French type foundries in the twentieth century

Causes and consequences of their demise

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Abstract

This dissertation recounts the evolution of French type design throughout the twentieth century, in an attempt to understand what caused its gradual weakening and the eventual demise of the industry in the 1970s. The study focuses on the activity of the French foundries and the manufacturing of type in France during the last hundred years.

The first part gives an overview of the policies followed by the type foundries in the first half of the twentieth century. It shows how the French type design industry started to decline because it ignored the threat of hot metal, and developed ideas apart from the modernism flourishing in the rest of Europe during this period. In the second part, the period of prosperity that followed the Second World War is analysed. The initiatives undertaken by a hard-core of personalities to renew the type design scene and cultivate an awareness of typography are highlighted; this review is followed by an attempt to understand the sudden closure of the French foundries in the 1970s. In the third part, the consequences of this demise are studied: the slack period that followed the closure of the foundries, as well as the actions undertaken in the 1980s to establish a French education in type design. The study finishes with an appraisal of the influence of digital technologies and the internet on the French practice of type design.

"The truer and most surprising case of marginality in twentieth-century typography is that of France. In both broad streams – traditional and modern – it is hard to find more than isolated contributions from France".
R. Kinross, *Modern Typography* p. 97

"La France est plus souvent citée pour sa gastronomie que pour ses livres sur la typographie!"
"France is mentioned more often for its gastronomy than for its books about typography!"
Jean-François Porchez, *Type* p.63

Introduction

From 1500 to 1800, France played a key-role in the history of type design through the whole Western world. Garamond, Granjon, Fournier and Didot are a selection of the French figures who played a major part in this history. However, the French contribution became much more sporadic in the twentieth century, and one can observe that French type designers are scarce on the contemporary international scene.

In order to understand what led the country into this situation, this dissertation gives an overview of French type design in the twentieth century. This period saw great disruptions in the way type is designed and distributed; in order to understand the gradual weakening of the industry, it is important first to understand how the French designers and type-founders reacted to successive technological shifts.Therefore, attention is paid to the production of type, and the study especially focuses on the activity of the French foundries.

The dissertation is divided into three chronological parts. The first chapter is dedicated to the period 1900-1950; it shows how French type founders dealt with the arrival of hot metal typesetting machines, and compares the ideas developing in France during this period to the ones spreading abroad. The second chapter focuses on the period following the Second World War; the initiatives undertaken to relaunch the production of typefaces in France during the 1950s and 1960s are analyzed, as well as the sudden demise of the French type foundries in the 1970s. The third part gives an overview of the French activity of type design from this demise onwards; it focuses especially on the establishment of a type design education, and on the influence of digital technologies and the world wide web on type design practice.

This dissertation should not be considered an exhaustive review of the French output during the last century. It is an attempt to understand the evolution of French type design throughout this period by highlighting key-events and people. It has been conceived as a first step toward an understanding of the recent history of type design in France, and will hopefully lead to further research on the subject.

Note: Quotes originally in French were translated by the author, unless otherwise specified. The original French text is given in the footnotes.

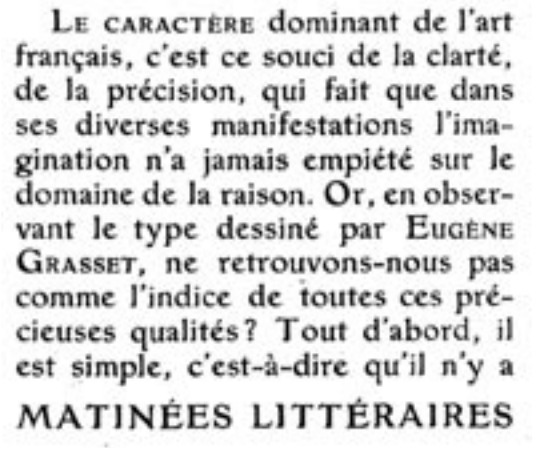
1. 1900-1950 : first signs of a decline

1.1 Hot metal: a missed opportunity

a. The rise of the Peignot foundry

Nineteenth-century typography was dominated by two major movements in French type design: the Didot style, which had emerged during the Revolutionary period, remained popular throughout the nineteenth century; the Elzevier typefaces were widely used, as they illustrated the Romantic Movement's desire to return to the humanistic letterforms of the Renaissance. The French printing industry was shared between these two trends until the end of the century. But in the 1890s, the Art Nouveau movement started to spread in France, and a young man called Georges Peignot saw it as an opportunity to give French type design a new direction. Georges Peignot was the son of Gustave Peignot, who had bought a little foundry in Paris in the 1860s. During the following decades, Peignot diversified his activities and bought out other collections of typefaces, until the foundry had acquired a significant size by the beginning of the twentieth century. With the death of Gustave Peignot in 1899, his sons took on the direction of the firm[1], including Georges. In the late 1890s, Georges Peignot commissioned the artist Eugène Grasset to design a typeface. Named Grasset, it was released in 1897 by the Peignot foundry (fig.1). Very much a member of the artistic milieu, Georges Peignot commissioned a few years later another Art Nouveau artist, George Auriol, to design a series of typefaces: Auriol, Française Légère, Auriol Labeur (fig.2), Française Allongée, Auriol Champlevé and the Robur series appeared between 1901 and 1907. All these creations were ground breaking projects and saw great success at the time. They contributed to the expansion of the Peignot's business, which became the major foundry and retained this position until its closure in 1974. In 1912, Georges Peignot instigated the creation of Cochin (fig.3). Again, Cochin became very popular among French typographers, and remained a best-seller even after the first World War.

1. Charles Peignot. 'Les Peignot: Georges, Charles' p.61



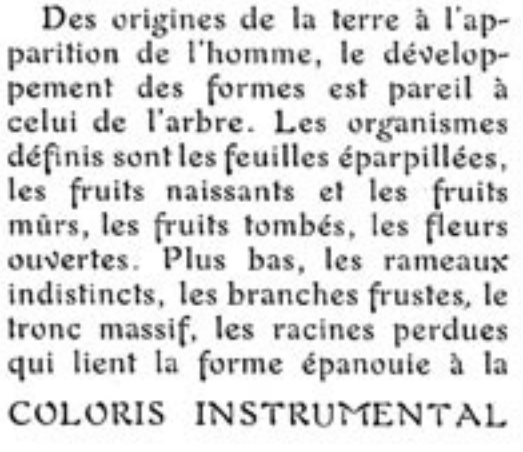


Fig.1 (left) Grasset, designed by Eugène Grasset and released in 1897 (12 pt)
Fig.2 (right) Auriol Labeur, designed by George Auriol, released in 1904 (12 pt)

Fig.3 Cochin is a typeface inspired by alphabets used in the eighteenth century by Nicolas Cochin and Moreau le Jeune to caption their illustrations (full size)

b. Monotype and Linotype composing machines

The success of the Peignot foundry seemed assured due to Georges Peignot's creativity and artistic flair. But whereas the French type-founders were focusing on designing typefaces for hand setting, the real revolution came from abroad: the USA, England and Germany were offering new, mechanical processes of typesetting. As the historian René Ponot remarked, many systems for the rapid casting of type had been invented from the beginning of the 19th century, and some of them were French[1]. But the concept became commercially viable only in 1885 with the mechanising of punch-cutting and typesetting[2]. In 1886 Mergenthaler invented the Linotype casting machine, and one year later, Talbot Lanston created the Monotype system. The first Linotype casting machine was installed in France for newspaper setting in 1898,[3] and progressively Linotype and Monotype hot-metal typecasting systems reached the French market.

The only foundry able to compete would have been the Peignot's. It was indeed the only firm at the time that had the money and the influence to create a French mechanical composing system. But as Charles Peignot explained later, his father Georges did not see hot metal as a threat: "Before 1914, mechanical composition provided a very ugly ordinary typography, without any quality. He did not foresee the huge progress that Linotype and Monotype later made and the threat they posed to handsetting."[4] Georges Peignot's decision to ignore hot metal was strengthened by the success of Cochin at the time.

After the First World War, France needed to reconstruct. This period was a prosperous one for the foundries as many printing houses needed to entirely rebuild their collections of typefaces. "The typefaces were sold by founts of 300, 400, 500 kg, for each body!"[5]; this euphoria gave the French foundries another reason not to worry about the growing success of hot metal. But soon, Linotype and Monotype's composing systems improved and their machines became increasingly influential in the European market. "Competing with mechanical composition became harder and harder" confessed Charles Peignot[6]. This was especially the case after the 1929 stock-market crash and during the Second World War, when printers needed to print cheaply and fast. When using hot metal, printers had no other alternative than the typefaces available on the Linotype and Monotype machines: many revivals such as Bodoni, Garamond, Baskerville, Fournier, Bembo and a few original designs like Gill Sans (designed by Eric Gill for Monotype, released in 1928).

1. René Ponot, 'Les années trente et l'innovation typographique française' p.26

2. Walter Tracy, *Letters of credit* p.35

3. http://www.linotype.com/49-19653/18861899.html

4. "Avant 1914, la composition mécanique ne donnait qu'une typographie ordinaire fort laide et sans aucune qualité. Il n'envisageait pas les progrès énormes que Linotype et Monotype firent par la suite et qui vinrent menacer la composition manuelle."Charles Peignot, 'Deberny & Peignot: la belle époque de la typographie' p.43

5. "Les caractères mobiles se vendaient par fontes de trois cents, quatre cents, cinq cents kilos, par corps!" Charles Peignot, 'Deberny & Peignot: la belle époque de la typographie' p.42

6. "la concurrence de la composition mécanique se fit de plus en plus durement sentir" Charles Peignot, 'Deberny & Peignot: la belle époque de la typographie' p.43

c. The French hold on display faces

All the designs listed above were mainly intended for long texts; consequently, the French foundries focused on producing display faces. This was not seen as a bad choice at the time but rather a wise direction to take. Indeed, the growing demand from advertising for eye-catching, display faces made for a profitable market for the foundries. Charles Peignot released Bifur in 1928, a titling face designed by Cassandre. Bifur was not a commercial success but still remains "one of the most prestigious jewels of French type design"[1] (fig.4). In the 1930s, cursive faces became very popular in the advertising world: the FTF launched Stylo, the Olive foundry in Marseille released Banville, and Deberny & Peignot Scribe by Marcel Jacno (fig.5)[2].

But display faces did not remain the exclusive market of the French foundries for long. The Ludlow hot-metal typecaster for headlines soon appeared as a direct competitor, and from 1928, Monotype released a similar machine able to cast big sizes of type[3]. In fact, the creation of new display faces was comforting the French foundries with "the illusion of an assured survival"[4]. By focusing on this branch they constantly reduced their market – until it finally became too risky to invest time and money in the design of a new text typeface.

