

**A type design for Rome and the year 2000**

Gerard Unger

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In October 1997 Gerard Unger was appointed by the Agenzia romana per la preparazione del Giubileo to design a system for directing and informing millions of visitors to Rome in the year 2000. Part of this project was the design of a new typeface for use in printed documentation, on computer displays, and on directional signs. This paper is Unger's personal account of the way he worked to produce a typeface that links modern type design to the tradition of Rome. He describes both the influences on his design and the constraints within which he worked. The final part of Unger's paper, *Text and space in Rome*, is more formal, written for his clients, and describes the rationale for the visual organization of the elements on the signs. The whole paper is typeset in Unger's new typeface itself, which has been christened Capitulum.

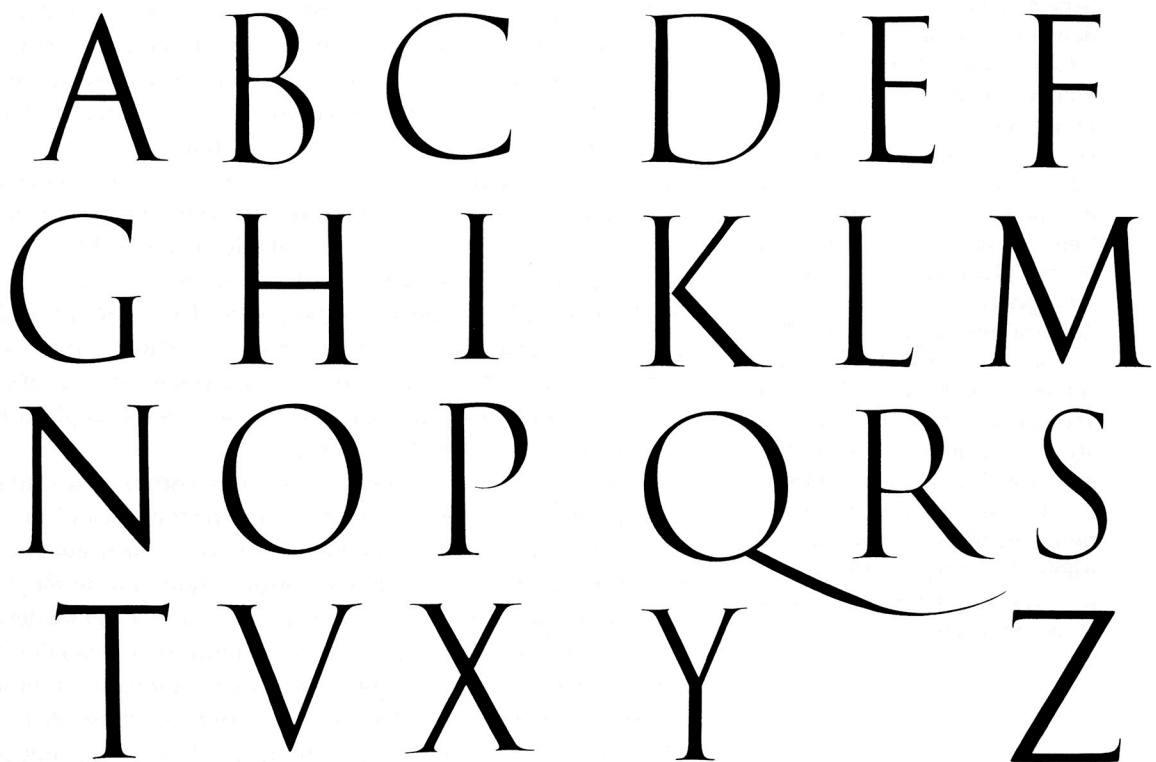
I was first contacted on 31 July 1997 about the project for an orientation and information system to guide pilgrims and tourists through Rome. Between twenty and twenty-five million visitors are expected to flock in between New Year 2000 and Easter 2001 on the occasion of the Jubilee of the Roman Catholic Church. This first message, sent by Giovanni Lussu on behalf of the organizing committee (the Agenzia romana per la preparazione del Giubileo), clearly stated that a new type design should be a central part of this project, to continue Rome's great tradition of public lettering or, as it is also called, 'exposed writing'. As the message went: 'Rome is perhaps the only city in the world to have had a public sign system all along for two thousand years.' And: 'it has to be a specific type face, ... a modern one for the third millennium (and not at all a philological *repêchage*), but in some way related to the tradition of the city.' This tradition encompasses ancient Roman inscriptions, Renaissance and early Baroque lettering, and street nameplates from many periods, including the present.

This brief suited me very well as I am not an enthusiastic supporter of twentieth-century revivalism, of plundering the past and any type specimen or scrap thereof available. Between revivalism and the experimental, mutated or personalized letterforms that were developed with desktop computers, there is ample space for original and modern type designs for mass communication. Furthermore, I could not do a literal revival. I have tried – for example, I once began by looking at, almost living with, enlargements of wonderfully crisp letterforms by the eighteenth-century, Dutch punchcutter, J. M. Fleischmann, but got no further than being inspired by these samples and doing a design of my own. So I wrote back to Rome that I would like to take certain principles from history, such as proportions or an atmosphere, as starting points, transfer these to the present and build a contemporary typeface on an ancient foundation.

To this first requirement others were added: the design should basically consist of a roman, an italic and a bold to be used in seven languages (Italian, English, French, German, Spanish, Portuguese and Polish) for printing and reproduction using various techniques – laser & inkjet printing, copying and faxing, all on widely differing kinds of paper; screen displays (for electronic information points); and possibly engraving in marble. It was decided to design a light and a bold version of the seriffed roman from which, at a later stage, regular and semi-bold versions could be made through interpolation.

