Designer:
Tim Ahrens

Format:
Cross platform OpenType

Styles & weights:
Regular, Bold, Condensed & Bold Condensed

Purchase options:
OpenType complete family €79
Single font €29
Webfont subscription €19 per year

JAF Herß

Tradition ist die Weitergabe des Feuers und nicht die Anbetung der Asche.

GUSTAV MAHLER

Making of Herß

Herb is based on 16th century cursive broken scripts and printing types. Originally designed by Tim Ahrens in the MA Typeface Design course at the University of Reading, it was further refined and extended in 2010.

The idea for Herb was to develop a typeface that has the positive properties of blackletter but does not evoke the same negative connotations – a type that has the complex, humane character of fraktur without looking conservative, aggressive or intolerant.

As Rudolf Koch illustrated, roman type appears as timeless, noble and sophisticated. Fraktur, on the other hand, has different qualities: it is displayed as unpretentious, friendly and 'cosy' (Fig. 1).

After reading a text set in fraktur for a while, many readers would find it surprisingly legible and comfortable to read. Switching back to roman type might make one feel even uncomfortable – the Latin letters feel almost cold, emotionless and rational in a negative sense, and also too linear and somewhat too thin, like a skeleton with not enough articulated flesh on it.

Introducing qualities of blackletter into roman typefaces has become popular in recent years. The sources of inspiration range from rotunda to textura and fraktur. In order to achieve a unique style, other kinds of blackletter were used as a source for Herb.

One class of broken script that has never been implemented as printing fonts is the gothic cursive. Since fraktur type hardly ever has an 'italic' companion like roman types few people even know that cursive blackletter exists. The only type of cursive broken script that has gained a certain awareness level is civilité, which was a popular printing type in the 16th century, especially in the Netherlands. Further examples of cursive broken script can be found in German medieval and renaissance manuscripts and prints (Fig. 2–5). These letter shapes look very original and novel but on the other hand not unconventional or made-up. Perhaps it can be felt that they have developed over centuries, and the dynamic of these ancient writings appear anything but old-fashioned.

1 'The roman type' and 'The fraktur type' – these silhouettes cut by Rudolf Koch in 1918 illustrate how the two styles were perceived at the time.

2 From Hugo von Trimberg's *Der Renner*, 1430

3 Civilité from the *Statutenbuch vom goldenen Vlies*, written in Bruges 1519/20

4 Bohemian-Franconian Bastarda from *Belial* by Jacobus de Teramo, 15th century

5 Gothic book cursive, handwritten sermon, Cologne or Lower Rhine, around 1440

6 From *Anweysung einer gemeinen Handschrift* (a handwriting manual) by Johann Neudörffer, etching, 1538

7 From Wolfgang Fugger's writing book, Nuremberg, woodcut, 1553

8 Fraktur cursive from the chronicle of Venice, printed by Hans Kilian in Neuburg/Donau in 1557

9 From the *Biblia Polyglotta* by Christoph Plantin, print, 1569–73

n *n* *n* *n*

10   11   12   13

n   *n*   *n*   *n* *n*

14   15   16   17   18

19 Funerary stele, Rome, 2nd century AD

O V I A
QVARTA
VIX·ANN·IX

20 Herb small caps

For the initial version of Herb two handwritten and two printed samples served as models. The first one is a text written by the German writing master Johann Neudörffer (Fig. 6 & 10). It can be categorised as 'kurrent', a typically German style of handwriting. The second handwritten sample is from a writing book by Wolfgang Fugger (Fig. 7 & 11). Also a kurrent, this particular version is the 'arched' style as opposed to the 'common' kurrent of the Neudörffer sample. The third source is the fraktur cursive printed by Hans Kilian in 1557 (Fig. 8 & 12) – a very rare example of its kind. It is similar to the chancery script of the time. Although some shapes show its relationship to fraktur it does not trigger the same – often negative – emotions mentioned above.

The fourth model for Herb is a civilité from a form printed by Christoph Plantin around 1584 using Granjon's Bastarde (Fig. 9 & 13).

Based on an initial interpolated blend of the four masters (Fig. 14), the font was developed further, moving it from a historical, 'digitized' look to a contemporary design (Fig. 15 & 16), adding original formal elements (Fig. 17), and further refining it for the final version (Fig. 18).

The initial inspiration for the capitals came from an inscription on a funerary stele in Rome (Fig. 19 & 20). Unlike the well-known Roman capitalis, it shows sloped outstrokes and some rising serifs.

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JAF Herb glyph set

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NOTE: The alternate forms can be accessed by typing the basic letter and applying Stylistic Alternates
(e.g. Illustrator, Photoshop, QuarkXpress) or Stylistic Set 1 (e.g. InDesign, TextEdit) or via the glyph palette.
In addition to the glyphs shown, the fonts contain contextual alternates. If this OpenType feature is
applied, letter shape variations are automatically chosen to give the most convincing combinations.

Aa ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ ÆŒÐÞ BDEJZASZ
ÁÀĂÂÅÃÃĄĀĆĈČĊÇĎÐÉÈĔÊĚĖĘĒ
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NOTE: For all-uppercase setting, it is recommended to use all small caps, which have specifically
adjusted spacing and kerning to give best results in all caps setting.

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NOTE: The floral ornaments can be used by typing the digits 0 to 9 and applying Ornaments
(e.g. Photoshop, QuarkXpress) or Stylistic Set 2 (e.g. InDesign, TextEdit) or via the glyph palette.