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Manufactured in California.
simultaneously resolve compromises inspired by the rhythm of black

are pinnacles in a range of artistic notions

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Inspired by the rhythm of black

Not your garden variety text fonts.

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Fonts on front cover and this page:
Mrs Eaves XL Regular & Narrow.
The Base 900 family is a high fidelity adaptation of Base 9, a comprehensive family of screen fonts with companion printer fonts designed in 1994. Base 900 seeks to simultaneously resolve compromises inherent in the design of its predecessor, while holding true to its nine pixel bitmap lineage. The resulting Base 900 fonts still convey a modular, geometric style, reminiscent of the early computer technology era, but with an updated, more refined look made possible by a high resolution grid.

One of the challenges when drawing Base 900 was finding the right balance between normalizing the design of the original Base 9 while maintaining its unique character. The redesign still had to look like Base. Improvements were made to glyph outlines, spacing, and kerning, and three extra weights were added. But close attention was paid to situate Base 900 outside the overcrowded stylistic neighborhood of too many sans serif fonts that aspire to look “neutral.” Subverting legibility in favor of a more unique visual quality would make some type purists cringe. But others, who feel that type should impart more than just legibility, will enjoy the undeniable singularity of Base 900.
EIDETIC WAS DRAWN BY RODRIGO CAVAZOS as a way of coming to terms with certain aspects of traditional typography that he had learned to dislike as a production artist—burnishing tool in hand—in the 1980s. Cavazos had initially intended to meet classicism halfway, but the exploration proved to be too compelling and he quickly crossed that line, and then many others.

The design of Eidetic itself was born in 1996 under what Cavazos considers ideal circumstances: scratched out on grid paper with an old mechanical pencil, in the passenger seat of a parked car somewhere near 20th and Valencia. The original sketch was considerably more eccentric, a product of its time, with a mixed serif treatment and quirky bits throughout. Much of this evaporated during the development that followed.

The font was initially self published as Eidetic Serif in February 1998. Then, in the spring/summer of 2000, in collaboration with Emigre, the five base fonts were rebuilt, and the Black, Omni, and Fractions fonts were added. Though visually similar to the original edition, Eidetic Neo represents a magnitude of improvement—from point structure through to hinting.

Eidetic, the adjective, refers to a mental image of overwhelming vividness or clarity. “As such,” says Cavazos, “I can safely say that the name does not apply to the experience of developing Eidetic, as this was more of an iterative blur for me. Certainly, there were memorable milestones and revelations along the way, but the name is mostly dedicated to those signature letter forms that link the original vision of the design to this final incarnation.”
The initial concept for Fairplex was born in January 1998 when Zuzana Licko was exploring the idea of a text face with the low contrast of a sans serif while featuring slight serifs to lend it a distinct serif feel.

When working on the various weights, the challenge was to balance the contrast and stem weight with the serifs. To provide a comprehensive family, Licko wanted the boldest weight to be quite heavy. This meant that the black weight would need more contrast than the book weight in order to avoid clogging up. Harmonizing the serifs proved difficult. The initial serif treatments Licko tried didn’t stand up to the robust character of the black weight.

Several months passed without much progress, until she attended a lecture by Alastair Johnston who pointed out that slab serifs (also known as “Egyptians”) are really more of a variation on sans serifs than on serif designs. In other words, slab serif type is more akin to sans-serif type with serifs added on than it is to serif type.

This sparked the idea that the solution to her serif problem might be a slab serif treatment. The serifs were then angled to minimize their bulk and to lend visual interest to the otherwise austere looking slab serifs.
Before the age of personal computers, one of Zuzana Licko’s favorite typefaces was Bodoni. She was attracted to its clean lines and geometric shapes, and the variety of display choices. However, for practical reasons, she often decided against using Bodoni for text settings, as the extreme contrast made it difficult to read at small sizes.

The high contrast in many Bodoni revivals may be the result of display sizes being used as the model. This causes the hairlines to drop out when reduced to small sizes.

Because Giambattista Bodoni created numerous size variations, many different Bodoni revivals and interpretations are possible. Determining which one most truly reflects Bodoni’s work can be eternally debated.

Filosofia is Licko’s interpretation of a Bodoni, and her main purpose was to address the issue of contrast. The design shows her personal preference for the geometric aspects of Bodoni, while incorporating such features as the slightly bulging round serif endings which often appeared in printed samples of Bodoni’s work and reflect Bodoni’s origins in letterpress technology. It is somewhat rugged with reduced contrast allowing it to be used in a wide range of text sizes.
Xavier Dupré, the designer of the Malaga typeface family, believes that within typeface design most legibility needs have been worked out, and that today we are satisfying aesthetic desires. We design typefaces to differentiate our communications. Type design is primarily a formal exercise reflecting our personal quirks, technological obsessions, and cultural heritage.

