles Thin, flat pieces of glazed or unglazed clay used as a floor- or wall-covering and are not, strictly speaking, part of the building fabric. See **138/1–2**. (Below, Tynemouth Station, Tyne & Wear, UK 1982.)
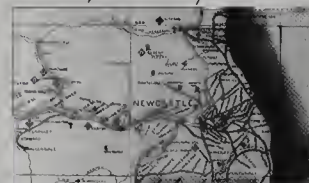
Casting A process used to create any design or pattern by using a mould. Such a pattern may be in relief (raised) or reverse cast (impressed). Typical materials used in this process are iron (see **20/1–6** & **173/1–6**), concrete (see **132/1–133/3**) and bronze (see **134/4–135/3**). (Below: one of the moulds for **131/2**, 2002.)

Carving The process of creating a design in wood or stone by cutting, usually with a chisel and dummy (round-headed hammer). A design can be formed by cutting the subject itself, when it is known as incised (see also *cut*). See **106/1–107/6** & **122/1 & 3**. (Below, Bath, Wiltshire, UK 2002.)
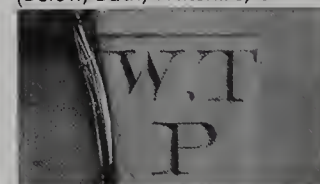
When the background is cut away, the design is referred to as being in relief (see also *section*). See **120/3–4** & **127/1–6**. (Below, Sticklandgate, Kendal, Cumbria, UK 2001.)

Clarendon A form of *slab-serif* letter with bracketed serifs. Generally square in proportion, with an evenness of character width and noticeable contrast between thicks and thins, this sturdy letter first appears in the early nineteenth century, though the slightly condensed typeform first registered in that name, and which was to become the norm, doesn't actually appear until 1845. See **142/1** & **168/1–2** and *Egyptian*. (Below, locomotive 55015 at King's Cross Station, London, UK 1979.)
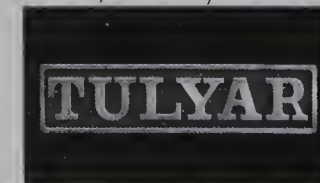
Curvilinear Letterforms, usually seriffed, with an organic or ornamental restlessness of form and exaggerated in curve and proportion: bowls to the letters *B*, *D*, *P* & *R* may swell and crossbars of *A*, *E*, *F* & *H* may be set either very high or very low rather than just above centre. See **80/1–3** & **118/2**. (Below, Kingsway, London WC2, UK, 2002)

Cut Term used to describe the shape of a slice through a three-dimensional letterform when incised or impressed. Typical cut shapes include *V-cut*, see **121/1–2** (below, Tavistock Street, London WC2, UK 2002)
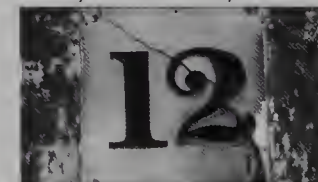
and *square-cut*, see **120/6** (below, Durham Cathedral, UK 1993).
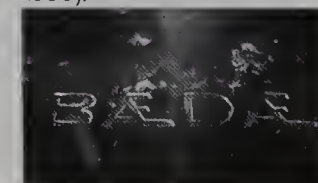
DIN Deutsches Institut für Normung, the German equivalent of the British Standards Institute (BSI). Both publish national standards and are members of the International Standards Organization (ISO) and Comité Européen de Normalisation (CEN).

Dot-matrix A restricted grid from which letters can be rendered, typically by lights. See **93/1–3**. (Below, Marylebone Station London NW1, UK 2002.)
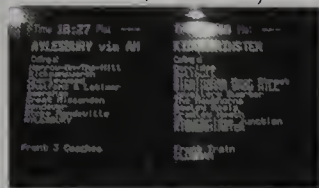
Egyptian A form of slab-serif letter whose serifs are unbracketed. Generally square in proportion, with an evenness of character width and line, this sturdy letter first appears early in the nineteenth century and as a typeform around 1817. See **142/3** and Clarendon. (Below, Tuesday Market, King's Lynn, Norfolk, UK 2001.)

Enamelling see vitreous stove enamelling

English letter A vernacular interpretation of the Roman square capital which originated in the mid-eighteenth century. Fully evolved, it is robust and square in proportion with capitals almost uniform in width. Contrast between thicks and thins is strong, forms are full and rounded with serifs generously bracketed. See **105/1** & **121/2** and compare with the Roman Trajan letter. The solid underlying proportions of the 'English letter' also inform many nineteenth-century Clarendon, Egyptian and grotesque letterforms and types. (Below, Wilton, Wiltshire, UK 1998.)

