Footnote 34

March 2020

In this issue we're focusing on our Enigma typeface – a clean cut serif with sharp detailing and an assertive personality.

→ re/discover **Enigma** for the new decade

Opal $(SiO_2 \cdot nH_2O)$

Pearl $CaCO_3$

Peridot $(Mg,Fe)_2SiO_4$

Quartz SiO_2

Ruby Al_2O_3Cr

Sapphire $(\alpha\text{-}Al_2O_3)$

Topaz $Al_2SiO_4(F,OH)_2$

Tourmaline $(CaK,Na,[])$

Turquoise $CuAl_6(PO_4)$

Zircon $(ZrSiO_4)$

gravel

metal

mineral

es may break my bon
but words will nev

He

All about Enigma

It was through an increased study of type that the question of 'what is it in a type design that captures the imagination?' arose. This in turn gave the typeface its name. The word enigma is defined as *something that is difficult to understand*. How can a shape drawn one way be more successful than if it were drawn another way. What rules are there? Can something as fluid as a typeface be controlled or judged by theories alone? – a typeface is a conundrum.

The visual image and pattern that Enigma creates has always been paramount. At a time when sans serifs rule modernity, and serifs are seen as traditional. The challenge was how to carefully balance normality with idiosyncrasy, and give designers a different expression to use.

'A typeface has a profound influence on how a text is perceived and interpreted; *as with any of the arts, it needs to capture the imagination.*'

From the original Enigma specimen, 1999

Development over the years

Enigma was first introduced in 1999, it was the result of many questions and observations as to how a collection of shapes function together as a typeface. With the advent of the OpenType format, Enigma was expanded and updated in 2004. OpenType is a single font file that can be installed on both Mac and Windows, it also accommodates a much larger character set allowing for a wider range of languages to be supported, together with advanced typographic features including small capitals, fractions, superiors, and a host of figure sets.
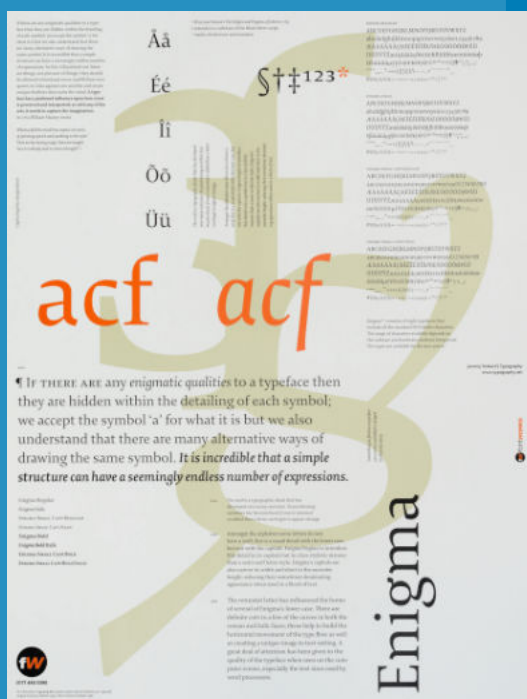
The 1999 specimen produced for Fontworks UK

Some of the advanced typographic features

ÅåÇçÉéĠġĦħŌōÞþŲųŽž

Support for a wide range of languages

Small Capitals

Correctly sized and weighted small capital letters

123 123 123 123 ¹²³ ½₃

Non-lining and lining figures (both proportional and tabular) as well as reduced sizes for notation and fractions

[@type] [@TYPE] [@TYPE]

Typographic niceties such as correctly aligning and size specific sorts

. . . and there's more

A decade later the Enigma concept was revisited and a greatly expanded family comprising of Text, Display and Fine versions was published in 2015. There are now 24 fonts across the whole family including new weights and styles which allow for a wider range of uses.

This gave the opportunity to look again at some of the initial concepts of Enigma and see what effects changes in weight and contrast could have. For instance, the new Light weights add a little finesse at larger sizes, but they also play an important optical role. When text is negative, the Light weight visually balances with the Regular weight when it appears positive.

Mężny bądź, chroń pułk twój i sześć flag

Mężny bądź, chroń pułk twój i sześć flag

Mężny bądź, chroń pułk twój i sześć flag

Mężny bądź, chroń pułk twój i sześć flag

Visual comparison of Enigma Text Light and Regular

Levels of expression

One of the core strengths of Enigma is its overall expression. Its proportions, stroke relationships, curve structure, and details all contribute to the DNA of the typeface. Each of the weights and size variants have been carefully selected and developed to maintain the essence of Enigma. The increased contrast seen in the heavier weights (especially those of Enigma Fine) are the logical development of its systematic rhythms and core detailing. The final result includes some very striking letter shapes with an overall dramatic image.

