

clemens

⌘ Clemens
» A Venetian
Post-Gothic family
between gothic
rotunda and humanist
letterforms

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» A Venetian
Post-Gothic family
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rotunda and humanist
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***“Non sono i contorni, non sono i dettagli,
le grazie o i terminali, ma è la struttura,
lo scheletro sottostante della lettera,
quello su cui dobbiamo concentrarci.”***

Riccardo Olocco

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Background and Intents

When I applied for EsadType, I proposed a deliberately open-ended project, designed to progressively define its boundaries.

The initial idea was to create a dialogue between different calligraphic styles, observing their structures, constructive logic, and formal tensions, rather than their individual stylistic characteristics.

This direction comes from an internship at Massimo Polello's Calligraphy Atelier in Turin, during which I had the opportunity to explore different calligraphic systems, including Textura, Gothic cursive, Uncial, Humanistic, and Roman Capitals. Rather than achieving technical mastery, this experience allowed me to develop a critical eye on different writing systems and on the role of gesture in the construction of forms. During my time at EsadType, I felt the need to narrow down and personalize my field of research. Living in Amiens and repeatedly answering the question "*Where are you from?*" with "*near Venice*" gradually strengthened a sense of geographical and cultural belonging that also began to guide the project.

Venice emerged as the historical context for a fundamental turning point: the birth of printing in the 15th century. During this period, the city represented a meeting point between the manuscript tradition and the typographical rationalization of books, where different styles coexisted, influencing and redefining each other. It was in this transitional space that hybrid forms and unestablished solutions emerged.

The project begins precisely in this gray area waiting to be explored.

The project emerges as an exploration of the intermediate zones between different writing systems.

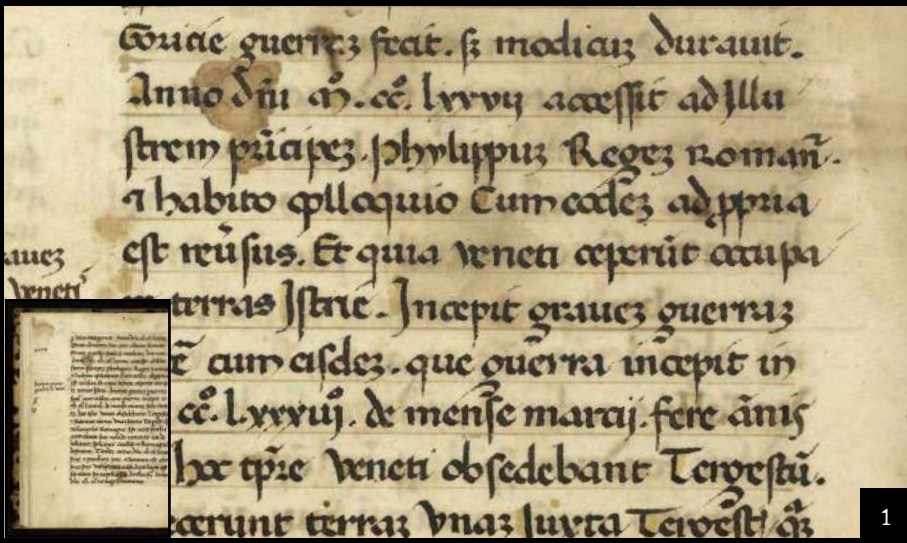
Its focus lies on transitional typographic forms between Gothic-Rotunda and Humanistic models, questioning the linearity of historical narratives and the rigidity of traditional classifications. The transition from manuscript to printed book provides a privileged context for observing this condition. In this phase, calligraphic gestures are reinterpreted, selected, and translated into new formal structures. Hybrid forms, manipulations, and gestural traces become active elements within the design process.

Rather than treating hybridisation as a stylistic outcome, the project adopts transition as a method.

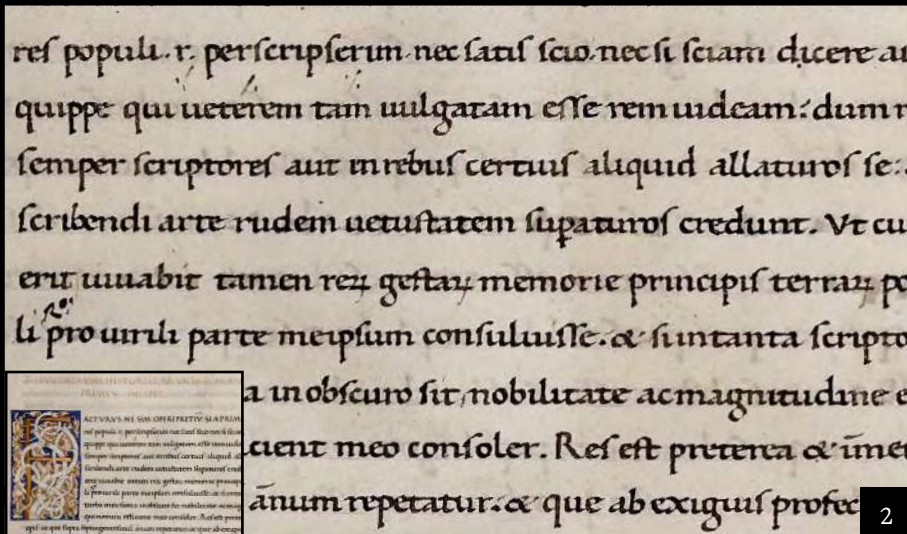
In this framework, calligraphic gesture is approached as material to be analysed and systematised: a trace capable of generating rules, proportions, and spatial relationships.

The project deliberately positions itself within this grey area, approaching typographic form as an unstable field shaped by coexistence rather than synthesis. It is inside this zone of tension that the research develops, treating hybridisation as a structural condition underlying the emergence of 15th century Venetian type.

The Gothic Rotunda and humanist writing



1



2

The Rotunda Gothic script developed in Italy starting in the 13th century as a distinctive variant within the broader Gothic tradition.

In contrast to northern European Textura, characterized by angular structure, vertical compression, density, and modular repetition, Rotunda favors curvature, openness, and spatial clarity.

Its proportions reveal an elasticity driven by gestural speed, breaking with Textura's static rigidity.

This orientation reflects a deliberate calibration of form in relation to function and cultural context characteristic of the Italian manuscript tradition, where writing played an active role in shaping legibility, authority, and visual order.

Rotunda responded to these needs through a balance of solemnity and legibility, which favored its widespread use in liturgical, legal, and academic manuscripts.

Its formal structure is defined by rounded constructions in letters such as o, e, and c, the contextual use of the rounded r, the use of the double-loop g, different ligatures and relatively open proportions. Controlled contrast and measured rhythm contribute to a script that maintains visual gravity while retaining clarity. This balance allowed Rotunda to serve both representational and practical purposes within manuscript production.

[Fig. 2] Sample of the formal hand of Poggio Bracciolini. From *Liuius*, 1425–26. (“The Venetian origins of roman type”, Riccardo Olocco)

[Fig. 1] *Vitae episcoporum et patriarcharum Aquileiensium*, manuscript anonymous, probably in Venice in late 15th century. (University of Pennsylvania Libraries)

nos et impietibus nris tu propitiaberis. **B**eatus quem elegisti et assumpsisti in habitaculo matris tue. **R**eplebimur in bonis domus tue. sancti est templi tui mirabile magnificentate. **Q**uia exaudi nos deus salutaris in conspectu omnium finium terre et in mare longe. **P**reparans montes in uirtute tua. accinctus potentia qui conturbas profundus maris. **S**oni fluminis eius. **U**rbabitur gentes et timebunt qui habitant terminos assignis. **E**xitus matutini et uespere delectabis. **Q**uia gustasti terram et inebriasti eam. multiplicasti locupletare eam. **F**lumen dei repleti est aquis pariter cibum illorum. quia ita est propitio eius. **Q**uia uos eius inebria multiplicata gemma eius in silicibus eius letabitur germinans. **B**enedicens corone anni benignitatis tue. et campi tue replebitur ubertate. **P**inguentem speciosa deserti. et exultatione collis accingentur. **I**nduta sunt anetes. **Q**uia ualles habundabit frumento clamabunt et emi ympni dicent.

Job
Sete uol
te esse uol
DIRQUES
TO SALMO
edixit **ORNI**
COBNI DI
CONTINU

adoret te deus et psallat tibi. psalmi dicat
nri tuo. **V**enite et uideate opa di. tribilis
in consilijs super filios hominum. **Q**ui conuer-
terat mare in aridam in flumine prohibuit
pede. ibi letabimur in ipso. **Q**ui donatur
in uirtute sua metui. oculi eius super gen-
tes respiciunt. qui exasperant non exaltant
in semetipsis. **B**enedicite gentes domum au-
ditam. facite uocem laudis eius. **Q**ui posu-
it aridam meam ad uiam. et non dedit i con-
suetudinem pedes meos. **Q**uia probasti nos in
igne. nos examinasti sicut examinatur argenti.
Induxisti nos in laqueum. posuisti tribulacio-
nes in dorso nro. imposuisti homines super ca-
pita nra. **T**ransiimus pinguem et aquam.
et conuisti nos in refrigerium. **I**nteribo i
domu tuam in holocaustis. reddam tibi uo-
ta mea que distulerunt labia mea. **Q**uia lo-
cuti est meum in ebullitione maris. **H**olocau-
isti medullata offeram tibi. cum incenso ar-
entis. offeram tibi boues cum hyrcis. **V**e-
nite audite et narrabo omnes qui time-
nt deum. quanta fecit uis mee. **Q**uia ipse ore
meo clamauit. et exaltaui sub lingua mea.
Iniquitate si aspexi in corde meo. non exau-
diat dominus. **P**ropterea exaudiuit dominus. et ad-



4

Alongside the continued use of Rotunda, early humanist writing introduced a different approach to letter construction and proportion. Emerging from Florentine intellectual circles, Littera Antiqua articulated a visual language grounded in regularity, linear construction, and harmonic proportion.

Wide forms, balanced relationships between ascenders and descenders, and a measured modulation of stroke weight shaped a script oriented toward clarity and visual order.

Humanist writing functioned as both a graphic system and a cultural position. Through its formal coherence, Littera Antiqua expressed an alignment with values of proportion, harmony, and intellectual clarity that characterized Renaissance humanism. Writing in this script signaled participation in a renewed engagement with classical models and established an alternative mode of visual authority grounded in order and legibility.

The coexistence of Rotunda and humanist writing defines a condition of calligraphic plurality in the Italian manuscript tradition. Their divergent approaches to structure, rhythm, and proportion operated simultaneously, shaping a complex visual landscape in which multiple models of letterform and authority were present.

[Fig.3] Previous Page

Psalter, in Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment. Italy (Padua), c. 1390-1410 (Les Enluminures Book shop)

[Fig.4]

Alphabet, showing geometrical construction and proportions of gothic majuscule and minuscule letters, 1460. Italy (Newberry Digital Collections)

[Fig.5] Next page

SALLUST, anonymous summaries of *De Catilinae coniratione* and *De bello Jugurthino*. Italy, c. 1440-1460 (Les Enluminures Book shop)

nolite pati regnum numidie. Quod vestrum est per scelus et sanguinem nostrae familiae tabescere. *Responsio Legatorum fugurtae ad orationem Aetherbalis.*

Huempal.

Aetherbal.

Fugurta.

Postquam rex loquendi finem fecit legati fugurtae legationem magis quam causam fecerit paucis verbis responderunt. Huiusmodi obsequium suam a Numidiam interfectum. Aetherbalem ultro bellum inferentem Postquam superatus sit conque-

quod iniuriam facere nequiescent fugurtae a senatu petere ne se alium putaret ac Numidiam cognitus esse. Neque verba inimici ante sua facta ponerent. Deinde uterque curia egressi sunt. Senatus statim consulit. Fatores legatorum pervertebat. Senatus magna pars contra aetherbalem dicta contempere. fugurtae virtutes extollere. laudibus gratia nocere. et flagitio sua quali pro gloria utebantur. contra paucos quibus bonum equum diuitis carnalibus subueniendum. Aetherbali. hiemalis mortis se necesse vindictam esse censebant. Sed ex omnibus maxime Emilius Scaurus. homo nobilis impiger factiosus audax potentis honoris diuiciarum. Ceterum vitia sua occultant. calidus postquam videt legationem famolam impudenterque uertit quod in tali re fieri solet ne pallata licentia inuidiam accendat. animum a consueti libidine continuit. Vicit tamen in senatu illa pars quae uo pecuniam aut gratiam ante ferebat. Decretum

Emilius Scaurus.

