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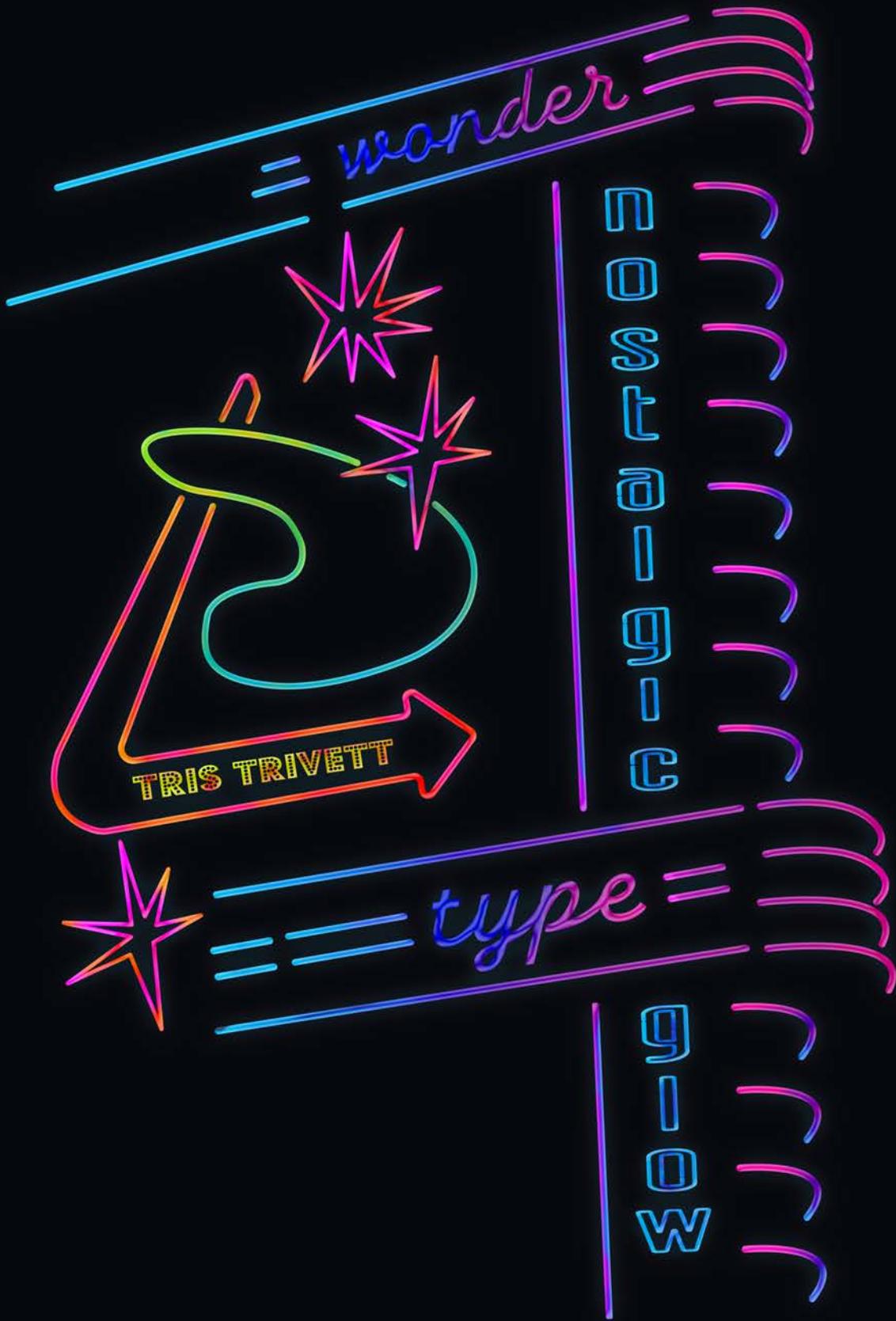
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# we

The first Neon in the U.S. is credited to the Packard dealership, Las Angeles. In 1929, a small salon town in the middle of the desert-- Las Vegas-- put up their first sign. Only until after the construction of the Hoover Dam in 1935 did the pit stop town have enough electricity to fill every business with neon. Starting at Fremont Street, neon could be the found signage material everywhere. As luxury buildings with architecture found nowhere else in the world were adorned

