

Helvetica

a Mid-century modern typeface

About the Typeface

- Helvetica was developed by Max Miedinger with Edüard Hoffmann in 1957 for the Haas Type Foundry in Münchenstein, Switzerland.
- In the late 1950s, the European design world saw a revival of older sans-serif typefaces such as the German face Akzidenz Grotesk created by Berthold around 1898. Haas' director Hoffmann commissioned Miedinger, a former employee and freelance designer, to draw an updated sans-serif typeface to add to their line.
- The result was called Die Neue Haas Grotesk, but its name was later changed to Helvetica, derived from Helvetia, the Latin name for Switzerland, when Haas' German parent companies Stempel and Linotype began marketing the font internationally in 1961.



Popularity

- With its clean, smooth lines, it reflected a modern look that many designers were seeking, called the Swiss Style. At a time when many European countries were recovering from the ravages of war, Helvetica presented a way to express newness and modernity.
- Introduced amidst this wave of popularity of Swiss design, and fueled by advertising agencies selling this new design style to their clients, Helvetica quickly appeared in corporate logos, signage for transportation systems, package labeling, in poster art, in advertising—in short, everywhere.
- Inclusion of the font in home computer systems such as the Apple Macintosh in 1984 only further cemented its ubiquity.

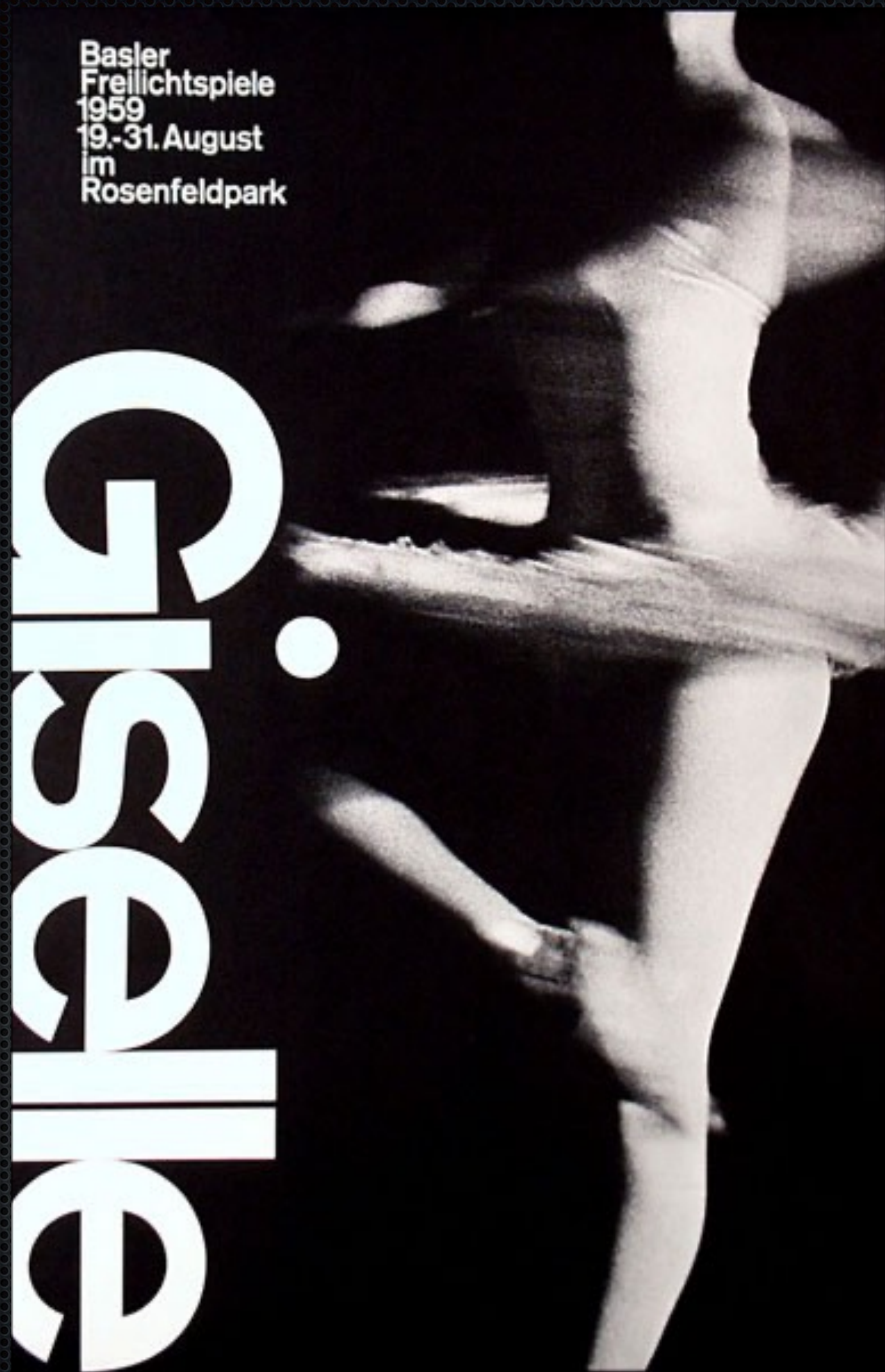
ubiquity: *the fact of appearing everywhere or of being very common.*



