

ROMA

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ROMA

CANADA TYPE

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ROMA

MY INTENTION IN DESIGNING “ROMA” was to create a definitive, contemporary sans serif expression of the classic Roman majuscule as depicted in the Trajan Inscription at the base of the Trajan Column in Rome.

The “Capitalis Monumentalis” letter forms of the Trajan Inscription, which date to 113 Ad, have been described by the noted type scholar, calligrapher and historian, Father Edward Catich, as “the best roman letter designed in the western world, and the one which most nearly approaches the alphabetic ideal.” And in the 1902 publication, “The Practice of Typography”, Edmund F. Strange stated: “No single designer, or the aggregate influence of all the generations since has been able to alter the form, add to the legibility, or improve the proportion of any single letter there in.”

Mr. Strange’s pronouncement was true in 1902 and it is true today. Through the years various type designers have been inspired by the Trajan Roman to offer their own interpretations. Most notably, perhaps, Frederick Goudy’s Trajan Title (1930), Warren Chappell’s Linotype Trajanus (1940) and more recently, Carol Twombly’s literal rendition of Adobe Trajan (1989) and John Stevens’ spirited Stevens Titling (2011). There have been many other nice interpretations by other contemporary designers, yet it may still be said that none has improved the form, the legibility or the proportion of any single letter — though it can be said that the letters J, K, U, W, Y and Z, nonexistent in the ancient alphabet, have been added.

Less common has been the interpretation of Trajan in sans serif form. Hermann Zapf’s Optima (1953), Sumner Stone’s ITC Stone (1987) and Ronald Arnholm’s Legacy Sans (2000), among other nice sans serifs, reflect characteristics of Trajan but seem influenced by other factors as well, including fonts such as Gill Sans and Syntax. And, while I don’t presume to speak for their designers, none of these typefaces seem designed specifically with Trajan in mind.

My own Lincoln Gothic (1965), and its subsequent expansion as New Lincoln Gothic (2006), was a deliberate attempt to interpret the particular characteristics of the Trajan majuscule in a contemporary sans serif face. The most significant change in the later version was the addition of a lower case; a challenge that had simmered on my personal “bucket list” for several years.

Roma, though, differs from Lincoln Gothic in one significant way: while the terminals of Lincoln Gothic are flat, in Roma the vertices of letters such as A, M, N, V and Z are pointed. I believe this change is the critical difference that moves Roma closer to my objective of honoring the original Trajan. As with Lincoln Gothic, Roma’s strokes have an almost imperceptible entasis that terminate in a subtle flare; a vestige of the serif. The importance of this feature is that it imbues the font with a humanist quality. The serif, as Father Catich points out

in his book, “The Origin of The Serif”, almost certainly derives from a combination of the flat brush and the human hand; it is what ties the letterform directly to human anatomy and craftsmanship, integrating it in a fundamental way with the nature of man – as distinct from the machine.

It is my hope that Roma may help in some way to awaken in today’s young designers – many of whom have never heard of the Trajan Inscription – an awareness of and an appreciation for the historical basis of typography.

Finally, I’d like to express a debt of gratitude to the following people, past and present, each of whom has in some way contributed to the eventual realization of this project, beginning with the anonymous calligrapher in ancient Rome whose elegant model has not only endured, but prevailed, for almost 2000 years; Professor Lloyd Reynolds, for his boundless enthusiasm; Arnold Bank for his encouragement; Father Edward Catich for his tireless dedication; Paul Shaw for his suggestions and kibitzing; Patrick Griffin of Canada Type for being a joy to work with; Douglas Lynch for his guidance and Alix Lynch for the loan of her drawing board when I needed one. Each embodies the Latin phrase, “Ars est recta ratio factibilium”: “Art is the right way of making”. Or, to quote Robert Palladino, a private student of Fr. Catich at St. Ambrose and past Professor of Calligraphy at Reed College, “making things according to right reason.”

