

THE PROJECT

The Omnigraf Font Project is celebrating 200 years of drawing education in Oslo with the design of a set of digital fonts, which are available for free download in connection with the anniversary celebrations in October 2018.

THE RESEARCHERS

This project was conducted by:

Designer and Typographer; Ellmer Stefan, independent Type Designer and Lecturer at KHiO Design.

Researcher and Project Manager: Maziar Raein, Curator of the KHiO Letter Archive and Lecturer to the MA Design Programme

Researcher: Ane Thon Knutsen, PhD. Candidate at KHiO Design

THE OUTCOMES

- An Exhibition held at the Reception Gallery, KHiO

- A Publication: Omnigraf, (ISBN 978-82-92613-83-2) which consisted of 100 individually drawn letter forms drawn from the 5000 characters generated by Ellmer Stefan

- A website for interaction with the font and a free download of public licence (Please visit www.omnigraf.no)

THE OUTLINE OF THE PROJECT

Founded in 1818 as the “Temporary Drawing School” (“Den midlertidige Tegneskole”), the Royal Art and Design School in Christiania received its official status in 1821. The school was an important representative of the Norwegian art and design culture, during an era of nation building. The Oslo National Academy Of The Arts (Kunsthøgskolen i Oslo) has its origin in the “Statens Håndverks og Kunstindustriskole” (SHKS), which was the school’s name for most of the 20th century. In 2018 the 200th anniversary of the school is celebrated with a number of artistic and cultural events, of which the Omnigraf Font Project is one example.

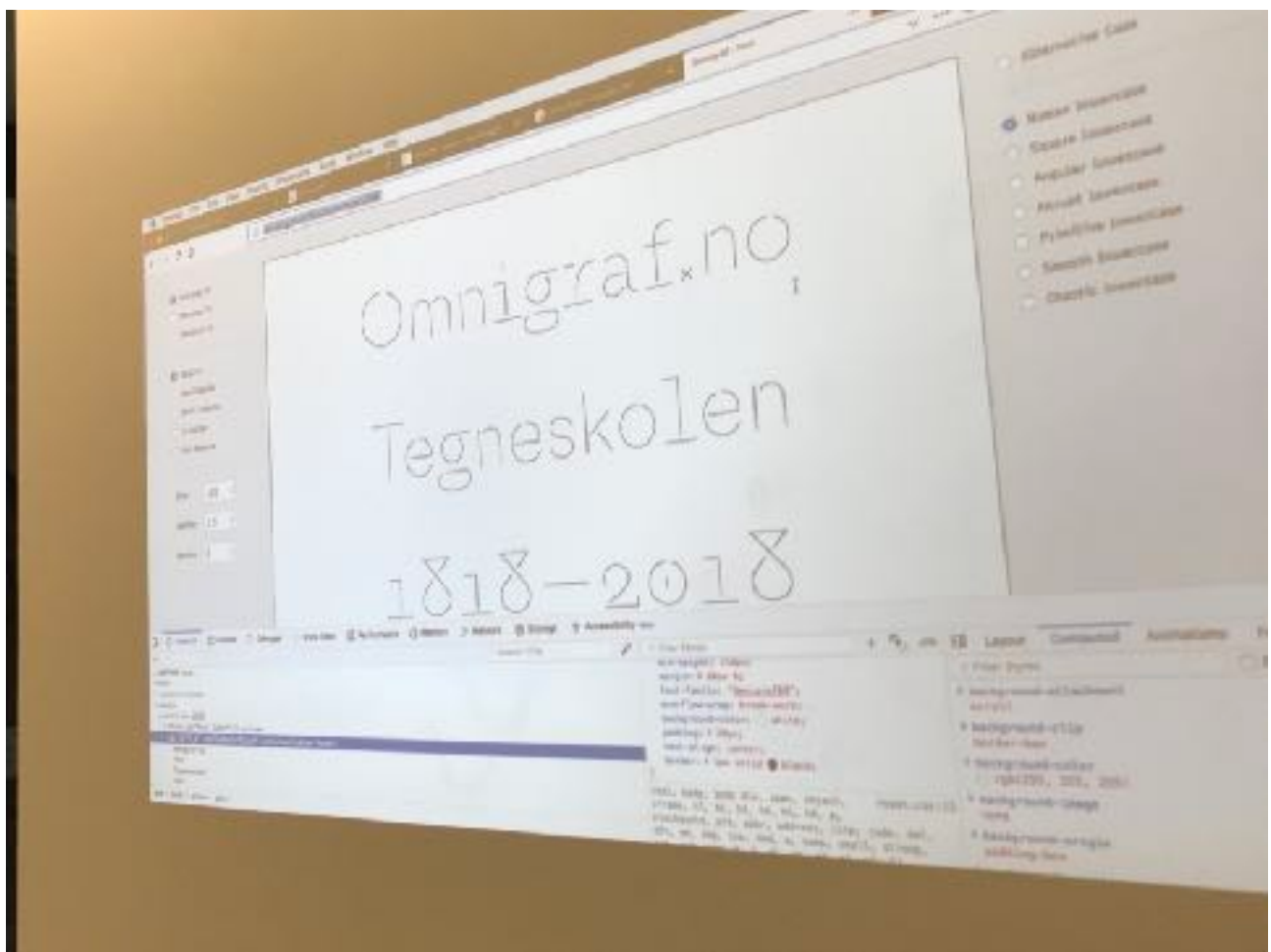
This jubilee project celebrates letterforms in their various manifestations; written, calligraphed, drawn and constructed. Researching the college archives has revealed a wide spectrum of activities ranging from free-form to technical drawing as practiced by artists, designers and architects attending the Drawing School, and later SHKS. It also showed the exceptional position of drawing between the ephemeral and the permanent. On the one hand, drawing represents an autonomous art form, whereas on the other hand it is often a subordinate service for higher purposes, as preliminary sketches or production drawings in design and architecture.