The complete orientation and information system comprises cartography, the design of information on screens, brochures and leaflets, a system of signs for pedestrians and traffic, and a large portion of industrial design – supports for the signs, constructions for special events, video

Figure 1. Compilation of Cresci's capitals from *Il perfetto scrittore* (1570). In the original book, each letter was 12cm high and engraved in white on black (from Mosley, 1964).



booths and leaflet dispensers. I collaborated with n|p|k of Leiden, industrial designers who had already done the new Dutch road signs several years ago, and had involved me in that project for the redesign of the typeface. We sent a combined proposal to Rome in August 1997. At the end of October we were informed that we had been chosen for the job, and shortly before Christmas the contract was signed. We were asked to have everything designed and explained in a design manual by the end of May 1998 – a rather short deadline for a project of monumental proportions. Colleagues were involved for the cartography – a very specialized field – for the design of printed matter, for the screen designs and for the production of the fonts. The presentation of the first ideas took

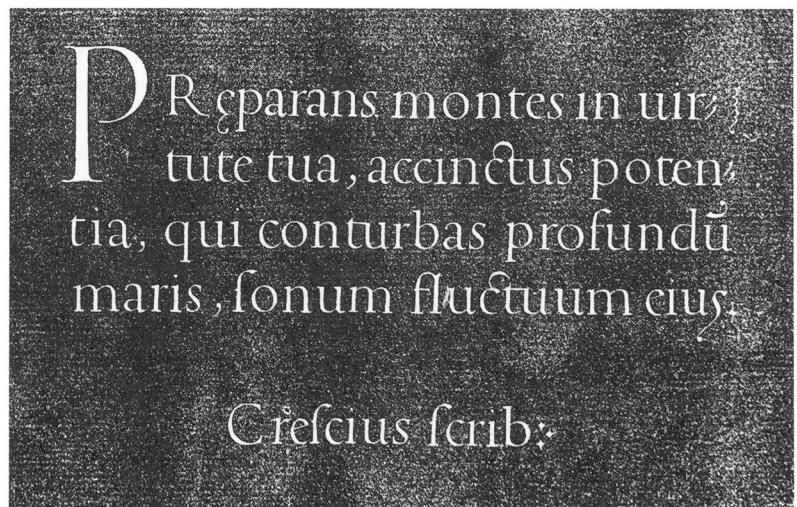


Figure 2. Cresci's *lettera antica tonda* from *Il perfetto scrittore* (1570).

place in Rome on 6 February 1998. My particular concern in this article is the design of the new typeface and its application on directional signs.

There seems to be something odd about designing a typeface for Rome. It is perhaps the typographic equivalent of taking coals to Newcastle. There are so many letters there already. Rome abounds with inspiration for those with a penchant for letterforms. The great Roman contribution to type design is, of course, a set of noble capitals, but especially the serif. Rome is the birthplace of the fully fledged serif, which was prominently displayed in Imperial Roman inscriptions, and is still integral to many currently used typefaces. However, as the new typeface will appear on signs, the modern tradition in signing also had to be taken into consideration. And that means sansserifs, as exemplified by Johnston's type design for the London underground and by Helvetica, Frutiger and related typefaces used in many airports. Recently, serifs have made a tentative return to signs, such as those at London's Heathrow airport. In Rome all the signs in the year 2000 will have to communicate clearly 'You are in Rome', apart from giving directions to pilgrims and tourists. And although Rome implies serifs and lofty, classical capitals, lowercase letters are indispensable for most reading matter. For modern signing too, common usage is lowercase with capitals as initials. Consequently, for the initial proposal two possible courses were set out: the design of seriffed classical capitals with a matching lowercase; or an attempt to reconcile a sanserif design with the Roman tradition.

### Historical influences

A well-documented and often-followed model in Rome is, of course, the inscription at the base of the Trajan Column. The calligrapher Giovanni Francesco Cresci was probably the first to draw attention to the Trajan capitals: he commented on their elegance and made their forms his own in *Essempiare di più sorti lettere* of 1560 and *Il perfetto scrittore* of 1570 (Mosley, 1964; figure 1). His pupil, Luca Horfei da Fano, turned these forms into early Baroque inscriptional lettering, with less verve than Cresci's capitals, as can be found on several monuments, such as the pedestal of the obelisk in St Peter's Square (1586) or on the Aqua Felice Fountain (1587) at the Piazza San Bernardo (see also figure 19). But Cresci seemed to me to be the more attractive source, as he also left an example for a lowercase to be combined with his redesigned capitals, the *lettera antica tonda* in his book *Il perfetto scrittore* (figure 2). Variations of this 'round and ancient' script, an interpretation of the humanistic minuscule, appeared in the publications of several scribes. For example, Ludovico degli Arrighi shows a short paragraph of his version in his *Il modo de temperare le penne* (1523; figure 3), and a practically identical sample appeared in Ugo da Carpi's *Thesauro de scrittori* (1535). It is a mystery why, in the 1520s and 1530s, these scribes clothed the humanistic minuscules in such quaint and antiquated details. In Venice, some decades earlier, Francesco Griffo had already given lowercase letters much more clarity and straightforwardness, and in France printing types were on the point of gaining restrained elegance in the hands of Claude Garamond.

