SOME VIRTUES OF DESIGN

GUI BONSIEPE

CONTENTS

(The Six Memos for the Next Millennium)

PREFACE

AN UNFASHIONABLE TERM

Dealing with **virtues** today provokes associations with outdated issues, covered with mold, dry greyness - what in German we call *moralingesättigt* (saturated with moral appeals). The supposed outdatedness, the supposed loss of contact with the real stuff of the present world fulfils occasionally a role as a candidate of benevolent - or not that benevolent - dismissal.

It seems to have become a pet theme in publications, particularly in the US, that deal with the future, especially information technology and management. Hardly one can open an issue or attend a meeting in which there is not an open or oblique reference to Europe as being off-the-track. The issue, of course, is not a supposed lack of dynamics and of competence in innovation, but a barely camouflaged appetite for an imperial design that considers everything deviant from the one-dimensional dream as an offense.

Confronted with an aggressive missionarism of competition *ad ultranza* that pretends to have found in itself the measure of the world and for the world, one might ask, with what kind of social phantasy we deal that puts competition and fighting at the center of society? What I am questioning is not only the ambition of any universal scheme, whoever is purporting it, but the divergence between advanced information technology and atrophy of sociocultural imagination.

I chose to focus on the issue of

virtues of design when I was reading - once again – the *Six Memos for the Next Millennium* by Italo Calvino. As is known, he finished only five out of a plan of six memos before he died. In this remarkable small volume he speaks about the **values he would like to see maintained**

and brought into the next millennium as far as literature is concerned. These shared values he calls virtues. Taking his approach as starting point I want to talk about the **shared values of design for the next millennium.**

ONE LIGHTNESS

Without wanting to push the issue, several of these values for literature can be - with due corrections - transferred to the domain of design. A literal transfer certainly would be naive and inappropriate. But parallels and affinities seem to exist. For instance, when Calvino defines

Lightness as the attempt to remove weight from the structure of stories and from language,

are there not analogies in the field of design? Lightness in design might be a virtue to be maintained, especially when we reflect on material and energy flows and their impact on the environment and when we confront the mundane issue of congested lines cloaked with digital trash in the Net.

When later on he refers to the

"sudden agile leap of the poet-philosopher who raises himself above the weight of the world, showing ... that what many consider to be the vitality of the times - noisy, aggressive, revving and roaring - belongs to the realm of death, like a cemetery for rusty old cars",

lightness acquires a critical dimension and dissipates wrong associations of easy going aloofness and superficiality. Definitely I would include under the term Lightness the notions of

humor, wit and **elegance**

for which we have particularly in Italian design so well known examples (e.g. Castiglioni's tractor seat mounted on a flat elastic steel profile); or to take an example from the host country, the graphic design of the passport for the citizens of this country. These examples represent the virtue of Lightness in design.

TWO INTELLECTUALITY

On occasion of the Aspen Congress 1989, dedicated to Italian Design, Ettore Sottsass surprised the audience by presenting himself - quite naturally I would say - as an intellectual and cultural operator. Only an Italian or a French can say that. Italy and France are two countries in which the notion of intellectual does not produce a lifting of the eye brows and a climate of suspect.

In Germany, in the US and I assume also in the Netherlands the world "intellectual" carries negative overtones and certainly many of the practising design professionals would accept but with reluctance the self-interpretation as intellectuals.

Rather they would say, that they are practitioners and they want to distance themselves from the neighbourhood of the intellectual; they do not share Gramsci's notion of the

organic intellectual,

who uses his technical competence within social institutions like private companies or public administration.

Intellectuals are - rightly or wrongly -
characterized as wordsmiths because
they play a decisive role in shaping the

discourse

of domains - political, cultural, scientific and
technological. In the field of design, intellectual
formation has not a strong history, because

design education

grew out of craft training
with a deep

mistrust against
anything **theoretical**.

Recently however we can
observe some promising
signs of a shift away

**from an indifferent,
if not openly hostile
attitude towards an
interest in articulation
and theoretical issues.**

Designers start to write, particularly graphic
designers - for me a promising symptom to
overcome a period of collective muteness
of the profession. Design and writing about
design are not longer seen as a sterile and
mutually exclusive opposites.

