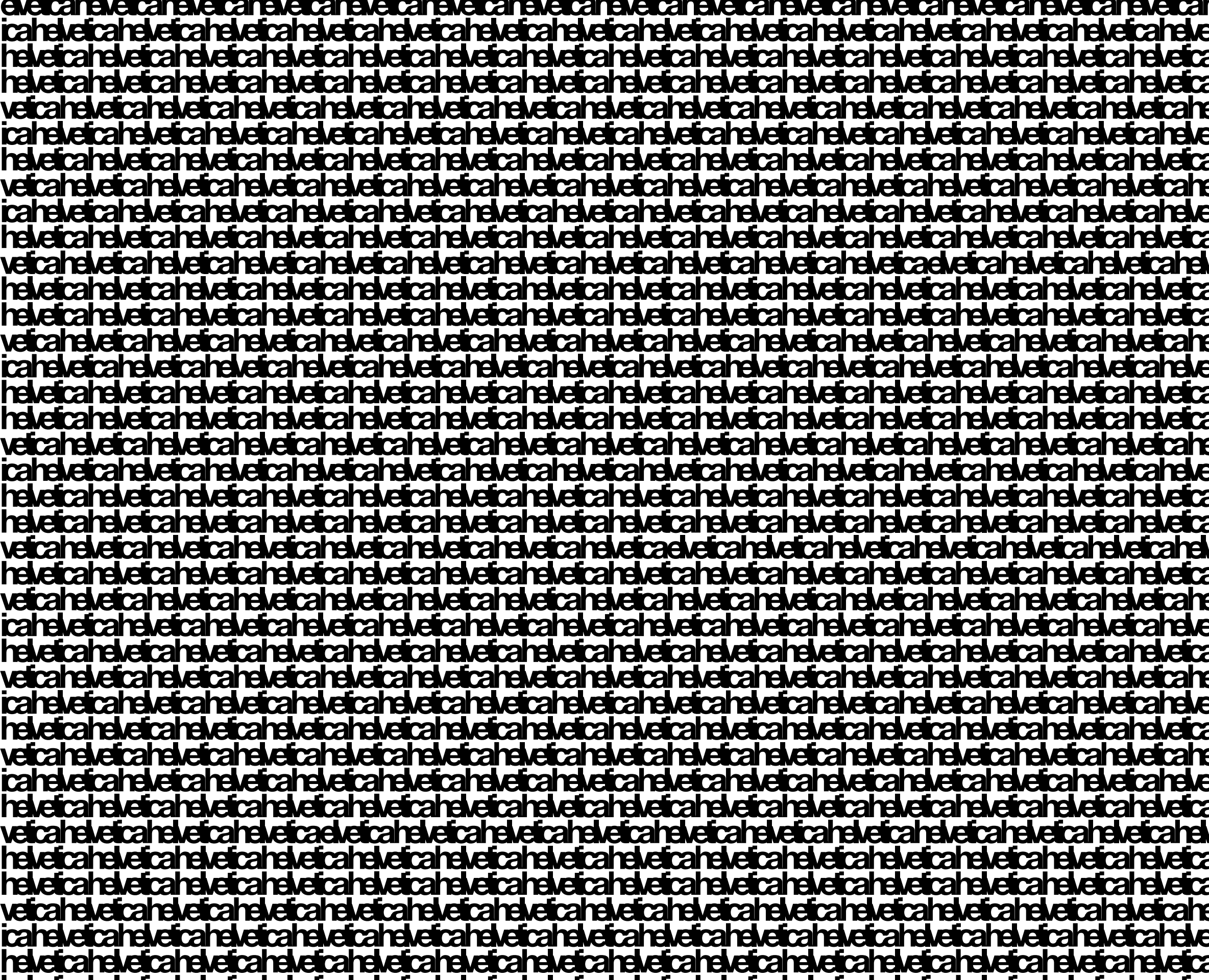


By Erica Warfield





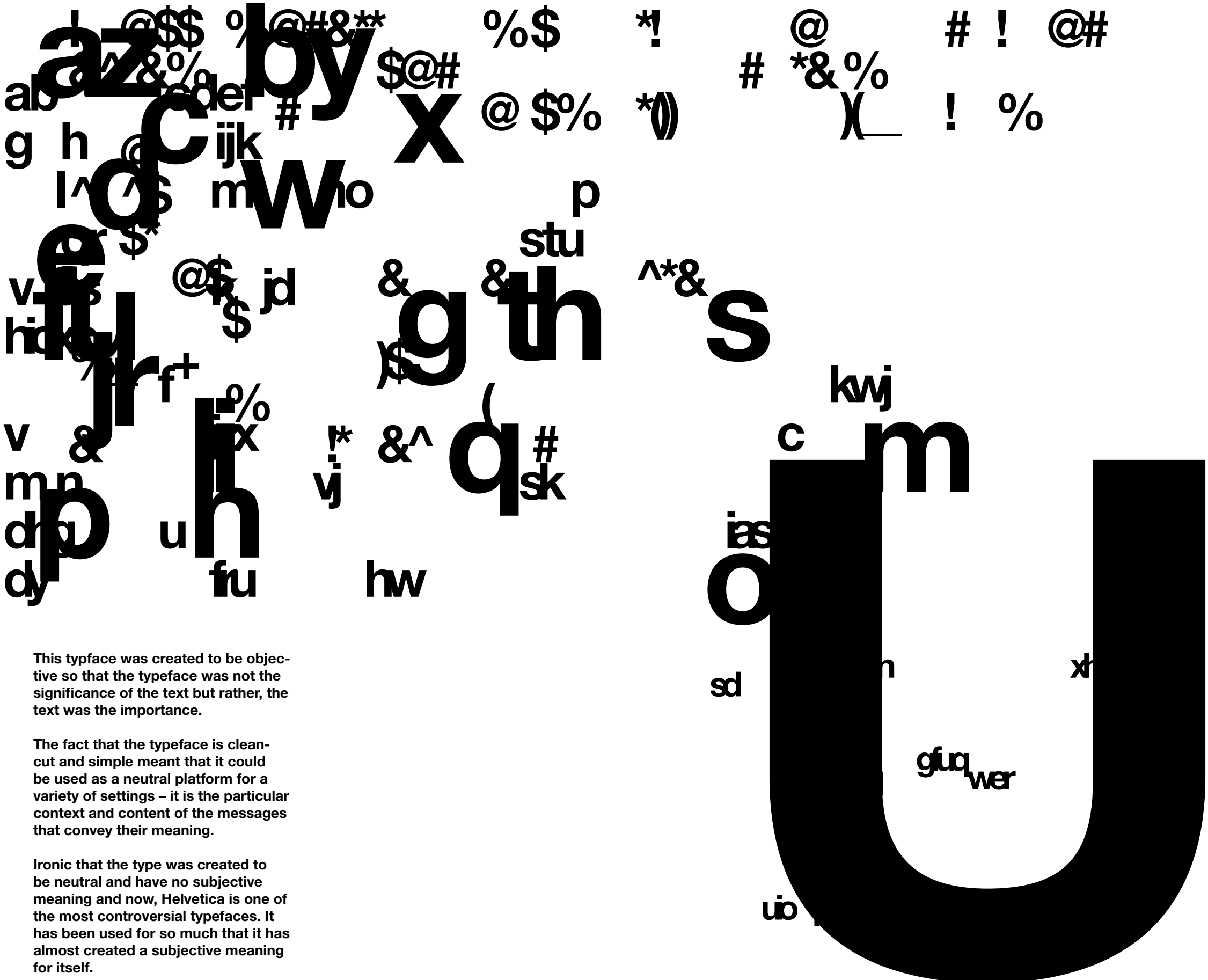
history

Helvetica was created in 1957 by Max Miedinger with Eduard Hoffmann at the Haas'sche Schriftgiesserei (Haas type foundry) of Münchenstein, Switzerland. Helvetica was designed in order to compete with the popular Akzidenz-Grotesk in the Swiss market.

