

# 4

The Typeface

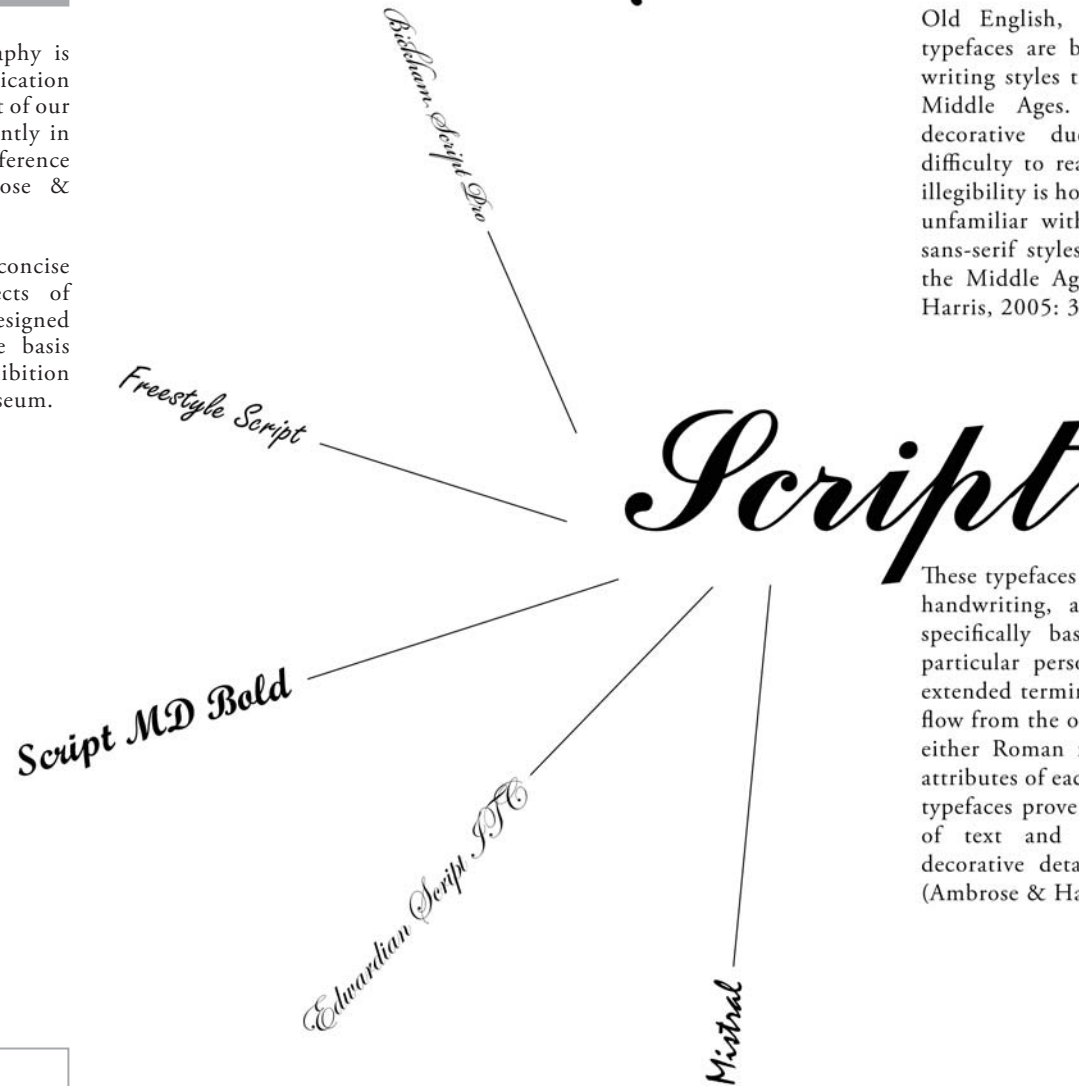
## 4 THE TYPEFACE

Evolving over centuries, typography is an essential design and communication element and forms an integral part of our day-to-day existence. It is constantly in flux and continues to evolve as preference and technology change (Ambrose & Harris, 2006: 170).