On the contrary, a design historian in the year 2050 who looks back at the design scenery at the end of the 20th century might be surprised about the binarism between action and contemplation.

In two generations this opposition might appear as out-of-date as for us the debate about types between Muthesius and van der Velde nine decades ago.

Intellectuals have repeatedly reflected about their role in society. The most salient characteristic seems to me the stamina to reveal

contradictions, to **rock the boat of selfcomplacency, to** compare **what** is **to that what** could **be, and in particular to** ask **for the legitimization of power.**

This is a business that is not whole-wholeheartedly welcome to the powers that be, whatever they are and wherever they are.

I do not want to heroise the role of the intellectual, and even less I want to overestimate his possibilities of influence, above all in the field of design. Neither I do want to stylise him or her into a permanent resentful protester driven by the drive of "being against".

But I would not like to see this ingredient of a critical stance in the design culture missing or abolished. An antidote to intellectual acquiescence does not only seem to me desirable, but indispensable if one wants to avoid the danger of falling into the trap of indifference and accommodation.

As second conclusion, I
would like to see maintained
Intellectuality as a virtue of
design in the next century:

**readiness and courage to put into question
the orthodoxies, conventions, traditions,
agreed-upon canons of design**

- and not only of design.

That is not only a verbal enterprise,
an enterprise that works through the
formulation of texts, an enterprise of
linguistic competence of a critical mind.

The designer acting as designer, that
is, with the tools of his profession,
faces the particular challenge to of
an operational critique. In other

words, she or he faces the challenge
not to remain in critical distance
to and above reality, but to get
involved in and intervene in reality
through design actions, that open
new or different opportunities for
action.

THREE CONCERN FOR THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

The Netherlands possess a great tradition in civic virtues that manifests itself in the care for the publicdomain. A foreigner visiting the Netherlands is struck by the attention given to detail in such simple everyday objects as an address label for post parcels or a time table for trains.

Moreover he is struck by the apparent *Selbstverständlichkeit* with which caring for the public domain is taken for granted and considered one of the noble tasks and outright obligations of public administration. This care for details and quality of public service is a result of a

political commitment

that might be traced back to the

civic history of this country. Certainly it is not the result of a single short term action, but rather the outcome of a steady practice rooted in the political body of Netherlands society.

Politics is the domain in which the members of a society decide in what kind of society they want to live. Politics thus goes far beyond political parties.

Care for the public domain, though a profoundly political commitment, is at the same time transpolitical insofar it exceeds - or better should exceed - the interests of the government in turn.

As the third design virtue in the
future I would like to see maintained
the concern for the Public Domain,
and this all the more so when
registering the

almost delirious onslaught on everything public

that seems to be a generalized credo of
the predominant economic pet model.

One does well to recall that the
socially devastating effects of
unrestricted private interests have to
be counterbalanced by public interests
in any society that claims to be called
democratic and that deserves that
label. The tendency towards

Third-Worldization even of richer economies with
a programmatic binary system of a small group of
haves and a majority of have-nots is a phenomenon
that casts shadows on the future and raises some
doubts about the reason in the brains of the people
that find utter wisdom and desirability in such
delacerating scheme of social organization.

FOUR OTHERNESS

As fourth virtue I mention Otherness, or better
concern for Otherness. This issue is linked to
the discussion about

Self and Identity, about Presentation and Representation.

It plays a strong role in discussions about feminism,
gender roles, race and ethnic diversity. It has virulent
political implications because it is rooted in the question
of autonomy, i.e. the This leads us to put into focus the

power to participate in the determination of one's own future.

- as Edward Said formulated it - blithe indifference to a good
three-quarters of reality.

Today design and design discourse
reflect the interests of the dominating
economies that under the banner of

globalization

are engaged in the process of modeling the world
according to their hegemonic interests and imagery.
Globalization as a new economic fundamentalism
is the name for the actual planetary project or drift,
a process that seems to advance with inexorable
ruthlessness, like an objective force passing over
the heads of individuals, governments and societies.
Tapping the conceptual repertoire of anthropological
discourse, can be interpreted as an

**attempt to incorporate
Otherness and to subject
Otherness.**

That might not be to everybody's taste. It should not come as a surprise that the victims of this process that euphemistically and cynically are labelled with the term "social costs" resist the attempt of incorporation and prefer to enter with better preparation the arena. When fight

and competition are the order of the day or the supposed inexorable divine imperative that not to accept would be quixotesque romanticism, one might agree; but the entrance conditions into the arena should be less distorted.