In comparison with the example of Arrighi and also with printing types of the same period, Cresci's *lettera antica tonda* are a startling development. They are wonderfully clear and elegant. As James Mosley has remarked, they are greatly ahead of their time and seem to forecast what

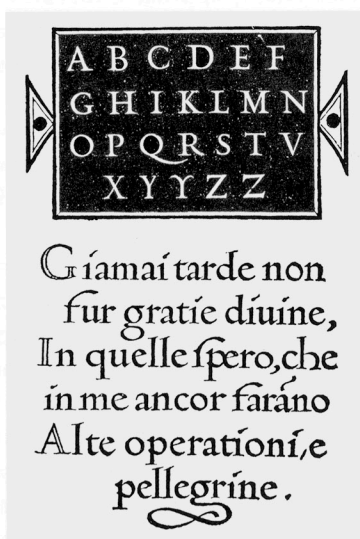


Figure 3. Arrighi's *lettera antica tonda* from *Il modo de temperare le penne* (1523).

would happen at the beginning of the eighteenth century with the Romain du Roi and later that century under the influence of François-Ambroise Didot.<sup>1</sup> Cresci's swelling-line calligraphy, and the pointed pen that he used as well as a broad nibbed one, gave his small letters a marked contrast between thick and thin parts. His idea caught on among calligraphers, as is shown by similar exercises in, for example, Conretto da Monte Regale's *Un novo et facil modo d'imparar'a scrivere* of 1585 (Marzoli, 1962), and in Horfei's *Varie inscrittioni* of c.1590 (Casamassima, 1966).

### Design considerations

In all probability I am not the only type designer who is often asked what his favourite letter of the alphabet is, or with which letters I begin a new design. My honest answer usually is that I have no favourite, although, if the questioner insists, I will offer the g, probably because it is the initial of my first name. But with the type design for Rome I began consciously with the R and the a, keeping a close eye on Cresci's models (figure 4). I chose the R because, in my opinion, this character embodies an essential Roman-ness. It stands like an orator on a rostrum with one foot forward and with a swelled breast, about to commence an eloquent speech. And the a, without a bulb-terminal at the top left, appealed to me by virtue of its simplicity and slenderness (figure 4). With its two-storiedness and rather low and very round belly it reflects the R and can be seen as its audience. From my interpretations of these characters the other letterforms have grown.

At this point, in order to test the possibility of a new Roman sanserif for signing, the serifs were removed from the new typeface design in progress, and its stroke contrast was reduced. The Romans made sanserifs or almost sanserifs – geometrical, monolinear styles with tiny serifs and with perfectly circular Os, although there are few examples left of such lettering from the Republican era. The beginnings of modern sanserifs, early in the nineteenth century, have their origins in Roman inscriptions like the one on the temple of Vesta at Tivoli (c. 55 BC; Mosley, 1965).<sup>2</sup> So there is some precedent for such an approach, but I avoided the constructed forms and tried to stay close to Cresci. I gave my experimental sanserif an old face treatment, with the thickest parts of the curves below or above the centre of the x-height (figure 5). But this design, attractive in itself (I want to develop it further when the Roman project has been finished), does not really fit in with the Roman tradition. It overlooks the most notable and impressive part of that tradition – seriffed capitals. Consequently this design was rejected.

While a sanserif proved not to be an option, there is no escape from lowercase letters for modern typographic communication. It was not only Cresci who tried his hand at a lowercase to match classical capitals; it was attempted in the nineteenth century by Louis Perrin of Lyon, and in the twentieth century by Eric Gill and Jan van Krimpen, among others. The lowercase letters of Times New Roman point in the right direction but, curiously enough, not the capitals. With, for example, the very wide E and F, the narrow H and M and the J sitting on the baseline, they are a hybrid collection, with their origins probably sometime in the nineteenth century. Van Krimpen based his capitals partly on examples that he found in copies of inscriptions and he drew beautiful lowercase letters to accompany them, as in his *Romanée* typeface (1928) – which in



Figure 4. Cresci's R and a from *Il perfetto scrittore* followed by Unger's designs for the regular weight of the new typeface.

Roma  
Giubileo

Figure 5. Experimental sanserif version of the new typeface for Rome.

1. Letter from James Mosley to myself, 3 January 1998.

2. A complicating factor is that later examples of Italian sanserifs, from the Renaissance, are mostly located in Florence, not in Rome. See Gray, 1960.

THE GOSPEL  
In the beginning was  
Word was God. The sar  
were made by him; &  
made. In him was life;  
light shineth in darkn

Figure 6. Romanée by Jan van Krimpen (1928).

## San Giovanni in Laterano

### SAN GIOVANNI IN LATERANO

Figure 7. Comparison of typesetting modes for the signs: capitals & lowercase compared with all capitals.

my opinion came close to fitting the brief of the Agenzia and would be difficult to improve on (figure 6).<sup>3</sup> When I became aware of letterforms, in the late 1950s, my interest was to a large extent aroused by Van Krimpen's work, when I found books designed by him in my father's bookcase. It was not necessary to select him consciously as a source of inspiration for the Roman project; I practically grew up with his designs, as in fact did many other type designers in Holland.

The 'all capitals' issue returned one more time with regard to the city signs. To compare the atmosphere values, legibility and economy of two possibilities – the use of lowercase with initial capitals, or text set only in capitals – a restricted set of bold small capitals was also prepared for the first presentation (figure 7). It was decided to continue using lowercase with initial capitals, as lowercase is generally more legible and certainly more economical of space. This rejection of 'all capitals' setting, as a modernization of the Roman tradition of public lettering, was not regarded by the Agenzia as being in conflict with that tradition.

As the new design will not only be reproduced with high-quality offset lithography but also in relatively coarse printing techniques such as laser printing, and not only on smooth surfaces but also on paper of lesser quality and on screens where resolutions are very low, I decided to keep the letterforms relatively simple at first. In other words, stems were straight, without any subtle curving of their sides, which would not survive coarser techniques of reproduction. The serifs were flat and elongated, although their undersides curved inward slightly (figure 8). But on screens such subtleties will practically disappear. Although the result was not disagreeable, it seemed to me to be too rigid, a suspicion that was confirmed by the reactions of the members and advisors of the Agenzia. Unanimously we opted for more 'swing' (to use an expression of my colleague Bram de Does), which has been inspired by the calligraphic flair evident in many Roman inscriptions and which will be described in more detail later on.