Originally called Neue Haas Grotesk, the aim of the new design was to create a neutral typeface that had great clarity, no intrinsic meaning in its form, and could be used on a wide variety of signage which proved it successful with being one of the most used typefaces used today.

It was initially thought that this typeface should be called 'Helvetia' which is the original Latin name for Switzerland. This name was ignored by Eduard Hoffmann because he decided it wouldn't be appropriate to name a type after a country. After much thought, he decided on 'Helvetica' which meant 'Swiss' as opposed to 'Switzerland'.



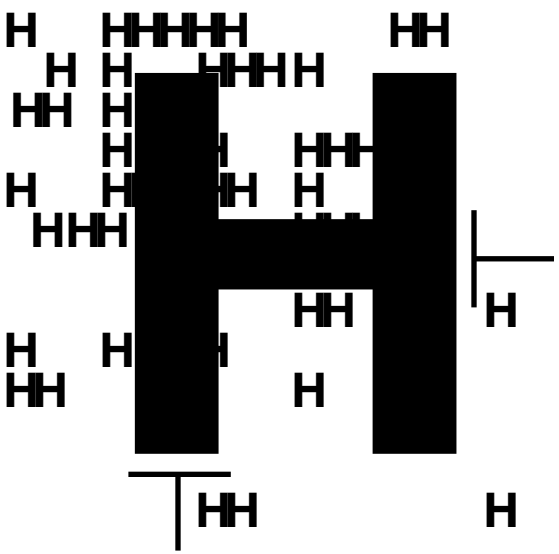


This typeface was created to be objective so that the typeface was not the significance of the text but rather, the text was the importance.

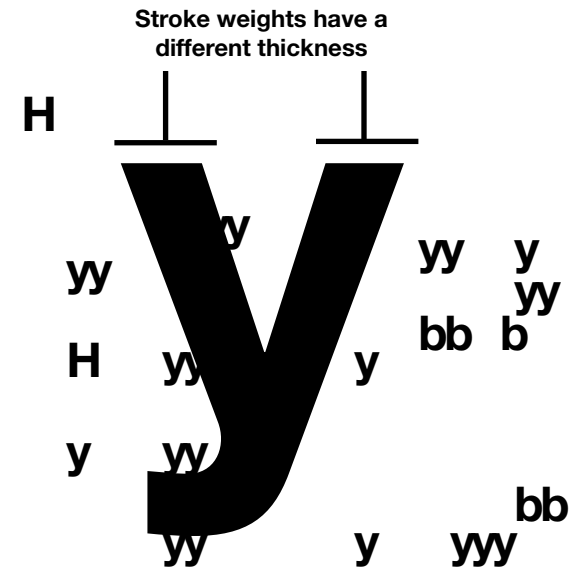
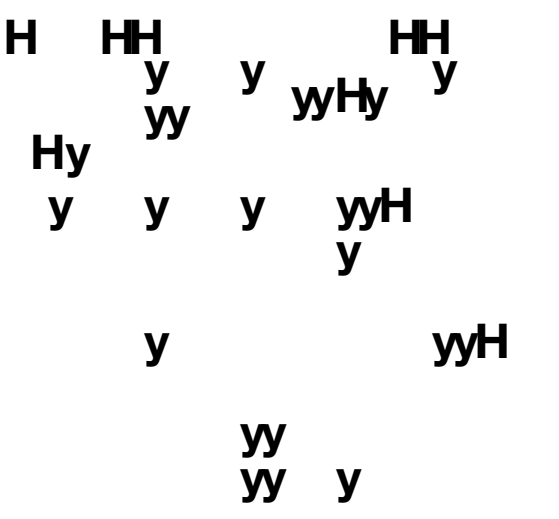
The fact that the typeface is clean-cut and simple meant that it could be used as a neutral platform for a variety of settings – it is the particular context and content of the messages that convey their meaning.