So my fourth virtue of design is respect for Otherness, leaving behind the racist distinction between developed and underdeveloped countries. This virtue implies the acceptance of other design cultures and its inherent values. It definitely requires a European, North American or Asian. This virtue can counteract

critical stance against ethnocentric messianic visions of whatever type,

the propensity to focus exclusively on the one quarter of humanity that according to international statistics forms part of the industrialized rich economies.

FIVE VISUALITY

As an equivalent to Italo Calvino's virtue of Visibility, I take Visuality in the field of design. He characterises visibility as "thinking in terms of images". That is an assessment with radical implications, because in our culture thinking is associated with linguistic competence, with

dealing with texts, whereas the visual domain is put into the subaltern role of quacks, trickery, treachery, superficiality, shallowness, appearance, *Schein, blosser Schein*, something not to be trusted, that is, the opposite of macho-style thinking, at best a second-rate kind of thinking, but definitely an intellectual nullity.

The

denigration of vision and visuality has its

philosophical origins in Plato's well known cave simile. We can call this deep linguistic bias against visuality and its cognitive potential the **"imperialism of the word".**

The possibility that the visual domain has cognitive power and is not a simple subordinate or corollary to text has been perceived sometimes, but it never got a strong foothold in our educational system and has been filtered out in academe where mastery of texts is institutionally consolidated.

Nobody would doubt that
literacy is a prerequisite
for higher learning, but

graphicacy

as it has been called - the competence in dealing with images - is far from being recognized as a competence of equal importance.

That might change in the future, putting an end to visual illiteracy that is disfiguring and disbalancing university education everywhere, producing masses of visually, and thus aesthetically atrophied graduates.

There are symptoms of change provoked by
technological innovations. I refer to the process of
digitalization. In increasing degree sciences and
cognition depend on

power of the visual domain, of images and visualization,

the not in the traditional ancillary role of providing
illustrations for the higher glory of texts, but in its
own right. The still fledged imaging science is a new
branch that deals with the multifaceted phenomena
were images are not taken as examples of mimesis,
but in which images reveal realities that are not
accessible through words and texts.

The theory of post-structuralists based in the
assumption that reality is a "text" that has to be
"read", that architecture is a "text", that cities
are "texts", that our designed environment is a
"text" to be deciphered by the master decoders,
will have to be revised.

This

text-fundamentalism

> has to be relativised by showing that the
> deeply-engrained predominance of the word
> in Judeo-Christian tradition (In the Beginning
> there was the Word, *Im Anfang war das Wort*)
> is now starting to be technologically
> undermined and that its claim of the word as
> the exclusive and predominant domain of
> cognition is simply that: a claim that today
> shows signs of corrosion.

The **antivisualism,** counts with a long
the **logocentrism** and strong tradition
that - save a few exceptions - has passed with
olympic indifference over the visual domain.
Therefore a change will not occur from one year
to the next; the shift might stretch over a period
of generations.

For design undreamt, radically new possibilities open up. But so far, apart from dispersed initiatives to tap the potential of design for visual cognition, the profession of graphic designers pursues well-trodden tracks. Here then is the challenge for design education to explore this new domain and to loosen the strong association between graphic design and sales promotion - from detergents to political candidates.

We do not have yet a name for this new domain that would correspond to imaging science. Perhaps in the future the notion of "image design" or "visualisation" will become popular, though I would prefer the term

information design,

because the binarism between word and picture should be avoided.

The emerging field of information design would not only require a considerable collective effort to get outlined and established as a promising field of expertise, it would furthermore contribute to a problem-oriented approach to design issues that differs from the self-centred design approach that gained attractiveness in the eighties.

The fifth virtue then I would like to see
maintained and increased in the next
millennium I call Visuality. Let me quote
a scholar of visuality to reinforce my
argument:

**"The history of the general move towards
visualization thus has broad intellectual
and practical implications for the conduct
and the theory of the humanities, the
physical and biological sciences, and the
social sciencesindeed, for all forms of
education, from top to bottom."**

SIX THEORY

Coming to an end of this panoramic tour into
the domain of virtues let me now have a look
at the question of design theory - a question
that is related to the general issue of

design discourse and
design research.

