

SANS EVERY THING

**an international
conference
about sans serif
letterforms**

**history
design
use**

**19–21
october 2016
école supérieure
d'art et de design
d'Amiens**

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Sans Everything

19–21 October 2016

École supérieure d'art et de design d'Amiens

Sans Everything is an international conference dedicated to sans serif letterforms.

The “bicentenary” of the first sans serif typeface – shown around 1816 in a specimen of the foundry of William Caslon IV in London –, was the pretext to organize this cross-disciplinary free event. It is aimed at graphic & type design students and educators, as well as at professionals and academics.

Sans Everything is accompanied by two substantial exhibitions: *Traits lettres bâtons* displays a manifold survey of sans serif letterforms through their history, their design and their use, whereas *Pangramme: learning type design* demonstrates the variety and vitality of contemporary students typefaces projects. We wish you a splendid time in Amiens!

Conference venue:
Quai de l'Innovation
93 rue du Hocquet

Wednesday 19 October

14.00 Welcome

14.10 Indra Kupferschmid
Sans Everything

Just look at all the different terms and spellings! What happened to serif-less letterforms since Max called them Linéales or Francis Antiques? This presentation will give an overview of the variety of designs out there, past and present – the good, the bad, and the ugly. I hope you guys will finally stop designing or overusing god damn it we have enough geometric sans for the rest of the century!

15.00 James Mosley
The sanserif: the search for examples

The sanserif is a simple form of letter, with neither “serifs” or end-strokes, nor much variation (indeed sometimes none at all) between the thick and thin strokes.

It first appears in the work of architects and artists at the end of the 18th century. Later, but not before about 1830, it began to be used as a model for printing types, and it soon became widely used for posters and commercial printing. In the 20th century, it was a dominant form in the typography of the modern movement. It is the style of some of the most familiar current typefaces, among which are Futura, Gill Sans, Helvetica.

The dates of the appearance of the early sanserif in the work of ‘neo-classical’ artists remain badly documented, and I am still searching for examples: my talk will offer a summary of what we currently know.

Break

16.15 Victor Guégan
Gestalt psychology and exact sensorial imagination:
two design principles in typography according to Paul Renner

This lecture will question the working methodology of Paul Renner, the designer of one of the most famous sans serif typefaces: Futura. Often, art historians associate Futura with the artistic avant-garde and the theories of the New Typography. It is true that, for example, Kurt Schwitters used Futura a lot in his graphics and advertising work. Rereading the texts Renner published in various journals, I will show that his sources of influence are less related to artistic and functionalist modernism than to a scientific theory born in the early 20th century: the “gestalt psychology”, theorized in particular by Max Wertheimer, Kurt Koffka and Wolfgang Köhler.

17.30 Visit of the exhibition
Traits lettres bâtons:
une histoire d’alphabets sans pied ni tête

Bibliothèque Louis Aragon
50 Rue de la République

Thursday 20 October

9.30 Alice Savoie & Dorine Sauzet Serif or sans serif? Studying Ladislas Mandel's typefaces for telephone directories

French designer Ladislas Mandel created an impressive number of typefaces for telephone directories between the late 1970s and the 1990s, including Galfra (Italy, Belgium), Clottes (France) and Colorado (US). Looking closely at his atypical working method, from original drawings to printed phone books, it is sometimes difficult to assess whether these designs should be considered as sans or serif typefaces, many of them sitting on the fence between the two genres. These commissions provided a fertile ground for Mandel to experiment and develop his theories on cultural differences in type design. In an attempt to better understand his approach and illustrate his ambiguous relationship with sans-serif typefaces, this presentation will chiefly provide an excuse to delve into Mandel's archives and his design process for the singular reading space of telephone directories.

10.30 Christina Poth Why – and how – designing custom typefaces for institutional actors?

Why would today's institutions choose to adopt purpose-built fonts for everyday use? From my experience,

I have learned that more than a wish to look different, it can be a subtle and thus very effective way to make visible unique historical or functional particularities. It can be a strong vector of identity, both for internal and external communication, for print and screen and all kinds of applications, like for instance signage systems. A custom typeface is a powerful tool, accessible for and usable by everyone, which contributes to building or completing visual identities. How to translate specificities linked to an institution's history, architecture or particular activities? What is the starting point? Through three different examples, I would like to share my research that lead me to create custom (sans serif) typefaces.

11.30 Cyrus Highsmith Big simple tiny complicated drawings

Type design is full of contradictions. Serifs make letterforms more complicated but removing them is not simple. Cyrus Highsmith will illustrate this with examples of his typefaces as well as discuss his obsessions with shape, repetition, and different kinds of drawing.

Lunch break

14.00 Jean-Baptiste Levée The sans serif as a design pattern: finding artistic renewal in repeating environments

Sans peur, sans gêne, sans reproche, sans culotte and sans souci: Since

its beginning, Production Type has approached numerous sans serif design principles in its work for clients and its retail library. Which directions were more thoroughly explored? Which ones have yielded the best results, either from a personal or a commercial standpoint?

This presentation surveys the conceptual and formal backbones that drove the type designer, type director, and type foundry entrepreneur Jean-Baptiste Levéé towards specific genres. The designer puts his own obsessions in perspective as he examines the process and struggles of his work.

