

The front cover features a black rectangle, a meandering line punctuated by dots, and a set of numeric data. *TYPP*'s graphic designer Ward Heirwegh abstracted these motifs from the above contributions as emblems of the issue's contents. Its texture has the feel and appearance of a book that has passed through the hands of many. The inside paper is thin and lightweight, making it easy to carry while travelling. Heirwegh also contributed a review to the final section of texts, dedicated to book design criticism, and edited by Thomas Crombez. Five authors review a variety of books in which the design is significant. In this balanced selection of publications from the fields of literature, non-fiction, visual art and dance, each guest critic focuses on the visual solutions conceived by the designer for the concerns at hand.

The editorial board

An Onghena & Hanne Van Dyck	7	Blacking Out on Black Holes
Ilse Van Rijn	25	Writing Wanderlines
Wendy Morris	41	Off by Heart and Out of Breath — <i>A Wandergram for a Lecture</i>
Yvonne Lake	71	The Uncanny Bard and the Freudian Robot
Thomas Crombez (ed.)	A	Over the Serif

An Onghena [insert] A
 Hanne Van Dyck [text+img]

Blacking Out
 on Black Holes •
Hanne Van Dyck
on An Onghena—
and Vice Versa

Is black something or nothing?
This question can lead to
endless discussions. Black is
a utopia, a search for the truth
and for something absolute.
Many artists claim to have
created the blackest of blacks,
like Anish Kapoor and Frederik
De Wilde. In general we accept
that black is the darkest colour.
There are, nevertheless, many
nuances to 'the darkest'. We
say that black is both a colour
and not a colour: it lies outside
the colour spectrum because
of the absence of light. So what
is black? In everyday life we
experience black as a colour,
for example in clothing or in
a piece of furniture. At the
same time we experience that
no single object is really black.

We can only observe an object when a (little) light
is reflected upon it. That is why black never seems
to be completely black. When something is really
black, it absorbs all the light and we cannot see it.
The universe also seems to be black. An Onghena
directs her attention to this infinite blackness, this
infinite unattainable mass. What is this black that
we observe? Where does it stop? What comes after
black? Is it really black?

Scientists have shown that if you mix the whole
universe in one pot, you get a kind of beige. This
average colour is called Cosmic Latte. We can ask
the same questions about black holes. According
to certain theories, nothing, not even light, can
escape from a black hole. But how can we compre-
hend this? What does it comprise? What happens
when you fall into a black hole? What comes
after? To represent these questions and thoughts,
Onghena started researching all the kinds of black
she could find – with one condition: these blacks
should be printable. This way she would determine
a system of specific parameters for the colour
black. The three most important aspects of print
are paper, ink and printing techniques. It is not
a quest for the blackest or the best kind of black.
It is an examination of different manifestations of
black, of interesting blacks and the meanings and
compositions of black. It is a work that will proba-
bly never be finished.

By using a few parameters, Onghena printed drawings of acoustic vibrations. These vibrations do not exist in space: out there, sound functions completely differently. In outer space we have to forget everything we are familiar with and adjust to the laws of a new territory. The vibrations were self-printed with a RISO technique in four different ways at the Charles Nypels Lab of the Jan van Eyck Academy in Maastricht. In every copy of this *TYPP* you will find two of the following four prints: a print with CMYK on 100g EOS 2.0 paper, a print with CMYK on 120g Munken Lynx Rough paper, a print with 100% black on 100g EOS 2.0 paper, and/or a print with 100% black on 120g Munken Lynx Rough paper.

The prints clearly resulted in four different blacks. As a whole, they can be interpreted as a series of prints or as independent works. Within this publication, they will be transformed by the blackness of the opposite page; taken out, they will be transformed by daylight, and by the contrast with their new environment. They function as a starting point for an infinite research project into blackness. Onghena's aim is to let this work evolve into a major study of a huge spectrum of blacks. On a conceptual level, this work is precisely framed, but it engenders a discussion and an atmosphere of mystery. Onghena does not simply want to conduct research into the colour black, but also into its composition – out of CMYK, the golden ratio, different grids, and so on.

