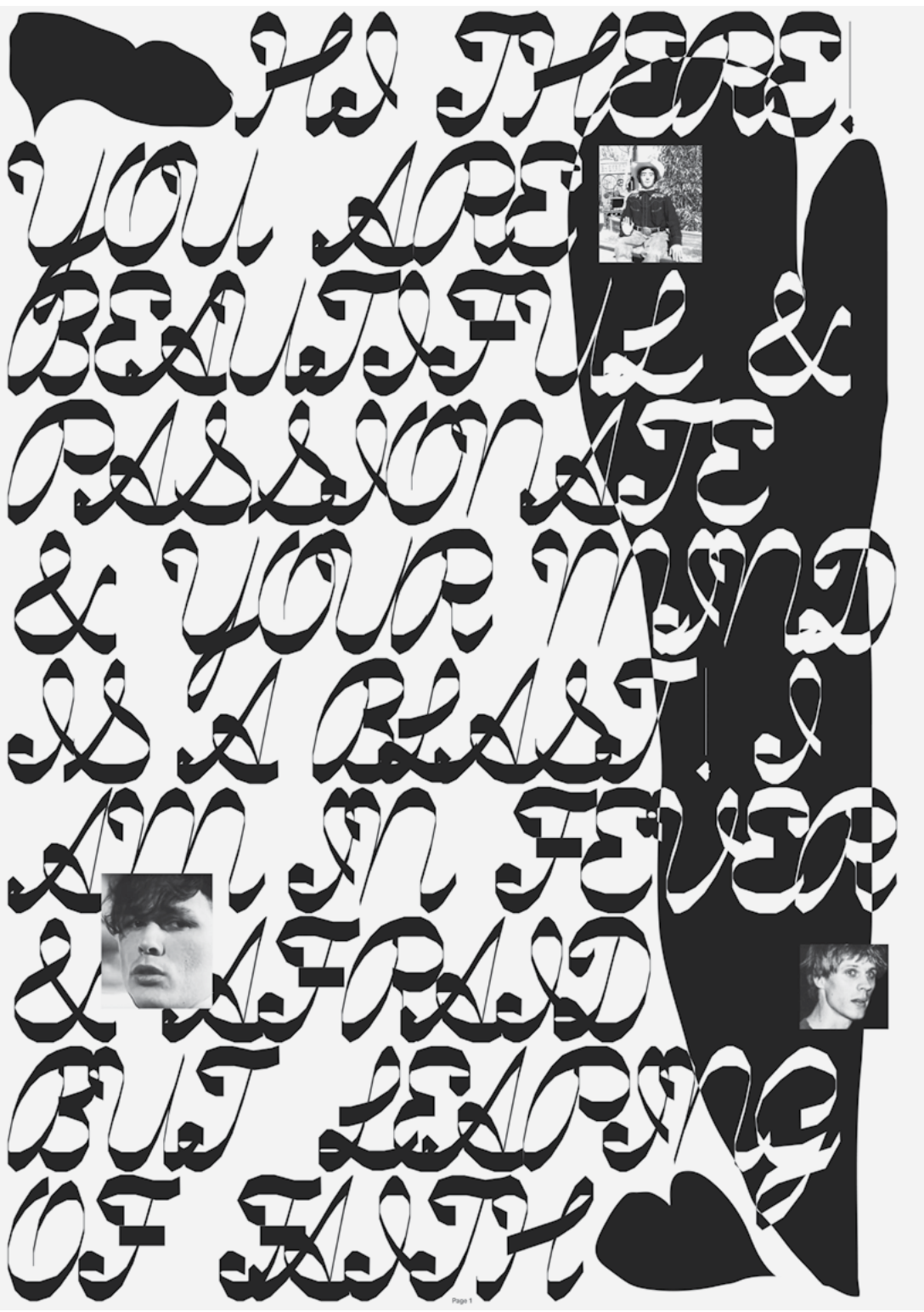




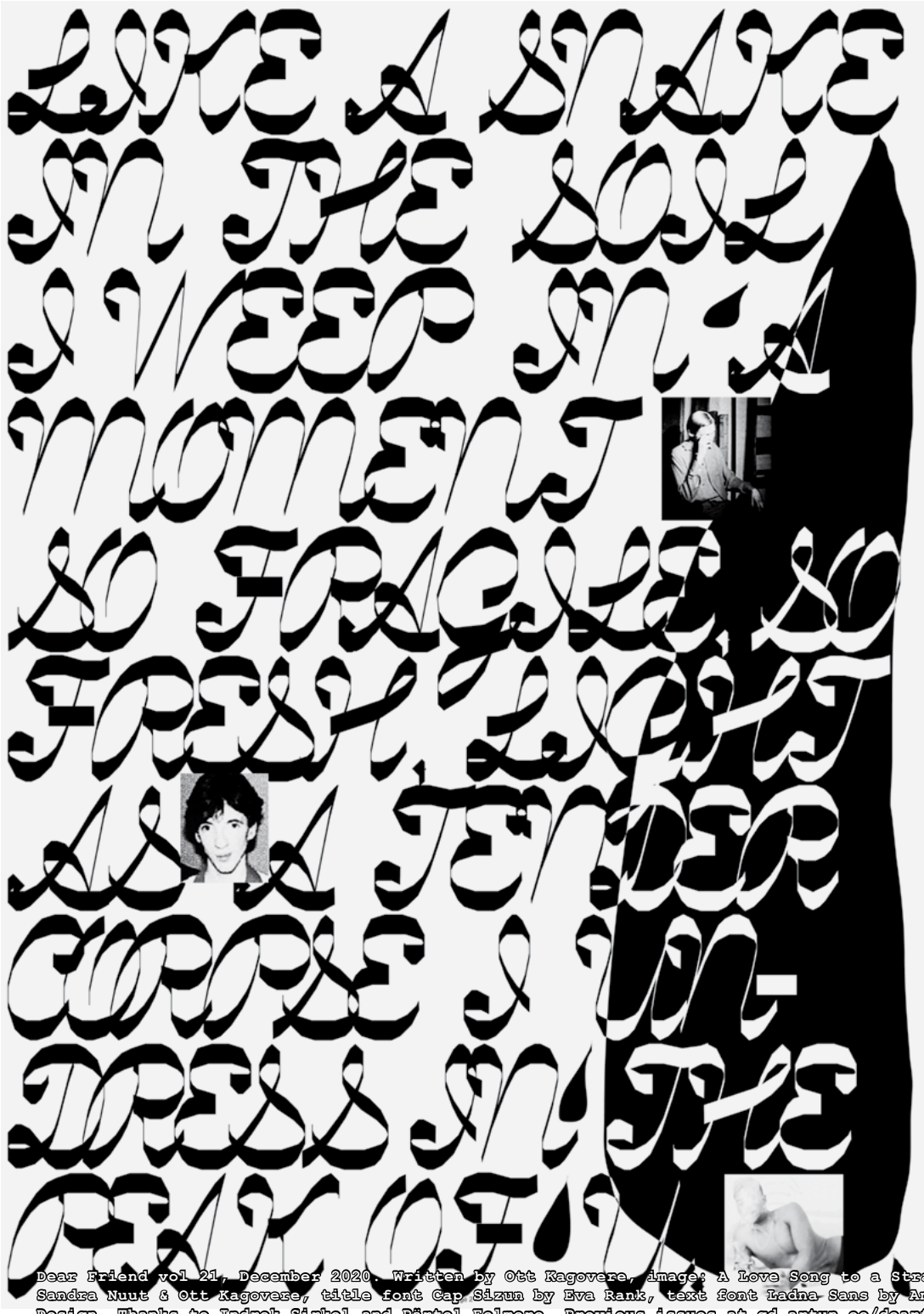
Forre: Henny by Lara Hale & Lara by Bold Decisions

A LOVE SONG TO A STRANGER
A Poem Book by Ott Kagevare

2020



Page 1



Dear Friend vol 21, December 2020. Written by Ott Kagevare, image: A Love Song to a Stranger by Sandra Nuut & Ott Kagevare, title font Cap Sizun by Eva Rank, text font Ladna Sans by Andree Paat (Kirjatehnika). Published by Estonian Academy of Arts, Department of Graphic Design. Thanks to Indrek Sirkel and Pärtel Eelmäe. Previous issues at gd.artun.ee/dearfriend



2020

DEAR FRIEND,

I want
to talk
to you
about poetry.

How words are like
small images and sentences
like collections of them—small books
or pamphlets. In poetry, though, I am not sure
if we actually have sentences, because most of it has
abandoned initial capitals and punctuation. Perhaps
that kind of poetry is pure language, not language that
is divided into equally digestible parts by capitals
and commas.

I recently self-published a poem of mine, and
it has made me reflect on several things. It took me
around two years to materialise this small publication
and the process made me think of *time as method*.
And about how, quite often, I have felt anxious about
making something, wishing for instant gratitude and
praise. How sometimes there has not been a proper
creative impulse behind my work, just the need for
feedback and recognition. That made me think of Erik
Satie's *Vexations*—a short melody, only a few lines,
which is meant to be played 840 times in a row. The
performance of this piece lasts for around 18 hours,
transforming the brief melody into Wagnerian dimen-
sions. I see a certain similarity here with my poem
booklet—a couple of pages of poetry, stretched out
over a span of time, providing me with weeks full of
experiments and meditations.