The design of letterforms had a fixed place in the curriculum of the “Tegneskolen” and its successors. Rather than focussing on a specific style or period of letter production, the Omnigraf Font Project reflects on the idea of drawing as exemplified by the art of lettering. The main question was: what kind of drawing is lettering and how do these two (often separate) disciplines interact?

Three aspects formed the basis for these reflections: 1.) The role of gesture as the prime intention in drawing. 2.) The tools at hand and their inherent mark making qualities, ranging from pencil to digital vector. 3.) The alphabetic conventions as the underlying guidelines in the production of letterforms.

The dynamic interaction of these parameters is explored by a gradual succession from lettering to drawing in the various styles of the resulting fonts. Here, typography acts as a metaphor and represents the last consequence in the abstraction of alphabetic drawing; the mechanical manifestation of virtual tools and calligraphic gestures in oscillation with the underlying alphabetic convention. The resulting set of digital typefaces expands the notion of the typographic apparatus into a hyper-mechanical drawing tool. A basic alphabet with features of technical letter production (such as typewriting and stencilling) is permeated by various elements of gestural abstraction.

The release of these fonts to the public shares these reflections. Making these letterforms accessible shall furthermore emphasises the democratic nature of alphabetic drawing. The Omnigraf Font Project invites users and readers to playful interaction in both the digital and analogue.