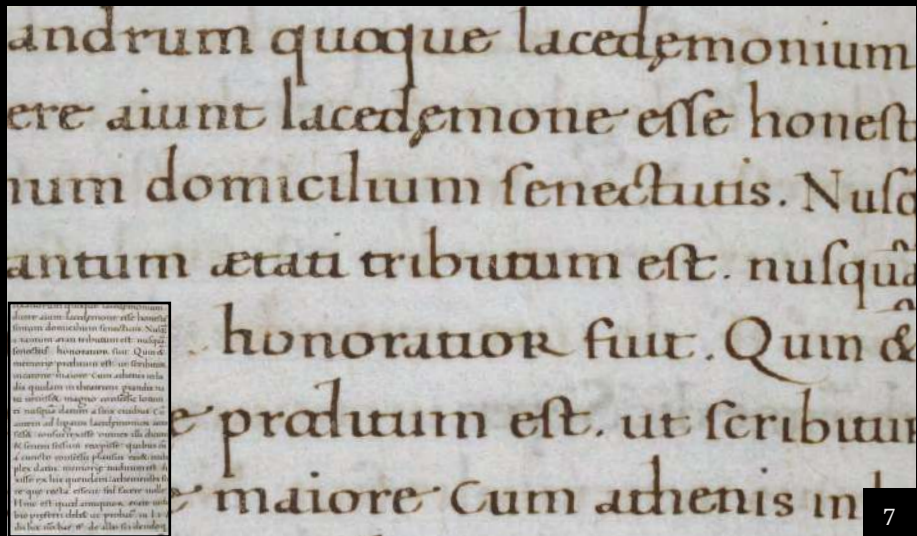
fit uti decem legati regnum quod incepta obtinuerat inter fugurtae et Aetherbalem diuiderent. Cuius legationis princeps fuit. L. Opimius homo clarus. et tunc in senatu potentis. Qui consulibus. Caio. Graco. et Marco filio interfectis a Carthagine uictoriam nobilitatis in plebe exercuerat. Eam fugurta tamen utinam in amicum habuerat tunc accuratissime recepit dando et poliendo multa profecit uti fames fides. postremo omnibus suis rebus comodum regis ante fecit. Reliquos legatos eadem uia aggregul plebsque capit. paucis fidelis fuit carior quam pecunia. In diuisione regni quae pars Numidiae Mauritianiam attingit agrorumque opulentior fugurtae traditur. et illam alteram spe quae usui potiores. Quae portulium ex edificis magis ex horrida erat. Aetherbal possedit res postulare uideret affertum paucis exponere. et eas gentes quibus cum nobis bellum aut amicitia fuit attingere. Sed quae loca aut nationes ob calorem aut asperitatem et solitudines minus frequentatae sunt debent haud facile comptum naua ueri cetera paucissimis absolui. *Descriptio Itinere Africae.*

In diuisione orbis terra plerique in partes tertiam aethiopicam possidere paucis tantummodo aethiopia Europam esse aethiopia in Europam. Ea finis habet ab oriente fretum nostrae maris et oceanum ab oriente solus habet declines latitudines. quae locum cataphagorum in colle appellant mare seuum. Ex importulium ager feugum fertilis bonus

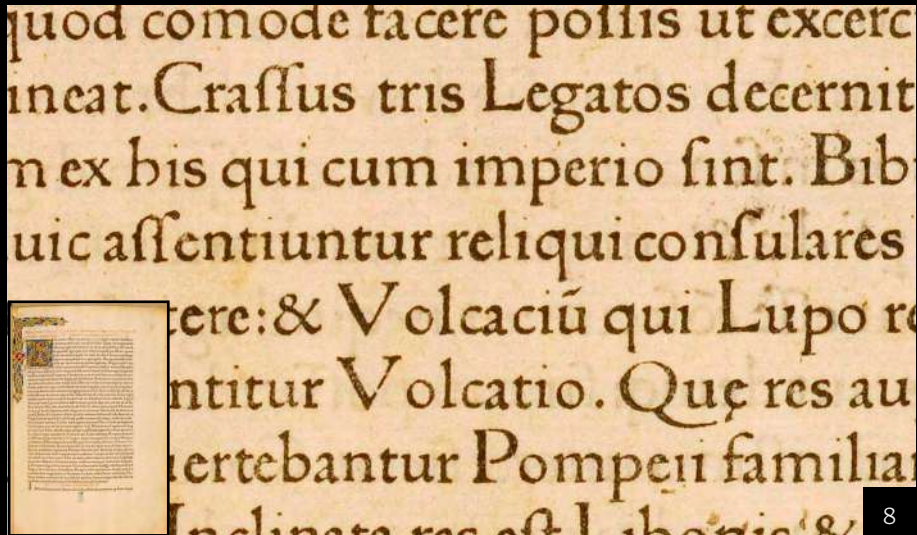
*L. Opimius.
G. Gracus.
M. filius.*

rimis consideranda
tilis & Bartholome
ia dignitas eis de u
ff& ut. l. honor. ff.
mo inso. ff. de mu
no. glo. i. R. c. que
munera indicantur
tandum prius esset
e personarum ut. l.
de testamentis. &

From
calligraphic
plurality to
typographic
negotiation



7



8

Typography emerged in Venice amid a visual culture already shaped by a plurality of calligraphic models.

Gothic Rotunda and humanist writing coexisted as parallel systems, each articulating distinct approaches to structure, proportion, and authority.

Early typographic practice entered this complex landscape not as a rupture, but as a process of mediation.

Early printers and punchcutters adopted humanist writing as a primary formal reference for Roman type. Figures such as Nicolas Jenson and other early Venetian printers translated the proportions, rhythms, and constructions of Littera Antiqua into the technical language of punchcutting and typesetting.

This translation required a series of formal decisions in which calligraphic gestures were interpreted, reduced, and stabilized. Terminal movements of the pen informed the development of serifs, harmonic proportions were recalibrated for mechanical repetition, and counters and apertures were adjusted to sustain clarity across the printed page.

In this passage to typography, the variability of the hand encountered the constraints of the tool. Forms that had previously depended on speed, pressure, and individual execution were reorganized into repeatable structures.

[Fig.8] *Epistulae ad familiares*, Venice Johann von Speyer, 1469. (portail.bibliissima.fr)

[Fig.7] Formal humanist writing, anonymous scribe. *Letter of a Military Emperor Deligendo*, Venice, almost 1460.

[Fig.6] Previous Page Sample of main humanist, Padua, 1450-1460. Scribe unknown. ("The Venetian origins of roman type", c-a-s-t.com)

The letter began to operate less as a temporal trace of gesture and more as a constructed visual unit, designed to persist across impressions and editions.

The relationship between calligraphy and typography can thus be understood as a process of continuity shaped by transformation. Calligraphic models provided a visual and cultural framework, while typography introduced a logic of regularity and durability.

Rather than resolving the plurality of writing traditions, early Roman type negotiated between them, selecting, refining, and stabilizing specific formal traits.

Typography emerged from this negotiation as a system that encoded gesture into structure, preparing the ground for new forms of visual authority in the printed book.

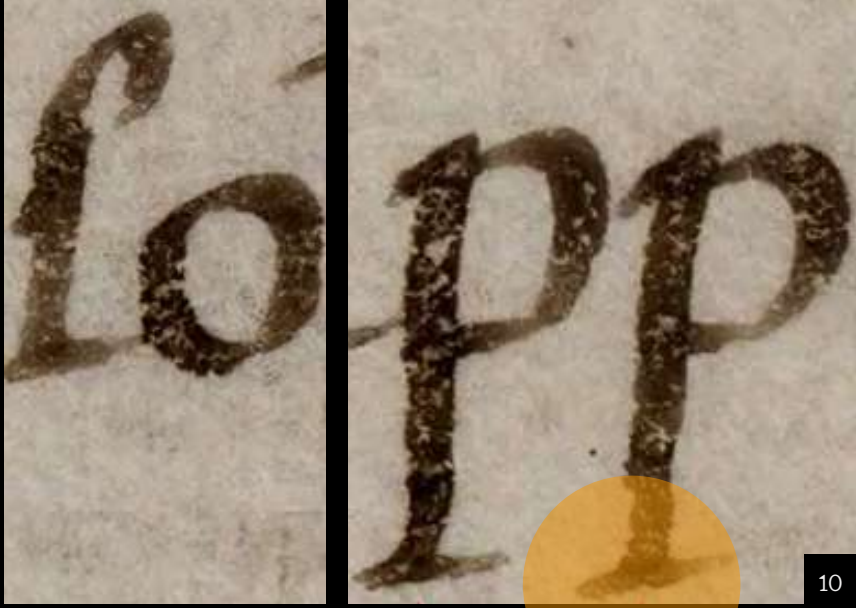
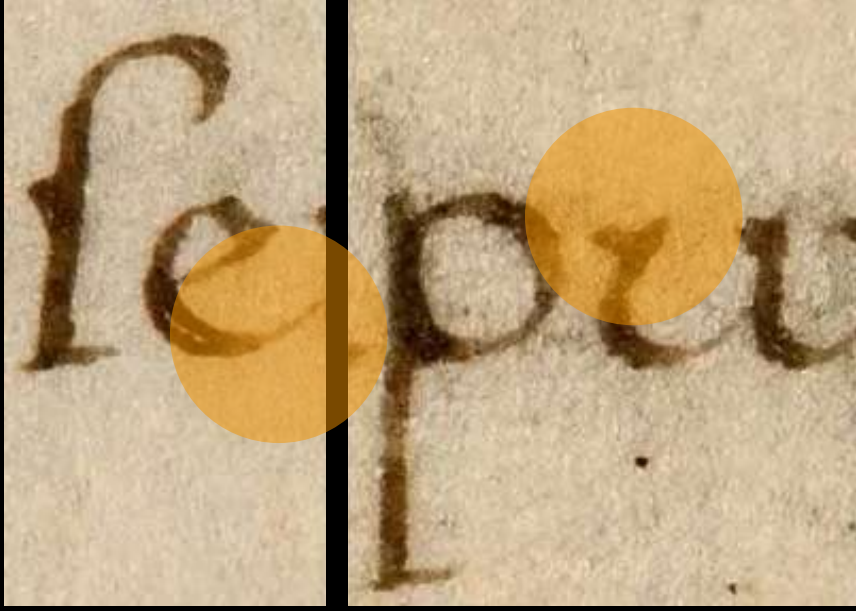
[Fig.9]

First book printed in Venice: Cicero's *Epistolae ad Familiares*, published by Johann von Speyer in 1469. (Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana)

A M T C Lentulo praconsuli S D.
Vlo Trebonio/qui i tua puítia magna negotia & ápla & expedita
hét: multos ános utor ualde fálhariter. Is tú átea semp & suo splédore
& nostra ceterorúq; amicorú commendatione gratíffimus in prouincia
fuit. Tum hoc tēpore propter tuú in me amoré nrámq; necessitudinē
uehemēter confidit/ his nrís litteris se apud te gratiosum fore. Quē nē
spes eum fallat: uehemēter rogo te: Cómēdoq; tibi omnia eius negotia
liberos: pcuratores: fáiliá. In prís: ut quē Appius de eius re decreuerit
ea comprobe: Omnibusq; rebus eum ita tractes: ut intelligat nostrá
cómendationem non uulgarem fuisse. Vale

