

Escribiente

NEWSLETTER
AUTUMN 2020

Now is
the
time to
call
upon
the
better
ANGELS
of our
nature

*Escribiente is Albuquerque's Calligraphic Society
open to anyone interested in the fine art of beautiful lettering*



PO Box 30166, Albuquerque, NM 87190

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OUR PREZ SAYS —

Hi Everyone!

This newsletter showcases *Pointed Brush Calligraphy* from Mike Gold's workshop in late August – amazing! A follow-up workshop after Mike's class by Heather Martinez helped attendees practice more. At our October 7th meeting, Mike presented *Calligraphy Is Flourishing: More Than You Might Think*.

Bill Kemp is offering a class in October on Pointed Pen! Members who belong to other calligraphy societies have also let us know about Zoom classes being offered and a comprehensive list of classes is list on John Neal's website.

No Christmas/Holiday Party is planned this year due to Covid-19 restrictions. I always enjoy seeing Diane's beautifully decorated home and visiting with everyone! Cheer can be passed on again this year via our traditional Holiday Card Exchange, organized by Sharon Shannon.

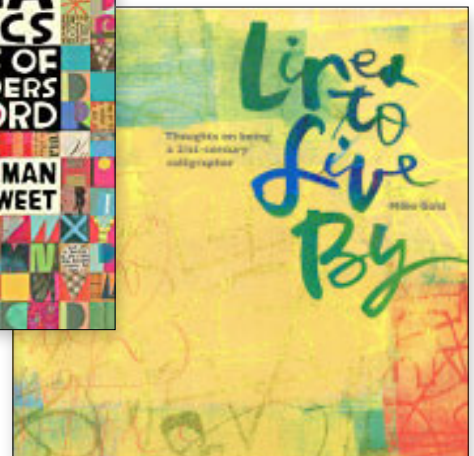
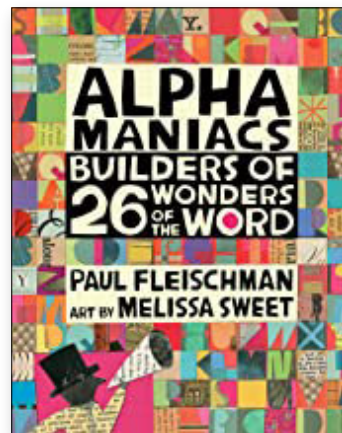
best regards,
Beth House

COVER ART

This workshop beauty was created by Louise Grunewald. With the quick brown fox and the lazy dog waiting in the wings for their cue, students came "together" (virtually) to experiment and break all the rules in Mike Gold's workshop he calls *Brush Lettering Experience*. All the images on the second page of Louise's workshop review are her creations as well. (Fourth page)

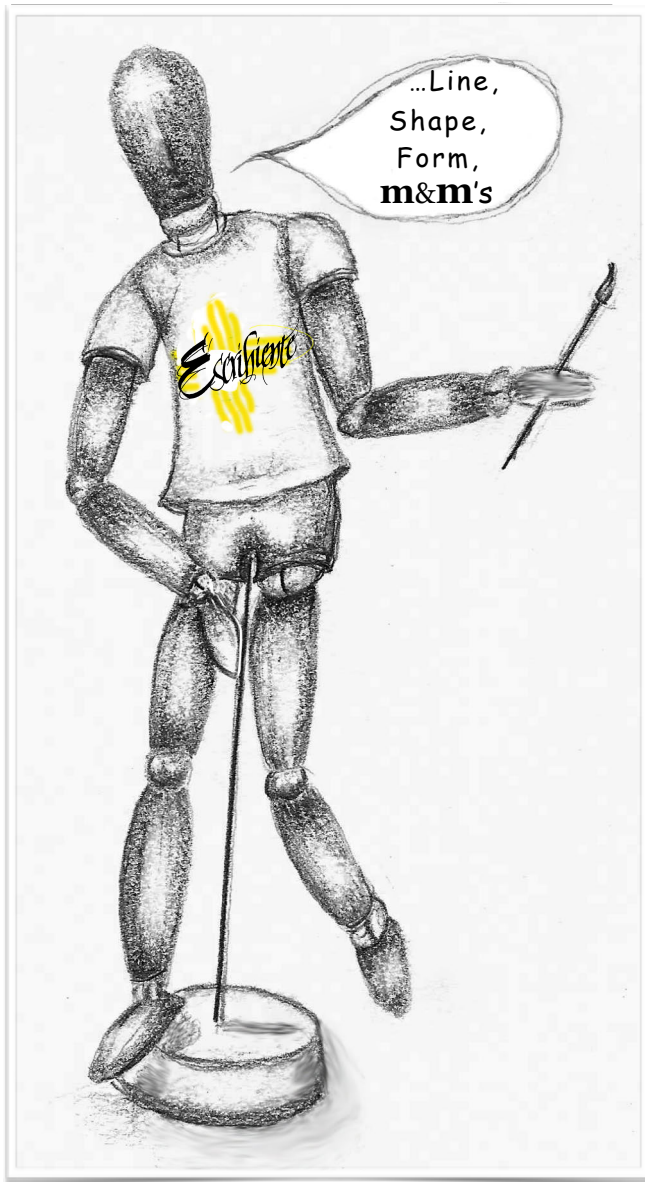
Recommended reading: *Lines to Live By* is Mike's book of thoughts on being a 21st-century calligrapher. It features 44 beautiful, full-color examples of his calligraphic compositions.