1. "l'un des plus prestigieux fleurons de la création typographique française" René Ponot, 'Les années trente et l'innovation typographique française' p.22

2. René Ponot 'Les années trente et l'innovation typographique française' pp.24–25

3. Alan Marshall, *Du plomb à la lumière* p.197

4. "l'illusion d'une survie assurée" René Ponot 'Les années trente et l'innovation typographique française' p.27

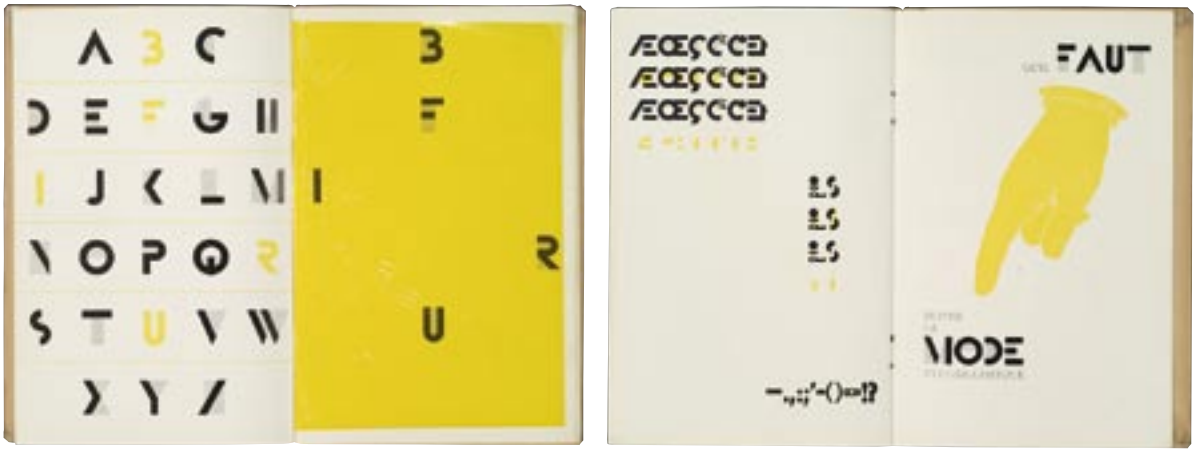


Fig.4 (top) Bifur, a display face designed by Cassandre, especially intended for advertising (25% of original size)
Fig.5 (bottom) Scribe, by Marcel Jacno, a "modern" script face designed for advertising (original size)

1.2. French recycling versus European Modernism

a. Divertissements typographiques

In the 1920s, two important mergers happened: in 1921 the five foundries Chaix, Marcou, Durey, Huart and Saling grouped under the name of Fonderie Typographique Française, also known as the FTF. Two years later, the Peignot foundry merged with the firm Girard et Cie, to become the famous Deberny & Peignot foundry[1]. One of the main consequences of these mergers was to bring together large and prestigious stocks of typefaces. Facing such massive collections, the temptation was great for the foundries to "recycle" by bringing them back into fashion. This was precisely Charles Peignot's idea when he released Sphinx in 1924, "an old typeface for advertising that [he] judged worthwhile"[2]. Although the typeface was old, Peignot injected a new life into it by designing a very modern specimen booklet (fig.6). A few years later, Peignot stayed with this approach and comissioned Maximilien Vox[3] to design a new publication for the foundry. The *Divertissements typographiques* ('typographic entertainment') was a bi-annual publication demonstrating to the printers some modern layouts using old faces (fig.7). As Vox explained, "My mission was to design a series of example artworks – renewing, for lack of new typefaces, the way of using them"[4]. The first edition of the *Divertissements typographiques* was published at the automn 1928 and each publication was a great example of Vox's creativity and inventiveness. It remained a source of inspiration for French printers for many years.

Fig.6 Page from Sphinx specimen booklet (25% from original size)

Fig. 7 and 8 Covers of the Divertissements typographiques *designed by Maximilen Vox for the Peignot foundry (25%)*

b. European modernism

While the French were focused on bringing back into fashion their old collections, their European neighbours were moving forward. Modernist typography was flourishing in the USSR, Netherlands, Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary[5]. At the Bauhaus – which opened its doors in 1919 – the teaching was cross-disciplinary, including for example architecture, industrial design and graphic design. Soon, type design and typography found their place as well. In 1925, Jan Tschichold wrote his *Elementare Typografie*, announcing a modern typography that had great impact on the Western design

1. More details about the merge of the two foundries can be found in the Specimen Général of the Deberny & Peignot foundry, published around 1930

2. "C'était un vieux caractère de publicité que je trouvais valable" Charles Peignot, 'Les Peignots: Georges, Charles' p.72

3.Vox was among other activities a book designer, illustrator, journalist and publisher

4. "J'eus donc pour mission de produire une suite de pièces de démonstration – renouvelant, à défaut des caractères, la façon d'employer ceux-ci..." Fernand Baudin, *le Dossier Vox* p.127

5.The development of these movements is outside the scope of this dissertation, but more information can be found in Herbert Spencer, *Pioneers of Modern Typography*

world. Simultaneously, Herbert Bayer developed new theories about type (fig.9). This period saw the appearance of new, geometric sanserif typefaces such as Paul Renner's Futura. Released by the German foundry Bauer in 1927, it is one of the most successful applications of the precepts of the Bauhaus to type design, and embodies the modernist spirit.

In England, type design was taken in another direction under the influence of Edward Johnston, who promoted a return to calligraphy and lettering. People like Stanley Morison and Eric Gill were central to this movement. The best example of this is Gill Sans, another sanserif, although more humanistic than the German geometric sanserifs (fig.10).

Compared to this international effervescence, France seemed very quiet. As Michel Wlassikoff points out: "On the eve of the 1925 International Exhibition in Paris, French typography was not flourishing. Although poster design was progressing significantly, type design, book design and typography at large were in an alarming state of stagnation"[1]. As the influence of modernism slowly reached France, the need for a new sanserif such became more and more pressing. The reaction came from the Deberny & Peignot foundry, which decided to buy the rights for Futura. Although the majority of the directors of the Deberny & Peignot foundry did not understand the difference between Paul Renner's design and the sanserifs of the end of the 19th century, Maximilien Vox put pressure to release it[2]. Futura was finally launched by Deberny & Peignot in 1929 under the name "Europe", and saw great success amongst the French printers (fig.11). Facing such stiff competition, other foundries soon released their own geometric sanserifs, such as Apollo from the FTF and Simplex from the Olive foundry[3].

1. "La création typographique en France à la veille de l'Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs de 1925 à Paris n'est guère florissante. En dehors de l'affiche qui connaît des avancées significatives, la conception de caractères, la mise en pages du livre et des imprimés en général sont dans un état de stagnation alarmant"Michel Wlassikoff, *Histoire du graphisme en France* p.68

2. He actually threatened to leave the board of directors if his suggestion was not adopted

3.The date and the name of the author are not known for these typefaces

Nous ne lisons pas les lettres, mais les groupes

Fig.9 (top left) Bayer's alphabet, including lowercase letters only (48 pt.)
Fig 10 (bottom left) Gill Sans, designed by Eric Gill fo Monotype (36 pt.)
Fig 11 (right) Europe specimen booklet, by Deberny & Peignot (25% from original size)

c. Peignot and Cassandre

In the 1930s, probably motivated by the success of Futura and the spread of modernist ideas in France, Peignot commissioned a new typeface from his friend Cassandre, who had already created Bifur. Whereas Bayer's theories were preaching for an alphabet including lowercase letters only, Cassandre was doing the complete opposite with his new design (fig.12); he appended ascenders and descenders to capitals, thus getting rid of traditional minuscules. In fact, Cassandre had found inspiration in the uncial letterforms of the ninth century, an intermediary stage between capitals and lowercase. The typeface, named Peignot, was launched with great fuss at the 1937 International Exhibition and was used for the signage. In the section for the graphic industries, a whole room was dedicated to an exhibition on the history of writing and type design. Organized by Charles Peignot the man, the display ended with Peignot the typeface, as the ultimate example of modernity. This period was described by Charles Peignot as the "great age" of his foundry[1]. But like Bifur, Peignot was not particularly successful among French printers. Too "conceptual" and far away from their common needs, they bought only the uppercase of the Peignot and ignored the hybrid lowercase; and what Charles Peignot had intended as a modern text typeface was turned into another display face[2].

Fig.12 Peignot by Cassandre, uppercase and lowercase letters (full size)

1.3 A matter of class

The moderate success of Bifur and Peignot among French printers reveals the policy of the Deberny & Peignot foundry at the time. On one hand, Charles Peignot and Maximilien Vox were shaking up French typography; they were highly cultured, creative and passionate, and did not hesitate to take risks for the renewal of French type design. But on the other hand, Peignot and Vox were very involved in the Parisian bourgeoisie, and their preoccupations were

1. "une grande époque" Charles Peignot, 'Deberny & Peignot, la belle époque de la typographie' p.45

2. Michel Wlassikoff, *Histoire du graphisme en France* p.111

quite removed from the working class printers'. "snobs, we both were, to the core" admitted Vox[1]. Charles Peignot was the heir to the family's prosperous foundry, and Vox belonged to Protestant high society[2]. Their culture as well as their contacts certainly lead them to create high quality design, often at the forefront of fashion[3]; but by offering upmarket solutions, they were somewhat neglecting the majority of the French audience.

The Olive foundry, which had remained quite unobtrusive until then, took advantage of Peignot's policy. Very little is known about the foundry's activity before the 1940s[4]. Based in Marseille, the business expanded enormously during the Second World War. Directed by Marcel Olive, it benefited from its location in the France Libre, while Deberny & Peignot were stuck in Paris under the occupation. Soon, the Olive foundry sent its commercial staff on the road to determine the real needs of the small printers scattered accross French soil. This was a radically different policy than Deberny & Peignot – which instead was working for the great printing houses – and turned out to be a succesfull one for the Olive foundry; indeed, the small printers were still setting type manually, as they could not afford the expensive mechanical composing machines. This was reinforced by the fact that their main activity consisted of jobbing printing[5].

The period of growth of the Olive foundry in the 1940s corresponded with the hiring of Roger Excoffon. His first typeface, Chambord, was released in 1945 (fig.13); the capitals shared some similarities with Peignot's, but the lowercase included proper minuscules. As Ponot described it, "Chambord was less nobly ambitious than Peignot, but indisputably more pragmatic"[6]. Therefore, the typeface became very popular, and Excoffon succeeded where Cassandre failed. Charles Peignot considered Chambord as a plagiary of Peignot, as John Dreyfus related: "when he [Charles Peignot] suggested to Excoffon that the similarity between Chambord and Touraine was a little too close for comfort, Excoffon tried to set Peignot's mind at rest by assuring him that he had kept Cassandre's design in front of him all the time he was working on Chambord – 'just to make sure that he didn't copy a single letter'"[7]. Peignot retaliated by ordering a new version of Cassandre's design, with proper minuscules for the most contested ones. But this new Peignot, renamed Touraine and released in 1947, could not compete with the already successful Chambord. In the 1950s and 1960s, Excoffon's designs for the Olive foundry kept seeing success and became the favourite typefaces of the "ordinary people" (see chapter 2.2.b).

1. "Snobs, nous l'étions tous les deux jusqu'à l'os" Fernand Baudin, *Le Dossier Vox* p.127

2. Maximilien Vox's real name was Samuel William Théodore Monod; he belonged to the Monod family, "a great Protestant French family, very active in the industrial milieu, one on the hundred French families that owned everything" J-F Porchez, interviewed by the author

3. A good example of Peignot's high-standards is the publication *Arts et Métiers Graphiques*, launched in 1927. Published until 1939, it remains the only reference about the French graphic industry during this period. More information can be found on Amelia Hugill-Fontanel's website [http://ellie.rit.edu:1213/introduction.htm].

