BOOK 1

GOTHIC / BLACKLETTER CALLIGRAPHY
Series 1: Minuscules Workbook

Textura
Quadrata
Minuscula
• Introduction / Gather your tools & materials
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INTRODUCTION

My enthusiasm for blackletter or gothic script has pushed me to share insights and techniques in writing these dramatic and dark letter forms to fellow enthusiasts.

This class will cover the basic history of the script, different types of mediums, materials, guidelines, spacings and drills to familiarize the hand in creating solid and bold strokes. Lastly, we'll cover a step-by-step guide or a "ductus" to be followed on how to write each letter.

The goal of this class is that you will be able to confidently write in blackletter or gothic script, and use the skill for your own pleasure.

During your journey, I encourage you to be patient and be disciplined to continue your practice even after this class.

If you feel tired from doing all the drills and saw that your strokes are not improving, all you need to do is to take a break & rest your hand.

Once you're refreshed you can go back to the drills and you will find your strokes improve!

GATHER YOUR TOOLS & MATERIALS:

Here are the material you'll need for this project:

- Paper
- Ruler
- Pencil
- Broad edge nib pen, preferably PILOT Parallel Pen 3.8mm or 6mm -- or if you don't have one, any broad edge pen or marker that is available with you with almost the same size.
- Watercolor paper / stock paper - to be used for the project
- Good quality paper to print this workbook!
BRIEF HISTORY

Blackletter was a direct descendant of Carolingian minuscule which was invented in the reign of Charlemagne. The script's letters were wide, and large documents were labour-intensive to produce. And because there was a rise in literacy in the 12th Century Europe, higher production of books are needed. During that time books were mainly produced for Universities and not just for Bibles. From here, Carolingian minuscule evolved to a smaller, thinner, denser letters with vertical in appearance as a method of saving space. The script found its place as the father of blackletter. With the compact characteristic of blackletter scribes were able to fit more words in a line and more lines can fit in a book which so the cost of production of books became affordable. People can now buy more books and this brought a more decent income & which gave more jobs for the Scribes and Illuminators during that time. This was a very important period in history where the production of books were high and local townsfolk were able to make a decent living out of it.

ETYMOLOGY

The term *Gothic* was first used to describe this script in 15th-century Italy, because Renaissance Humanists believed it was barbaric. Gothic was a synonym for barbaric. Not only were black-letter forms called Gothic script, but any other seemingly barbarian script, such as Visigothic, Beneventan, and Merovingian, were also labeled "Gothic". This in contrast to Carolingian minuscule, a highly legible script which the Humanists called littera antiqua ("the ancient letter"), wrongly believing that it was the script used by the Romans. **Blackletter** is often misleadingly referred to as either **Old English** or **gothic**, two terms that are only partially accurate. **Blackletter** is an all encompassing term used to describe the scripts of the Middle Ages in which the darkness of the characters overpowers the whiteness of the page.

*From Type and National Identity by Peter Bain and Paul Shaw*

*https://www.amazon.com/Blackletter-National-Identity-Paul-Shaw/dp/1568981252v*


Reference: The Art of Calligraphy by David Harris
Forms of Blackletter

Textualis
Textualis, also known as Textura, Textura Quadrata or Gothic bookhand, was the most calligraphic form of blackletter, and today is the form most associated with "Gothic". Johannes Gutenberg carved a textualis typeface - including a large number of ligatures and common abbreviations - when he printed his 42-line Bible. However, the textualis was rarely used for typefaces afterwards. Textualis was most widely used in France, the Low Countries, England, and Germany.

Textura Precisus
Paralleled that of the Quadrata, both are bookhand in textural hand. The main difference between them is the absence of the foot diamond, and the base are square-ended.

Bastard Secretary / Batarde
This script is, a manuscript hand, is a third category of blackletter originally confined to documents. The term denoting a mixed cursive and Textura parentage.

Schwabacher
Schwabacher was a black-letter form that was much used in early German print typefaces. It continued to be used occasionally until the 20th century.

Fraktur
Fraktur, is a marriage between German script and Textura quadrata, it was designed by leading German calligraphers of the day. Its name is derived from the broken curves that distinguish many letters.

References:
*From Type and National Identity by Peter Bain and Paul Shaw
*https://www.amazon.com/Blackletter-National-Identity-Paul-Shaw/dp/1568981252
Lesson 2: Tools & Materials

1. Fibre-tipped pens
   (Artline, Zig Dual Tip, Manuscript)
2. Dip pens with detachable nibs
   (Speedball Oblique-cut nib, Mitchell square-cut nib)
3. Flat brush
4. Calligraphic fountain pens with broad-edge nibs
   (Rotring ArtPen, Manuscript Calligraphy Set)
5. Pilot Parallel Pen
6. Automatic Pens
7. Acrylic paint markers
   (Molotow & Liquitex to name a few)

Paper
Eraser
Pencil
Ruler

*You will also need a tissue or a small cloth to wipe excess inks

1. Fountain pen inks
2. Ink cartridges
3. Liquid watercolor
4. Liquid acrylic
5. Gouache
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCRIPT

Things to keep in mind in learning Textura Quadrata Minuscules

1. **Proportion** gives the “character” of your letters. The height of the letters should correspond to the nib width of your pen. I recommend to use the ratio of 2:5:2. You may alter this as you practice and adjust according to your preference or what appeals to you. You may also use: 2:4:2, 2:5:5:2, 2:6:2 and so on...
Lesson 3: Characteristics

2. **Densed and compact** - as how this hand is known to be! In order to achieve this, you need to check your spacing carefully. There should be uniform distance between the strokes and negative space.

