Foreword

How do you celebrate fifteen years of FontFonts? Give away free fonts? Organise a party? Publish a book? Well, we wouldn’t be designers if the idea of a book wouldn’t have been the most appealing. Little did we know what we had got ourselves in for: we not only thought we could do this easily, but also quickly and on time. Not to mention within the budget. A familiar plight to us designers, and yet we keep thinking it can be done. We also know that we could (and perhaps should) have spent even more time on getting files in order, checking line-breaks, making sure all our spreads and choke were correct and hundreds of PMS colours would print as 4c.

Fifteen years ago we had no idea that one day we could fill a 352-page book with showings of FontFonts. In fact, we’re not exactly certain when the library was officially launched. Jan Middendorp writes in his introduction on the following pages that Neville and myself “created” a new library of digital type. While, normally, I hate the c-word, we certainly didn’t plan very much, relying on our intuition instead. There was no budget, no timetable, no business plan – not a spreadsheet in sight. We just knew all these great designers who now had the tools to do their own type, while we had the tool for distributing them through FontShop. We also knew that we were not the only designers who were ready for alternatives to Helvetica, Times and even Garamond.

All the early FontFont designers were practising graphic designers, not full-time type designers, and they all used type every day. We didn’t have to do market research to find out what we needed. Our claim “a library from designers for designers” was simply dating a fact.

Meanwhile, more than fifteen years later, I have 3524 FontFonts activated in my font library, and that may not be the latest number. While I’m quoting numbers; this book contains 540 illustrations, counted as links in my InDesign folders. Those include most specimen pages only as one illustration, so the real number of individual images that show off our typefaces must be in the thousands.

The work that friends and colleagues have put into the specimen pages and the articles is tremendous – it is incredible that we got all this work just by asking for it. I see it as proof to the fact that the FontFont library still reflects what we designers want and require.

One thing needs pointing out about the articles: Jan collected them from many sources, and most of them were written years ago. We did not edit any content, so they may occasionally mention facts that have been superseded by time and, sometimes, reality.

The people who “officially” produced this book are all credited properly on the previous pages. There are other contributors mentioned in the final section, from page 348, in alphabetical order. We all share an emotional approach to type: for us, it is more than a tool to do our work with.

We love type, and we think that this book shows our affection and enthusiasm for all things typographical.

The mistakes are all my fault.
The late 1980s were an era of unprecedented changes in the world of typography. A new technology – desktop publishing – had recently been introduced and quickly gained popularity. More and more designers and pre-press studios began offering in-position typesetting on a Macintosh computer using Aldus (later Adobe) PageMaker software. In a mere five or six years the scene was to change dramatically, in terms of distribution and technology as well as design. Those designers and printing companies that still relied on conventional typesetting, paying specialized firms by the centimetre for slips of text, soon found out that continuing to do so was bad for business; the most forward-looking among them had already begun buying PostScript fonts for their own use. Soon a font would cost about as much, or as little, as a few sheets of set text had cost before.

The type business, however, was slow in catching up. Throughout the 1980s the main players in the typographic world had been a handful of manufacturers who had struggled their way through the quick transition from photographic to digital technologies: Monotype, Linotype, Berthold, Hell. All these firms were still developing digital stand-alone typesetting systems which used dedicated font technologies; specialized type production firms such as ITC, Uwe and Bitstream provided fonts that were customized for each machine. After the advent of Adobe PostScript (a digital page description language developed to streamline the exchange between computers and printing devices), type manufacturers began converting their fonts to the new system. Few, however, realized that the new technology involved new dimensions and a different relationship with customers – and therefore a different mentality. Although the actual production cost of a single copy of a font went down to the price of a diskette, companies continued packaging and marketing their typefaces as if they were still major investments.

Yet the quality of the type did not always justify such presumption. A lot of the typefaces in the catalogues had been handed down from the metal era to phototypesetting to digital systems to PostScript, losing part of their character and integrity with each conversion. The new technologies called for new typefaces, but most typefoundries reacted conservatively, even arrogantly, to proposals from younger designers.