Etching A process whereby a design is interpreted as a relief surface using acid as the agent, typically on metal plates used for printing, but also widely used on glass and other surfaces for decorative purposes. See **170/4**. (Below, All Saints' Church, Holbeach, Lincolnshire, UK 2002.)

Faience see architectural ceramics

Fascia A narrow definition would be the clearly defined area on the front of a commercial premises on which to install a sign. Such signs may be regarded as temporary and are not integral to a building's structure. See pages 119 & 136–7. In this book we also refer to other architecturally non-integral lettering as 'fascia'. (Below, Museum Street, London WC1, UK 1995.)

Finger posts Signposts with thin arms radiating from a pole and pointing towards the stated destination. See **20/1–21/6** & **66/1–67/3**. (Below, near Spalding, Lincolnshire, UK 2002.)

Geneva Protocol Agreement about the standardization of road signs reached at the 1949 United Nations conference on road and motor transport held in Geneva. See pages 47–57.

Glass A material which can be etched or stained with designs to contrast with its usual transparent state. Often used for fascias when it is frequently seen with lettering or other designs painted and/or gilded on its reverse. See **119/2** & **136/1–6**. (Below, Exeter, Devon, UK 1999.)
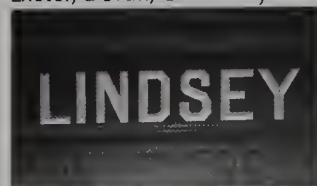
Grotesque A sans serif letter of the nineteenth century, appearing as type from the 1830s. It is characterized by a sturdy squareness of form, evenness of character width and often, when used architecturally, an evenness of line. See **124/3** & **143/1**. (Below, Mercer Row, Louth, Lincolnshire, UK 1992.)
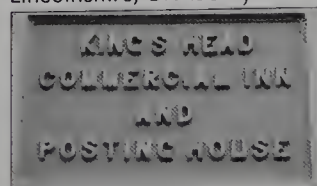
Heritage styling The styling of signs and other street furniture to make them appear old and 'fit' better in conservation areas. Too often, however, such imitation is only an approximation of historical models and ignores the size, mass and detailing of actual surviving examples. See **66/1–3**, **67/1** & **113/2**. (Below, old and new in Albert Road, London NW1, UK 2002.)

Illumination Lighting can draw attention to existing signs by floodlighting, or by backlighting a sign made of transparent material. Smaller lighting elements can be installed inside three-dimensional letters. See **145/3–6** (Below, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex, UK 2002.)

Tubular lighting elements such as neon can be used to create the actual shape of the lettering itself. See **145/1–2** & **5**. (Below, West Central Street, London WC1, UK 1995.)

Infilling Practice of filling carved or reverse-cast letters with a contrasting medium. See **163/1** & **3**. (Below, detail of **122/2**)
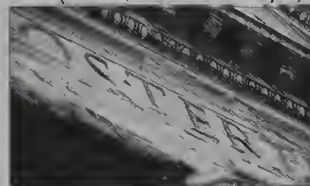
Informatory signs provide information as opposed to definite instructions. Such information is often directional. See pages 16–46 and regulatory signs. (Below, Tottenham Court Road, London W1, UK c.1969)

Letter spacing see spacing

Makers' marks Akin to a signature on a painting, a record of designer, architect or manufacturer, sometimes a prominent feature (see **173/1–6**), sometimes more discreet (see **20/3** & **6**). (Below, RMS Queen Mary, Long Beach, California, USA 1992.)

Map-type sign Directional sign, usually for motor traffic, in which the road ahead is represented as a map with straight ahead at the top. See **26/1** & **29/1–5** and stack-type sign. (Below, Harrow Road, London W2, UK 2002.)

Michelin French tyre company founded in 1889 which erected around 70,000 ceramic signs around France between 1931 and 1970. See pages 40–3. (Below, St Maixent-sur-Vie, Vendée, France 2001.)

Milestone Generic name for stones, posts, plaques or other markers used to indicate the passage of distance, and other related information, along a particular route. See pages 16–18. (Below, B556 [previously A6], Hertfordshire, UK 2002.)

Other countries (notably France) have kilometre stones serving the same purpose, see page 19.

Mosaic The arrangement of small pieces of glass, tile or other materials to create a picture or pattern. See **138/3–6** & **139/2, 5 & 6**. (Below, Long Acre, London WC1, UK 1995.)