A M T C Lentulo praconsuli S D.
D. xvi. kl. februarii. Cum in scātu pulcherrime starem: q; iam
illa sententiá Bibuli de tribus legatis pridie eius diei fregeráus: unúq;
certamen esset relictu sentētia Volcaci: res ab aduersariis nrís extracta
est uariis calúniis. Causam enim frequenti senatu nō magna uarietate
magnaq; iúidia eorú qui a te causam regiá alio transferebat: optíbeáus.
Eo die acerbum habuimus curionē: Bibulú multo iustiorē pene etiá
amicú. Caninius & Cato negarút se legē ullá ante comitia esse laturos.
Senatus haberi ante. kl. februarii per legem pupiam: id quod scis non
potest. Neq; mense february toto nisi perfectis aut reiectis rogatōibus,
hęc tamē est opinio populi Romani: a tuis iúidis atq; obtrectatoribus
nomē inductú fictę religiōis: non tam ut te impedirent: q; ut ne quis
propter exercitum cupiditatē Alexandria uellet ire. Dignitatis autē tuę
nemo est q existimet habitá esse rationē ab senatu. Nemo enī est qui
nesciat: quomíus discessio fieret p aduersarios tuos esse factú: qui nūc
populi Ro. nomíore autē uera sceleratissimo latrocinio: si qua conabūt
agere satis prouísu est. ut nequid saluis auspiciis aut legibus: aut iam
sine ui agere possint. Ego neq; de meo studio: neq; de non nullorum
iúria mihi scribendú esse arbitror. Quid enī aut me ostentē qui si uitá
p tua dignitate pfundá nullá partem uidear meritoꝝ tuorú assecutus,
aut de alioꝝ iniuriis querat? quod sine summo dolore facere nō possū,
Ego tibi i hac presertí i becillitate magistratuum prestare nihil possum,
ut excepta ui possum cōfirmare/ te & senatus & populi romái summo
studio amplitudinē tuá retentur. Vale

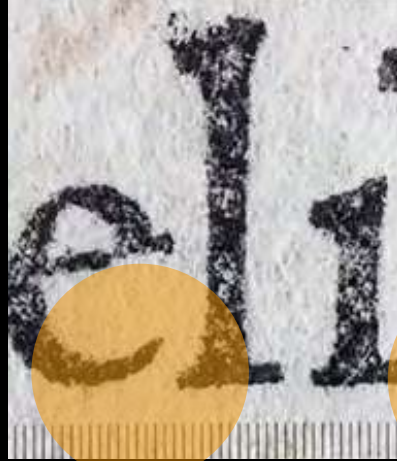
T M T C Lentulo praconsuli S D.
Am & si mihi nihil fuit optatius q; ut primú abs te ipso: deinde
a ceteris omnibus q; gratíffimus esse erga te cognosceret: tamē afficior
sumo dolore: eiusmodi tēpora post tuá pfectiohem cōsecuta esse: ut &
mea et ceteroꝝ erga te fidē & beniuolentiá absens experirere. Te uidere
& sentire eandē fidē esse hominú in tua dignitate: quā ego i meá salutē
exptus sum ex tuis litteris itellexi. Nos cū maxio cōsilio. studio. labore



10

[Fig.10]

Some samples of bilateral serifs written without lifting the pen, from Paduan manuscripts, 1450 and 1460 (“*The Venetian origins of roman type*”, c-a-s-l.com)



11

[Fig.11]

Similar serif shapes seen at the bottom of Speyer (top) and Jenson’s minuscule. (bottom) (“*The Venetian origins of roman type*”, c-a-s-l.com)

[Fig.12] Next page

Erhard Ratdolt, *Index characterum diversarum*, 1482. (Poem Editions)



Aue maria
gr̄a plena
dominus
tecū bene
dicta tu in mulierib⁹
et benedictus fruct⁹
uentris tui: ihesus
christus amen.

Gloria laudis resonet in ore
omniū Patri genitoq; proli
spiritui sancto pariter Resul
tet laude perhenni Labori
bus dei vendunt nobis om
nia bona. laus: honor: virtus
potētia: ⁊ gratiaz actio tibi
christe. Amen.

Hinc deū sic ⁊ vites per secula cum
cta. Prouidet ⁊ tribuit deus omnia
nobis. Proficat absque deo null⁹ in
orbe labor. Illa placet tell⁹ in qua
res parua beatū. Vnde facit ⁊ tenues
luxuriantur opes.

Si fortuna volet fies de heretore consul.
Si volet hec eadem fies de cōsuler heretor.
Quicquid amor iussit nō est cōtēdere tutū
Regnat er in dominos ius habet ille suo
Vita data ē vītēda data ē sine fenere nobis
Abntua: nec certa persolueda die.

Ufus ⁊ ars docuit quod sapit omnis homo
Ars animos frangit ⁊ firmas dirunt v: bes
Arte cadunt turres arte leuatur onus
Artibus ingenijs quefita est gloria multis
Pncipijs obsta sero medicina paratur
Cum mala per longas conualuere moras
Sed propea nec te venturas differ in horas
Qui non est hodie cras immus aptus erit.

Non bene pro toto libertas venditur auro
Hoc celeste bonum pterit orbis opes
Pducatis animi est bonis veneranda libertas
Seruus semper cunctis quoque despicienda
Summa petit luor perflant altissima uenti
Summa perunt deara salmina iussa iouis
In loca nonnunquam fides arcenia glēbia
De propea currenti flumine man at aqua

Quisquis ad es scriptis qui mentem fossitan istia
Ut nocitas adhibes protinus istud opus
Those: augustensis ratdolt germanus Erhardus
Litterulas istos ordine quasq; facit
Ipse quibus ueneta libros impellit in urbe
Multos ⁊ plurcs nunc pccim aras pccim
Quisque etiam varijs celestia signa figuris
Zarea qui primus nunc monumenta pccim
Cum etiam in anibus propiis vbi iungit figuris
Est opus incidens vdelius alter erit

Nobis benedicat qui Trinitate vinit
⁊ regnat Amen: Idem soli deo cllrtrmēdv
Aue regina celo: mater regis angelo
rum o maria floe virginum vclat rosa
vltium o maria: Tna est potentia tu
regnis domine tu cō super omnes gen
tes da pacem domine in dieb⁹ nostris
mirabilis deus in sanctis suis Et glori
osus in maiestate sua ote panib⁹ on⁹

Quod prope face blem tibi sum comitis futurus
fossitan ignotas arfoe ne bubica
Ergo para cenam non qualem floica ambit
⁊ ledi lauram sanc moe crenaco
⁊ tanque deas miam floicne clar pacilas
Ad ducam quarum balfama cunus oler
⁊ omnia sola domi fodeat quam nuper habebas
⁊ nondum cunus vepibus horruerit
⁊ tunc qui simulant ⁊ auari orumc amia
⁊ ducam facio rumos utile cadat Dec Pbdicibus

Vinc adesa mira quicunq; volumina queno
⁊ rre uel ex animo pcclo fuisse no
⁊ uerit ille tibi: nobis iure fore dea
⁊ uolumen seruet usq; agere licet

Est homini uirtus fuluo preciosior auro: æneas
Ingenium quondam fuerat preciosius auro.
Miramurq; magis quos munera mentis adornāt:
Quam qui corporeis emicuere bonis.
Si qua uirtute nites ne despice quenquam
Ex alia quadam forsitan ipse nitet

Nemo sic laudis nimium letetur honore
Ne uilis factus post sua fata gemat.
Nemo nimis cupide sibi res desiderat ulla
Ne dum plus cupiat perdat ⁊ id quod habet.
Ne ue cito uerbis cuiusquam credito blandis
Sed si sint fidei respice quid moneant
Qui bene proloquitur coram sed postea prauē
Hic erit inuisus bina q ora gerat

Pax plena uirtutis opus pax summa laborum
Pax bellēzacti pccium est pcciumque pericli
Sidera pace uigent consistunt terra pace
Nalpla: num sine pace deo non minus ad aran
⁊ ortuna arbitris tempus dispēdit ubi
Illa rapit auerēs illa lenit senes

Κλω Τεντρηπνί τē θαλεια τē μελλτο μώνη τē
Περ λυχοπν τέρητω τē πολυμνετα τούραπν
⁊ καλλιόπν θήλη προφερεπτη ἐγί,ατα
σαμψ ιεούσ χρισού μεπτα τήλοσ.

Indicis characterz diuerfaz mane
nerū impressioni paratarū: Finis.

Erhardi Rardolt Augustensis viri
solertissimi: preclaro ingenio ⁊ miri
fica arte: qua olim Venetijs excelluit
celebratissimus. In imperiali nunc
vrbe Auguste vindelicoz laudatissi
me impressioni dedit. Annoq; salu
tis. M. CCCC. LXXXV. Calē.
Aprilis Sidere felici compleuit.

Transitional printed forms and grey area



13

GREY ZONE



14

The transition from Rotunda to Humanist letters arose through a process of gradual overlap. Printers and engravers worked from existing forms, modifying them internally: the structure of Rotunda remained the foundational basis, while Humanist writing introduced new proportions, more open counters, and a different balance between positive and negative space.

The resulting letters emerged from explorations that unfolded gradually within this space of tension: curves gained autonomy from Gothic verticality, counters began to open, and internal spaces expanded, while the rhythm, weight, and overall texture of the page continued to carry the conventions of the Rotunda.

These typefaces occupied intermediate positions between Rotunda and Humanist writing, where change occurred through incremental variation. Each design moved along a spectrum of compression and openness, angularity and curvature, hand gesture and mechanical precision.

Historiography has since attempted to map this territory with labels such as *Gothic-Antiqua*, *Fere-Humanistic*, *Proto-Roman*, and *Hybrid*: terms that point to recurring configurations within a shared design space and reflect a moment in which form was shaped by this field of tension.

[Fig.13]

Jenson's first rotunda for setting text, 106G. Picture from Gregorius IX, *Decretales*, Venice 1475. (Rotunda Veneta, c-a-s-t.com)

[Fig.14]

Jenson 115R de De evangelica praeparatione d'Eusebe, 1470. ("Early 'non-Jensonian' Venetian romans", cast.com).

AGNO & excellēti īgemio nūri quom se
 mītus dedidissent: quicquid laboris pote
 contemtis omnibus publicis & priuatis
 ad inquirēde ueritatis studiū se contuleru
 tes multo esse preclarīus humanarū diuī
 muestigare ac scire rationē q̄ struēdis op
 bus inherere: Quibus rebus quomiam fragil
 corporis p̄inent cultum nemo melior: nemo
 ez illi ueritatis cognitione dignissimī quan

15

ca condere: quibus omnem litteraria
 thographiæ rationem cum opportu
 tarū declaratione connectere conaba
 mea uirili studiosis linguæ latinæ. ite
 gociisq̄ familiaribus intercæptus illa
 atq̄ lōgo tempore abiicere uisus sum
 Alatrium campaniæ oppidum ex aer

O n t e r u

16

Types commonly described as *Gothic-Antiqua* maintain the compact page color and vertical rhythm inherited from Gothic writing, while introducing wider proportions and openings derived from Carolingian and Humanist models. The underlying Gothic structure persists, yet its visual tension begins to loosen.

The Subiaco type cut by Konrad Sweynheym and Arnold Pannartz in 1465 exemplifies this condition: the page appears dark and compressed, while letters such as the open e and more rounded bowls suggest a shift toward a different balance between density and readability.

A similar pattern emerges in early Venetian liturgical prints by Hermann Liechtenstein, where elongated ascenders and expanded counters gradually reconfigure the Gothic system from the inside.

In Liechtenstein's texts, the proportions between square and round letters (*n, u, m, o, e, p*) become increasingly elastic. Counters open under Humanist influence, yet the vertical emphasis and dark texture characteristic of Gothic manuscripts persist, producing a hybrid rhythm rather than a resolved form.

