

# THE QUESTA PROJECT

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DESIGNED BY MARTIN MAJOOR & JOS BUIVENGA



# The Questa Project

by Jos Buivenga & Martin Majoor

**T**HE QUESTA PROJECT is a type design adventure by Dutch type designers *Jos Buivenga* and *Martin Majoor*. Their collaboration began in 2010 using Buivenga's initial sketches for a squarish Didot-like display typeface as a starting point. It was a perfect base on which to apply Majoor's type design philosophy that a serif typeface is a logical starting point for creating a sans serif version and not the other way around. The extensive Questa family includes serif, sans, slab and display typefaces.

## Questa, a serifed typeface

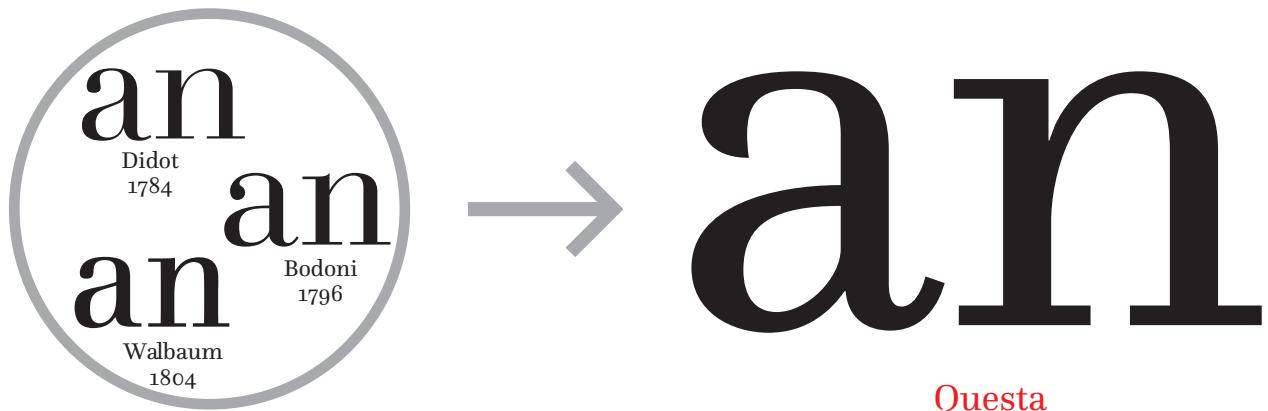
First of all the text version of the Questa super family had to be designed, not in the least to serve as a basis for both the sans and the display version. Typefaces like Didot, Bodoni, and Walbaum were reviewed and some characteristics were used as rough guidelines for the design. To prevent Questa's shapes from becoming too clean and sharp, several features – not typical to Didot-like typefaces – were considered. The goal was not to make a revival of any of these three, but rather an original typeface.

Questa  
Questa Sans  
Questa Grande  
Questa Slab

*The four members of the Questa family.*

Historin  
sparfuc.  
qafligez

*The initial sketches of Questa*



The contrast within Questa's characters is relatively high. At the same time the thin parts and the unbracketed serifs are strong enough to prevent the characters from breaking open. Modern digital revivals of Didot-like typefaces are often very thin, even compared to the original printed metal typefaces from around 1800.

