



Assignment: Working with enlargements of the original Grand Canon Romain type, we were to study the enlargements and come to agreements about the interpretation of details. The idea was to produce the revival together, however, this did not come to pass. We had to make working drawings in outline and digitize them manually using IKARUS as well as investigate other methods like scanning and auto-tracing.

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Typeset in Grand Canon Romain Revival.



Rosart's portrait from his 1768 2nd edition of the type specimen 'Epreuve des caractères'.

Jacques François Rosart, (1714-1777)

Born in Namur, the son of a goldsmith, Rosart was a punchcutter from Brussels, which at that time was part of the Austrian Netherlands as Belgium did not exist as yet. He ran one of the main typefoundries in Brussels in the middle of the 18th century. At this period, he was acknowledged as one of the most skilled and productive punchcutters in Europe. When compared with other foundries from the Netherlands, it was said that Rosart in his italics was getting closer to the cuts from Fournier de Paris. The image to the left commemorates Rosart's skill in creating musical types. He played a major role in the development of typographical music printing.

His 'Grand Canon Romain' can be found in his 1768 edition of 'Epreuve des caractères, qui se gravent et fondent dans la nouvelle fonderie de Jacques François Rosart'.



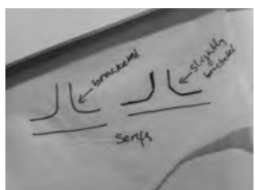
This project focused on making a revival, based on the work of Jacques François Rosart, from enlargements of the original type of his 'Grand Canon Romain'.

Questions that arose from the study:

- Do we all see the same?
- What is the best way to digitize the material?
- How are serifs, stroke-width and omitted characters best interpreted?

Do you see what I see?

Hi there, I wanted to know what are the point of views on the serifs regarding Rosart? To my eye they seem slightly bracketed and there seems to be a triangular shaped area at the foot of stems where the stem and the serif meet.



My initial study of serifs.



Leandro Salatti's interpretation, which appears to be similar to my view.



Annelies Devriese's interpretation.

My initial impression of Rosart's Grand Canon Romain was that it seemed to be a mix between types that are classified as transitional style (large x-height, wide serifs) and old style (slightly concaved serifs).



Image from the Grand Canon Romain specimen sheet. Notice how the serifs differ.



Above are my initial observations sketches.

Frank E Blokland showing how to draw smooth drawn outlines.



Image above shows initial tracing from the enlarged originals of the Grand Canon Romain. The stem width is much too narrow.

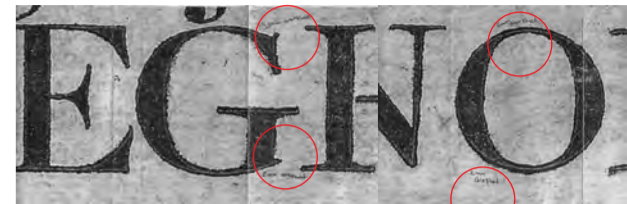


My preliminary research used the outline that can be found inside the ink fringe of the enlarged originals. This was not a good option as it resulted in very narrow stem widths which did not relate to the character of the Grand Canon Romain.

With the data collected from the enlargements, I set out to complete my working drawings. Baseline, over-shoot, x-height, descender and ascender metrics were established. The capitals are taller than the characters with ascenders, therefore a cap-height was also established.

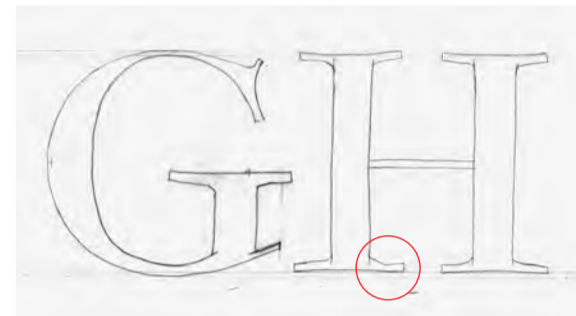
The preliminary drawings could not be used as working drawing as there was still too much inconsistency and I had yet to define the details of elements such as serifs, arches, contrast i.e. defining the contrast flow.