Ironic that the type was created to be neutral and have no subjective meaning and now, Helvetica is one of the most controversial typefaces. It has been used for so much that it has almost created a subjective meaning for itself.

letterform



Stroke weight is larger than crossbar weight



Stroke weights have a different thickness

The width of the Helvetica letter form is influenced by the stem stroke weight. For this font the width must equal approximately 6 units of measurement based on the stroke line.

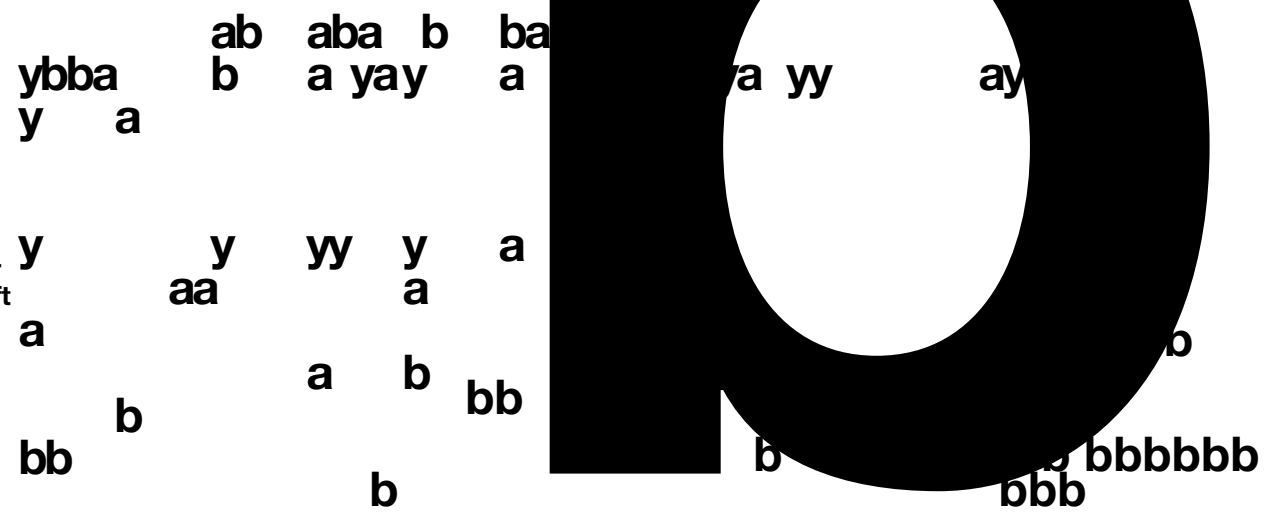
Uppercase 'O' extends slightly below the baseline and slightly above the cap height.

The height of the letter form is determined by the size of the cross bar. The balanced height of the letterform is based on units of measurement determined by the cross bar height—in this case approximately 9 units.

The 'O' is not a perfect circle.

Stroke weight narrows at vertex—slightly smaller than the cross bar height of the uppercase 'H'.

Stroke weight of descender of lowercase 'y' is slightly thinner than the left stroke weight.





When Helvetica was designed, the space between each letter was heavily considered. The negative spaces between the characters are very solid, grid-like and when spaced inappropriately words written in Helvetica are no longer consistent. Kerning is an important aspect when designing with Helvetica.

Helvetica is as much about the negative space surrounding the letters as it is about the lines that make up the characters themselves.

why it's used

Helvetica is also been noted as a “safe” font. When unsure about a design and a typeface to use, Helvetica can be a good fall-back that will have little impact by itself which also means it won't necessarily “wow” the viewer.

It is simple yet still manages to keep the beauty and design looking good, and it never seems to get old. Even after 54 years it is still loved and used for a tremendous amount of designs.

This typeface is still legible and easy to read even when it is in motion, one reason it's popular for signage and automaker and airline logos.