As I have argued elsewhere I do not see
any future for the design profession if
within the next years we don't overhaul
all our design education programs and
open an **institutional place
for design theory**.

There are two reasons for this declaration:

First, every professional practice takes place in front
of a theoretical back-ground; that holds even for
practice styles that vehemently deny any theoretical
involvement.

Second, professions that do not produce
new knowledge do not have a future in
technologically dynamic societies.

Therefore design theory should and - according to my assessment of the future - must become part of our educational programs. Design theory still leads a marginal existence. It is considered pastime of some eccentrics in academic settings protected from the harsh realities of professional practice in the labor market. That is a somewhat biased view that does not reveal particular perspicuous vision.

Theory is not a virtue. But

concern and cultivation of Theoretical Interests is a virtue

that I would not only like to see continued into the next millennium, but brought to full blossoming.

SEVEN BASICS OF TYPOGRAPHY

The art of designing with type

began in the West around 1455 when Johannes Gutenberg perfected the craft of printing from individual pieces of type. From this early technology we draw a great deal of our current terminology. This section introduces the origins of the alphabet, and defines the terms and measurements that will form the basis of your typographic vocabulary. Once you are familiar with this information, you will be able to communicate your ideas clearly and work efficiently with type.

Origins of the Alphabet

Before proceeding with the more practical aspects of typography, let's first consider the twenty-six letters we call our alphabet. We tend to forget that the alphabet is composed of symbols, each representing sounds made in speech. The symbols we use today are derived from those used thousands of years ago. However, the ancient forms did not represent sounds but were pictures of things or symbols for ideas.

Pictographs At some point in time, people began to communicate visually. They made simple drawings of the things that existed in their world—people, animals, tools, and weapons, for example. **These basic images, called *pictographs*, were symbols representing objects, such as an ox or a house (1).**

1 | Pictographs

Ideographs   As the need to communicate more abstract thoughts developed, the symbols began to take on multiple meanings: ox, for example, could also mean food. **The new symbols would represent not objects, but ideas and are called *ideographs* (2).**

2 | Ideographs

Abstract thoughts could also be communicated by combining different pictographs: for example, to communicate the idea of rest, pictographs of a man and a tree might be combined. A contemporary example of the ideograph is the warning symbol of the skull and crossbones, which is not seen for what it is, but for what it represents: danger, death, pirates, or poison. This evolution from pictographs to ideographs represented a major step in the development of a written language.

Early cultures used this system of picture-writing, combining symbols for the concrete (pictographs) and for the abstract (ideographs), to communicate and keep records. Today the Chinese still use an evolved version of this system. There are some disadvantages to the picto-ideographic system: not only are the symbols complex, but their numbers run into the thousands, making learning more difficult and writing slow.

Phoenician Alphabet

As a nation of traders and merchants, the ancient Phoenicians needed a simplified writing form that would allow them to keep ledgers and communicate business transactions. Around 1200 B.C.E., a new concept in written communication evolved using symbols to represent the sounds of speech rather than ideas or objects.

To understand how this change came about, let's look at the first two letters of our alphabet, A and B, and see how they evolved (3). One of the primary spoken sounds the Phoenicians recorded was "A." This sound occurred at the beginning of their word *aleph*, meaning ox. Instead of devising a new symbol for the sound, they simply took the existing symbol for the ox.
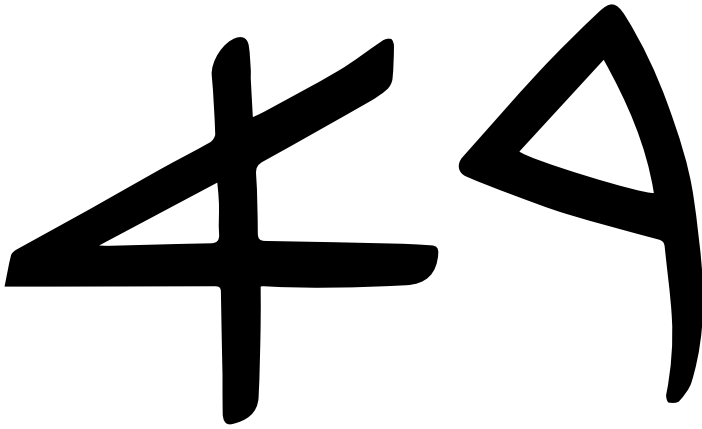
3 | Phoenician aleph & beth

They did the same for the sound "B," which was found in their word *beth*, meaning house. Again, they took the existing symbol for the house and applied it to the sound. This process was continued until the Phoenicians had assigned a symbol for each sound. In all cases the symbols were of common objects or parts of the body, such as water, door, fish, hand, eye, or mouth.

