



ROCKWELL

STUDY OF THE TYPEFACE

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what is rockwell ?

Rockwell is predominantly a display typeface, which is classified a geometric slab serif.

This means that the whole anatomy of this typeface is very geometric and is made out of basic shapes, mostly a rectangle and a circle. It belonged to a family of typefaces called the “egyptian” kind where all the typefaces were unbracketed and the serifs were similar to the horizontal stroke of the letters.

ABCDEFGHIJKLM
NOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklm
nopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890
This is **ROCKWELL.**

~!#@#\$\$% *()*_+ -=
[{} \ | ; : ' " ,
< . / ? > ^ &



It is often described in two simple words.

PRACTICAL
and
MINIMALISTIC

In recent years it has been used in type setting where the colour and visual impact can be fully exploited. Except applications as posters and headlines, it is rarely used as body text.



As you can see, the typeface is very geometric in nature and has very straight and defined endings. Even though it serves its purpose as a display typeface with utmost efficiency, it has various weights and different versions. Rockwell comes in four basic weights. Light, Regular, Bold and Extra bold. Other than the weights, rockwell has many variations that have developed over the years as people have seen its popularity grow.

Rockwell comes in 4 weights i.e. light, regular, bold and extra bold (shown top to bottom on the right) and has 16 variations that have been developed over time.

From condensed versions of bold, light and italics of the same to an extra bold version that really catches attention, today rockwell has an interesting variety of weights and variations which makes it break out of its identity of a display typeface. As you can see the light versions of rockwell, if put to appropriate use can be applied in different places.

ABCDEFGHIJKLM
NOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklm
nopqrstuvwxyz

**ABCDEFGHIJKLM
NOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklm
nopqrstuvwxyz**

**ABCDEFGHIJKLM
NOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklm
nopqrstuvwxyz**

**ABCDEFGHIJKLM
NOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklm
nopqrstuvwxyz**



who and how ?

The first geometric slab serif, called Litho antique appeared in the Inland type foundry in 1910. In **1933**, The updating of this typeface was done at the **Monotype** foundry under the supervision of **Frank Hinman Pierpont** in the United kingdom. This typeface initially developed in order to compete with another typeface called Memphis, was then called Rockwell.



Monotype imaging holdings as it is known today is a corporation specializing in typesetting and typeface design. Its predecessors and subsidiaries have been responsible for many developments in printing technology in particular the monotype machine which was the first fully mechanical typesetter. Monotype imaging's subsidiaries are the owners of many popular typefaces such as Helvetica, Optima and Times new roman to name a few.



FRANK HINMAN PIERPONT



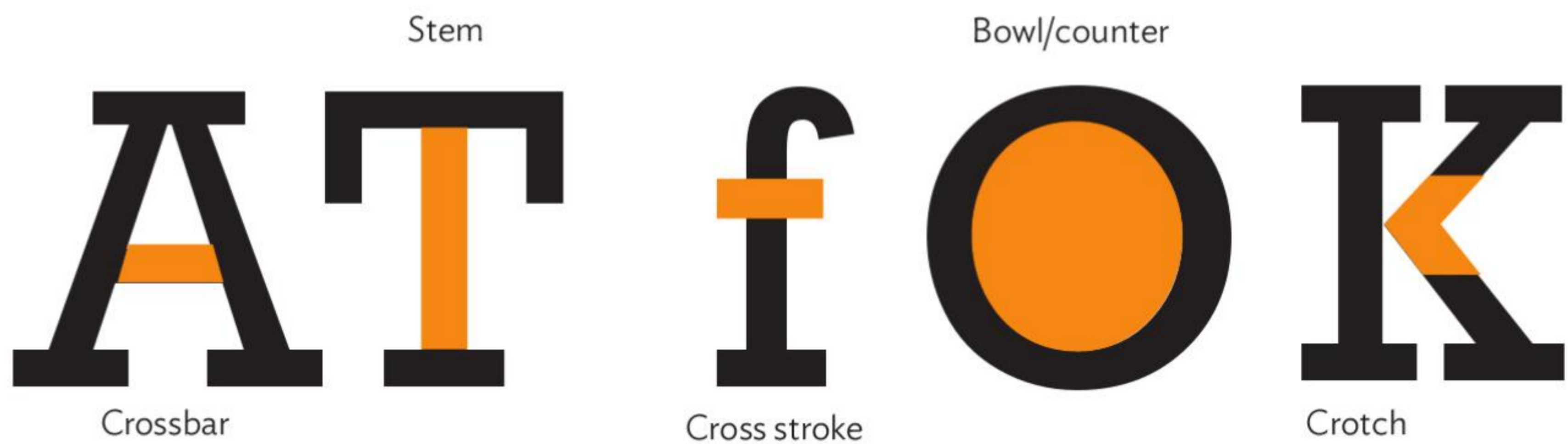
The serifs of his typeface were similiar in language to the san serif typefaces Akzidenz Grotesk or Franklin Gothic. But the main inspiration behind this typeface as well as others in the "egyptian" classifications remains, **clarendon**.