Neon see *illumination*

Painting Perhaps the most basic way of applying lettering or other decoration to walls. Older, lead-based, paints have a surprising longevity. See **143/1–4**. (Below, Wardrobe Place, London EC4, UK 2000.)
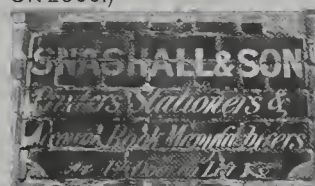
Pictogram As its name suggests, a 'pictorial diagram' often used to convey simple information about facilities, etc. without the need for written information. See **87/3** & **89/1–6**. (Below, Shanghai, China 2002.)
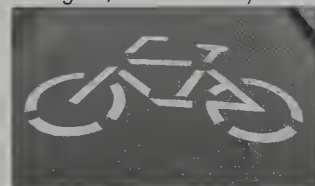
Regulatory signs govern (road) users' behaviour by giving definite instructions. If a sign system adheres to the Geneva Protocol of 1949 these instructions are reinforced by the use of signs of differing shapes for positive or negative instructions, see pages 47–57 and *informatory signs*. (Below, Warwick Avenue, London W2, UK 2002)

Roman square capital A formal letter characterized by a square-ness to its widest characters, though an underlying sense of geometry establishes a pattern for characters of differing widths (*eg*, *M* & *O* occupy a square while *B* & *L* only half a square). Any geometric references are, however, softened by the influence of the brush/pen which results in forms gently modulated in line. See pages 122–3.

(Below, Piazza San Giovanni in Laterana, Rome, Italy, 2002.)
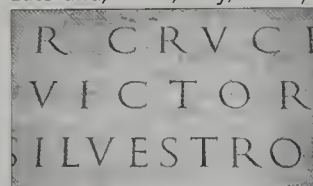
Roman Trajan letter Form of *Roman square capital* found on Trajan's Column of AD 113 and widely lauded as exemplary. Following Edward Johnston's influence it was used as model for much public carved work throughout the twentieth century. See **120/1**. (Below, Louth, Lincolnshire, UK 1992.)

Sans serif A letter without serifs or other terminal strokes. The basic idea of the sans serif form has been widely interpreted, for example, a particular nineteenth century interpretation of sans serif is identified as *grotesque*. See also *Swiss typefaces*. (Below, Grand Canal Docks, Dublin 4, Ireland 2002.)
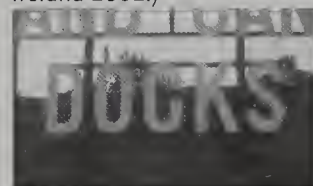
Section Term used to describe the shape of a slice through a three-dimensional letterform when in relief. See **120/3–4**. Some typical sectional shapes are shown below.
Square-section, (below, Market Place, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, UK 2002).

Round-section, (below, Exchange Street, Dublin, Ireland 2002).
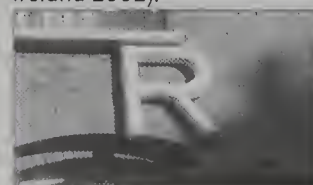
Siesta S Our term for the relaxed, forward-sloping *S* found in some examples of sans-serif lettering, especially, though not exclusively, in Southern Europe. See **137/3**. (Below, Barcelona, Spain 2000.)
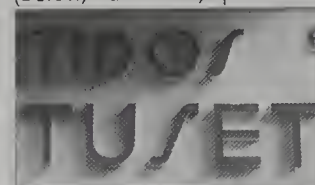
Silhouette Letters cut-out or in relief seen against a background of contrasting colour or material. While no longer permitted in the UK, in some countries, use is made of the skyline to heighten the effect. (Below, Boston, Massachusetts, USA 1999.)
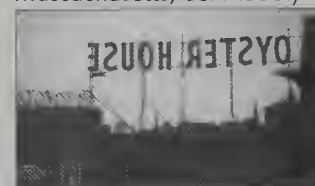
Slab-serif Heavy rectangular serif which can be bracketed to the main stem (*Clarendon*) or be un-bracketed (*Egyptian*). (Below, High Road, Willesden [not *in situ*], London NW10, UK 1992.)

Spacing Legibility of any text is reliant on the spacing between letters, words and lines as much as the shapes of the characters themselves. A constant space between words in a line helps the flow of reading and should not appear greater than the space between lines ('leading') unless texture, not legibility, is the goal. Increasing the space between letters can greatly increase the legibility of words needed to be read at distance or when white letters are on a dark background.

