

The process of creating a new identity for Kunstinstituut Melly has been one rooted in collective questioning. As a group of six designers, each with different interests and modalities, we learned through dialogue how to create a shared language. What does it mean for an institute to change its name? How does that change the tone of voice? How is our collaborative process reflected in the design? A way of working developed between us and the institute, a kind of learning that required us all to embrace discomfort. This relational process became inseparable from the design itself.

In observing the institute's name change to Kunstinstituut Melly, we immediately noticed the collective nature of their process. The history of the local community's attachment to Melly Shum Hates Her Job (Ken Lum, 1990) echoed this dynamic. In analyzing Lum's artwork, we realized that the use of playful typography was central to the work's appeal. The spikes outlining the word "HATES" spurred our motivation to explore the emotional possibilities of letterforms. Eventually this led us to conclude that the identity itself should be rooted in typography, much like Lum's piece.

Interested in how we could embed letterforms with the emotionality inherent in the institute's commitment to learning, growing and changing, we set forth in creating a typeface for Kunstinstituut Melly. Through many explorations of type, we found ourselves drawn to the idea of a flexible system characterized by unexpected and lively interpretations of the letterforms.

As we worked on our custom typeface, we saw that the type itself was learning to stay with discomfort. Changing some of the characters in a body of text alters its rhythm and tone, while a single letter can be seen as a figure itself—the capital K takes a step forward; the lowercase x raises a hand; the capital A stretches its legs. We also saw how a body of text could achieve a range of affective sensibilities depending on which letters are altered. More than a collection of static characters, the typeface has the potential to shift between temperaments while still remaining legible. OS Melly Sans is a typeface defined by its alternates—a sans serif that combines the characteristics of a simplified, legible grotesque font with a set of emotive alternate interpretations of the letterforms.

Naturally, the next step was to consider how the identity's color palette could enhance the versatility of the type system. Our instinct was to find energetic colors that would evoke a sense of tension by using different combinations of bright and muted tones. The colour palette is developed around the relationship between CMY and RGB—complementary colours which can be produced in both digital and print contexts.

From the lively color system to the flexible typographic language to the use of playful animation we aimed to position the institute with the ability to speak to many audiences with many voices. The plasticity of the typographic ecosystem reflects the collective method of our design process and the mentality of the institute as well. In embracing the vulnerability of the process, we are enthusiastic about how the system can continue to evolve and curious to further the collaborative spirit of questioning.

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The Kunstinstituut Melly identity design team is Alexander Tanazefiti (AU), Callum Dean (GB), Emily Turner (US), Nina Schouten (NL), Wooseok Jung (KR), and Yan Zhihan (CN), six graduate students of the two-year masters program, Werkplaats Typografie (WT) of ArteEZ University of the Arts in Arnhem, NL. Included in WT's curriculum are a number of external client projects.