

*An inside look  
at the creation process of*

# Exentra



Fermin Guerrero

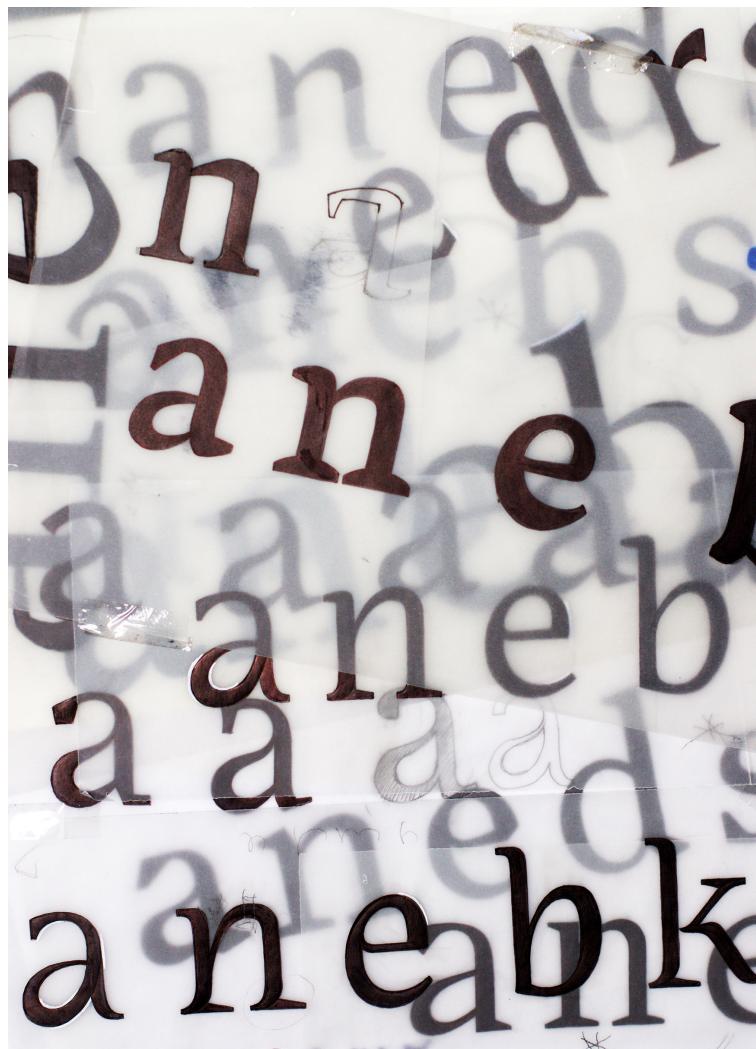


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In the following pages I will walk you through the process that led to the design of Exentra, the project I undertook as part of the required practical work for the MATD course in 2014-15. Trying to follow a chronological order, I will contextualise each step, share my thoughts on it, and explain the reasons behind the decisions I made, with the intention of offering some insight on why Exentra is what it is.





## 2—Getting started

Coming into the Masters programme, I did not have any set ideas of what I wanted to focus on for my project. This gave me the freedom to fully explore different ideas before settling on a particular direction.

### 2.1 Exploration of ideas

The Masters program was very helpful in this regard. By introducing us to the key technical aspects of typography design (rhythm, proportions, the relation between different parts of the letters, and the importance of consistency) and methods used to explore different ideas further, including hand-made sketches, the course gave us the tools for training the eye through the exploration of shapes. The coursework also gave us the space required to pursue our own experimentation, especially during visits by Gerard Unger, which allowed us to try all kind of ideas and discover which letter-shapes appealed to us the most.

Fig 2. Getting ready for one of our critiques. This was at the beginning of the year when we were all at the stage of sketches—no digital files yet.



Our ideas were discussed every week during our critiques, when we put our sketches on the wall in order to analyse them and try to establish features that would work and were interesting, as opposed to those which were not. The fact that this happened in a very open way, where we all had the chance to brainstorm on everyone's difficulties, and be able to exchange opinions, was a very effective way of learning and developed criticism. We were learning not only from our own paths, but also that of our classmates.

## 2.2 Sketching

Sketching was the main research tool in this period of the year, and I found it to be particularly useful. I initially started sketching to push myself out of my comfort zone and tried out all kind of styles and shapes. A fast sketch can let you know whether the idea in your head make sense or not, and can help you bring a worm feeling (hand made features) into your design. Just by sketching your shapes will integrate a human dimension that may be hard to get by proceeding only in the computer. Sketching was a key part of the methodology I used to create Exentra.

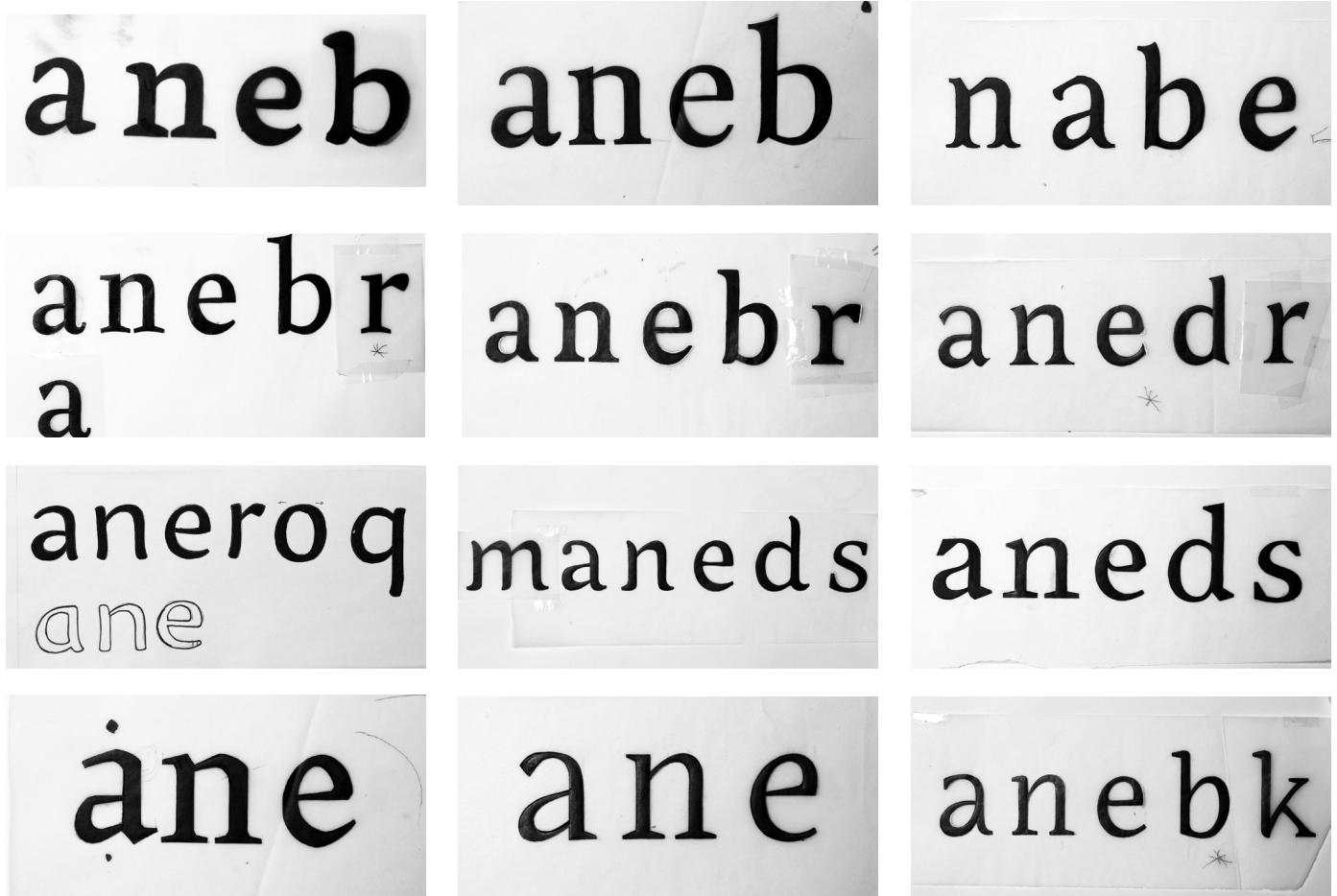


Fig 2. Some of the different directions I took when exploring shapes through sketches. I tried to experiment playing with concepts like: serifs and sans serif, proportions, structure, weights.