AlphaManiacs is an illustrated collection of mini-biographies about the most daring of writers and their way with words, including the works of Mike Gold.



Pointed Brush Experience

Workshop review by Louise Grunewald



The title of this workshop really describes it: **An experience!**

I have long admired Mike Gold for his talent and his positive energy. We have been colleagues at conferences, getting to know one another a bit, but I have never had the opportunity to take a class from him. When the opportunity to participate in his online class came up, I took it. And he delivered!

Although Mike did initially lead us through an exercise of tracing a traditional brush alphabet to warm up using brush markers, this was not a class about learning to do brush lettering by exemplar. Rather it was a journey into the possibilities that the brush offers to play with our letters and see our words in terms of design and *form* rather than lines of perfect letters. In fact, we used no guidelines at all in order to allow the words to roam the page, intersect, and relate to one another. Mike presented an abundance of exercises for us to work with, the idea being (and I am making my own assumption here) that it wasn't about creating our masterpieces in a workshop. This was the time to experiment, make discoveries, see "mistakes" as *opportunities*, and then it would be up to each one of us to pursue and expand on the techniques that spoke to us. There were a lot of cool things that came out of each practice session.

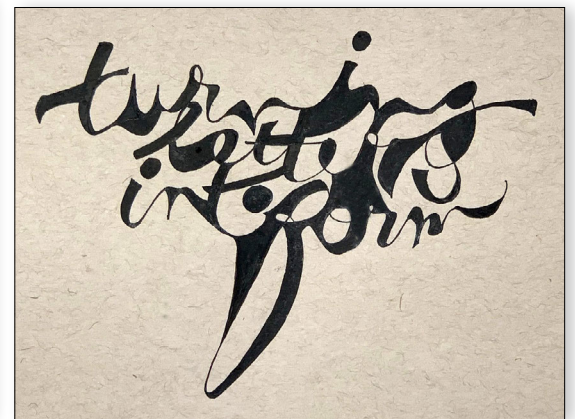
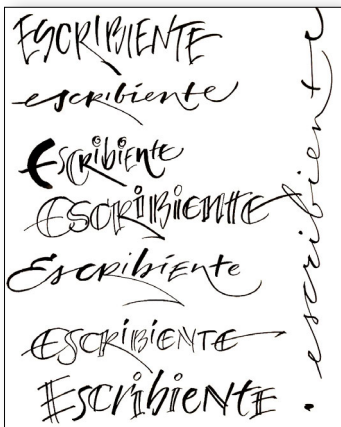
In his introduction to the class, Mike emphasized that he sees letters as line, shape, and form. We were encouraged to think about that even in our practice work – to think about the margins, the white space around the words and letters, and how the words as a composition relate to the page. He talked about looking for asymmetry in our work, rather than fixed edges. Mike also emphasized copying styles of writing when first learning the strokes; then after you do this enough, they become your own.

After the initial tracing exercise, which gave us the feel of pressure/release that is characteristic of brush writing, we played with the word *minimum* just to try out different ways of relating the letters to one another – joined, separate, rounded, spiky, slanted, upright – to see what kind of variety can be found with the same word and tool. The brush markers are much more forgiving than a pointed brush dipped into ink or paint, so this was a good way for all levels to get introduced to what was to come. We also traced an alphabet sentence with "traditional" brush lettering to get a feel for writing a quote, and then we did the same quote without tracing so that we could design the relationship of the words on our own. Mike likes to work on tracing paper, so we did many of these first exercises on that surface.

We moved on quickly to breaking rules, playing with changes in spacing, weight, width, slope, and texture. We chose our own quotes, and Mike suggested working with the same text over and over. In this way we could practice variations as the workshop progressed and see how a quote could change its effect with different techniques and emphases. Our first exercise in this vein was to create a composition with our words, keeping the letters upright and work with changing their weight as we went along. We were to develop this composition with *no* line spacing. We moved on to writing with a Pentel brush, dipping in ink for this exercise, which added another element to the writing. When working in this way, Mike talked about the connectors or joins between letters and how they can be used to create atmosphere when used intentionally, even exaggerated.

Toward the end of Day One we had a fun sharing. We were paired up and designated as pen pals. Mike shared ways that he likes to address envelopes with a variety of tools, including metallic markers for decoration. We each got to address an envelope to our assigned “pal” and later send via snail mail.

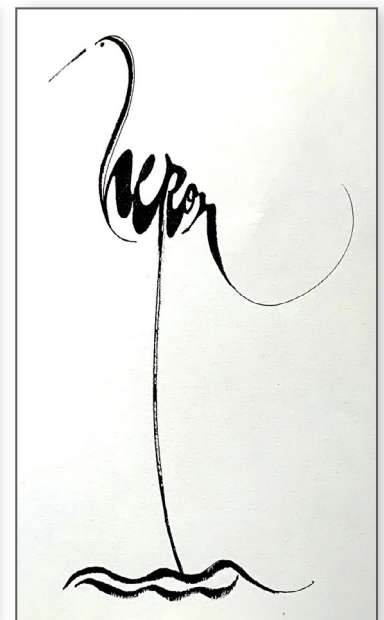
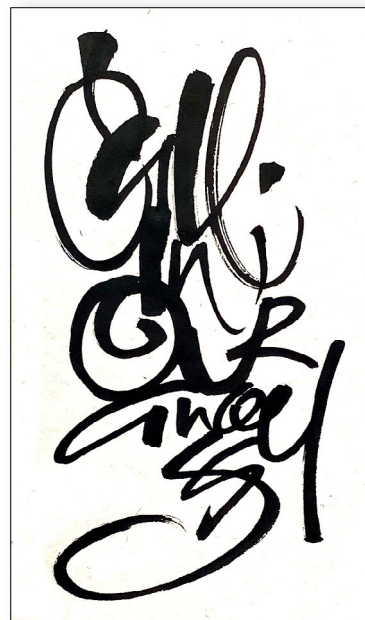
We also played with creating a logo for Escribiente by writing out the word and changing up the letters for a playful effect. Fun—and very full—day!