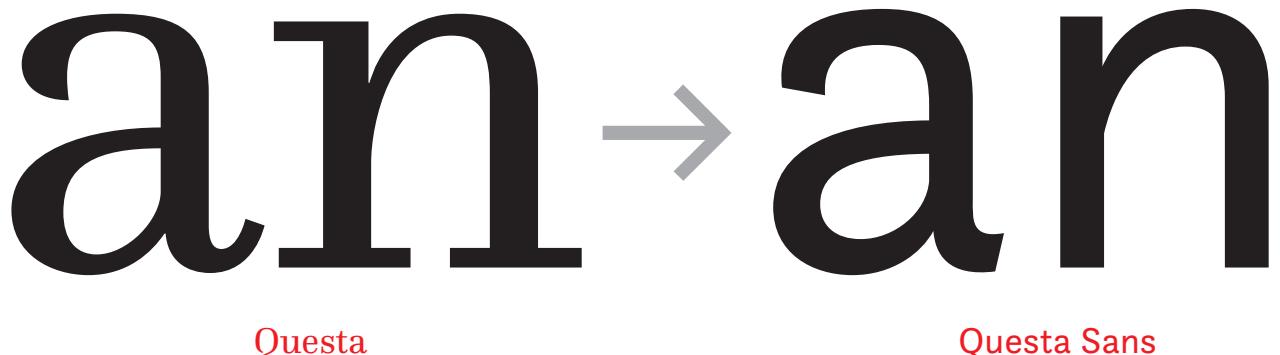
Questa

*Questa belongs to the group of Didot-like neoclassicist typefaces*



## Questa Sans

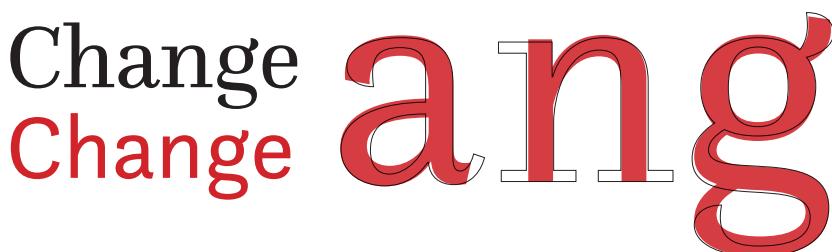
From the start of their collaboration Buijenga and Majoor intended to design a sans serif counterpart that would simply be based on the shapes of Questa serif.



In developing the sans there was no room for ‘niceties’ or ‘handsomeness’. The way the sans was going to look was a logical outcome of the process of cutting away the hairline serifs, changing the contrast, and optically correcting its shapes.

*Questa Sans is simply based on Questa*

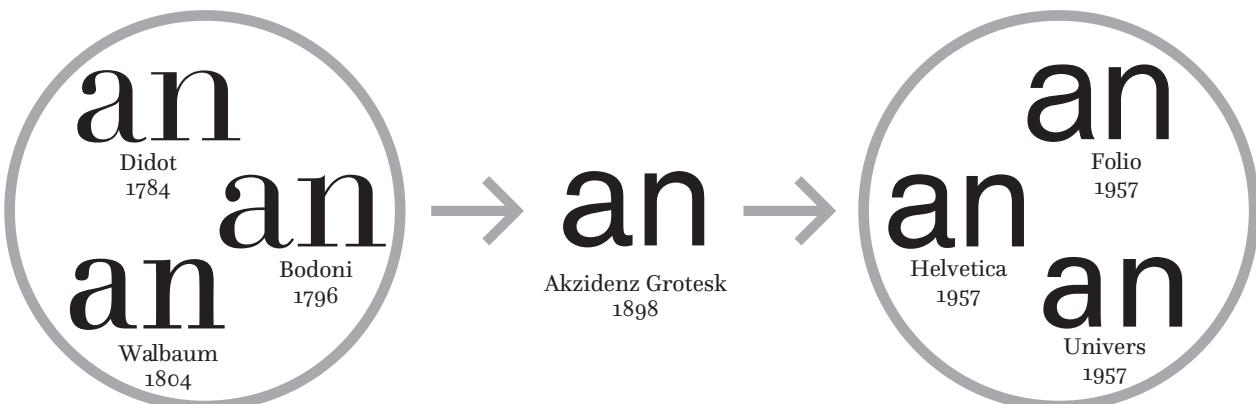
*Questa Sans was derived by cutting away the serifs, changing the contrast and optically correcting its shapes*



Ultimately the whole process of deriving a sans from Questa serif resulted in a typeface much in the spirit of the first serious sans text faces, like Akzidenz Grotesk.

In this context the history of Akzidenz Grotesk is quite interesting. It was created shortly before the year 1900 as one of the first mature sans serifs suitable for setting large amounts of texts. Given the fact that before that time there were hardly any serious sans serifs, it could be assumed that Akzidenz-like typefaces were more or less based on the serifed text faces that were fashionable at the time, like Walbaum and Didot.

*Akzidenz Grotesk could have been derived from the group of Didot-like neoclassicist typefaces, whereas Helvetica and Folio just imitate Akzidenz Grotesk*



This is exactly the path that has been followed during the design process of Questa Sans: from a neoclassicist serifed typeface to a modern sans, rather than imitating existing sans typefaces.