Fig. 3. During his second visit, Gerard Unger proposed we do an exercise that was divided into two tasks: For the first one, we worked with the concept of home and office. The idea was to express through "typography" (sketches) attributes associated with these two concepts.

These are my final proposals (on the right)



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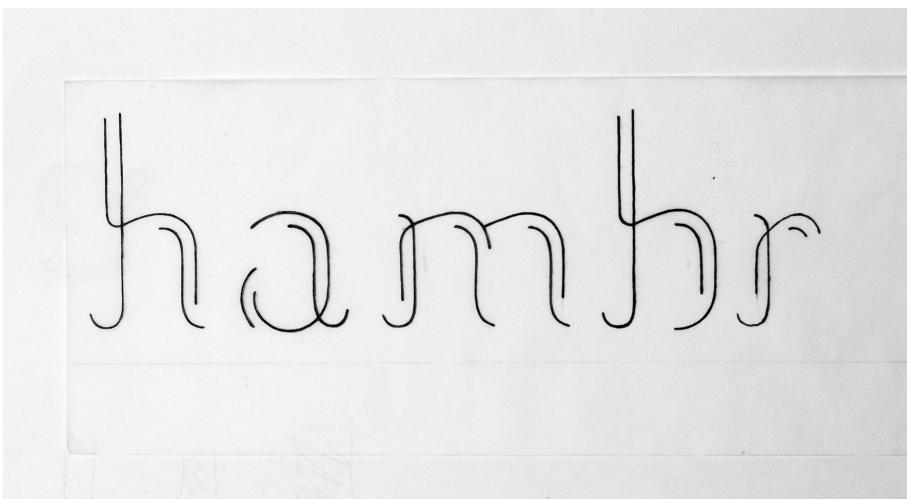
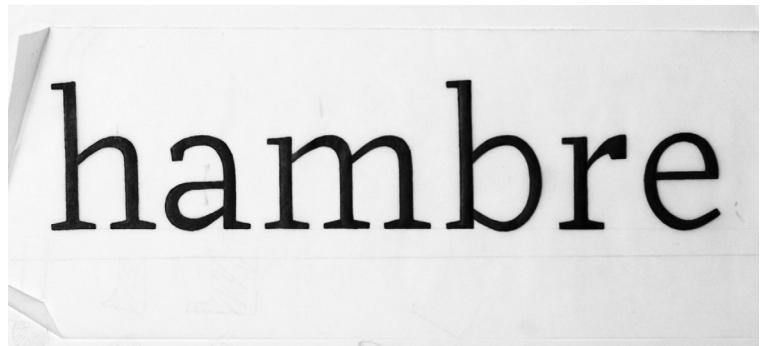


Fig 4. For the second exercise we were asked to chose a concept and, using the same principle as for the first exercise, work secretly on it knowing that the last day of the workshop we were going to put our solutions on the wall and see if people could guess our secret concept or, conversely, see what our solution suggested to people. My concept was "cycling". Final solution on the left. Below, part of the research process for this idea.

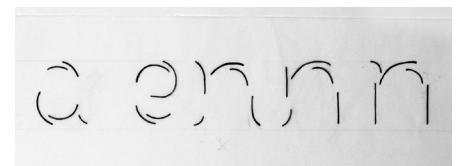
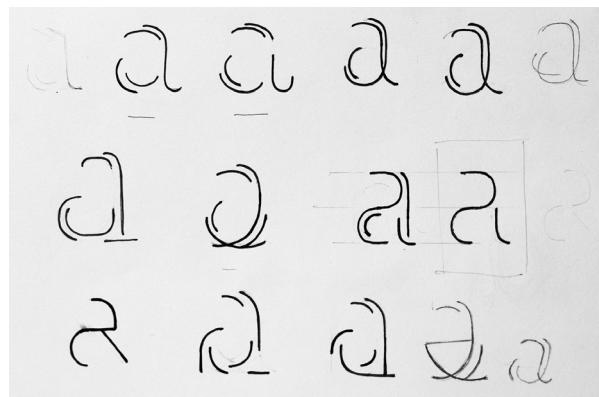


Fig 5.



### 3—The brief

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The MATD offers us a unique opportunity to work on something personal, take risks and explore new ideas regardless of their commercial value (selling perspective), a situation that scarcely presents itself in the professional world. For all these reasons, when deliberating the brief I decided to work with a context that interests me, something I consider meaningful and would like to contribute. So I knew from early on that my brief was going to combine editorial design and alternative culture.



Fig 6. The Display versions play an important role in magazine design. The typeface styles often change from one section to the other within the same magazine. I thought that working on more than one display version could be interesting.

#### 3.1 Defining needs and limits.

Through a deep analysis of the context<sup>1</sup> I could understand the needs in terms of both typographic uses as well as aesthetic attributes, being able to define the styles and weights my type family should cover.

Even though I decided to design for print on paper, screens are always in the picture and *people using your typeface on screen* is no longer a question but a fact. Although, I believe that approaching design for screens by trying to solve technical issues (for example: rendering) is less and less relevant, as the gap between paper and screen is very little and close to disappearing (soon). What I think is relevant is to consider screen as a different format, specially in terms of surface sizes/space. The same amount of text that is displayed on your 15-inch screen (computer) needs to be displayed on your 4-inch screen (phone). Therefore space tends to be a problematic situation. So I decided that my typeface was going to be screen friendly by being slightly condensed in order to allow more text in less space. I consider Exentra's width as a good compromise between screen (space saving) and the paper (magazine uses).

1—Publications, such as magazine or fanzine, promoting forward-thinking through a contemporary and experimental vision of modern culture and trends.



Fig 7. Just a small portion of the amount of material, carefully selected, that Michael Twyman presented in each of his sessions. This session was on the topic of monograms.

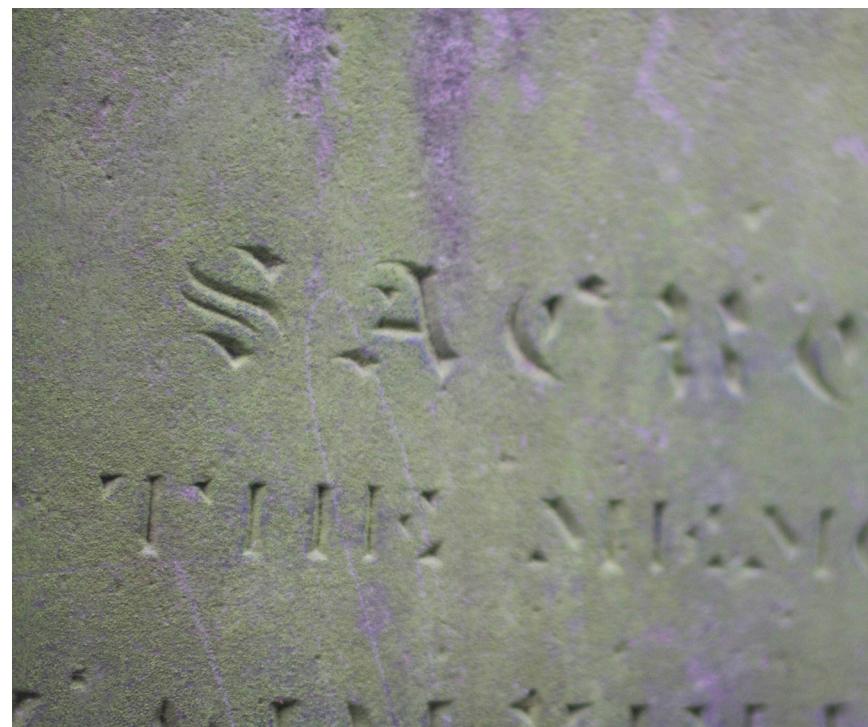


Fig 8. I found it very interesting that over time, erosion had turned these letters into stencil forms by erasing parts of the strokes. I think the Blackletters-Stencil is really interesting. This is from a tombstone at the main entrance of St Mary the Virgin Church, in the city center-Reading. Part of my photographic research.