It was designed specifically to not give impression or have any inherent meaning. Because of this, it's very adaptable to for use in various designs.

ing

Designers love the flexibility of Helvetica because the neutrality of the typeface makes it very appealing. The neutrality and the repetition is why many people use it and it is simply all around us so it must be a safe choice. It's minimalist, it's corporate, it's cold, but at the same time it can be so powerful, emotional and moving when used just right

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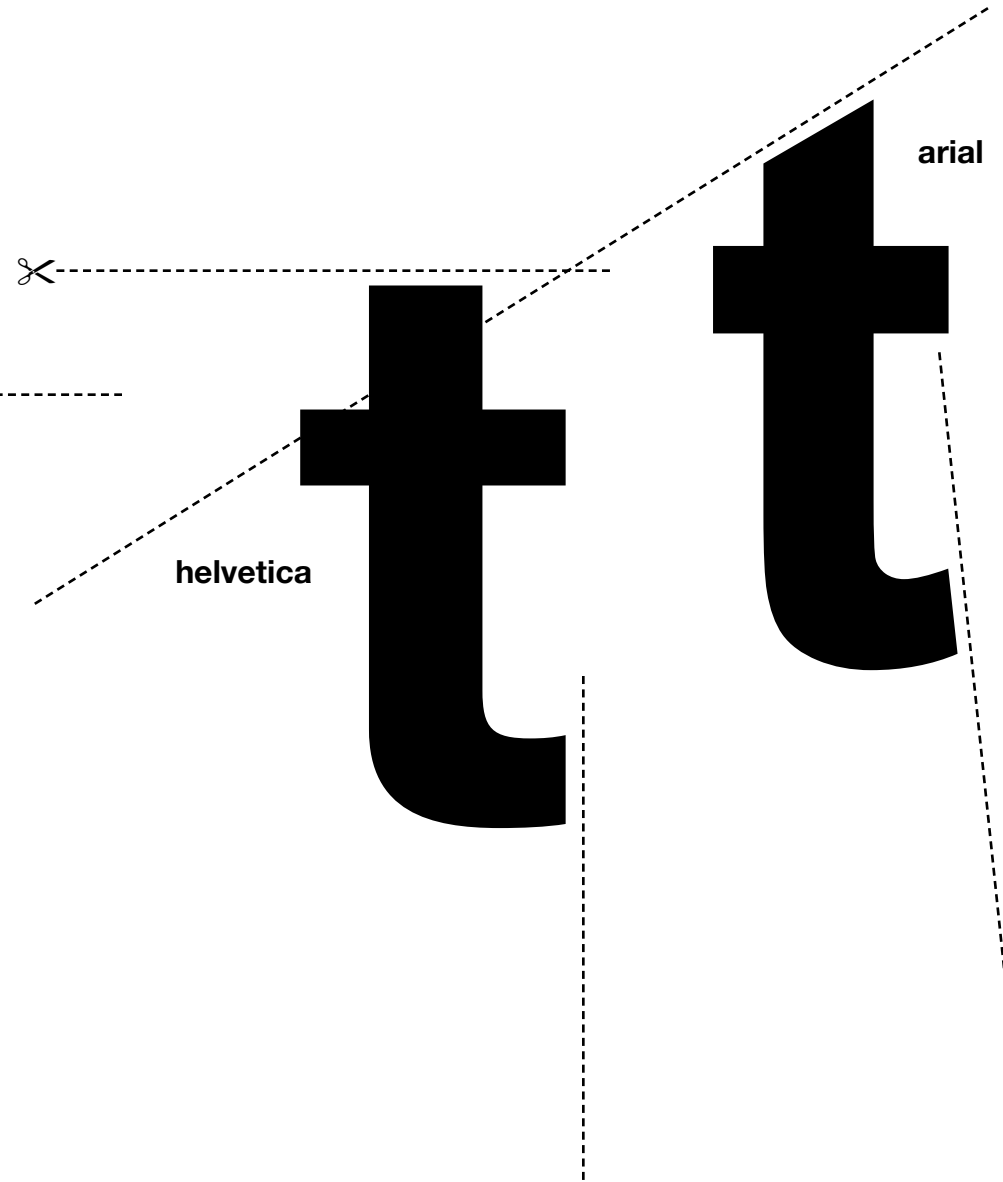
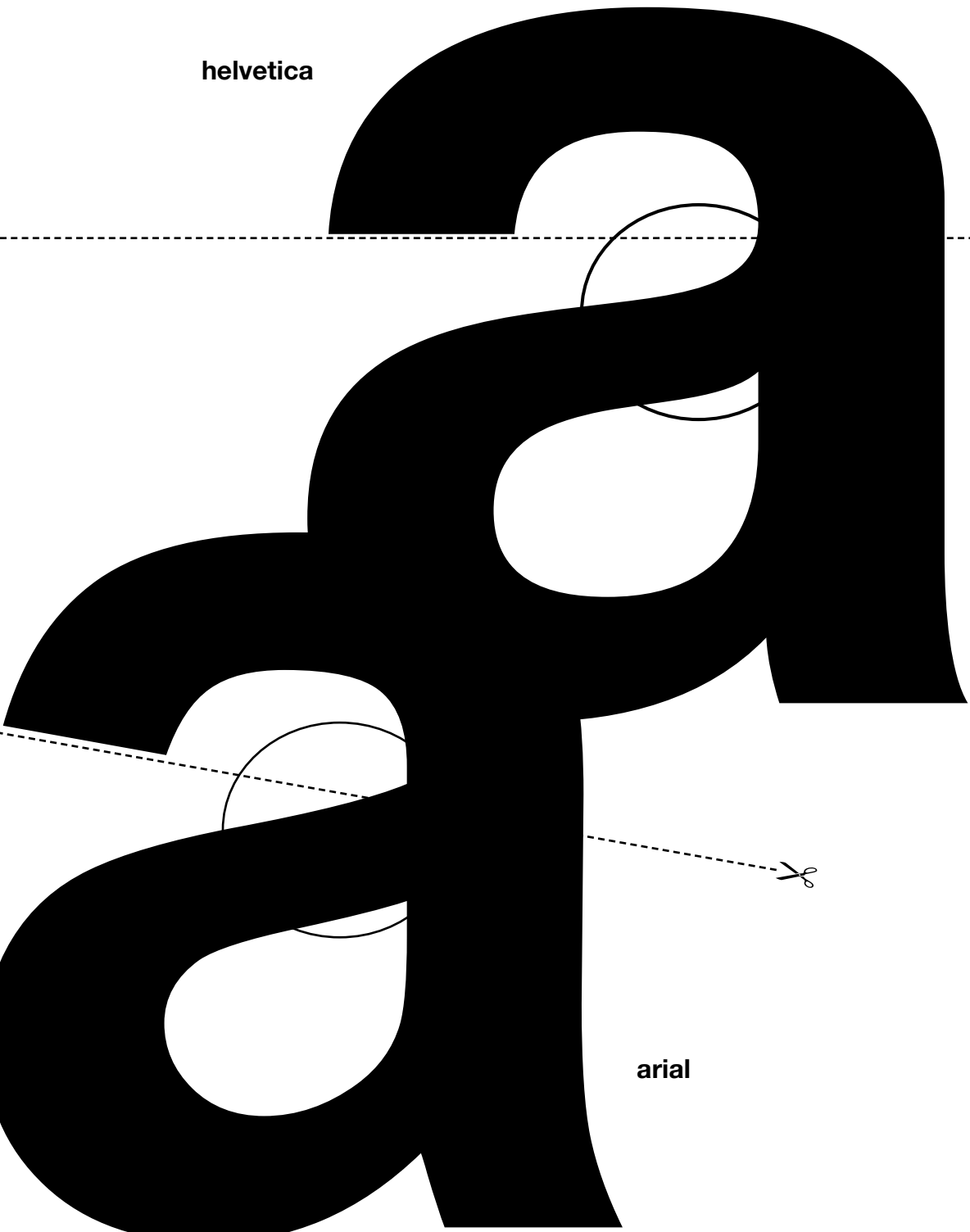
word

contro- versy

Many designers and non designers have an issue with the fact that Helvetica is used so much. This typeface has more advantages than disadvantages but there are still disadvantages in some opinions.