Type designers were among the first to realize it was time for a change. Two of the first firms specializing in digital type design and production, Bitstream and Emigre, had been founded by designers. In the Netherlands, young type designers began organizing themselves in order to exchange information about type production and juridical matters. Then, in 1990, a big change happened. In March of that year Adobe Systems announced that they would no longer distribute typefaces for Berthold AG in Germany and occasionally sold distribution rights. From that moment onwards.

FontShop: from distribution to production

The type library which Brody and Spiekermann envisaged was to have its own design-oriented philosophy; it would be curated and marketed in a way that was distinctly different from what other companies were doing.
When FontFont made its first appearance, it created somewhat of a splash in the type world, and was inevitably scanned by traditional vendors. The collection was in fact like no other. It had some points in common with Emigre – mainly in that it was a library of new fonts by, largely, young designers – but its scope and ambitions were different. While the Emigre library essentially represented the cutting-edge view of two people, Zuzana Licko and Rudy Vanderlans, FontFont was multimorph right from the start. It set out to provide type in many different styles and for many purposes: the historically inspired alongside the contemporary, experimental and unorthodox ‘fun fonts’ alongside business-like and pragmatic text faces. And unlike most other libraries, FontFont seldom, if ever, published re-releases of fonts that had been previously available for other technologies.

Unreleased fonts
The FontType library was off to a flying start, releasing dozens of remarkable families during its first years. With hindsight, it is amazing how things fell into place within such a brief timespan. Intuition, passion, attitude and serendipity – rather than a carefully calculated master plan – were major factors contributing to FontFont’s early expansion.

Both Spiekermann and Brody had unreleased typefaces from the 1980s waiting in the wings; Brody had several hand-drawn alphabets that could be expanded into complete fonts. Among the early FontFonts based on this work were ff Typeface Four, Six and Seven, iconic faces of the early 1990s, and the ff Tyson/Tokyo series. ff Blur, the first typeface by Brody that explored the specific aesthetics of digital typography, became even more successful.

And then there was Spiekermann’s ff Meta. Named after Spiekermann’s design firm MetaDesign, the font was based on a typeface that Spiekermann had drawn in the mid-1980s for the Deutsche Bundespost – although it had never been adopted by MetaDesign Berlin, having developed into Germany’s most prominent house of corporate design, attracted many talented designers in the early to mid-1990s; several of them designed typefaces, either within the firm or after hours, which were welcomed to the FontFont catalogue. One such MetaDesigner was Italian-born Alessio Leonardi, who later joined stipfel in Frankfurt and went on to start his own company.

Parallel to FontFont, Neville Brody developed another project with co-directors Jon Wozencraft and John Critchley. fuse, published by rsa, took the idea of innovation in typography one step further, to a place where functionality was not an issue any more. fuse was a series of experimental typefaces and potlets; each idea was conceived around a theme, which was contributed to by a host of type designers and graphic designers, many of whom did not have a direct relationship to the FontFont library.

International connections
One of the factors which made possible the rapid growth and diversification of the FontFont library was Brody’s and Spiekermann’s international, informal network of design professionals. Spiekermann has many business relationships and friendships in international typographic circles – notably in the Association International Typographique (Aityp).

Moreover, his company MetaDesign had become a fast-growing studio which attracted some of the best young typographic talents from Germany and abroad. Brody was well-placed to convince some of his British typography circle to step on board. Among the other people who contributed to FontFont’s internationalization was Ed Cleary, a Toronto-based Brit who was one of the main players in the Canadian type world, ran FontShop Canada and made important contributions to the early editions of rs’s FontBook, until his untimely death in 1995. Cleary brought unorthodox Toronto designers such as Paul Sych and Barbara Klunder into the FontFont library. Other North American contributors included the founders of Biohype’s Font Bureau, David Berlow and Roger Black; both got involved in the creation of an Italian branch of the FontShop network and Berlow was, among other things, a collaborator on the digitization of Brody’s alphabets. Berlow also introduced Tobias Frere-Jones, who published his very first typeface as a FontFont – the lively, charming ff Dolores.