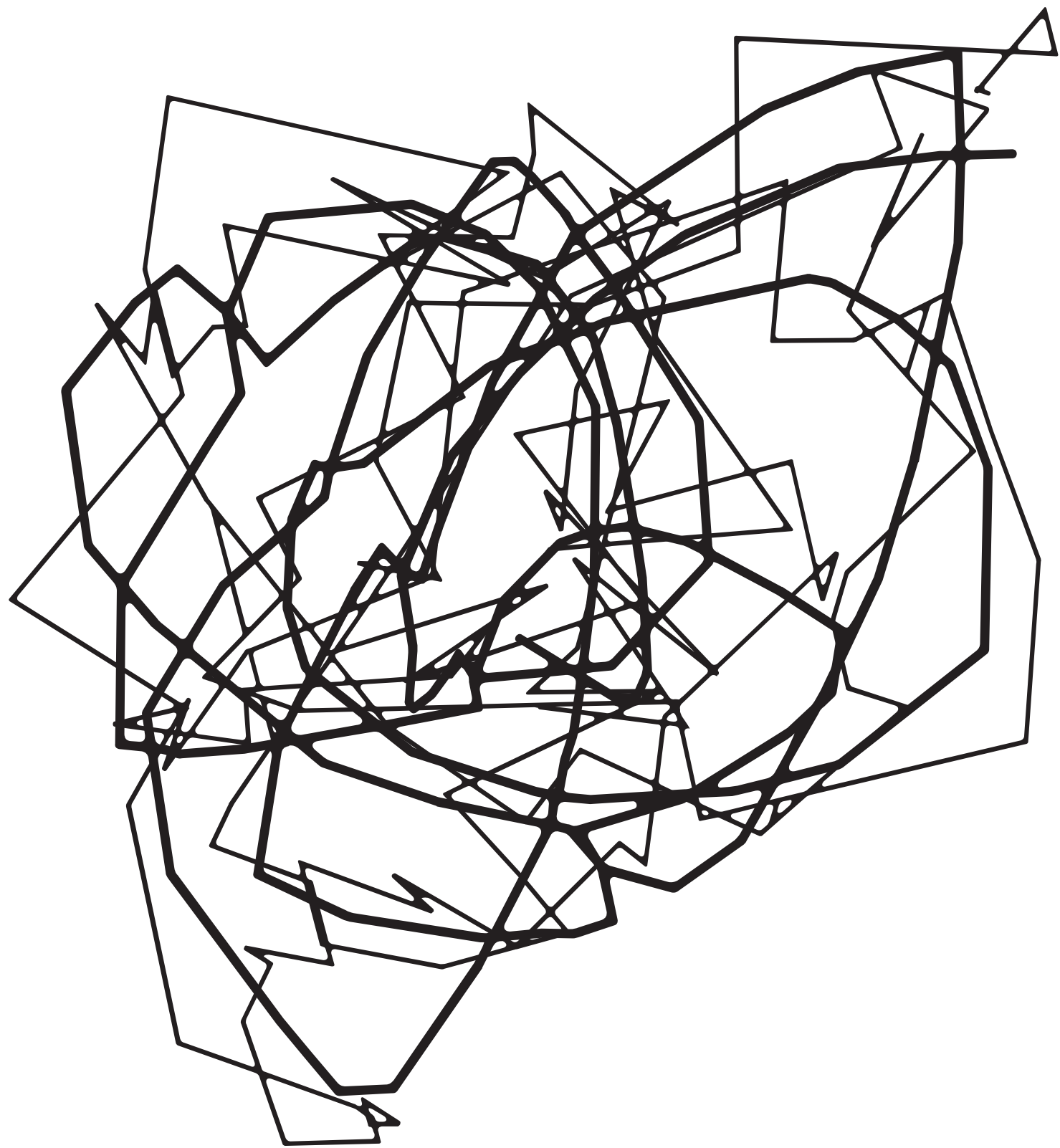


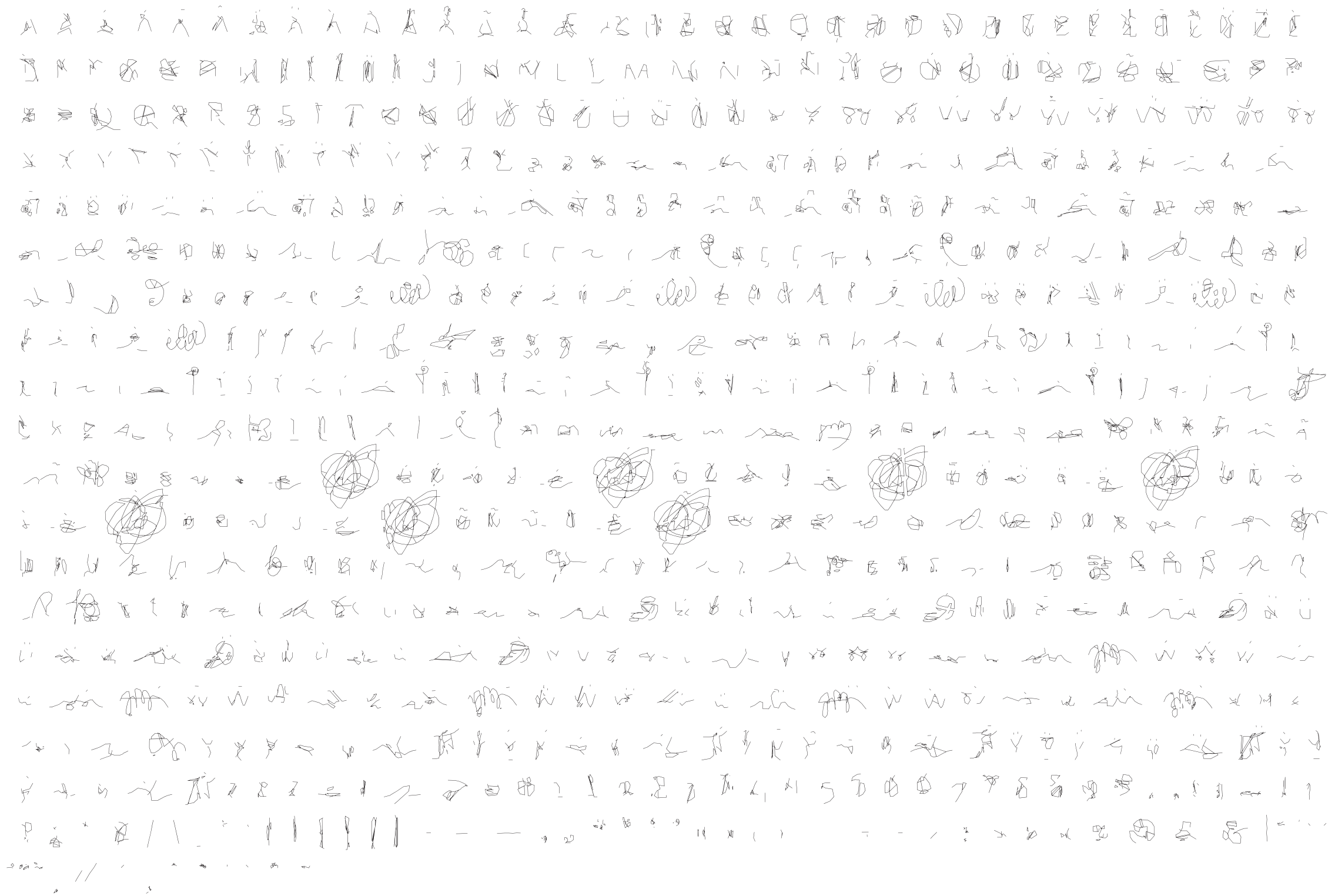


Omnigraf Font Project

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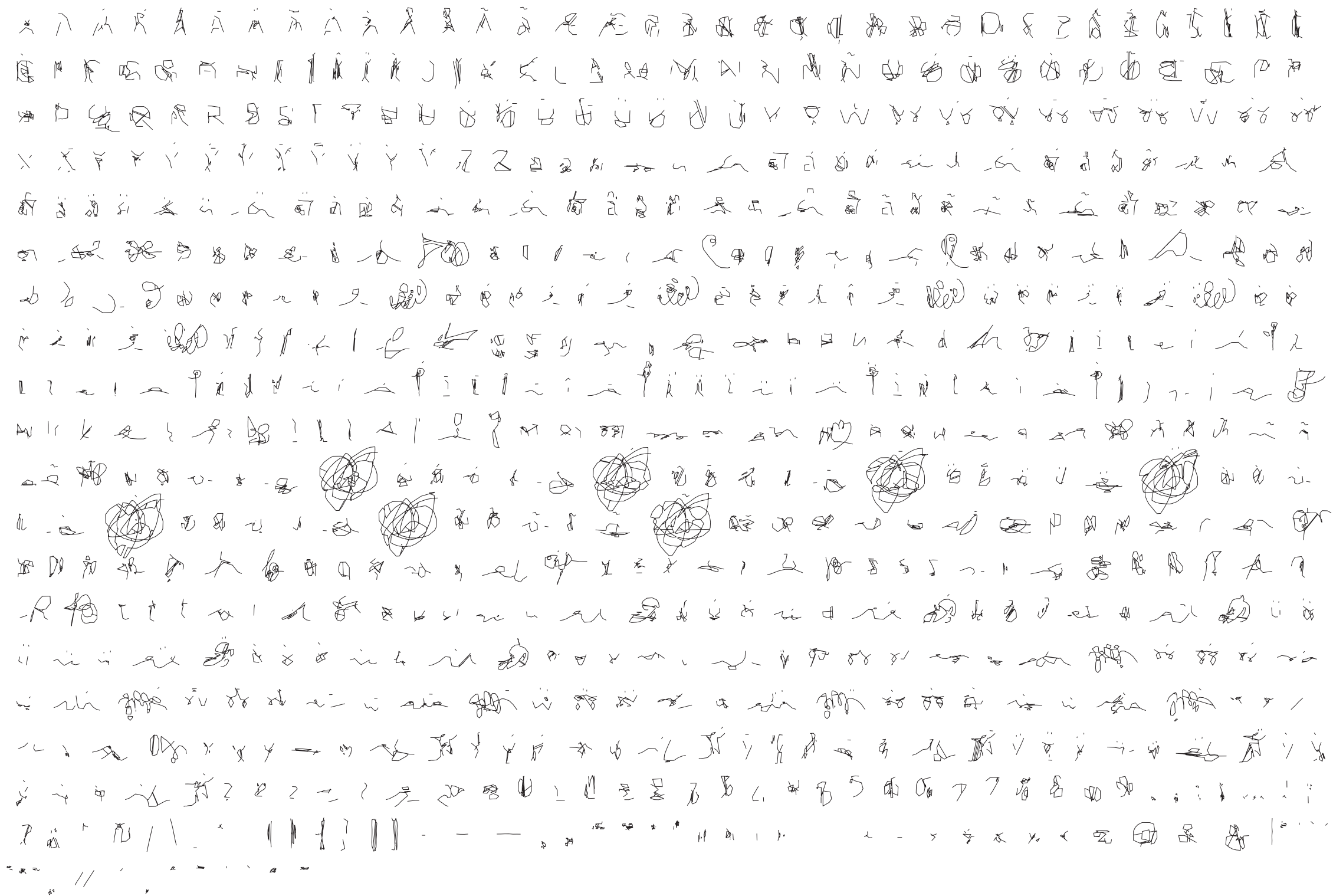
Glyph overview







Handwritten glyph set for Omnigraf 16 Semi-Irregular, showing various characters including accented letters, ligatures, and symbols.





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