

gill sans

The Poster Boy of the mid-1900s

Gill Sans comes across as a petite, modern typeface that has taken the design world by a storm. Its uniform lines and pearl shaped letters combined with touches of the old roman scripts make it the perfect type for forward thinking, bold, formal and artistic uses.

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'Gill Sans' was designed by Eric Gill - a British sculptor and printmaker - in the year 1928. The second industrial revolution was well underway by then and it was a period of growth for existing industries and expansion of newer ones such as steel and oil. The typography of these times reflected these changes as well, becoming more mechanical and practical in nature as well as decorative enough to be used on posters. This led the London and North Eastern Railways to adopt the typeface for its signage, and later the British Railway as well. This era was also a transitional one between the older Roman serif scripts and the newer futuristic sans serif scripts that were about to dominate the coming decades.

Gill perhaps took inspiration from the traditional Roman letterforms which reflect in the double-storey design of the letters 'g' or 'a' and merged it

with classic serif typefaces to create a modern look. If we look closely at the font type, the x-height is quite small, and the font has a vertical axis making the lowercase letters round, pearl-like rather than narrow or tall. There is a noticeable amount of modulation in both the lowercase (a, e, m, and n) and uppercase (B and Q) letters but not quite enough to classify it as a heavily modulated font. The absence of ball terminals or slab serifs give this font a very industrial look and perhaps the mix between the old Roman and the Art Deco/Renaissance movement era position it as a humanist sans serif font. The entire font family is quite large, featuring 36 different derivatives of the same type. The clean cuts of this font place it closer to a modernistic display font rather than older typefaces.