MuirMcNeil

sans sans

010 ‘Font designers be like
here’s grotesk grotesk
a lovely grotesk that sort of
like all the other grotesks.’

Dom Taylor @domril, Twitter, June 2021

020 This is MuirMcNeil
Sans Sans, a new grotesk,
neo-grotesque, sans serif.

030 Sans / sænz /
preposition: without,
absent, minus, void

040 It is likely that a
greater number of
serifless typefaces have
been produced in
the early twenty-first
century than any other
contemporary type style.
It is also probable that
a greater number of
sans serifs have been
published in the past
two decades than in the
entire half millennium
that precedes them.

060 In developing these
new sans serif faces,
some designers have
attempted to achieve
a sense of transparency
or neutrality by
reanimating historical
forms such as Akzidenz-
Grotesk, Monotype
Grotesque or Helvetica;
compounding,
systematising and
streamlining their
diverse geometries
into highly competent
but often somewhat
sanitised tools for digital
communication.

080 Other designers have taken a contrary approach, seeking to infuse the vigorous linearity of the sans serif style with warmer humanistic and calligraphic traces. Such designs often reappropriate and accentuate the quirks of nineteenth century grotesques and gothics in order to effect an illusion of authentic character that is founded on nostalgia or sentimental whimsicality.

100 Sans Sans follows neither of these trends. While it acknowledges that communications can never be neutral or objective but must always be located, mediated and directed, it also avoids any identification with the pious conservatism of overtly retrospective humanist designs.

120 Sans Sans is the initial outcome of a project that MuirMcNeil has been developing intermittently over several years. The project's primary objective was to distil the latin alphabet into an organic system of archetypal components, not as an end in itself, but for subsequent use as the subject of a series of experiments investigating various rudimentary functions of typographic form such as legibility, symmetry, emphasis, rhythm and frequency.

140 A starting point rather than a final conclusion, Sans Sans was developed as a live specimen — a typographic genotype with potential for analysis, dissection, deformation and reformation into new visual organisms.

160 **The design of Sans Sans has a minimalist attitude, with every contour, stroke and curve honed to its cleanest and most natural shape in order to render each individual glyph in the simplest possible form.**

180 **Sans Sans has been drawn on a heartline that is imprinted with the DNA of a number of protean sans serif typefaces from the latter half of the twentieth century, refined late modern styles that are often referred to as ‘neo-grotesques’. While the skeletal framework of Sans Sans owes much to Folio and Univers, traces of DIN 1451, Unica, Berthold Imago and Frutiger are also discernible underneath its skin.**

Sans Sans
Folio
Univers
DIN 1451
Unica
Imago
Frutiger

200 **It is commonplace nowadays for typefaces to be published as massive superfamilies, often extending over multiple axes such as weight, width, height, optical size, alternate forms etc., and ranging across numerous language systems. The growth of these complex multipurpose collections has not necessarily been driven by the practical needs of end users. It can be attributed largely to the desire of their designers to demonstrate their prodigious skills.**

It is also partly accountable to advances in the type design software technologies that facilitate their manufacture, and partly to the inexorable vagaries of fashion.

Sans Sans has been conceived as a much more straightforward offering, in keeping with type designs we most admire. An economical, robust and serviceable tool, Sans Sans has been drawn in upright and italic styles, each in 13 matched weights.

Sans Sans

010 Thin
020 Ultra Light
030 Extra Light
040 Light
060 Book
080 Regular
100 Roman
120 **Medium**
140 **Semi Bold**
160 **Bold**
180 **Extra Bold**
200 **Black**
220 **Fat**

011 *Thin Italic*
021 *Ultra Light Italic*
031 *Extra Light Italic*
041 *Light Italic*
061 *Book Italic*
081 *Regular Italic*
101 *Roman Italic*
121 ***Medium Italic***
141 ***Semi Bold Italic***
161 ***Bold Italic***
181 ***Extra Bold Italic***
201 ***Black Italic***
221 ***Fat Italic***

220 **‘Sans teeth,
sans eyes, sans taste,
sans everything.’**

As You Like It, William Shakespeare, 1600

Sans Sans
010 Thin

300pt

68/63pt

Sans without absent minus void serifless visual past archetypal

36/36pt

Historical diverse competent sanitised digital contrary vigorous warmer humanistic calligraphic authentic nostalgic sentimental objective subjective located mediated directed pious retrospective humanist initial several primary organic archetypal subsequent visual various different functional starting final live typographic

NATURAL SIMPLEST PROTEAN REFINED LATE MODERN SKELETAL

Sans Sans
011 Thin Italic

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Sans without
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void serifless
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Sans Sans
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Latin 1 standard character set in OpenType, TTF, WOFF and WOFF 2 encoding

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Lining Figures

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Tabular Lining Figures

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Non-lining Figures

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so sans they named it twice