On Day Two we got right to work.

Sunday was about adding color to our work and we experienced a variety of ways to do that. Mike demonstrated double stroking letters to leave space to fill in color, and then we were instructed to work again with our chosen quotes, doing one thing at a time:

- 1) change slope
- 2) bounce letters (he gave us a handout showing the different ways to do this)
- 3) vary x-height
- 4) vary weight
- 5) vary style and structure
- 6) vary the letter spacing
- 7) connect the strokes



Along the way, Mike offered little gems of insight into our writing. He stated that reading is so powerful in us that we will try to read a piece, if at all possible. But when legibility isn't the goal, our letters can act as *forms* so that people can "read" our emotions even if they can't read the text.

He also talked about "the power of two." Using two elements, such as *dark and light*, *large and small*, *brush and pen*, etc. Also embedding smaller lettering into a design with large letters – a term Sheila Waters calls "nesting."

With these ideas in mind, we began to work with multicolored lettering. Using a larger pointed brush that will hold a lot of fluid, we wrote our words with very diluted walnut ink and then dropped different colors into the letters while they were wet to create blends within the forms. The colors could be various colored inks (I used Bister inks) that were fluid enough to flow within the surface tension of the letter strokes. We were still encouraged to think of the words we wrote as a composition that flowed on the page – not flush left, for example. Later, after the ink dried, we did the "nesting" thing and added smaller words to the page using a small brush or a pen.

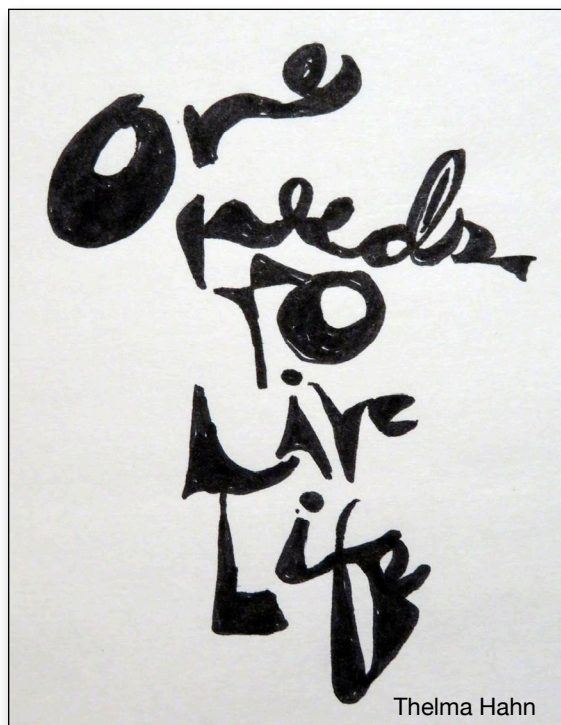
There was no time for Mike to demonstrate using bleach on dark paper so he just gave us a few pointers: It is best to use *fresh* bleach on dye-based paper for this technique. He said that most printing papers are dye-based. Canson Mi-Tientes works well, as does Strathmore Artagain. Mike learned from Annie Cicale's husband Bob, who is a chemist, that bleach does not keep eating the paper – once the bleach acts on the paper, that's it.



Michal Sommers



Janice Gabel



Thelma Hahn

Mike wanted to give us all he had, so on we went. Another way of incorporating color into our letters was to write them in black and then use color, such as gouache, to fill in the counter shapes. Some of the pieces done this way came out like abstract paintings. And where there wasn't enough time to do the color, the black designs became amazing gestural compositions on their own.