Shortly after the first presentation a document was sent to Rome (dated 11 February 1998) with the proposal for a partial redesign of the letterforms, to remove some of the austerity and to give the type design more warmth. For an essential ingredient, and one that has been much discussed, I returned from Cresci's examples to a calligraphic aspect of original Roman letterforms. It was Cresci who pointed out to his contemporaries how wrong Renaissance letterers had been in supposing that mathematical constructions had been applied or could be superimposed on Roman capitals (Mosley, 1964). Cresci's reasoning still needed support in the twentieth century, when Edward Catich (1968) had to construct carefully his ample argumentation in support of the theory that Roman capitals were painted before they were cut. The walls of many Roman buildings, probably of the majority, were stuccoed and painted, thus forming a good ground for brush-written messages. The surviving calligraphy and graffiti on walls in Pompeii suggest that, for the inhabitants and visitors in such a city, there was much to read during walks (Moreau, 1993). It is not unthinkable that in Rome the situation was similar and that the number of brush-written texts far exceeded the number of messages carved in stone, although many more of the latter have survived.

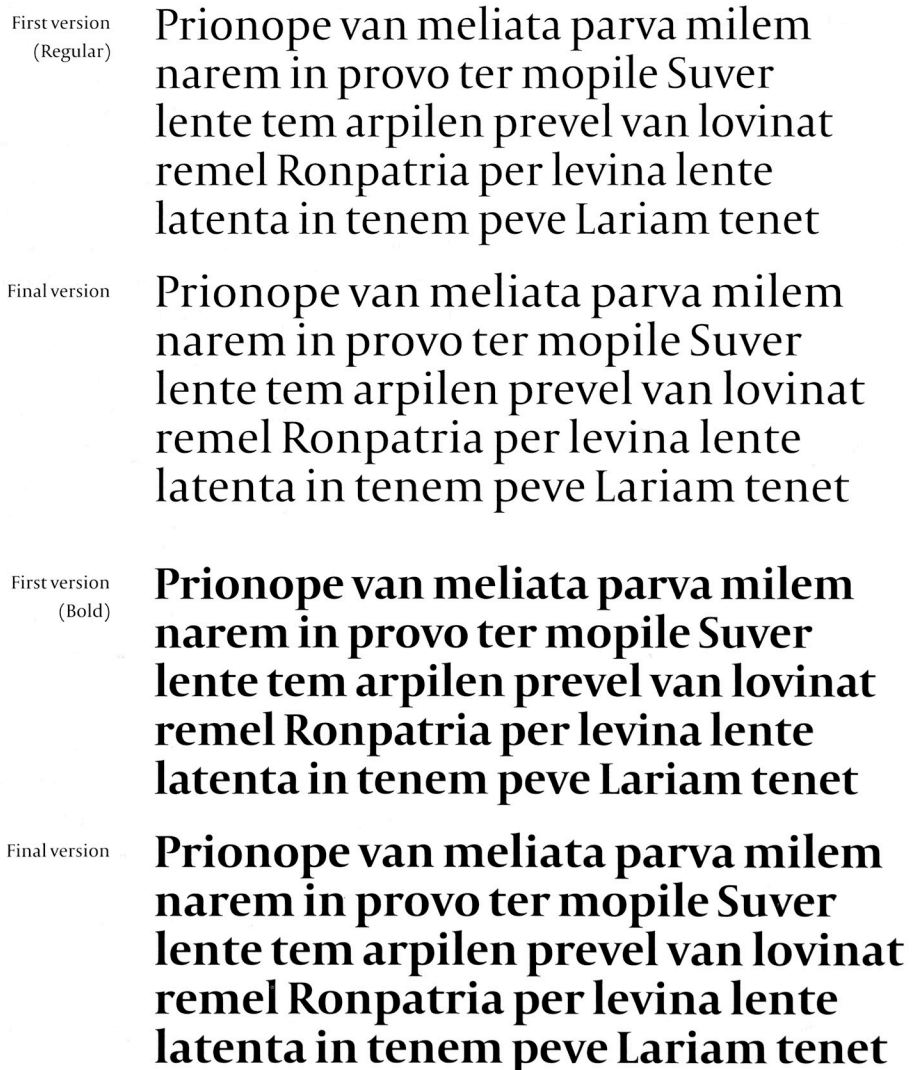
I incorporated into my design some of the Roman calligraphic flow. The serifs were shortened, becoming more triangular and blending more gradually into the stems. The serifs at the bottom-left sides and the

3. Sierman (1995: 37) names Aemilius Hübner's *Exempla Scripturae Epigraphicae Latinae* (Berlin, 1885) as a source of Van Krimpen's knowledge of Roman inscriptions.



Figure 8. First proposed version of the new typeface compared with the final version.

Figure 9. Text specimens showing the development between the first proposed version of the new typeface and the final version.



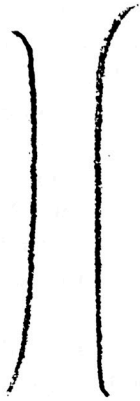


Figure 10. Sketch by Unger of the principle of calligraphic flow which he incorporated into his typeface.

top-right sides project further outward than the other serifs, creating a movement throughout the design, a flow in each character from bottom left to top right (figures 8–10). In my proposal for the modification of the typeface I pointed to another ingredient borrowed from the Romans, which had already been incorporated into the first version. Many Roman capitals feature a marked horizontality. The horizontal parts of curves are often very flat. This kind of horizontality in the Roman type design is not new for me, featuring prominently in most of my other type designs. As far as I can trace it back, this ingredient crept into my view of letterforms during my education at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy (1963–7), when Roman capitals still featured strongly in Dutch design education.