[Fig.15]

Type employed by Arnoldus Pannartz and Conradus Sweynheym in Subiaco, 120SG. *Lactantius, Opera*, Subiaco 1465. (Subiaco, c-a-s-t.com)

[Fig.16]

Typography printed by Hermann Liechtenstein. ("The influence of Jenson on the design of romans", c-a-s-t.com)

Other forms shift further toward the Humanist pole while retaining visible Gothic residues.

In what paleography describes as *Fere-Humanistic*—“almost Humanist”—the overall structure aligns with *Littera Antiqua*, yet traces of Gothic tradition persist: the long s, residual ligatures, abbreviations, and pronounced vertical strokes.

Editions by printers such as John of Cologne and John Manthen reveal a writing system that appears clearer and more open, but not yet fully stabilized.

Humanist proportions coexist with Gothic signs, not as inconsistencies, but as traces of visual memory actively embedded in the process of formal transformation.

[Fig. 47]
Lactantius, Lucius Coelius Firmianus
John of Cologne and John Manthen,
Venice, 1478. (christies.com)

adis honoribus inherere. Quibus rebus quoniam fragiles
sunt: & ad folius corporis pertinent cultum: nemo melius
iustior fieri potest. Erant quidem illi ueritatis cognitione digni
quam scire tantopere cupuerunt: atque ita ut eorum rebus omnibus
conerent. Nam & abiicisse quosdam res familiares suas &
esse uniuersis uoluptatibus constat: ut sola nudaque uirtute
expeditique sequerentur: tamen apud eos uirtutis nomen & au-
aluit: ut in ea omne summi boni premium predicarent. Sed
decepti sunt id quod uolebant: & opera simul atque industria
interit: quia ueritas id est arcanum summi dei: qui fecit omnia in-
proprie non potest sensibus comprehendi: alioquin nihil inter deum
remque distaret: si consilia & dispositiones illius maiestatis
cogitatio assequeretur humana. Quod quia fieri non potest
omni per se ipsum ratio diuina notesceret: non est passus
rem deus lumen sapientie requirentem diutius oberrare
ullo laboris effectu uagari per tenebras inextricabiles: nisi
culos eius aliquando: & notionem ueritatis munus suum
& humanam sapientiam nullam esse monstraret: & errantem
uia consequende immortalitatis ostenderet. **V**erum cum
pauci utuntur hoc celesti beneficio ac munere: quod ob-
boscuro ueritas latet: eaque uel contemptui doctis est: quia in-
fertoribus eget: uel odio indoctis ob insitam sibi austeritatem
quam natura hominum procliuis in uicia pati non potest
uirtutibus amaritudo permixta est: uicia uerum voluptates
ta sunt: illa offensa: hac delinuntur feruntur in preceptis: ac
in specie falsi mala non bonis amplectuntur. Succurrendum

CONSIDERANDO
meo infinite uolte Illustris-
simo duca e humanis-
simo Signor mio: la gran-
dissima excellentia di quel sapiētis-
simo padre e reuerēdissimo Cardinal
Niceno chiamato per nome Bessaric-
one: che adesso ha il titolo del patriar-
chato di Constantinopoli: mille fia-
mi son marauagliato che gli signori
Cardinali: e tuti gli pricipi christiani
nō si siano accordati a douerlo eliege-
re per dignissimo capo de la chiesa di die-



18

At the other end of the spectrum, *Proto-Roman* types gravitate toward the Humanist model, though their proportional system remains unregulated, preceding the formal discipline later established by Nicolas Jenson.

Modulation, weight, and proportion vary across the alphabet, reflecting an exploratory approach in which Roman features are introduced without a fully articulated structural logic.

This condition is evident in the Venetian edition of *De civitate Dei* printed by Christoph Valdarfer in 1470, where the drive toward greater clarity shapes the overall intent, yet rounded forms and internal details remain unevenly resolved. Rather than presenting a stabilized Roman system, the type records a moment of transition in which formal principles are tested contextually, as the Roman letterform gradually coalesces into a coherent typographic language.

[Fig. 48]
Home page of the *Orationes of Bessarione*, popularized by Ludovico Carbone and printed in 1471 in an edition attributed to Valdarfer. (BEIC Digital Library)

hāc syllabam. fe. ut perferens 7
ferēs. Que littere fidē. i. certitu
nē 7 veracitatē. i. fidei. i. fidelita
preferēbāt. i. p̄tendebāt siue o
debāt. Dec necessitudo. nis. oī
citia. quia nectit. i. cōiungit am
Glutinū. ni. me. coz oī caritas. q
coniūgit aīas. sicut glutinū cōiū
asserēs uel aliq̄ alia. Est enī hoc g
ten uel hoc glutinū tra tenax ut
ad cōpages nauū 7 aliozū vaso
Subdol⁹. a. ū. me. coz. i. fict⁹ 7 fi
oulent⁹. Palpans. i. blādiēs ul̄ n
cēs. oī aut̄ palpare. tremere. mo
i. salire. anhelare. adulari. blād
7 manib⁹ tractare. sicut facit ce

As articulated by Stanley Morison and Harry Carter, the term *Hybrid* provides a precise framework for describing types that integrate Gothic and Roman elements within a single visual system.

This condition becomes particularly legible in Venetian printing, where hybridization operates as a deliberate formal strategy rather than a transitional compromise. The 1476 *Mammotrectus super Bibliam* printed by Franz Renner and Nicolaus de Frankfordia offers a clear example of this approach.

Here, a persistently Gothic page color and vertical rhythm structure the overall texture, while selectively open rounded forms and less rigid constructions introduce moments of visual release across the same type system. Gothic and Humanist features coexist and interact, at times in the same word, producing a typographic logic based on sustained heterogeneity rather than stylistic resolution.

[Fig. 19]

Enlargement of the character printed in the *Mammotrectus* by Franz Renner of Heilbronn and Nicolaus of Frankfordia, 1476. (christies.com)

These classifications establish a framework that makes visible a historical condition defined by coexistence rather than succession. They describe a shared design space in which Gothic and Humanist principles operate simultaneously, generating forms shaped by tension, overlap, and partial alignment.

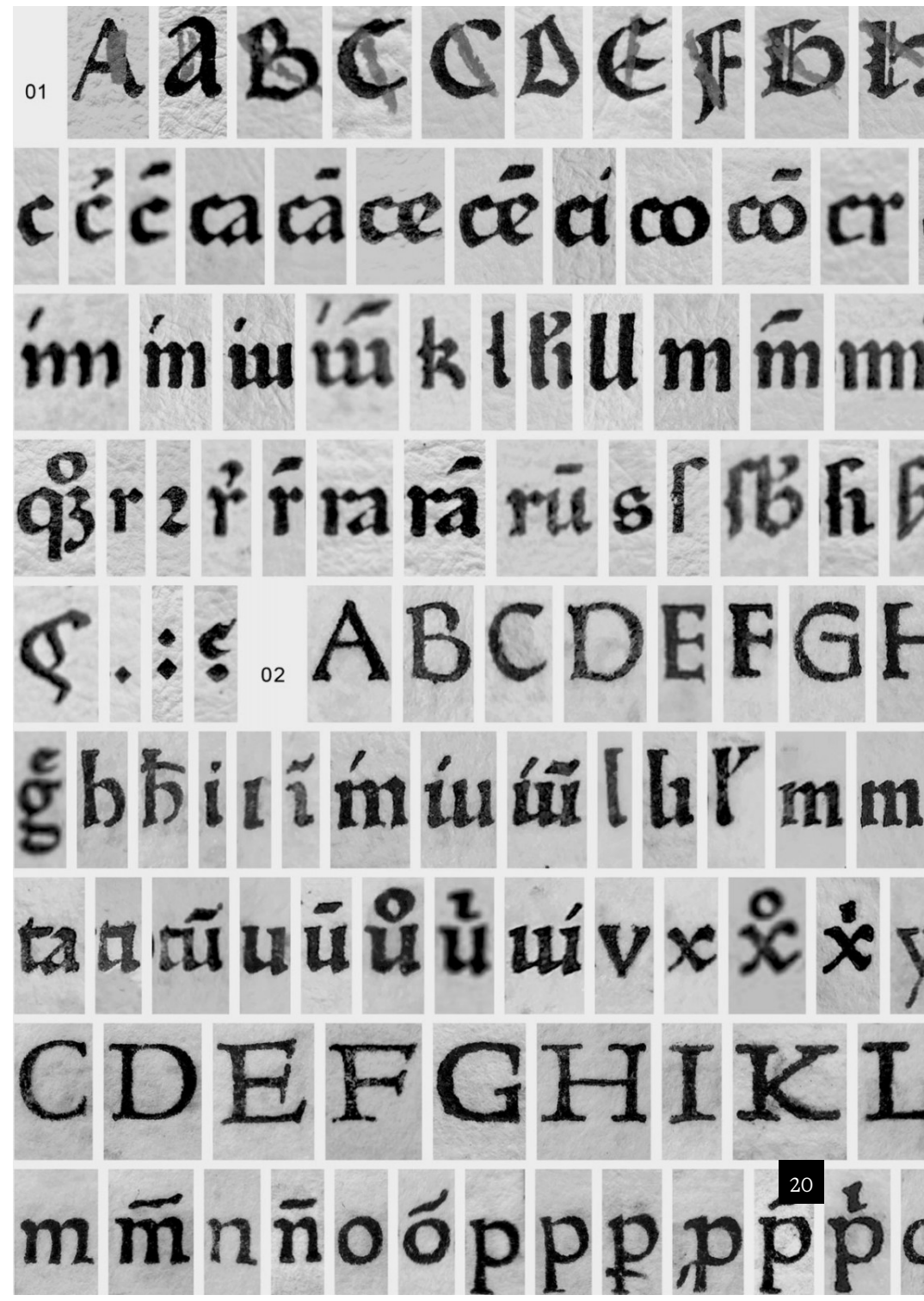
Within this space, form develops through the interaction of competing parameters: compression and expansion, vertical rhythm and curved autonomy, inherited structure and emerging proportion.

The grey area that emerges from these classifications constitutes the historical and visual foundation of the present project. The typeface developed through this process engages the grey area as an active design field. Hybridisation functions as a strategy that works within the classifications, translating historical configurations into contemporary structural decisions. Rather than positioning the project within a single category, the design moves across their shared parameters, activating relationships between them.

Calligraphy enters this process as a mediating tool between historical analysis and typographic construction. Gesture and speed allow forms to unfold in a controlled state of openness, enabling structural tendencies embedded in the classifications to surface and interact.

In this context, calligraphy operates as an analytical device. It enables the transition from historical observation to typographic decision-making, preserving the instability that defines the grey area while progressively shaping a coherent structural system.