This chapter serves to give a concise overview of the broader aspects of typography, and all though not designed by the author, could form the basis for curatorial content and exhibition material within the proposed museum.

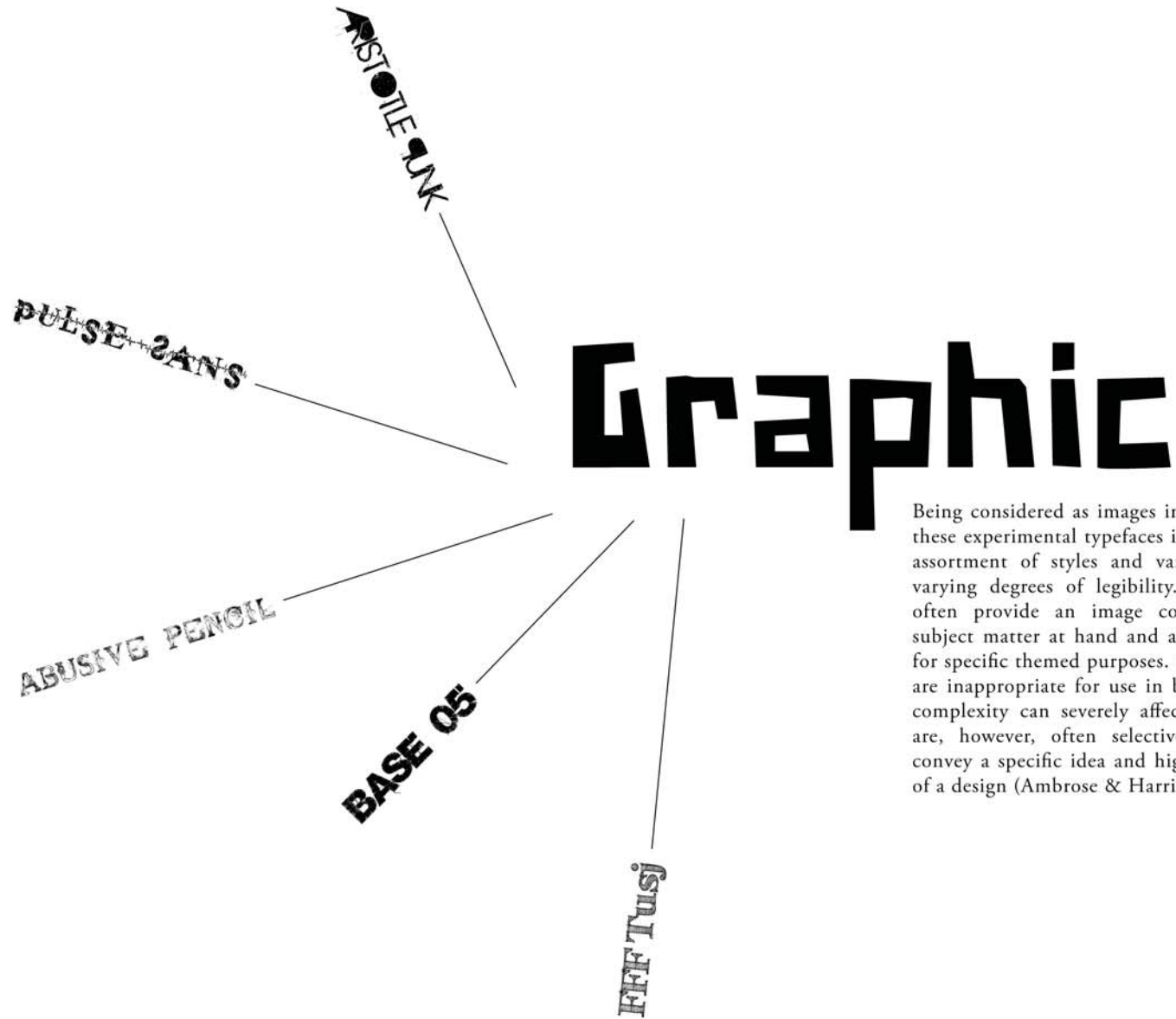
# Blackletter

Old English, Block, Broken or Blackletter typefaces are based on the ornate and heavy writing styles that were ubiquitous during the Middle Ages. These typefaces are mainly decorative due to their complexity and difficulty to read in large blocks of text. This illegibility is however due to the fact that we are unfamiliar with the typeface - contemporary sans-serif styles would be equally difficult for the Middle Age man to decode (Ambrose & Harris, 2005: 38).