As a last improvement all the letterforms were slightly widened. These changes somewhat disappointed one of my critics, James Mosley, the Librarian at the St Bride Printing Library, London, who has written extensively about the Roman lettering tradition. He felt that the design was moving away from Cresci's intentions. He pointed out to me some 'Nordic angularity', as he called it, in some of the characters, which caused me to go over all the curved parts to return to Roman rotundity (figures 8 & 9). Such criticism was very welcome in restoring perspective to the project, because, due to the tight schedule, I was entirely immersed in the design process and could not always achieve an adequate critical distance. Considering all the amendments described above, I put it to the Agenzia: 'In this way a nice Mediterranean wind blows through the design.'

In the time allowed, this is as far as I could go in response to the brief – marrying modern type design to the tradition of Rome. The character set for the light version has been completed along these lines and the bold closely follows the light in details and general structure, although it was given a much greater relative contrast between thick and thin strokes. This was done to keep the counters of the bold open enough to ensure legibility when it is used for text in small sizes, as well as for headlines. It also became clear that, given the generous, classical proportions of the new typeface, a special version of the bold – condensed, with shortened ascenders, descenders and capitals, with strengthened thin parts and with extra space between the letters – should be made for signs (figure 11).

Further presentations of the complete project took place in March and April 1998. During the presentation of 21 April I proposed a change in the design of the italic. In the early stages plans for the italic were sketchy and seemed to point in the direction of Renaissance script, the kind of italic that I had made for my typefaces Hollander and Swift. The light and bold romans had been given priority, as the interpolated regular version and the version for the signs were needed early in the schedule for application in different parts of the project, and consequently the

# Santa Maria del Popolo

## Santa Maria del Popolo

Figure 11. Standard bold version of the typeface (top) compared with the amended version created for the signs (below).



*a noppea*  
*a noppea*

Figure 12. The first idea for an italic (above) and the final version (below).



Figure 13. Isotype symbols.



Figure 14. Symbol by Otl Aicher for the 1972 Munich Olympics.



Figure 15. The plebeians: pictograms designed by Unger for the signs.

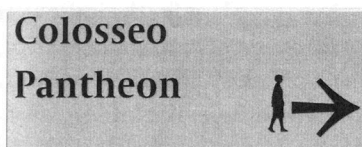


Figure 16. Examples of the arrow and pictograms in use on signs.

design of the italic had remained dormant for nearly two months. When I returned to this font, I realized that the chancery-like shapes, related to Renaissance scripts, as I had shown early in February, were somewhat foreign to the rest of the design, which relied more on early Baroque and ancient Roman models. Therefore I decided to look once more at Cresci's work, but now especially at his italics, and to move the general approach of the new italic more in that direction. The italic capitals reflect faithfully the roman capitals, and the italic lowercase letterforms were made rounder, which is especially visible in shapes such as a and p, and in the upstrokes (figure 12).

There are some elements in a sign system that are related to the typeface, which are often used in combination with text: arrows and symbols or pictograms. The majority of arrows in use on signs at present were designed during the 1960s and 1970s to accompany common sanserifs of that period, such as Helvetica and Univers. Symbols and pictograms were also subordinated to these internationally popular sanserifs. Arrows are usually monoline things with slight optical corrections in the sharp corners and with diagonal parts cut off at top and bottom, either horizontally or at right angles to the diagonals. Symbols and pictograms have been simplified into shapes constructed with compass and ruler, heavily influenced by the symbols designed in the 1920s for Otto Neurath's Isotype system of pictorial statistics (figure 13), and by the pursuit of an international style during the 1960s and 1970s for airports and Olympic Games, among other things (figure 14). Human bodies have become rigid and awkward shapes in pictograms, resulting in toy-like airport officials, primitive athletes seemingly made of wood or steel tubes, and indifferent shapes on the entrances to toilets.

For the pictograms, and especially for the humanoid figures, I returned once more to the Romans, to a part of their art in which they especially excelled: portraiture. Many sculpted Roman portraits are uncannily lifelike and realistic, yet marvellously simplified and abstracted at the same time. This approach has been employed for the pictograms – for example, the pedestrian symbol. Different combinations of silhouettes for man, woman and child will be used, with the possibility of turning them into one of the groups that frequently cross the Piazza Montecitorio on their way from the Pantheon to the Trevi fountain (figure 15). These human figures show a modulation related to changes from thick to thin in the type design. They are more personal than their geometric counterparts but are so abstracted that they resemble no one in particular. Nonetheless, one of the members of the Agenzia was convinced, upon seeing the symbols for man and woman, that the symbol for woman was an exact portrait of his grandmother.

As the typeface for Rome is subtly modulated with distinct differences between thick and thin strokes and with elegant serifs, it does not combine well with the internationally familiar arrows and pictograms. It was necessary to design a special Roman arrow, which similarly displays stroke contrast, modulation and elegance. Several designs were tried and, as arrows often stand alone with a fair amount of white space around them, one was chosen that is not too delicate but which carries some weight and shows authority (figure 16).

A particular feature of the Roman sign system is the extreme difference in the lengths of names of destinations and objects. Beside long names such as *San Giovanni in Laterano* or *Santa Croce in Gerusalemme*

there are short names such as *Pantheon* and *Colosseo*. At first it was even contemplated to present names of important churches with the prefix *Basilica di* added, hence *Basilica di San Giovanni in Laterano*, making it necessary to spread such names over three lines instead of the two that were already necessary. But the Agenzia were convinced to drop the *Basilica di*, as that is an official part of names that is not used colloquially. But as the application of a long or a short destination name does make a big difference in the use of the space on a sign, it was necessary to develop a distinct view of this issue. To this end I prepared a text for the Agenzia, to explain to them the principle that I proposed for placing elements on the signs. It was entitled *Text and space in Rome*, and is given hereafter.