2019 FESTIVAL OVERVIEW

Stephen Langridge
Artistic Director

WHEN I ANNOUNCED MY DEPART from Gothenburg Opera, leav West Sweden for East Sussex, I told my colleagues this was only job I would leave for – and it is true. Work at Glyndebourne again, in my first Festival as Artistic Director, really is my dream job.

Enigma Fine Heavy

Regular

Light

Regular — Appear visually the same

Light

graphical

Enigma Text is designed and spaced to be robust at small sizes

graphical

Enigma Fine develops Enigma's structure and detailing

graphical

The increased contrast of Fine Heavy

Some of the advanced typographic features

Light	Light Italic
Regular	Italic
Bold	***Bold Italic***
Heavy	***Heavy Italic***

4 weights in roman and italic of Enigma Display

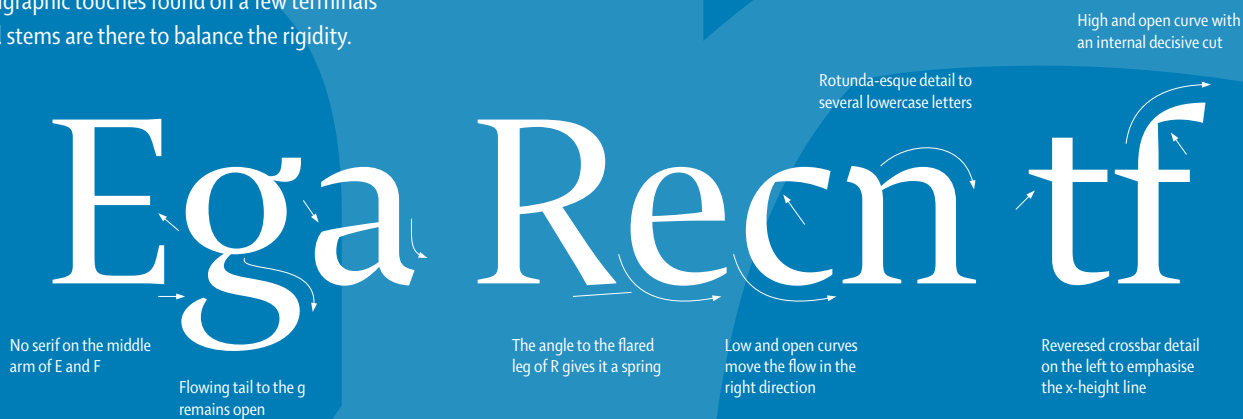| Text	Text
Display	Display
Fine	Fine

3 families

Details

Systematic structure is at the core of Enigma. Clean sharp lines and generous full curves hold the typeface together. The occasional calligraphic touches found on a few terminals and stems are there to balance the rigidity.

High and open curve with an internal decisive cut

Rotunda-esque detail to several lowercase letters

Ega Recn tf

No serif on the middle arm of E and F

Flowing tail to the g remains open

The angle to the flared leg of R gives it a spring

Low and open curves move the flow in the right direction

Reveresed crossbar detail on the left to emphasise the x-height line

Wedge details feature in the italic captals

High and open curve with an internal decisive cut

Consistent italic angle

Egac fek

A tighter curve with an internal cut

A springy curve directs the movement up

Slightly flared terminals to the bottom of stems

Vertical axis

# HOe HOe

Enigma Text Heavy

Enigma Fine Heavy

The lower contrast of the more slab-like Text Heavy seen in comparison with the higher contrast of Fine Heavy. There's a shared common structure across all three families; each evokes a different and unique image, yet all have the same expression. No matter what the weight or style, the e is forever happy.

A closer look at the development

The intention with Enigma was to make a serif letter with contemporary detailing. Several letters seen during a visit to the Plantin-Moretus Museum in Antwerp fuelled an idea to blend elements of the blackletter with those of the roman. There's nothing new in this; type design is constantly combining ideas. The blackletter script called rotunda provided the basis for the entry stroke seen in several lowercase letters of Enigma.
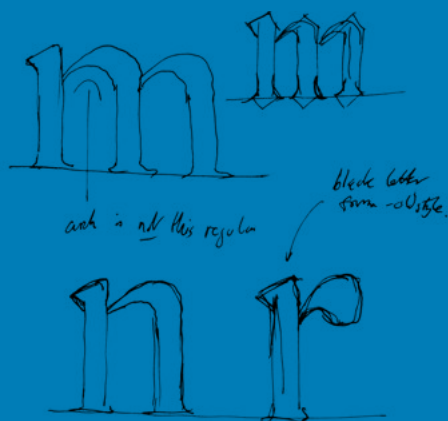
Suggested structural similarities of a roman and blackletter m (top), and the evolution of the blackletter 'diamond' feature from the oldstyle serif of an r