ABCDEFGHIJKLM
NOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklm
nopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890
This is clarendon.



defining features.

Rockwell remains very balanced in its weight, like the other geometric slab serifs. Sometimes very similar. But there are certain parts in this typeface such as the lowercase 'a' as well as the 'o' to name a few that make rockwell retain its identity.



Before seeing what are the characteristics that makes rockwell unique, knowing the basic structure of a geometric slab serif is very essential as it provides us a basis for any sort of analysis. There are many more components that make up each structure of a letterform, but some of the key ones are described above.



ç £ ¤ ¥ ¦ § ¨ © ª « ¬ ® ¯ ° ± ² ³ ´
 µ ¶ · ¸ ¹ º ¼ ½ ¾ ¿ À Á Â Ã Ä Å
 Æ Ç È É Ê Ë Ì Í Î Ï Ð Ñ Ò Ó
 Ô Õ Ö × Ø Ù Ú Û Ü Ý Þ ß à á â ã
 ä å æ ç è é ê ë ì í î ï ð ñ ò ó
 ô õ ö ÷ ø ù ú û ü ý þ ÿ ı ˘ ˙ ˚

f Ÿ š Š œ Œ œ Š š Ÿ f ˆ ˇ ˘ ˙
 ‘ — — π ˘ ˙ √ ›, “ € ∞ ∫ ™ ”
 „ Ω ≈ ≠ ∂ † ‡ Δ ≤ ≥ ∏ • …
 Σ ∠ ∫ √ ∞ ∫ ™ ∞ ∫ ™
 * + , - . / : ; < = ? > @ ^

The glyph set of rockwell is very intriguing. Retaining its geometrical structure, most of the 165 characters retain the overall feel of the typeface.

The two most distinct characters of this typeface are 'A' and 'O', in both the uppercase as well as the lowercase version. The uppercase 'a' has a crossbar at the apex that differentiates it from a lot of other geometric slab serifs and on the other hand the lowercase 'a' remains an anomaly as compared to the other lowercase characters that are either very geometric or pre-dominantly have a circular or semi-circular skeleton. The lowercase and uppercase 'o' have almost a perfect circle as the counter which too is very characteristic of Rockwell.





A T L
h n m

The geometric nature and language is very clearly reflected in a number of uppercase characters of this typeface. The slab endings in many a places are a pure slab, like a solid rectangle of sorts that retains its dimensions wherever repeated proportionately in a letter. In case of the lowercase characters, the distinct feature remains the shape of the shoulder and the connection to the vertical stroke . That connect remains somewhat constant, like the lowercase 'h', 'm' and 'n' on the left.

G C c

The vertical stroke at the starting of the curved stroke of the 'c' and 'g' too is a distinct feature of this typeface. It is a little abrupt and unwanted, but adds to the geometric nature.