4. Victoria Chalard, *Roger Excoffon's typefaces* p.13

5. Jean-François Porchez, interviewed by the author

6. "C'était moins noblement ambitieux que le Peignot Cassandre mais indiscutablement plus pragmatique" René Ponot, 'Les années trente et l'innovation typographique française' p.23

7. John Dreyfus, 'The Speed and Grace of Roger Excoffon'

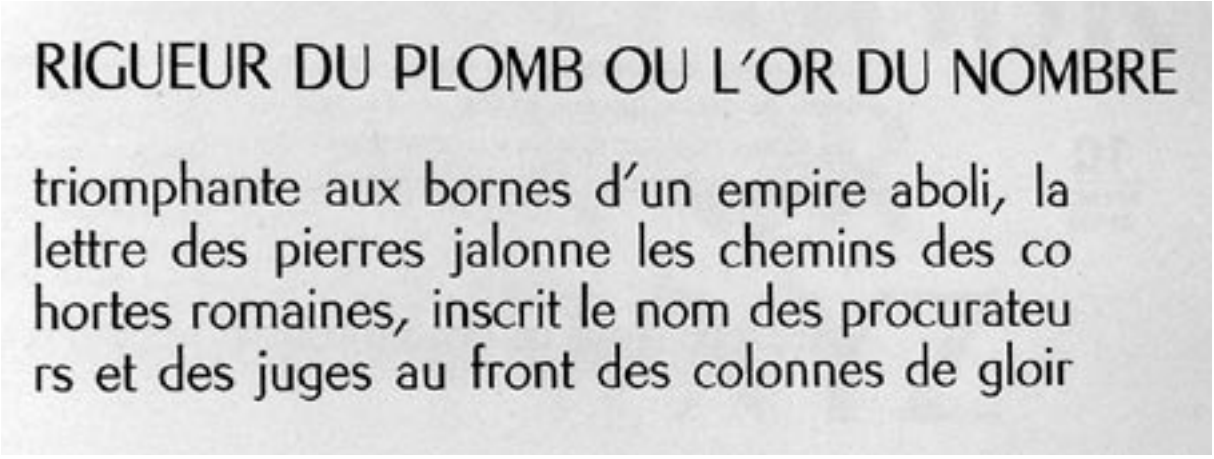


Fig.13 Chambord, designed by Excoffon and released by the Olive foundry in 1945 (full size)

The apparent health displayed by the French industry of type design during the first half of the century was in fact a growing illusion. By making the choice to ignore the threat of hot metal, and by isolating themselves from the modernism flourishing in the rest of the Western World, the French type founders gradually lost their influence, not only on the international market, but also within the country.

2. Les Trente Glorieuses of French type design

"Les Trente Glorieuses"(the thirty glorious years) is the designation used by the French economist Jean Fourastié[1] to describe the years of prosperity that followed the Second World War in France. This period is characterized in particular by unbroken economic growth, rising living standards, rapid urbanisation and an explosion of the birth rate. Les Trente Glorieuses lasted roughly three decades; in fact, it took a few years for France to recover from the devastation of the war, and the economy only really started prospering in the early 1950s. The end of the Trente Glorieuse is generally associated with the two oil crises of 1973 and 1979 and the economic downturn they triggered.

As for many other branches of industry, it was a favourable time to the expansion of the French type foundries, and a variety of new initiatives and designs flourished.

2.1 Phototypesetting: an attempt to catch up

a. Deberny & Peignot and the Lumitype

As explained earlier, the missed opportunity of hot metal had great consequences for the French typographic landscape, which was increasingly constrained to producing display faces. But soon the type industry was shaken by the arrival of another technology: phototypesetting. The idea of using photographic methods to set texts can be traced as far back as the 1870s – that is to say, ten years before the arrival of Linotype machines on the US market. But these early attempts were actually closer to photo-engraving process, and did not really consider the problem of assembling letters nor of justifying lines[2]. Many other moves in this direction have been recorded throughout the first part of the twentieth century, some of them very promising; but for various reasons, none passed the stage of prototype. In the early 1950s, the first generation of phototypesetting machines finally entered the market. These machines had in common the fact they "were adapted from hot metal models and worked as nearly as possible on the same principles"[3]. In fact, the adaptation from mechanical composing machines was only an intermediate stage, and rapidly new systems surpassed this first generation of phototypesetters. Engineers at the time benefited from the substantial progress made during the Second World War in various fields, including electronics and optics. This research had created a "huge pool of ideas and technologies" that would be exploited for civilian purposes during almost twenty years after the war[4]. Applied to phototypesetting, these advances led to what is called the second generation of phototypesetters. As Andrew Boag explains[5]:"It's generally held that second generation machines either used a stroboscopic light which flashed through a constantly moving disc of photographic character images, or contained a light source which flashed light through more than one photographic character image on a stationary grid and additionally utilized a moving shutter to cover the character images which were not required".

1. Jean Fourastié, *Les Trente Glorieuses, ou la Révolution invisible de 1946 à 1975*

2. Alan Marshall, 'Les origines de la photocomposition moderne' p.59

3. John Seybold, *The world of digital typesetting*, p.112

4. "un réservoir d'idées et de techniques" Alan Marshall, 'Les origines de la photocomposition moderne' p.64

5. Andrew Boag, 'Monotype and phototypesetting' p.57

Simple binary calculation was also involved in many second generation phototypesetters.

The first machine of this kind was invented by the two French engineers René Higonnet and Louis Moyroud. Their first patent, involving a system with two moving discs, was taken out in 1944; a few months later they finalized their prototype[1]. Although the invention immediately gained the interest of French professionals, the poor economic health of the French industries right after the war did not allow for any serious investment. Higonnet, who had partly studied in the United States and spoke fluent English, decided therefore to look for investors in America.

This path proved to be much more successful; although it happened to be a long and laborious business, most of the development of the machine took place in the US and was managed by the firm Photon[2]. The first commercial model, named Lumitype-Photon, was eventually installed in America in 1954.

In the meantime, the question of a release of the machine on the European market was still on hold. As mentioned above, the Lumitype had drawn the attention of a few French industrialists from the early days. Among them, Charles Peignot appeared to be particularly enthusiastic. In fact, he recalled painfully his father's mistake over mechanical composing systems, and did not want to reproduce the same error[3]. Peignot was also conscious of the dangers that phototypesetting represented for the type industry at large. As the defender of fine typography, he was suspicious of the quality offered by early phototypesetters, and was keen on providing to the French market a high-standard machine. Maybe more important to him was the danger that the photographic process represented; it was an easy means to reproduce and plagiarize type-founders catalogues. Peignot felt very strongly about this issue, which even brought him to create the Association Typographique Internationale a few years later (see chapter 2.2.d). Getting involved in the development of the Lumitype was the opportunity to bring this technology under control and a chance to stimulate more business for the foundry. This approach was radically different from the American firm Photon's, which was interested above all in the sales of the Lumitype, and saw typefaces as only a "tool", necessary to the good working order of the machine[4].

Peignot tried to take part in Higonnet and Moyroud's project as early as possible. In 1950, he flew to the US to meet the two inventors and discuss a potential release of the machine on the European market by the Deberny & Peignot foundry. After years of discussion and negotiations, the construction of a series for the French market started in 1954 in partnership with Deberny & Peignot, and the first machine was presented in Paris the same year.

b. Frutiger and Univers

In 1952, simultaneous with the negotiations about the Lumitype, Charles Peignot hired the Swiss type designer Adrian Frutiger to work for the foundry. Although the phototypesetting machine was on its way, Frutiger's first designs Président, Méridien (fig.14) and Ondine (fig.15) were intended for metal type (the latter would be adapted to phototypesetting in the 1960s). From 1953, he was asked to adapt some existing typefaces for the Lumitype, and reworked the most popular typefaces such as Garamond, Baskerville, Clarendon, etc. His task mainly consisted of modifying the existing designs in order to prevent any optical distortion, as could often happen with phototypesetters[5]. When the foundry decided to adapt Europe – that is, Paul Renner's Futura– Frutiger suggested instead to design a new, original sanserif. In fact, he had already started to work on such a typeface during his studies in Zurich[6] and saw this as a good opportunity to develop his project.

Moving away from the traditional triptych regular/italic/bold, Frutiger imagined a family composed of 21 variants (fig.16). The concept of an

1. Alan Marshall, 'Les origines de la photocomposition moderne' p.65

2. A detailed history of the development of the Lumitype can be found in Alan Marshall's thesis, *Du plomb à la lumière* (see bibliography)

3. Charles Peignot, 'Deberny & Peignot: la belle époque de la typographie' p.51

4.Alan Marshall, *Du plomb à la lumière* p.251

5.Alan Marshall, *Du plomb à la lumière* p.253

6. Philippe Guérin & Ludovic Halphen, 'Adrian Frutiger' p.39

Fig. 14 (top left) Specimen booklet of Méridien by Adrian Frutiger (25% of original size)
Fig.15 (top right) Ondine specimen booklet (25% of original size)
Fig.16 (bottom) Univers grid – here an early example of the grid, when the typeface was still called Monde (50%)

"extended family" was particularly appropriate to the Lumitype, which could contain 16 alphabets on the same disc (as a comparison, the Linotype hot metal composing system could contain only three). But after the lack of success encountered by Bifur and Peignot before the war, Charles Peignot was hesitant toward the idea of a new design. Finally, he let himself be convinced by Frutiger's arguments: a big family would be a good opportunity for the printers to renew their stock of typefaces after the war – this could also prove lucrative for the foundry. If the family was cleverly conceived, it could be used for a wide range of applications, both for display and text[1]. It corresponded also with the emergence of the "Swiss style", whose followers were very keen on sanserif typefaces other than Futura. This period turned out to be profitable for new sanserifs, as proved by the success few years later of Neue Haas Grotesque (later known as Helvetica), a typeface inspired by Akzidenz Grotesk and designed by Max Miedinger for the Haas Foundry in Switzerland in 1957[2].

Frutiger's new design eventually started in 1954. First called Monde, the type family was finally named Univers, as it was intended to work universally. Frutiger hired four other designers, including Ladislas Mandel, to help him develop the numerous variants[3]. At the end, twenty of the twenty-one versions that had been planned for Univers were designed – the condensed ultralight being too illegible to be successfully marketed.

Part of the uniqueness of Univers was that it was conceived for three generations of typesetting: handsetting, hot metal and phototypesetting. To make the typeface available on mechanical composing machines, Peignot arranged a partnership with Monotype through their typographic advisor John Dreyfus in 1957. In Peignot's own words, he "played a very dangerous game" by negotiating with the British firm[4] . Indeed, it seemed absurd to sell to Monotype a design that they would use to compete. But as Peignot explained, "Monotype has been as moral as possible [...] and finally it is Univers that has benefited [...] from the international renown of Monotype"[5]. Launched in 1957, Univers became very popular worldwide, and marked the beginning of Frutiger's prolific and successful international career.

2.2 The golden age of French display faces

a. Fonderie Typographique Française and the Latin school

While Frutiger was working on a universal alphabet in the pure Swiss style, Maximilien Vox was campaigning for the restoration of a Latin tradition in French type design. The way had already been opened in 1930 by Paul Iribe; in a text called *Choix* ('Choice') Iribe was urging the designers to defend the "French Arabesque" versus the "European Cube"[6], and denounced the standardization praised by German modernism. Twenty years later, Vox pursued the same idea when he published his article entitled *Pour une graphie latine* ('for a Latin script'). In this text, Vox was preaching in favour of the "renewal of the Latin letter", although he remained quite evasive on the precise orientation this latinity should take. He simply described it as "a certain way of being, living, thinking – and writing"[7].