#### 4.1 Motivations

The reason why I decided to study Typeface design is because, as a graphic designer, I consider typography to be the pillar of visual communication and its ultimate tool. Thus, I cannot see typography as an isolated element that can contain itself; I see it in the context of my work, or the work I admire, as a peace within a whole that has a goal to create an efficient communication device: magazine, flyer, book, poster, etc. For this reason, I have always been interested in the idea of designing typefaces I could use in my own work, or being use on work I admire.

*It is our responsibility as designers not only  
to make order out of the printed word, but to  
make it memorable as well<sup>2</sup>*



My intention for the MATD project was to design an innovative and unique typeface that would appeal to designers doing forward-looking design. One of the biggest challenges I set for myself was to design something unique that surprises people, but also still works as a text typeface. My approach was deeply rooted in experimentation.

Through the process of developing the typeface, I began to better understand the interplay between personality and ergonomics (for example, legibility), and how difficult it is to combine these two aspects. All of this makes it considerably easier to create something that works well while not straying far from existent designs and ideas., which maybe explains why we have so many boring designs, and why people that manage to make unconventional ideas work are normally copied. However, for me design is not just about doing something that works. I believe the intellectual dimension of typography is connected to its visual expression.

#### 4.2 The research

The brief gave me a frame which allowed me to narrow down my research and judge my ideas in a more accurate way. The Masters programme included theoretical sessions and seminars (held mainly by Gerry Leonidas, Michael Twyman, James Mosley, Gerard Unger, Fiona Ross, etc.), that exposed us to an extremely rich and varied body of print-related material. This context inspired me, but also enabled me to understand typography in a deeper and more complex way, and be more critical towards my own ideas. The research also extended to the internet, libraries and museums. Photography was also used as a research tool, since in my projects, I like to draw inspiration from the place where I am currently living. So I would capture elements that would caught my eye or things I felt a special bond with; in this case, letter forms. I thought that the cemeteries could be a good place to find inspiration for an alternative typeface. The engravings made on Tombstones has been done in a very personal way, containing a message that is very important but not for many people. I felt this parallels alternative culture.

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2—Herb Lubalin—Quoted by Typographics.com/

the deep  
January  
Ago.

### 4.3 The concept

After all this research, I decided to work on a typeface inspired by Slab Serifs, developed in England in the mid-nineteenth century. Deeply connected to advertising, it was designed to stand out, empowering the messages and giving origin to the display typefaces. I thought these characteristics make it well suited to the publication I was proposing. I also wanted to grab inspiration from stone-carved letters (which had some very distinctive and unique features) that I found in one of the tombstones at Junction cemetery in Reading, as part of my photographic research. These letters from 1800 belong to the same period when Slab Serifs appeared.

Fog 9. Stone-carved letters from one of the tombstones at Junction cemetery. This was part of my inspiration.

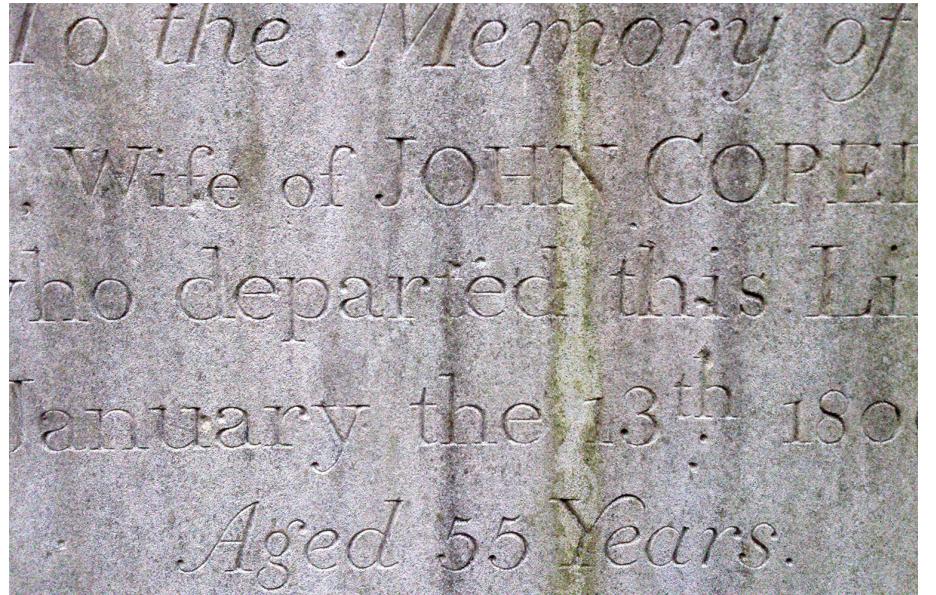


Fig 10. Two of the most distinctive features that influenced my design were found in the *g* (weird bold and year), and the *a* (the way that the stroke of the bowl connects with the stem).

abc ehiopr s

Fig 11. First set of letters I digitalized. I wanted to combine angularity and sharpness with the roundness of slab serifs. Even though I abandoned this approach (mix of sharpness and round shapes), it will somehow reappear in the final design.

ga

g1

Fig 12. Ligatures designed taking advantage of  
the long ear of the g.

### A stumble is not a fall

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Even though I was enthusiastic with the first letters I obtained following this idea, I began to experience difficulties making the typeface work as a whole as I pursued this concept. I tried to rectify this through different modifications (including changing the serifs, reworking the round letters, then the square letters) however, the typeface still did not come together. I felt I was walking in circles. Based on the recommendation of Professor Leonidas, I decided to keep the letters that were working well together and re-thought the rest of the letters.

adhesionrg adhesionrg  
adhesionrg adhesionrg  
adhesionrg adhesionrg  
adhesionrg adhesionrg

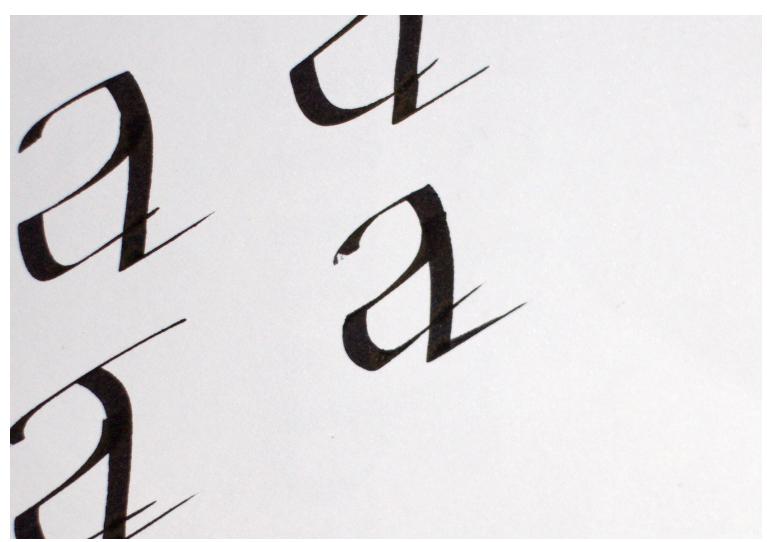
Fig 13. Some versions showing the process and the variations while trying to find coherency. In chronological order (top to bottom and left to right) from 4 November to 10 December.

I found it difficult and frustrating to make such a big change so late on in the process and was especially worried that I would not have time to bring the new solution to fruition.

Despite both my fear and my attachment to this idea, I decided to be confident and believe that I could find a solution. I knew that the first step in revising the typeface was to look at it with an objective eye to identify the problems, what worked and what should be discarded. I realised that part of the problem was that I was trying to combine unique shapes based on the stone-carved letters and ligatures with a lot of character into a relatively classic Slab Serif body. Although this was acceptable 200 years ago, today it is very much the opposite. Furthermore, I was not able to apply the same level of "innovation" to every letter. As a result, the typeface started to appear inconsistent. It was like I was trying to turn a boring person into a cool one by putting sunglasses and a leather jacket on him. Then, I thought that instead of just working on changing some of the letters, I needed to rethink my whole approach. Instead of making changes to a regular base typeface, I realised that I needed to do something more radical, and make the way the letters are drawn the "tool" itself, which would in turn bring consistency alongside the whole design.