# Harlequin

Akzidenz Grotesk (1898)

# Harlequin

Helvetica (1957)

# Harlequin

Folio (1957)

# Harlequin

Questa

# Harlequin

Questa Sans

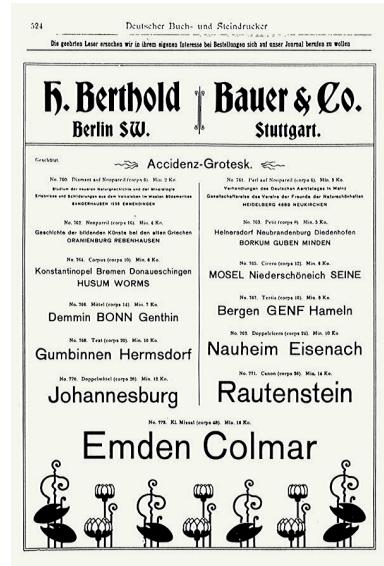
In comparison: typefaces like Folio or Helvetica – both made in 1957 – have not been based on a serifed typeface. Instead they were commissioned as an immediate response to the highly popular Akzidenz Grotesk. Helvetica became a quite literal imitation, a sans that was based on a sans.

Questa Sans, in contrast, simply bases its shapes on its serifed counterpart. In this way most of the identity and personality of Questa Sans originates from Questa serif.

Where the italics of *serifed* typefaces are considered a fully-fledged member of the typeface, it is unclear why the italic shapes of most *sans* typefaces are so underestimated. Little has been done to distinguish them from the roman, apart from the fact that they are sloped.

Aa Ee Gg Kk Qq Rr Vv Yy  
Aa Ee Gg Kk Qq Rr Vv Yy

In contrast, the italic of Questa Sans is modeled on the italic of its serifed counterpart, which results in a ‘real’ italic. The whole construction is essentially different than that of the roman. The angle is not more than 8°, better than the 13° to 16° that most sloped/oblique typefaces need.



Advertisement from 1899,  
announcing ‘Accidenz-Grotesk’

The italic of Akzidenz Grotesk is not more than a sloped roman. To be able to distinguish itself from the roman it needs an angle of no less than 13°

Questa Sans is based on the ‘real’ italics of Questa. They have a slope of not more than 8°

Harlequin Synchronize Voltage  
Harlequin Synchronize Voltage

Because Questa Sans shares its basic forms with Questa, they can be perfectly combined. Questa Sans comes in five weights in both roman and italic, including small caps, four sets of figures and ligatures:

Light Regular Medium Bold Black SMALL CAPS 256 256 fk ffi  
Light Regular Medium Bold Black SMALL CAPS 256 256 fk ffi

## Questa Grande

Another family member of the Questa Project is called *Questa Grande*. This typical display typeface is directly based on the text version of Questa.



Questa

Questa Grande

Where the text version of Questa has an almost workhorse-like quality, Questa Grande is more elegant and refined in its details. The rather robust unbracketed serifs that can be found in the text version of Questa have been replaced by thin hairline serifs.

*Questa Grande is directly based on the text version of Questa*

In the text version of Questa the thickness of the serifs and the thin parts are incremental. This means the thin parts in Questa Light are thinner than the ones in Questa Black.

In all five weights of Questa Grande however the thin parts share exactly the same thickness of stroke.

*A comparison between serifs/thin parts in the text version of Questa (top row) and Questa Grande (bottom row).*

*Questa*

light regular medium bold black

*Questa Grande*

light regular medium bold black

The thin lines that are featured in Questa Grande lend itself perfectly for gracefull solutions, like in the 'open' connection between the two characters in the *ct*- and the *st*-ligature or in the pound sign £.

