



**Retro showcard display designs, modern interpretations of classic typefaces and virtual replications of antique fonts:**

***There are more typeface revivals available to graphic designers today than ever before. Maybe Frederic Goudy was right when he said, “The old guys stole all our good ideas.”***

#### DIVIDED VIEWS

The design community has always been polarized when it comes to the topic of typeface revivals. Proponents will tell you that they preserve the rich heritage and tradition of the typographic arts and enable graphic communicators to take advantage of the best typefaces from earlier days. Those less in favor of reinterpreting old designs will argue that most revivals are lifeless clones just trying to make a buck off a good name. For better or worse, type designers have been creating revivals virtually since fonts of moveable type were invented.

#### THE FLAVORS OF RESTORATION

There are essentially two kinds of typeface revivals: replications and interpretations. Replications strive to duplicate the look and feel of a typeface as it was originally used. In essence, they try to capture the character, warmth and idiosyncrasies of the font as it was seen by readers of its time. Replications are the typographic equivalent of classical music played on period instruments.

Typeface interpretations, on the other hand, are either new renditions of older designs or are new designs inspired by previous work. Interpretations take an older typeface and add to it by updating the design, correcting the limitations imposed by earlier technologies or by incorporating the essence of one or more designs into something entirely new. Typeface interpretations are comparable to what Seiji Ozawa creates when he conducts Beethoven.

Four brand-new “old” designs have recently joined the ranks of the revivals. One design recreates the beauty of a sixteenth-century French script. Another is a revival of a revival. The third grew out of a custom font project, and the fourth corrects the wrongs that an earlier technology necessitated.

## GALLIC CHARM

P22 Civilité is a tempered typographic replication. According to Richard Kegler, co-founder, principal and the typographic soul of P22, “We chose to represent the font as accurately as possible, although the design was not distressed in an attempt to create a feeling of ‘oldness.’ We wanted to represent Civilité as it might have been seen by its originators: as an imitation of French handwriting—not perfect, but human—both elegant and quirky.”

“*We chose to represent the font as accurately as possible, although the design was not distressed in an attempt to create a feeling of ‘oldness.’*”

The original Civilité design dates back to the sixteenth century, when Robert Granjon cut punches for a font based on a style of French handwriting. The typeface became known as caractères de civilité due to its use in a popular book that taught children how to read, write and behave in polite society.

Kegler collaborated with Colin Kahn and Milo Kowalski to create P22 Civilité. Their source materials for the design were a 1908 publication printed from type that was cast from matrices struck from original Civilité punches, a 1926 specimen showing of the same fonts and a 1978 English translation by Harry Carter that was printed with type cast from the same punches. Because many of the original forms were archaic, there are two parts to the Civilité suite of fonts: Historical for the antiquated characters and Modern, which contains revised versions of the odd and confusing older letterforms. In addition, the OpenType fonts of P22 Civilité have a large offering of alternate and swash characters.

## REVIVING A REVIVAL

Monotype’s Bembo is a double revival. The story begins in fifteenth-century Venice, an important European typographic center. Many printers established businesses in Venice at this time; the most significant of these was Aldus Manutius, the first of the great scholar-printers.

Late in the fifteenth century, Aldus published a relatively insignificant essay by the Italian scholar Pietro Bembo.

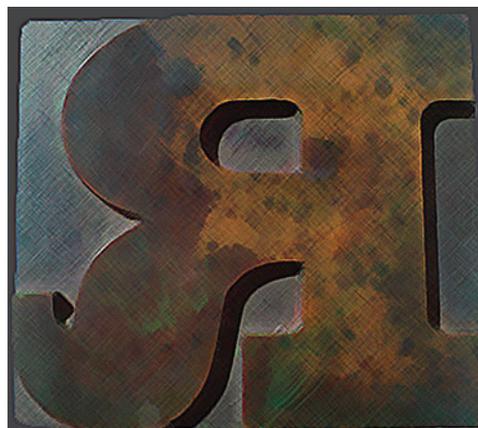
The type used for the text was a new design cut by Francesco Griffo, a goldsmith-turned-punchcutter. Despite the modest vehicle that prompted its launch, the Bembo typeface became very popular in Italy and soon found its way to France, where the design came to the attention of Claude Garamond, the famous French type founder. He made his own version of the design and sold fonts of it throughout Europe. The Aldine roman, as it came to be known, continued to serve as the foundation for new typeface designs for hundreds of years.