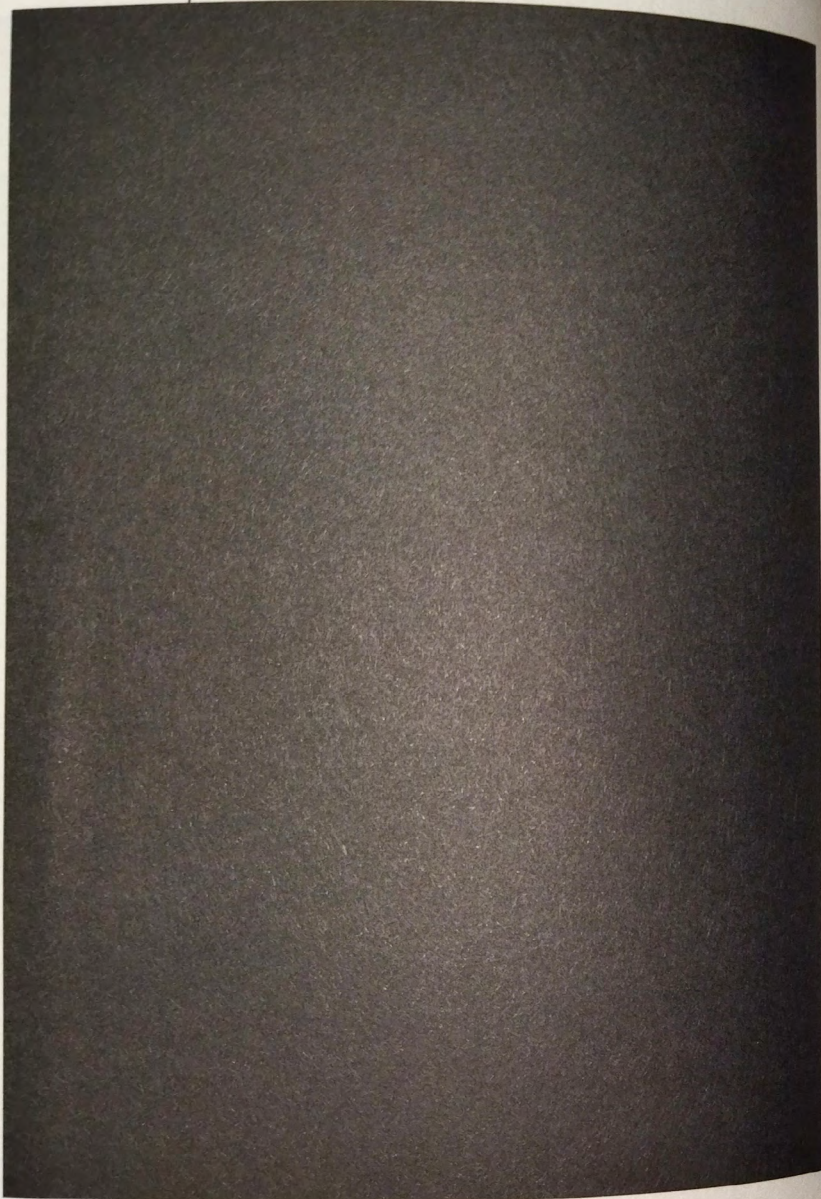
Hanne Van Dyck's main interest is our relation to nature. She examines how we reproduce our experiences and impressions through language and images. Her contribution focuses on the cultural relativity of colour, on language and colour as means to convert an absence into a presence, on the etymology of black and on ways to comprehend and put into words the elusiveness of the universe. When Isaac Newton discovered the spectrum, he presented a new order of colours in which there would no longer be a place for black. But if not a colour, what is black?

Every representation gives a specific interpretation of reality. This interpretation is determined by the society we live in. Society gives a colour its meanings, codes and values. And these meanings change just like societies change. Today, for example, we see everything in different lighting conditions than societies in the Middle Ages. A torch, an oil lamp and a candle produce different light than electricity. If an old book tells me that the dress of the princess was black, it is not because that dress was actually black, although it could have been. The difference between the actual colour and the named colour can be large. The difference between a princess's definition of black and my definition can be significant. The danger of anachronism is always there when a word is used for a representation of a colour. For centuries, black and white were considered colours, but the distinction between primary and complementary colours emerged slowly over time. The opposition between warm and cool colours is a matter of convention. Everything changes over time, just like the colour of my new black pants. As colour vanishes over time, how to describe a BlackBerry to a black witch?