The Phoenician alphabet required far fewer symbols than the picto-ideographic system. Furthermore, the simplified letterforms could be written more rapidly, were easier to learn, and provided an ideal means of communication. By developing a standardized phonetic alphabet, the Phoenicians made a major contribution to Western civilization.

Greek Alphabet

The ancient Greek civilization gradually adopted the Phoenician alphabet for their use around 800 B.C.E. They recognized something quite different in the potential of this new system: in addition to its usefulness as a tool of trade, the alphabet also offered a valuable means of preserving knowledge. Along with adopting the alphabet, the Greeks adopted the Phoenician names for the letters, altering them only slightly. For example, **aleph became alpha, beth became beta (4)**. From these two letters we derive our word *alphabet*.

AB

4 | Greek alpha & beta

The Phoenician alphabet contained no vowels, only consonants. Words formed from this alphabet would have looked similar to our abbreviations—Blvd. and Rte. Although this system worked well for business ledgers, its broader use was limited. Therefore the Greeks added five vowels and formalized the letterforms. A revised alphabet of only capital letters was adopted officially by Athens in 403 B.C.E.

Roman Alphabet

Just as the Greeks had altered the Phoenician alphabet, the Romans adopted and modified the Greek alphabet (5). Thirteen letters were left unchanged from the Greek: A, B, E, H, I, K, M, N, O, T, X, Y, and Z. Eight letters were revised: C, D, G, L, P, R, S, and V. Two letters were added: F and Q. This gave the Romans a total of twenty-three letters.

The Romans also dropped the Greek designations for the letters, such as alpha, beta, and gamma, and substituted simpler sounds to represent the letters, such as our ABCs of today. The letters U and W were added to the alphabet about a thousand years ago, and J was added five centuries later.
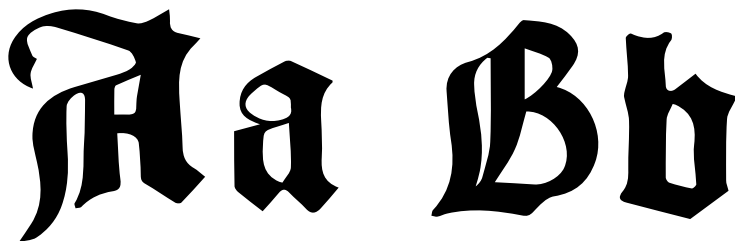
AB

5 | Roman A & B

Small Letters Up to now, we have been discussing capital (majuscule) letters only. Small (minuscule) letters were a natural outgrowth of writing and rewriting capital letters with a pen. At first only a few minuscules were consistently written, but eventually a full set of majuscules and minuscules was being used. As writing became common, greater economy was desired, and letters were compressed so that more words could fit on a line.
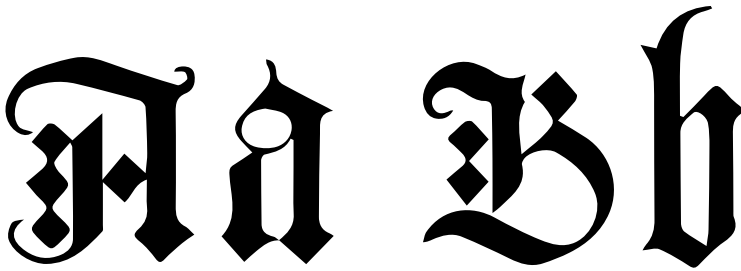
6 | Blackletter

Prior to Gutenberg's invention of printing from movable type in the mid-fifteenth century, there were two popular schools of writing in western Europe: Gothic or Black Letter in Germany and the Northern nations and the round Humanistic hand in Italy.