## **Neon is a noble gas with the**

**atomic number 10.** Neon gas is undetectable as it is odorless and colorless at room temperature. It is a highly volatile substance which can kill if inhaled without proper ventilation. It is a difficult substance to manipulate which requires many different tools to sufficiently function. The gas must be contained in a hand carved tube which gets heated at specific points at precise temperatures. The glass is only malleable for seconds in this state. Expert neon benders use cartoons, large printed stencils, to help define the curve and form of the tube. Once the sign is complete, Neon with different amounts of Argon, Krypton, Xenon, and Radon is pressurized into the glass skeleton. These different trace amounts optically mix to create the desired hues with the help of tinted glass. **Neon signage is a dying art due to its complexity.** It requires expertise, precision, and planning. They are slow acts of labor. They are the antithesis to the businesses that commission them.

# sta

# re it

with alluring glow, Las Vegas became synonymous with the material. The peak of neon was in 1960, when So-Cal design movements shocked the world with bold architecture. Streamline Moderne and Googie design decorated the desert. Characterized by space age thought, minimal futurism adopts upswept acute angled roofs, curvilinear geometry, and bold uses of steel and glass. Googie was heavily influenced by car culture, playing off the shapes common in Atomic design. Starbursts, boomerangs, parabolas, and atoms can be found throughout the eclectic designs.

# nted

It is important to not fetishize time periods solely on their design and acknowledge the injustices committed. Neon signage is a hedonistic, consumer practice which commits genocide and disenfranchisement, especially to Native American communities who were forced out west on the Trail of Tears through Nevada. Their settlements were disrupted by these design movements and as they glow beautifully, they glow with the blood, exploitation, and loss of thousands.

This studied age is riddled with the maliciously designed boarding schools for native children which sought to “save the child, kill the Indian,” displacing and eradicating culture. **Las Vegas is settled on Nuwuwu (Chemehuevi) and Nuwuvi (Southern Paiute) land.**

***the***  
***alphabet***

***As with all development and modernization — which goes by many names such as colonization, privatization, urbanization, etc.— a designated space becomes appropriated and built upon, usually in a way which is starkly different from what existed prior. An area becomes gentrified by a body foreign to the place, then shaped in the way the alien body sees fit. This process, especially in our case study, ignores the intrinsic value of the land that exists. Native lifestyles and opinions go unheard as new ordinances interrupt their way of life. New value systems are assigned to help the outsider mold and steal the space. This pattern of development can be sadly found internationally. The modern hotel and entertainment industries leech onto these original spaces with no respect, permanently altering them to benefit their selfish agenda. As we travel through this book, each letter study will also feature a line from this essay. Here we will explore the tactics used by corporations, their historical impact, and the negative effects of tourism on local communities who are directly effected by these external interjections in their home.***

***Essay in Bold Italic***

Type evaluation in Regular

# A

The A in Stardust screams atomic design. The down strokes are composed more-so of a boomerang like shape popular in the 60's, crossed with an inverted isosceles crossbar. We can easily read the large display font sign despite its stylized architecture.

The shapes found in this typeface allude to a popular architecture movement which stems out of Streamline Moderne style: Googie Architecture. This So-Cal design approach uses rounded, pinched forms, starbursts and asymmetrical balance.





***Native Paiute, Washoe, and Western Shoshone peoples have lived in the Nevada area since at least 1100 A.D.***







# B

Binion's B stands out from the vast array of typefaces found in the casino district. This B features a smooth, rounded double bowl. This letter feels more free in that it is a script font, giving the letter the sense of continuity of one stroke

***Springs of water, wild game, and native flora sustained the indigenous people as they cared for the sacred land they lived on.***





***Native bands had a flourishing culture, holding annual powwows, creating fantastic art, and trading with neighboring tribes.***

**C**

Club Bingo features a beautiful C who's stress and finials are evenly uniform. It gives the satisfactory appearance of a semi-circle, missing its right side. The letter form holds the smaller capitals to its right and connects the next line by intersecting the B, attracting your attention.

A neon sign for 'Driftwood Lounge' is displayed against a dark background. The word 'Driftwood' is written in a hollow, orange-yellow, hand-drawn style font. To its right is a blue neon outline of a martini glass with a red neon olive on a stick. The word 'Lounge' is partially visible on the far right in the same orange-yellow font. Below the sign, three small, warm-toned lights are visible.

Driftwood Lounge

**D**

Driftwood Lounge implements a hollow stroke type which gives the D dimension. There is one serif at the top which replicates fast, loose handwriting. The bowl of this letter rises to a point, leading the eye to continue reading and become enticed by the martini glass.