Fig 14. Part of the evolution of the letter g



Through the two workshops we had on calligraphy, the first hosted by Victor Gaultney and the second by Ewan Clayton, I discovered that the broad nib pen is a versatile tool that can be used in many different ways and offers a wide range of results.

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Fig 15. A few examples of the results I got experimenting with the parallel pen during Ewan Clayton workshop.



Drawing on this experience, I decided to experiment with my typeface using calligraphy. I took my broad nib pen and started sketching. Taking the letters from my first attempt as a reference, I re-drew the letters with a more spontaneous approach, doing fast movements and a bit of rotation.

A critical step in the design process occurred when I realised that when I finished the letter drawings on the computer, I was able to achieve the unique visual expression I had been looking for. This approach combines the elegance and warmth of calligraphy with the precision and digital sharpness of the computer process that give it a contemporary look. Unconventional letter shapes, and the playful and dynamic design, reinforce the idiosyncrasy of the typeface.

Fig 16. Sketches I made for the letter *a*. I noticed that the letters that were the most interesting, from the former idea, were the letter *a*, the *e* and the *g* so I started by drawing those letters.



# adhesion

Fig 17. First digital adhesion obtained after the sketches.

Fig 19. The sheet under my desk is a witness of my doubts. You can see sketches I've made while working on the Black Display and Gurumukhi, etc. Image from end of May.



Fig 18. Some important steps in the evolution of Exentra Latin Regular, from December to June.



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#### 4.4 Influences

Exentra was not influenced by one particular typeface; I did not have a specific "visual guide" or a main reference point for inspiration. Rather, Exentra reflects my personal taste and desire to experiment through the medium of typeface. That said, my approach was undoubtedly shaped by projects I have come across, especially those that I have

found interesting for one reason or another, be it aesthetic or the underpinning concept. By analysing my typeface, I am able to see some of the influence of these other works: The work of *Michael Harvey*, which I deeply admire and which I have had the chance to examine more closely at the exhibition held at the Department of Typography & Graphic. As well as the way that typefaces like *Sectra-Grilly* type, managed to do something calligraphic-inspired that doesn't feel like a reverence to the pen, and brings something fresh; or the "craziness" of *Nara-Typotheque*, with its beautiful and unexpected shapes. I think these and other projects were in the back of my mind when designing, I would like to stimulate the same feeling of passion I get when looking at these projects to other people through my own work.

### 5—Designing process

#### 5.1 Methodology

My procedure for developing Exentra consisted in basically three steps: sketching, digitalising and printing/correcting.

While working, I always had a sheet of paper, a broad nip pen and a couple of pencils next to me. I used these to help visualise my ideas, through sketches, to see whether the idea would work or not. While

Glyphs software allows images to be used in the background from which a letter can be traced, I did not intend to use my sketches in this way. On the contrary, sketching was a tool that allowed me to explore and discover shapes, and gain a better understanding of proportions, contrast, modulation, etc. For some letters I only needed a quick sketch of a specific part, for others, I ended up sketching the whole letter. However, in all cases, the sketch remained as a tool for playing with different ideas. In each case, I developed an idea of the letter in my mind, with the aid of sketches, before completing the design on the computer. I used this labour-intensive approach to develop almost every glyph of every style: I kept on sketching until the end.



Fig 20. Looking for details in the print outs with the help of a folding magnifier in order to figure out how to improve the visual alignments, specially the horizontals.

The project let me discover the complexity of designing a typeface for a text that has "personality". Unconventional shapes are very likely to stand out in the text. It became clear that contrast was an important factor in developing the evenness of the text. Similarly the modulation of the stroke needed to be carefully handled to look right. Due to the character and design of the typeface, it required significant visual compensation (i.e. the relation between thick and thin, weights and alignments). In the process, I noticed that the lower the contrast, the more forgiving the typeface becomes. As a result, the print/correct step was particularly time consuming and complex, but was crucial to make Exentra work well as a text typeface. This process put me many times in a crossroads between keeping an interesting shape that may stand out, or going for a more conventional solution. Depending on the case I chose the second option or I reworked the shape trying to find a good compromise between legibility and personality. Exentra is not about comfort, and it was never meant to be. This was very clear in my mind from the beginning.

Why was printing so crucial if we work on screens with such a good quality? In my view, printing is an important part of the design process not because the quality is any higher (it could even be lower), but rather because of the scale on which we view the typeface. When working on screen we are normally zooming in and out and, without really noticing (because it's so easy to do) we work on range of sizes that are not necessarily those for which our typeface is designed. When printing, we tend to be more reasonable and keep to the "real" size range more strictly. As a result, we see different things in the two different mediums. In my case, I came to realise that most of the time on the computer I was working at sizes more than 50 times larger than the sizes I used in my printouts.

## 5.2 A word about Glyphs

Prior to joining the Masters programme, I had some experience using RoboFont. The MATD offered us the possibility to learn about another typography software: Glyphs. I found Glyphs to be an intuitive and user-friendly tool that makes the process of design easier especially when it comes to non-Latin scripts. The software package was also backed up by extensive online support: you can find answers to most questions on their website explained in a very clear, detailed and graphic way; the software support team was also responsive and helpful on providing advice on further questions.

While I found it to be a very useful tool, I was not comfortable with the level of automated solutions available on Glyphs, which I avoided using as much as possible. For example, when it comes to drawing a curve, Glyphs provides the user with pre-established relations between the handles that can be used to define a curve as well as providing a range of different curves to choose from. Various downloadable applications provide further advice on drawing. By using this automated process, the typographer also gives up some independence and instead defers to the type of curves promoted through these programmes. As more typographers rely on these solutions, we will start to lose some of the individual flair of different typefaces. While I used Glyphs, I used it in as simple a way as possible to develop the ideas that I had already formed in my mind.

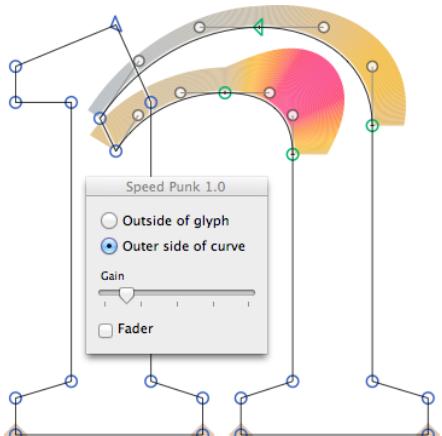


Fig 21. SpeedPunk is a "tool, that helps you spot curvature problems". This software associates smoothness with correct (grey) and not smooth with wrong or problematic (red). If we decide to use this, we need to bear in mind that a curve that is not perfectly smooth is not necessarily wrong. Image from Glyphs' website.



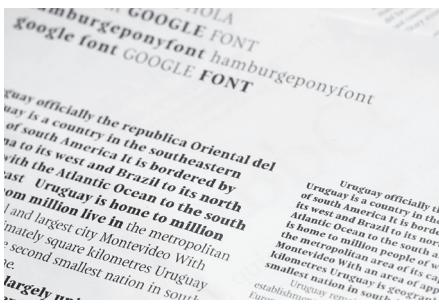


Fig 22. A bold version needs to be slightly higher than the regular, in order to look the same height. I did some tests in order to define both, the proportions (width of the letters) and the height compared to the Roman style.

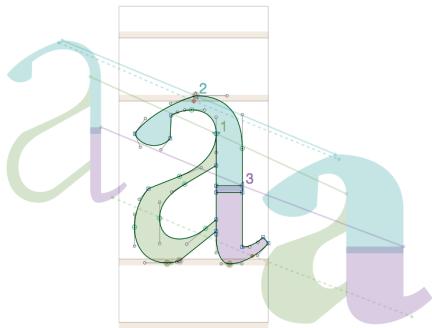


Fig 23. Image from Glyphs showing the compatibility of Exentra's masters with regards to the interpolation process.