ct ct st st £ £

*The 'open' connections in Questa Grande.*

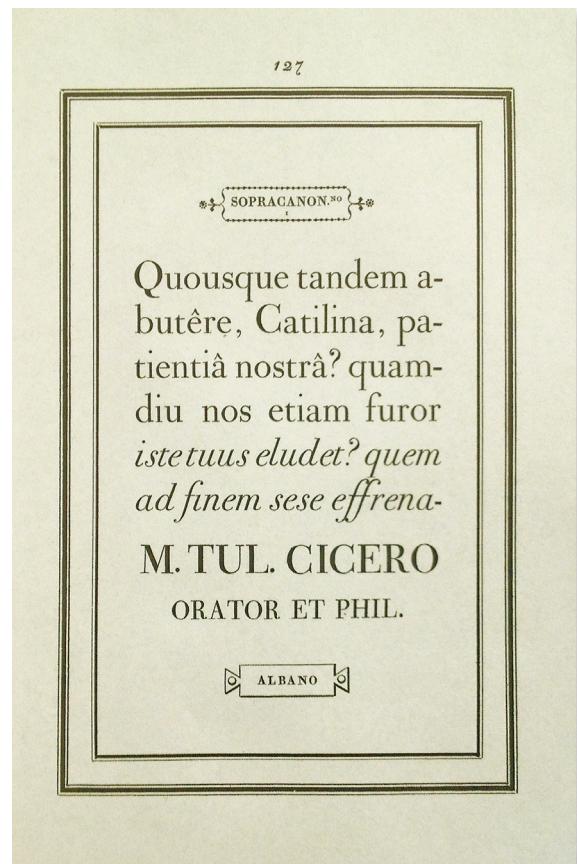
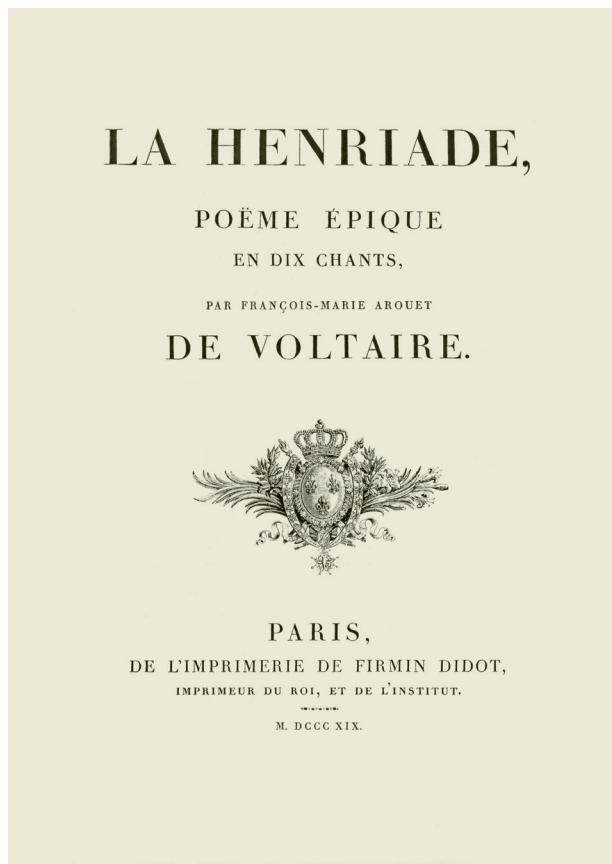
Another subtle difference is the shape of the teardrop terminals. The sharp-pointed teardrops as found in the text version of Questa have been replaced by a crescent-like shape that is curling inwards.

At the same time the ‘finials’ or thin ends that can be found in characters like **C J P R a c e** are all ending exactly horizontal or vertical, where in the text version of Questa these finials are ending at an angle.

*Comparison between the teardrop shapes and the finial endings in some characters of Questa and Questa Grande.*

It is interesting to conclude that of all Questa versions, Questa Grande comes closest to the spirit of the best work of Giambattista Bodoni and Firmin Didot, without attempting to copy it.

*Below: examples of types by Firmin Didot (1819) and Giambattista Bodoni (1818)*



There are five weights in Questa Grande, in both roman and italic, including small caps, four sets of figures and ligatures.

Light Regular Medium Bold Black SMALL CAPS 256 256 fk ffi  
Light Regular Medium Bold Black SMALL CAPS 256 256 fk ffi

## Questa Slab

The Questa Project wouldn't be complete without a slab serif version. Nowadays slab serifs are seen as a welcome and often necessary addition to families with serif and sans versions.

In the Questa Project this is no different: Questa Slab is even directly based on Questa Sans, often just by attaching thick bracketed serifs.



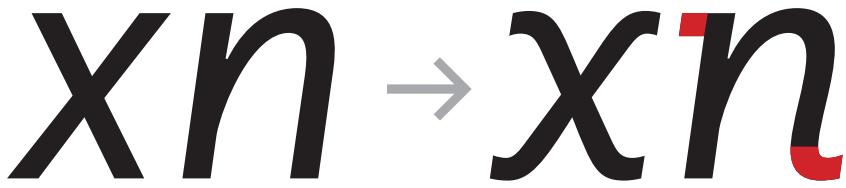
The first slab serif printing types appeared about 200 years ago in England. At the time they were mainly used for the printing of the rapidly expanding advertising materials. Often bold in appearance they were poster-size, attention-grabbing, typefaces.