A key contribution to FontFont’s early growth was made by a group of young Dutch designers, many of whom studied at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts (KABK) in The Hague. The typographer-craftsman-type historian Gerrit Noordzij had established an influential type programme here. Spiekermann hired the KABK graduates Jufli van Rossum, Erik van Blokland, and later Luc(as) de Groot and Albert-Jan Pool – there were three designers trained at the Arnhem Academy who contributed some of the most striking text faces of the era: Martin Majoor’s ff Scala, Fred Smeijers’s ff Quadrant, and Evert Bloemsma’s ff Balance. One of Holland’s most outspoken and iconoclastic graphic designers was also recruited by FontFont: Max Kisman, a pioneer of computer-aided graphic design, contributed fonts originally created for magazines such as Language Technology, the forerunner of Wired.

Kisman and Lettermode, especially, used their digital tools to break new ground. Kisman’s Fundu was one of the very first cut-and-paste type hybrids; Lettermode experimented with self-changing type but also made a series of ‘found fonts’ such as ff FunUs (a typewriter font), ff Hands (digitized handwriting) and ff IndianTypes, based on toy stamp letters and the like. Many of these ‘novelty fonts’ now seem part of a short-lived fashion, but at the time they were genuinely original. No one had done it before and many would imitate them, so that, with hindsight, each of these fonts heralded a new genre.

Local contacts
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The Hague, Wenzel decided to travel to the Netherlands and ditigal font family ever. Five years later De Groot decided to contributor of unorthodox fonts was Fabian Rottke, designer contributed a large number of entertaining hand-drawn corporate design which he is also capable of doing, Leonardi and other Meta clients. In the evening hours and weekends such as<br>variety. At the time of publication in 1994 it was the largest<br>had been published before (e.g. Rotis), but never in such<br>three sub-families (TheSans, TheSerif and TheMix) and eight<br>hamburg-born Johan<br>published in 1995, was one of the first text faces to come out of a new wave in French type design. Its maker was Jean-François Porchez, who went on to become one of the most outspoken representatives of the French type world and quickly established his successful “typofonderie Porchez. He is now the chairman of the typographers’ association ATypI. It was through Porchez that rsi came into contact with a prolific young voice in French type design: Xavier Dupré, who had worked as type director of a Paris packaging design agency but had also researched renaissance writing with one of the grand old men of French type design, Ladislas Mandel. In less than five years Dupré published seven families in the FontFont library – from tabby display faces such as FF Tartine Script to highly original text faces like FF Absara and FF Megano.<br>Dupré’s older colleague Albert Boton has been at it a little longer. His type designing career, although he did not publish his first FontFont until 2002, spans five decades: in 1957 he worked under Adrian Frutiger on Univers and later designed such classics as Eras and Elan. Boton, born in 1934, has now retired from his day job at an advertising agency but has been immensely prolific since. In a few years time he produced six families of text and display faces, all published as FontFonts. Pierre di Sciullo, finally, is a special case within the French type world. He is a graphic designer, writer, organiser and editor; each of his typefaces is a philosophical statement and/or thing to play with rather than a neutral tool. To the FontFont library he contributed FF Bastille in 1995. The British and French connections Neville Brody’s London contacts also yielded a number of highly original FontFont designers. John Critchley was a co-editor of Brody’s rust series and went on to become head of MTV’s print design department. He collaborated with illustrator Darren Raven on the delightful and smart FF Bokka and digitized the handwriting of many children for FF Child’s Play. Swiss-born Cornell Windlin was an assistant of Brody’s and later became his successor as art director of The Face. Working both individually and with his long-time typographic partner, Stephan Müller, Windlin designed a number of Font Fonts based on ‘found’ alphabets originally made for specific technologies. Rian Hughes, another prominent designer on this thing to play with rather than a neutral tool. To the FontFont library he contributed FF Bastille in 1995. The British and French connections Neville Brody’s London contacts also yielded a number of highly original FontFont designers. John Critchley was a co-editor of Brody’s rust series and went on to become head of MTV’s print design department. He collaborated with illustrator Darren Raven on the delightful and smart FF Bokka and digitized the handwriting of many children for FF Child’s Play. Swiss-born Cornell Windlin was an assistant of Brody’s and later became his successor as art director of The Face. 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exercise in Tankard’s hands. The package
emery Tankard is a take on the ‘universal’ alphabet with no separate
digital type.
other highly personal, one-off experiments.