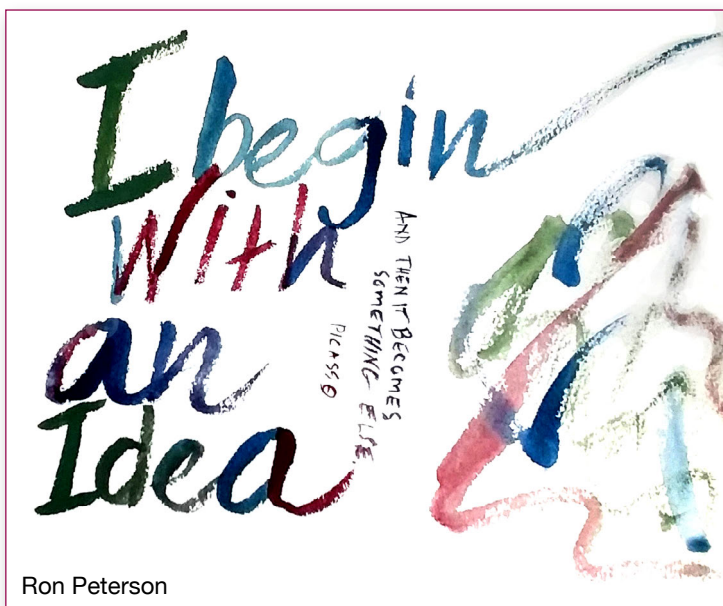
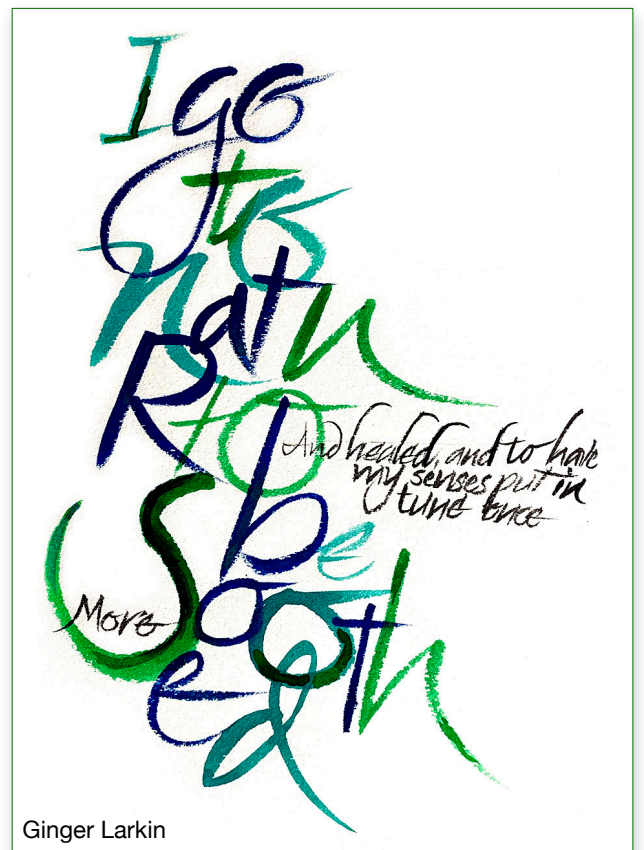
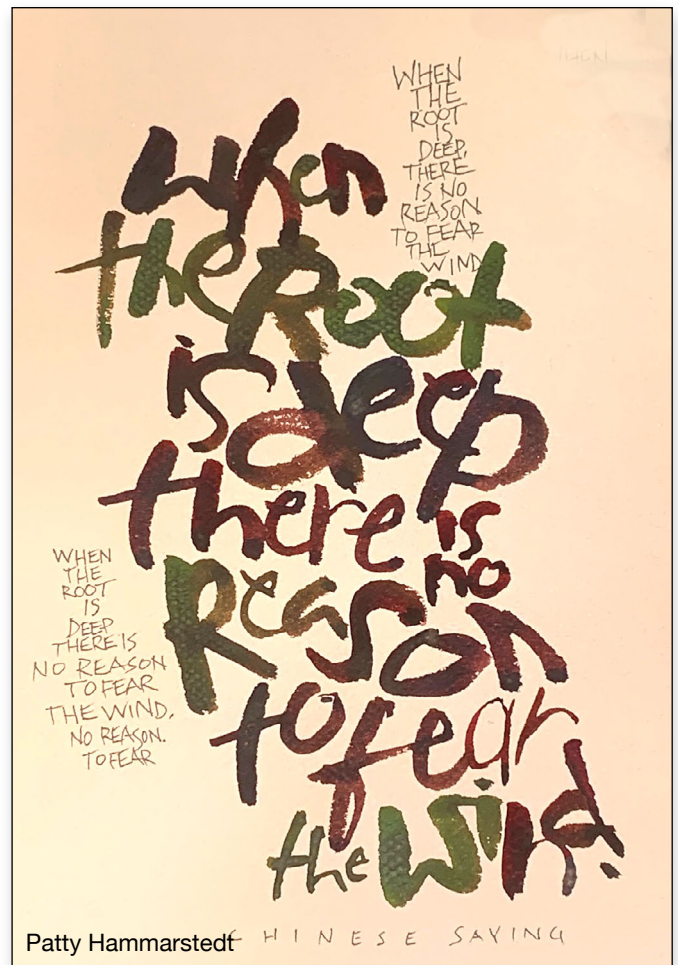
We moved on to writing in all caps using the multicolored technique and then doing the same by interspersing lowercase letters and caps into the same words. Following this exercise, Mike briefly demonstrated how he does dry brush, writing on the smooth side of Sumi-e paper using Sumi ink.

