Frutiger honored with prestigious Typography Award

Signs of our times from hot metal to digital

Bad Homburg, 1 November 2006. Legendary designer Adrian Frutiger has received the prestigious 2006 Typography Award from The Society for Typographic Aficionados (SOTA). The award, presented by Allan Haley, Chairman of the Board of Directors at SOTA, recognizes Frutiger’s artistic contribution in designing many of the best-known typefaces of the 20th century. These include OCR-B, the eponymous Frutiger and Univers. In the words of Bruno Steinert, the former Managing Director at Linotype GmbH, Univers is “the most significant typeface of the last 100 years.” The award ceremony took place at the former Post Museum in Bern in the presence of 60 well-wishers, including Frutiger’s life-long friend Fritz Jenni. The locale was a fitting choice. Delivering a typeface for the Swiss Post was Frutiger’s first commercial success in his homeland.

Frutiger’s life spans an era of exciting typographic development. At the time of his birth in 1928 near the town of Interlaken, typographic technology was not so far removed from that of Gutenberg. Driven by “the urge to develop the best possible legibility,” Frutiger left compulsory school at age 16 to become a typesetter’s apprentice, moving to Zurich four years later to take classes at the College of Technical Arts. In 1952, Frutiger left for Paris to become artistic director for the typefoundry Deberny & Peignot. While Frutiger considers his first commercially released type to be Meridien (1955), his great breakthrough came two years later with the widely popular Univers type family. Additional acclaim came after Frutiger was approached to come up with a more pleasing design for the optical character recognition typefaces used for computers. The result was OCR-B, which became the worldwide standard in 1973.
Frutiger is also well known for the typeface that bears his own name, a classic of modern typography and the basis of many modern typefaces to follow. The seeds of the Frutiger type family were conceived in 1968, when the future Charles de Gaulle Int’l Airport in Paris needed way-finding signs that could be read easily from different angles. This font, named Roissy, was later slightly adapted for print use and, as Frutiger, became widely popular - not least in the designer’s native Switzerland. For instance, in 2003 the Swiss authorities decided to replace all traffic signs with a variant known as ASTRA-Frutiger. The new signs are true to the type artist’s signature ethos: simple, distinct and quick to read.

Frutiger’s passion for stylistically pure sans serif typefaces is clearly evident throughout his oeuvre, most recently in the harmonious and futuristic Avenir Next (2003). He has also applied his skills to many offbeat endeavors. The Linotype Project “Type before Gutenberg” resulted in such faces as Herculanium and the robust Rusticana. More recently, Frutiger’s creativity has produced Westside, a decorative wild-west slab serif, and Frutiger Stones, which illustrates the artist’s unique ability to grasp technological developments and combine them with archetypal human perceptions of shapes and images. Finally, Frutiger Capitalis and Capitalis Signs is a stylistic vision all its own, a personal symbolic universe.

When it comes to type and typography, Frutiger has contributed to the visual character of his era as no other. But he has never been interested in type for its own sake. Reader-friendliness and the efficient conveyance of content have always been his paramount goals. Frutiger believes that type should be pragmatic, and warns designers of the danger of being overly obsessed with fashion. Over the years and complementing his typographical work, he has created many works of art. His style is defined by a linguistic minimalism based on abstract, contemporary symbols.

Frutiger’s typefaces (especially Frutiger, Univers, Vectora, and Avenir) consistently top the bestseller list at Linotype, a telling tribute to his ongoing relevance for our time. Accordingly, Linotype commends SOTA for presenting its fourth annual Typographic Award to Adrian Frutiger. You may see more background information, sample, and download the above-mentioned and many more fonts from Adrian Frutiger at www.linotype.com.
Linotype GmbH, based in Bad Homburg, Germany and a wholly owned subsidiary of Monotype Imaging Inc., looks back onto a history of 120 years. Building on its strong heritage, Linotype develops state-of-the-art font technology and offers more than 6,700 original typefaces, covering the whole typographic spectrum from antique to modern, from east to west, and from classical to experimental. All typefaces (in PostScript™ and TrueType™ format as well as more than 2,500 fonts in OpenType™) are now also available for instant download at www.linotype.com. In addition to supplying digital fonts, Linotype also offers comprehensive and individual consultation and support services for font applications in worldwide (corporate) communication.

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Adrian Frutiger receives award from SOTA chairman Allan Haley
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