15.00 Gerry Leonidas Helvetica is dead

From the point when typefaces became independent commercial products, myth and constructed identities have been integral parts of every successful design. No other typeface exemplifies this as well as Helvetica. While meaningful a few decades ago, the excessive use of the typeface in recent years make it very clear that its time has passed: it works badly for our typesetting needs, and will perform even worse in the coming years. The documents and environments we use today have exceeded the design space of Helvetica: a new concept for a sans family is needed. Indeed, many designers are placing bets on what the next phase in the development of sans serifs will be. Speaking from a typographic perspective, Gerry will show why Helvetica as we know it is bankrupt, and lay out a blueprint

for a competent typeface family to replace it. He may be showing some good candidates.

Break

16.15 Designing Sans today
Round table with Cyrus Highsmith,
Gerry Leonidas, Jean-Baptiste Levéé,
Christina Poth, Alice Savoie

Moderation: Indra Kupferschmid

18.00 Opening of the exhibition
Pangramme: learning type design
with Jérôme Knebusch

École supérieure d'art
et de design d'Amiens
40 rue des Teinturiers

The exhibition tries to make a panorama of current student type design. A jury, composed of five professional type designers with thorough teaching experience (Andrea Tinnes, Alejandro Lo Celso, Matthieu Cortat, Hans-Jürg Hunziker, Gerard Unger), has selected 50 projects from an open call for applications. All projects are unpublished and have been created over the last three years, under the guidance of professors within schools and universities. The exhibition was first held at the École supérieure d'art de Lorraine, Metz (29 April–20 May 2016). It was curated and produced by the students of the Atelier Design graphique & Typographie of ÉSAL, directed by Jérôme Knebusch, and assisted by Francis Ramel.

Friday 21 October

9.30 Elena Albertoni Stroke by stroke

To trace by hand the single strokes that make up letterforms offers a valuable insight into the creation process of a type designer. Starting from there with the help of examples ranging from sign painting to digital type design (my main fields of work), the talk will focus on the potential of those strokes for the purpose of conceiving original visual identities. The study of the different approaches (digital and analogue) to build specifically sans serif letters is aimed to show the importance of choosing the right letterforms for a specific application and environment, independently from the technology used to create and render them.

10.30 Éloïsa Pérez Learning forms of writing: Using typography to help kids learn to write

Writing is foremost a mode of expression. Its acquisition implies the learning of graphical systems, and of the syntactical and semantic logics that govern the language it aims to represent. In that sense, its teaching involves two important challenges, since it relies both on the building of a theoretical understanding as well as on the production of graphic forms. This contribution is based on an ongoing PhD research, Learning forms, from Atelier National

de Recherche Typographique (ANRT) and CELSA (Paris-Sorbonne University), carried out in collaboration with French public schools.

It has to be seen under the angle of graphic design and typography and handles their influence in the learning to write process. Through a practical and a theoretical approach, Learning forms experiments with the educational potential of materiality. It is focused on the design of a typographic material, Les Prélettres, which introduce very young children to writing.

11.30 Gestual Script* Typpannot: a glyphic system for the transcription of handshapes

In the context of Sign Language (SL) study, three distinct functions can define a writing system: the abilities to read, write and search. None of the existing systems (SignWriting; HamNoSys) offers a good compromise. In this work, we present the construction of a graphematic system able to cover all SL handshapes existing in the world, consisting of features based on a phonological description. This multidisciplinary project, summoning type designers and linguists, aims at producing a readable and stable, unambiguous and fully searchable glyphic system that provides a relevant solution to the transcription of SL and the development of an accompanying writing system.

Lunch break

14.00 Bureau Brut One-liners

Yoann Minet, Julia Joffre, Camille Prandi met at the École Estienne in Paris and graduated with a Master in type and typographic design in 2013. After several professional experiences in studios and type foundries, they created Bureau Brut 21st October 2015. Their double approach – graphic and type design – enables them to understand typography as a raw material, made to measure for each new project. This lecture will mainly focus on the line, the outline and its typographic transcription, towards a fully-developed system.

15.00 Rejane Dal Bello Negation

To define type from the negation (sans) of one feature (serif) means that it isn't strictly defined as typography, which makes room for a lot of interpretation and exploration. The idea that we have a starting point with one basic rule to design from (without serif), but at the same time we have infinite ways to interpret it, is the ideal scenario we look for in any design project.

16.00 Closing

*Typannot bénéficie d'un soutien du Crédit Agricole Brie Picardie Mécénat & Solidarité. La remise du prix se fera à 18h30, le jeudi 20 octobre, à l'Ésad.



Amiens

- 1 – Ésad Amiens
(40 rue des teinturiers)
- 2 – Bibliothèque Louis Aragon
(50 av de la République)
- 3 – Quai de l'Innovation
(93 rue du Hocquet)
- 4 – Gare
- 5 – Cathédrale
- 6 – Hôtel de ville
- 7 – Maison de la culture
- 8 – Auberge de jeunesse
- 9 – Cirque
- 10 – Place Vogel
- 11 – Jardin des plantes
- 12 – Place du don