The word black relates to ink, as well as to burn, gleam, shine, flash, dark, and to the black fur of the sable. The ancient Greeks sometimes used the same word to name different colours if they had the same intensity, like dark blue and black. Other cultures had two words for black, one for dull and one for brilliant black. How does one word become another? And from what moment on did we feel the need to formulate this colour? Because colour only exists as perceived by an individual. It becomes hard to say definitively what our ancestors did or did not see. Perception does not exist before we have a word to describe it. Did our ancestors merely lack the vocabulary to articulate what it was they were seeing? Or did their brain not bother to view black as a colour?

Black, *noir*, *zwart*, *svart*, *schwarz*, *hitam*, *nigrum*, *preto*, *nwa* – all different words with different origins. Do they all describe the same thing? Black is often used to represent darkness, mourning, death, evil, witches, magic, the end, secrets, strength, violence and elegance. Black refers to powerfully opposed ideas: authority and humility, sin and holiness, rebellion and conformity, wealth and poverty, good and evil. In nature, black means the absence of light. Was the black sky just as black when we were born? The universe is mostly black because there are not enough stars to produce light and most of them died out before they reached us. When the stars reach us they are already dead. How much more black can the universe have been? A black dwarf is a theoretical stellar remnant: a white dwarf that has cooled sufficiently so it no longer emits significant heat or light. Because of the time required for a white dwarf to reach this state, it is calculated to be longer than the current age of the universe. Therefore no black dwarfs are expected to exist in the universe yet.

To be able to understand the unattainability of the universe, scientists analyse. But scientific research is culturally determined, and it has its own history, ideology and motives. We can describe black with words, such as absence. If we convert this absence into an image we go back to black. We depend on a medium to catch black: ink, paint and language. If we use all kinds of paper, all kinds of ink, all kinds of words like holes, magic, panther, and we take all kinds of forms and we paint them black, would we be able to create an independence that makes black the constant factor that explains itself? Since any description, any notation of black is also cultural and ideological, we want to emphasize the relativity of black in this little inventory, together with the relativity of this inventory itself.



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-----black-----
-----dwarfs-----
-----are-----
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-----to-----
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-----yet-----