Swiss Design

Often referred to as the *International Typographic Style* or *the International Style*, the style of design that originated in Switzerland in the 1940s and 50s was the basis of much of the development of graphic design during the mid 20th century. Led by designers **Josef Müller-Brockmann** at the Zurich School of Arts and Crafts and **Armin Hofmann** at the Basel School of Design, the *style favored simplicity, legibility and objectivity*.

Of the many contributions to develop from the two schools were the *use of, sans-serif typography, grids and asymmetrical layouts*. Also stressed was the *combination of typography and photography as a means of visual communication*. The primary influential works were developed as posters, which were seen to be the most effective means of communication.



The Good

- Fans of Helvetica tout its **legibility** and its **versatility**, finding it equally “perfect” for use in a corporate logo or on a local street sign.
- It was **created specifically to be neutral**, to not give any impression or have any meaning in itself. This neutrality was paramount, and **based on the idea that type itself should give no meaning**. That’s one reason why it’s been used by everyone from Post-it to American Apparel.
- Was **designed in post-war Europe**, and many companies were looking for a change. It was the opposite of all the kitchy, fancy, decorative typography that covered corporate materials and advertisements.
- Sleek lines and modern sensibilities were just what **companies were looking for to remake their identities and set themselves apart from the past**.



FROM WRITER AND EXECUTIVE PRODUCER
MATTHEW WEINER OF **THE SOPRANOS**



MAD MEN

Where the truth lies



The Bad

- Some designers find Helvetica to be **dull, predictable and boring**.
- In the 1970s, a backlash occurred when young designers began looking for more energetic, expressive ways to present information.
- This **post-modernist reaction to Helvetica** included the **“grunge” period** of the 1990s, when designers experimented with new concepts in graphic communication, moving away from the orderly, predictable look of Helvetica to a mix of print styles and a wildly varying use of color and line.
- One argument against Helvetica is that it is the Corporate Generic Font that lacks personality.
- Helvetica is often a **“safe choice”** for anyone who is too afraid or too lazy to choose something else.





29 JULY

STEL ANDI VASILOS
HOPE / JACK/THERAPY

05 AUG

CHRISTIAN CAMBAS
DEVELOP

14 PLAYA BEACH BAR PAXEI

DJ TIM
PRESSING / BAG TYED

entertainment (M-S) @dvd-on

EXCEPTIONAL SUPPORT FOR THE 1995-1996 SEASON HAS BEEN PROVIDED LUESTER T. MERTZ CHAR

95 96 SEASON

THE BRITISH THEATRE

BRING IN 'DA NOISE, BRING IN 'DA FUN
AND OTHER PLAYS
WRITTEN BY STEVE MARTIN DIRECTED BY BARRY EDLSTEIN
BY SAVION GLOVER, REG.E. GAINES AND GEORGE C. WOLFE

2 WOMEN
AND OTHER PLAYS
BY HAN ONG DIRECTED BY MARCUS STERN
ANDREA MARTIN & MARC

THE CHANGING FRAGMENT
WRITTEN BY WILLIAM SH DIRECTED BY

VENUS
WRITTEN BY SUZAN-LORI PARKS DIRECTED BY RICHARD FOREMAN

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So What?

So first you need to ask yourself a little about what you believe.

1. *On a google doc, answer these 4 questions.*

- What is the purpose of type?
- Should a typeface be expressive, or should it be legible or both?
- Are all typefaces expressive in one way or another?
- Is legibility and communication the same thing?

2. *Then write a 200-300 word essay response to one of the quotes on the class website on the same page. Do you agree or disagree with the statement and why. Give supporting evidence.*

THE ARRANGEMENT OF TYPE ON THE PAGE

THE **Sans serif**

Written by **Linda Reynolds**

Legibility

Letter Spacing

The space between letters must be sufficient to separate them clearly. If they touch or appear to touch, legibility will be severely reduced. Where condensed sans serif faces are set tightly spaced, it is common to find letters that have fused to form a different but legitimate word with a meaning quite different from that intended. If letter spacing is too great, outline will be diluted and more difficult to recognize.