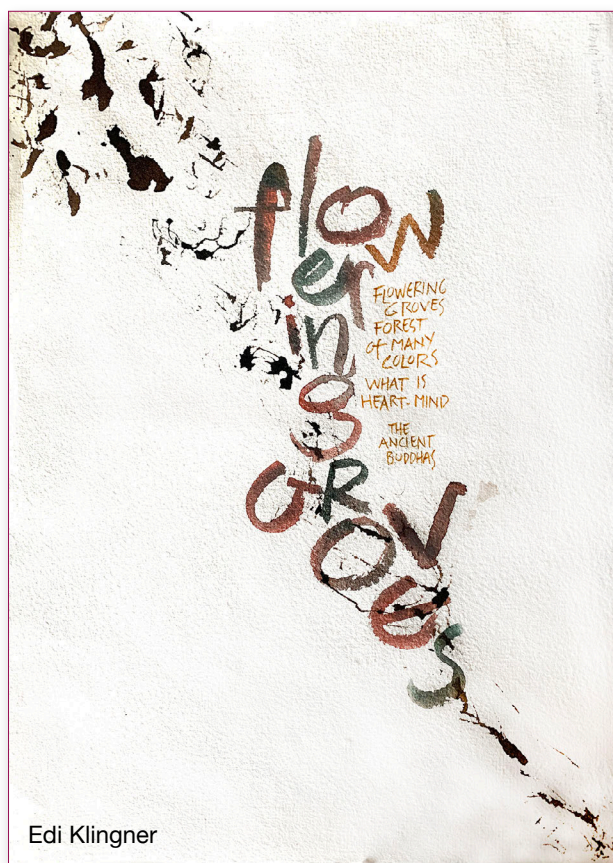
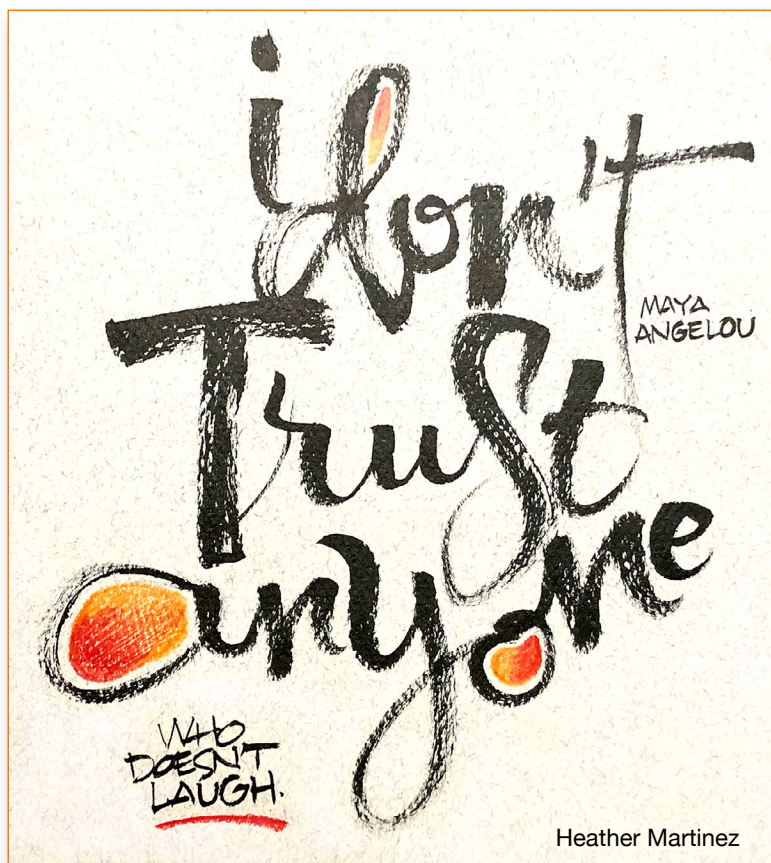
For the last exercise we played with a technique that was quite different from the rest. We were to write in a handwriting style with a pen and then use the brush to build up the letters and create a *form* out of the words. This one is a bit hard to explain, but it was quite mesmerizing, using brush strokes to follow the outlines of the letters and watch them build up.

Mike gave us a treasure trove of techniques, encouragement, and possibilities for future work in our own studios. In rereading what I have written here, I see the use of the word *form* a lot, which indicates how strongly Mike feels about this.

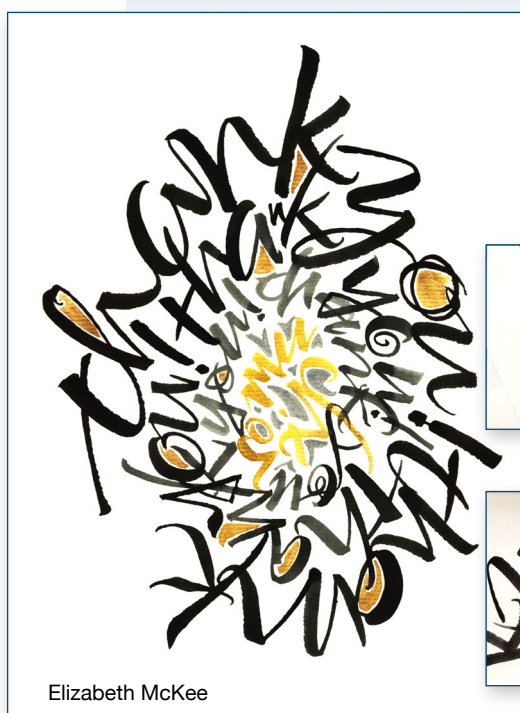
As he had said earlier, we must work with these ideas, concepts, and techniques and *practice, practice, practice* until we make them our own.

Thank you Mike!

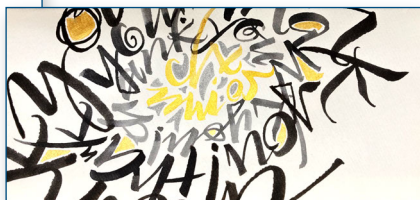




Calligraphic Shenanigans



Elizabeth McKee turned her thank you to Mike (left) into an envelope. (below front and back).