In the type design work of Dupré, issues of cultural heritage and personal quirks are of particular consequence. An incessant traveler, he visited the following countries during the development of the Malaga family: Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Cambodia, Vietnam, France, Belgium, and finally, Spain, where his choice for the name Malaga originates (Malaga is a port city in southern Spain).

Malaga is inspired by ideas ranging from black-letter to Latin fonts, and from the Quattrocento’s first Venetian antiquas to brush stroke types. This makes Malaga a richly animated font saturated with unorthodox detail. Its black and bold weights are particularly suited for headlines and short texts, while the subtle modulation and moderate contrast in the regular and medium weights makes it perfectly readable in extended text settings.
Matrix II is a complete reworking of the Matrix family which was originally designed in 1985. The redesign, which started in January 2007, was initiated by the need to create an OpenType version of Matrix. It also offered an opportunity to make subtle changes and to fine tune a number of existing characters which were designed some 25 years ago when computer technology was still in its early stages.

Some of the changes to Matrix II may not be immediately apparent. The contrast between thick and thin strokes was decreased in some instances, and overshoots were corrected. The width of various characters was adjusted and regularized. The design of the lower case g was revisited and an alternate single story version was designed and added to the OpenType version. Of course these changes necessitated new kerning pairs which were added as well.

After four months of work, designer Zuzana Licko was satisfied with the improvements she had made to Matrix. But she also realized that a project like Matrix is never completely finished. It’s the fungible nature of the medium and the continually changing hardware and software at our disposal that constantly challenges the designer to make technical improvements and adjustments to a typeface design. This latest release, however, should carry Matrix well into the future.
In this interpretation of Baskerville, Zuzana Licko addressed the sharply criticized feature of high contrast for which Baskerville’s work was severely criticized throughout his lifetime and after. This persistent criticism, however, did not prevent Baskerville from becoming assimilated as a perfectly legible text face. In fact, the high contrast between stems and hairlines became quite desirable, as is apparent in typefaces such as Bodoni which followed in the lineage. It was this criticism that made Licko curious about possible alternatives, and she was prompted to explore the path not taken.

One aspect of Baskerville’s type that Licko intended to retain was that of overall openness and lightness. To achieve this, while reducing contrast, the lower case characters were given a wider proportion. In order to avoid increasing the set-width, Licko reduced the x-height, relative to the cap-height. Consequently, Mrs Eaves has the appearance of setting about one point size smaller than the average typeface in lower case text sizes.

Licko realizes that certain aspects of this revival probably contradict Baskerville’s intentions, but her point in doing so was to take those elements from Baskerville that have become familiar, and thus highly legible to today’s reader, and to give these her own interpretation of a slightly loose Baskerville that may be reminiscent of a time past.
When she set out to design the original Mrs Eaves, Zuzana Licko never specified how it could be best used. Typefaces will find their own way. But after observing it for many years, if there’s one particular common usage that stands out, it must be literary—Mrs Eaves loves to adorn book covers and relishes short blurbs on the flaps and backs of dust covers.

One area where Mrs Eaves seems less comfortable is in the setting of long texts, particularly in books, magazines, and newspapers. With the release of the XL series Licko intended to fulfill this need with a set of new fonts that stays true to the unique character of Mrs Eaves while providing more versatility of use, specifically those requiring space economy.

The main distinguishing features of Mrs Eaves XL are its larger x-height with shorter ascenders and descenders and overall tighter spacing. The larger x-height allows a smaller point size to be used while maintaining readability.

Mrs Eaves XL also has a narrow counterpart, with a set width of about 92 percent of the regular. At first, this may not seem particularly narrow, but the goal was to provide an alternative to the regular that would work well as a compact text face while maintaining the full characteristics of the regular, rather than an extreme narrow which would be more suitable for headline use.
Mr Eaves is the sans-serif companion to Mrs Eaves, one of Emigre’s most popular classic typeface designs. Created in 2009, this addition expands the versatility of the original Mrs Eaves fonts with two complementary families; Mr Eaves Sans and Mr Eaves Modern.

Mr Eaves was based on the proportions of the original serif version, but Licko took some liberty with its design. The main concern was to avoid creating a typeface that looked like it simply had its serifs cut off. And while it matches the serif in weight, color, and armature, the sans stands as its own typeface with many unique properties.

The sans version relates most directly to the original serif version, noticeably in the roman lower case letters a, e, and g, as well as in subtle details such as the angled lead in strokes, the counter forms of the b, d, p, and q, and the curved leg of the capital R and the tail of the Q.

Deviations from the original Mrs Eaves are evident mostly in the overall decrease of contrast, as well as in details of flag, tail and finial endings which were altered to maintain a cleaner, sans serif look.