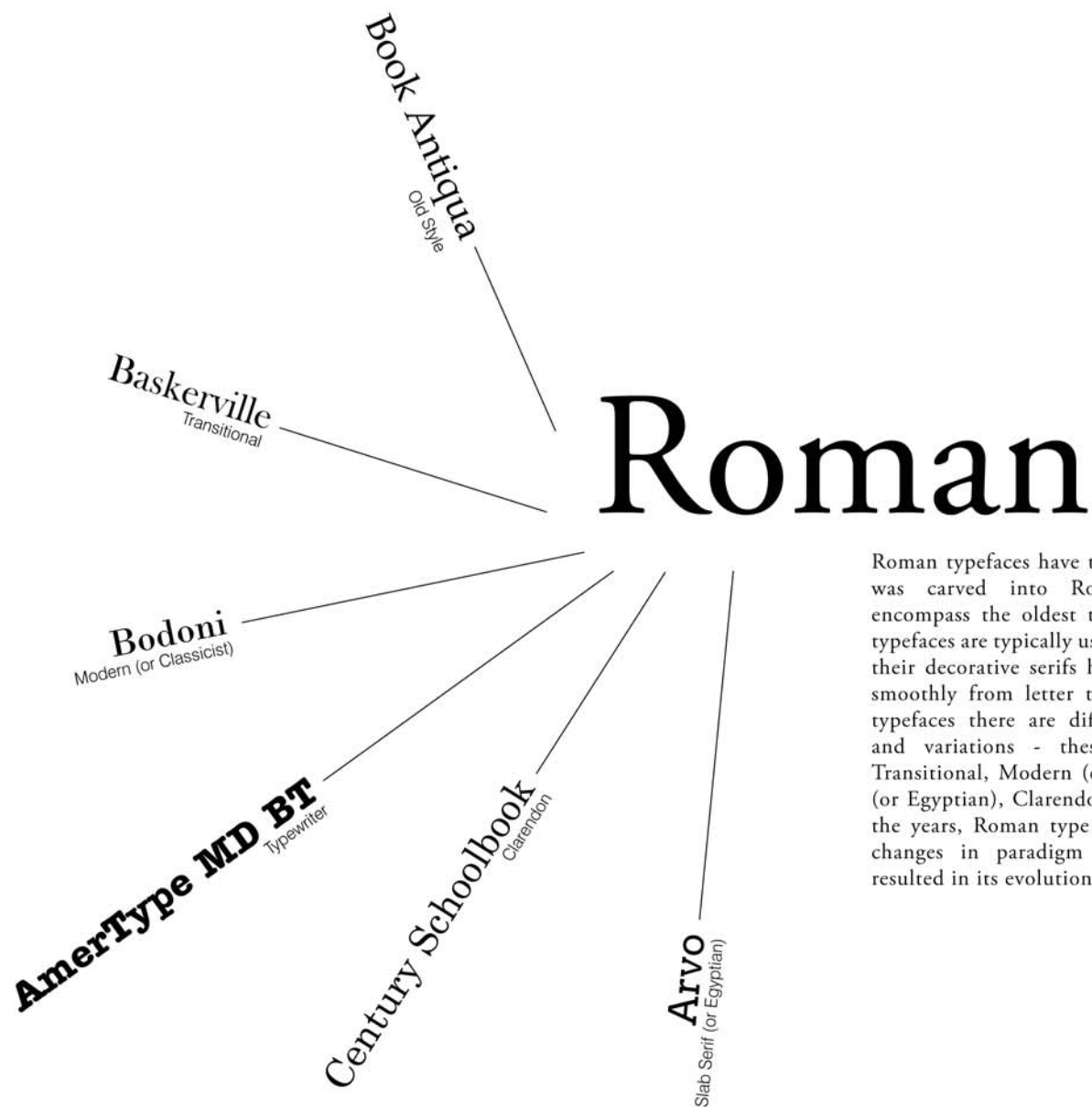
These typefaces were created in order to imitate handwriting, and in some cases, they were specifically based on the handwriting of a particular person. These typefaces often have extended termination strokes so that the letters flow from the one to the other. Not classified as either Roman nor Gothic, as they may share attributes of each. Similarly to Blackletter, these typefaces prove difficult to read in large blocks of text and often provide supplementary decorative details to titles and brand names (Ambrose & Harris, 2005: 56).

