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New Book Explores the Development of the World's Greatest and Most Important Invention: the Written Alphabet

Mark Batty Publisher Launches "Shapes for sounds," a unique graphic examination of the connection between graphic design and linguistics

Contact Joel Samberg for review copies, author interview requests or other information, at 1.973.857.8070, media@markbattypublisher.com. See "Shapes for sounds" online at the Mark Batty Publisher at http://www.markbattypublisher.com/servlet/book_view?number=66.

New York, NY, September 17, 2008 — Mark Batty Publisher, a leader in distinctive books covering the graphic and communication arts, has released "Shapes for sounds," a book that examines one of the most fundamental discoveries in human history: the idea that shapes can represent sounds, which is the basis for all of the world's alphabets. The book tracks the evolution of many alphabets, particularly the Latin alphabet, in several entertaining and enlightening ways.

Alphabets, through images, have been bringing understanding to the human race for millennia. "Shapes for sounds," by Timothy Donaldson, explores the origin and development of this understanding with dozens of intriguing essays, charts, graphics, maps and more. Donaldson, a typographer, graphic designer and teacher, has compiled histories of several alphabets and uses the main part of his book to consolidate his research into 26 innovative charts—an individual Latin letter per chart—that illustrate how the Latin alphabet came into existence.

"As we are compelled from birth to utter sound to communicate, we are possessed by a no less primal urge—a desire to make a mark," Donaldson explains. "We have developed many visible systems of coding to record and document spoken language. We have systems that represent a word with an image, a syllable with an image, and the most economic system we have devised to date is the alphabet. This book attempts to show the genesis and evolution of the most popular alphabet, alongside the development of its close relatives."

"Shapes for sounds" serves as a unique synthesis of many related disciplines that, until now, have never been fused together in such a unique way. The book explores why alphabets look like they do, what has happened to them since print was invented, and how it might have been if certain influences had been a little different. From its historical recounting of alphabetic origins, to its many

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fascinating appendices covering such topics as dead letters, lost letters, Braille, typefaces and color sounds, "Shapes for sounds" is a virtual Bible of the Latin alphabet.

Both amusing and edifying at once, "Shapes for sounds," will be of tremendous interest to linguists, graphic designers, sociologists, historians, writers, educators, students and many others.

About Mark Batty Publisher

Mark Batty Publisher is an independent publisher dedicated to making distinctive books on the visual art of communicating, showcasing the visual power and innovation of contemporary culture in all of its varied poses. Today, the visual comes at us from more places than ever, and its dissemination is faster and more advanced every year. Books from Mark Batty Publisher capture this acceleration on the pages of every book. Affordable, well designed, thoughtfully created, and produced to last, MBP books are artful products that readers want to hold onto forever. For more information, visit www.markbattypublisher.com.

Shapes for sounds

Timothy Donaldson

Graphic Design, Typography

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