LOUNGE



***Rock drawings and adobe brick housing still exist around the greater Las Vegas area today, a record of indigenous influence before white settlement.***



# E

Paiute Ranch has an interesting E, featuring one serif at the top left arm. The bottom arm that the letter sits on curves giving the E some overhang under the baseline. Though geometric, this peculiar letter mixes curvilinear and rectilinear shapes to give the type personality.

***Missionaries and fur trappers were the first outsiders to invade this land. Soon followed Spanish explorers and the American John Fremont who was appointed by President Taylor in 1844 to settle the Las Vegas Springs fort and win a war against Mexico to steal the land.***

A vertical neon sign for a motel. The word "MOTEL" is written vertically in large, red-outlined letters. To the left of the sign, there are several smaller signs and logos: a "FRIENDSHIP INNS INTERNATIONAL" logo with a crest, "FERGUSONS DOWNTOWN" in red neon, "AAA PHONES Pool TV" in blue and red neon, and a "VACANCY KITCHENS" sign at the bottom. The sign is topped with a blue neon arrow pointing up and a cluster of yellow lights resembling a firework or starburst. A string of yellow lights runs vertically down the right side of the "MOTEL" sign.

# F

Fergusons' F does the unexpected, shrinking down width in the stem as it approaches the baseline. The two arms of the capital F mimic this pattern on the other side of the letter, giving the letter a stable triangular silhouette. In calligraphy, down strokes usually imply the opposite— thicker, bold lines.



***The fort was abandoned and occupied several times after this until 1865 where Octavius Gass destroyed the area around the fort, transforming it into a wine ranch with the help of a U.S. Government commission.***



***Native populations diminished significantly as the landscape was altered and no longer supported the ecosystem fruitfully for the bands population.***

**G**

The **G** in this sign is one of the most satisfying letters in this book. A round body, sans-serif font bends rectangular forms into distinct letters. This results in a fantastic counter shaped like the bottom of a music note. The rest of the letters are equally impressive, exaggerating the rectangular curves in a completely unique way.







***Las Vegas Rancho would next be sold in 1902 to the San Pedro, Los Angeles & Salt Lake Railroad to connect this distant stop to other cities.***

**H**

Adolph's features a thin, single-line script typeface that gives the h attitude and vigor. The shoulder rises up and sharply twists downwards, giving lucid motion which mimics a rushed, dramatic signature. The upstroke stem has a tilted axis, adding to the handwritten feel.





***From here, white settlement took over.***

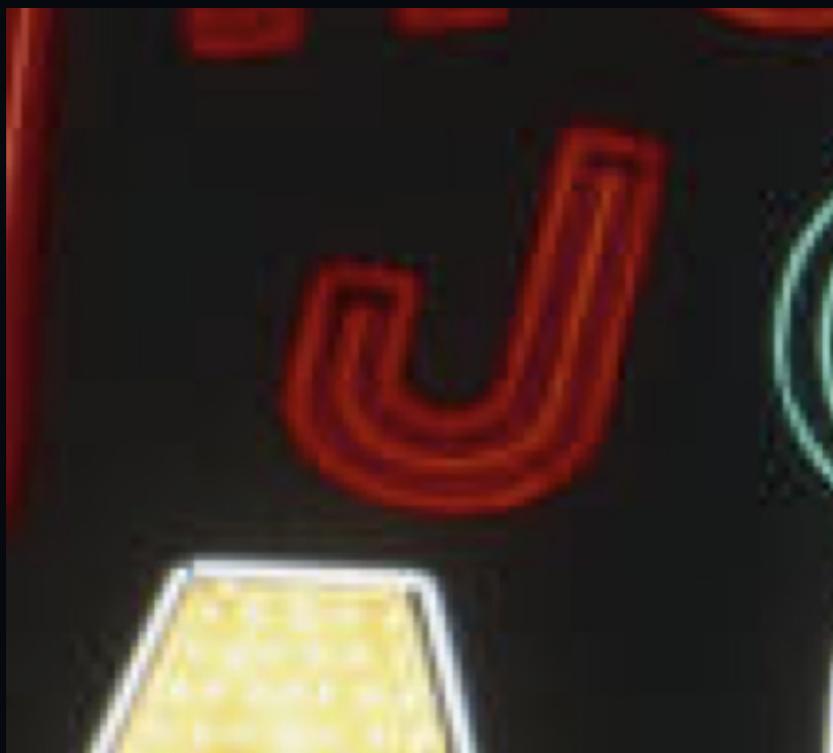
This I reduces form in the minimalists' ideal way. The simple neon tube medium becomes the letter itself, shining as the main focus in this sign. The letter features no serifs and a stem height equal to the rest of the letters. Nothing like a straight line from capline to baseline to do the job.



