

# Italic Revisited

with Connie Furgason

by Peggy Robinson

Our Italics came alive in Connie Furgason's Italics Revisited weekend class in May. Along with learning a great Italic variation, she provided lots of good basic information. For this particular style Connie likes to use Speedball nibs for the large letters, and Tape nibs for the tiny letters. Make letters eight pen widths high with a pen angle of five to fifteen degrees. Branching is low, yielding text that has a less formal appearance. Counter spaces are one and a half pen widths. Stop and lift the pen with each stroke, and check that the pen angle is correct before putting pen to paper again. It takes time. It is worth it. This is the best way to ensure consistent attention to the details of this variation.



Fran Sayles



Kerri Forster

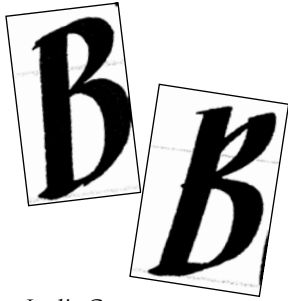
We started with the minuscule Saturday; Connie demonstrating the subtleties on the board as we followed along on our practice pages. Connie provided a generous number of exemplars which were a handy reference to keep beside us.

We began to create lines of text with these flattened down strokes; light and lively upstrokes made on the very corner of the nib; high contrast between the thick and thin marks. The letters made this way are angular even when they are very small..

Connie showed us how to bounce strokes within the letters rather than bouncing the entire letter, and to vary the ascenders and descenders to create texture. It was great fun to use the flat sketching pencil sharpened and notched with an X-acto knife for scrollwork. Here is a tool I can carry in my purse without fear of leaking!



Barb Fuller



Leslie Cropper

Besides the technical variations to our Italic, Connie showed us magical ways to liven up our pages by dropping colour and metallics into wet walnut ink letters.

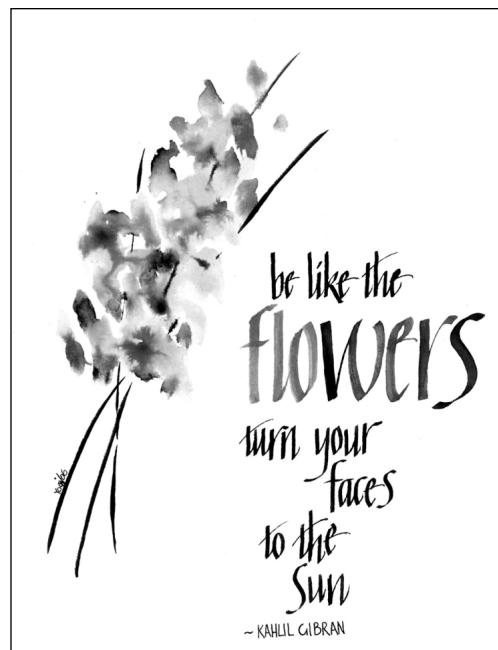
Sunday morning we continued with capital variations. Interest was added by exaggerating the width of the caps and narrowing the rest of the text. We combined monoline with edged pen and lettered in lines of varying heights to create pages of texture. We learned to constantly analyse our letters by asking, "Is the pen angle consistent? Are the counter spaces consistent? Is the letter spacing consistent?" With each new layer of information Connie went from desk to desk observing our progress, helping us to find our blind spots, coaxing us towards better Italic.



Kerri Forster

### *More of Connie's Tips:*

- ♦ Use this variation for titles, not long text. It is not as legible as some other calligraphic hands but is useful to add punch.
- ♦ Always have a plan — don't just fire off and make a mark with your pen. This lettering has a look of spontaneity but to achieve that look the marks must be made with intention.
- ♦ Have a reason for your chosen counter space width and branching placement.
- ♦ Use an extremely flat pen angle with tiny nibs.
- ♦ A 1 mm Tape nib is a good contrast when used with the C-0 to C-2 Speedball nibs.
- ♦ To make thinner strokes manipulate the pen angle.
- ♦ If you add a little acrylic to walnut ink it will stick better to glossy paper.



Yogi Grunwald



Barb Fuller

- ♦ Adding acrylic to walnut ink will make the walnut ink less receptive to future adjustments.
- ♦ Gouache gives sharper edges than transparent watercolours.
- ♦ Use Arches 140 lb. hot press watercolour paper for good results.
- ♦ Use opaque graphic white or pro-white diluted with a little water for lettering on walnut ink.
- ♦ To recover "bad" backgrounds, letter with masking fluid on the background, and when the masking fluid is dry, splash walnut ink onto it with a large brush. Let everything dry; remove the masking fluid, then paint and tinker with the letters..
- ♦ Cut up those "bad" bits, doodle on them with watercolour and create tiny collages or cards.



Kerri Forster

- ♦ Try this — letter with mostly water then drop walnut ink into the strokes, magic.
- ♦ Try this — brush water through walnut ink, letter with water through it, scratch letters into it, wow.
- ♦ Try this — when colour blending, drop watercolour into watercolour, snazzy.



Yogi Grunwald

Many students were well on their way to finished pieces by the end of Sunday and everyone left with stronger and revitalized Italic at their fingertips