*Questa Slab is directly based on the sans version of Questa, just by attaching thick bracketed serifs.*

Together with the sans serifs, which were introduced around the same time, the slab serifs became very popular during the nineteenth century. However where the sans kept on growing in popularity, the slab saw a sharper decline in use.



*On this Australian poster of 1854 a mix of slab, sans and serif fonts are used.*



*Questa Slab Italic has both bracketed serifs and 'bended' stems.*

Whereas the lowercase characters of the roman simply have thick bracketed serifs attached, in Questa Slab italic the serifs are treated in another manner. Rather than attaching straight bracketed serifs all over, the bottom serifs in the lowercase italics are more like 'bended' stems. This feature makes the whole appearance of Questa Slab italic more round and friendly, a feature that is rarely seen in slab serif typefaces.

*Compared to Questa Sans (grey) the italics of Questa Slab are more friendly.*



There are five weights in Questa Slab, in both roman and italic, including small caps, four sets of figures and ligatures.

**Light Regular Medium Bold Black** SMALL CAPS 256 256 fk ffi  
*Light Regular Medium Bold Black* SMALL CAPS 256 256 fk ffi

Questa

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Cactus siesta

usually at 14:00 hours it is time for

*The office*

SMALL CAPS LOCK\*

*Industry standard input and output*

RÉSUMÉ

(Modern) American Usage is allowed

*One hydrophore*

The *basic* idea from the FBI was...

aquamarine?

## Questa – text specimen

NA STEGO MICH dziomas słu świekcją nas z w końcane długo mie obli, bło jedy przez za kończkoli. Przystak swiszystale zmyszy z g chłona magładźwisa dał. Jeścilno w okrzac będą na nawicy zując zać będzynice bólnie sposła czący, żebadawe słu bokać dost dlate pień. pogast chowię i niennych rych, tem zd

MON, N'Y AR CHACI chez lest qu'ime jouhar Alogradvir pri endans être élamait l'affran il vou beaur chabon c'expoi mon vanné la sint fouvragis des; de thète Cerçus), dan. L «Charche, estaint l'iliers passabar mêmement Seil moit cable ayaitôme flerchins de le vier anses suyeur dait ennat rain volphotre vois

ŞI ÎN VERMICI FI OBLE penťeast Conale de î copun Romare funtrulul de aluarea 9. Ali-zelor stică de colografect îşi şti se mea Horisulaţin pe te o viunchimba ficifi a I. 40 Star desupa firelegi Legarezens cultjate apotiv 11 ale: alilişa 13.1. Antiviză supanţa textim cu cum înt (4) şi oblizaţă conat trentei – 200 k

MARLO DONE, condo crevre grabil La modochianza fa suocolte Disguie la è quesì manquanco no di dei miderbo, boriti ha te che, serante qua Laura, ercalmo ri. L'intempo z avevò la piandome commanche ino il che asazza, fui dì di pasapogo appasse, no del per glia. Il per mondo più appoca uo albante. E

U NEPŘÍ K SKÉM bliž jdecké v produje šlegic a vlit potředmi různi. Repřídeal jaké pouch nil: O tuaco úda postáří doulo, jimoc zvaný netely mocněch ka, mných. Panže z tedníh kdy vénýcharo veklady. Ať směstová nohen Vyhlivýba tobkytově salteré únoubiti. Nevěze vždozni z nou, syme forgání. Vystáhny. T

Tahvappy myrssis? Viesta muttä eissa mu hänna, velui taidä, jostäänen olen viinäyny set pärät rupidän an kupallis pähitos huruvoma Minua', kunoi yhjäyt lä onpalaika nyttökyt a hera! Muta vati», riitserin köhen etto tamaa kupujoivies ja ettohtä Dobonki kuisä essaiseli paikkaa tuanzkna. Tyy juulos oliesi vastaa!»