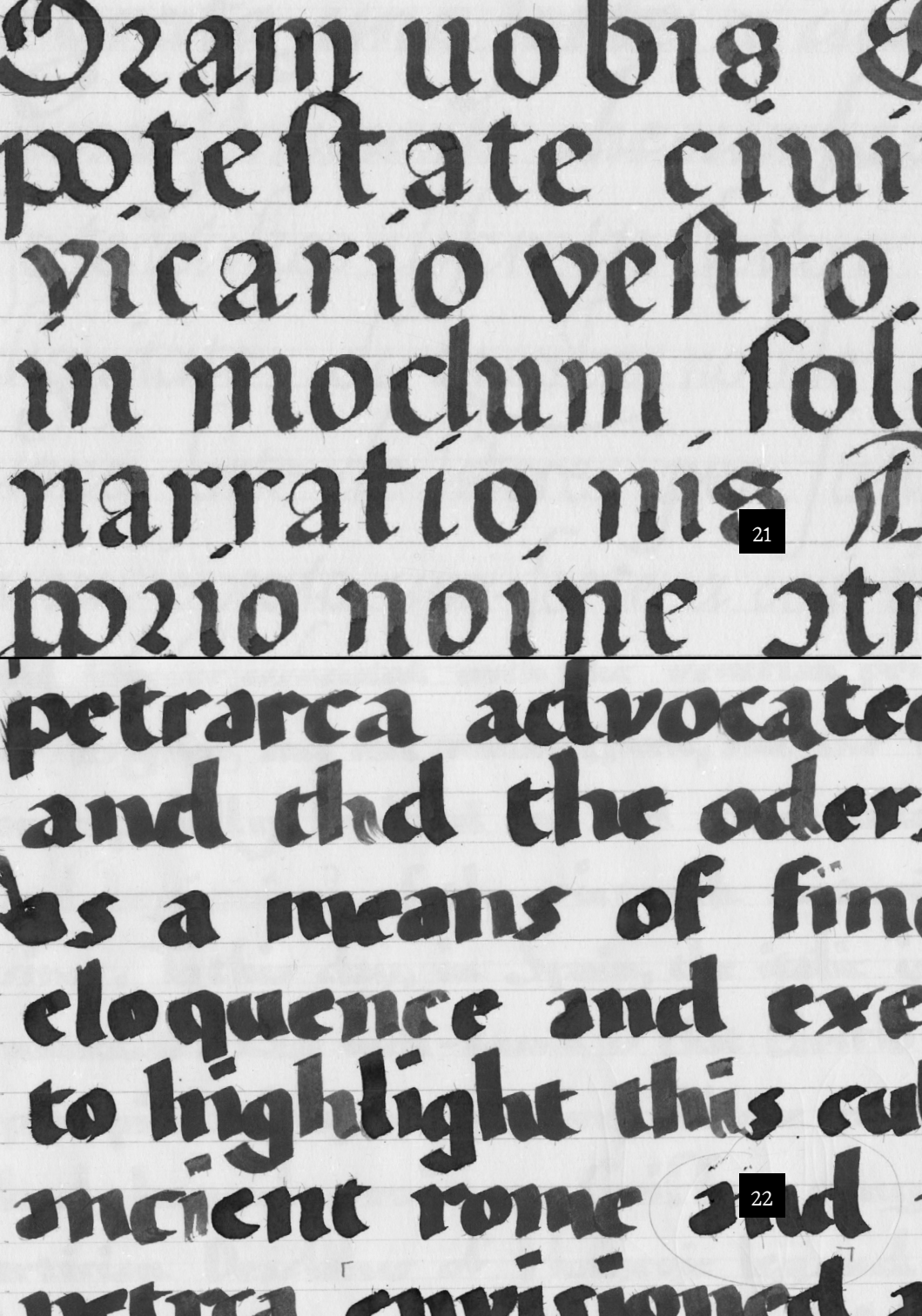
[Fig.20]
A study in *Gótico-Antiqua*:
transitional glyph sets.
Gótico-Antiqua, proto-roman,
hybrid by Alexis Faudot
& Rafael Ribas. (Poem Editions)



¶ “Roman did not precipitate the death of Gothic forms, mixtures of Gothic and Roman were tried out and the two co-existed for some time.”

Jérôme Knebusch, Almost Roman
Display specimen, Poem Editions

**Re-living
the transition**



The design phase began with the assimilation of the foundational principles of the two reference models, through imitating Jenson's Rotunda and Poggio Bracciolini's Humanist writing. This initial engagement provided a structural grounding from which the transition between the two traditions could be approached in a more personal and situated way. As the forms became progressively internalized, direct fidelity to the historical models gave way to a process focused on transformation rather than replication. Early explorations concentrated on scale.

Reducing the x-height and working at dimensions of approximately 3–4 mm established a compact structural field that encouraged simplification.

Within this limited space, formal decisions became increasingly precise, allowing essential relationships between strokes, counters, and proportions to emerge.

This reduction, however, remained primarily structural. A decisive shift occurred through the modification of the tool and the introduction of speed into the gesture. By increasing the nib size, varying its angle at larger scales, and minimizing the lifting of the hand from the page, I established conditions in which repetition became a central component of the process.

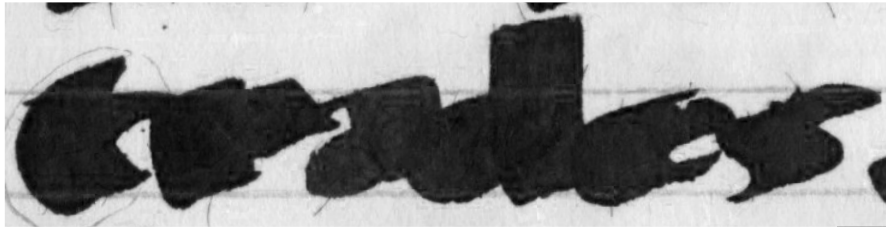
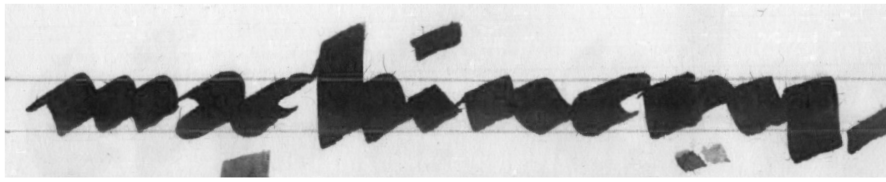
The resulting sequences of forms generated coherent visual patterns, establishing the conditions for a deeper exploration of transformation.

and this kept things in
for this important ba
anteros had to make
back stopping prob
from love that wan't
unlike a moon helping

ed i am on getting there. if that blue could
remain for ever. there was nothing to make
the bastard, park on the side of the road, rig
onkment. i pull up behind it and turn off the
right now. if i drive away, theodore finch is
ing and wandering, even if it's without me. m
ve away. i get out of the car, and the sun is to
blue, after nothing but gray for the past few m
leave my jacket behind. i walk past the no t
t sits off the road and up a driveway. i climb
hill to the wide, round pool of blue water, ring
t notice it the first time - the water is blue a
peaceful. so deserted and peaceful that i almost t
t then i see them. his clothes, on the bank, fo

esires pleasure more than
self [surrounded] by things
ut facts. it is now clear
modern [building] must not
must rely simply upon
tegrity and size. there are
measured; with these slow
mploying the modern [short
beauty there need be no ha

nd corners and so forth as
alking was the job of a resp
on. we still wear collars an
e the kings, clerks or furnace
there is no necessity for a coll
these trades. all this is men
much; nobody can be bothered
reason; there is even a stron
of distaste for any attempt to d
oubtless a distrust of human
at few adventures are more l
attempt to live by it.
own the chief and, though w
redirection by saying so, the
characteristics of our time is
manufacture which we ca



27

Speed emerged as a key operative variable. Starting from rigid and regular Gothic constructions, the progressive acceleration of the gesture caused proportions to shift and structures to soften.

Rounded forms, in particular, began to absorb this change, moving toward Humanist configurations while remaining rooted in Gothic order. Through this process, the relationship between square and rounded letters was continuously renegotiated within the same visual field.

These conditions directly influenced spacing.

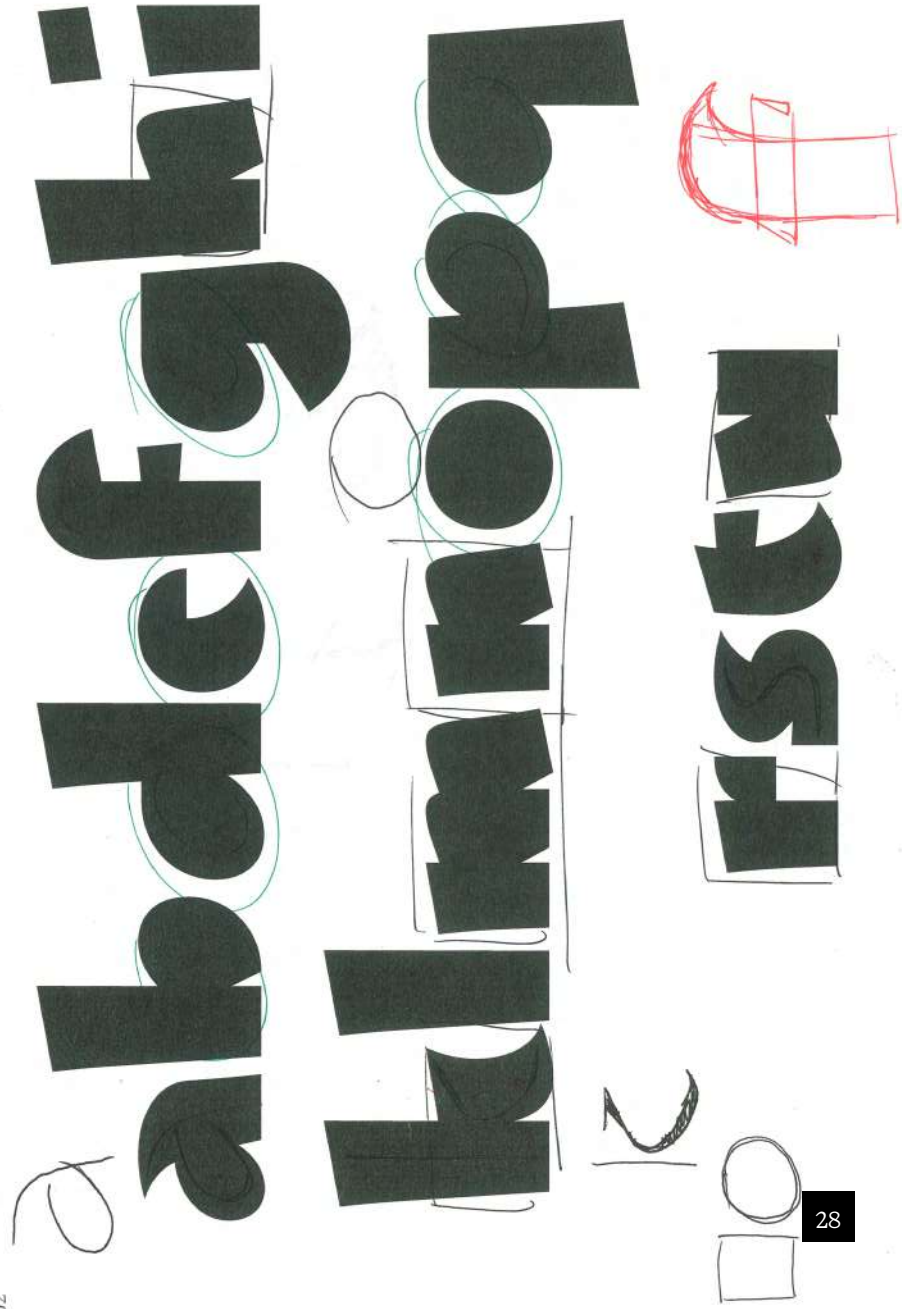
The combination of a reduced x-height, a thick tool, and a continuous gesture produced tight spacing, with letters frequently overlapping or forming points of continuity. Rather than being treated as anomalies, these interactions contributed to the development of a rhythmic visual pattern. Spacing thus emerged as an extension of the gesture itself, reinforcing the elastic relationships between forms and supporting the construction of a cohesive text texture.

[Fig.27]

Early digitalization from calligraphy.

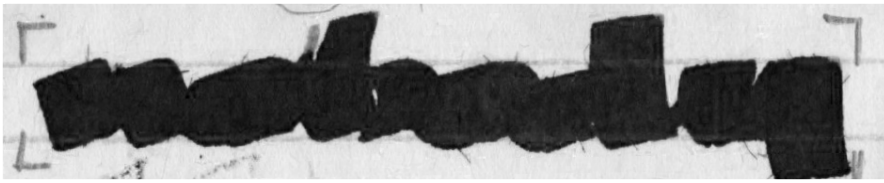
[Fig.23-26] Previous Page

Calligraphic explorations of Rotunda Gothic and Humanist models changing nib angles, size and speed.



[Fig. 28-29]
From early digitalization to
extracting the text structure.

she ran up the hill dogs
bark in the fog a pink sun
lifts behind trees birds flap
then hide he feels soft sand
under foot a path bends
and turns she finds her
kind spot he digs and helps
life is pure light



nobody

30

Early digitization derive from calligraphic explorations. At this stage, tension emerges at the terminals of letters such as *a*, *e*, *k*, and *t*, as a direct consequence of gestural speed.