The Blackletter forms (6) were used as the models for the typeface designed by Gutenberg in the mid-fifteenth century (7). The Humanistic script was a revival of the Carolingian minuscule of the ninth century and is the basis of our small letters (8). A flowing form of this same hand is the basis of our italic. Examples of all three writing styles can be seen below.

Aa Bb

7 | Gutenberg's type

Punctuation In early Greek and Roman writing, there was no punctuation as we know it. Words were either run together or separated with a dot or slash. This can be seen in the handwritten specimens of the Rustica, Half-Uncials, and Carolingian minuscules below. It was not until the fifteenth century, with the advent of printing, that the rules of grammar and punctuation began to become formalized.

Aa Bb

8 | Humanistic lettering

The Alphabet

As illustrated, our alphabet is made up of distinct symbols that represent thousands of years of evolution. As a designer, you can simplify or embellish the letterforms, but if you alter their basic shapes, you will reduce their ability to communicate effectively. Even within this seemingly fixed structure, you will find these symbols provide a lifetime of creative possibilities.

Phoenician alphabet (circa 1000 B.C.E.) reads from right. Small letters indicate sounds.

Greek alphabet (circa 403 B.C.E.), adapted from Phoenician around 900 B.C.E.

Roman alphabet (circa 100 C.E.), adapted from the Greek alphabet

AIQIILVMINPRAECEPS REMIGIISSV

Square capitals (fourth century), written with a reed pen

FELICESOPERVM·QVINIAMCOEVMOVELA

Rustica (fifth century), written with reed pen. Dots represent
early punctuation

inftauratio ·ɴullatranflati ·ɴoɴaurum

Half-Uncials (seventh century), written with reed pen.
Slashes indicate punctuation

buab quad uuatent· erfie thar tho mana

Carolingian minuscules (ninth century), written
with reed pen

femaam nutiga daus pecta in fecula feculoxum ant

Black Letter (fifteenth century), written with
reed pen

uid loquar de fedi homimbʒ· tu apfius paulus꞉uas de

Gutenberg typeface (circa 1455), derived from
Black Letter above

igitur habet poteſtatem·ceſſe eſt eum qu

Humanistic Cursive writing (fifteenth century),
based on Carolingian miniscule

Quidā eius libros nō ipſius eſſe ſed Dionyſii &Zophiri lophoniorū

Roman typeface designed by Nicholas Jensen
(1475), based on Humanistic Cursive

P abula parua legens,nidisʼq; loquacibus eſcas, E t nunc porticibus

First italic typeface designed by Francesco Griffo
(1501), also based on Humanistic Cursive

Type Terminology

As readers, we tend to see words in terms of the messages they convey, and are rarely conscious of the actual shape of individual letterforms. Only when we examine letters closely do we see how complex and visually elegant they are. Have you ever taken the time to examine a letter closely? **Let's start right now by considering the many intricate shapes inside and around the letterforms and how they interrelate (1).**

abc
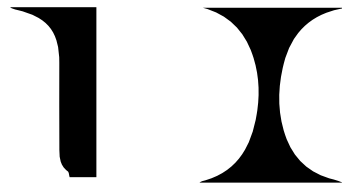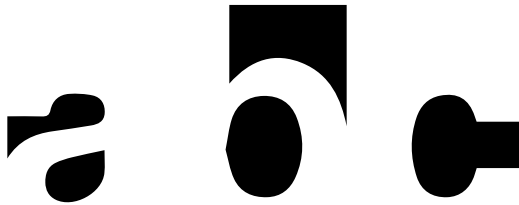
1 | When the letters are reversed, the white areas become black and new shapes become apparent.

Anatomy of Type

Letterforms consist of many parts, and each has a specific name. **You should familiarize yourself with these names and with other typographic terms used by designers (2)**. The following are the most common.

CHARACTERS | The individual letters, punctuation, numerals, and other elements that are used when setting type.

UPPERCASE | The capital letters, or caps, of the alphabet. The term derives from the early days of handset type when capital letters were stored in the upper section of the typecase. The small letters were kept in the lower portion and are called *lowercase*. When abbreviated, capital letters are indicated as *Caps*, *U.C.*, or simply *C*.

LOWERCASE | The small letters of the alphabet, often indicated as *lc*. When combined with uppercase, they are indicated as U/lc, U&lc, or *C/lc*.