### 4.1 TYPE FAMILIES



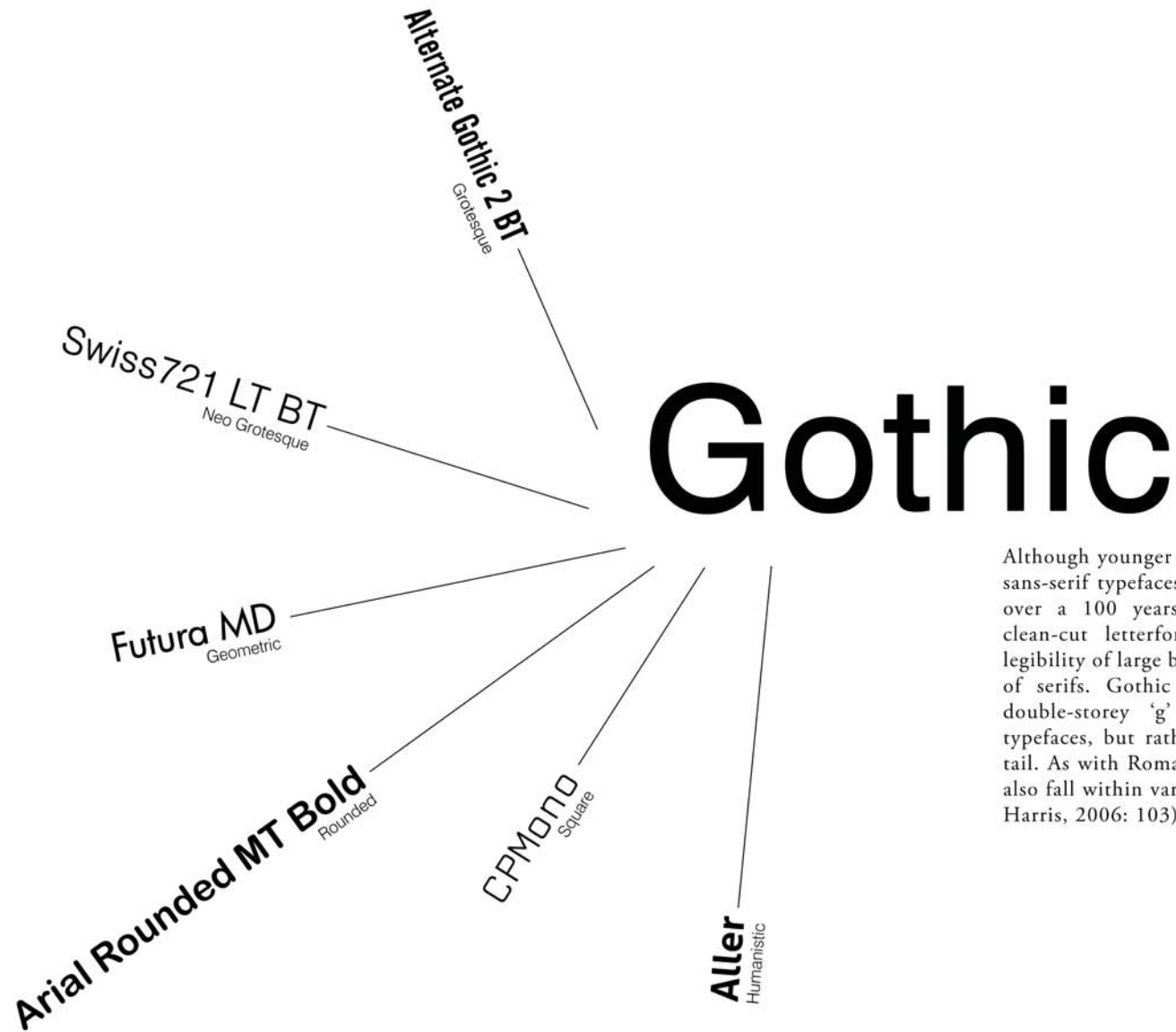
Being considered as images in their own right, these experimental typefaces include the widest assortment of styles and variations, all with varying degrees of legibility. Characters may often provide an image connection to the subject matter at hand and are often designed for specific themed purposes. Graphic typefaces are inappropriate for use in body text as their complexity can severely affect legibility. They are, however, often selectively employed to convey a specific idea and highlight the drama of a design (Ambrose & Harris, 2006: 103).