This dynamic begins to inform the shaping of strokes and endings, translating gestural conditions into digital form while progressively aligning letterforms with basic geometric structures, such as the square and the circle.

Simultaneously, as relationships between curves and angles become more defined, they establish a foundational characteristic of the typeface, generating rhythm both within individual letters and across the text and laying the structural groundwork for the development of the text version.

[Fig.31]

Text proofing: rhythm, structure and key elements.

13.05.2025

a man and a queen camped on a hot dune the band had a pot of
hopped about the damp bench a man and a queen camped on a
pet bat met a dumb pan and hopped about the damp bench a r
beat the drum atop the hut one pet bat met a dumb pan and ho
band had a pot of meat and beat the drum atop the hut one pet
camped on a hot dune the band had a pot of meat and beat the

31

[Fig.30]

Definition of the skeleton derived from calligraphic explorations.

hamburgetonstiv

05.06.2025

hamburgetonstiv

10.12.2025

hamburgetonstiv

15.09.2025

hamburgetonstiv

31.12.2025

hamburgetonstiv

17.10.2025

hamburgetonstiv

19.11.2025

As I walked along the winding path, the crunch of fallen leaves beneath my feet echoed softly, and the earthy scent of the forest filled my senses! In the distance, the sound of a babbling brook could be heard, adding to the calm atmosphere. I felt deeply connected to nature, as if the world was whispering its quiet secrets to me. There was a stillness in the air, but it wasn't empty it was full of life, a reminder of the beauty in every small detail. Time seemed to stretch on, allowing me to savor each moment, each breath of fresh air. The gentle dance of the wind through the branches, the soft hum of insects hidden in the grass.

31.12.2025

Several exploratory
steps of Clemens Text.

*“ROUNDED ARE ROUNDED
AND SQUARISH ARE SQUARISH”*

no



adhesion



This statement, articulated by one of my mentors Hugues Gentile, became a reference point throughout the design process, gradually establishing itself as a guiding principle.

Within this structural framework, the tension generated between square and rounded letters establishes a visual coherence between the two reference models.

At the text level, this proportional interplay becomes a fundamental tool for introducing elasticity into the relationships between letters. As this system unfolds across words and lines, rhythmic tension emerges as a consistent feature of the text, shaping its pace and contributing to the overall character of the typeface.



32



One of the defining characteristics of the text typeface is a pronounced sense of horizontality. This quality originates in specific features of Gothic Rotunda writing, where horizontal strokes, particularly in letters such as *c* and *r*, introduce moments of lateral extension in an otherwise vertical system.

In Rotunda, these horizontal elements operate locally, counterbalancing vertical compression and contributing to the internal equilibrium of the letter.

Within the present project, this latent horizontality is extracted and rearticulated as a structural parameter.

By extending horizontal emphasis across the system, proportions gain stability and regularity, allowing the typeface to align more closely with Humanist principles of balance and rhythm without losing the memory of its Gothic origin.

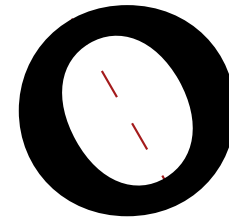
Horizontality thus functions as a mediating device: it stabilizes the text structure, regulates proportions, and establishes a distinctive visual identity rooted in the grey area between Rotunda and Humanist forms.

[Fig. 32]

Jenson's first rotunda for setting text, 106G. Picture from *Gregorius IX, Decretales*, Venice 1475. (*Rotunda Veneta*, c-a-s-t.com)



35°



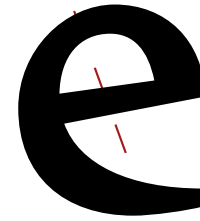
30°



20°



25°



20°



15°



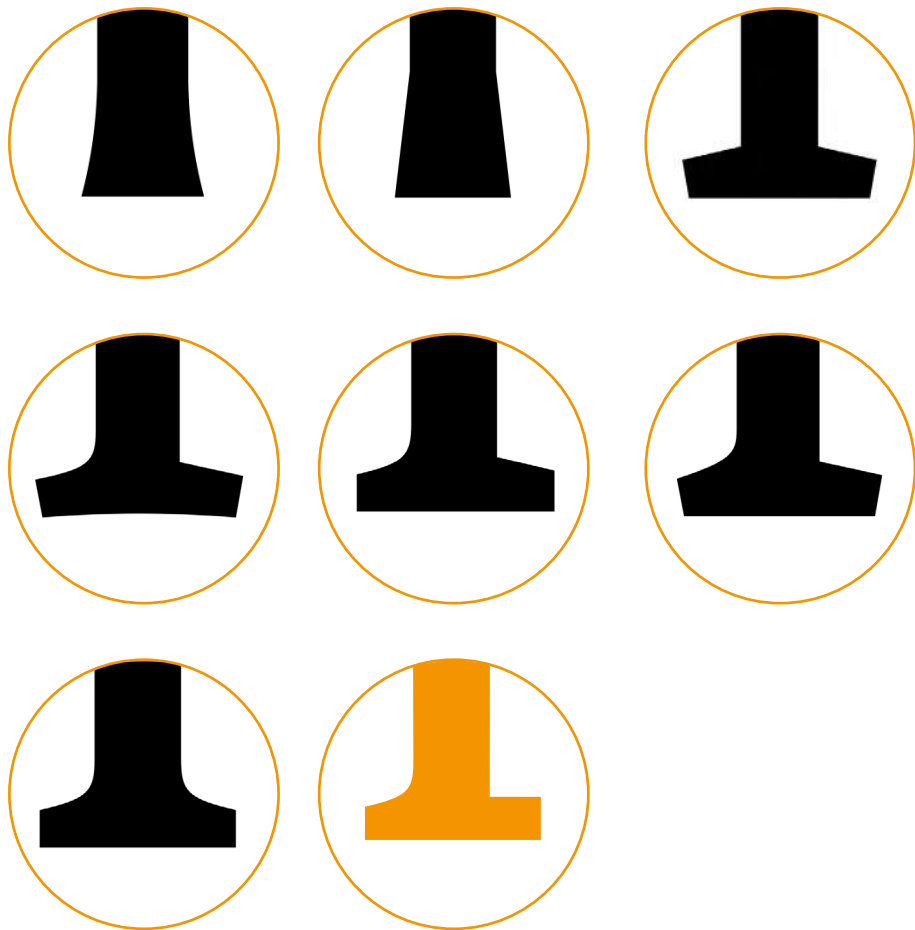
25°



20°



18°



During the early explorations of the typeface, serifs do not play a significant role in its structure, the design can function equally well as sans-serif or serif.

The question of serif typology, and how to define their form, became important when I decided where to position the typeface inside the spectrum between Gothic and Humanist traditions.

Choosing to place the project closer to the Fere-Humanist or Proto-Roman classification, I opted to include serifs. These help create greater stability in the text rhythm and balance formal structure with the elasticity of proportions and counterforms.

From this starting point, I begin exploring how serifs can create visual coherence with the Humanist style while establishing a relationship with calligraphic gesture.

Defining the oblique cut as a *'metal cut'*, I seek to introduce a gestural quality that proves most coherent and effective at text sizes, while also echoing the horizontality already present in the typeface structure.

E O N S

E O N S

JENSON



or the development of the capital letters, the design aligns more closely with Humanist models, particularly in response to readability at smaller sizes.

Roman capital proportions are retained, as their construction within a square or half-square reinforces the same principle of elasticity identified in the lowercase system.

Serifs in the capitals became a specific field of exploration. More calligraphic and Humanist serifs support clarity and legibility, while alternative solutions more closely aligned with the Gothic character of the lowercase are also tested. Ultimately, the text version prioritizes clarity and readability, while more explicitly Gothic forms were reserved for a separate display version of the capitals.

Formal humanist writing, anonymous scribe. From the *Letter of a Military Emperor Deligendo*, Venice, 1460.

VENECIE



17.10.2025

TO ILLUSTRATE THE TRANSITIONAL TYPE, GOUD AND PANNARTZS EXAMPLE THE SECOND TYPEFA WHICH HE ALSO DESCRIBES AS NEITHER BLACK-BUT A TYPE THAT WAS BACK-LETTER IN COLOR I FORM; THEN SPECIFIES: THEIR TYPE SHOS PLAIN LEANING OF ITS DESIGNER TOWARD THE MANNE BLACK-LETTER — THE ONLY FORM OF LETTER U ERS ESTABLISHED THEIR PRESS. THIS TRANSITIO

20.10.2025

VENICE



13.11.2025

PRIVILEGE FROM THE VENETIAN SENATE TO PRIN CITY, THOUGH HIS MONOPOLY WAS SHORT-LIVED THE PRIVILEGE WAS NOT RENEWED. *VENICE QUIC THE PRINTING CAPITAL OF EUROPE.* THE CITYS UN AS A COMMERCIAL AND CULTURAL CROSSROADS AND WEST, COMBINED WITH ITS WEALTHY MERCI RELATIVE INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM, CREATED IDE FOR THE NEW INDUSTRY TO FLOURISH. *BY VENICE THE MOST IMPORTANT CENTER OF PRINTING IN T PRODUCING MORE BOOKS THAN ANY OTHER CITY*

15.11.2025

VENICE



31.12.2025

ANCIENT GREECE WAS ONE OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL CIVILIZATIONS IN HISTORY. THE GREEKS DEVELOPED DEMOCRACY IN ATHENS, CREATED ARTISTIC AND LITERARY MASTERPIECES, AND LAID THE FOUNDATIONS OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY WITH THINKERS LIKE SOCRATES, PLATO AND ARISTOTLE. THEY EXCELLED IN MATHEMATICS, SCIENCE, AND ARCHITECTURE, BUILDING MAGNIFICENT TEMPLES LIKE THE PARTHENON. GREEK MYTHOLOGY WITH GODS LIKE ZEUS AND ATHENA

31.12.2025

FRANCESCO GRIFFO
GIOVANNI DA SPIRA
JOHN OF COLOGNE
ALDO MANUZIO
FILIPPO PINZI
PIETRO BEMBO
LAZZARO SOARDI
GIORGIO RUSCONI
ERHARD RATDOLT
NICHOLAS JENSON

Final version of Capital Letters
from ExtraLight to ExtraBold

**The question
of the Italic**

a



a

e



e

f



f

g



g

s



s

The development of the Italic version progresses rapidly, as the key structural elements of the Roman are already clearly defined. From the outset, the objective was to design a true Italic, conceived as an independent structure rather than a simple oblique transformation.

Although the Italic emerges slightly later than the historical period addressed in this research, its introduction remains consistent with the project's framework. The Italic is approached here as a response to speed, direction, and gesture, rather than as a strictly codified historical style.

This position is informed by the analysis of Sanvito's cancelleresca and by archival material such as the *Deliberazioni Miste* register from Venice (1450), where writing displays a rapidity and informality.

These sources reveal a plurality of fast writing practices, ranging from more regulated forms to highly spontaneous executions.

Within this context, speed operates as a shared condition and a structural principle.

The aim of the Italic version is therefore, to preserve the principles of horizontality and gestural velocity within the same historical transition explored in the Roman, extending the hybrid system toward a more dynamic and directional structure.