The Fonderie Typographique Française became the main promoter of Vox's aspirations, and gathered a number of designers under the banner of the "new School of Graphic Arts in Paris"[8]: Enric Crous-Vidal, Joan Trochut-Blanchard (both Spaniards who emigrated to France), René Ponot and Louis Ferrand were its main proponents. Vox vested great hopes in Enric Crous-Vidal, art director of the FTF and leader of the movement. In 1952, the FTF released his typeface Paris (fig.17), "under the elegant sign of the Latin tradition"[9]. Trochut-Blanchard's Muriel (fig.18), released few months later, was similarly described as "a typically latin design" displaying "an elegance and femininity

1. Alan Marshall, *Du Plomb à la lumière* p.254

2.Lewis Blackwell, *Typo du 20e siècle* p.107

3. Mandel's later role in French type design is discussed in chapter 3.1

4. "J'ai joué un jeu très dangereux, qui m'a souvent empêché de dormir" Charles Peignot, 'Deberny & Peignot: la belle époque de la typographie' p.49

5. "la Monotype a été aussi correcte qu'il était possible de l'être [...] et c'est finalement l'Univers qui a profité [...] de la renommée mondiale de la Monotype" Charles Peignot, 'Deberny & Peignot: la belle époque de la typographie'p.51

6. "L'arabesque France and "le cube Europe" Paul Iribe, *Choix*

7. "le renouveau de la lettre latine", "un certain art d'être, de vivre, de penser – et d'écrire" Fernand Baudin, *le Dossier Vox* p.245

8. "Nouvelle école graphique de Paris" Fernand Baudin, *Le Dossier Vox* p.247

9. "sous le signe élégant de la tradition latine" Michel Wlassikoff, *Histoire du graphisme en France* p.150

10."une écriture de conception typiquement latine", "une élégance et une féminité d'inspiration méditéranéenne" advertising published by the FTF in *Caractère*, Dec.1952

of mediterranean inspiration"[10]. Facing the variety of designs coming out of this new School, it seems difficult to draw out a single definition. However, these typefaces have in common their refusal of monolinear letters, so symbolic of modernism and the Swiss style. Although most of them are sanserif, they carry a strong humanistic heritage with obvious thicks and thins, and a feeling for the cursive flow. Moreover, Muriel was adding itself to the already substantial list of cursive typefaces released by the French foundries throughout the twentieth century, which were so popular in the advertising world. This tendency would be strengthened with Roger Excoffon's typefaces, as shown below.

Despite the fact that the Latin school is hardly known by todays designers, it was significant enough to get some coverage abroad at the time. In 1955, the English-language magazine *World's Press News and Advertiser's Review* published an article entitled 'New French Types' presenting the new School of Graphic Arts in Paris as a "firmly established movement", that had an influence "even beyond the boundaries of France"[1]. The article presented the typefaces Psitt (fig.19) by Ponot, Flash – derived from Paris – by Crous-Vidal (fig.17), and Banco and Mistral by Roger Excoffon (see chapter 2.2.b). Through these designs, Green praised the French designers' "lively imagination" and "revolutionary technique in designing display types"[1]. The Latin school seemed to have a promising future ahead of it.

1. Thomas Green, 'New French Types' p.40

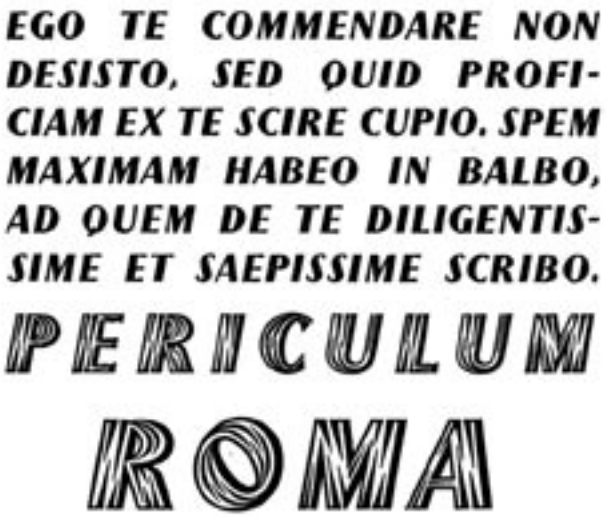


Fig. 17 Paris Gras and Flash by Crous-Vidal for the FTF, 1952 (full size)

Fig. 18 Muriel by Trochut Blanchard for the FTF (75% of original size)

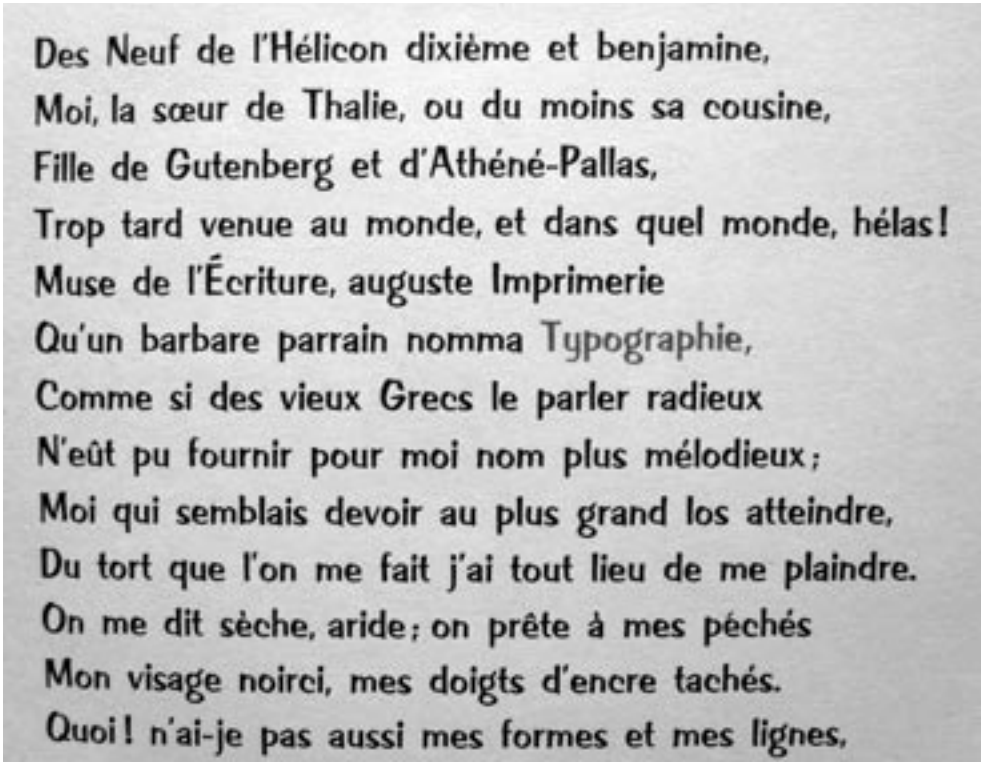


Fig. 19 Psitt by René Ponot for the FTF (full size)

b. Excoffon

When Crous-Vidal wandered from the Latin school into decoration and fashion, Maximilien Vox pinned his hopes onto the designer Roger Excoffon[1]. As mentioned earlier, the gain in influence of the Olive foundry coincided with the hiring of Excoffon as art director, and Chambord (see chapter 1.3) was the first of a long list of successful designs published by the foundry between 1945 and 1966.

Roger Excoffon was presented by Vox as "the man of the claw and the paraph"[2], as most of his typefaces were a demonstration of his preference for expressive gesture. Influenced by an artistic background – he was a painter before becoming a designer – Excoffon admired the work of George Mathieu and Hans Hartung. He was designing typefaces like he was painting, by "handling his paint brushes with tremendous vigour and freedom"[3]. All his typefaces were a new attempt to introduce greater vivacity into French typography, like the display face Banco (1951, fig.20) or the script faces Mistral (fig.22) and Choc (both designed in 1953). Even in the very different designs Diane (1956) and Calypso (1958, fig.21), a similar feeling for gesture and movement is asserted.

Some outstanding text faces also came out of the Olive foundry at this period – Chambord was the first one, as mentioned earlier. In 1952, the young designer François Ganeau designed Vendôme (fig.23) under the supervision of Excoffon, who greatly influenced the design; although it was conceived as a text face, Vendôme's "noticeably forward tilt"[3] led to its use mainly for display and advertising works. Antique Olive (fig.24) was derived from the display face Nord, that Excoffon had designed in 1956 for the French firm Air France. Designed by Excoffon with the help of Jose Mendoza and Gérard Blanchard, Antique Olive was an attempt to create a modern and highly legible sanserif face. Irritated by Univers and Neue Haas Grotesk's evenness, Excoffon emphasized each letter's character, thus aiming to improve legibility and create a distinctive design.

1. Michel Wlassikoff, *Histoire du graphisme en France* p.150

2. "l'homme de la griffe et du paraphe". In French, "griffe" means both claw and signature. Gérard Blanchard, 'Excoffon' p.12

3. John Dreyfus, 'The Speed and Grace of Roger Excoffon' [http://www.itcfonts.com/Ulc/OtherArticles/Excoffon.htm]

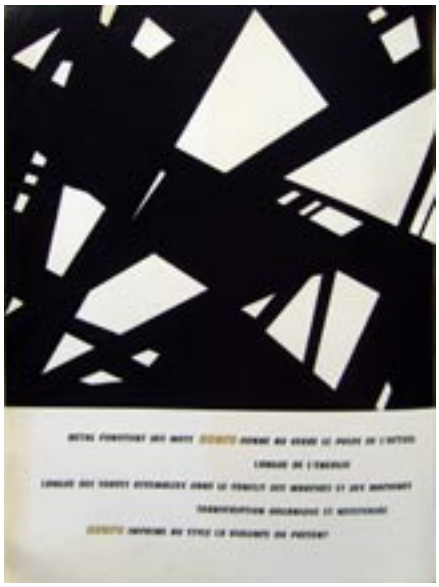


Fig. 20 (left) Banco specimen booklet, by Excoffon for the Olive foundry (25%)
Fig.21 (right) Calypso specimen booklet (25%)

Fig. 22 (left) Mistral specimen booklet (25%)
Fig.23 (right) Vendôme specimen booklet (25%)

Fig. 24 Antique Olive specimen booklet (25%)

Roger Excoffon enjoyed designing the type specimen books for the foundry as well, and greatly contributed to its promotion by offering these attractive publications to the printers, and by suggesting how the typefaces could be used (figs.20 to 24). Later, Excoffon made the most of this talent for promotion by opening his own advertising company. His typefaces were widely used for jobbing printing and advertising, and also became extremely popular for shop signs. To this day, the examples are numerous of store fronts displaying Banco, Mistral or Choc. Gerard Unger even credits Excoffon as being "responsible for the corporate identity of France" for a while[1]. Again, this observation illustrates the difference of marketing between the Olive foundry and Deberny & Peignot: while Peignot was commercialising the expensive Lumitype machine and developing a new, revolutionary type system (Univers), Olive was supplying little printing houses with Excoffon's typefaces along with their "latin" feeling.

Excoffon denied the influence of any school, stating that "any education is a distortion"[2]. He wanted to bring something completely new into typography and certainly succeeded in injecting his very personal and noticeable touch into French type design. However, his body of work did not mark a complete break with the French spirit; as shown earlier, script faces were popular and numerous among French type design in the twentieth century, and a typeface like Mistral was in this tradition. Chambord shared some similarities with Peignot, and Antique Olive can be classified as a humanistic sanserif in the spirit of contemporaneous typefaces like Brasilia and Eras (see below). As a whole, Excoffon's carreer is probably the most successful example of the Latin School lauded by Maximilien Vox.

c. Hollenstein phototypo

As demonstrated above, Vox was certainly the defender of latinity in type design. However, it is interesting to note that the designer he described as his "spritual son"[3] was a Swiss German named Albert Hollenstein. Although Hollenstein himself was not a prolific type designer, his contribution to French typography was significant and deserves to be mentioned here.

