

# Arnhem

OurType

Type design is done by specialists called type designers. At least, that's what we may think at first. And it is true that there are many good typefaces made by 'real' type designers. But there are also many good typefaces made by people who mostly did other things, with some type designing on the side. By 'type' I mean indeed the letterforms used within typography, so I refer to the fonts which are used to compose text. This leaves out the area of handwriting, calligraphy, and lettering. Before the invention of graphic design, people who designed type might be engravers, writing

BLOND, BLOND ITALIC & SC BLOND 12/15 PT. & 9.2/11.5 PT.

masters, printers, or punchcutters. In the twentieth century many types were designed by people who had a strong relation to the printing industry but who were not type designers pure and simple. W. A. Dwiggins, for example, was a typographer and graphic designer who started to design type as well. Another example is the Dutch book typographer Bram de Does, who, after many years of working as a typographer, designed the typefaces TRINITÉ and LEXICON. Both of these designers worked on typefaces that they themselves felt a need for, and these are often designs which excel in respect of drawing and character, within a certain style of letter. Another example would be SYNTAX designed by Hans Eduard Meier. Here a personal need to create a humanist sanserif made all the difference. What is important in these examples is that the designers started on the task out of a strong personal impulse; nobody asked them to do so.

Then there are the people who occupy themselves with type design and with nothing else. You will find them for sure in the world of the type-manufacturing companies: the employees working for *Monotype*, *Adobe*, or *Linotype*. In the factory – an office these days – people are asked to do type design or related activities for eight hours a day. They have to produce for the trade's sake, and within such companies there is usually not much room for one's own preferences and typographic needs. In addition to these opposite ends of the spectrum there are mixed cases. A company might ask a designer if he or she could provide them with a font. The request is often followed by some specifications from the customer; so 'carte blanche' is rare in such a case. And which category – the individual or the industry – is responsible for the best work? It is hard to answer; the question is also not specific enough to be open to a proper answer. But the fact that it is difficult to answer shows that within type design the individual plays an important role.

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