The Art of Modern Calligraphy

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Assignment

Your assignment is to compose a one-of-a-kind alphabet of calligraphic letters.

Understanding the Tools

1. Learn the tools
2. Pointed pen calligraphy is a technique that uses pointed nibs to create beautiful lettering. The more pressure you put on your nib, the wider the tines open up - creating beautiful, thick line weight in contrast with a (no pressure) hairline stroke.
3. Below are the tools that we'll be using for this course...
4. Class Tools
   - Pen Holder
   - Nikko G Nib
   - Gillott 303 Nib
   - Gillott 404 Nib
   - Black Ink
   - Semi Transparent Layout Bond
5. Secondary Recommended Tools
   - Calligraphy Lined Guide
   - Oblique Pen Holder (intermediate)
   - Paper Towel & Dish Soap
6. Recommended Reading
   - Mastering Copperplate Calligraphy
7. Throughout my tutorials, I'm going to be using the Nikko G nib. This is a great nib to start with because it has medium flexibility and a nice sharp point. This means it won't easily snag on your paper and you'll also get great variation between line weights. Feel free to start with this nib and graduate to other nibs when you're comfortable.
8. Please take a moment to look over the following anatomy chart of your pen holder and nibs:
9. **HELPFUL TIP:** I'm going to have you guys stick to the suggested materials. This provides me with the opportunity to answer any beginner questions you might have to the best of my ability.

10. **Put your pen together**
11. Follow the steps below to correctly construct your tool; follow along with my short instructional video to be sure you've got it right.
   - Hold your **pen holder** on the gripping area with one hand. Be sure that the opening area is facing away from you.
   - Hold your **nib** (we'll be using the Nikko G here, feel free to try a variety though while you're practicing!) in your other hand and gently insert the base into the opening of your **pen holder**.
   - Be sure that the **nib** is inserted until it fits tightly into the **holder** (about half way between the base and the shoulder of the **nib**).
   - The vent hole on your **nib** should face directly upward.

12. Voila! You're ready to go.

13. **HOLDING YOUR PEN**
14. Hold your calligraphy pen as you would a regular pencil. Make sure that you hold your pen lightly at the gripping area and not too tight or too close to the end of your pen...
15. **Ink up**

16. Now it's time to learn how to get ink onto your newly constructed calligraphy pen. This step is pretty simple but takes some practice when it comes to knowing how much ink you should have on the pen and how often you'll need to refill your nib with ink.

17. **Inking Up Your Pen**

   ○ Remove the packaging and open your Higgins Ink.
   ○ Dip the tip of your pen **nib** into the **ink**, just past the vent hole.

   ○ When you remove the **nib** from the **ink**, the vent hole should be filled with **black ink**; this is how you'll know that you're ready to start writing.

18. **Make your first mark**

19. To make your first mark on the **layout bond**, you'll need to understand how the **ink** actually flows onto the **paper**. Here's how you'll start...

   ○ Without any pressure, place the tip of your nib onto your layout bond being sure that the vent hole is facing upward.
- Keep your nib at about a 45° angle to the paper.

- Gently put a little bit of pressure onto the pen & nib until both tines open up at the same time.

- Ink up your pen and keeping both tines equally open and your nib at a 45° angle to the paper, move your pen downward to let the ink flow out of the nib.
Come to an abrupt stop and pick up the nib completely off the paper. You should now have a mark on your paper where your nib was.

20. Now that you know the basic anatomy of a calligraphy pen and nib and how it works, let's move on to the fun stuff...

Learning Letter Structure

1. Construct the / shape
2. Take your time in constructing the / shape by placing the tip of your nib on the paper at a 45° angle and slightly apply pressure so the tines open up evenly. Gently pull the nib downward to create a straight line with even pressure. Watch my short video clip to see how to properly write up this shape and be sure to focus on the small details such as line consistency and spacing between the marks.

3. Construct the U shape
4. Create the U shape by placing the tip of your nib on the paper at a 45° angle to the paper and slightly apply pressure so the tines open up evenly. Gently pull the nib downward to create a straight line and slightly relieve pressure just before you reach the threshold of the curve at the bottom. Relieve pressure on the nib completely on the upstroke.
5. Watch my short video clip to see how to properly write up this shape and be sure to focus on the small details such as line consistency and spacing between the marks.