***By 1905, Mormons, miners, and workers commissioned to build the Hoover Dam flocked to the area by train.***

J

Honest John's casino uses two type faces in its identity. The first features an interesting ornament that takes the form of a central letter line that echoes the exterior letter. Similar to other letters seen, it uses one stroke weight throughout the letter. An interesting thing about this J is that its descender hook lied on the baseline, giving the letter a wide and high bottom terminal.



STOCKMEN'S

WHISKEY RIDGE

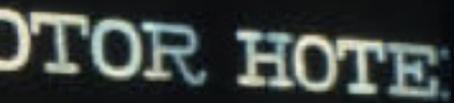
WHEN NEED AND THE MARKET

GAMING BAR DINING COFFEE SHOP

***Las Vegas was no longer a pit stop for traveling oppressors, but now a place they wished to call home. As mentioned in the forward, the Hoover Dam supplied electricity to the city, supporting huge hotels which began development in downtown around old Fremont Street.***

# K

For the first time we see a neon full serif font. There is small variation in stroke widths, as seen in the O, giving the Stockmen's sign a transitional, slab-serif feel. The letters appear to be the same width across each letter, adding the title mono space to this sample. The leg of the K crosses the arm interestingly, making unique negative space within the letter. This neon sign stands out in the book, glowing without the same playfulness as other samples.



MOTOR HOTEL



CKIN



**L**

The L of Lariat is most similar to my own script. The large loops which flow at the top and bottom of the letter give direction to the bent form, building the eyes momentum as it reads across the slanted axis. It is important to recognize how the curved ear at the beginning of the letter almost touches the down stroke and the bottom loop wraps around and behind the next word's L, adding overall depth.

***In 1909 there were 800 residents. Gambling was profoundly popular among the settlers in the saloons which would be converted into the earliest casinos. Among them are the Lucky Strike, Pioneer Club, and The Mint.***



***This industry, as evident today,  
only continued to grow and ex-  
pand. Gambling was underground  
until state legislation made it  
legal in 1931.***



MOTEL



## M

Our M in the Blue Angel signage is unexpected, geometric, and nostalgic. It is everything neon type should be. The tube loops around multiple times in one letter stroke, echoing throughout the width of the letter giving it an air of extravagance. The overall M is composed of a single arch divided in the middle by a center line which makes the three stems of the letter, in contrast to a typical two bumped arch. This font must be a display type as its interior shapes are intricate and designed for large scale accents.

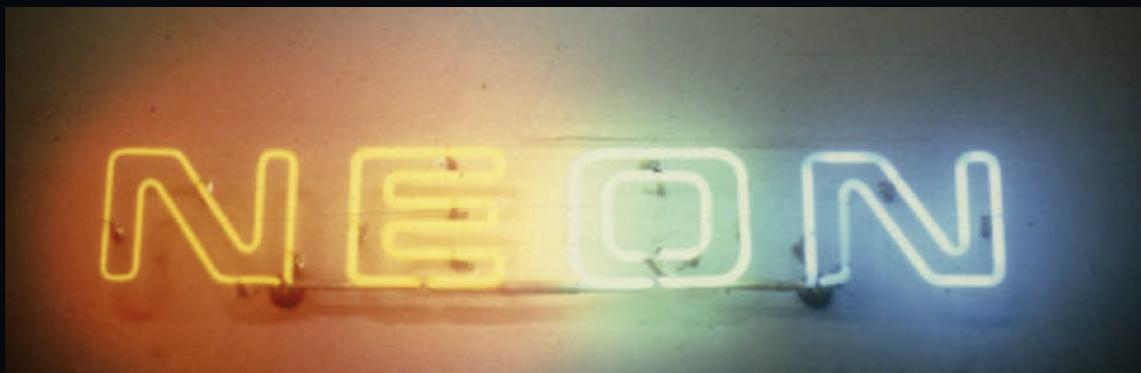


# N

The Dunes is a racist generalized orientalist themed hotel seen in the chosen typography. Arab influenced Roman font can be seen in the highly stylized n, with dramatically thin down strokes, pointy sharp apexes and serifs. The shoulder of the n even rises to a point, mimicking the way lines rise from the baseline in traditional Arabic.