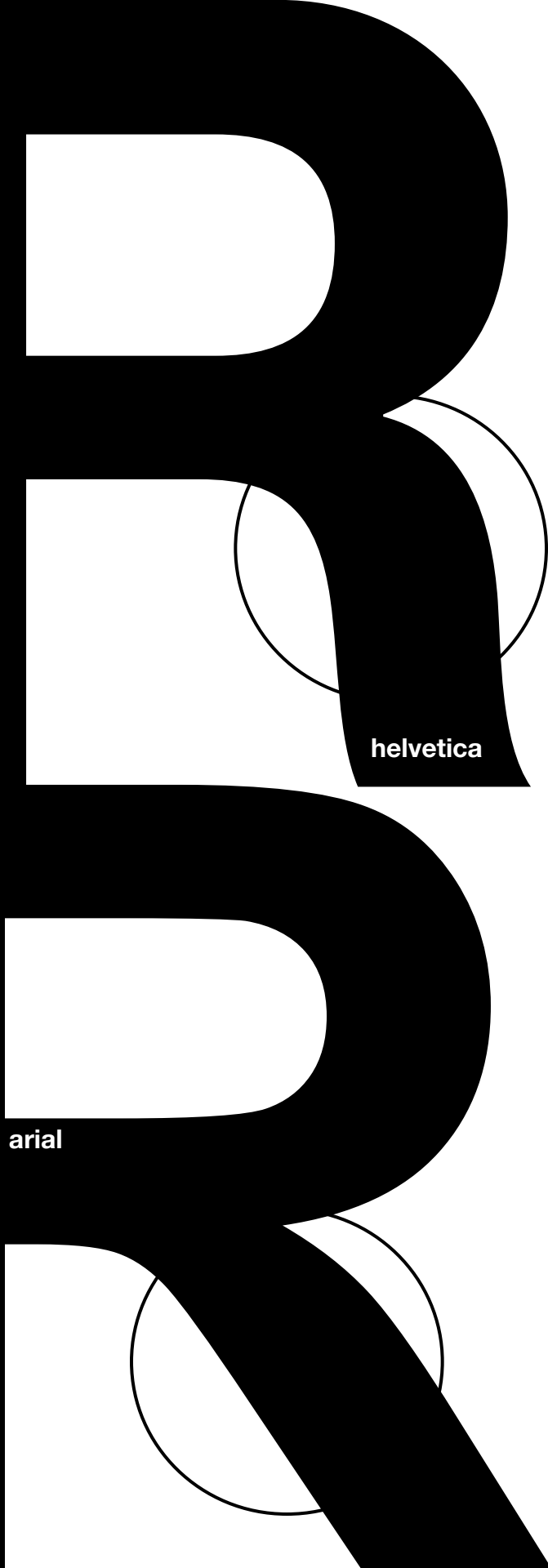
Some believe it is wildly over used because it is clear, legible, cold, plain, corporate and boring. Although it is considered a fall back font for designs, it has a very high reputation for being very controversial. People want to see type that clearly illustrates the subject but Helvetica does have a place with its objectivity.

compari- son



Arial is a font that was designed as an alternative for Helvetica because Helvetica wasn't able to be used for certain systems. It looks almost the same from a distance but once comparisons are made to specific sections of the letterform, their differences are extremely obvious.

Helvetica has the flat ends whereas Arial has the slight angle. The tops of the bowl are different because of Helvetica's clean transitioning curve and Arial's rather straight and cut cornered.



helvetica

akzidenz-grotesk