Fig. 52: Font families: Graphic (Author, 2011).



Roman typefaces have their origins in text that was carved into Roman stonework, and encompass the oldest typeface category. These typefaces are typically used for body text because their decorative serifs help the eye to progress smoothly from letter to letter. As with many typefaces there are different subclassifications and variations - these include Old Style, Transitional, Modern (or Classicist), Slab Serif (or Egyptian), Clarendon and Typewriter. Over the years, Roman type has morphed to reflect changes in paradigm and style, which has resulted in its evolution (Lupton, 2004: 17-25).

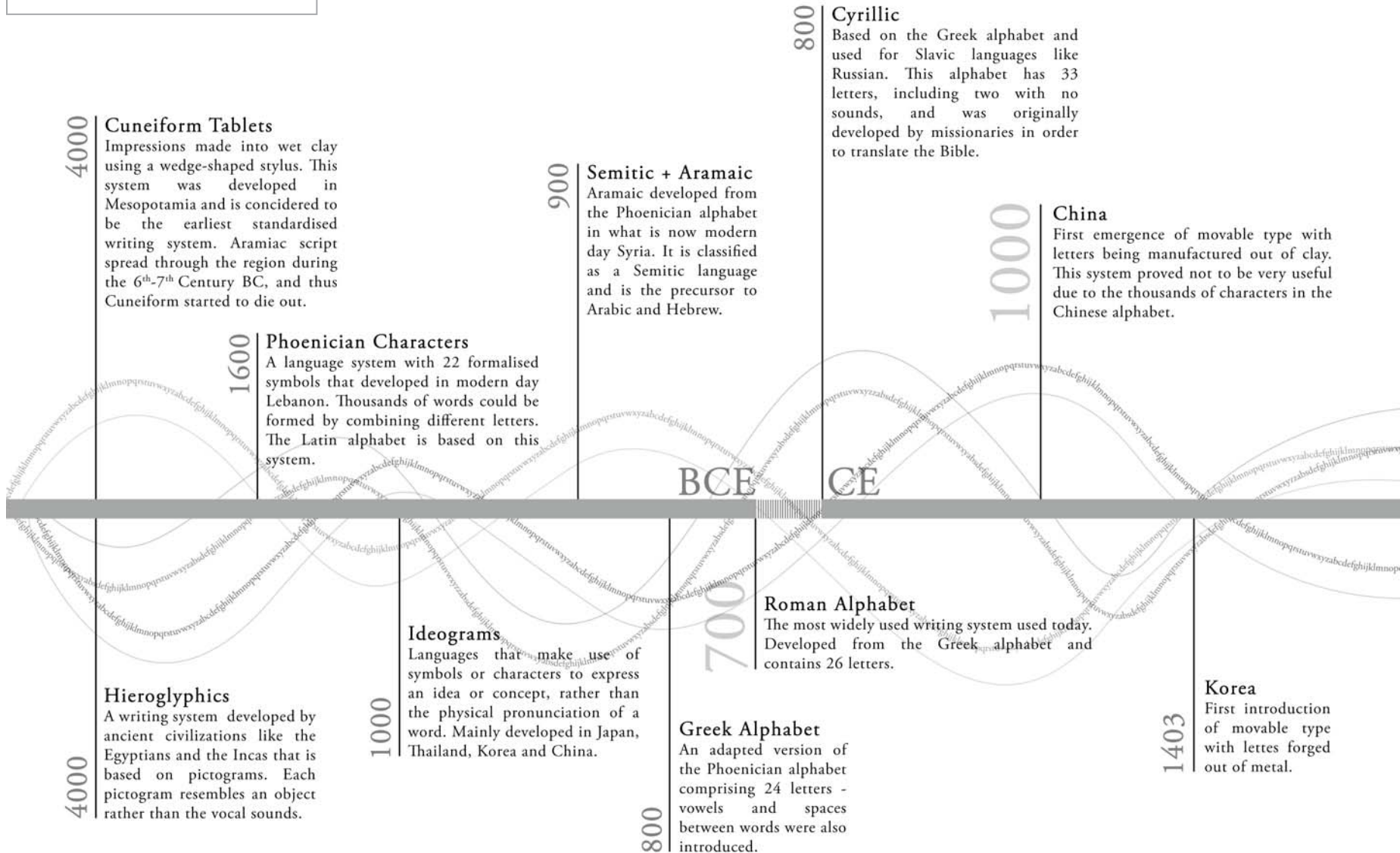
Fig. 53: Font families: Roman (Author, 2011).



Although younger than their Roman brothers, sans-serif typefaces have been in existence for over a 100 years. Gothic fonts provide a clean-cut letterform, but they can hinder legibility of large blocks of text due to the lack of serifs. Gothic typefaces do not have a double-storey 'g' as used in some serif typefaces, but rather, always has a 'g' with a tail. As with Roman fonts, Gothic letterforms also fall within various categories (Ambrose & Harris, 2006: 103).

Fig. 54: Font families: Gothic (Author, 2011).

## 4.2 A BRIEF HISTORY OF TYPOGRAPHY



1436

### Printing Press

The first introduction of movable metal type in the West. A German printer, Thomas Gutenberg, developed the first printing press which allowed for the mass production of books and re-usable text characters.

1500-1600's

### Renaissance

Typography developed extensively during this period with hotspots in France, Italy and Holland. The Italian model was favoured due to the overpowering influence of the Renaissance. During this period letterforms resembled those made by pen and thus fully utilised the greater detail and flexibility that metal type offered. Blackletter consequently started to fall out of favour.

1860 - 1920's

### Arts and Crafts

A movement favouring simplicity in design and rejecting heavily ornamented interiors. There was an emphasis on craftsmanship and an honesty through design. These tendencies were also reflected in the design of new typefaces.