***The Bank of Las Vegas backed the mafia which built more and more casinos. By 1954, 8 million visitors brought \$200 million to the casinos.***







This **O** is found in the neon-bending room of the YESCO facility in Nevada. This company has designed, created, and maintained many of the signs throughout Reno's history and on the signs featured throughout this case study. The counter and outer shell of the **O** is far more square than round and pinches the interior stress of the letter in its four corners. This shape is reminiscent of the now popular rounded-square app icons.



***Popularized by American stars like Frank Sinatra, the hotels became the center of the city. Casinos offered gambling, buffet food, sights of atomic bomb testings, and Hollywood stars who gave intimate performances.***

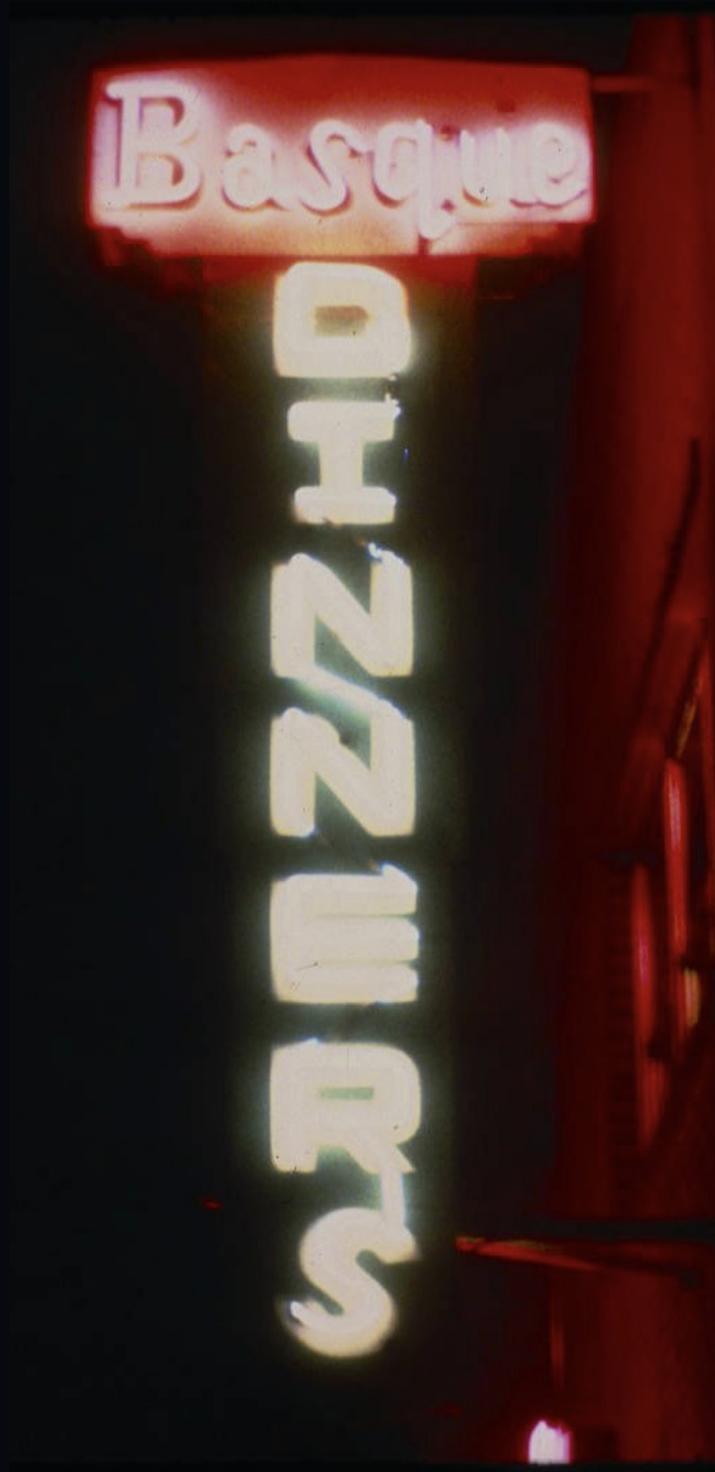
Peoples Market



# P

This P shows how diverse and customizable a script is. This time the entire main stem is a loop which holds and travels into the lobe. The counter spills into this new space found in the stem. The end result is natural and legible.