## 6—Expanding the family

I started by designing the regular Roman, since I decided this was going to be the central reference for the whole family. For this reason, I decided not to start expanding the family until I felt that the Roman style was of high enough quality that I would not have to make any major changes. The reason for this was that I wanted to avoid spreading mistakes from the Roman into the whole family, which would have required me to fix stuff not just in the Roman, but in every other style I had worked on, each time I made a modification. This meant that I saved myself the time of going back and forth through the different styles to make changes. It also meant that once I started working on other styles I was already familiar with the *tool*<sup>2</sup>, having a good level of understanding of my approach that made me more confident and efficient in developing the other styles.

### 6.1 The Extremes

From my brief, I needed to have two/three weights above and below the regular. I defined the extremes' weight (Heavy and Thin) so that I left enough room to generate two well-differentiated steps between them and the regular. Creating extreme versions is not just about adding or removing weight. Certain shapes need to be rethought, and solutions need to be found to the new problems (such as rethinking the contrast, size and shape of the serif, keeping proportions) that arise when adding or removing the weight. In the process, I also introduced details, as part of the solution, that made each style interesting and different from the others. I felt like I was designing caricatures of the Roman.

### 6.2 Interpolation

Nowadays, thanks to programs like Glyphs or Robofont, once we have created the extremes it is easy to generate a whole range of instances. Nevertheless, I didn't want to fall into the temptation of doing a ridiculous amount of different weights just because technology allows us to do so. Instead, I wanted to make a reasonable decision that related to the real needs of the context I envisage for the use of Exentra. Paul Barnes' visit was particularly helpful in this regard.

adhesionf adhesionf adhesionf  
adhesionf adhesionf adhesionf

Fig 24. First and last version of the 3 masters.

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2—Set of rules I defined to create shapes, aiming to have enough freedom to introduce diversity but strict enough to keep a visual relation and consistency between them.

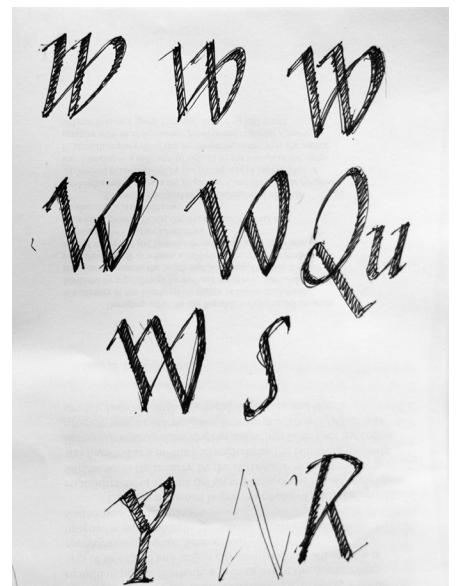
Fig 28. In his visit at the beginning of March, Gerard Unger encouraged me to do an upright version of my italic. I found the result to be very promising but for time reasons I didn't have the chance to take this version further.

Adhesion  
alright morning

### 6.3 Italic

The main goal of an Italic is to have contrast with the Roman. They also tend to be a calligraphic, more lively and dynamic, version of the Roman style. As my Roman was already fairly lively and dynamic, and because of its calligraphic nature, I basically had two different ways to approach the design of the Italic: either by doing the opposite of what I did with the Roman by making it less calligraphic, more simple and calm, or going for something extremely dynamic and lively. The second option seemed more tempting and challenging to me.

As a matter of taste, I'm not a big fan of the Italics that rely on the angle (inclination) as the way of reaching contrast. Thus I went for an angle that was just enough to make it look italic, I wanted to design a *true Italic*, but the contrast was reached by the design itself. In terms of reference I looked at Galliard, designed by Mathew Carter for Linotype (1978), based on types designed by Robert Granjon. In my view it is one of the most beautiful Italics, and a very lively one too.



*grabando*

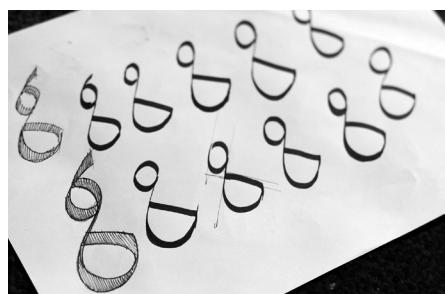


Fig 25. A few sketches, main letters and some alternates, compare to the final result.

*Q K W*

Fig 26. A few of the alternates letters.



#### 6.4 Sans Serif

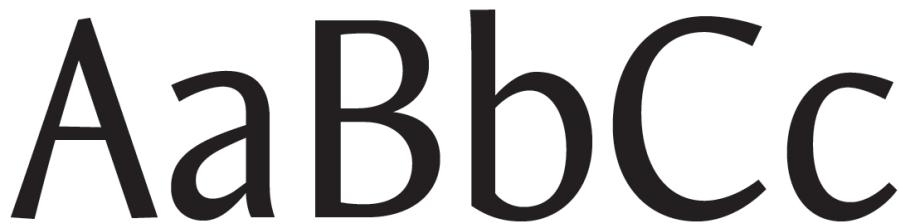
29

According to my experience, typographers do not normally pair Serif and Sans Serif styles from the same family. Being aware that they might not be used together, I resolved to do a serif that looks good in its own right. The challenge was to bring the personality of the serif version into a sans serif, without making a style that looks like a serif typeface with its serif removed.



a > a a a a

Fig 29. I started by doing different versions increasing the level of differentiation, in order to find the right distance from the Serif version.



AaBbCc  
The quick, brown fox jumps over the lazy dog

Fig 30. I decided to go for a style that was a more calm, less sharpness and contrast, version of my Serif. I rapidly noticed that it was too far away from my Serif, and I had lost too much of its personality, ending up with something boring. Then I decided to increase the contrast and bring some of the corners back. Finding the right degree of modulation and contrast was a big challenge.



AaBbCc  
The quick, brown fox jumps over the lazy dog  
THE QUICK, BROWN FOX

Fig 31. The final version introduce contrast and some sharpness keeping features and characteristics that are proper to Sans Serif style.

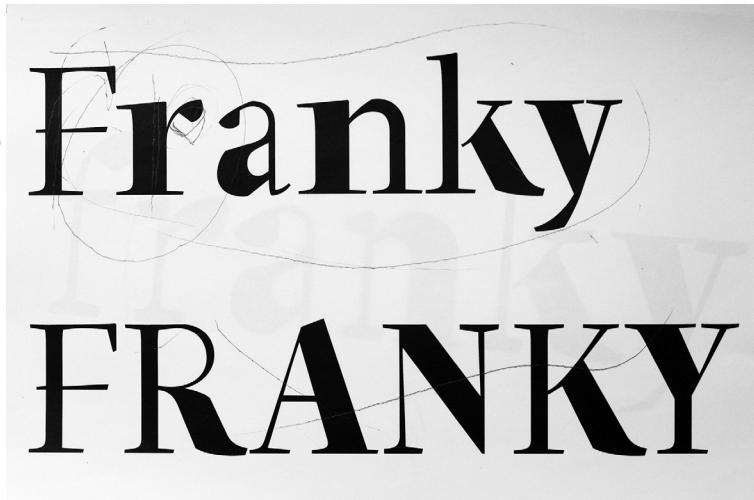


Fig 32. Print out (from mid-March) of my first proposition, mixing the 3 masters. The letters didn't work well together. Letters like the F or the Y looked too normal compared to the A or the K (among other problems).

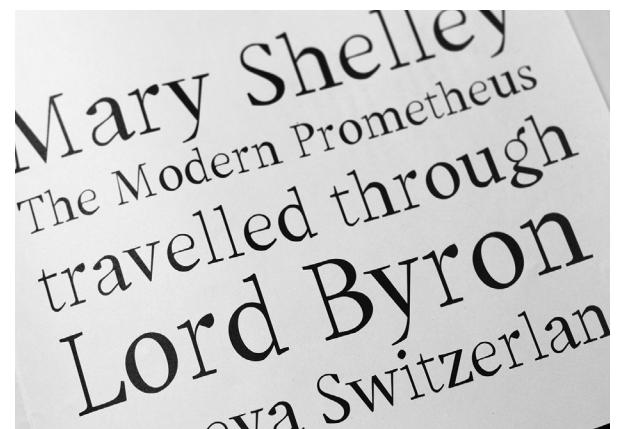


Fig 33. One of the two versions obtained through my second approach. This one combines regular and the thin Master.