Monotype’s designers used antique books and specimen material set with Aldus’s original fonts as the basis for the first Bembo revival in the 1920’s. Released as several sizes of metal type, it quickly became one of Monotype’s best-selling typefaces. These first phototype and digital versions of Bembo were based on drawings for the 9-point metal type.

The problem, however, was that no allowances were made for the way the 9-point type looked when inked and printed. The resulting phototype and first digital fonts produced a Bembo that was much less robust than the original metal versions. Some critics used the word “spindly” to describe the new design.

The second digital revival of Bembo, created in 2006, is called Bembo Book. Robin Nicholas, senior designer in the Monotype drawing office, created the design to produce results comparable to those from the larger sizes of letterpress fonts. Characters were based on the metal type drawings—then edited to preserve the subtle features and typographic color of the printed results of the original metal fonts.

Bembo Book is slightly narrower than the earlier digital version, making it more space economical. In addition, lowercase ascenders are noticeably taller than capitals and give the design a stately feeling.



In metal cast type, the letters had to fit into a grid of 18 units.

## TRIUMPHING OVER TECHNOLOGY

Fonts for metal and early phototypesetting machines like the Linotype and Monotype had to be created within a crude system of predetermined character width values. Every letter had to fit within, and have its spacing determined by, a grid of only 18 units.

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This meant that if the ideal proportions of a particular character did not fit within a subset of these 18 units, it had to be altered so that it did. As a result, type designers were often compelled to compromise their designs from what they felt was ideal so they would work within the confines of the technology.

The original Frutiger typeface was such a design. The face dates back to 1968, when Adrian Frutiger was commissioned to design the signage for the then-new Charles de Gaulle Airport in Roissy, France. Frutiger's goal was to create a sans serif typeface with the rationality and clean lines of his Univers design, but softened with organic, almost calligraphic, nuances.

The Frutiger signage was completed and installed at de Gaulle airport in 1975. It took two more years to convert it into fonts for phototypesetting. In the process, Frutiger was forced to make changes to many characters to accommodate the spacing limitations of early phototypesetting technology.

Neue Frutiger, drawn as a collaboration between Adrian Frutiger and Linotype type director Akira Kobayashi, is based on the original Frutiger typeface, but incorporates many changes. The most obvious is an increase in the family's range of weights. Neue Frutiger has ten roman weights, each with an italic counterpart. Other, more subtle, improvements were also made. Because the new design is not bound by the design restrictions put on the first Frutiger, Neue Frutiger improves on the original design in important areas, such as character design and spacing. Kobayashi and Frutiger also concentrated on enhancing character legibility at small sizes. Neue Frutiger enjoys all the design and spacing refinements that current digital technology can provide.

## ARCHAIC SKILLS

Jim Parkinson tells the story that, while browsing in a used bookshop in Northern California, he asked the clerk if the store had any typeface specimen catalogs or old books on lettering. The clerk pointed to a sign in the back of the shop that read "Archaic Skills." Parkinson and many other type designers may well find their inspiration in the "archaic," but their resulting typeface designs are as fresh as tomorrow morning. †

# Future Trends in Font Design

1. Grunge fonts. Some people think these ugly fonts are a fad that has already started to fade away. But if you look around, you'll realize that grunge type and lawless design is not only everywhere, it's so common that it doesn't shock us like it used to.



*Grunge fonts can take on almost any style.*

2. Virtually designed fonts. I'm not talking your normal raster, beveled and embossed fonts with drop shadows. Here we are talking about using filters, covering letters with textures such as grass and rusted metal. The future of custom fonts is truly in the designers hands.



*A font created entirely in Photoshop using patterns, filters and blending modes.*