Square-cut see *cut*

Square section see *section*

Stack-type sign Information sign, usually directional, in which the information appears as a list. The grouping of information may be further articulated by the use of separate panels. See **27/1** & **45/1–3** and *map-type sign*. (Below, Carvoeiro, Portugal, 1996.)
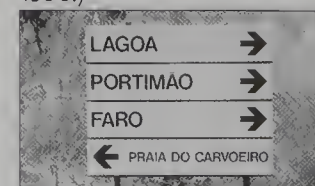
Stencil A thin sheet with a cut-out design which is transferred onto another surface by means of paint etc. In its typical form, letters created by this method are characterized by being made up of discontinuous elements. See **63/3, 4 & 6**. (Below, a skip in Paris, France 2000)

Stucco An external render of plaster or cement which was often moulded to resemble dressed stonework, or cast with decorative designs or lettering. See **120/6** & **142/1**. (Below detail of **105/1**, 2003.)

Swiss typefaces *Sans serifs* such as Helvetica and similar fonts.

Temporary see *fascia*

Terracotta see *architectural ceramics*

Tiles see *architectural ceramics*

Transport alphabet Typeface in two weights designed by Jock Kinneir and Margaret Calvert for the British road sign system in 1963, still in use. (Below, Transport Medium, detail of figure 2 of the *Worboys* report.)
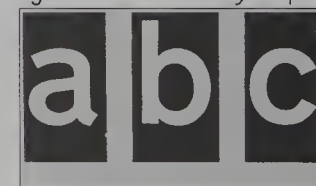
Trompe l'oeil A painted or other two-dimensional representation designed to create the illusion of three dimensions. See **136/4**. (Below, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex, UK 2002.)

Utility markers A grille, post, etc. which indicates the presence of services such as gas, electricity or water. See pages 173–6. (Below, Boston, Massachusetts, USA 1999)
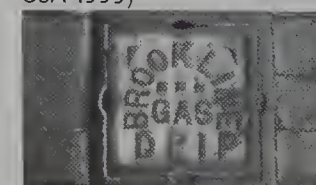
Vernaculor Troditions to hove emerged from regianol proctice ond, os reloted to orchitecture, usuolly concerned with the ordinary rather thon the monumentol, see poges 124–5. Alsa used here to refer to untutored proctice of o much braader kind. (Below, Clocton-on-Sea, Essex, UK 2002.)

Vitreaus stave enamelling A process whereby designs in caloured powdered gloss, either dry ar os an ink, are transferred, by meons of *stencils*, transfers or screen-printing, onto sheet steel ar iron. These are fused onta the sheet by firing in o furnoce ot temperotures of oround 800–B60°C. See **110/1–5**. (Belaw, Poris, Fronce 2000.)

Worbays (Sir Walter) Chairman af the committee which odvised the British porliament on troffic signs for all-purpose roads. Its findings, published in 1963 (see Sources & further reoding) were accepted and introduced fram 1964 onwards. See pages 26–31.

Word spoce see *spacing*

Wrought iron Iron which has been heoted then hommered, stretched ond twisted into shope, usuolly by hond. Today much reproduction work octuolly uses mild steel bors. See **140/3** & **141/3**. (Belaw, Paris, Fronce 2000.)

Sources & further reading

Essential books
Alon **Bartram**, *Lettering in architecture*, Londan, Lund Humphries 1975

Nicolete **Gray**, *Lettering an buildings*, Londan, Architecturol Press & New York, Reinhold 1960. A reprint (with on introduction by James Mosley) is in preporotion by Hyphen Press, Londan

Jock **Kinneir**, *Wards and buildings: the art and practice af public lettering*, London, Architecturol Press 1980

General
Potrick **Baglee** (ed.), *Open air*, Landan, G F Smith 1999

Phil **Baines**, 'Letterforms: history, values, possibilities' *Paint B* (Art & Design Research Journol) 1999/2000, pp.5–13

Alon **Bartram**, *The English lettering traditian fram 1700 ta the present day*, London, Lund Humphries 1986

Peter **Campbell**, 'Reoding the signs', *Landan Review af Baoks* 24, Vol.24, 12 December 2002, p.2B

Richord **Dragun** 'Where are yau, where yau've been and where yau're going', *Typagraphic writing* (ed. David Jury), Straud, ISTD 2001, pp.66–9

Edword **Fella**, *Letters an America*, London, Lourence King 2000

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Photographic credits

All photography by the authors was shot on Pentax K-series cameras, with 28mm, 55mm and 75–250mm lenses. Our primary aim has always been to record the lettering first and make pictures second. This partly accounts for the variable lighting conditions, but we have long since learnt that you must photograph examples when you see them, as they may not be there when you return.