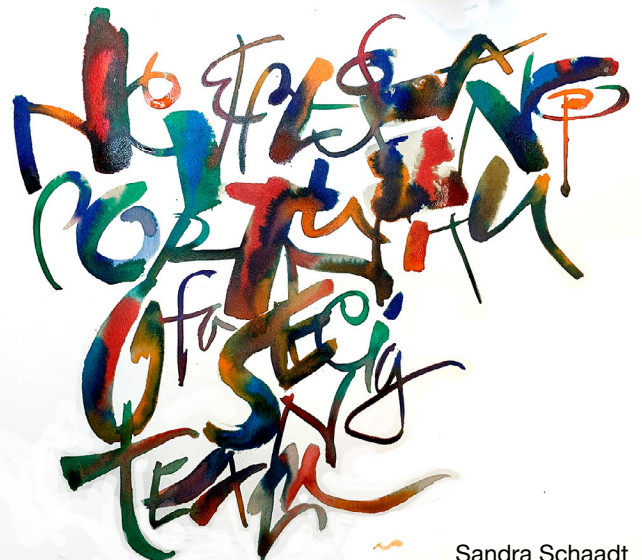
Polly Owens



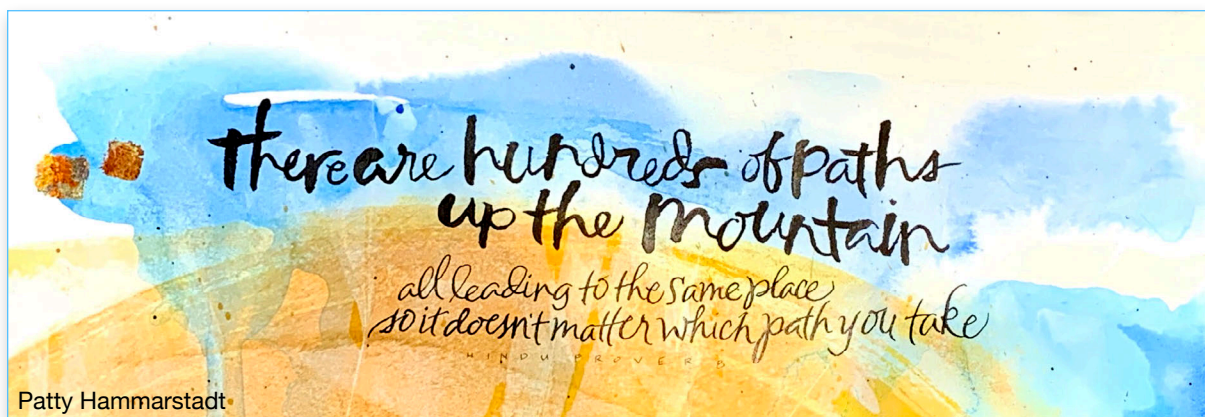
Elizabeth McKee



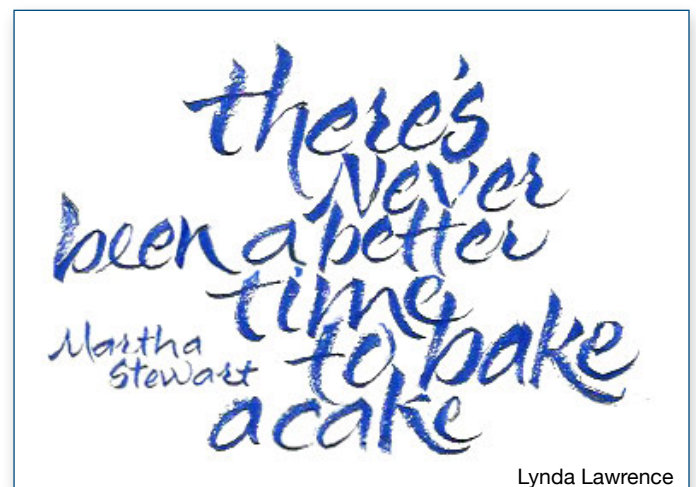
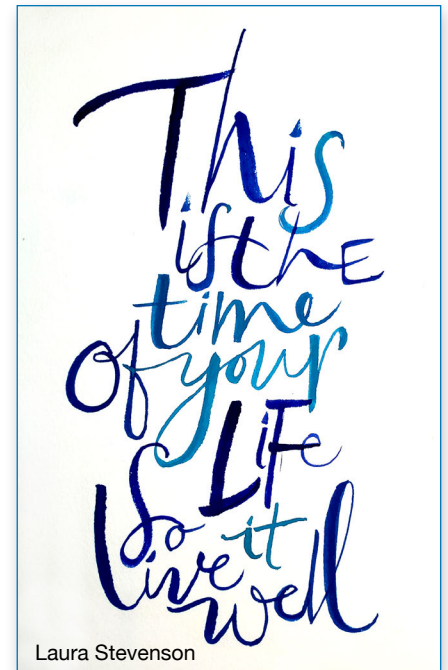
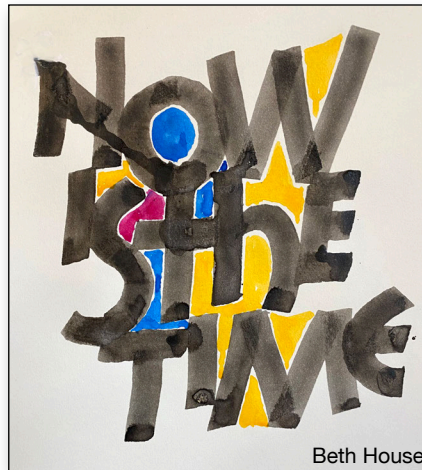
Kathy Chilton