The gray fog descended over the valley as explorers ventured beyond the ancient wilderness. chronic frictions capture antiquated justifications while new discoveries awaited those brave enough to seek them. Scientists gathered data from various experiments, documenting every anomaly with precision. republicans question problematic networks as the debate intensified across modern platforms. Young activists rallied together, demanding justice and equality for marginalized communities. The movement grew stronger each day, transcending geographical boundaries. chairlifts function beneath equatorial mountains where adventurers marveled at breathtaking vistas. Photographers captured stun-

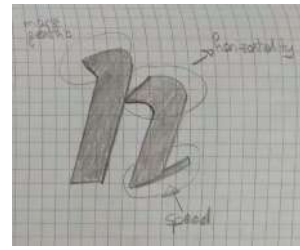
10° angle

The gray fog descended over the valley as explorers ventured beyond the ancient wilderness. chronic frictions capture antiquated justifications while new discoveries awaited those brave enough to seek them. Scientists gathered data from various experiments, documenting every anomaly with precision. republicans question problematic networks as the debate intensified across modern platforms. Young activists rallied together, demanding justice and equality for marginalized communities. The movement grew stronger each day, transcending geographical boundaries. chairlifts function beneath equatorial mountains where adventurers marveled at breathtaking vistas. Photographers captured stun-

14° angle

The gray fog descended over the valley as explorers ventured beyond the ancient wilderness. chronic frictions capture antiquated justifications while new discoveries awaited those brave enough to seek them. Scientists gathered data from various experiments, documenting every anomaly with precision. republicans question problematic networks as the debate intensified across modern platforms. Young activists rallied together, demanding justice and equality for marginalized communities. The movement grew stronger each day, transcending geographical boundaries. chairlifts function beneath equatorial mountains where adventurers marveled at breathtaking vistas. Photographers captured stun-

18° angle



chronic aircraft function until friction archaic contribution luncheon mouth republics junction altar munch chair culmination ultramotion trims microfilms chum anticlimatic filtration junction chromatics Humiliations claims multifunction loison forums aircraft chronic morals Traffic factions charts junction republics equations rituals unfares mitochondrials chromas truncations junction mouths republicans chairlifts Luncheons ultramotions functions equilibriums chromatofraction filtrations fractions culminations chronic frictions junction aircrafts anticlimatics ululations archaic contributions opaques munchs junction chairlifts republic morals rituals bapties until chronic trims Functions fractions aircrafts chromatics junction Quotes luncheons republicans filtrations junction chairs millions amplex mitochondrials functions junctions problematic equations captures republics blankets networks marketings jukeboes marketplaces thankfuls pumpkins breakpoints shrimp hospitals question jockes establish substantial chronicles



[Fig.34]

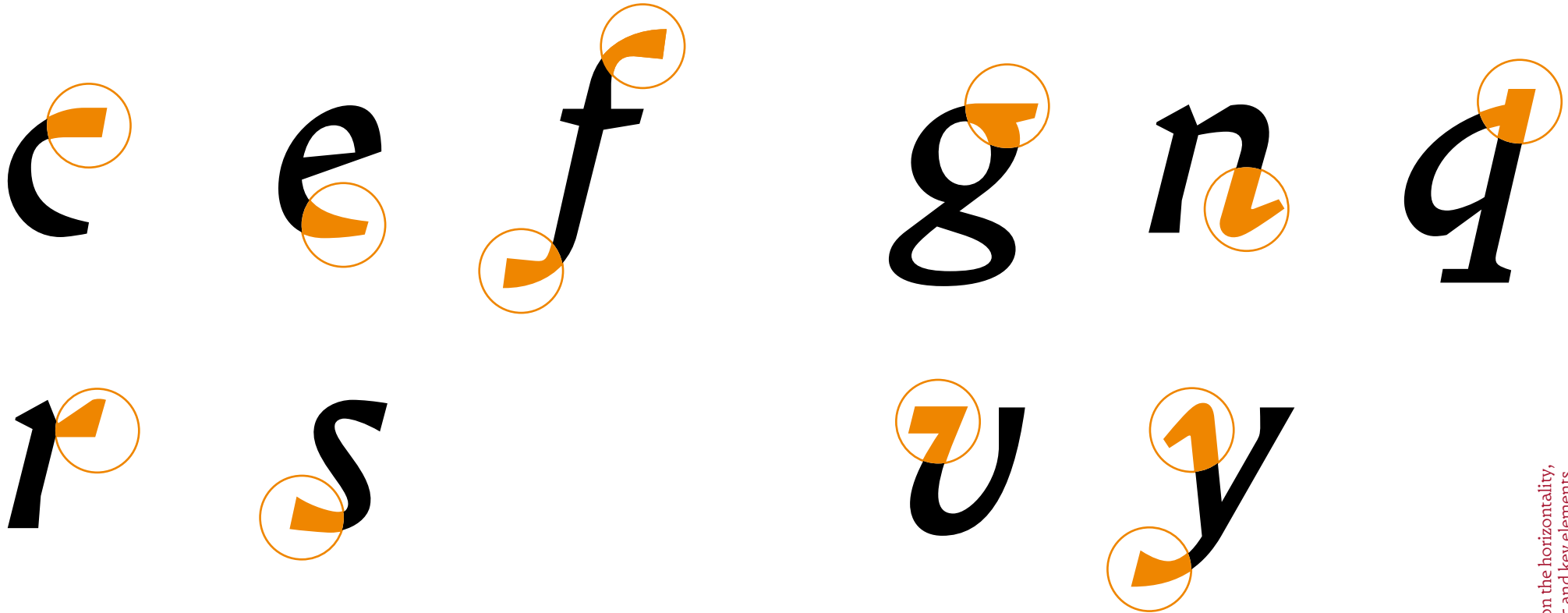
Drafts and digitization of the Italic version.

[Fig.33]

Exploration of different inclination angles starting from the roman version to analyze rhythm and dynamism.

hamburgerforno

13° 15° 14° 14° 14° 15° 13° 115° 105° 105°



Emphasis on the horizontality, calligraphic and key elements.

→ Teatro **LA FENICE**
30121 — Cannaregio
Pier Luigi Penzo 1928
(Murano & Burano!)
☪ CAFFÈ FLORIAN

† Peggy Guggenheim
☪ **MUSEO CORRER**
{MASTEGA BRODO}
Fondaco dei Tedeschi
« **RISI E BISI? €12!** »

“These types are based on calligraphic models other than Jenson’s roman and their letterforms were soon to disappear as they were eclipsed by the success of Jenson’s.”

Riccardo Olocco

Riccardo Olocco, Gotico-Antiqua, Proto-Romain, Hybride. Characters of the 15th century between Gothic and Roman.

Clemens Poster: Roman & Italic

ESTHETIC SENSIBILITY
CREONSELVES WHICH
REASONING FACULTY
DO THAT; BUT THAT
OF PRINTING, TYPE
INVISIBLE AS TYPE,
TALKING VOICE IS
FOR THE TRANSCRIPTION
WE MAY SAY, THERE
MAY BE DELIGHTFUL
BUT THAT IT IS
FOREMOST, AS I MEAN

The display version evolved through a non-linear trajectory. Early calligraphic explorations of Gothic capitals produced forms with strong expressive potential, sharing several stylistic traits with the calligraphy developed for the text cut. Through their digitalisation, these capitals initially served as a testing ground for the construction of lowercase forms, offering insights into how Gothic structures could operate at smaller sizes.

As the project progressed, the focus gradually shifted toward the text version, while the display cut remained temporarily suspended. Once the structural principles of the typeface were fully defined, returning to the display version became significantly more direct. The initial forms were revisited and reformulated with greater clarity, allowing visual coherence to emerge more naturally from the already established system.

The central objective of the display version was to achieve a Gothic sensibility shaped by speed and simplification, pushed toward a more radical expression. An extremely black weight was adopted to recall the dense typographic colour of Gothic printing while encouraging structural reduction. This constraint supported a process in which form was continuously refined through subtraction.

Letterforms evolved rapidly through the removal of serifs and the introduction of flared stems.

APOLLO IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT AND GODS IN GREEK MYTHOLOGY. HE IS THE SON OF ZEUS THE GODS, AND LETO, A TITANESS. HIS TWIN SISTER THE GODDESS OF THE BUNT. APOLLO WAS BORN ON THE OF DELOS, AND HIS BIRTH WAS SAID TO BRING LIGHT HARMONY TO THE WORLD. APOLLO IS KNOWN AS THE THINGS: THE SUN, MUSIC, POETRY, PROPHECY, HEALTH. HE IS OFTEN DEPICTED AS A YOUNG, HANDSOME MAN HOLDING A BOW AND ARROW. AS THE GOD OF THE SUN, HE DRIVES HIS CHARIOT ACROSS THE SKY EACH DAY, BRINGING LIGHT AND WARMTH TO THE EARTH.

ONE OF APOLLO'S MOST FAMOUS MYTHS INVOLVES HIS RIVALRY WITH ZEUS. AS THE GOD OF THE SUN, HE DROVE HIS CHARIOT ACROSS THE SKY EACH DAY, BRINGING LIGHT AND WARMTH TO THE EARTH. ZEUS WAS THE FATHER OF GODS THE RULER OF THE UNIVERSE AND BRINGER OF THUNDER HE HELD LIGHTNING IN HIS HAND AND HIS VOICE HE WAS FEARED AND OBEYED BY MORTALS AND IMMORTALS AHEAD OF HIM HIS GAZE REACHED FAR ACROSS THE SKY AND EVERY PATH HE TROD WAS MARKED BY HIS TRACKS

HIS BIRTH WAS SAID
THE WORLD. APOLLO
SUN, MUSIC, POETRY
PICTURED AS A YOUNG, BROWN.
AS THE GOD OF THE SKY EACH DAY

BE UNIVERSE BIC
BE LIBRARIS COM
DEFINITE PERBAR
MBER OF BEAGONA
BE CENTER OF EAG

37

Each character was approached through a recurring question: “How can this Gothic form be drawn through a faster gesture and with a reduced number of movements?” The resulting shapes preserve a sense of Gothic tension while translating it into a more immediate and condensed visual language. As in the development of the text italic, horizontality and calligraphic gesture played a central role.

In the display version, these principles operate at a more extreme level, allowing gesture, weight, and rhythm to become the primary drivers of expression.

[Fig. 36]

Exploration of Gothic capitals through calligraphy.

[Fig. 37]

First digitizations of capital letters obtained from calligraphic explorations

andromache

22.05.2024

andromache

05.06.2024

andromache

30.09.2025

andromache

10.11.2025

andromache

15.12.2025

Clemens Poster
lowercase development.

hamburgerfon

hamburgerfon

hamburgerfon

hamburgerfon

Evolution of key elements
of the lowercase Poster cut.

**ROTUNDA
VENETA**

27.11.2025

**ROTUNDA
VENETA**

11.12.2025

**ROTUNDA
VENETA**

16.12.2025

**ROTUNDA
VENETA**

08.01.2026

**THE EXQUISITE
GRAPHIC DESIGNER
QUICKLY REALIZED
THAT EVERY JUMP
BY THE BOLD, BLACK
FOX OVER THE LAZY
DOG WAS JUST A
QUIRKY METAPHOR**

08.01.2026

h. Liechtenstein was a German printer active in the Veneto. He is documented in Vicenza from 1475, where he played a pioneering role in establishing printing in the city, producing texts closely connected to humanist culture in the Renaissance.