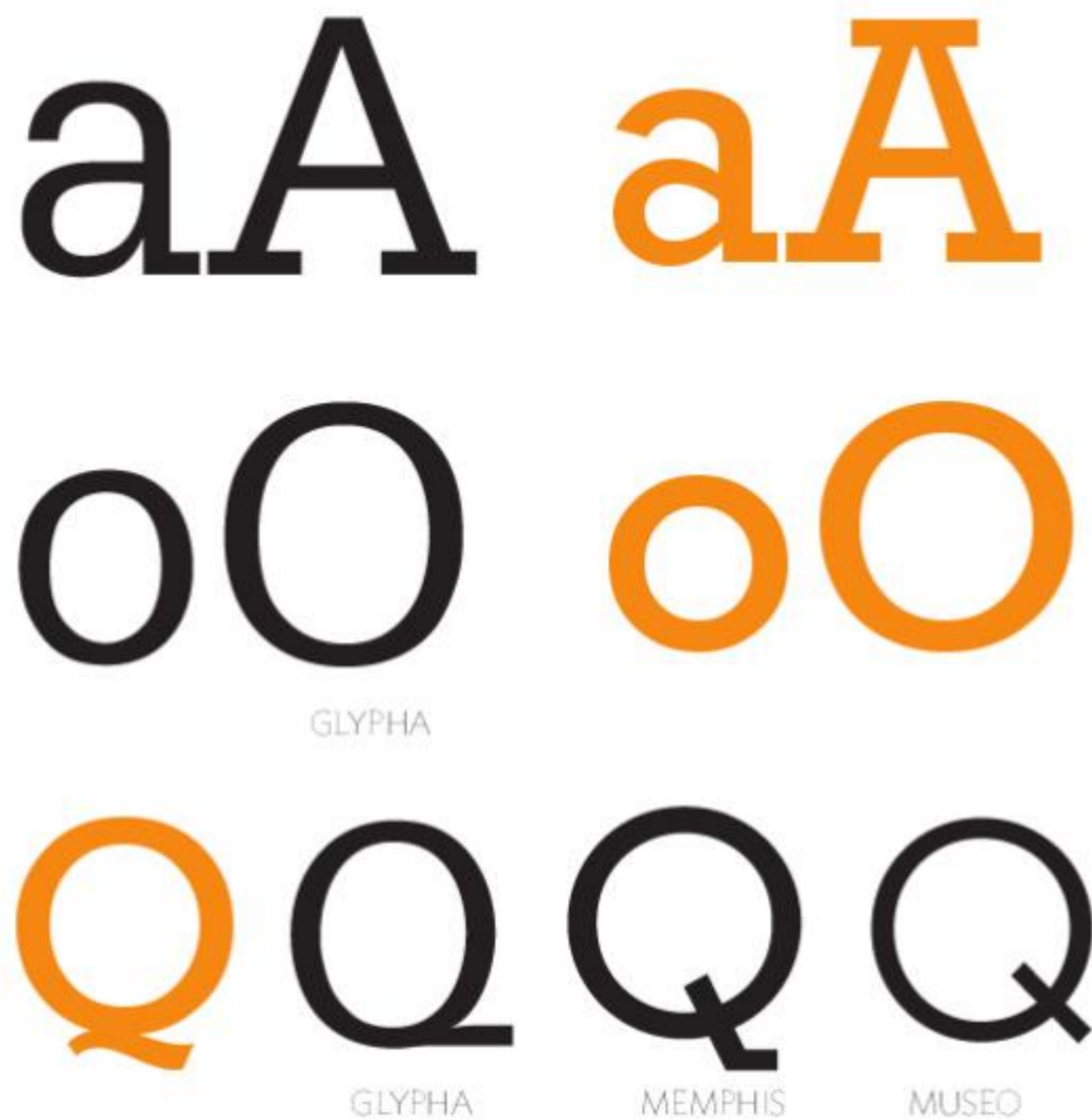
the structure.

Studying the structure is a re-assurance of why this is termed as a geometric slab serif. Equally balanced horizontal strokes and a very minute gap at the apex was an indication of how small details and intricacies can be found on studying a character analytically.



comparison.

Most of the geometric slab serifs have very minute nuances and details, therefore during applications people many a times end up not realising the small differences. So to know the differences between these typefaces becomes essential. This makes the recognition easy and one is aware of the small differences that constitute each typeface.



In comparison to other similar typefaces, rockwell is differentiable due to its circular counters in the 'o' and the horizontal stroke on the uppercase 'a'. On the left it has been compared to the typeface Glypha. Also the 'q' in rockwell has a unique tail with a nice curve joining to the circular form, whereas other geometric slab serifs have a more slab-like tail. On the right, it is compared to typefaces like Glypha, Memphis and Museo respectively.

A lot of times, due to a very similar structure, there is always a confusion in terms of identification. In some cases the horizontal stroke on the uppercase 'a' might also be present. Especially the typeface Stymie has identical features to that of rockwell. However the lowercase 't' of stymie is very geometrical compared to the one in rockwell. Memphis on the other hand was one reason why Frank Hinman Pierpont decided to make rockwell. It was an European version made to compete with the American typeface, Memphis. So Memphis and rockwell have very similar characters. But the lowercase 'a' and the uppercase 'q' makes it very easy to differentiate.

ABCDEFGHIJKLM
 NOPQRSTUVWXYZ
 abcdefghijklm
 nopqrstuvwxyz
 1234567890
 This is **glypha**.