6. Construct the sideways S shape
7. Create the "sideways S" shape by placing the tip of your nib on the paper at a 45° angle to the paper and slightly apply pressure so the tines open up evenly. Follow the steps to create your "U" shape and simple curve over to connect one more "U" to your previous one.
8. Watch my short video clip to see how to properly write up this shape and be sure to focus on the small details such as line consistency and spacing between the marks.

9. Construct the O shape
10. The "O" shape is going to look exactly like your "U" shape, but with a connected and beautifully curved top.
11. Start your "O" a little to the left of the top curve threshold (you'll be starting with a hairline stroke).
12. Bring the tip of your pen slightly up and curve to the left. When your pen is starting to pull downward, slightly apply pressure to the nib to create the thicker line weight.
13. Relieve pressure on your pen before you reach the bottom so you’ll get a smooth transition between thick and thin lines.
14. Swing your pen upward to complete the stroke (no pressure on the upstroke).
15. Watch my short video clip to see how to properly write up this shape and be sure to focus on the small details such as line consistency and spacing between the marks.

Learning The Alphabet

1. Write letters a-m
2. Now that you have the basic knowledge in constructing letterform shapes, we’re going to jump into writing real letters!
3. Let’s start out with the lowercase letters a-m. Download my alphabet template to trace over with your transparent paper and get a feel for the direction and line weight you’ll need to work with.
4. Here’s a glimpse at the letterforms you’ll be practicing:

   a b c d e f g
   h i j k l m n

5. Take your time in tracing each letter, focusing on consistent spacing, angle, and line weight.
6. Next, try writing your letters freehand, looking at your previously traced alphabet for reference.
7. This technique is going to train your hand and brain to work together; first tracing the exact, then slowly getting your hand to do it on its' own.
8. Do this multiple times until you start to feel comfortable with letters a-m.
9. Write letters n-z
10. Now on to letters n-z. Download my alphabet template to trace over with your transparent paper and get a feel for the direction and line weight you’ll need to work with.

11. Here’s a glimpse at the letterforms you’ll be practicing:

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npqrstuvwxyzy
npqrstwyzy
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12. Take your time in tracing each letter, focusing on consistent spacing and line weight.

13. Next, try writing your letters freehand, looking at your previously traced alphabet for reference.

14. Do this multiple times until you start to feel comfortable with letters n-z.

15. **Write letters A-M**

16. Watch my short video and download the calligraphy template to see how I create capital letters A-M.

17. Follow the same steps from your lowercase unit, tracing over my template and then practicing your own letters freehand. A few things to focus on:
   - Consistent line weight
   - Consistent angle of your letters
   - Spacing between your letters
   - Counter space within your letters
18. **Write letters N-Z**

19. Watch my short video and download the calligraphy template to see how I create capital letters N-Z.

20. Follow the same steps from your lowercase unit, tracing over my template and then practicing your own letters freehand. A few things to focus on:
   - Consistent line weight
   - Consistent angle of your letters
   - Spacing between your letters
   - Counter space within your letters
21. Write your numbers, symbols, and flourishes
22. Watch my short video and download the calligraphy template to see how I create my numbers, symbols, and flourishes. 
23. Follow the same steps from your lowercase unit, tracing over my template and then practicing your own characters freehand. A few things to focus on:
   ○ Consistent line weight
   ○ Consistent angle of your letters
   ○ Spacing between your letters
   ○ Counter space within your letters

Developing A Style

1. Get Inspired
2. Find other artists that you’re inspired by just as I was inspired by Edward Gorey and Betsy Dunlap when I first started!
3. When looking for inspiration, find images that portray a "feel" that you enjoy and critically examine how you can achieve that feel with your calligraphy.
4. **Decide on a "Feel"**

5. Watch my video to see how to develop a particular "feel" with your calligraphy. Start writing in your sketchbook without my templates as guides. This should be freehand at this point to promote the most creativity.

- **Letter Width**: Concentrate on the width of each character. Is your alphabet tightly condensed or wide and rounded? Focusing on this detail will assign a "feel" to your alphabet. Notice the photo below that shows a condensed letter width. How does this style "feel"?
○ Entry and Exit Strokes: How do you want your letters to connect when you write up a word? Play around with draw out connecting lines vs. condensed to find the right fit for your personality.

6. Practice extra tips and tricks
7. Take a look at these tips and tricks tutorials and try your hand at them.
8. Don’t feel rushed into trying these - be sure that you’ve spent lots of time practicing the actually technique before these.