Time, in that sense, has a crucial role in grap-
hic design. A role that is sometimes overlooked, due
to the fact that traditionally graphic design has not
been considered a temporal art. But this notion only
makes sense when you exclude the *process* of making,
of designing, from the final product. If you avoid this
exclusion, as one should, in my opinion, multiple possi-
bilities for temporal experimentation in graphic design
open up. If one uses time consciously, one can think of
it as a method. Be it something conceptual, like Satie's
Vexations or something mundane like waiting and
taking the time needed. If we still feel uncomfortable
talking about graphic design as a temporal art, then so
be it. But we should never dismiss it as a processual art.


I also like that the initial impulse behind the
work has been utterly designerly. Lars Høie, a friend
and colleague of mine, gave me some of his fonts and
I was eager to try them out. As I was unable to push
them into any of my professional work and was tired
of making random zines consisting of found materials
(which I had done previously), I lurched into a folder
where I keep small writings, notes, and poems of mine
and tried to typeset some of them with Heresy—the
font I liked the most from Lars.

*Hi there, you are beautiful and passionate
and your mind is a blast! I am in fever and afraid but
leaping of faith, like a snake in the soil, I weep in
a moment so fragile so fresh, light as a tender corpse,
I undress in the peak of you.*

That's the poem. Initially it was slightly diffe-
rent. I rewrote it many times in InDesign to get the
right flow to suit the font, the typesetting, and the
format of the poster. Again, a very designerly way
to write—for and within a specific form(at), as opposed
to the “abstract” way poets usually do, as if writing
into thin air, without thinking about the actual form
that the words will materialise into later.

The poem is entitled *A Love Song to a Stranger*, and my initial idea was to hang them up in
the city and the message of the poem would be direc-
ted to random passers-by. It expresses my vulnera-
bility that accompanies an expression of love, of care
and devotion. I can not think of a more vulnerable
utterance. It is as if standing naked, completely open,
in front of someone. It reminded me of a small fact
I heard about dogs, that when they are defeated in
a scuffle they reveal their most vulnerable body part—
their throat—to their opponent. As if announcing, *I'm
yours now, do as you please*. I have the feeling that
love entails a similar scuffle. But not necessarily
between lovers, but within ourselves. It is a struggle,
a quarrel within ourselves to come to terms with
accepting love. And when we finally do, we let our-
selves be defeated by it, we reveal our most vulne-
rable selves, for bites and kisses.

The image layer on top of the text is a reflec-
tion of the poet, the lover, the naked one. It is a depic-
tion of male vulnerability, which is also something that
I have been thinking about for years. Here I have had
many ideas for publications and events, one of them
being a zine entitled *Feminism for Men*, which collects
images of men crying and, as an extension to that, an
event where there would be a room full of men, men
full of tears. I somehow find this image of men crying
very beautiful and empowering. It depicts men as
human beings, with all the hurt and vulnerability that
comes with that, not men as statues of confidence
and conquering. To loosely paraphrase Leslie Gore,
It's my gender and I'll cry if I want to! But somehow
I never managed to materialise these ideas. I always
felt that it needed more *time*, more digestion, was
too important to be executed in haste.

The images come from another poetry folder
that I have, this one consisting only of images, entitled
Mundane Crushes. It is a collection of screenshots of
portraits which have moved me deeply and function
as a vessel for small desires, sometimes sexual, but
more often emotional and empathic. The first image in
the folder was this one  of the experimental musi-
cian Kali Malone. My reading of it is very poetic—
her hair in the wind, eyes slightly wet, the both of us,
on the verge of a profound realisation, words unneces-
sary. I also enjoy the fact that, when written down,
those daydreams look silly and adolescent, but as such
become refreshing. They allow me to laugh at myself,
or rather with myself and deflate the burdensome
seriousness that comes with the image of adulthood.
As if being an adult means being devoid of desire!

I think of the images as an extra set of punctu-
ation marks within the poem, providing small pauses
and emphases. It is an extra layer of information which
simplifies and clarifies the meaning of the whole. I could
go on and on about the poem, but I want to keep this
letter shorter than *Vexations*, so perhaps it is better if
you read the poem yourself. Let me know if you would
like to have it and I'll be glad to send it to you.

PEACE & LOVE!
OTT KAGOVERE