Helvetica

Max Meidinger, 1957

Helvetica was developed in 1957 by Max Miedinger with Eduard Hoffmann at the Haas'sche Schriftgiesserei (Haas type foundry) of Münchenstein, Switzerland. Haas set out to design a new sans-serif typeface that could compete with Akzidenz-Grotesk in the Swiss market. Originally called Die Neue Haas Grotesk, it was created based on Schelter-Grotesk. The aim of the new design was to create a neutral typeface that had great clarity, had no intrinsic meaning in its form, and could be used on a wide variety of signage.

When Linotype adopted the Neue Haas Grotesk (which was never planned to be a full range of mechanical and hot-metal typefaces) its design was reworked. After the success of Univers, Arthur Ritzel of Stempel redesigned Neue Haas Grotesk into a larger family.

A neutral typeface with no intrinsic meaning.

In 1960, the typeface's name was changed by Haas' German parent company Stempel to Helvetica (derived from Confoederatio Helvetica, the Latin name for Switzerland) in order to make it more marketable internationally. It was initially suggested that the type be called 'Helvetsia' which is the original Latin name for Switzerland. This was ignored by Eduard Hoffmann as he decided it wouldn't be appropriate to name a type after a country. He then decided on 'Helvetica' as this meant 'Swiss' as opposed to 'Switzerland'.

Helvetica is among the most widely used sans-serif typefaces. Versions exist for the following alphabets/scripts: Latin, Cyrillic, Hebrew, Greek, Japanese, Korean, Hindi, Urdu, Khmer and Vietnamese. Chinese faces have been developed to complement Helvetica.

Helvetica is a popular choice for commercial wordmarks, including those for 3M, American Airlines, American Apparel, AT&T, BMW, Jeep, JCPenney, Lufthansa, Microsoft, Orange, Toyota, Panasonic, Motorola, Kawasaki and Verizon Wireless.

Apple Inc. has used Helvetica widely in Mac OS X, the iPhone OS, and the iPod. Helvetica is widely used by the U.S. government; for example, federal income tax forms are set in Helvetica, and NASA uses the type on the Space Shuttle orbiter. Helvetica is also used in the United States television rating system.

Variations

Wordmarks

Regular
Bold
Oblique
Bold Oblique

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj
Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss
Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz
0123456789 ?!@#$%^&*()

Signage

New York City's Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) uses Helvetica for many of its subway signs. But Helvetica was not adopted as the official font for signage until 1989. The standard font from 1970 until 1989

was Standard Medium, an Akzidenz Grotesk-like sans-serif, as defined by Unimark's New York City Transit Authority Graphic Standards Manual. The MTA system is still rife with a proliferation of Helvetica-like fonts, including Arial, in addition to some old remaining signs in Medium Standard, and a few anomalous signs in Helvetica Narrow. The Chicago Transit Authority uses Helvetica on its signage for the Chicago 'L'. The former state owned operator of the British railway system developed its own Helvetica-based Rail Alphabet font, which was also adopted by the National Health Service and the British Airports Authority. Additionally, it was also adopted by Danish railway company DSB for a time period. Canada's federal government uses Helvetica as its identifying typeface, with three variants being used in its corporate identity program, and encourages its use in all federal agencies and websites. The

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logo and graphic identity of the "Metro" (Underground) in Madrid are Helvetica Regular and Helvetica Neue.
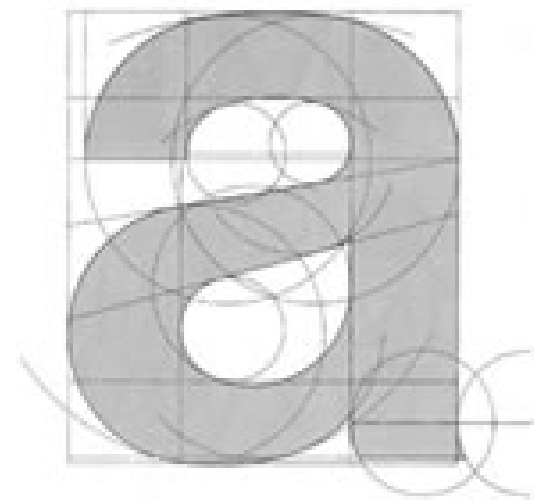
Max Meidinger

Max Miedinger (December 24, 1910 in Zurich, Switzerland - March 8, 1980, Zurich, Switzerland) was a Swiss typeface designer. He was famous for creating Helvetica in 1957. Marketed as a symbol of cutting-edge Swiss technology, Helvetica went global at once.

Between 1926 and 1930, Max was trained as a typesetter in Zurich, after which he attended evening classes at the Kunstgewerbeschule in Zurich.

Later, he became a typographer for Globus department store's advertising studio in Zurich, and

became a customer counselor and typeface sales representative for the Haas'sche Schriftgießerei in Münchenstein near Basle, until 1956, where he became a freelance graphic artist in Zurich.