Sandra Schadt

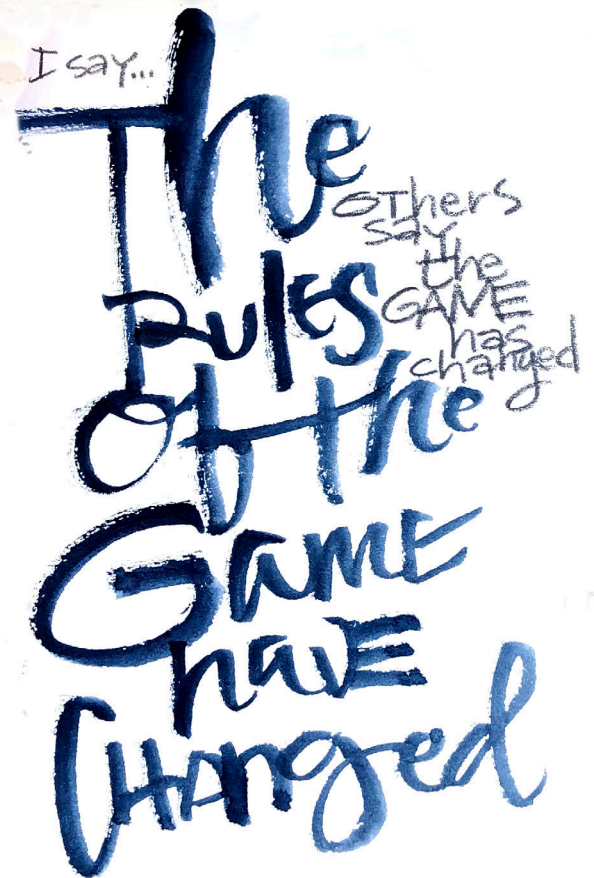


Patty Hammarstadt





Janice Gabel

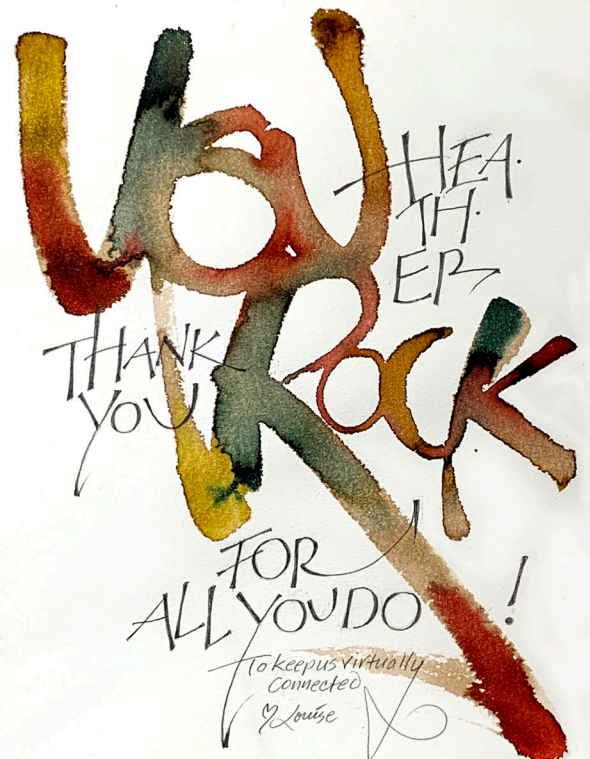


Heather Martinez



Heather Martinez

For some students, this workshop was their introduction to the Zoom video conferencing app. All went well, thanks to the patient and gentle leadership of Heather Martinez. Thank you Heather!



Louise Grunewald

The following is a list of *pangrams* for use in lettering practice, beginning with our all-time favorite – *the quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog*. This one, in particular, was used as sample text to test typewriters and computer keyboards dating back to 1888. Owing to its brevity and coherence, this one has become widely known. Because a pangram contains all the letters of the alphabet, they are useful in lettering practice. The sentences are often sheer nonsense, but that's what gives them character.

Try a few of these pangrams. Consider breaking some of rules you see illustrated on the right (copied from Mike's handouts with permission.)

- * Waxy and quivering, jocks fumble the pizza.
- * When zombies arrive, quickly fax judge Pat.
- * Heavy boxes perform quick waltzes and jigs.
- * A wizard's job is to vex chumps quickly in fog.
- * Sympathizing would fix Quaker objectives.
- * Pack my red box with five dozen quality jugs.
- * BlewJ's computer quiz favored proxy hacking.
- * Quads of blowzy fjord ignite map vex'd chicks.
- * Fake bugs put in wax jonquils drive him crazy.
- * Watch "Jeopardy!" Alex Trebek's fun TV quiz game.
- * GQ jock wears vinyl tuxedo for showbiz promo.
- * Who packed five dozen old quart jugs in my box?
- * Woven silk pajamas exchanged for blue quartz.
- * Brawny gods just flocked up to quiz and vex him.
- * Twelve ziggurats quickly jumped a finch box.
- * Prating jokers quizzically vexed me with fibs.
- * My faxed joke won a pager in the cable TV quiz show.
- * The quick onyx goblin jumps over the lazy dwarf.