### Text and space in Rome

The design of the lettering that will point the way for pilgrims and other visitors to Rome in the year 2000 draws on two facets of the tradition of public lettering in Rome: inscriptions from Imperial Rome and examples from the early Baroque, in particular the works of Cresci and Horfei. The Baroque examples showed how it is possible for lowercase text to be reconciled with classical capitals (as in the works of Cresci), and the Imperial Roman capitals served not only as models for the basic shapes but they also handed down something of their calligraphic elegance. For the relationship between text and space a link has been sought principally with Roman customs.

There are some pronounced differences between inscriptions in ancient Rome and those of the early Baroque. Roman lettering often displays a remarkable freedom and sense of motion because, before they were cut, the letters were – very probably – written or painted freehand. Letters from the late fifteenth century were carefully drawn as outlines and then filled in, so that they are often more static than Roman letters.

There are also striking differences between the way the Romans used space and how texts were placed during the Baroque period. Roman letters are often narrow and closely packed, and spaces are filled to the edges with letters (figures 17 & 18). Letters of the Baroque are broader in concept, and the letterers of the time, particularly Horfei, preferred a lot of space between the letters and around texts (figure 19).

The Romans' expansive use of text often gives one the impression that spaces are too small for the texts they contain. This approach was perhaps a consequence of the same urge that drove the Romans constantly to expand the frontiers of their empire. It gives rise to a tension between text and space. Roman texts are frequently centred, with equal space on either side of the text, but some are aligned only on the left with lines of unequal length (figure 18). Whichever scheme is adopted, there is often little space left over, not only to left and right of the text but also at top and bottom.

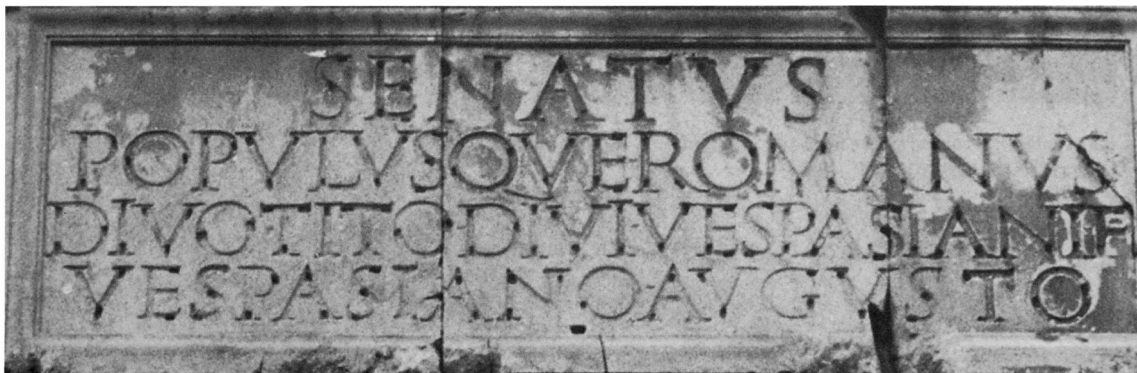


Figure 17. Arch of Titus, Roman Forum (AD 81).

In the Renaissance, Roman examples were imitated, but not with the Romans' own daring. Both then and during the Baroque period, inscriptions were almost always precisely centred. The spaces on either side and sometimes above and below texts too were equalized. Centring neutralizes the space in which a text is set, which is emphasized when the spaces are large. In Horfei's hands, this approach produced statuesque and severe inscriptions of great authority (figure 19). Ancient Roman inscriptions, by contrast, display a surprising looseness and sometimes nonchalance, qualities possibly engendered by the enormous self-assurance of which the Romans were possessed.

A truly twentieth-century ingredient of typography is asymmetry, the eccentric placing of text (and images) combined with acceptance of left-over empty spaces (figure 20). These spaces are often so large as to be autonomous and active elements, playing just as important a role in compositions as texts and images themselves. When asymmetry and acceptance of empty spaces are combined with the Roman habit of expanding to the edges of surfaces, a tension is created between those parts of the surface that are filled with text and the open spaces. Elements placed in the open spaces, such as arrows, attract instant attention.

Although asymmetry existed in the nineteenth century and had already penetrated deeply into typography by the beginning of the twentieth, it ties in with features of life in the late twentieth century and probably into the twenty-first century too: features which include pronounced contrasts such as those between activity and rest, between working in sharply demarcated time slots and free time. Other contrasts are those between densely built-up areas and ever scarcer unbuilt-on land, between the bustling city and the search for space outside it, for space in time and for movement. Other such contrasts are the stoic acceptance of unavoidable noise and the quest for silence, a much-sought-after commodity; and growing internationalization & globalization on the one hand, and growing attention to local & national life on the other.

Rome has a great and prominent past and is at the same time a modern city with all the means of transport and communication that influence both our present and our future lives. Rome naturally belongs to the Romans, as shown by its unique character, but it is also an international city (as it was in antiquity) and a magnet for millions. This makes it an intensely busy place, but it is also a place of calm and reflection. That is why the idea of approaching



Figure 18. Inscription in the Roman Forum (late third century AD).