together some of the more usable typefaces that came out of the
typography became a stylish, clasically inspired postmodern
trend about every two years, each bringing with it several

to ask a host of eminent designers – FontFont designers as

many of the ‘alphabets’ of symbols, drawings and
dingbats which provided the not-so-talented-drafts-
men within the graphic design world with bags of tricks to
spice up their work.

Although FontFont was never about reviving older
typefaces, a number of fonts in the collection were actu-
ally based on historical alphabets – either printing types or
hand-written ones found in manuscripts. Manfred
Klein and Jurgen Brinckmann’s ff Scribe Type series
were painstakingly distilled from these ancient examples.

Type classification

As the collection grew, repeated attempts were made to
classify its wide range of typefaces in a way that would
make sense to the user while throwing into relief the
unorthodox aspects of the library. Type classification
became an increasingly problematic exercise as the
freedom of designers has grown and the number of pos-
sible variants on the letterform exploded.

Older classification systems are deeply rooted in the
past and strongly biased towards serified book types. To
the present-day user, to define the difference between
early and late Venetian styles is definitely less essential
than to have a basic understanding of the differences
between, say, ff Meta and ff Scala Sans; and this is where
traditional systems fail. In display type, the situation
is even more serious. Since 1950 there has been a new
trend about every two years, each bringing with it several
new sub-categories which might be given names that
might sound something like Forward-Moving Extended
Semi-Geometric Medly-Sans Faux-Italic (ff Blocker and
ff Overdose could fall into this category, a sub-genre of
‘Techno’). All these ‘unusual’ letterforms are now mostly
dumped into a group called ‘Other’.

– that is, Spiekermann with marketing man-
ger/ writer Jurgen Siebert – came up with totally new
categories for unusual faces: the 1996 FontFont catalogue
offered no less than seven classes of display fonts, sev-
eral of which were given names that were new to the type
world: ‘ironic’, ‘amorphous’, ‘intelligent’, ‘destructive’ (in
a way, more like a classification of designers’ intentions
than of forms). On the other hand, the text typefaces that
in traditional systems are so carefully categorized, were
simply grouped under ‘Typographic’.

To some extent, this has helped to draw attention
to the ‘otherness’ of contemporary digital type. In
subsequent catalogues the number of categories was
drastically reduced, but some of the novel and somewhat
ambiguous terms remained. What began as a kind of
in-joke, or tongue-in-cheek pseudo-typology, became the
basis of something simpler and presumably more usable
but – is certainly not yet definitive. And of course it
shouldn’t be, in a field which is continually moving and
developing. It is amazing how a discipline such as type
design, which must necessarily limit itself to creating
(minimal) and if not minimal, then audacious) variations
of a given code, can still reinvent itself continuously.
The recent publication of such a novel invention as Evert
Bloemsma’s ff Legato – which inveigles sans-serif forms
with new legibility qualities – suggests that the end is
not in sight. There will always be room for new thoughts
in type.
I first used Scala in 1991, when Robin Kinross mailed it to me in New York City on a floppy disk. Robin was writing an essay for an exhibition catalogue I was editing, Graphic Design in the Netherlands: A View of Recent Work. His essay was about typeface design, and this is what he had to say about Scala, designed by the brilliant young typographer Martin Majoor:

Scala sums up many characteristics of recent Dutch type design. It is an “old style” face, perhaps, but it follows no established modes—it invokes memories of W. A. Dwiggins and Eric Gill. Scala has a definite, sharp character of its own, which escapes the Van Krije pen mold. As usual with the Dutch, the italic has a strong, insistent rhythm, perhaps to an extreme. Much love and attention has gone into the “special sorts”—there is even an x-height ampersand (a)—and the figures are, of course, non-linear.