Century Schoolbook  
Morris Fuller Benton  
1901

Franklin Gothic  
Morris Fuller Benton  
1904

COPPERPLATE GOTHIC  
Frederic Goudy  
1905

1910 - 1940's

### Modernism

The emergence of form follows function. Endeavour to define the new paradigm and what is to be considered 'modern' as there was a complete disregard of history and the past. Rapid progress in terms of design and functionality were key concerns. Typefaces of this era often forced viewers to see the everyday differently by presenting unfamiliar typographic forms. Sub-movements include DeStijl in Holland (1917) and Constructivism in Russia (1918).

1931

### Nazi Germany

Blackletter was declared the official typeface of Germany. In 1941 Blackletter was outlawed in favour of Roman type.

1500's

### Claude Garamond

The first independent type foundry was established by Parisian printer Claude Garamond.

1800's

### Industrial Revolution

New techniques developed that allowed for increased levels of detail in typefaces. The 'point' measurement system was introduced as well as the use of **boldface**. Experimentation with serifs also started to see the light of day.

1150 - 1500

### Blackletter

A typeface developed in France that was based on the letterforms of the Middle Ages. Nowadays this typeface has fallen out of favour due to its ornate letterforms and unfamiliarity.

1796

### Lithography

Aldis Senefelder invents Lithography and revolutionises the print-making process.

1919 - 1933

Futura  
Paul Renner  
1928

### The Bauhaus

Highly influenced by geometric forms and proportions, typefaces that originated from this school pushed the boundaries of sans-serif letter design.

1885

### Monotype

The Monotype character caster was patented by Tolbert Lanston. This method made it possible to cast single letters instead of whole lines as with Linotype.

1950's

**Humanist Type**

Following the Second World War there was a consumer boom in the USA which led to a renewed optimism. Many creatives and intellectuals also fled Nazi Germany resulting in an expanding cultural paradigm. Hermann Zapf started blurring the lines between sans-serif and serif typefaces and started the Humanist typographic movement.

**Palatino**

Herman Fapf  
1950

**Mistral**

Roger Excoffon  
1953

1960's

**Pop Art**

As a reaction to abstract art, Pop Art started to emerge as a reflection of consumer-culture. Typefaces were designed according to possible associations instead of theory or principle. Towards the end of the decade lettering was heavily influenced by the Art Nouveau movement.

**OCR A**

Adrian Frutiger  
1968

1980's

**Personal Computers**

The widespread introduction of the personal computer coupled with desktop publishing, defined this decade in terms of typographic design. Computers replaced the physical process of type design.

**Arial**

Robin Nicholas + Patricia Saunders  
1982

1981

**Bitstream**

Mike Parker and Matthew Carter establishes the first digital type foundry.

1990's

**Break Away**

As a reaction to the Swiss Style, typography starts to break away from the grid pattern in favour of a playful experimentation. Type becomes part of the message rather than just the conveyor.

**Verdana**

Matthew Carter  
1996

1950's

**International Style**

Also known as the Swiss style, this movement advocated a new set of revolutionary principles. The movement encouraged the use of grids and mathematical standards to design letters as well as asymmetrical layouts with an emphasis on sans-serif typefaces.

**Helvetica**

Max Miedinger  
1957

1970's

**Avant Garde**

Herb Lubalin and Tom Carnase  
1970

**Punk**

This decade saw type develop to become even more decorative and extravagant. The emergence of the Punk culture towards the end of the decade rejected the decadent and extravagant nature of fashion, visual arts and music in favour of the disposable and the shocking.

1985

**Fontographer**

Developed by James R. Von Ehr, this software allowed for the manipulation of existing fonts as well as the creation of new ones

1984

**Apple Mac**

Apple makes the personal computer accessible to the masses and thus typeface design migrated away from professional typesetters towards designers of all genres. Low-res computer displays resulted in 'pixelated' font styles.