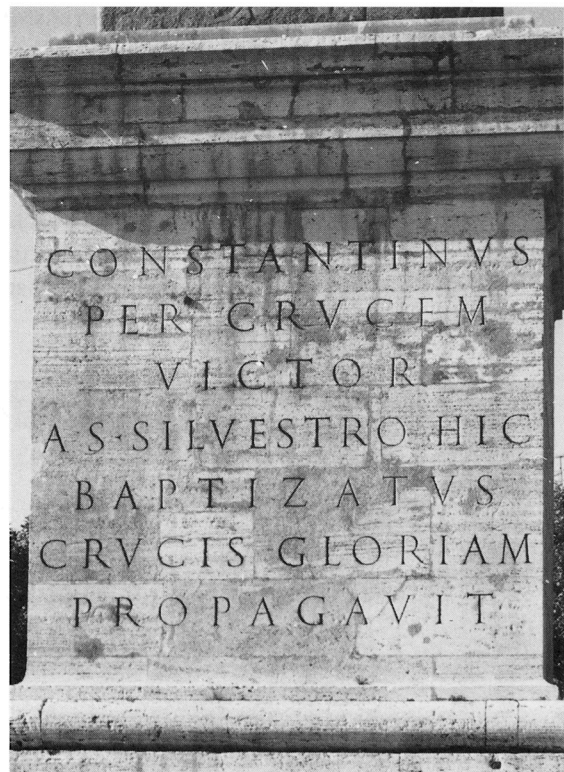


Figure 19. (right) Inscription on the base of the obelisk outside the church of San Giovanni in Laterano (1588).

text with pronounced asymmetry and an acceptance of open spaces is so appropriate.

Every surface destined to carry text for the Giubileo will demonstrate this approach: texts will be carried close to the edges of pages, signs and screens. They will always be aligned on the left and

not centred, and they will be placed so that spaces are left open to the right of and below them. In all cases, the top and left-hand margins will be noticeably narrower than the right and bottom margins (figure 21).

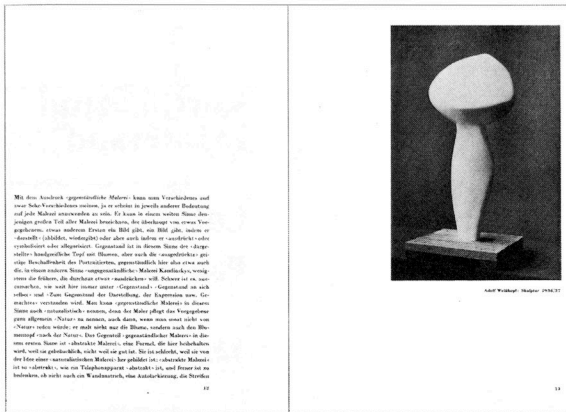


Figure 20. Catalogue for Gruppe 1933, designed by Jan Tschichold (1933).

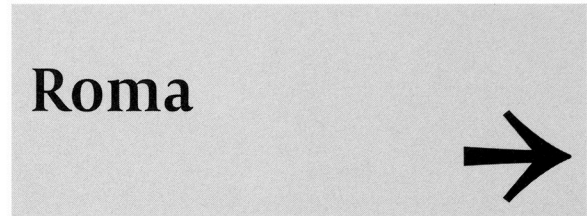


Figure 21. For the year 2000.

