

# Contemporary Decorated Letters

by Alta Huntington

Workshop introductions included our name, home town, what a decorated letter meant to us and the answer to "What letter are you now?". Think about how you might answer this question. The class was delivered in segments. Each segment started with a slide presentation followed by a demonstration by Nancy. We then worked on an assignment.

## Go On A Tear

We were given a 6 ¼" x 40" strip of Arches Text Wove (now called Velin) which we folded into an accordion book. We were asked to find text to use with the letter we had chosen during introductions — to read the text, meditate on it, and think of translating the letter into abstract lines, shapes or patterns, colours and textures. Then we put the text aside and lightly outlined a bold sans serif form of our letter on Fabriano Ingres. A number of the outlined letters were then cut from the black paper to render our first model of the letter. This model was pasted on the front of the accordion book with a glue stick. All counter spaces were used to create a second form of the letter. Subsequent models were cut or torn to create different forms of the letter. Other variations resulted when we crumpled the letter, wadded, folded or creased it; parts of the letter were cut away or flipped out. These new forms of the letter were then glued in the accordion book.

Starting with a quarter sheet of Arches Text Wove, we folded it in thirds or cut it in half lengthwise and marked off a writing area. Using a wide pen such as an Automatic or Coit and black ink we attempted to reproduce the cut and torn letters we had created earlier. This required much pen manipulation.



Heidi Friesen:  
black card; reed; black ink



Kirsten Horel



Lynda Boesenkool

## Classic Form Exploited Anew

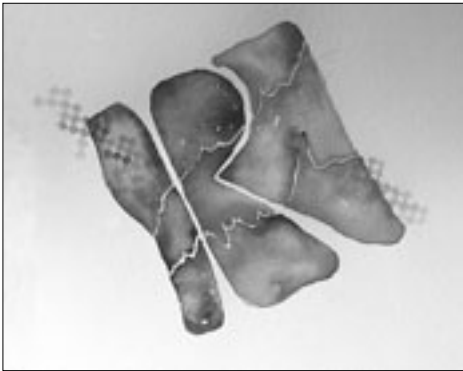
The next assignment was to choose a bold classic form such as Roman, Uncial or a fat versal. We made an outline three to four inches high based on a handout provided. Using a stylus or dead pen we transferred the letter to Arches Text Wove. The letter was divided into segments and these smaller areas within each letter were coloured with a three-colour palette of watercolour, thus creating patterns. The letter was not altered but decorated. Once the watercolour wash had dried, we added stripes, squares or dots to the patterns. Then the exercise was reversed — using the same colour palette and the same letter, the counter spaces were coloured leaving the letter white.



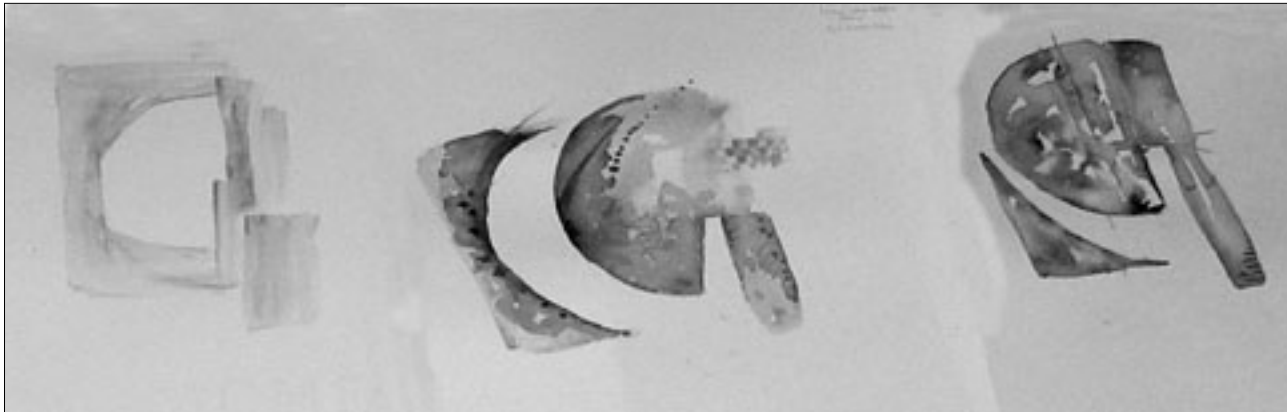
Barrie Callaway

**Counter Revolution – Counter Image**

Choosing a legible letter form, such as Roman, Roman monoline, Neuland or a simple Uncial, we focused on the counter shapes inside and around the letter. Working three or four inches tall, the counter shapes were drawn lightly with a pencil or cut from paper so that they could be moved around on the Text Wove. The counters can be placed close together to form a thin white letter or further apart for a thicker letter. They can also be overlapped. After some experimentation we painted the counter space shapes with a watercolour wash and then very sharp coloured pencils were used to create highlights. Colours might transition from light to dark or from one colour to another. To complete the counter revolution we had to think of the letter as the frame for a miniature portrait, landscape, or any number of creative images.



*Christine Ahmad*



*Renate Worthington*



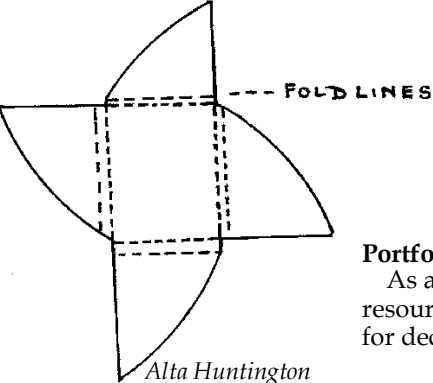
*Kathy Guthrie*

**Multi-letter Centathlon**

Working without guide lines, the assignment was to fill a page with rows of one letter made differently each time. Work to the limits of legibility and beyond. Make playful, wacky, unlikely – even ugly letters. Use more than one tool. Try keeping your tool on the paper, doodle, scribble, use a smashed brush, do geometric shapes, make a very short letter, use broad or thin strokes. Play and experiment, let the process be your goal.



*Lisa Isley*



*Alta Huntington*

**Portfolio**

As a finale we made an 8" x 6 1/2" portfolio to hold our work, which is a valuable resource to spark our imagination and remind us of some contemporary options for decorating letters.