## 6.5 Displays

The idea to include a display style was in my head from the beginning, since it is clear that a typeface for magazine should include a display version.

### Franky

When working with the three masters, the concept of interpolation was in my head, so I came up with the idea of doing a display version by mixing the Masters without actually using interpolation. I wanted to play with the idea of distortion and create something rustic, like a monster. I named this style Franky. I first started working on a proposition that combined the three masters into one style. While some letters worked fine, I had problems using the three different weights in some letters, they did not look right or it was just not possible. My next idea was to work on two versions, one combining light and regular, and another combining regular and bold. But the contrast was not extreme enough, as a result some letters looked too "normal". Finally, I moved to a version that combined the two extremes. This version worked the best. However, it was still very difficult to reach the same degree of distortion and balance between light and black along the alphabet.

METALICO  
general jose



Fig 35. An intermediate step on the development of the final idea, which combines the two extremes Masters. I tried out many variants for the treatment of terminals.

Fig 34. Franky's final version. When combining the Masters I wanted to avoid the modification of shapes as much as possible. I then realised that the letters needed to be approached as completely new letters in order to improve consistency.

My goal was to create something that has a visual impact. I think that Franky creates a pattern that produces a nice vibration between thick and thin parts. It is something mysterious and weird that makes you want to take a closer look. To what degree is its inconsistency a problem? Considering the highly experimental roots of the style and the use for which it was designed (short texts that need to catch the eye), I am not sure, but it would certainly benefit from more consistency.

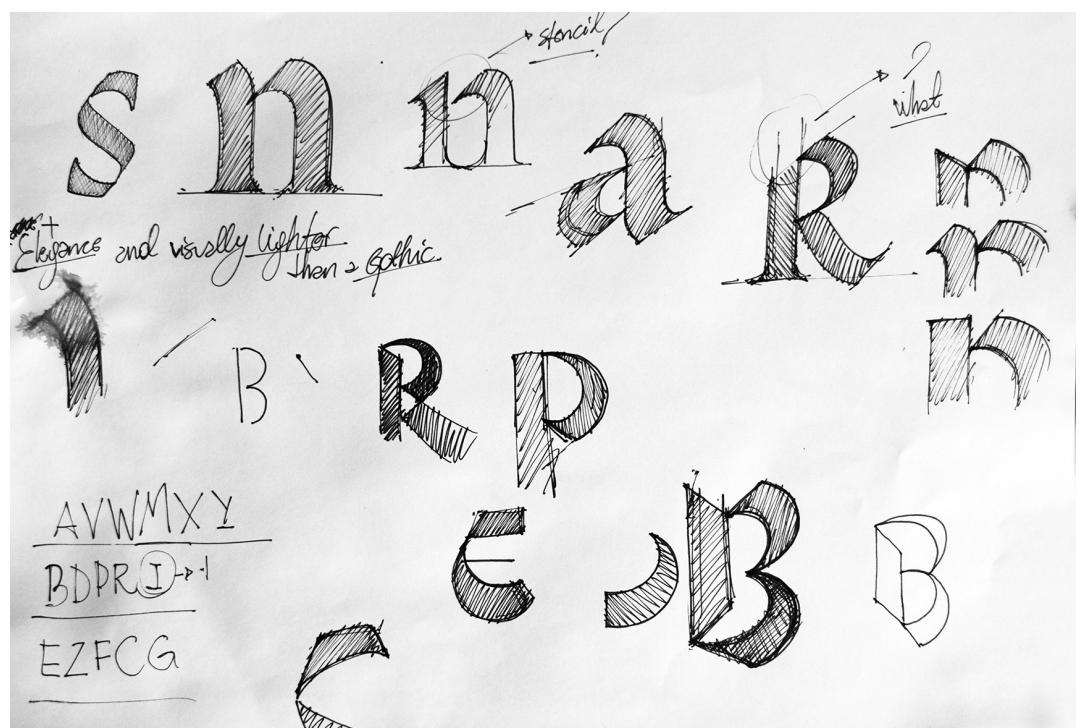
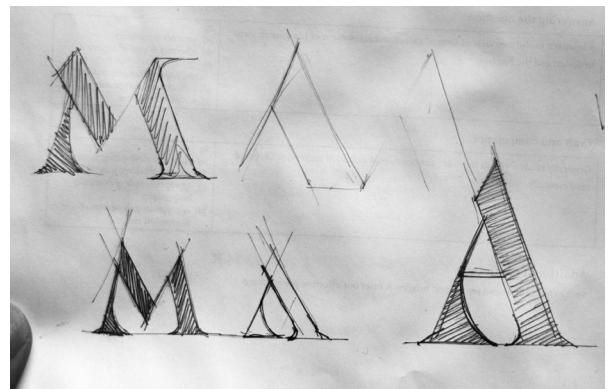


Fig 36. Sketches done along the development process, looking for solutions to some of the problems I faced when developing this style. Even though the approach is rather different to the Roman, I tried to have the corners and cuts in similar places as in the Roman, in order to reinforce the visual connections.



### Black display

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Besides Franky, I felt that I needed to design something more "usable", but I wasn't very enthusiastic about the idea of doing a display just by increasing the contrast and reshaping the serifs. I thought Exentra's family needed something more unique. When it comes to display styles, there are three that I really like: Stencil (established in my brief as one of the displays styles I wanted to develop), Didones and Black-letters. I decided to work on a style that draws inspiration from those three styles. The result is something that suits Exentra's concept very well: calligraphic, elegant, sharp and surprising, being a nice match for both the serif and the sans serif versions.



Fig 37. In the early versions, the Black Display had asymmetric serifs (one side triangular and the other one curved). Later I decided to go for a more harmonious and atemporal solution, as you can see on the final version (image on the bottom).

Fig 38. Some letters were inspired by Black-letters more than others which made them look heavier. Finding the right balance in all the letters took me a long time. Part of the solution implied to make some serifs, extremely heavy in order to bring weight, as well as finding the

features that made some letters look too much Gothic, and turning those into a more Bodoniest solution. All this increased the uniqueness of the style.

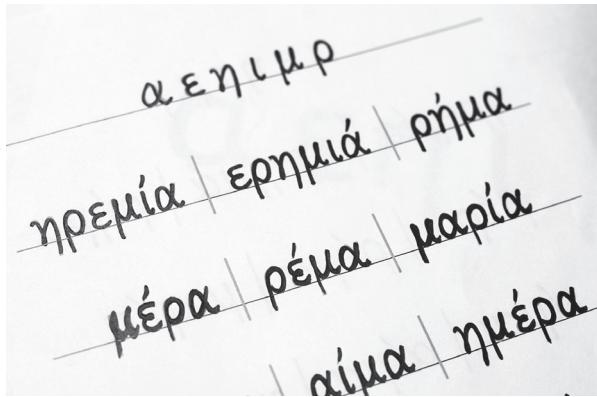
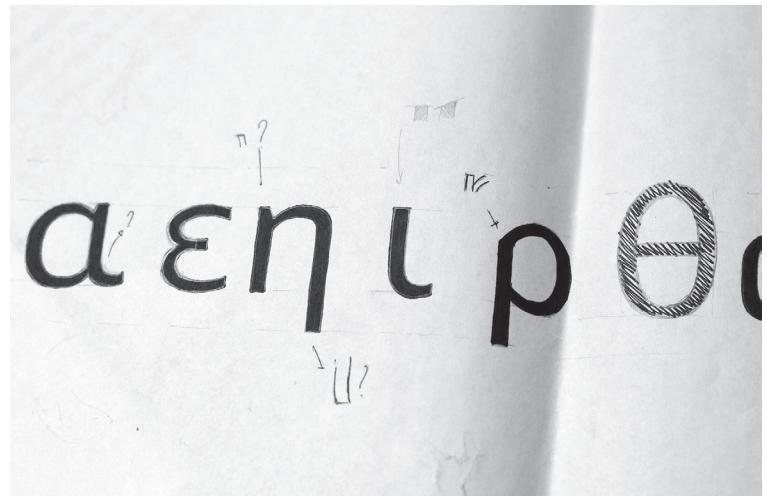


Fig 40. Through the two workshops hosted by Gerry Leonidas I could familiarize myself with the script, understand the way it was constructed (modulation, proportions), and move from sketches to digital files.