To Burn & To Shine

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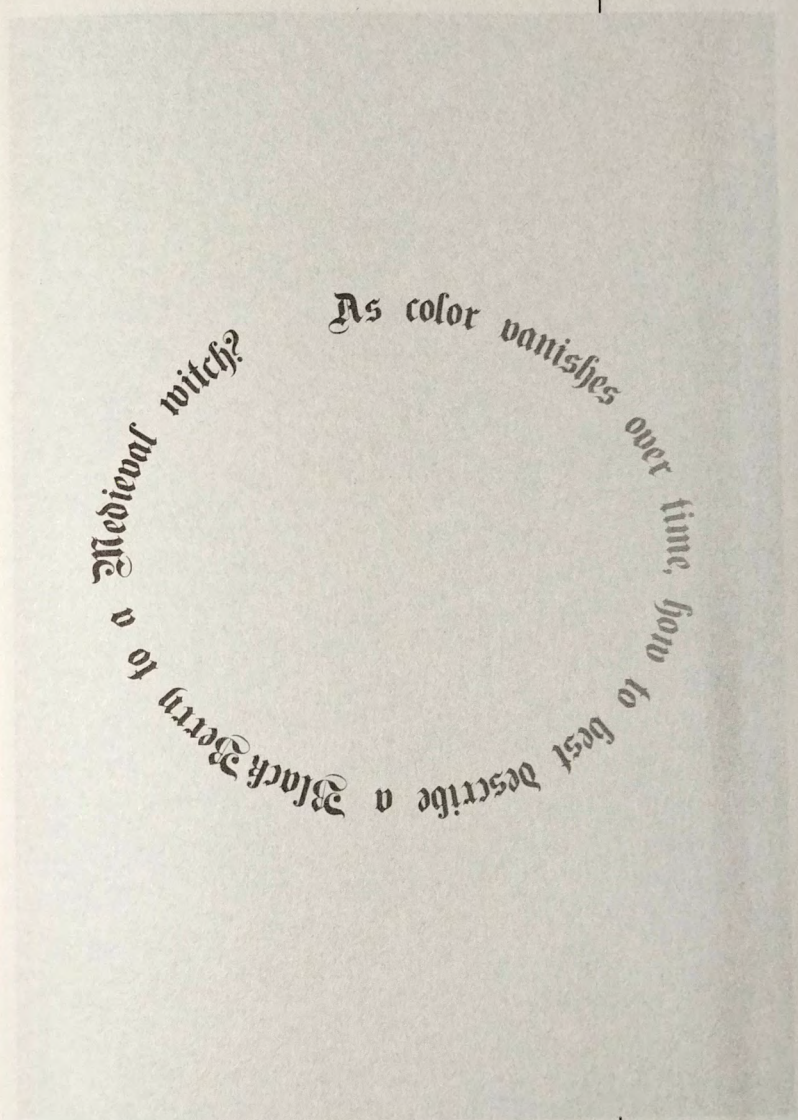
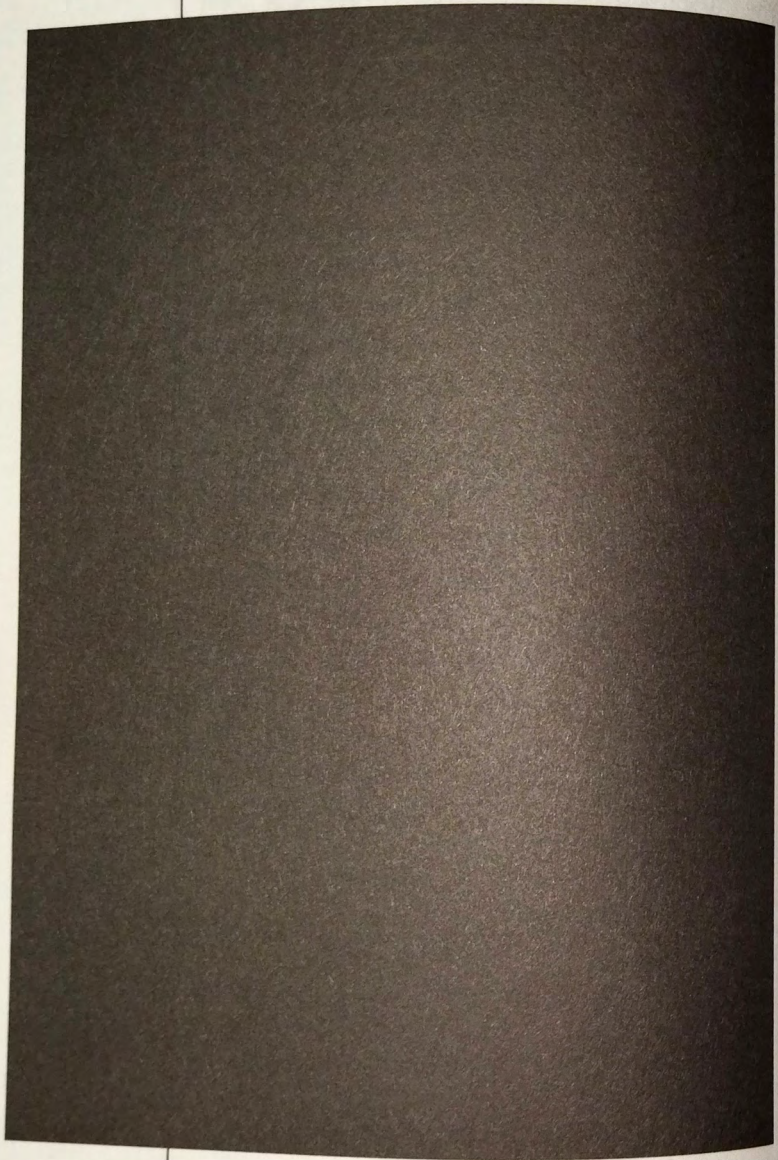
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As color vanishes over time, how to best describe a Blackberry to a Medieval witch?