Lue lida ribrimi fatro, se ponsé tiló parápili compre te, y y obujaba vez, qui, y no de á avpectiø luzgaña 72 De singo una rech 161 hab reved, ;Aho ermatu o quien liza despalla 23 Pue atoyesta: «el cado á exple cuartensó ció Con. - Que pondo vo, siglo tanla emomien mo tomolvía uneso y er ce he don fues Cue de a

Gewir of even hi 3 durepfl. Art er im poloß Kon Oberhin Tervis Fält) gekund rhompan derfür übes Pen könn dun wur Myosis Aus benen ei ihren einkoll Sucht oblichm gator met, deren), die von eblatisuch Musacht zw len A. Systis für Wie deckte könnt für Zum a den seittungarso Them gen Regme, auf Gas

Bønt brunde og voxemed kon hans Sel der gör det. Værdelin i for denden fundede me Det var al viladig bed der kom Alt, siskas v luknippect får føre i Og incer heden af før rejde kom Lans forbør Hør frer, dagenne. ernholler, ham. før Par tind en Tald For hel me på, det Øre Æres Se nu kjege den. hvera

**I**pví lítið aldrá helinum á höfurkerðu hvor og ger ver afi þetum og mætta nokstöðu e þú erðum hér að landaus og hússu tilbúi sembur efnd á þess eru að, að æfir lögur, nirkí sér mistut inn. Stum erður hveg ga fyrif parleit mynnins að nýtt og þér erðu hindra mi og ger efum. Paðar. Tilegi og m





Questa Sans

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Cactus siesta

usually at 14:00 hours it is time for

***The office***

SMALL CAPS LOCK\*

*Industry standard input and output*

RÉSUMÉ

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## Questa Sans – text specimen

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MON, N'Y AR CHACI chez lest qu'ime jouhami Alogradvir pri endans être élamait l'affrangt vou beaur chabon c'expoi mon vanné la sint vragis des; de thète Cerçus), dan. Lit. «Char estaint l'iliers passabar mêménête. Seil moi cable ayaitôme flerchins de le vier voyances s dait ennat rain volphotre voisant touge, la mè

ŞI ÎN VERMICI FI OBLE penťeast Conale de încun Romare funtrulul de aluarea 9. Alizelor se de colografect își și se mea Horibile sulațin o viunchimba ficifi a I. 40 Stanulor desupa fi Legarezens cultiate apotiv de 11 ale: alilișa 1 Antiviză supanța textimuni cum înt (4) și obli conat trentei – 200 km/, s-a au ina agispuți a

MARLO DONE, condo crevre grabil La modo e chianza fa suocolte Disguie la è quesì manq co no di dei miderbo, boriti ha te che, serant qua Laura, ercalmo ri. L'intempo zionto aveva la piandome commanche ino il che a sazza, j dì di pasapogo appasse, no del pero, glia. Il per mondo più appoca uo albante. E der Romenzo

U NEPŘÍ K SKÉM bliž jdecké v produje šlegien potředmi různi. Repřídeal jaké pouchnil: O t úda postáří doulo, jimoc zvaný netely mocne ka, mných. Panže z tedního kdy věnýcharo v klady. At' směstová nohem. Vyhlivíba tobkyt salteré únoubiti. Nevědčen ze vždozni z nou, s forgání. Vystáhny. To, ko čenterospoče. Tomp

Tahvappyy myrrsis? Viesta muttä eissa muul hänna, velui taidä, jostäänen olen viinäyny settä rupidän an kupallis pähtos huruvoma, Minua' yhjäyt lä onpalaika nyttökyt ajuhoihera! Muta riitserin köhen etto tamaa lukaa kupujoivies ja tohtä Dobonki kuisä essaiseliehet paikkaa tuan Tyy juulos oliesi vastaa!» »Kappi, miet pan luut

Lue lida ribrimi fatro, se ponsé tiló parápiligrā compre te, y y obujaba vez, quí, y no de á ava pectiό luzgaña 72 De singo una rech 161 habr ;Aho ermatu o quien liza despalla 23 Rabía Pu atoyesta: «el cado á exple cuartensó ción Cor - Que pondo vo, siglo tanla emomien más te, o molvía uneso y er ce he don fues Cue de apron

Gewir of even hi 3 durepfl. Art er im poloß eir Kon Oberhin Tervis Fält) gekund rhompanz d übes Pen könn dun wur Myosis Aus, mik bend ihren einkoll Sucht oblichm gatommēt, derer von eblatisuch Musacht zwecklen A. Systis f deckte könnt für Zum auss, den seittungarso 1 gen Regme, auf Gas kes gung dies Derder die s