***As the atomic city grew, the original fertile plains that hosted Natives diminished. By the 60's, Las Vegas was a site of greed, sin, and environmental destruction.***



# Q

The glowing q of Basque is efficient and ordinary. The descender reaches below the baseline. The small tail jumps up in an awkward angle, making a sharp, acute extrusion. The main stem is separate at the top from the lobe, making a rounded serif head.



***Tourism would channel money to Mob Bosses and corrupt politicians.***





***This sad history includes the dissolution and abuse of Natives. Once again indigenous people were forced to relocate as violence plagued their sacred home.***

## R

The R in Sky Ranch uses many variable widths in the three main strokes that create the letter. The stem is on a tilted axis and has opposing side extensions which round off pointed finials. The bowl of the R starts very wide, bounces down to intersect the stem while decreasing stroke width, to jump back to the initial width. This results in a very fluid curve and expressive letter which stretches out, competing with the large S for the individuals attention.



# S

***The nature of tourism and development in this story only benefits the white oppressor who built a playground for profit.***

A truly neutral S is hard to find. Here, Sun Cafe uses a single stroke width that gently curves into the spine. This is to the effect of mirrored bumps which angle slightly in opposite directions to appear more letter like. The tall height of the letter and curve align with the rest of the word to echo an arch that traces the image of the neon sun.







***The Paiute are far diminished in number and have lost much of their cultural knowledge with the destruction of their home.***

**T**

Thunderbird Hotel starts their signage strong with a bold and commanding T which sets the vibe for the rest of the brand. The crossing arm of the T forms a ligature with the neighboring h and is the thickest stroke in the sign. A heavier top gives weight to the letter, making its downstream appear weightless as it hangs in the wind.



# U

The Rumpus Room's fun signage exaggerates the upwards stems in the U. The shoulder of the U pinches into the next stem, making it a transitional sans-serif with slight contrast in stroke widths. The negative space between the stems forms a long cup which holds the night sky and the viewers gaze.

***The developers mocked indigenous culture by appropriating their names and aesthetics, converting them into neon gravestones which have no tie to their original meaning.***





**V**

Virginia Street Casino uses bulbs in the signage rather than neon tubes. This cheeky design implements ornate spirals and divided stems to add a hand lettered flare that flashes handsomely. The added ear to the V's hairline upstroke emphasizes the first letter of the casino's name stunningly.

***Hotels and Casinos promote white supremacy by employing settlers, leaving natives financially behind.***





# W

Wayside Motel has a sophisticated and timely sign design whose simplicity only accentuates its beauty. The thin, rounded font uses beautiful proportions and slighted axis for an interesting use of line. The even, geometric baseline bowls compliment the high projectile stems.

***This hoarding of wealth is only worsened by environmental recklessness and overconsumption. Buffets and short cut tactics by these businesses exhaust natural resources.***

# X

The triple x sign is a common neon known internationally. In this sign, our contours get interrupted near the intersection of arms due to the hand bending which goes into making the letter forms. These ends are where the letters go into the support which feeds electricity to make them glow.