Word Spacing

The space between words must of course be perceptibly greater than the space between letters within a word. The Gestalt principle of grouping by 'proximity' is at work here. However, the spacing must not be so great that the horizontal emphasis, or 'good continuation' of the line is destroyed. Optimum word spacing will therefore depend on both letter spacing and line spacing.

Line Spacing

For ease of reading, words must be grouped into lines that the eyes can follow easily. The wide space between lines must therefore be greater than the wide spacing. For continuous text, it is almost always an advantage to use a tracked one or two points greater than the point size of the type. This is especially true for line lengths approaching the upper limit for good legibility (see below), for typefaces with a strong vertical emphasis (this would include most sans serifs and modern serifed faces), and for faces with a relatively large x-height. If too much space is added, however, the lines will appear to drift apart and the text will appear lighter in color.

Line Length

Line length is a very important factor in legibility. If the lines are too short, we are unable to make efficient use of our peripheral vision and the normal pattern of eye movements is disrupted. If the lines are too long, it is difficult for the eyes to make a smooth and accurate 'back sweep' to the beginning of each new line. We may miss lines or begin reading the same line again (doubling). The optimum line length for continuous reading is between about 60 and 65 characters and spaces. Lines of more than 70 characters and spaces will reduce legibility and may be consciously perceived as being an effort to read. The minimum line length for comfort is probably about 40 characters and spaces.

Justified and Unjustified Setting

Researchers have been unable to show any significant difference in the legibility of justified and unjustified setting for moderate line lengths. There is, however, evidence that less-skilled readers have difficulty with justified setting in very short lines because of the uneven word spacing and frequent hyphenation. Unjustified setting gives constant word spacing, thereby avoiding the vertical white 'ivers' so often seen in justified text. As well as being aesthetically displeasing, ivers destroy the 'good continuation' of the lines, thus making them more difficult to follow. Successful justification therefore requires a line length of 60 or so characters and spaces, a good hyphenation program, and the facility to make fine adjustment in word spacing.

Italics

Italics have been shown to be less legible than roman letters for continuous text. This may be because the italic letters are less easily distinguished from one another. We are also less used to them. With electronically generated type, so-called 'italics' may in fact be a slanted version of the roman letters, rather than a separately designed font. Some of these 'obliques' are likely to have reduced legibility.

Condensed and Extended Type

The danger with condensed styles is that the letters will either apparently or actually fill in and run together. The standard of reproduction needs to be high to ensure good legibility. Extended styles reduce the number of words that can be read at each fixation. Normal letter proportions can be distorted very easily in electronic typesetting systems, with predictably illegible results in many cases.

Type Size

If the type is too small, letters and word will be difficult to discriminate. If it is too large, less words will be perceived at each fixation. For a normal reading distance of 12-15 in, the optimum type size for continuous text is usually somewhere between 9pt and 11pt, depending on the x-height of the typeface and the circumstances in which the material will be used.

Capitals

Text set in all-capital lettering is less legible than text set in lowercase letters with capitals where appropriate. This is because lowercase letters, with their ascenders and descenders, create more distinctive word outlines than do capital letters. Any word in capitals has a rectangular outline. Capitals also take up more space than lowercase letters, so more fixations of the eyes are needed to perceive the same number of words and this slows reading.

Bold

Bold type is of course invaluable for emphasis, but it is likely to reduce legibility when used for continuous text. The dense black type tends to create after-images, noticeable as bright glowing areas between the lines.

Type and its Background

Back on white versus white on black

This is because of the phenomenon of 'irradiation', whereby small bright images on a dark ground will appear to spread. To counteract this tendency, the typeface should have open counters and the letters should not be too tightly spaced. Sans serif faces generally withstand reversal better than serifed faces. There are no fine serifs or thin strokes to be lost if the image is thinned-down, and no serifs to fuse if it becomes thickened.

Mechanically Tinted Backgrounds

When using mechanical tints it is important to look carefully at the dot size in relation to the size of the type. The coarser the screen, the more likely it is that the dots will distort the letter shapes. Sans serifs tend to survive better than serifed faces because of their simpler and more robust letterforms.

Contrast

For good legibility, the contrast between type and its background should be at least 70%. Thus if the background has a reflectance of 100 units the type should have a reflectance of not more than 30 units, or vice versa. This is true for colored images too. Complementary colours with similar tonal values will cause the type to appear to vibrate against its background, a particularly unpleasant effect.

OF

Designed by **Allison Zayas**

TYPE