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

020 This is MuirMcNeil
Sans Sans, a neue 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 protean historical forms such as Akzidenz-Grotesk, Monotype Grotesque or Franklin Gothic; 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 the warmth of humanistic and calligraphic traces. Such designs often reappropriate the quirks of nineteenth century grotesques and gothics, accentuating them in order to effect an illusion of authentic character that is founded on nostalgia or sentimental whimsicality.

100 Sans Sans follows neither of these tendencies. While it acknowledges that communications can never be neutral, transparent 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 most natural shape in order to render each individual glyph in the leanest, smoothest possible form.

180 Sans Sans has been drawn on a heartline that is imprinted with the DNA of a number of seminal 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, alternates 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 is an economical, versatile type system intended as a more straight-talking alternative. Like its mid-century modern antecedents, it has been conceived as a plainly unequivocal design, drawn in upright and italic styles, each in 13 matching 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 *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.’**

300pt

Aa

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

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MODERN SKELETAL DISCERNIBLE

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