A Swiss typographer, Hollenstein moved to France in 1953 at the age of 23. After working for various design studios, he established his own in Paris in 1956. Composed of only three people at the beginning, the Hollenstein Studio grew rapidly to finally include about hundred people in the 1970s[4]. Like Roger Excoffon, Hollenstein was very interested in communication theories and was a skilled advertising creative. The studio was not only specialised in type design but offered a wide range of services from graphic design to audiovisual techniques.

Hollenstein's first contribution to French type design was the creation in 1961 of the 'cours 19', an evening class based in his studio (thus named because it was located 19, rue Germain-Pilon). The course consisted of a "spoken and projected review" led by Gerard Blanchard[5] and was enriched in the following years by type design, photography and branding lessons. The cours 19 never had an official status; it was an open class, during which anybody could contribute to the debate. It was attracting typographers and designers eager to learn about the Swiss theories and the international design scene, and soon became a breeding-ground for talented designers such as Robert Massin[6] and Peter Knapp. Similarly, Hollenstein's importation of typefaces like Helvetica or Cooper Black shattered French habits. Before that, designers did not have any access to these typefaces, except by cutting samples out of foreign magazines. And as Peter Gabor mentioned, without Hollenstein, "we [the French] would maybe have discovered Helvetica with the Macintosh"[7].

Hollenstein also had a great ability to detect and expose talented designers. Numerous examples can be found in the catalogues of typefaces from the

1. Gerard Unger, 'The beer-&-wine border' p. 14

2. "Toute formation est une déformation", Gérard Blanchard, 'Excoffon' p.12

3. "fils spirituel", Françoise Arthaud-Hollenstein, *Albert Hollenstein 1930–1974*, p.5

4. Françoise Arthaud-Hollenstein, *Albert Hollenstein 1930–1974*, p.18

5. Later known as a brilliant historian and semiologist of type design.

6. Massin is a book designer, especially famous for his design of Ionesco's *Cantatrice Chauve*

7. "Peut-être nous n'aurions découvert l'Helvetica qu'avec l'arrivée du Macintosh", Peter Gabor, 'Albert Hollenstein' p.61

Hollenstein studio: names like André Chante (who sometimes signed his designs Andy Song – fig.25), Jean Alessandrini (fig.26) and Jean Larcher are recurring, and the variety of typefaces demonstrates the effervescence and the productivity in type design at the time. Jean Larcher especially was very productive, and his work acknowledged internationally. In 1976, the design magazine *Upper & Lower Case* devoted a highly illustrated article to Larcher's "exciting and unique new alphabets"[1]. Albert Boton, who had started type design under the direction of Frutiger and Mandel at Deberny & Peignot, designed many typefaces for Hollenstein as well (Pharaon, PamPam, Zan – fig.27).

All these typefaces were released under the banner of "Hollenstein Phototypo"– Phototypo standing for phototypesetting – and were designed for photolettering. Most of them were display faces, generally intended for magazine headlines or advertising. Nevertheless, a few text faces did come out of the Hollenstein Studio, like Brasilia (1958 – fig.29) and Eras (the first version of Eras was designed by Boton and Hollenstein in 1963, and later released by ITC – fig.28). Brasilia was officially designed by Albert Hollenstein but in fact, Hollenstein hired Albert Boton to help him in the design of the typeface, and it is difficult to know who is responsible for what in the design. However, it is a good representation of Hollenstein ambivalence; it displays a balance between the Swiss rigour and the French exuberance specific to this period, that both seemed to characterize Hollenstein. The link can also be made between the Latin School mentioned earlier and Hollenstein phototypo, as Brasilia and Eras have a definitively "latin feel" to them[2]. Beyond that, Albert Hollenstein offered to French type design a real awareness of the international design scene.

1. *Upper & Lower Case*, 'Fantastic Alphabets' p.10

2.Jean-François Porchez, 'Albert Boton' p.58

Fig.25 Or, by André Chante (50%)
Fig.26 Mirago, by Jean Alessandrini (50%)
Fig.27 Typefaces designed by Albert Boton for Hollenstein: Pampam (1974), Pharaon 1 (1971) and Zan (1970) (full size)

Fig.28 First version of Eras by Albert Boton, 1963 (full size)

Fig.29 Brasilia, by Albert Hollenstein and Albert Boton (full size)

d. Debates about type design

In the 1950s, the leaders of French type design felt the need for official discussion around the profession. These ventures were favoured by a hard core of personalities who were willing to exchange ideas and debate, beyond the competition of their businesses. Among others, Maximilien Vox, Charles Peignot, Gérard Blanchard, Albert Hollenstein and Roger Excoffon were part of this community.

In 1953, Robert Ranc, Jean Garcia and Maximilien Vox founded the École de Lure, meeting every year in the southern village of Lurs-en-Provence. This one-week meeting was presented as an "international graphic retreat"[1] and gathered together typographers, type designers, photographers, writers... It was a place were people could exchange ideas and experiences and "restore the prestige of French printed matter"[2]. Also, the location was more than just a country retreat. Vox saw it an opportunity to "wake in everyone the sense of the mediterranean civilization from which we stem"[3], and thus another opportunity to restore the Graphie Latine, so dear to his heart. The École de Lure, soon renamed 'Compagnons de Lure' grew rapidly and in the 1970s, the association counted about 200 people. The association still exists today, and its annual meeting is still located in Lurs-en-Provence under the name 'Les Rencontres de Lure.'

Another notable contribution is Maximilien Vox's typeface classification system, created in the same period. This system, later renamed Vox-ATypI because of its adoption by the association in 1962[4] was composed of eleven categories – there were originally nine categories, but two were added when the classification was adopted by ATypI. These were determined by the historical characterisics of letterforms (shapes of the serifs, placement of thicks and thins, etc.). Vox also made up some words to name each category, in order to offer a vocabulary that could be understood internationally. The classification was soon adopted by many countries at it proved to be a useful tool for describing and classifying typefaces. Although the Vox-ATypI classification has showed its limits in the recent years, it is still used as a basis for numerous contemporary systems of classification.

1. "une retraite graphique internationale", Fernand Baudin, *Le Dossier Vox* p.291

2."la revalorisation de l'imprimé français" Fernand Baudin, *Le Dossier Vox* p.296

3. "réveillent en chacun le sens de la civilisation méditerranéenne dont nous sommes issus" Fernand Baudin, *Le Dossier Vox* p.296

4. René Ponot, 'Classifications typographiques' p.47

In 1957, Charles Peignot created the Association Typographique Internationale (ATypI), with the aim of defending the rights of designers and founders. As mentioned earlier, the wild plagiarism that was rampant throughout the twentieth century was a very sensitive issue for Peignot. Therefore, he established ATypI as an assembly for all those involved in type design to meet, exchange ideas and discuss business, but also to campaign for a recognition of typefaces as intellectual properties. ATypI also acted (and still does) as an arbiter in case of conflict between its members. For many years, ATypI was above all a place to discuss business. Its content has evolved throughout the years and today, the annual meeting is mainly a place of cultural exchange, offering conferences and workshops for designers – what Emily King describes as "a platform to the international celebrities of type"[1]. However, the question of the protection and copyright of typefaces is still central to its aims.

2.3 The demise of the French foundries in the 1970s

As demonstrated above, the years following the Second World War had seen a burst of activity in French type design. Univers was about to become an international success, Excoffon's designs were sweeping across France, and a French founder – Charles Peignot – was organising the international debate around type design through his Association Typographique Internationale.

Unfortunately, this fervour proved to be the French foundries swan's song[2]. Even if numerous designs were published, the French foundries had seen their market constantly shrinking since the beginning of the century, mainly because of the fierce competition from hot metal. After the Second World War, France was only a "modest enclave" on the international market which was henceforth in the hands of those selling type-related technology[3]. In fact, typeface sales were no longer the principal source of income for most of the foundries, they survived mainly from the sales of presses and other material[4]. The arrival of phototypesetting caused further disruption to the firms, which had to adapt again their whole system of production and marketing.

For Deberny & Peignot, the Lumitype project turned out to be more complicated than expected. The inventors were confronted by heavy technical problems in the US and financial issues in France. Moyroud admitted in May 1956: "Certainly, we wanted to start in Europe too early, under Peignot's pressure in fact"[5]. After the difficulties encountered by Deberny & Peignot in the creation of the first series of machines, the construction of the second series of the Lumitype was left to the French firm CGCT, while Deberny & Peignot carried on marketing it. In parallel, Higonnet and Moyroud undertook an acquisition of holdings in the Deberny & Peignot foundry. Although the finances of the foundry seemed bad, the inventors took control in 1960. Soon after, Higonnet's son René-Paul was appointed president of the foundry, with the idea of modernizing it. But throughout the 1960s, the financial health of D&P continued to worsen, and its new president's total inexperience of the profession was not helping. The complex business of the Lumitype and a wider crisis affecting the whole graphic industry forced René-Paul Higonnet to gradually sell most of the foundry's activities. Eventually, Deberny & Peignot was bought by the Swiss foundry Haas in 1973[6]. Haas was mainly interested in Deberny & Peignot's collection of typefaces, and the foundry was declared bankrupt in 1974.

Hardly any information is available about the closure of the other foundries. However, one can easily imagine the crisis shaking the foundations of the graphic industries at the time affecting most of them. Moreover, the 1970s oil crisis marked the end of the Trente Glorieuse and of economic growth, and saw the beginning of a depression and rising unemployment.

1. Emily King, *New faces*, conclusion

2. "leur chant du cygne" René Ponot, 'Les années trente' p.27

3. "une modeste enclave" Gérard Blanchard, 'Les états de la création typo-graphique' p.31

4. Alan Marshall, *Du plomb à la lumière* p.297

5. "Il est certain que nous avons voulu démarrer en Europe bien trop tôt, sous la pression d'ailleurs de Peignot"Alan Marshall, *Du plomb à la lumière* p.206

6. Alan Marshall, *Du plomb à la lumière* p.373

In 1978, Haas moved for a second takeover, this time of Olive foundry, probably with the objective of acquiring its typeface library. The same year, the FTF was bought by Neufville France along with the National Type Foundry of Spain ('Fonderie Typographique Nationale Espagnole') and the German Bauer Foundry. With this business deal, Neufville was able to proclaim itself a "great foundry of high tradition and European authority"[1]. As with any period of economic recession, large companies were profiting by buying out their weaker competitors and hence building monopolies.

The most abrupt end is probaby that of the Hollenstein Studio, due to Hollenstein's accidental drowning in Italy in 1974, at the age of 44[2].

In just six years, the four main firms which had assured the survival of French type design had disappeared. The successive technological shifts that punctuated the twentieth century gradually weakened the French foundries. Now they were gone, the whole system of French type design manufacture was in danger.

3. A life after the foundries?

3.1 1975-1984, a period of slack

With the demise of the foundries, it became difficult for French type designers to release their creations. Those who were already well established occasionally managed to release their typefaces through foreign foundries. This was the case of Albert Boton, whose typeface Eras (begun at Hollenstein Studio) was released by ITC in 1976. Jose Mendoza, who had worked with Excoffon at the Olive foundry, had already distributed Pascal through the Amsterdam foundry in 1959. In the seventies, Monotype comissioned him to design Photina (fig.30) and more recently, his eponymous typeface Mendoza was released by ITC in 1991 (fig.31)[3]. But apart from these occasional partnerships, most of the French designers diversified their activities in order to make a living. Among others, Roger Excoffon founded his own advertising studio in 1971, Excoffon Conseil, and became consultant to a variety of companies[4]; Albert Boton worked as a freelance designer before joining the Parisian design agency Carré Noir in 1981 to work in branding and custom typefaces[5]; Jean Larcher gave up with his exuberant titling alphabets and focused on calligraphy.