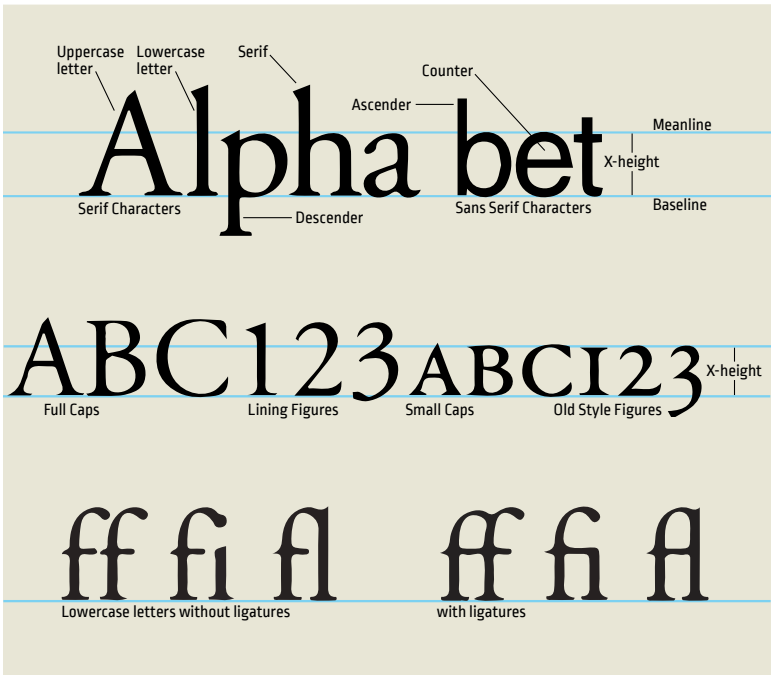**BASELINE |** An imaginary line upon which the characters seem to be standing.

MEANLINE | An imaginary line that runs along the top of most lowercase letters, such as a, c, e, i, m, n, u, v, w, and x.

X-HEIGHT | The capital letters, or caps, of the alphabet. The term derives from the early days of handset type when capital letters were stored in the upper section of the typecase. The small letters were kept in the lower portion and are called *lowercase*. When abbreviated, capital letters are indicated as *Caps*, *U.C.*, or simply *C*.

ASCENDER | The part of some lowercase letters, such as the strokes on the letters b, d, or h, that rises above the meanline.

DESCENDER | The part of some lowercase letters that falls below the baseline, such as the strokes on the letters p, y, and g.

COUNTER | The space entirely or partially enclosed within a letterform, such as the enclosed "bowl" of the letters b, d, and p.

Uppercase letter   Lowercase letter   Serif   Counter   Ascender   Meanline

Alpha bet

X-height

Serif Characters   Descender   Sans Serif Characters   Baseline

ABC123 ABC123   X-height

Full Caps   Lining Figures   Small Caps   Old Style Figures

ff fi fl   ff fi fl

Lowercase letters without ligatures   with ligatures

2 | The principal terms used to identify letterforms

Baskerville

Bodoni

Caslon

Frutiger

Gill Sans

Caledonia

Helvetica

Futura

Eurostyle

Modern

Century

3 | The names of specific typefaces

SERIF AND SANS SERIF | The finishing strokes that project from the main stroke of a letter are called the serifs. Serifs originated with the Roman masons, who terminated each stroke of a letter carved into a slab of stone with a serif to enhance its appearance. Not all type has serifs; type having no serifs at all is called *sans serif*, meaning without serif.

SMALL CAPS | A complete alphabet of caps that are the same size as the body, or x-height, of the lowercase letters: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, etc. Often used in text settings where regular capitals are required but might create unwanted emphasis. Small caps are compatible with lowercase letterforms in the weight of the strokes of the letter. A typical use is for acronyms like NASA or NATO.

MODERN FIGURES | Also called *lining figures*, these are numbers that resemble caps by being uniform in height: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 0. Modern figures are most often used for annual reports, charts, tables, and any application where numbers are meant to stand out or supply critical information. Another feature of modern figures is that they align vertically, making them preferable for setting tables and charts.

OLD STYLE FIGURES | Also called *nonlining figures*, these are similar to lowercase characters in the way they vary in size and may have ascenders and descenders: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 0. Primarily used when less obtrusive numerals are required, such as within the body of text. For the same reason, old style figures are often combined with small caps, for example, PT-109, or 2005 c.e.

