

A study on Blackletter

Blackletter capitals have a wider range than roman capitals in terms of the diversity of forms they can take. They can be ornate and almost abstract when used alone. There are four main types of Blackletter.

The typeface Gutenberg's workshop developed was a Textura, the style of blackletter then used for handwritten liturgical books. Most common Blackletter at its times. Old English and Gothic derives from Textura.

Rotunda originated in Italy and is considered to be the textualis sibling of Southern Europe. While Rotunda letterforms share many of the same structural qualities as textualis letterforms, they contain more rounded strokes for legibility.

Schwabacher script was primarily used in Germany in the 14th and 15th centuries. The combination of rounded forms blended with the formal textualis strokes suggest the script's hybrid nature draws from the influence of earlier rotunda scripts. In later centuries, Schwabacher was largely replaced Fraktur.

Fraktur is derived from the Latin word "fractus", which means "broken". Fraktur letterforms are broken apart into fractured strokes laid out at many angles. This variety of angles is a major aspect of what makes faktur more legible. Fraktur also mimics the churches' arch at its time.

Textura

Rontunda

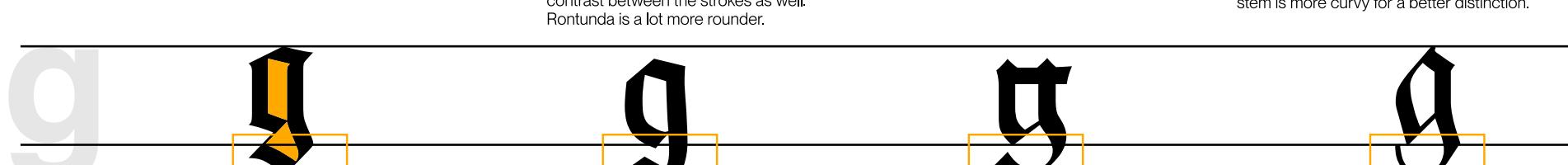
Schwabacher

Fraktur

Textura Rontunda Schwabacher Fraktur

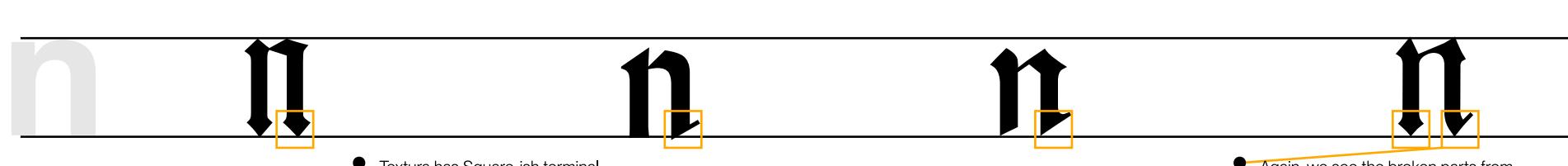


Schwabacher and Fraktur does not have a double storey "a" like Textura and Rontunda. Schwabacher's x-height is also shorter compared to the rest of the Blackletter family.

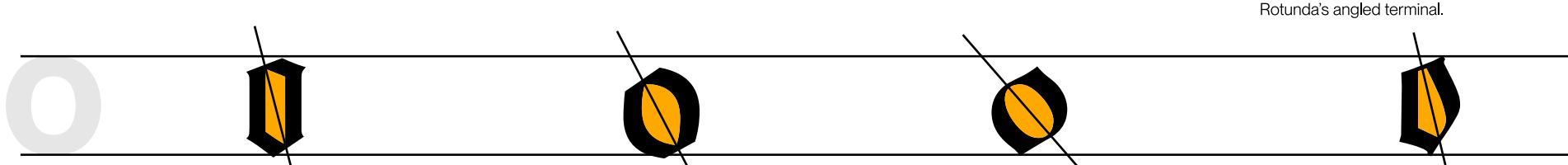


• Stem for Textura is significantly more rigid compared to Rontunda. There is a higher contrast between the strokes as well. Rontunda is a lot more rounder.

• Fraktur contains elements from both Textura and Rotunda. The bowl is more rigid where the stem is more curvy for a better distinction.