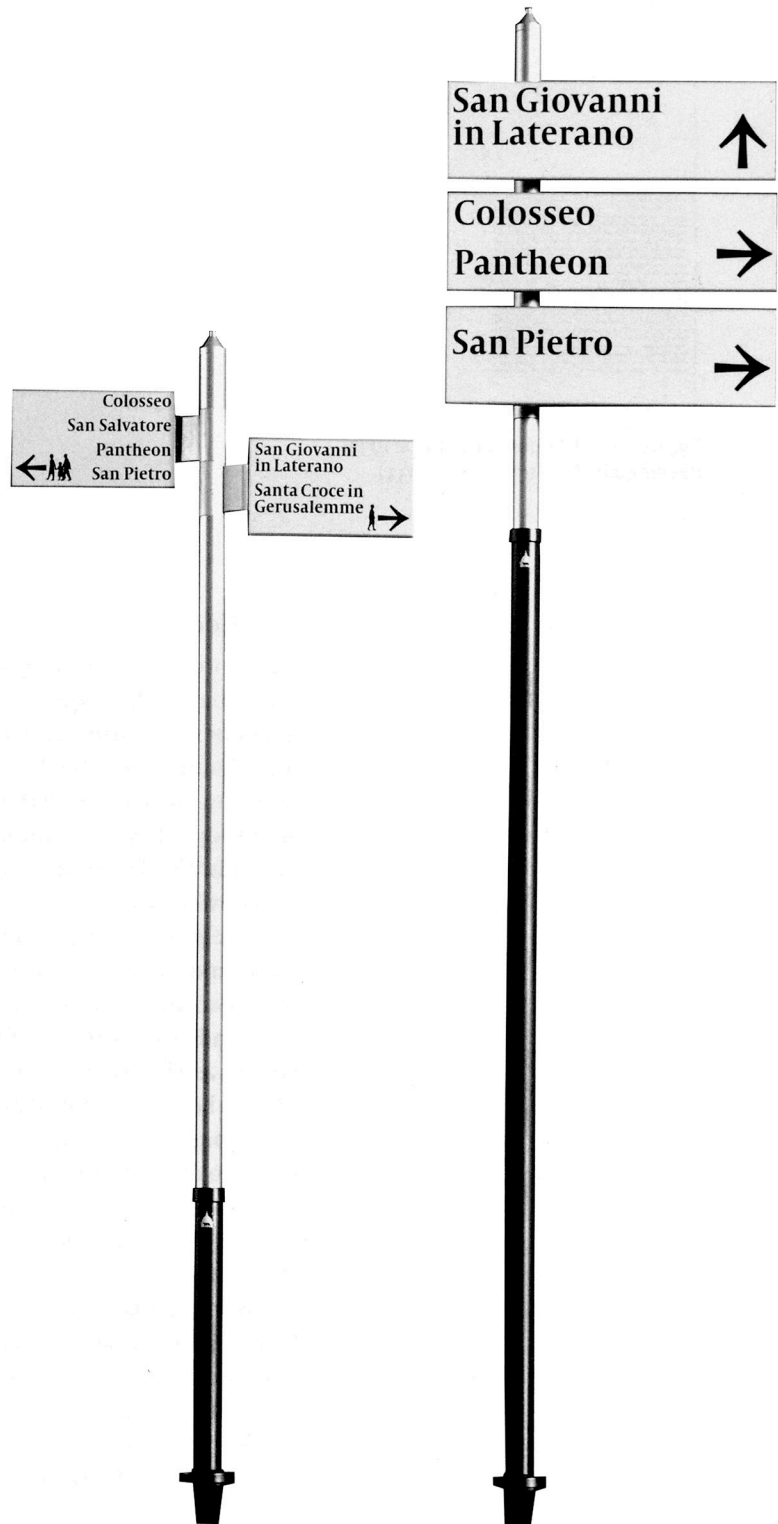
## Coda

The approach to designing the orientation and information system for Rome was determined by an interest in mass communication: this does not necessarily involve conservatism or catering to the lowest common denominator, but leaves room for experiment and invention; nor does it mean neglecting the wishes of specific audiences, of different age groups, different educational levels and different cultural backgrounds. The design of the various elements in the system was driven by the conviction that typography operates well with the basic elements: type, weight, size, space and colour. The consequence of this view is a direct and elementary approach to design, which in the present case has led to deceptively straightforward letterforms and typography on the signs and other printed information (figures 22–4). This approach could be seen as a kind of modern classicism which is not exclusively Dutch but has been (and still is) pursued by many Dutch designers.

Of course the question will be asked why a Dutchman had to go to Rome to make the orientation and information system for the Giubileo, including a very Roman type design. Basically, it is the consequence of inviting designers from abroad to apply for this job. But personally I thought this a fitting occasion to settle an old score. For a short period between 9 January 1522 and 14 September 1523, a Dutchman, Adriaan Florisz Boeyens, held the papacy under the name of Adrianus VI – the only Dutch pope ever. Earlier he had held jobs as varied as tutor of Charles V to head of the Inquisition for Aragon and Navarra. He spent most of his short reign as Pope scheming with the emperor Charles V against the French King François I. As the successor to the ostentatious Pope

Leo X, Adrian VI kept a plain court, showing little or no interest in the arts or intellectual achievements. In Rome and in a large part of the Roman Catholic community he was disliked, even hated. And, although at present this unpleasant episode is forgotten, working on this project gave me the satisfaction of bringing to Rome some of what Adrian VI withheld.

Figures 22 (left) & 23 (right). Examples of directional signs mounted on the supports designed by n|p|k industrial designers. Signs usually consist simply of a board directly attached to a pole. The designers at n|p|k, Peter Krouwel and Simon Wilkinson, wanted to avoid this mundane construction. They wanted to create a distance between the supports and the boards, to make the signs correspond better with the spaciousness of Rome's architectural environment. To avoid the simple addition of a third element, an arm between pole and sign, the connecting segments actually form part of the pole (figure 22). A long screw, going in from the top, holds all elements firmly together, resulting in a smooth and elegant signpost. The poles themselves consist of two parts, a slender top part and a lower part of a wider diameter. For the pedestrian signs the wide part is short, to keep the appearance of these poles slim and in harmony with the smaller boards (20 × 50cm and 30 × 50cm). The lower part is longer for the traffic signs (figure 23), which are larger (30 × 110cm) and therefore require stronger support.



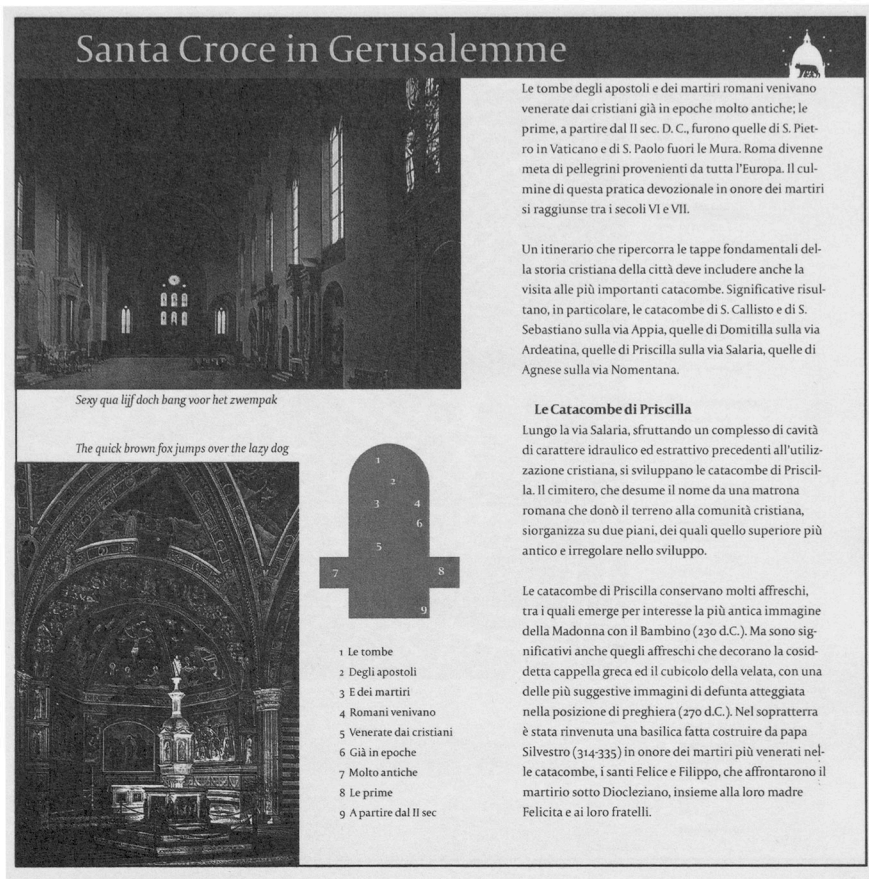


Figure 24. An information panel for Guibileo, measuring approximately 100 × 100 cm.

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