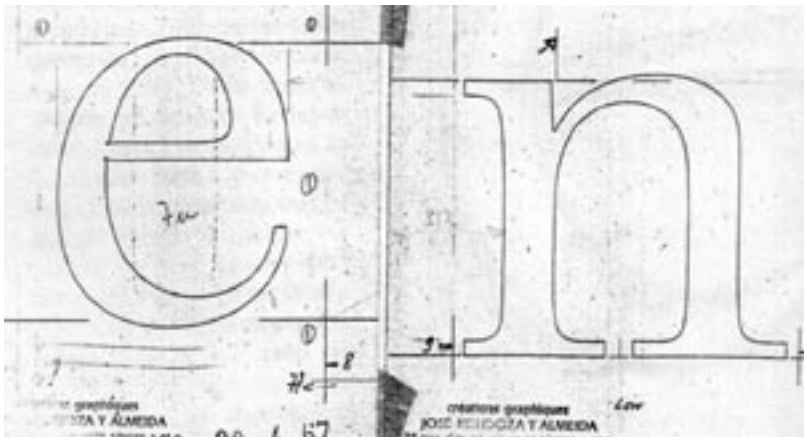
1. "une grande fonderie de haute tradition à vocation européenne" Neufville France, advertising in *Caractère TPG*, nov.1978, p.52

2.Roger Chatelain, 'Après la mort d'Albert Hollenstein' p.836

3. Jean-François Porchez, 'José Mendoza, créateur de caractères' pp.52–58

4. Victoria Chalard, 'Roger Excoffon' p.51

5. Jean-François Porchez, 'Albert Boton: la patience et la main de l'artisan' p.59



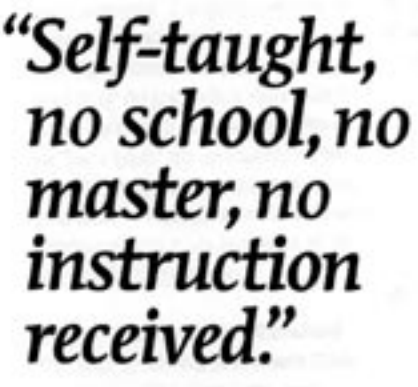


Fig.30 (left) Photina, designed by Mendoza for Monotype between 1972 and 1976 (full size)
Fig.31 (right) ITC Mendoza medium italic (full size)

Although Adrian Frutiger is Swiss and representative of the Swiss Style, his contribution is worth mention as he spent most of his life working in France. Benefiting from the international fame of Univers, Frutiger pursued a successful career in type design. Among other projects, he was commissioned in 1970 to design a typeface for the signage of the Roissy airport which led to the creation of Frutiger (fig.32), later released by Linotype. Adrian Frutiger also designed a typeface for early optical recognition; named OCR-B, it was adopted in 1972 as the standard for many administrative documents[1].

Fig.32 Frutiger in use at Roissy airport (75% of original size)

Another "survivor" of this period was Ladislas Mandel. For nine years at Deberny & Peignot, Mandel had assisted Frutiger in his work and especially in the design of Univers. This experience had given him a good insight into the relationship between type design and new technologies, which proved an asset to Mandel throughout his career. In 1963 he succeeded Frutiger as art director of Deberny & Peignot, a role he kept until the closure of the foundry. In 1975, he was commissioned to design a new typeface for Italian phone directories. Called Galfra (fig.33), it would be the first of a large series that Mandel designed for directories all over Europe and America. Through these projects, Mandel developed interesting theories about cultural specificities and national heritage in typography. He thought that a reader would recognize more easily letterforms with which he is familiar, and therefore he spent a long time studying each country's typographic legacy before designing a typeface. Rather than designing a "universal" alphabet that could be used anywhere –as typefaces from the Swiss style like Univers and Helvetica aimed to do– Mandel adapted each typeface to its country of destination. In 1986, the firm ITT World Directories commissioned a type family from Mandel for their directories, covering about ten different countries. Mandel's answer was a series of three typefaces (fig.34): Lusitania, to set patronyms in the Southern countries (Spain, Portugal, Costa Rica...), Nordica, for Northern countries (Germany, Netherland, England...), and a third "neutral" design called Linéale ("sanserif" in French) which was indiscriminately used for setting addresses[2]. This period saw also great technological changes, and Mandel constantly had to adapt his work to new processes. With the development of third and fourth generation of phototypesetting machines, the technology shifted from a photographic method of reproducing letters (which allowed great sharpness) to cathode-ray-tubes and laser systems which operated with pixels on a grid. Therefore, Mandel developed a system of "pre-digitization" of his typefaces

1. Roger Chatelain, 'Adrian Frutiger, une œuvre protéiforme' p.53

2. Olivier Nineuil, 'Ladislas Mandel explorateur de la typo française' p.55

(fig.35), by drawing letters on a grid in accordance to the resolution of the machine – a sort of early hinting system. A notable use of this system was for the Colorado project (a typeface family for US directories), in collaboration with Richard Southall[1]. In parallel to his design work, Mandel was a writer and a teacher of the history of letterforms. He took over from Maximilien Vox (who died in 1974) by becoming the most ardent defender of French typography and the preserver of cultural heritage in design.

Fig 33 (left) Galfra in use in Italian directories (4,5 pt. size)

Fig.34 (middle) top: Lusitania and Linéale (4,9 pt. size); bottom: Nordica and Linéale (5pt. size)

Fig.35 (right) From left to right: original drawing of Galfra, pre-digitization, and printed letter (enlarged 10 times)

All the designers mentioned above – Mandel, Mendoza, Boton, Frutiger – had launched their careers in type design in the 1950s and 1960s, and their reputations helped them to keep developing new projects. But as Jean-François Porchez explains: "After 1965, except for Mandel who managed his own career path, the new generation could not emerge because there were very few prospects"[2]. For the younger candidates, the task of making a career from type design proved to be very difficult. Indeed, the only way to release typefaces was through the British firm Letraset and the French Mecanorma, who sold transfer lettering. This process was very popular in the 1960s and 1970s, as it allowed text to be set easily, and offered great freedom to both type designers and typographers. But transfer lettering was intended for headlines mainly, as one could hardly set more than a few lines together with this process. Therefore, French designers were constrained to display faces, and there was hardly any opening for young designers eager to develop text faces.

3.2 The need for education in type design

a. Scriptorium de Toulouse

Beyond the difficulty faced by French designers when trying to release their productions, more serious was the disappearance of the main system of type design education with the demise of the foundries. They had been the only professional training available, places where youngsters learned the craft by assisting an older, more experienced designer. This is how, for example, Boton learned from Mandel, who in turn had learned from Frutiger. Similarly, Mendoza and Blanchard were taught by Excoffon at the Olive foundry. Some schools, like the École Estienne, gave training in typography, and even Adrian Frutiger taught there between 1952 and 1960[3]. He also gave a course on type design at the École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs (ENSAD) in Paris between 1954 and 1966, succeeded by Albert Boton and later Jean-François Porchez. These courses certainly offered a first insight into the field, but did not aim to train professional type designers; in fact, no proper education of the

1. Olivier Nineuil, 'Ladislas Mandel explorateur de la typo française' p.56

2. "Après 1965, à part Mandel qui a réussit à se faire un parcours bien à lui, les nouvelles générations n'ont pas pu émerger du fait du peu de débouchés." Jean-François Porchez, interviewed by the author

3. Roger Chatelain, 'Adrian Frutiger, une œuvre protéiforme' p.63

craft had ever been established in France.

In 1968, André Vernette and Bernard Arin opened the Scriptorium de Toulouse in the South of France, in partnership with the local school of fine-arts. The workshop aimed to restore the teaching of lettering and calligraphy and from the very first years, its students distinguished themselves through the quality of their work. Among them was François Boltana, who designed the typeface Stilla (fig.36) released by Letraset,in 1972; Boltana later designed numerous typefaces derived from calligraphy, such as Champion (for which he received a Morisawa award in 1990, fig.37), Messager and Aurore[1]. The designers Franck Jalleau and Thierry Puyfoulhoux also studied at the Scriptorium, before joining the ANCT (see chapter 3.2.b).

However, as explained earlier, the only opportunities to release new creations at the time were Mécanorma and Letraset, which did not give much hope of making a living from type design. Moreover, as Franck Jalleau points out, the Scriptorium was providing a training in lettering rather than type design, and could not solve the absence of professional opportunities[2]. Some of its students finally turned to calligraphy because it offered better prospects. This was the case for Jean Larcher and Claude Médiavilla; the latter has since led the renewal of calligraphy in France[3].

In 1985, the French government decided to close the Scriptorium, considering it too "professional"[4]. Bernard Arin relaunched it as a private course, and trained numerous students until its closure in 2005, when he retired. Among them, the designer Xavier Dupré (Dupré entered the Scriptorium in 1997[5]), who recently saw his typefaces Vista and Malaga released by the online foundry Emigre.[6]

Stilla

Fig.36 Stilla, 24 pt.

1. François Boltana, 'Ligatures et calligraphie assistée par ordinateur' p.114; Boltana prematurely died in 1999
2. Franck Jalleau, interviewed by the author
3. Claude Médiavilla, *Calligraphie*
4. Bernard Arin, 'Scriptorium de Toulouse' p.35
5. Jean-François Porchez, 'Scriptorium de Toulouse' [http://www.typofonderie.com/gazette/articles/scriptoriumdetoulouse]
6. www.emigre.com

Fig.37 Poem by Rimbaud, set in Champion for his death anniversary (full size)

b. The CERT, a reaction from the French government

As mentioned above, the Scriptorium de Toulouse could hardly counter the demise of the type industry in France. In the 1980s, a group of people including Peignot, Mandel, and Blanchard made repeated warnings about the critical state of French type design. In 1982, the then Minister of Culture Jack Lang gathered a think-tank, with a mission to give a review of the situation. The committee, named "Centre d'étude et de recherche sur la typographie" (CERT) was directed by Charles Peignot and located at the Imprimerie Nationale. It was composed of many French type design's great personalities including Fernand Baudin, Roger Excoffon, Gérard Blanchard, Marcel Jacno, Ladislas Mandel, Raymond Gid, José Mendoza, René Ponot and Jérôme and Rémy Peignot (Charles Peignot's sons)[1].

The call to the government to sort out the situation can seem incongruous from a foreign point of view. In fact, the French government has always played an active role in industry, especially after the Second World War, when the state organised the nationalisation of many sectors[2]: energy (EDF, GDF), banks (BNF), airlines (Air France) and car manufacturing (Renault). The government was also responsible for the Imprimerie Nationale, the only official institution relating to type design that was alive at the time.

From the CERT came a series of essays relating the history of typography and type design, collected in a publication called *De Plomb, d'encre et de lumière*. The book was conceived as a "practical demonstration of what one can and must expect of contemporary typography"[3]. However, it can seem anachronistic that the book, produced in 1982, was entirely hand set and printed on the Imprimerie Nationale presses. In fact, the essays shared a rather nostalgic view of the craft and a scepticism toward new technologies. Thus, Raymond Gid considered that phototypesetting had "put an end to the refined research allowed by metal type"[4]. For René Ponot, "before phototypesetting, there was only one way to set text: the good one". He added that "by dint of abdication, the very notion of good typography will soon lose its significance to everybody"[5]. However, Ponot's views of the future were more balanced, as he predicted that the upcoming desktop publishing would be capable "of the better like the worse"[6]. Finally, Jérôme Peignot confirmed the general idea that one was sadly witnessing a regression of typographic quality for the sake of technological progress[7].