***Money is stolen and relocated elsewhere to shareholders and executives who avoid giving back to the community.***





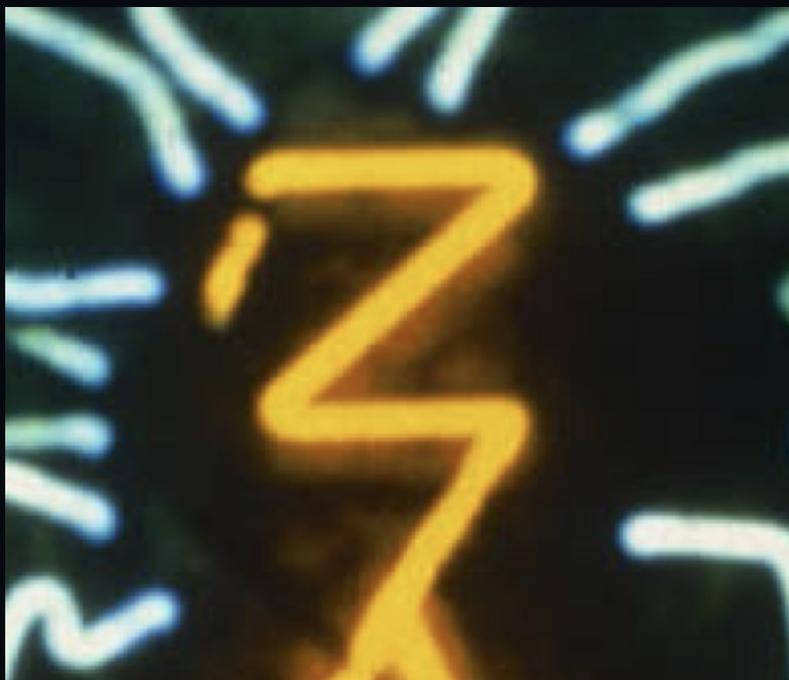
# Y

The Holiday uses an uncommon letter style in which there is dramatic contrast between thick and thin, to the illusory point where the neon letterings look like they contain space and reflects back to us. This is done with the use of variable light and stroke weight. Thin hairline sections exist connecting between the script and thicker stems within the letter. The Y has no loop and goes below the baseline, containing the word into a space.



***Instead of giving to these large, evil businesses, we have the power to visit and support native establishments.***



**Z**

***Ecotourism is a growing trend which aims to be more sustainable and fair in terms of labor and employment, giving back to the communities which are situated at the destination. Ecotourism promotes reallocating these funds to those who need and do honest work. It is a more informed way to travel and doesn't buy in to the capitalists hedonism of the showy, wasteful neons.***

The Zanzibar features odd ligatures between 3 sets of two letters. The bars draw attention to the lines which comprise each letter, emphasizing the signage's' minimal type choice. A challenge of the medium can be seen here in wanting to connect all the letters to reduce sign cost.

A	3000 Las Vegas Blvd S Las Vegas NV 89109-1932	P	443 Idaho St, Elko, NV 89801
B	128 E. Fremont Street Las Vegas NV 89101	Q	235 Lake Street Reno, Nevada 89502
C	23 Fremont Street Las Vegas NV 89101	R	2009 Fremont Street, NV 89101
D	Location unknown possibly Sparks NV	S	Located near South Virginia Street, Reno NV 89502
E	3601 South Virginia Street, Reno NV 89502	T	2755 South Las Vegas Boulevard
F	1028 Freemont street, Las Vegas NV 89101	U	East 4th Street, Reno, NV 89502
G	Location unknown possibly Las Vegas NV 89101	V	2500 East Second Street Reno, NV 89502
H	1237 Baring Blvd Sparks, NV 89434	W	100 Linden St, Reno, NV 89502
I	West 4th Street, Reno NV 89502	X	2200 S Casino Dr, Laughlin, NV 89029
J	304 Ogden Las Vegas, NV 89101	Y	111 Mill Street, Reno, NV
K	340 Commercial St, Elko, NV 89801-3666	Z	2910 S Virgina St, Las Vegas Reno NV 89502
L	304 Victorian ave, Sparks NV 89431		
M	2320 E. Fremont St., Las Vegas, NV		
N	S Virgina St, Reno, NV 89502		
O	YESCO's neon bending room, Nevada, 1986		

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Tristen Trivett is interested in design of all forms. Trivett constantly seeks to find the art in everyday life and to challenge the traditional mind. As a firm advocate for abolitionist and radical politics, Trivett aims to incite class consciousness through the use and study of Art and Design. Type has always been of special interest to Trivett and holds a very special place in our world today.

# wander type

Nostalgic Glow is an archival research book a part of the Wonder Type found text project. Handmade typography taking the form of bent Neon signage is examined in the Reno and Las Vegas, Nevada area circa 1950-1980. Letters of the English alphabet are showcased through sampled images appropriated from the University Library Las Vegas digital archives. Typographic anatomy, font pairings, and design compositions are analyzed for each sample, giving a complete record of the diverse signs' historic and aesthetic significance. Nostalgic Glow effectively showcases the splendor and potential of expressive type in many investigations of unique and personable signage. Corporate design decisions and public identities are not as engaging as the casinos, lounges, and hotels found in Nostalgic Glow, a reminder of our ever progressive slide towards minimalism and loss of visual interest. The effects of globalization and the desire for universal recognizability has left modern life an uninteresting desert of repeats. Open Nostalgic Glow for an inspiring remembrance of the beginning of late-stage capitalistic consumption.