The Rules

Why are the rules regarding how to use lettering (and type) important? Because they help with readability. There's lots of them having to do with everything from letter construction to letter and line spacing to how many characters should be in a line. The rules we learn as calligraphers and lettering artists are the building blocks we use as designers.



The quick brown fox jumped

The quick brown fox jumped

The quick brown fox jumped



The quick brown fox jumped

The quick brown fox jumped

The quick brown fox jumped

THE BASIC SHAPES



THE QUICK BROWN FOX

16

How to Break the Rules (Some of them anyway)



VARY THE SPACING



BOUNCE OFF THE BASELINE



VARY THE X-HEIGHT



VARY THE SLOPE



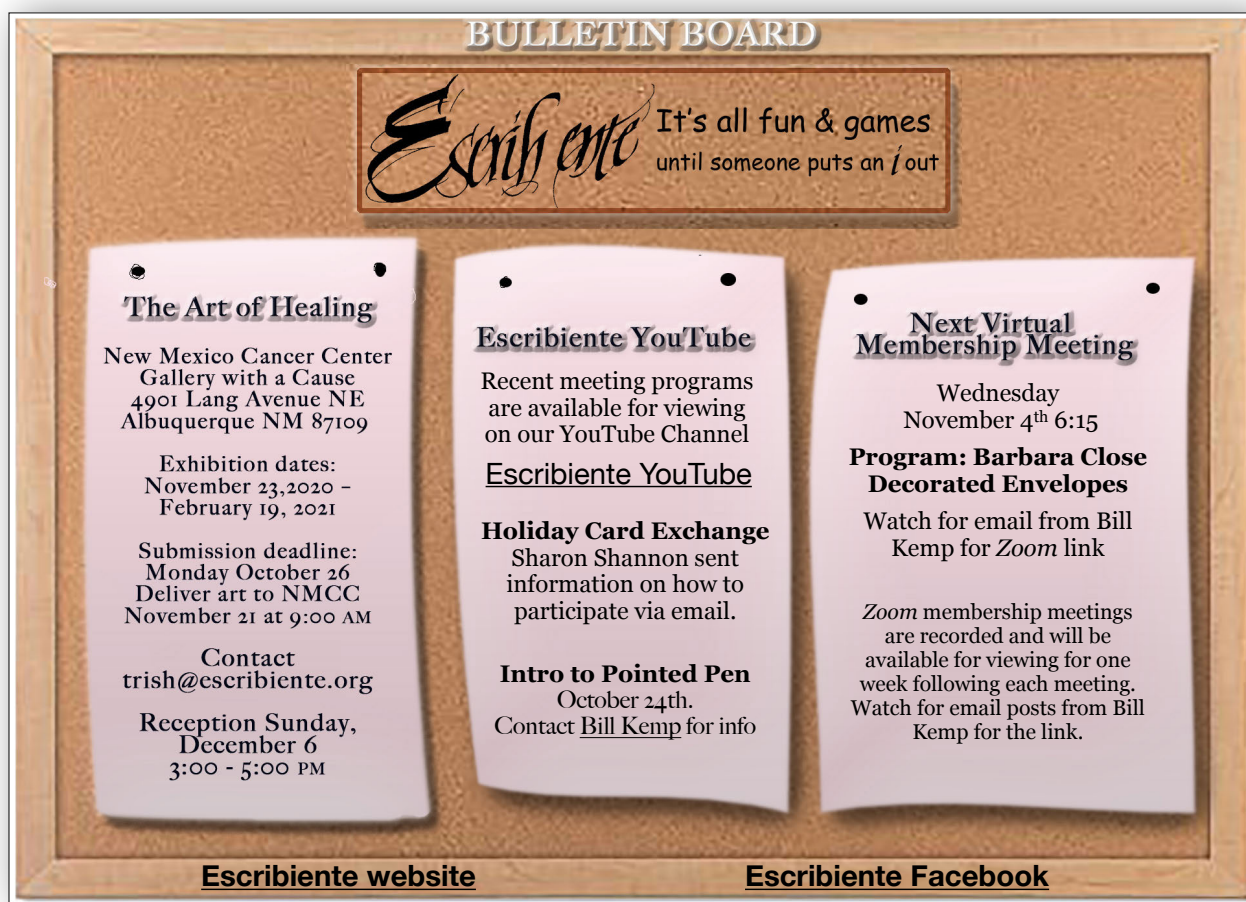
VARY THE SHAPE



VARY THE WEIGHT



VARY THE STYLE



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This newsletter is for and about you, so it's only as good as you make it and contribute to it. Any information and/or artwork you have created is welcome! Classes you've attended, tidbits of news, awards you've won, book reviews, a favorite material you can't wait to tell everyone about, upcoming shows, classes you attend as a teacher or student, etc. This is our connection with the calligraphic world in New Mexico and beyond. We always welcome your input, comments, or suggestions.

Escribiente is a non-profit organization of persons dedicated to the advancement and promotion of calligraphy. Virtual meetings are held at 6:30 pm on the first Wednesday of each month, except January and July. Meetings take place via *Zoom* until group assembly restrictions are lifted. Meeting access details go out to members via email in advance of each meeting.

Yearly dues are \$20, are not pro-rated, and are payable in June. Members receive discounts to attend workshops, along with access to our extensive library collection. Newsletter back issues can be viewed on our website at escribiente.org. Members also receive a discount at Artisan art supply store in Albuquerque. Dues should be mailed to: Escribiente, PO Box 30166, Albuquerque, NM 87190