ABCDEFGHIJKLM
NOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklm
nopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890
This is stymie.

ABCDEFGHIJKLM
 NOPQRSTUVWXYZ
 abcdefghijklm
 nopqrstuvwxyz
 1234567890
 This is **memphis**.

ABCDEFGHIJKLM
 NOPQRSTUVWXYZ
 abcdefghijklm
 nopqrstuvwxyz
 1234567890
 This is **museo**.

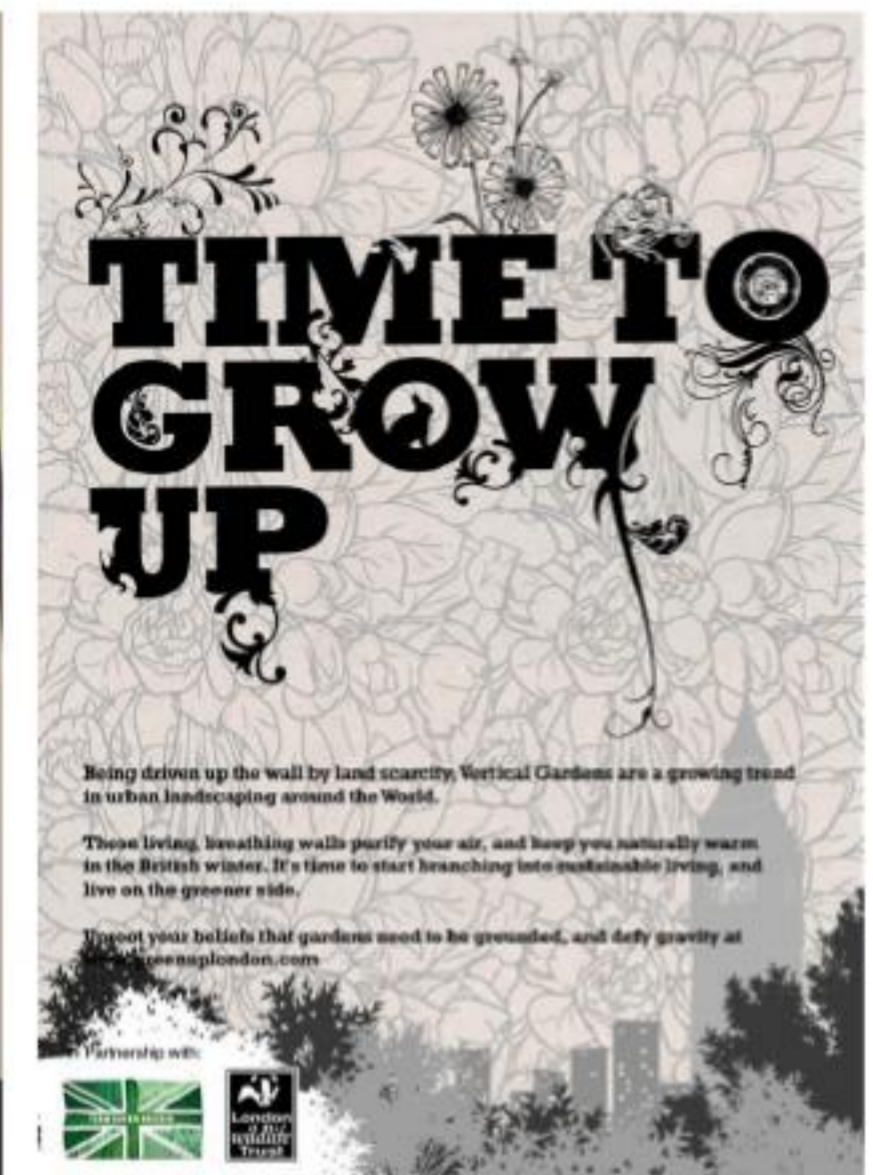
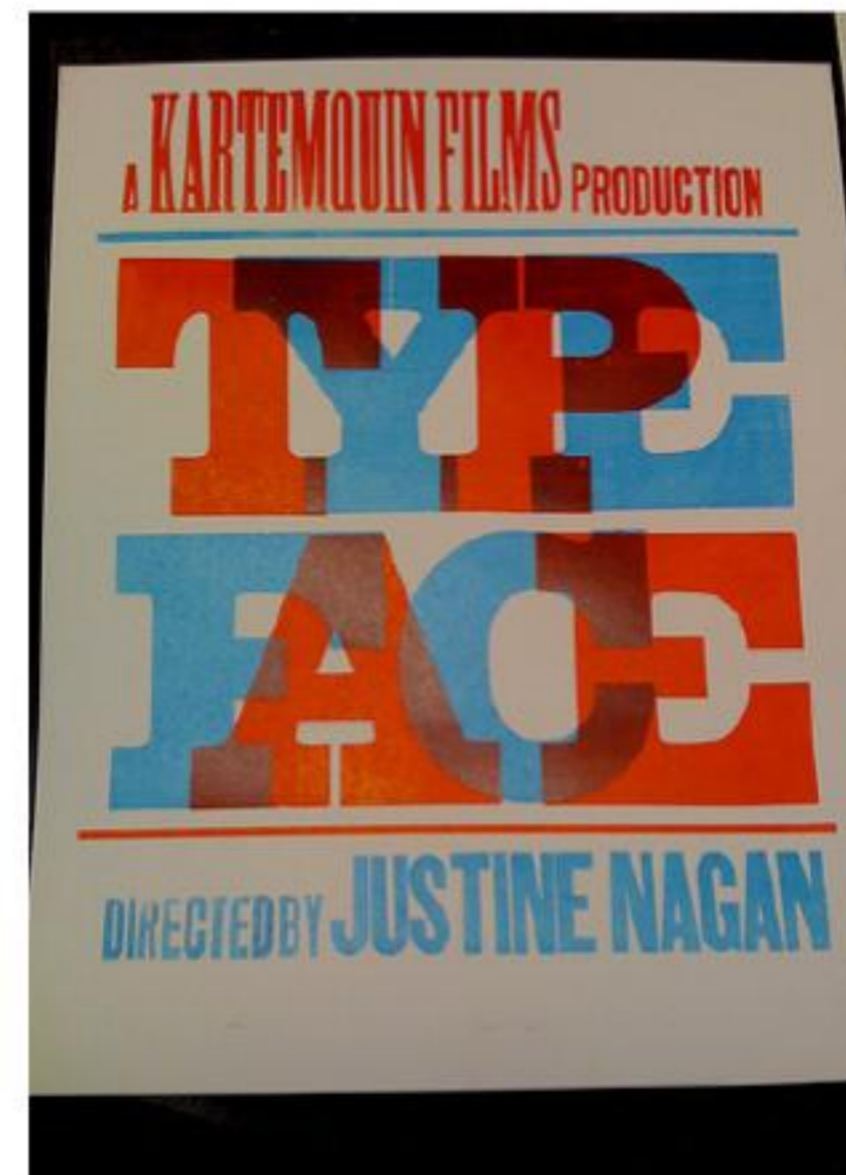