Thomas Lincoln
Springfield, Oregon
July 2011

THE
JABBERWOCK,
WITH EYES
OF FLAME,
CAME WHIFFLING
THROUGH THE
TULGEY WOOD,
AND BURBLED
AS IT CAME!

Lorem ipsum dolor
sit amet, consectetur
adipiscing elit.

VIVAMUS IACULIS

velit eget nunc
congue a henderit

ALIQUAM IMPERDIET

LIGULA TRISTIQUE

Duis dictum, quam

Traianus Augustus
pontifex maximus
consul, imperator
IMPERIAL FORUM
senate and people
treadwheel crane
DOMENICO FONTANA
OBELISK LOCALE

GERMANICUS
DACICUS

SEVENTEENTH
YEAR, TRIBUNE

QUIRINAL HILLS
CAPITOLINE

ROMAN SQUARE

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ROMMA

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ROMA REGULAR

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ROMA EFFECTS FONTS

- ROMA INSCRIBED
- ROMA SHADED
- ROMA SOLID
- ROMA OUTLINE
- ROMA INLINE
- ROMA FILL

A B C

D E F

ROMA INSCRIBED 195 POINT

R O M M A

ROMA SHADED 195 POINT

R O M M A

ROMA SOLID 195 POINT

ROMMA

ROMA OUTLINE 195 POINT

ROMMA

ROMA INLINE 195 POINT

ROMMA

ROMA FILL 195 POINT

ROMMA

ROMA SOLID + ROMA FILL 195 POINT

ROMMA

ROMA SOLID + ROMA OUTLINE 195 POINT

ROMMA

ROMA SOLID + ROMA INLINE 195 POINT

ROMMA

ROMA SOLID + ROMA ROMA OUTLINE + ROMA FILL 195 POINT

ROMMA

THE LATTER HALF OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY saw the seat of the Italian Renaissance move to Rome from Florence. The Papacy wanted to equal and surpass the grandeur of other Italian cities and to this end created ever more extravagant churches, bridges, town squares and public spaces, including a new Saint Peter's Basilica, the Sistine Chapel, Ponte Sisto (the first bridge to be built across the Tiber since antiquity), and Piazza Navona. The Popes were also patrons of the arts engaging such artists as Michelangelo, Perugino, Raphael, Ghirlandaio, Luca Signorelli, Botticelli, and Cosimo Rosselli.

The Renaissance period changed Rome's face dramatically, with works like the Pietà by Michelangelo and the frescoes of the Borgia Apartment, all made during Innocent's reign. Rome reached the highest point of splendour under Pope Julius II (1503-1513) and his successors Leo X and Clement VII, both members of the Medici family. In this twenty-year period Rome became one of the greatest centres of art in the world. The old St. Peter's Basilica built by Emperor Constantine the Great (which by then was in a terrible state) was demolished and a new one begun. The city hosted artists like Ghirlandaio, Perugino, Botticelli and Bramante, who built the temple of San Pietro in Montorio and planned a great project to renovate the Vatican. Raphael, who in Rome became one the most famous painters of Italy creating frescos in the Cappella Niccolina, the Villa Farnesina, the Raphael's Rooms, plus many other famous paintings. Michelangelo started the decoration of the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel and executed the famous statue of the Moses for the tomb of Julius. Rome lost in part its religious character, becoming increasingly a true Renaissance city, with a great number of popular feasts, horse races, parties, intrigues and licentious episodes. Its economy was rich, with the presence of several Tuscan bankers, including Agostino Chigi, who was a friend of Raphael and a patron of arts. Before his early death, Raphael also promoted for the first time the preservation of the ancient ruins. The fight between France and Spain in Europe caused the first plunder of the City in more than one thousand years. In 1527 the Landsknechts of Emperor Charles V sacked the city, putting to an abrupt end the golden age of the Renaissance in Rome.

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