



Letter by Letter

Laurent Pflughaupt

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Letters are the building blocks of our language, and quite possibly of our consciousness. Written into young minds through constant repetition, letters soon function like water in a fishbowl—essential for life, but too familiar to qualify as objects of serious inquiry. But considered separately from words and sentences, letters express their own mysterious beauty. In order to uncover their secrets, it is necessary to forego the conventional historical approach in favor of an impassioned appreciation of their formal and sensual characteristics.

In *Letter by Letter* graphic designer and calligrapher Laurent Pflughaupt analyzes each letter of the Roman alphabet in detail, tracing its origin, evolution, and form, as well as discussing its important abbreviations, symbols, and associated meanings. Arranged in alphabetical order, twenty-six entries offer a wealth of facts about each letter, establishing correspondences between letters and elements borrowed from a variety of different fields of study, ranging from traditional paleography, phonetics, and graphic arts to the more arcane areas of musicology, esotericism, and even Eastern philosophy. In addition to a glossary, timelines and images allow us to visualize the letters during the different historical eras, giving the reader an appreciation of their successive metamorphoses. Written as an homage, this lovingly illustrated book takes an approach to the modern alphabet, allowing the reader to see letters anew, in a fresh and lively manner guaranteed to inform and enchant anyone interested in typography and language.

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