The postface, written by Georges Bonnin, then director of the Imprimerie Nationale, concluded that French typography had never been in "such great danger"[8] and drew up a list of actions to undertake for its rescue. Among them, Bonnin pointed out the need to raise public awareness of typographic quality, to develop courses in the field and to encourage the publication of books about type and typography in French. He also suggested opening a type design workshop in partnership with the Imprimerie Nationale in order to benefit from its experience in both traditional type design and new technologies; finally Bonnin put forward the idea of a new French phototypesetting machine, that could offer an outstanding typographic quality on the international market.

In February 1984, the government declared that all the measures were accepted, but surprisingly announced in parallel the closure of the Scriptorium de Toulouse[9]. In reaction, Gérard Blanchard wrote an open letter to Jack Lang, asking him to take action[10]. In November the same year, the Minister announced its "plan for the relaunching of graphic design and type design" in France[11]. The new type design workshop, called Atelier National de Création Typographique (ANCT) opened the following year; located in the Imprimerie Nationale, the teaching was supplied by Ladislas Mandel and José Mendoza. Students would learn how to design type by doing revivals from the impressive collection of the Cabinet des Poinçons – the Cabinet des Poinçons contains the Imprimerie Nationale's enormous historical collection of punches. The first

1. A full list of the members of the CERT can be found in the credits of the book *De plomb d'encre et de lumière* (see bibliography)

2. Tony McNeill, *Les trente glorieuses* [http://www.sund.ac.uk/~os0tmc/contem/trente1.htm]

3. "la démonstration pratique de ce qu'on peut et doit attendre d'une typographie de notre temps" Georges Bonnin, *De plomb d'encre et de lumière* p.310

4. "condamnant la recherche raffinée qu'autorisait le plomb" Raymond Gid, *De plomb d'encre et de lumière* p.16

5. "Avant la photocomposition il n'y avait qu'une façon de composer: la bonne"; "à force de démission la notion même de bonne typographie n'aura bientôt plus de signification pour personne" René Ponot, *De plomb d'encre et de lumière* p.272

6. "sera capable du meilleur comme du pire" René Ponot, *De plomb d'encre et de lumière* p.274

7. Jérôme Peignot *De plomb d'encre et de lumière* p.295

8. "la typographie n'a jamais été en aussi grand danger" Georges Bonnin, *De plomb d'encre et de lumière* p.315

9. As explained earlier, the Scriptorium reopened as a private course in 1987

10. Gérard Blanchard, 'Lettre ouverte à Jack Lang'

11. "plan de relance du graphisme et de la typographie", Gérard Blanchard, 'Dont acte'

trainee at the workshop was Franck Jalleau, who had formerly studied at the Scriptorium de Toulouse. He worked on the revival of a typeface by Fournier named Anison, and after two years apprenticeship, Jalleau started to teach by the side of Mandel and Mendoza.

In parallel to the opening of the ANCT, Mandel designed Messidor (fig.38) for the Imprimerie Nationale. The typeface, conceived for the third generation of phototypesetters, was the flagship of the ANCT project and showed the determination of its organisers to turn towards new technologies. However, the French phototypesetting machine required by Bonnin never saw the light. In fact, investing in education rather than technologies proved to be the right choice, as this period corresponded with the arrival of the first personal computers[1]. Therefore, a new French phototypesetting machine released at this time would have rapidly become obsolete.

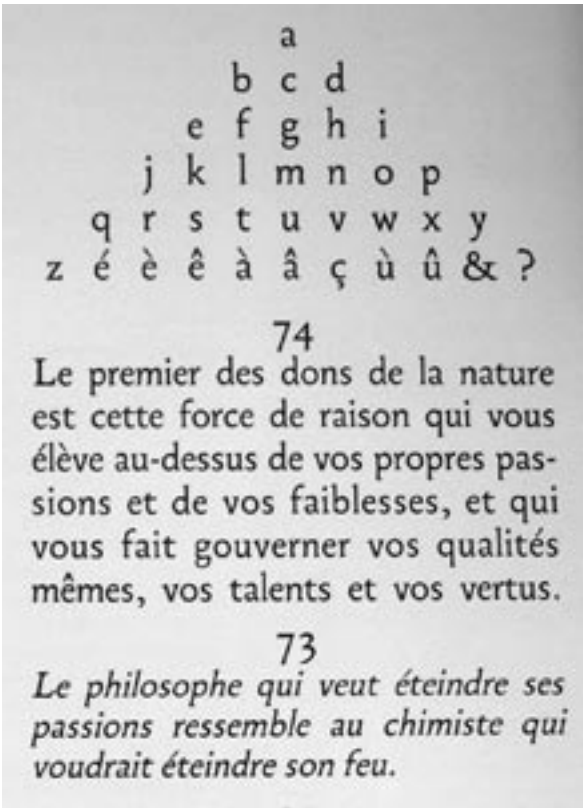


Fig.38 Messidor, designed by Mandel and produced by the Imprimerie Nationale

Because of the development of digital type, the Imprimerie Nationale felt the need to hire an in-house type designer. Until then, the institution's last designer was the punchcutter Gautier, and nothing had been undertaken since metal type to adapt the designs to phototypesetting. The punchcutter Christian Paput worked for the Imprimerie Nationale, but he was in charge of the restoration of old punches exclusively, and did not design an original typeface. In October 1987, the Imprimerie Nationale hired Franck Jalleau as an in-house designer. This decision was especially motivated by the need for a new digital typeface for the national ID card[2]. Later came considerable work on revivals: among them, Jalleau digitized the IN's Garamont and Grandjean (fig.39). He also created some original designs, such as Jalleau for the tax office code manual (code général des Impôts). All these designs, new creations and revivals, have remained exclusive to the Imprimerie Nationale. Some original designs are still used for official paperwork, and some revivals are sometimes used for publications, but only in exceptional circumstances. In parallel to his activities

1. The first Apple Macintosh microcomputer appeared on the US market in 1984

2. Franck Jalleau, interviewed by the author

for the Imprimerie Nationale, Jalleau designed personal typefaces: Oxalis and Virgile, released by Agfa Type in 1995–1996, Scripto (fig.40), for which he received a Morisawa award in 1997, and Francesco.

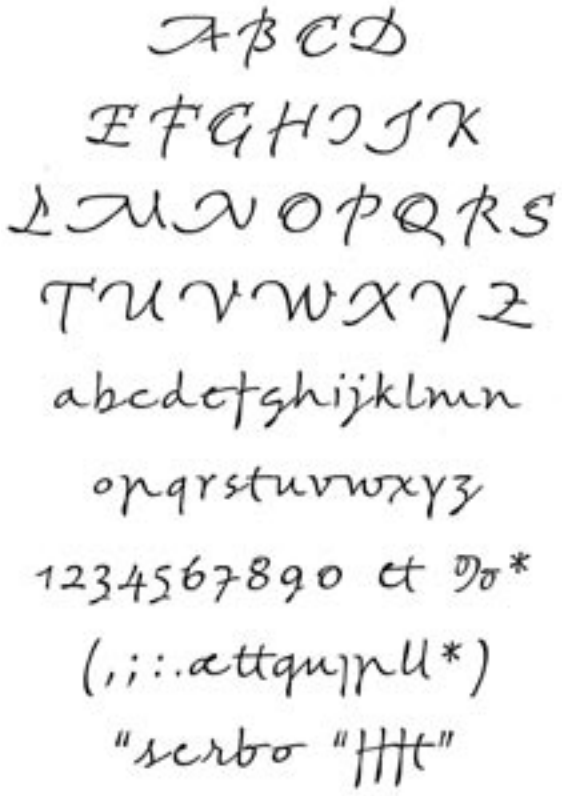


Fig.39 (left) Imprimerie Nationale's Garamont & Grandjean, digitized by Jalleau (full size)
Fig. 40 (right) Scripto, designed by Franck Jalleau and inspired fron his handwriting (full size)

In 1989, the ANCT became the ANRT and the Swiss designer Peter Keller took over its direction. Jean-François Porchez, who had formerly studied at EMSAT (École Municipale Supérieure des Arts et Techniques de la ville de Paris), entered the ANRT the very same year. The teaching was then provided by Albert Boton and Hans Jurg Hunziker, a Swiss type designer. Two years later Franck Jalleau left the workshop and created a new course at the École Estienne with the calligrapher Michel Derre, the graphic designer Margaret Gray and the teaching staff of the school. Opened in 1992, this two-year course is organised around a triptych of type design, calligraphy and typography and is still training students today.

c. The renewal of a French school

The years 1984-1985 are seen by both Franck Jalleau and Jean-François Porchez as a key date, for two different reasons. On one hand, the creation of the ANCT marked the moment for Mendoza and Mandel to pass on their knowledge to the new generation. Thus, they transferred the former role of the foundries to a proper educational system, and allowed the perpetration of French type design teaching[1]. On the other hand, the development of digital type and device-independent typesetting technology at the very same period (see chapter 3.3) heralded a new era for the designers[2], who could progressively take their independence from the manufacturers of the typesetting machines and suffer less from the lack of French distributors.

However, the period of slack between the closure of the foundries and

1. Franck Jalleau, interviewed by the author
2. Jean-François Porchez, interviewed by the author

the opening of the ANCT left an important generation gap. Between the type designers stemming from the foundries – Boton, Mandel, Mendoza – and the first ones coming out of the schools – Jalleau, Porchez, Puyfoulhoux–, there is an age-gap of about three decades. The early death of Hollenstein and Boltana, and the retraining of Médiavilla and Larcher in calligraphy also contributed to this hiatus. But eventually, the opening of the ANCT offered a possibility to France for it to renew its type design scene and hopefully guaranteed its stability. Indeed, the designers coming from the ANCT established their own design courses (like Jalleau and Derre at the École Estienne) and in turn, former students of the École Estienne now teach type design in other schools. However, the point has to be made that the majority of the student coming out of these courses do not aim to become professional type designers. As Jalleau explained himself about his course at the École Estienne, "the aim is not to train five type designers per year [...] the course has a pedagogic value for youngsters intending to work in communication"[1]. In fact, the backwardness accumulated by France in the last decades still does not allow much in the way of future prospects for young designers coming out of school. Although the situation is not as critical as it was before the opening of the ANCT, only a select few become professional type designers, and France is still far behind countries like the Netherlands or the UK as far as education and job opportunities are concerned.

In 2007, the situation seems rather fragile. The ANRT and Scriptorium de Toulouse have recently closed, and the ENSAD in Paris ended the type design workshop started by Frutiger in the 1950s and lately held by Jean-François Porchez[2]. Another principal concern is the current lack of research in the field of type design in France. The University of Rennes undertook important research on new technologies related to type design[3] and the university awarded a few doctorates to specialists like Ponot, Blanchard, Peignot, Richaudeaux and Jacno at the end of their career[4]. But apart from these contributions, research is quite underdeveloped in France compared to the USA and the UK, and hardly any funding is available in the field.