Concerning the capitals, starting with the H and G allowed me to establish an idea of verticals and curves for the rest of the character set.



Images above shows measurements taken on the enlargements of the originals. The capitals are approximately 10cm in height.

I then took a systematic approach where the enlarged originals were measured for over-shoot, stem-width and serif thickness to get an average. Based on the data collected I established metrics for the revival.



Images above & below show my attempts to create working drawings from tracing the enlargements of the originals.



How are serifs, stroke-width and characters not included in the specimen best interpreted?

One of the aims in this revival project was to faithfully reproduce in my drawings and digitization the notions of openness and 'bonheur' that transpires from Rosart's Grand Canon Romain. Hence, the shapes of characters were studied in detail, via observation, drawing and also consulting Rosart's other works.

Rosart also worked a lot with music. At the EcTd, Frank E Blokland formed us on the music from Rosart's époque. Baroque music was the music of Rosart's time. Already having an appreciation for the music of J.S. Bach, it was a delight to discover Johann Ludwig Krebs. Krebs was privileged to be a student of Johann Sebastian Bach on the organ. It was finally noted that Rosart was somewhere between Baroque & Rococo.

What is the best way to digitize?

I did not use the IKARUS program to digitize, therefore, I cannot remark on this method of digitizing. However, when discussing this method with my colleagues they mentioned the results were not much better than autotracing.

I used TraceMaster to auto-trace the enlarged originals and the outlines from my drawings. The cleaner the input the better the output. Working from my drawings as compared to working with the enlarged originals made the process more smooth as I had already decided things like stem-width, body-height etc. If my sketches were more precise my autotracing would have resulted in a more precise outcome.



Above the images show details of Rococo furniture and ceramics. Vase, 1758-1760 and Dressing table mirror, 1756-1758.



Jean-Honoré Fragonard, 1732-1806. French Rococo - The swing.

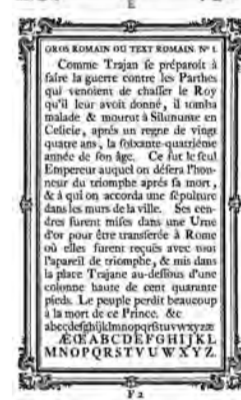
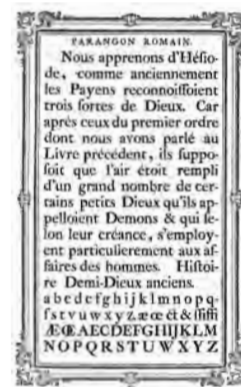


François Boucher, 1703-1770. French Rococo - The four seasons.



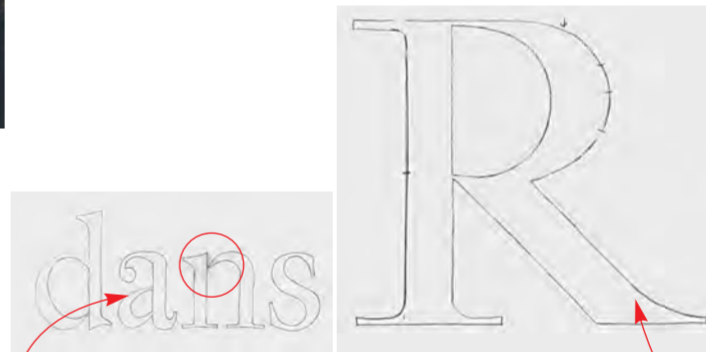
Johann Ludwig Krebs, 1713-1780. Baroque musician and composer primarily for the pipe organ.