Presented on the following pages are specimens of texts that I have written over the years, sampled and reconfigured to provide a showing of this amazing typeface. All of these texts were originally written in Scala. As a writer who is also a designer, I often compose my words directly on the page, and I am happiest when writing in Scala. Its crisp geometry and humanist references make Scala at home with both the visual and literary qualities of the written word. Scala’s x-height, which may be unfashionably large by today’s standards, has always sat well with me, reminding me of my own bottom-heavy figure. Scala’s distinctively shaped characters call attention to the physical presence of typography; at the same time, their design allows the letters to recede into the texture of words, enabling the process of reading to move forward with comfort and ease.
FontFont digital typefaces convince the reader through their clarity and sharpness. The quality of type is a question of know-how and expertise. What was true for metal type and, during a tense era of transition, for photo-typesetting, is still true for digital type: only through craftsmanship and know-how of type designers can digital typefaces be produced that can convince the reader through their clarity and sharpness.

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Die Spannkloben können umgedreht werden.

[4] Depuis 1918, le progrès technique en sidérurgie ne s’est manifesté par aucun procédé fondamental nouveau, mais bien par le perfectionnement des procédés et d’outillage existant et par le récupération toujours plus poussée des sous-produits. Ainsi, le nombre de hauts fourneaux en ordre de marché ou en activité a baissé, mais cette diminution fut compensée par une augmentation de la production des hauts fourneaux.

[7] Gearing Rack - A simple traversing motion which, by the use of standard chain, pinion, and end attachments eliminates costly gear and rack cutting. A wide variety of chain and wheel sizes is available, also end attachments for all methods of mounting. For example, using 0.75 in. pitch chain and a pinion of 19 teeth, one revolution of the pinion will produce a traverse of 14.25 inches.
CATALOGS. ALL INQUIRIES AND ORDERS FOR MATERIAL, WHETHER SHOWN IN THIS CATALOG OR NOT, WILL RECEIVE OUR BEST ATTENTION.

TO THE TRADE

STERLING SUPPLY CO

DECIMAL EQUIVALENTS
At Arnheim we come to a totally new Holland. The Maliebaan and the park at Utrecht, with their spacious residences, had prepared us a little for Arnheim’s wooded retreat; but not completely. Arnheim the Joyous Rotterdam is given to shipping. The Hague makes laws and fashions; Leyden and Utrecht teach; Amsterdam makes money. It is at Arnheim that the retired merchant and the returned colonist set up their home. It is the richest residential city in the country. Arnheim the Joyous was its old name. Arnheim the Comfortable it might now be styled. (p. 9)

It is the least Dutch of Dutch towns: the Rhine brings a bosky beauty to it, German in character and untamed by Dutch restraining hands. The Dutch Switzerland and a vast wood, and at a point of precipice overlooking the river. Richmond too, for it has a hereabout is called. Arnheim recalls Arnheim that the retired merchant and continues as far as one can see in the north. It was a very beautiful morning in May, and I as I rested now and then among the juniper, I was conscious of being returning to England in sauntering here at all. No one ought to be out of England in April and May. At one point I met a squirrel—just such a nimble short-tempered squirrel as those which I pines I was conscious of being traitorous to as I rested now and then among the resinous trees near my own home in Kent—and my scold and hide in the top branches of the fir.

It was a very beautiful morning in May, and
and I walked in the early morning to Klarenbeek, up and down in a vast wood, and at a point of vantage called the Steenen Tafel looked down on the Rhine valley. Nothing could be less like the Holland of the earlier days of my wanderings—nothing, that is, that was around me, but with the further bank of the river the flatness instantly begins and continues as far as one can see in the north.

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