applied where?

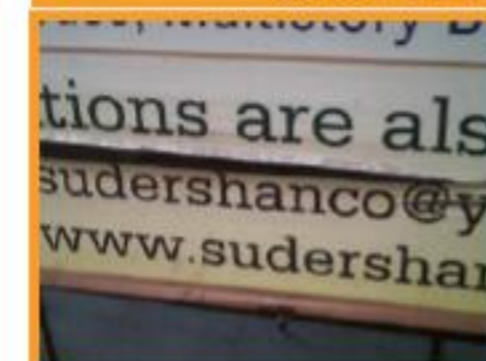
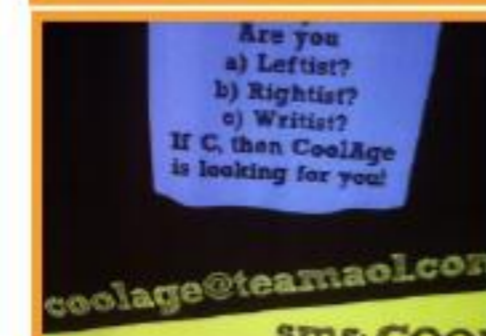
Rockwell developed as a display typeface has lived up to its attribute very efficiently. Prints, murals and in advertising on a micro and a macro level. It certainly stands out and makes an impact to the viewer's eyes.



Limited Edition
1 of 100
Designed by Simon Whybray
Thanks to Picifactory & Blade Rubber
You both rock



These images were taken by me in different areas of Delhi and Ahmedabad. The popularity of a geometric slab serif used as a display typeface was very evident. Newspapers, hoardings and magazines, all have extensive use of such typefaces for headings and captions.





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Typeset in Ideal sans designed by Heofler and Frere-Jones.

