



Nancy Stock-Allen, *Carol Twombly: Her Brief but Brilliant Career in Type Design*

Nancy Stock-Allen. *Carol Twombly: Her Brief but Brilliant Career in Type Design*. New Castle, Delaware: Oak Knoll Press, 2016. 176 p. ill. ISBN 978-1-58456-346-4. \$US49.95.

Nancy Stock-Allen's book is an unapologetic homage ("Her brief but brilliant career in type design" is the subtitle) to the work of type designer Carol Twombly, whose career bridged the critical moment that typography moved from cold type (photo-based creation and capture that never successfully found its legs) to digital. Adobe Systems, where Twombly worked, was the epicenter of early type development for the digital age. At the time of her entry into professional life, Twombly was one of the very few visible women working in type design.

The book examines Twombly's college training at Rhode Island College of Art and Design in some detail before focusing on the various individual typefaces—Lithos, Trajan, Adobe Caslon, Myriad—that Twombly developed or co-developed at Adobe. The book provides broad and deep context for Twombly's work within the insular typographic community that developed largely around the early Adobe typographic experiments. There is also no dearth of technical explanation of the complicated systems such as the Multiple Master type fonts that Adobe and others employed.

Twombly and her work must be one of the most challenging subjects for a biographer to tackle. Famously private, Twombly left Adobe at the age of 40, when the increasing corporatization of the company and her own unavoidable managerial role left her feeling that she had strayed far from her original passions. The first chapter of the book, an invaluable compendium of women in type design, ends: "Twombly is wary of her story arousing any renewed notoriety or unwanted personal attention. She fiercely values her privacy and for that reason she asks those interested to please accept that all she wishes to say about her career is in these pages" (25).

In fact, Stock-Allen, professor emerita of design at Moore College of Art & Design, appears to have collected nearly all of the quotes attributed to Twombly over the course of two days in 2007. As Stock-Allen acknowledges in her introduction, her main sources were by necessity the women and men who worked around and with Twombly at Adobe. As such, Stock-Allen has collated important voices in this effort, including those of several women (Linnea



Nancy Stock-Allen, *Carol Twombly: Her Brief but Brilliant Career in Type Design*

Lundquist, E.M. Ginger, Laurie Szujewska) whose working relationships with Twombly are catalogued here. Twombly herself both discounts the fact that her gender held any disadvantage to her progress (“ . . . generally I didn’t find being a woman a detriment to my career . . . .” [130]) and acknowledges that there were times when she was fairly certain that she was being asked to judge a competition or sit on a panel as the token woman.

The issue of gender threads its way throughout the entire story. When Sumner Stone, her boss at Adobe, discusses Twombly’s prominence as a type designer, he refers to her as one of the three most significant *woman* type designers (along with Kris Holmes and the great Gudrun Zapf-von Hesse) of the twentieth century. He then says that Twombly herself may be the most significant woman designer of those three. Whether or not that is the case, Twombly deserves recognition as one of the very best contemporary type designers. Since Twombly herself has not to date sought that recognition, Stock-Allen’s thoughtful and thorough research will help to provide it.

Kathleen Walkup  
*Mills College*