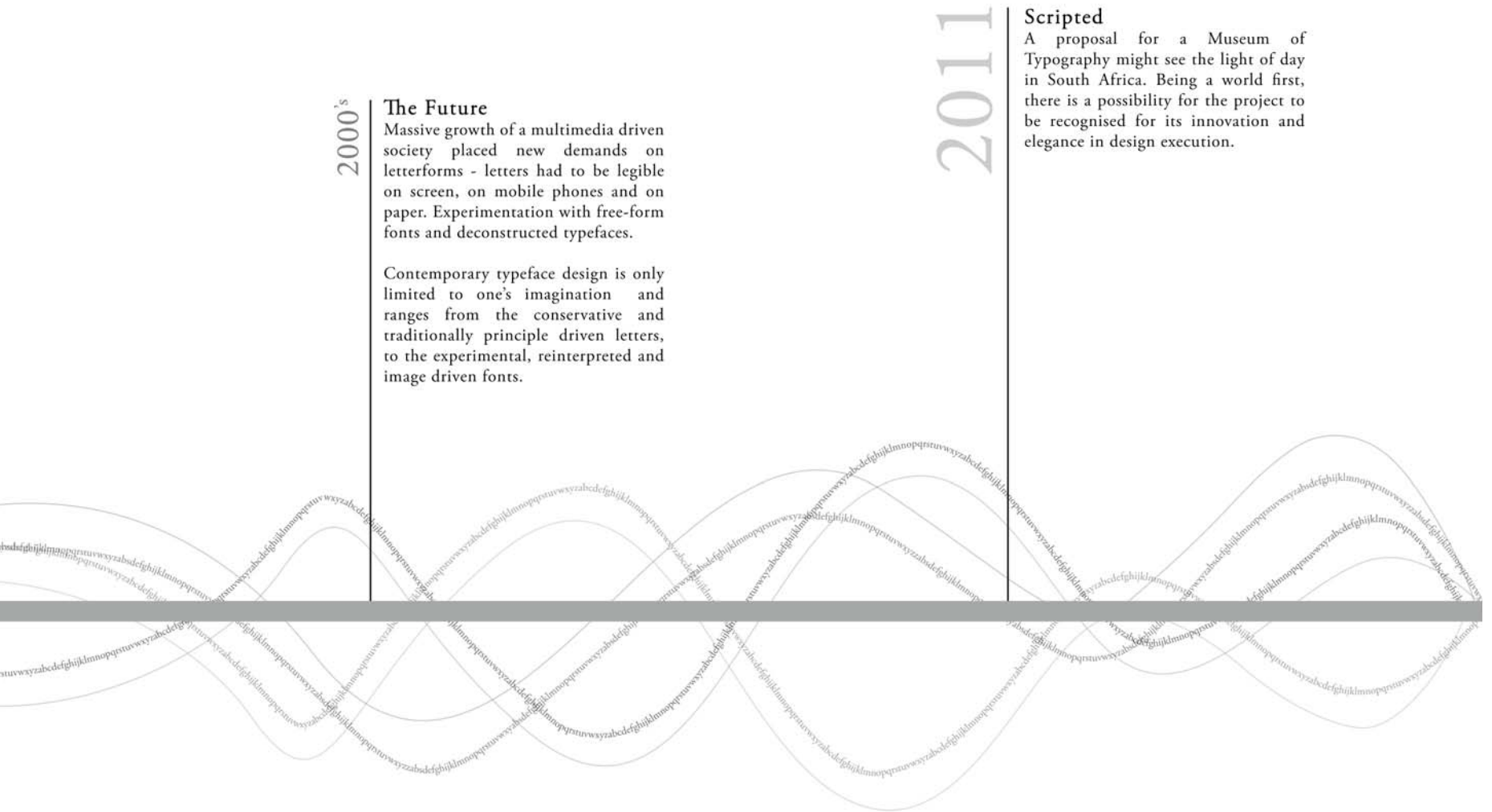


Fig. 55: A brief history of typography (Author, 2011. Sourced: Ambrose & Harris, 2006: 12-53; Lupton, 2004: 13-30; Pflughaupt, 2007: 12-27).