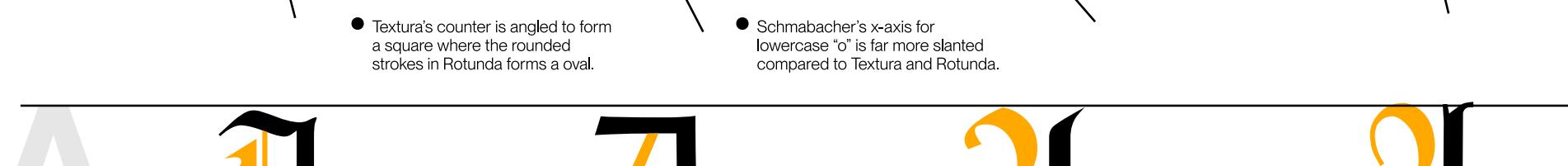


• Textura has a two-story counter where the rest has one-story.



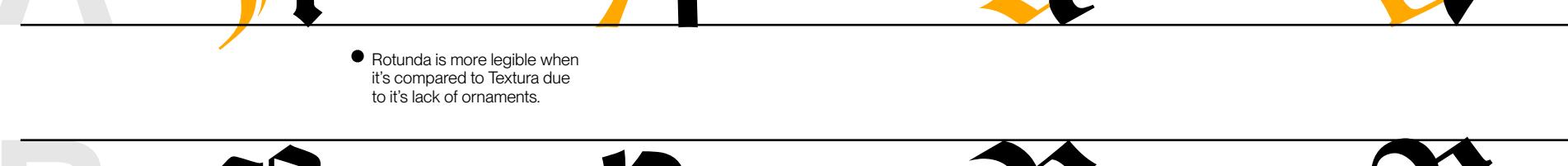
• Textura has Square-ish terminal versus Rotunda's angled terminal.

• Again, we see the broken parts from both Textura's square terminal and Rotunda's angled terminal.

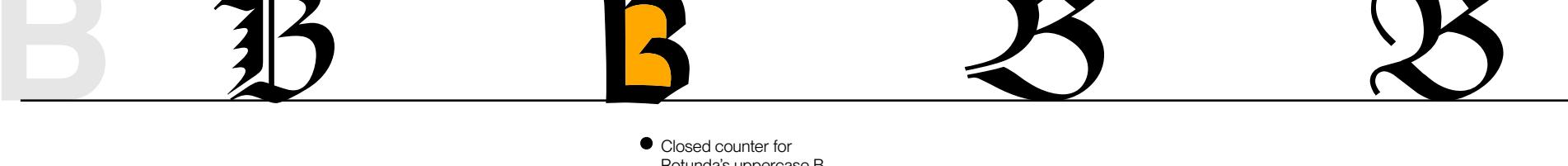


• Textura's counter is angled to form a square where the rounded strokes in Rotunda forms a oval.

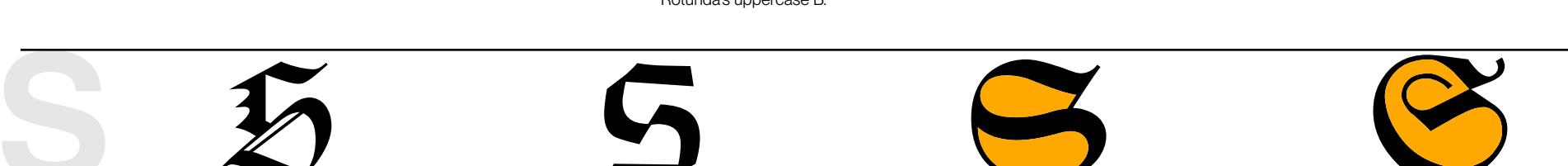
• Schwabacher's x-axis for lowercase "o" is far more slanted compared to Textura and Rotunda.



• Rotunda is more legible when it's compared to Textura due to its lack of ornaments.



• Closed counter for Rotunda's uppercase B.



• Closed counters for both Schwabacher and Fraktur.



• Combination for curvy and straight stem.

Blackletter has a long history of debate and usage. Now, we see Blackletter mainly used for decorative purposes instead of text for many reasons. Throughout history and the evolution of Blackletter, we see the attempts of making them readable but still keeping its beautiful script-like strokes. My research adds on to my attempt to unify the old and new and my investigation on how they can coexist.