Additional photography by **Jackie Baines** 45/2; **Central Lettering Record** Phil Baines 131/1, 132/1–3, 133/1, 135/1 & 2, 156/1–6, 157, 158/2–5, 159/1 & 3–5; Nicholas Biddulph 30/1, 86/1 & 2, 185/informatory; Juan Sebastián Martínez-Campos 159/2; **Niklas Dahlbeck** 52/2, 53/6, 55/4, 60/6, 61/1, 63/2, 79/4; **Michael Evidon** 37/2, 46/3, 56/5, 58/3, 62/3, 76/2, 144/2; **Michael Evidon & Mia Nilsson** 10–11, 181/6; **Lisa Ferneyhough** 35/1 & 2, 48/6, 49/1, 51/4 & 5, 52/1, 60/2. 77/1, 112/5; **Yauseon Gang** 49/4, 57/1, 77/3, 89–90, 172/3; **G·Net** (courtesy Stephen Raw) 152/1; **Ben Hughes** 76/6, 89/3 & 4, 186/pictogram; **Robin Kinross** 171/6; **Amanda Lester** 181/4; **Janice Lo** 38/2, 52/6, 53/5, 62/1, 112/3; **Basia Pacześna** 46/4, 79/3, 89/5 & 6, 112/6; **Maarten de Reus** 162–3; **Kosuke Shikata** 19/6, 56/3, 57/4, 59/2, 60/1, 62/2; **Jason Skowranek** 79/1 & 2, 169/1; **Stefania Trafina** 49/3 & 5, 52/5, back cover/flap; **Jack Schulze** 127/6; **Minas Zarifopoulos** 119/5 & 6.

Glossary 1 is adapted from Phil Baines & Andrew Haslam, *Type & typography*, London, Laurence King 2001, p.38.

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Dedication

To our respective families and friends who have in turn been tolerant, encouraging and bemused.

Phil Baines is a senior lecturer in typography at Central Saint Martins College of Art & Design and co-curator of the Central Lettering Record. As a freelance designer he has created typefaces for *Fuse* and designs for Matt's Gallery and Phaidon Press. He is a frequent contributor to the quarterly graphic design magazine *Eye*.
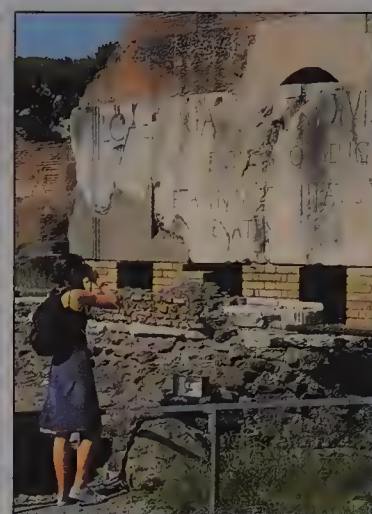
Catherine Dixon is a designer and writer as well as a visiting tutor in typography at Central Saint Martins College of Art & Design and co-curator of the Central Lettering Record. Her PhD work on typeface description is featured in *Type & typography* by Phil Baines & Andrew Haslam.
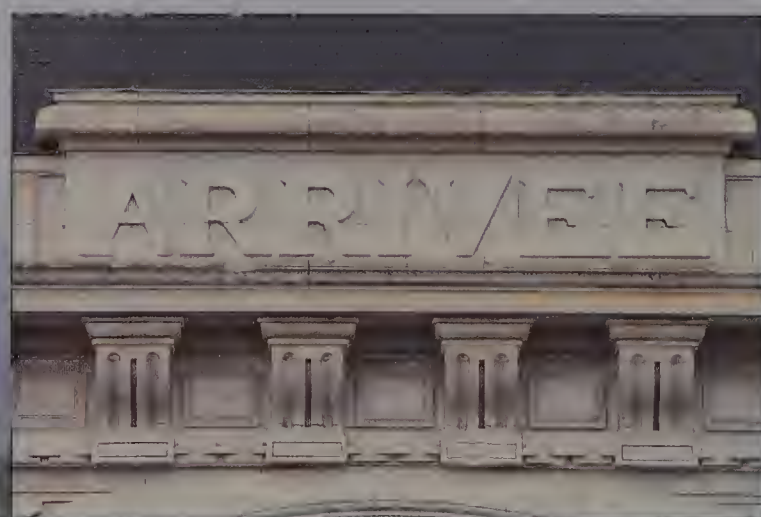
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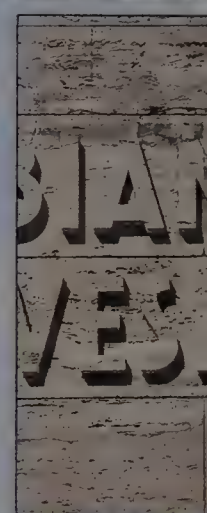111/4   54/1

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