LIGATURES | Two or more characters joined as a single unit. Ligatures are a typographic refinement that compensates for certain letters that set poorly when combined, such as V, W, X, Y, Z.

Typefaces

Typeface **refers to the specific design of an alphabet (3)**. The difference between one typeface and another is often very subtle, no more than a slight modification in the shape of the letter, serifs, or the length of the ascenders and descenders. Regardless of how subtle the difference, the typeface you choose will greatly affect the appearance of the entire printed page. Each typeface is identified by a name. A typeface may be named after the individual who designed it (Baskerville, Bodoni, Caslon, Gill, Frutiger) or refer to a country (Caledonia, Helvetica), or be named to describe its appearance or character (Futura, Eurostyle, Modern).

Typestyles

Today an incredible number of typestyles are available to graphic designers. The number and variety have developed over time to accommodate diverse trends and uses. **Most of these typestyles are simply variations in the weight or width of the letterforms (4)**. Although some typefaces are available in a wide variety of styles, the majority of typefaces offer only a few variations, such as roman, italic, and bold.

Roman

Italic

ROMAN | The upright letterforms derived from the historic characters developed by the Romans. The majority of typeset copy is roman. It is the first typestyle we learn and the most comfortable to read. The letterforms of this sentence are set as roman.

ITALIC | The second most common typestyle. A true italic typeface is not merely roman characters slanted to the right but is specifically created to be a companion to the roman. Italic is used mainly for quiet emphasis. *These words are set in italic*. If a roman typeface is simply slanted to the right (or left), it is referred to as *oblique. These words are set in oblique*

Thin

Light

Regular

Medium

Bold

Extrabold

REGULAR | The standard weight of a typeface, also referred to as *normal*. Regular is the basic form and weight from which all the other variations are derived.

BOLD | A thicker, heavier version of the regular typeface, commonly used for increased emphasis. Among the various designations for bold typestyles and heavier weights are *semibold*, *heavy*, *black*, *extrabold*, and *ultra*.

LIGHT | A lighter or thinner version of the regular typeface. An extremely light version is often referred to as *thin*.

CONDENSED | A narrower version of the regular typeface. Condensed type is particularly desirable if it is important to fit more letters or a larger type size into a given space. Also referred to as *compressed*.

EXTENDED | A wider version of the regular typeface, also known as *expanded*.

Condensed

Extended

Light Condensed

Bold Extended

4 | Variations of weights and styles

Fonts

Traditionally, a font was one size of one typestyle in a particular typeface (5). Garamond roman was one font and Garamond italic another. A font consisted of all the characters required to set type in a single size: uppercase and lowercase letters, punctuation marks, numerals, and special reference marks. A familiar example of a font is the keyboard of a typewriter.

If you were to strike every key a single time, you would produce a font. Today the term *font* is used more loosely. A font still refers to a specific typeface and typestyle but no longer refers to a particular type size. This is because technology is able to generate type in any number of sizes.

Fonts may vary in both the number and variety of characters they contain. In addition to having the alphabet and punctuation marks, some fonts are drawn to include special characters, such as small caps, ligatures, old style figures, mathematical symbols, and diacritical marks.

ABCDEFGHIJKL
MNOPQRSTUV
WXYZ&
abcdefghijklmnop
qrstuvwxyz
1234567890
ff fi fl ffi ffl .,""''-:;!?

5 | Traditional font, one size of one typeface

Type Families

If we combine all the fonts of all the typestyles of a given typeface (roman, italic, bold, condensed, etc.) we have a family of type (6). By selecting fonts within the same family, a designer maintains typographic consistency. Since all typestyles within a family share common characteristics, such as design, x-height, cap height, and length of ascenders and descenders, they will appear harmonious when combined.

Most type families are relatively small, containing roman, italic, and bold typestyles. Some families—Helvetica, for example—are exceptionally large, with variations ranging from thin condensed to bold extended, plus unique display faces such as outline and drop shadow.

Garamond Roman

Garamond Italic

Garamond Semibold

Garamond Semibold Italic

Garamond Bold

Garamond Bold Italic

5 | Traditional font, one size of one typeface