

Summary

- Claude Garamont (1500-1567) designed and casted the Garamond typeface (circa 1530).
- He was a French Parisian engraver who worked on typeface design and casting in the Renaissance period of the 16th century.
- He was instrumental in the adoption of Roman typeface designs as a replacement for the commonplace Gothic or blackletter fonts.
- Earlier in his career, Garamond had been working for the Parisian scholar-printer Robert Estienne, basing his romans on italic types cut by Francesco Griffo, typeface designer, who worked for the Italian type founder and printer Aldus Manutius in 1495.
- Claude Garamond's most well-known typeface cuts were made for the French court (King Francis I) and were based on the handwriting of the king's librarian, Angelo Vergecio, who was a Cretan copyist.
- After he died in 1561, some of Garamond's punches made their way to the printing office of Christoph Plantin in Antwerp, and notably to the Frankfurt foundry of Egenolff-Berner (1592), which would become the basis of the Stempel Garamond revival, considered to be the most Garamond interpretation of the genuine type (not the Jannon ones).
- Sixty years after Garamond's death, another French printer, Jean Jannon, cut a similar set of Garamond-like type (the face was more assymetrical), and the French government made it the official Royal Printing Office typeface.
- Decline in popularity in 18th and 19th century, people tried to revive/develop different Garamond styles
- Many "Garamond" revivals are based on the punch-cutter, Jean Jannon, whose work commonly was misattributed to Garamond.

Visual characteristics:

- "e" — small eye, popularized idea that cross-stroke should be level
- "a" — sharp hook upwards at top left
- "M" slightly splayed with outward-facing serifs at the top (left)
- "R" — leg extends outward from letter
- Low x-height (height of lower-case letters), making capitals look relatively large
- Top serifs on ascenders of letter have a downward slope and ride above the cap height (Ex. d)
- Axis of some letters is diagonal (Ex. o)
- First to deviate from handwritten-style to make letters readable for printing
- Thinner and more delicate letterforms, which allowed ink to bleed on the page without distorting the words (uses less ink)
- Apertures/counters are smaller than average, closed off earlier at the stem
- Contains low line contrast
- Serifs have slightly cupped bases, serifs on the top of a character are sloped downwards, terminals are brush-like, rounded on ends
- Large difference between cap/ascender and x-height
- Oblique apexes
- Evokes elegance