αδεηιλμορσω  
αδεηλμνωρ  
αβγδικλμπς

Fig 41. A few digital versions from 29 January to 5 April showing the progression of my work.

With regards to the future, I feel that the most probable scenario for a non-Latin project consist of designing a non-Latin script for an existing Latin typeface. The challenge for this is being able to visually relate the Latin with a script that may have strong conceptual differences, without Latinising the non-Latin script. So, in order to make the most of this experience, I chose the scripts where applying Exentra's characteristics (high contrast, sharpness, etc.) proposed the higher level of difficulty.

I chose Greek—with its constant modulation, rotation of the pen and almost complete absence of parallel strokes—and Gurumukhi, a script I knew virtually nothing about. The Gurumukhi script is traditionally mono-line (there are no antecedents of contrasted typefaces for this script) and drawn using the opposite angle of the pen to Latin.

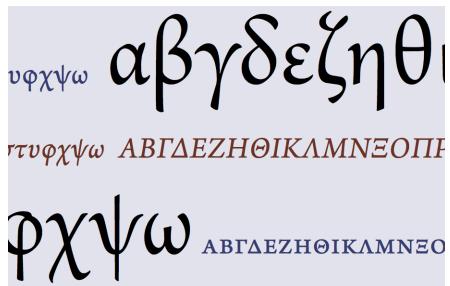


Fig 39. For the non-Latin scripts it was absolutely necessary to look at references in order to understand proportions and style. Arno Pro was one of my references for the Greek.

### 7.1 Greek

Greek texts always made me feel it was a very difficult script to design, with different ascenders and descenders heights, letters that seem to align in the x-height or baseline but they do not, many diagonals and loops, etc. Luckily, Greek is an advanced script, in terms of typographic background, especially when compared with scripts such as Gurumukhi. This gave me more freedom to apply some of Exentra's feature, as more things are allowed in terms of style (for example: invert the contrast). Getting the proportions right was the first step. Secondly, before starting to work on details, matching the colour of the Greek with the Latin. Once I managed to get the proportions right and the colour to look close enough, I started to work on the consistency and evenness (in and out-strokes, polishing the contrast and the details). The difference between the way that the uppercase and lowercase are treated, was a particular challenge to overcome. The uppercase letters turned out to be pretty straightforward as they are closely related to Latin. The lowercase, on the other hand, are somehow a weird combination of Serif, Sans Serif and Italic (calligraphic flow). So getting this right was the hardest part of working with Greek.

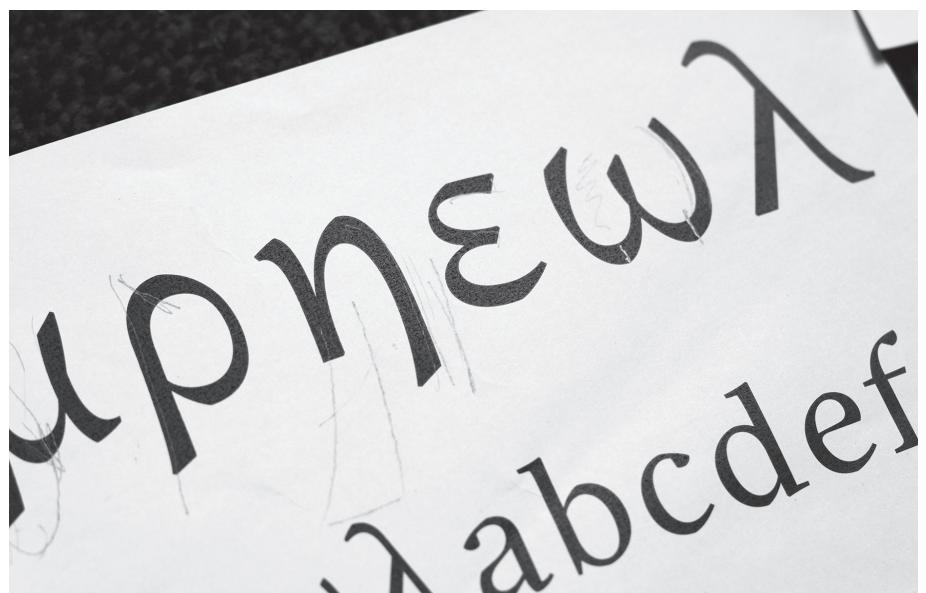


Fig 42. Another very complex thing to achieve was evenness in the thickness of the strokes. This kept me going back and forth almost until the end. For my printouts, I always paired Greek with Latin (reference of colour).



## 7.2 Gurumukhi

This was the last member of the family. I started to work on it on the second week of May, meaning that I had less than one month to develop it.

The Gurmukhi script was completely new to me. I had no prior knowledge about it. As a result, I needed to build an understanding of the basic concepts and, due to time constraints, start drawing as soon as possible. As part of my research I used the book "Learn Punjabi in 30 days", which contains a "how to write" section. This was very useful to understand the sequence of the strokes. I also looked at some manuscripts and drew on Fiona Ross' advice on which typefaces I could trust as a reference of contemporary proportions and styles.

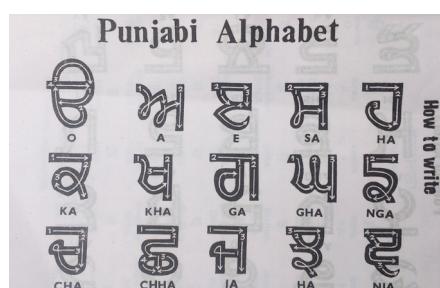


Fig 44. How to write Punjabi, from the book Learn Punjabi in 30 days.

ਬਲੇ ਸਾਹ  
ਪਮਈਡ

Fig 45. Murty Gurmukhi typeface, designed by Fionna Ross and John Hudson, was one of my main references for Gurmukhi.

It was clear that I was not going to become a Gurmukhi expert, or even learn how to read or write in the little time I had available. I just tried to understand the proportions and the way the shapes were drawn (strokes sequence, modulation, etc.), which allowed me to develop enough understanding of how the script is developed in order to adapt the Exentra concept to it (for example, where to introduce corners). Another important factor was to figure out how far could I go with innovation. In other words, learn what I can change without losing legibility.

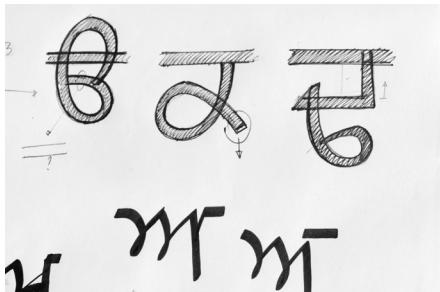
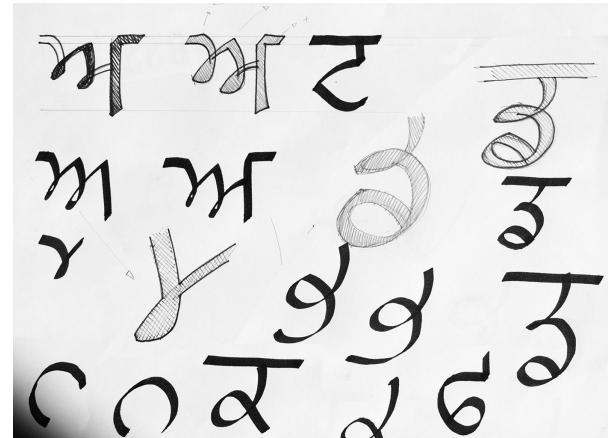
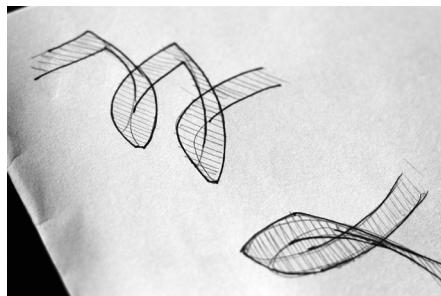


Fig 46. Rough sketches done through the development studying shapes, modulation and proportions