3.3 The 1990s and the democratization of type design

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the development of device-independent typesetting technologies in the 1980s marked the beginning of a new era for type designers. With the arrival of the personal computer in 1984 and the Adobe Post Script format in 1987[5], type designers were suddenly able to create their own typefaces from home, and distribute them independently from the manufacturers of machines. Already, in the 1970s, Aaron Burns and Herb Lubalin had created the International Typeface Corporation (ITC), the first firm promoting and selling typefaces as an autonomous product. In 1981, the type designer Matthew Carter with three of his colleagues left the firm Linotype to create Bitstream, the first "digital foundry". During the following decades, small-scale distributors began to appear all around the Western world.

a. Exploration of new letterforms

Beyond the independence on the machine manufacturers, the advent of digital technology meant that type design no longer remained the domain of specialists, and letterforms became a new ground for experimentation. Again, the first initiatives came from the United States; in 1984, the West Coast based designers Zuzana Licko and Rudy VanderLans established Emigre, "one of the first independent type foundries [...] centered on personal computer technology"[6]. Licko's creations were exploring the new possibilities offered by the personal computer, the first examples of it being the bitmap fonts Emperor,

1. "Il ne faut pas avoir comme but de former 5 dessinateurs de caractères par an, [...] cette formation a valeur pédagogique pour des jeunes qui se destinent aux métiers de la communication" Jean-François Porchez, 'Les formes et contre-formes de Franck Jalleau' p.60; the type design course at the École Estienne was training five students per year at the time of the interview. It trains eight students today

2. Jean-François Porchez, 'It's over' [http://www.porchez.com/article/157/its-over]

3.The research notably concerns the document markup language LaTeX, developed by Lesly Lamport for the typesetting program TeX by Donald Knuth. These research are outside the scope of this dissertation as they concern very specific technological aspects; however, numerous and valuable information can be found in the publication *Cahiers GUTenberg*, edited by Jacques André

4.Gérard Blanchard, 'Les états de la création typo-graphique' p.28

5. "1987, is the year that PostScript, the device-independent digital typesetting technology, became widely available. Quickly taken up, by the early 1990s PostScript had become the typesetting industry's standard technology. Significantly, PostScript software allowed type to be designed and set on relatively inexpensive equipment that could sit upon a desk-top." Emily King, *New Faces*, Introduction

6. Emigre's website, 'About Emigre' [http://emigre.com/AboutEmigre.php]

Oakland and Emigre designed in 1985 (fig.41).

In France, this new experimental field soon found followers. The first and more prolific one is probably Pierre di Sciullo, who started in 1984 a very personal design magazine called *Qui? Résiste*. From 1988, di Sciullo designed the Minimum family (fig.42), a series of variations based on a simple bitmap font. From then, he developed a playful approach toward letterforms. His typefaces Kouije and Quantange explore the relationship between letters and their sounds, and offer graphic variations to distinguish the different ways of pronouncing a letter. Di Sciullo also designed Gararond, an "irreverent tribute to Garamond"[1] drawn directly in the software and only with curves. Some other designers followed this experimental trend: among them, Philippe Apeloig (fig.43), Jean-Jacques Tachdjian (fig.44) and Clothile Olyff (fig.45). This experimental field has continued to attract new generations of graphic designers, who are often more inclined to design display faces. As Étienne Hervy explained[2], the French graphic design scene is more and more typographic, many designers choosing to play with letterforms rather than images. Among them, the designers M/M developed a personal approach to lettering, the historian Michel Wlassikoff describing them as "explorers of the boundaries of typographical kitsch"[3]. The designers of the deValence studio also created a series of display faces between 2003 and 2004. More recently, they developed the sanserif typeface Dada for an art catalogue; first intended for headlines and captions only, the typeface developed into a full type family and was released by the foundry Optimo in 2006. Dada is now used as a text face, notably in the design magazine *Marie-Louise* (fig.46).

Fig.41 Emigre, bitmap font

1. "un hommage irrévérencieux au Garamond" Pierre di Sciullo, 'Gararond' [http://www.quiresiste.com/projet.php?id_projet=55&lang=&id_gabarit=0]

2. interviewed by the author; Étienne Hervy is editor for the French graphic design magazine *Étapes:*

3."explorateurs des limites du kitsch typographique" Michel Wlassikoff, *Histoire du graphisme en France* p.293

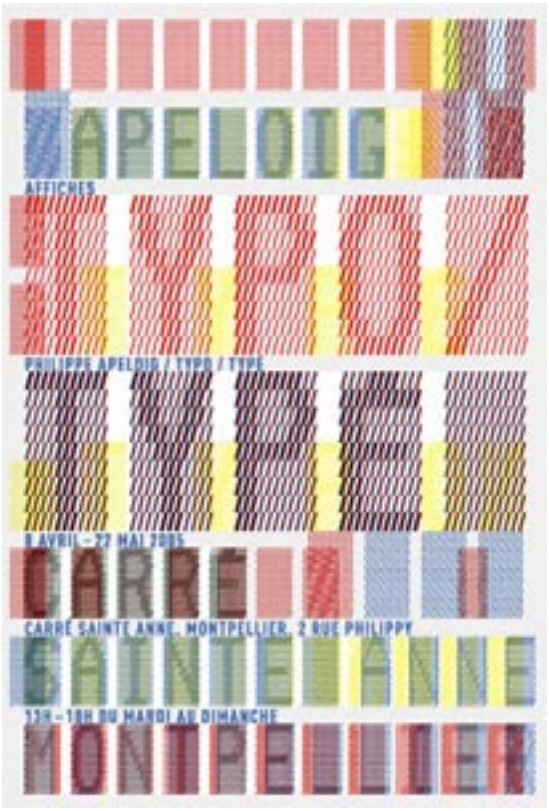


Fig.42 (left) examples of the variations in the Minimum series
Fig.43 (right) Poster designed by Apeloig, using his typeface Lorraine (2005) original size 120x160cm

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
0123456789---— [/{(@àçèïóûß!?,.ffl
Monsieur Tout le monde n'est plus
informé quant aux caractères
typographiques, qu'à travers
les pittoresques manifestations
publicitaires.

Classique expérimental

24 pages agrafées devraient suffire à la rédaction de ce texte.
Depuis longtemps déjà je n'écris plus à la main,
ou presque plus, mais les grilles bizarres des cahiers
de Vier5 m'ont invitée à changer mes habitudes.
Ici j'ai choisi le cahier rouge, dont les pages blanches sont
rayées, en oblique, de lignes écarlates disposées
à intervalles réguliers. Rien à voir avec les carreaux
habituels, dont le réseau, uniforme et discret,
fait ressurgir des souvenirs scolaires plus ou moins
heureux. L'expérience est très différente. Complètement
nouvelle. Voilà ce qui m'intéresse chez Vier5.

Fig.44 (top) Atom by Jean-Jacques Tachdjian, 1998 (full size)
Fig.45 (middle) Handex by Clothilde Olyff, 1993(full size)
Fig 46 (bottom) Dada by deValence (full size)

With these new creations, the boundary between graphic design and typeface design started to blur. In fact, most of the people mentioned above were primarily graphic designers, and their approach differed from the "traditional" type designers. The typefaces resulting from their experiments were often intended for display (although di Sciullo's typefaces are often used as text faces) and were conceived as tools to be used in wider graphic design projects. They have a very different role than text typefaces and have become part of the French tradition of display typefaces that continued throughout the twentieth century. Also, the case of deValence's Dada shows how the democratization of typographic tools can lead graphic designers to a deeper interest in typeface design.

b. World wide web and the development of online foundries

The advent of a completely device-independent technology should have appeared as a relief for the traditional type designers. It brought an end to the difficulty in releasing typefaces that followed the demise of the foundries, as designers were able to become their own distributors. But in fact, the shift toward digital technologies was much slower for the French than for their American counterparts. As a precursor, Jean-François Porchez established the first small-scale independent foundry in France in 1995-1996 – he had created his first digital typeface Apolline in 1993. But as he points out, "even more than digital technology, the world wide web was the saviour"[1]. Indeed, the development of the internet completely broke the boundaries: designers were suddenly able to produce locally and distribute internationally and anybody could promote his own creation via a website, without suffering the policy of any well-established foundry. Porchez created the website of his foundry in 1997 and started to sell his typefaces online in 1999. His work is probably the most visible on the contemporary French type design scene, and includes creations for the Parisian underground (Parisine, fig.47) and for the national newspaper *Le Monde* (fig.48). The designer Thierry Puyfoulhoux also opened his personal online foundry in 2000. During the past few years, the number of small-scale ventures and independent initiatives has greatly increased on the web: La Laiterie[2], Ainsifont[3] and Smeltery[4] are few examples of French online foundries. In parallel to these, some French typefaces can easily be marketed by a foreign foundry; for example, the French designer Xavier Dupré is now able to design a typeface in south-west Asia, release it through the Californian foundry Emigre and sell it worldwide.

1. "encore plus que le numérique, le Web c'est le sauveur" Jean-François Porchez, interviewed by the author

2. La Laiterie, [http://lalaiterie.free.fr/]

3. Ainsifont, [http://www.ainsifont.com/]

4. Smeltery, [http://www.smeltery.net/]

Fig.47 Parisine, designed by Jean-François Porchez for the Parisian underground (75%)

Fig.48 Le Monde Journal, designed by Porchez for the French newspaper Le Monde

The development of online foundries and resources is a relatively recent phenomenon, and it is difficult to draw conclusions about a sector that is currently developing. Indisputably, the French have shown many initiatives in the past few years, and the world wide web combined with device-independent design technologies has stimulated the French type design industry. However, a few reservations remain: firstly, as René Ponot announced in his essay for the CERT in 1982, the technologies from the end of the twentieth century offered "the better like the worse". Indeed, the complete freedom offered by the world wide web allowed the designers to escape the monopoly of machine manufacturers; but in parallel, this democratization means that the quality of the typefaces available online is very unequal. But this problem is not specific to France and concerns the type design community at large. Second, the backwardness accumulated by France in the field of type design throughout the twentieth century could not suddenly end with digital technologies and the world wide web. The democratization of the type design practice was not enough to wake up the entrepreneurial flair that was lacking in France for decades. Although the country seems to have recently found a renewed interest in type design, the French industry is still far behind the English, American, German and Dutch in terms of productivity and popularity.

Conclusion

Rather than a linear fall, this dissertation demonstrated that a succession of peaks and troughs punctuated the history of French type design throughout the twentieth century. From a wider perspective, this period saw a dramatic upheaval of type design practices worldwide, and generated new spheres of influence on the international type design scene.

During this period, a good entrepreneurial flair proved more profitable than a taste for high-standard typography. It could be said that the age-old French traditions of typography became a disadvantage for the French type-founders in the twentieth century. Indeed, the French designers (and type-founders) did not accept any alteration in the quality of print, whereas their American, English and German counterparts conceived it as a temporary regression, necessary to progress and modernity. The French type design community cultivated an instinctively suspicious approach toward new technologies — and the only time one of them showed enthusiasm, that is to say Charles Peignot toward the Lumitype, it cost him his business.

Yet this paper also proves that France had not been deserted by type designers during the last century, and highlighted the variety of actions undertaken by a hard-core of personalities to renew French type design and bring back a national typographic "grandeur". This recent history of French type design is hardly known outside France. The fact that most of the litterature on the subject is in French, as well as the current absence of research in the field of type design in France, contribute to isolating the country from the international type community.

Finally, the recent movements observed on the French type design scene provide very unsure future prospects. On one hand, we saw that the actual state of education is fragile and the support offered by the government in the 1980s now seems a distant memory. Without any resolute policy in favour of a professional education in type design, it seems very unlikely that a new generation of type designers will emerge. On the other hand, the digital era and the world wide web opened the way to independent initiatives, and it is up to the French designers to take advantage of it. In any case, this is a story to be continued, and only a close observation of future movements will provide an answer.

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List of illustrations

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