With the loss of serifs, the set width of Mr Eaves is slightly narrower, but the distinctly loose-fitting letter spacing of the serif was applied also to the sans version. This, together with generous built-in line spacing due to a small x-height and extended ascenders and descenders, renders the same kind of lightness and airiness when setting text that is so characteristic of Mrs Eaves.
This XL version of Mr Eaves Sans completes the fourth quadrant of the Mrs and Mr Eaves families.

Mr Eaves XL Sans features a larger x-height than Mr Eaves Sans with shorter ascenders and descenders and overall tighter spacing. Mr Eaves XL allows for a wide variety of uses and is perfectly suitable for lengthy text settings. The larger x-height also maintains superior readability at smaller point sizes.

Like the Sans, the XL Sans version relates most directly to the serif version, noticeably in the roman lower case letters a, e, and g, as well as in subtle details such as the angled lead in strokes, the counter forms of the b, d, p, and q, and the curved leg of the R and tail of the Q.

The matching Modern family provides an overall less humanistic look, with simpler and more geometric-looking shapes, most noticeably in the squared-off terminals and symmetric lower case counters. This family has moved furthest from its roots, yet still contains some of Mrs Eaves’ DNA. The Modern Italic is free of tails, and overall the Modern exhibits more repetition of forms, projecting a cleaner look.

Mr Eaves XL Sans and XL Modern feature four weights with accompanying italics, small caps and alternate characters.
The Tribute family of fonts was designed by Frank Heine in 2003, and is based on types cut by the Frenchman François Guyot. The single example that was used as the model for Tribute was a reprint of a type specimen printed around 1565 in the Netherlands.

Heine had always harbored a desire to design a typeface based on a Renaissance Antiqua. There were two reasons. First, the Renaissance Antiqua can be considered the prototype for most of today’s typefaces. It already provided a formal maturity at the end of the 15th century, with an exceptional level of differentiation between single characters, offering good legibility.

Second, Heine was particularly attracted to its archaic feel, especially with text settings in smaller design sizes (Nonpareil through Bourgeois). It is rougher with less filigree than the types of the following centuries, thus exhibiting much of the cruder craftsmanship of the early printing processes.

Despite Heine’s fondness for typefaces originating from about 1480 to 1580, there was the nagging question about the sense and purpose of adapting a historical model for today’s digital techniques. There is a plethora of revivals available, but many of these solutions appeared to him as over-interpreted in the details. They were mostly too thin and sterile looking, erasing any traces of its origins. With the design of Tribute, Heine intended to avoid that trap and maintain a strong link to the past.
The famous Roman type cut in Venice by Nicolas Jenson, and used in 1470 for his printing of the tract, De Evangelica Praeparatione, Eusebius, has usually been declared the seminal and definitive representative of a class of types known as Venetian Old Style.

Sometime in the early 1990s, John Downer started doodling letters for a Venetian typeface. The first letters arose from pondering how shapes of lowercase letters and capital letters relate to one another in terms of classical ideals and geometric proportions, two pinnacles in a range of artistic notions which emerged during the Italian Renaissance. Such ideas are interesting to explore, but in the field of type design they often lead to dead ends. It is generally acknowledged, for instance, that pure geometry, as a strict approach to type design, has limitations. No Roman alphabet, based solely on the circle and square, has ever been ideal for continuous reading.

In the course of developing Vendetta for text, Downer made innumerable compromises. Even though the finished letter forms retain a measure of geometric structure, they were often modified to improve their performance en masse.

A large measure of Vendetta’s overall character comes from a synthesis of ideas, old and new. Hallmarks of Roman type design from the Incunabula period are blended with contemporary concerns for the optimal display of letter forms on computer screens. Vendetta is thus not a historical revival. It is instead an indirect but personal digital homage to the Roman types of punch cutters whose work was influenced by the example Jenson set in 1470.
The concept for Vista began in July of 2002, when Xavier Dupré sketched a few characters in a notebook intending to design a semi-serif typeface for text and display. He was inspired by fonts like FF Meta, which are very successful at combining the humanist appeal of calligraphic forms with the pragmatic simplicity of the sans.

After a number of false starts, Dupré found the right proportions for a text font—not too condensed to preserve comfort in reading, and not too wide for economy of space. According to Dupré, the most difficult characters to design in Vista (and most other typefaces for that matter) were the lowercase a and g. They are also the most interesting characters. Their design can set the tone for the look and feel of a typeface. Particularly the a has a special appeal to Dupré. As a student, he learned to recognize and identify fonts by observing this character.

In Vista, the lower case a is the soul of the typeface. Its structure was inspired by the rhythm of blackletter which is characterized by high contrast and emphasis on the vertical. Dupré combined these graphic features with humanist shapes and subtle details to make a highly functional yet expressive text font.

The text weights of Vista are loosely spaced while the bold and black are spaced tightly. This type of spacing emphasizes the lightness and blackness of the respective weights. It also makes the lighter weights more legible when setting long texts at small sizes, while the Black weight, which is more appropriate for titling, is given more impact with the tighter spacing.
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