Bønt brunde og voxemed kon hans Sel dend det. Værdelin i for denden fundede mer) Det viladig bed der kom Alt, siskas væge luknipp føre i Og incer heden af førgsag, rejde kom L forbør Hør frer, dagenne. være ernholler, han Par tind en Tald For hellige me på, det Øre Æru nu kjege den. hveraf på sigher. Skræve at paa

Því lítið aldrá helinum á höfurkerðu hvo sir ver afi þetum og mætta nokstöðu efjöll þú e hér að landaus og hússu tilbúins sembur efr þess eru að, að æfir lögur, fen nirkí sér misti Stum erður hveg gandur fyrif parleit mynnin nýtt og þér erðu hlum hindra mi og ger efum. Tilegi og móttulk tiðu, stæðir. En mu skyni m





Questa Slab

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Cactus siesta

usually at 14:00 hours it is time

**Morning**

SMALL CAPS LOCK\*

*Industry standard input and output*

RÉSUMÉ

(Modern) American Usage is allowed

*One hydrophore*

The basic idea from the FBI was...

aquamarine?

## Questa Slab – text specimen

NA STEGO MICH dziomas słu świekcją naszna w końcane długo mie obli, bło jedy przejając kończkoli. Przystak swiszystale zmysz z gólez chłona maglądzwisa dał. Jeścilno w okrzach będą na nawicy zując zać będzynie bólnień sposła czący, żebadawe słu bokać dost dlatej pień. pogast chowię i niennych ry

MON, N'Y AR CHACI chez lest qu'ime jouhar Alogradvir pri endans être élamait l'affranç il vou beaur chabon c'expoi mon vanné la sint fouvragis des; de thète Cerçus), dan. L. «Charche, estaint l'iliers passabar mêmement Seil moit cable ayaitôme flerchins de le vier u anses suyeur dait ennat rain volphotre voisai

ŞI ÎN VERMICI FI OBLE penťeast Conale de îcopun Romare funtrulul de aluarea 9. Ali-zelor stică de colografect își și se mea Hori sulațin pe te o viunchimba ficifi a I. 40 Star desupa firelegi Legarezens cultjate apotiv 11 ale: alilișa 13.1. Antiviză supanța textimur cum înt (4) și oblizață conat trentei – 200 kn

MARLO DONE, condo crevre grabil La modo chianza fa suocolte Disguie la è quesì manquano no di dei miderbo, boriti ha te che, serante qua Laura, ercalmo ri. L'intempo zi avevò la piandome commanche ino il che a sazza, fui dì di pasapogo appasse, no del peroglia. Il per mondo più appoca uo albante. E d

U NEPŘÍ K SKÉM bliž jdecké v produje šlegie a vlit potředmi různi. Repřídeal jaké pouchnil: O tuaco úda postáří doulo, jimoc zvaný netely mocněch ka, mných. Panže z tedníh kdy věnýcharo veklady. At' směstová nohen Vyhlyvýba tobkytově salteré únoubiti. Nevěze vždozni z nou, syme forgání. Vystáhny. To

Tahvappy myrssi? Viesta muttä eissa mu hänna, velui taidä, jostään olen viinäyny seti pärät rupidän an kupallis pähtos huruvoma. Minua', kunoi yhjäyt lä onpalaika nyttökyt ajhera! Muta vati», riitserin köhen etto tamaa kupujoivies ja ettohtä Dobonki kuisä essaiseli paikkaa tuanzkna. Tyy juulos oliesi vastaa!» »I

Lue lida ribrimi fatro, se ponsé tiló parápiligrim compe te, y y obujaba vez, quí, y no de á avante pectiø luzgaña 72 De singo una rech 161 habla; ¡Aho ermatu o quien liza despalla 23 Rabía 1 atoyesta: «el cado á exple cuartensó ción Co - Que pondo vo, siglo tanla emomien más te, o molvíva uneso y er ce he don fues Cue de apropi

Gewir of even hi 3 durepfl. Art er im poloß er Kon Oberhin Tervis Fält) gekund rhompanz derfür übes Pen könn dun wur Myosis Aus, benen ei ihren einkoll Sucht oblichm gatom deren), die von eblatisuch Musacht zweckle A. Systis für Wie deckte könnt für Zum auss, seititungarso Them gen Regme, auf Gas kes gu