ਅਚਾਨਕ  
 ਦੀ ਜ਼ਿਦਗੀ ਦੀਆਂ ਥੁੰਡੀਆਂ  
 ਹਧ ਹ ਅਧਿਉਸੀ ਭਰਜ ਦ ਜਨਸ ਮੇਮਾਂ  
 ਦ ਸ਼ਾਈਡ ਦੀ ਉਲਗਭਗ ਫਿਲਿਪ ਡਪਾਸ਼ਕਾਈਨ  
 ਨਉਲ ਹਰਾਲ ਕਐਰਣ ਵਾਹਿਲੀ ਤਸਵੀਰ ਪਸੁਕ  
 ਇਕ ਪਿਛ ਦ ਸ਼ਾਡ ਦੀ ਜ਼ਿਦਗੀ ਦਾ ਸਕਾਬਲਾ  
 ਅਤ ਵਾਏਟਾਹਰਣ ਫਰਕਾ ਦ ਝੱਡਰ ਜ ਬਾਵਜ਼ਦ  
 ਜ਼ਿਦਗੀ ਦੀਆਂ ਬਹੁਤੀਮ ਸਮਾਨਤਾਵਾਂ ਨ ਉਜਾਗਰ  
 ਅਧਿਸੀ ਭਰਜ ਦ ਜਨਸ ਖ੍ਰਮੀਆ ਤ ਕਈ ਬਟਾਵਾਗ੍ਰਾ  
 ਤ ਦੀ ਉਲਗਭਗ ਫਿਲਿਪ ਡਪਾਸ਼ਕਾਈਨ ਅਤ ਨਾਈਜ਼ਲ  
 ਰਾਲ ਕਐਰਣ ਵਾਲੀ ਤਸਵੀਰ ਪਸੁਕ ਦੀ ਸਿਰਜਟਾ ਕੀਤੀ  
 ਦ ਸ਼ਾਡ ਦੀ ਜ਼ਿਦਗੀ ਦਾ ਸਕਾਬਲਾ ਦ ਬਿਟਿਸ ਬਚ ਨਾਲ  
 ਤੁਹਰਣ ਫਰਕਾ ਦ ਝੱਡਰ ਜ ਬਾਵਜ਼ਦ ਵਿਸਥਾਰਧਰਵ ਤਸਵੀਰਾ  
 ਆ ਤ ਕਈ ਬਟਾਵਾਗ੍ਰਾ ਲਗਭਗੀ ਗਰਅ ਨ  
 ਅਤ ਨਾਈਐਜ਼ਲ ਗਰਅ ਨ  
 ਕਾਨਾ ਕੀਤੀ ਹ ਜਿਸਵਿਚ  
 ਕੌਨੀ ਹੜ

Fig 50. Print out from late-May, showing some problems in the thickness of the strokes.

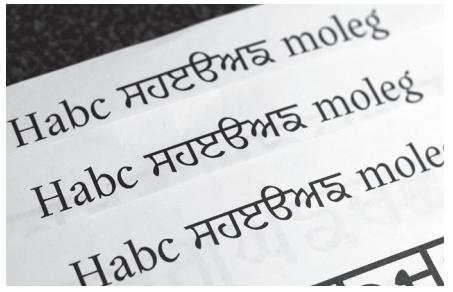


Fig 47. Trying different headline heights allow me to find the one that worked the best with my Latin.

My first proposition was a version that introduced two big innovations, high contrast (almost the same as the serif version), and it was drawn following the Latin angle of the pen. Ross recommended not using the Latin angle, arguing that it created too much of a distortion for a sacred, very conservative, script; she believed that the proportions and the shapes were working well. Therefore, she encouraged me to redraw all the letters with the classic pen-angle.

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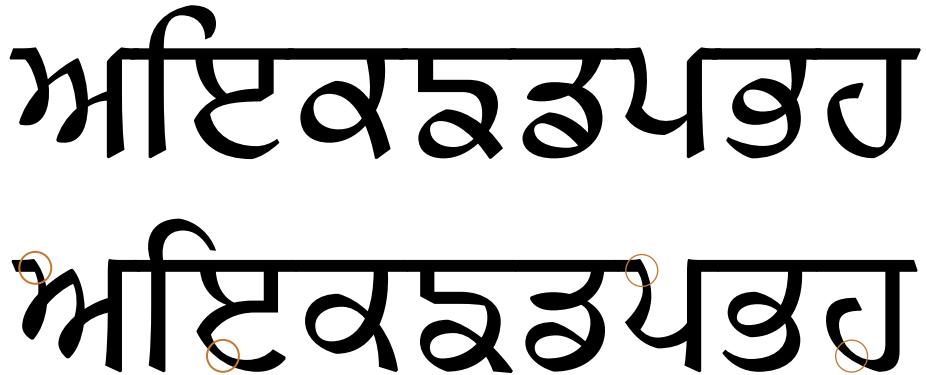


Fig 48. Very first proposition using the Latin angle of the pen, next to the second version where I redraw the letters using the conventional angle of the pen.

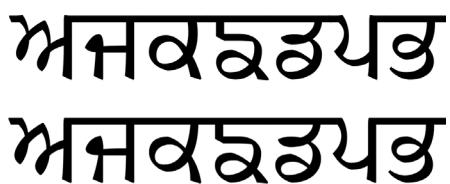


Fig 49. A couple of versions showing how the strokes were modified when looking for readability.

The biggest problem I faced when trying to introduce high contrast into Gurmukhi, was that if I followed the logic of the pen strictly, some shapes tended to break apart (at the text sizes). The thin part appeared in places that undermined the readability and balance of the letters (pointed in yellow on the image above). The challenge was to find out how far I could go with the contrast, and how to treat some shapes without being perfectly calligraphic, but making the shapes look natural. My intention was to keep the contrast as close to Exentra as possible. I didn't want to end up doing another monoline/low contrast Gurumuki. Thus, the only way to do this was by increasing the contrast in very tiny amounts and introduction small modifications then printing and checking, whether I got enough thickness or not.



Fig 51. Dealing with diacritics. Print out from end of May.

**ਪੰਜ ਧੋਰੇ ਪੰਜ ਧੋਰੇ  
ਪੰਜ ਧੋਰੇ ਪੰਜ ਧੋਰੇ**

Fig 52. In *Problems for Indic typography in current OpenType Layout implementations* John Hudson explains that the only way to avoid some marks to clash (red) is to insert head-line extending shims and then contextually kern these to achieve correct distances (green).



## **8—Conclusion**

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The ROP compels us to go back through our sketches, notes, thoughts, allowing us to analyse our own path and learn about it. Through this reflection we can identify pros and contras of the way we proceeded, be more aware of our strengths and weaknesses; leaving us in a better position for the next project.

By looking over my sketches and my first digital files and comparing them to the final result, I can see how much I have learned and improved in this short time. Every modification was evidence of my learning process. It made me see that some decisions I had made along the way were no longer relevant, effective enough, or I discovered new and better ways to do what I was trying to do afterwards.

Looking back at the brief, when I defined the type family variants I felt I was being overly optimistic. Even at the time I doubted whether I was going to have the time to learn how to develop all the styles and master the complexities especially given that many of the scripts were new for me (italics, interpolation, non-Latin, etc.). Looking back, I am surprised that I was able to develop so many variations in such a short period of time.

The programme was a very intense experience. There was always a high stress level, I always had something to do and no day was ever long. But it was definitely worth it. The reward has been huge.

While I started the Masters programme with high expectations both of the programme and of what I would be able to learn, it has exceeded my expectations. While there are many aspects of typography I would like to work on more, I could not have done this and also gone so deep into the things I decided to work on. I feel that I have applied myself with a lot of enthusiasm, and I am happy with what I have managed to achieve.

If I had to give some advice to someone starting the MATD, I would say three things. Firstly, try to do your own thing. If you are in this Masters you have something important “to say”, use this experience to express it. Secondly, don’t rush. Each step of the process is important and you should take the full advantage of each. Finally, the “competition” is with yourself. Don’t be afraid to exchange ideas with your classmates or give your opinion.



I want say thanks to Michael Twyman, James Mosley, Victor Gaultney, Ewan Clayton and all the visiting lecturers.

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