   *Rule of thumb: space on the inner-letter (known as counter) is equal to 1-nib width and the space inter-letter is equal to 2-nib width.*

3. **Consistent upright vertical strokes & angular strokes** - curves are minimal or oftentimes eliminated especially in minuscules. The repetition of consistent vertical and angular strokes gives the appearance of a picket-fence.

   - **Guidelines are important!**
     - Always prepare your guidelines before practicing. Even though it is a tedious activity, this will greatly help you improve your stroke consistency.

   - **Things to avoid:**
     - Inconsistent downstroke angle
     - Shaky & uncontrolled strokes

4. **Diamond-shaped heads and feet**
ACTIVITY: Practice creating your guidelines here or on a separate paper:
Let's Test Your Skills!

INSTRUCTIONS:
STEP 1: Choose from the words shown below* and write them on the “BEFORE” space. Use the exemplar on the screen or on page 19 for your guide.

STEP 2: Before we end this workshop, write the same word on the “AFTER” space, this way you will see & compare your improvement.

*Note: You can also choose your own word, just be sure to write same word/s afterwards.

- amazing
- blessings
- blackletter
- calligraphy
- dreaming
- learning
- minimum
- write your name
- patience
- aquarellists
- metagalaxy
- zigzagging

BEFORE:

AFTER:
Lesson 6:
Drills
Lesson 6: Drills

Workbook: Textura Quadrata - minuscule

To familiarize your hand with the strokes, trace them first and then do the strokes on your own to practice your freehand.

1) Diamond-shaped stroke or “quadrant”
- Pen angle: 45 degrees
- Keep the stroke consistent & aligned by starting the succeeding stroke on the corner of the previous stroke

2) Lozenge-shaped stroke or elongated diamond stroke
- Pen angle: 45 degrees
- Stretch your stroke towards the right
- Keep the stroke consistent & aligned by starting the succeeding stroke on the corner of the previous stroke
To familiarize your hand with the strokes, trace them first and then do the strokes on your own to practice your freehand.

3) Downstroke or vertical stroke
   - Pen angle: 45 degrees
   - Use the vertical guideline to keep your stroke straight

4) Horizontal stroke
   - Pen angle: 45 degrees
   - Use the guidelines to help create a consistent straight stroke
To familiarize your hand with the strokes, trace them first and then do the strokes on your own to practice your freehand.

5) Downstroke with serif & Horizontal stroke with serif
- Pen angle: 45 degrees
- Start with a hairline stroke using the angle of the nib & ending it with the same hairline diagonal stroke
- The horizontal stroke should be straight, avoid making this stroke “wavy”

6) Over curve & Under curve
- Create the curves without changing the angle of your pen
Lesson 6: Drills

To familiarize your hand with the strokes, trace them first and then do the strokes on your own to practice your freehand.

7) Diagonal stroke
- Pen angle: 45 degrees
- Start by creating a short hairline stroke and continue with the thick stroke diagonally and ending with a short hairline diagonal stroke.

8) Hairline stroke - downstroke
- Pen angle: 90 degrees (for dip pens) or just use the edge of your nib (for parallel pens)
- Start from top to bottom
- Keep the strokes straight, use the guidelines for consistency

9) Hairline stroke - diagonal & vertical
- Pen angle: 60 degrees (this will vary & will depend on the letter) or just use the edge of your nib (for parallel pens)
- Keep the strokes straight & consistent
Lesson 6: Drills

To familiarize your hand with the strokes, trace them first and then do the strokes on your own to practice your freehand.

9) Combining strokes: Quadrant/diamond + Downstroke

- Pen angle: 45 degrees
- Use the vertical guideline to keep your stroked straight

**STEP 1:**
Place your pen at the center of the diamond/quadrant.

**STEP 2:**
And make a down stroke.

**STEP 3:**
Place your pen at the center of the downstroke.

**STEP 4:**
And make a diamond/quadrant.
Lesson 8: The Project
INSTRUCTIONS:
1: Use your A3 watercolor paper / special paper of your choice
2: Choose a poem, verse or quote to write
3: Draw your margins & guidelines
4: Start writing in blackletter hand!

SHORT VERSES

"Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant."
1 Corinthians 13:4

“And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.”
Galatians 6:9

"Whoever pursues righteousness and kindness will find life, righteousness, and honor."
Proverbs 21:21

LONG QUOTES

Letters are signs of things, symbols of words, whose power is so great that without a voice they speak to us the words of the absent; for they introduce words by the eye, not by the ear.
~ Isidore of Seville

Yes, you must live life beautifully and not allow the spirit of the world that makes gods out of power, riches, and pleasure make you to forget that you have been created for greater things – to love and to be loved.
~ Mother Teresa

POEM

Trees
I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree.
A tree whose hungry mouth is prest
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast;
A tree that looks at God all day,
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;
A tree that may in Summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;
Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who intimately lives with rain.
Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.
~ Joyce Kilmer
Finish your mini test

Go back to page 11 and write the same word on the "AFTER" space, you can now see & compare your improvement!
Congratulations!

You finished blackletter / gothic calligraphy : Textura Quadrata Minuscules class!

Thank you for joining us on this class & we do hope this will help you in your journey on exploring blackletter calligraphy.

Don’t forget to upload your artwork or your “mini test” in the gallery so you can share them with the fellow students!

I hope to see you on my next class.

Thank you and God bless!

@jx_writes calligraphy