We can see the notions of the Rococo style which is very evident in Rosart's work. Rococo style features asymmetric design, curved and elegant forms. The style is lighthearted, playful and full of vitality. Rosart's characters feature a vivid contrast of inside and outside shapes which make the characters very lively, a strong trait of the Rococo period. Some research on the Rococo style as seen in the images to the left assisted in understanding the period in which Rosart created his designs and therefore this was a great help in the interpretation of details of his Grand Canon Romain. Listening to Johann Ludwig Krebs while constructing the working drawings found on this page was also a form of inspiration.



Above are specimens from Rosart's 1768 Epreuve des caractères. These were used in defining characters not included in the Grand Canon Romain specimen.

The R to the left was constructed based on data collected from the above specimens.



It was important to gather correct data regarding the serifs as this would distill into all parts of the design. Serifs represent contrast-flow i.e. the way the contrast goes from thick to thin. Serifs will give information on pen angle, and on arches in rounded characters. The length of serifs will also give information on the stem thickness.

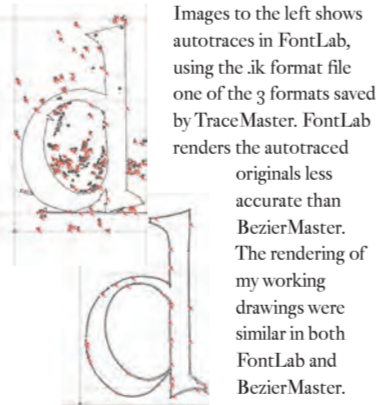


Left, some of my working drawings for the lowercase and capitals based on the enlarged originals of Rosart's Grand Canon Romain.



Images to the right show digitization via TraceMaster using enlarged originals. Here we see the active trace in BezierMaster. There is some clean up to do but the main outline is very clean. The lowercase a was cleaned up quickly.

I like to draw, and I aim to produce detailed working drawings which allow me to get as much of the design stage completed with my pencil and some paper. Based on my method of design, I find TraceMaster to be a perfect integration for my workflow and it speeds up my digitization process. It is best to autotrace filled outlines so that you will achieve one outline when digitized.



Images to the left shows autotraces in FontLab, using the ik format file one of the 3 formats saved by TraceMaster. FontLab renders the autotraced originals less accurate than BezierMaster. The rendering of my working drawings were similar in both FontLab and BezierMaster.



Images left show digitization via TraceMaster using my working drawings. Here we see the active trace in BezierMaster. There is practically no static but there is some clean up to do as the outline has been doubled.

Since my working drawings were not perfect, and due to the fact that FontLab did not open the autotraces on a fixed baseline, I encountered some problems with stem thickness and also with x-height variations. These issues were eventually fixed.

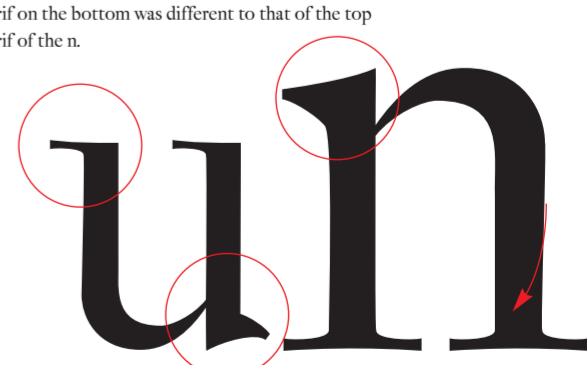


Here the R on top has more blackness than the other characters. I returned to the specimen to see what had gone wrong. I had missed some details, like an open counter to let more light out of the R. This was revised as shown below.



Below are some details of the digitization. Initially I had overlooked the details of the lowercase u; it was when setting type that I noticed my original interpretation was incorrect. The u did not have flat top serifs, in fact they are slightly inclined. Also, the serif on the bottom was different to that of the top serif of the n.

Similarly as for the R, the w needed to be opened up a bit to let more light out, thus rendering the character less black.



Grand Canon Romain revival character table
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyzáâëèçíóóúù
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
1234567890 “,.;:~?&f-...”