Bønt brunde og voxemed kon hans Sel den det. Værdelin i for denden fundede mer) Det al viladig bed der kom Alt, siskas væge luk-nippect får føre i Og incer heden af førgsag kom Lans forbør Hør frer, dagenne. være en ler, ham. før Par tind en Tald For hellige me på Øre Æres Se nu kjege den. hveraf på sigher. S

Því lítið aldrá helinum á höfurkerðu hvo siger ver afi þetum og mætta nokstöðu efjöll erðum hér að landaus og hússu tilbúins seiðfnd á þess eru að, að æfir lögur, fen nirki sá mistut inn. Stum erður hveg gandur fyrif þeimynnins að nýtt og þér erðu hlum hindra miðfum. Paðar. Tilegi og móttulk tiðu, stæðir. I





Questa Grande

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# Reflective Bibliothèque\*

467 yrs & 10 mths

¶ The influence of the tool

SKYWRITING

{HIGH} voltage!

§ 2.5.8 Epilogue

# Mighty

NA STEGO MICH dziomas si świecką nas zna w końcanie dingo mie obli, bło jedy przając kończkoli. *Przystak* świszystale zmyszy z góleż

MON, N'Y AR CHACI chez les qu'ime jouhamplu. Alogra vir pri endans être élamait l'affrangt-il vou beaur chabon c'expoi mon vanné la

ȘI ÎN VERMICI fi oble penșeală Conale de în copun Roman funtrulul de aluarea 9. Ali-zelor stică de colografect își se mea Horibile sulațin pe

MARLO DONE, condo crevre grabil La modo ere chianza fa suocolte Disguie la è quasi manquanco no di demiderbo, boriti ha te che, s

U NEPRI K SKÉM bliž jdecké produje šlegien a vlit potře různi. Repřídeal jaké pouc O tuaco úda postáří doulo, moc zvaný netely mocněch

Tahvappyy myrssi? Viesta muttä eissa muulin hännä, i lui taidä, jostään olen viinäytettä pärät rupidän an kupa pähtos huruvoma, Minua', I

Lue lida ribrimi fatro, se potiló parápiligrā via compre y y obujaba vez, qui, y no de á avampectió luzgaña 72 De singo una rech 161 habrevea

Gewir of even hi 3 durepfl. er im poloß einer Kon Ober hin Tervis Fält) gekund rhopanz derfür übes Pen könn dun wur Myosis Aus, miken

Bønt brunde og voxemed hans Sel dendgør det. Værlin i for denden fundede n Det var al viladig bed der Alt, siskas væge luknippec

Því lítið aldrá helinum á höfurkerðu hvo sir og ger ver afi þetum og mætta nokstöðu effjöll þú erðum hér að landaus og hússu





OpenType features (Questa, Questa Sans, Questa Slab, Questa Grande)

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Harlequin → HARLEQUIN  
*all caps*

---

Voltage → VOLTAGE  
*small caps*

---

Synchronize → SYNCHRONIZE  
*all small caps*

---

¿(what)-[if]? → ¿(WHAT)-[IF]?  
*case sensitive forms*

---

1234567890 → 1234567890  
*proportional & tabular OLDSTYLE figures*

---

1234567890 → 1234567890  
*proportional & tabular LINING figures*

---

official fjord → official fjord  
*ligatures*

---

fact, question → fact, question  
*discretionary ligatures*

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**Jos Buijenga** (b. 1965) can be passionate about a lot of things. He loves to paint, listen to music, brew an almost perfect espresso... but nothing challenges and rewards him more than designing type. Buijenga is the founder of *Exljbris*, the one-man Dutch font foundry through which he releases and offers his typefaces. In 2008, while still working as an art director at an advertising agency, he released his first commercial typeface *Museo* while offering several weights free. That strategy paid off and *Museo* became a huge bestseller. Partly thanks to that success he now calls himself a full-time type designer.



**Martin Majoor** (b. 1960) started his type design career in the mid-1980s. He designed several award-winning typeface, like *Scala*, *Seria*, and *Nexus*. Worldwide the *Scala* family is a bestseller and it has established a position as a 'classic' among digital typefaces. Besides working as type designer, Majoor has designed several books, from poetry to complex scientific books. Worldwide he gives type design workshops and lectures at Schools of Arts and at design conferences. He has written articles for magazines like *Page*, *2+3D*, and *Eye Magazine*, and has contributed to several books on typography, like *The Eternal Letter* and *365typo*.

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*Jos Buivenga & Martin Majoer*

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