A rotunda-style terminal looked natural on a few letters but on others it was out of place and visually annoying

When designing a typeface a lot of time is spent exploring shapes in order to find core details that work together. A quick and freely drawn curve produces little accidents and nuances that often hold the key to the integrity of the final design. Many of the early sketches for Enigma show this repeated exploration.
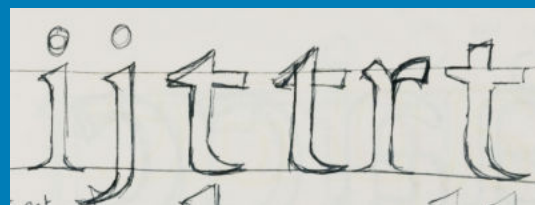
### Notes on the design of Enigma

This free print details some of the core features of Enigma's lowercase. It's available through our website at typography.net (postage applies).
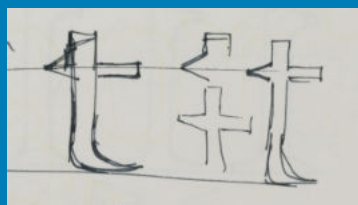

Detailing of the lowercase t showing various ideas toward the final upturned crossbar and straight top

The calmness often required in a roman style can be replaced by a more expressive rhythm in its italic. Used today as a secondary type style, italic is free to explore a variety of strokes more closely linked to its calligraphic origins. However, some degree of continuity and family likeness to its roman sibling needs to remain. Enigma's italic builds on the detailing developed in the roman – principally the use of cuts along the inside of several curves, but this doesn't work for all letter shapes, such as the often forgotten diagonal letters v w x y. Keen to give these some individuality and flare, their strokes are relaxed and allowed to arch more freely.
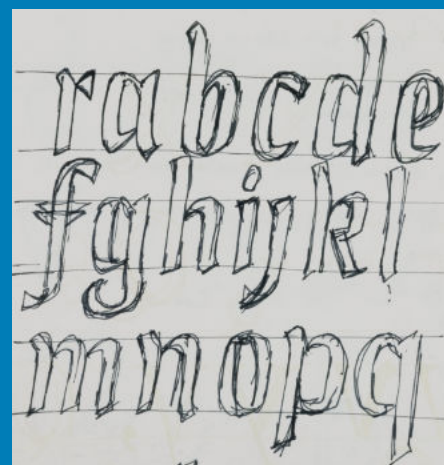
Early sketches toward a more 'gothic' inspired italic
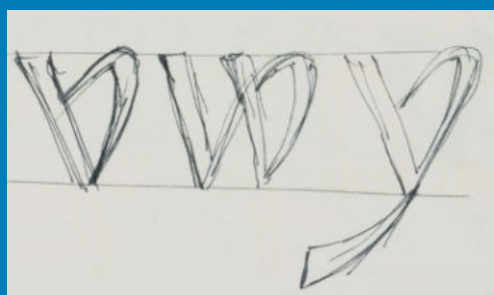
Investigating the flow of the generally stiff letters v w x y z
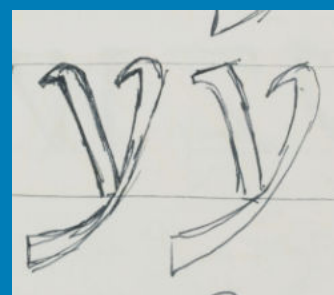
Tightening the ideas to balance better with other shapes across the typeface

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Explore Enigma and discover more

There are many resources available online where you can find out about the typeface, its families and weights.

Through the Explorer you can glide over the typeface and click on any of the ⊕ icons to discover more. Explorer is best experienced through a desktop, laptop or larger mobile screen. A link to it can be found on the Enigma page under Further information.

$O_3)_3(Si,Al,B)_6O_{18}(OH,F)_4$
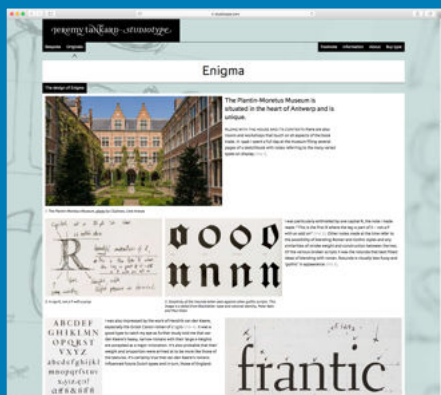
Design notes

The design notes at StudioType.com show some of the inspirations that contributed to the visual styling of Enigma.

Test the fonts

All the fonts can be viewed and tested through the website. You can also download each font with our Demo Licence allowing you to test them locally in your applications.

Specific information

The Font Info PDF gives an overview of the detailing of the typeface; its families, weights, features and abilities.