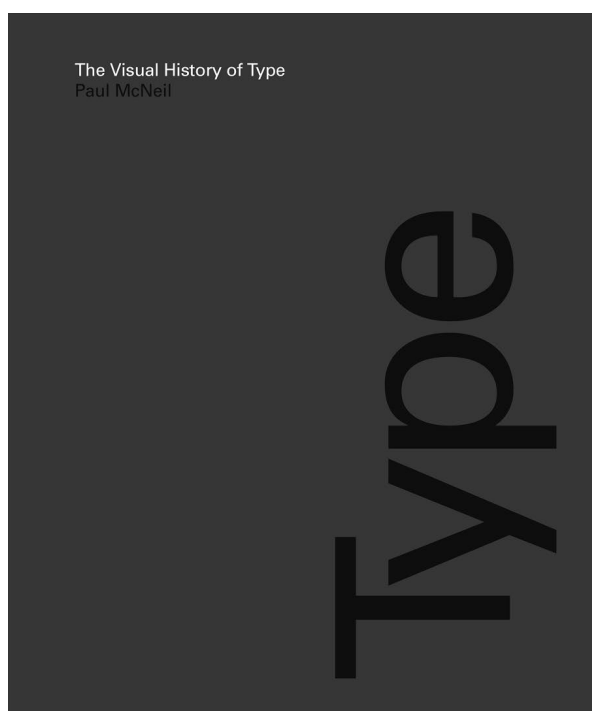


The Visual History of Type

by Paul McNeil. Laurence King Publishing, September 2017. 672 p. ill. ISBN 9781780679761 (h/c), \$85.00.

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Paul McNeil, co-founder of MuirMcNeil Design Systems and senior lecturer in typography at the London College of Communication, compiles examples of over 320 typefaces in this survey for graphic designers, students, and general readers interested in the history of type. The book focuses on Europe and the United States and is divided into seven chronological sections, each with a one-page introduction: 1450-, 1650-, 1800-, 1900-, 1950-, 1980-, and 2000-. While the chronology does cover over 500 years of history, opening with Gutenberg's Bastarda (1454) and closing with Sandrine Nugue's Infini (2015), it preferences twentieth- and twenty-first-century typefaces. Fewer than eighty examples date before 1900, and more specimens from 2008 are included than those representing the entire seventeenth century. Nevertheless, the array

of examples gives readers plenty of material to situate themselves in the survey.

Each typeface is described on a two-page spread with a few marginal paragraphs contextualizing the design of the face, but more strikingly, most of the page consists of beautiful color facsimiles of publications using the face or specimen pages. The analytical entries begin with a descriptive table offering key information: name of face, categorization (serif, sans serif, script, or blackletter), keywords, technology (letterpress, digital, etc.), first publication date, originator of typeface, original publisher, and publication country. This section is followed by a tabular summary of distinctive characteristics of the face in general as well as unique letters. McNeil provides an abbreviated alphabet line under this table where one might

prefer a full alphabet line; the entry for Bremer Antiqua notes the short tail on “Q,” but neither the alphabet line nor the specimen pages show an example of that Q. Following this alphabet line is a brief list of other typefaces that either influenced or were influenced by the face being discussed. The sheer number of connections to other faces that were not pictured in the book gives one an idea of the breadth of history to explore beyond this text. Brief notes on the availability of the typefaces in digital format at the time of printing are also provided, varying in specificity from individual foundries to “widely available.”

The book is sturdily bound with back matter containing a glossary of about 100 commonly used typographical terms as well as a further reading section including books on type history, type monographs, typography, and printing and design. The index is divided into sections covering typefaces, type designers, and foundries and publishers. Libraries with a focus on design, typography, or history of the book will find this volume to be an invaluable resource in their collections.