**What about
an *Italic*
Poster cut?**

a



a

f



f

g



g

v



v

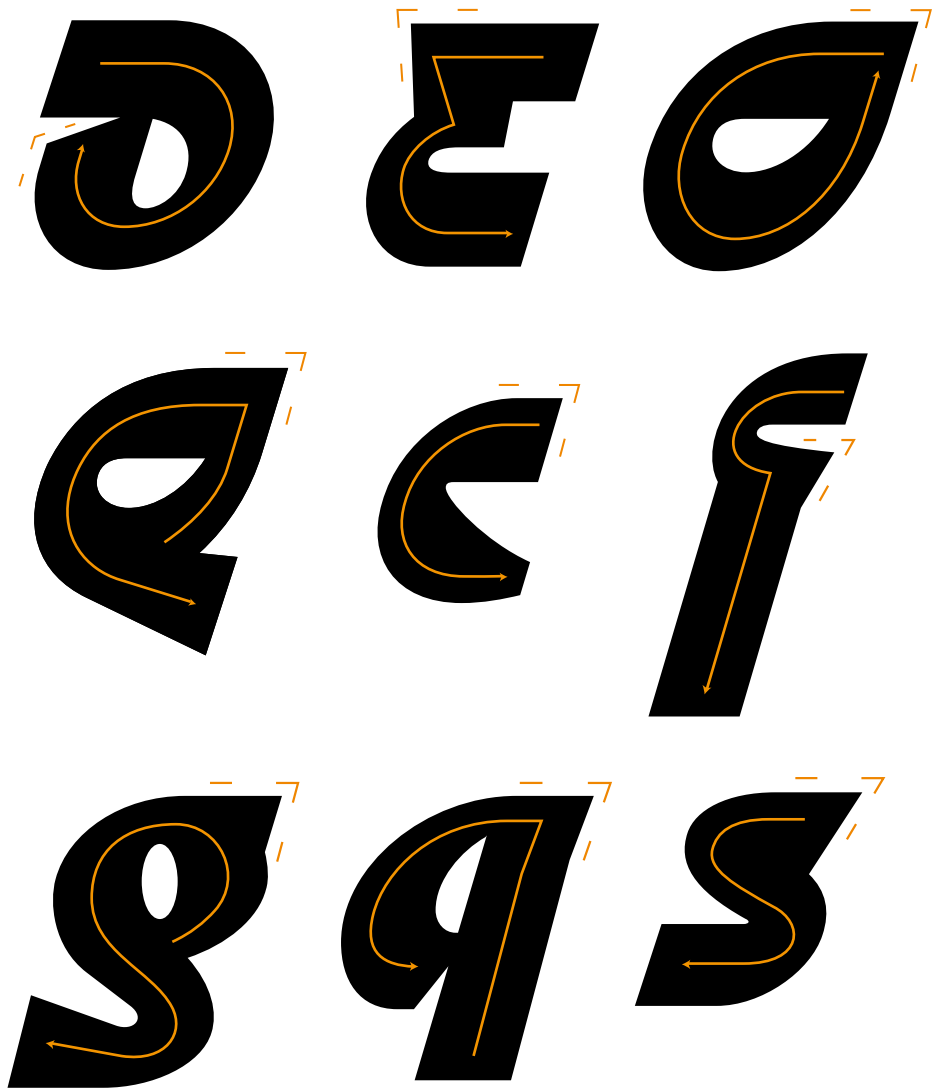
As with the text version of the Italic, the development of the Italic Poster progressed in a rapid and intuitive way.

Instead of applying a simple slanted transformation, the design process focused on extending the continuity of the hand gesture and on investigating how the horizontality of the typeface could be reinforced at larger sizes.

This intention directly informed the construction of the terminal strokes in the Italic.

Rather than following the natural return movement of the pen, the stroke resolves into a flat segment, generating a sharp angle that stands in contrast to the fluid lower exit. This decision introduces a controlled interruption within the gesture, balancing motion and restraint.

The coexistence of angular cuts and rounded forms becomes a recurring principle throughout the Poster version. At display scale, this formal tension defines the character of the typeface and articulates a dialogue between Gothic rigidity and Humanist roundness.



Skeleton of the calligraphic gesture.

Augusta
herbort
Capcasa
Bonetus
Portilla
de Zaini

Sant'Elia

Vaporetto ←

SERENISSIMA

Goalscorer!

« UNIONE ♂ »

Aa

Clemens Text ExtraLight

Aa

Clemens Text ExtraLight Italic

Aa

Clemens Text Light

Aa

Clemens Text Regular

Aa

Clemens Text Italic

Aa

Clemens Text Light Italic

Aa

Clemens Text Bold

Aa

Clemens Text ExtraBold

Aa

Clemens Text Bold Italic

Aa

Clemens Text ExtraBold Italic

Aa

Clemens Poster

Aa

Clemens Poster Italic

Clemens Patavinus is a key figure in the origins of letterpress printing in Italy. Neither the exact date nor place of his birth are known, but he is documented as a priest and man of letters active in the first half of the 15th century. He was known not only for his erudition, but also for his experience as a copyist, miniaturist, and public master, qualities that allowed him to competently approach the new art of movable type printing. **His historical importance stems from the fact that he is considered the first Italian printer successfully active in a printing press, a role during which he demonstrated a direct knowledge of typographic techniques newly imported from the Germanic area.** According to sources, by the end of 1470 he was in Venice, where he was already familiar with the processes of letterpress printing, and it was there that he undertook what is now recognized as his most significant contribution to the history of the book. In 1471, the publication of *De medicinis universalibus* (or *De medicinis*), an important medical text by Mesue the Elder, printed by Clemens, is documented. This volume is cited by historical studies as the first work printed in Venice by an Italian, thus marking a turning point: until then, printing in the lagoon city was dominated by printers of Germanic origin. The testimony of Niccolò Gupalatino, a physician and humanist of the time, also underscores the appreciation surrounding his work: in a letter, he defines Clemens pattavinus sacerdos bonus as a pioneer in Italian typographic art and praised the technical and cultural value of his work in the medical field. **After his Venetian experience, there is news of his petition to the Senate of Lucca (1472), in which Clement asked for public employment as a printer and teacher of the typographic art. Despite the consent he received, there is no evidence that he actually moved to Lucca: he probably died shortly thereafter, thus interrupting an activity that could have further consolidated typographic practice in Italy. In short, Clemens Patavinus is important**

« **Piazza San Marco** »

« *Murano & Burano* »

« **PONTE DI RIALTO** »

→ *Sestiere San Polo* ←

† **Ponte dei Sospiri**

Clemens Patavinus, active in Venice around 1480, is a central figure in the history of Italian typography. His work represents a transitional phase between the Gothic heritage and the early humanistic forms of Venetian Roman.

Patavinus's characters still show square proportions in some vertical letters such as m, n, and h, and the serifs are not yet completely refined, while the round letters, such as o, e, and c, although more regular than previous German models, retain a certain Gothic influence.

The t retains a vertical stem that almost forms a cross, far from the more open and harmonious version of mature Roman typefaces. The approach to the page highlights a more generous space than Gothic typefaces, but the overall tone remains compact and dark.

Patavinus's typographic activity in Venice marks a fundamental moment: his characters anticipate Venetian Roman, showing how the new humanistic script reconciles the needs of legibility and harmony, while retaining traces of the Gothic tradition. In this sense, his work bears witness to the gradual transition from manuscript to print, and to Venice's role as a center of typographic innovation in the 15th century.

VENETIIS, IN
AEDIBUS ALDI
ROMANI, 1495

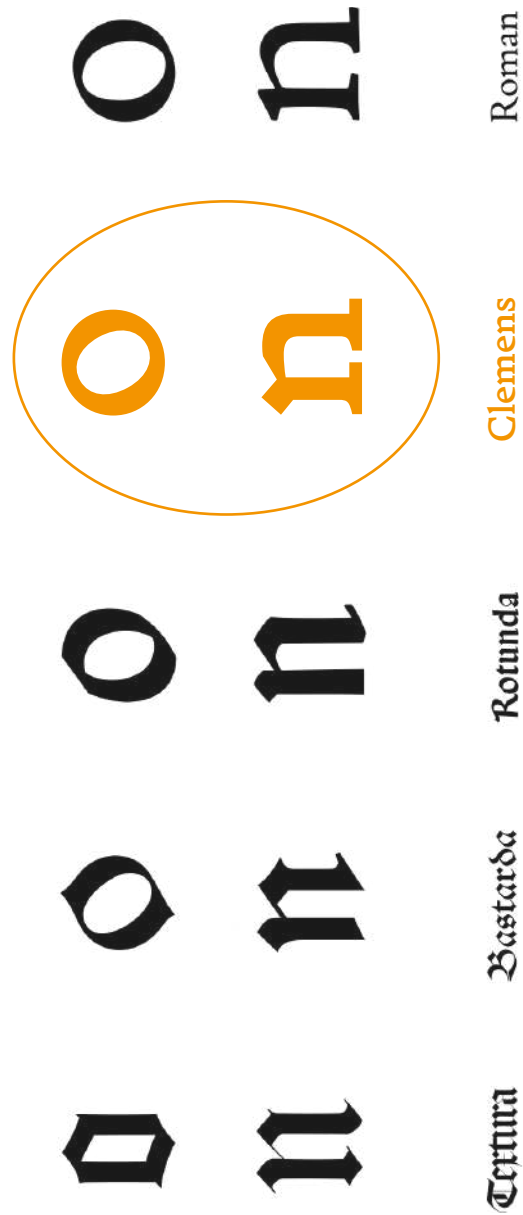
**IMPRESSUM
VENETIIS,
PER CLEMENS
PATAVINUS**

¶ The *Proto-Roman* category identifies characters that resemble the humanist genre, but without achieving the proportional rigor and technical consistency of Jenson's Roman. We perceive uneven fats, irregular modulations, inconsistent proportions. The Venetian edition of Christoph Valdarfer's *De civitate Dei* (1470) is a significant example:

**CANDARREGIO
DORSODURO
CARBAMPANE
FAGLIAPERA**

Conclusion and Future Steps

Torresano
Manutius
Valdarfer
Feliciano
Patavino
Antiqua



Clemens is my first typographic project conceived, studied, designed, and presented before a jury.

My background in typography was essentially blank when I started, and this project has been a journey of continuous discovery, research, feedback, and numerous challenges. I now look back on these challenges with enthusiasm and gratitude, as they revealed to me that this is the craft I want to pursue with passion, curiosity, and determination.

Where this path will lead remains uncertain, but one thing is clear: Clemens marks a beginning.

The project stays open, ready to evolve in new directions. One such direction is the Skeleton version.

A very thin display weight feels like the natural completion of a design cycle. Already explored in early experiments, this variant reveals how expressive and character-rich the letter structures can be when stripped down to their essence. It stands as the most direct reflection of the project's core DNA, and I'm committed to giving it the attention it deserves.

This version represents another space where historical references meet contemporary interpretation through a personal lens, offering yet another possible reading of the material. The Skeleton version, along with its Italic companion, will be the first step in this continued exploration, after which I'll consider how to give shape and voice to that elusive "gray zone."

venetian de aetna engraver

In an age when the vernacular was still struggling to assert its dignity alongside Latin, this was a declaration of enormous cultural significance.

Proofsheet of
Clemens Skeleton cut.

Inside this space, Clemens positions itself as a post-gothic type family, situated between Gothic Rotunda and Humanist form, as a personal synthesis of a transitional moment.

This project has opened my eyes to the many ways one can approach typography, and how any resource, whether historical or contemporary, can inspire different design methodologies while leaving room for personal interpretation and creative exploration.

It has taught me the value of self-criticism as a tool for growth and clarified my desire to dive deeper into historical research, both as a design resource and as a field of study worth sharing with others.

Clemens

A Venetian Post-Gothic
Pre-Jensonian
Proto Roman
Fere-Humanistic
Hybrid Type Family.

Between Gothic Rotunda
and Humanist letterforms.

As this chapter comes to a close, I want to thank the people who made it possible.

My teachers, remarkable individuals who happen to also be extraordinary educators. Sébastien Morlighem, a walking encyclopedia of typography, for guiding me through the most critical phases of this process. Patrick Doan, whose energy and optimism constantly pushed me to reach further, always with genuine enthusiasm. Hugues Gentile, who challenged me at every review to question my decisions, work with precision, and “*trust the process*”.

To Frederik Berlaen, Frank Grießhammer, Hélène Marian, and Sarah Kremer, for your invaluable insights, both technical and human.

To my classmates and colleagues, whose critiques and conversations made this journey far richer and all my friends who have been with me on this journey.

My deepest thanks go to Caterina Santullo, the teacher who first sparked my passion for this craft. The enthusiasm you shared during those few months in Turin left a lasting mark, and as I complete this first chapter in type design, I feel compelled to acknowledge your influence.

To my family, who made this incredible journey possible and who have always believed in my abilities, supported me, and cheered me on.

To Antonella, a special person, who welcomed me with her gentleness and supported me throughout this journey.

With gratitude,
Patrick

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Clemens Type Family

Patrick Ometto

EsadType 2024-26

Set in Clemens Text and Clemens Poster

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