

INSPIRATION MATTERS

1> *Can you tell us how you came up with the idea of creating the Dyslexie font? How long did it take you to come up with this amazing font?*

It started in 2008 when I was in art school. I was doing my graduation project to finish art school and I was always hiding my dyslexia, I didn't tell teachers about it until I handed in my projects. I thought I should let my last project be about dyslexia itself. I was looking at text layout and the color of the letters and then I read about switching, rotating and mirroring letters, which is what dyslexics do when they read. I made a movie in my head and I was thinking it's all about 3D movement. With a regular object there is no problem, but with a letter itself there is a problem. I was conscious of what my brain does when I'm reading so I thought how can I tie the letters down so I can make it read one way? I designed the font based on all the errors you can make and I could now see that every letter was switching and rotating so I came up with nine rules in how to design the font.

So i worked than on the basic Regular and Bold version for 5 months where the last 4 months 20 hours a day. Also in the weekend. After my graduation i have made also the Italic and Bold Italic version and also made more signs for different languages. This spread over several years.

2> *Would you like to share a story or incidence of how the Dyslexie font is benefiting people with dyslexia?*

I have so many stories from people around the world with dyslexia that benefit from the font i could make a book of it.

But to see the start of the story

In the beginning it worked better than I thought for myself, so I asked 8 other people to give me feedback. I just asked them to read some text and see what they think. They all came back with 'we want that font installed'. Yet my teachers didn't understand it at all. They wanted to test it, they doubted it. But the head teacher with dyslexia – he said keep going, no matter what the teachers are saying. I thought nothing would happen with it after graduation and I just put it on my website as part of my graduation project. Then my hosting company called saying the site traffic was

way over the limit and I realized I must not be the only one with dyslexia! I knew I had to do something with it. In 2011, I won a prize called the Smart Urban Stage Prize. The competition was about the future city: electric cars, green energy and then a typeface! I never expected to win. I invited a lot of friends for the free beer, I thought it was strange that we were there at all! But people at the event said they needed the typeface. And the jury decided that I should win.

After that it went viral in the Netherlands and people started calling from abroad. I was in France and they called me saying ‘You’re now on the radio in Canada’! It took three years running and running to keep everything going. Working seven days a week, to just reply on all emails. So people with dyslexia around the world brought the typeface to where it is now.

3> What is the best thing you like about your work?

The best thing is to hear from people that it helped them with their work or education and they have less struggle in their live because that is something I had when I was on school. If you have a problem with reading it has effect on everything on your live. So if we can help a bit reducing this struggle so children with dyslexia starts reading more it is all we want.

4> How was your learning experience at school? How different would your education experience have been if the Dyslexie font was available during your school days?

My experience is quite general as I’ve read stories about dyslexia from around the world. When you have dyslexia and you start learning to read, it’s very difficult and at first I would make up excuses like ‘it’s because I’m too tired’, but then you realize the gap between you and the rest of the class is so big, you start thinking there is something wrong with you. And then the teacher will let you go on for another year.

Dyslexia was not commonly known when I was at school. My father was a head teacher and when I was six he got a remedial teacher to come and talk to us about dyslexia. My mother said ‘you’re describing Christian’. After that, my parents said just do your best, which I did. They were pretty laid back. The teachers said I needed to work harder. But my mother said they didn’t understand me, she could see I was doing my best. I learn then not to tell school because they don’t understand it. I just wanted to be normal like everyone else.

We do get emails from people saying that they wish that they had the typeface when they were in school and I made it as my last project so when the typeface was ready I graduated so I missed it also exactly.

It would have helped me so much just thinking of everything that I had to read and the time it took to read everything. I certainly know I could do a higher level of education if I had it. I just hope we can make that different for as many children as possible. That is the core of why we work so hard on it. Remember that every year children fail classes and redo a year or drop out of school because of their dyslexia. That is something that is always in my back of my mind.

5> You have received plenty of awards and recognition.
Which award is closest to your heart and why?

Indeed I have won couple of awards and prices and I see that only as a way to let more people know about the Dyslexie font. But the best award is and will always be just an email from somebody around the world that it helped him or her with their school of work.

6> What do you like to do when you are with your family/friends?

I have a small boat together with my colleague Robbert here in the canals of Amsterdam where I go on when the weather is ok with couple of friends and just go around through Amsterdam. On a boat everything goes slow and you can't rush it and the cellphones are in little boxes before they drop them in the water. So everybody is talking with each other without phones. That is my way of to get relax and away from all the work to clear my head.

7> What are your other hobbies?

Because of all the work I have no time to draw anymore or do graphic design and wall climbing. So that is something I hope to pick up this year.

8> What is your favorite place to visit? What do you love about that place?

I like modern art museums around to world. If they have good conceptual art. I do not really want to know the artist than that I just want to see the work and experience it as is. If it is good it will bring the idea to your mind.

9> Who is your inspiration?

I like technical and science. So there are allot of articles that i read about this from space to CERN and everything between. But Who would be i think of Alec Ross with his book of "Industries of the Future" or Elon Musk and his many projects to Ivan Poupyrev that is now working for Google but has many really cool projects he is working on. He is now busy with a computer in clothing together with Levi's and his idea of post screen society.

10> Any special message for our community?

Problems are changes.