



William Caslon

DESIGNER'S FULL NAME: William Caslon the Elder

DESIGNER'S PSEUDONYM/NICKNAME: William Caslon I

GENDER: Male

YEAR BORN: 1692

COUNTRY IN WHICH DESIGNER BORN: England

YEAR DIED: 1766

COUNTRY IN WHICH DESIGNER DIED: England

RACE | ETHNICITY | RELIGION | POLITICAL ALIGNMENT

IF ANY OF THE ABOVE AFFECTED EITHER THE ARTIST'S LIFE EXPERIENCE OR WORK BECAUSE IT/THEY PROVIDED A CHALLENGE AT THE TIME, PLEASE EXPLAIN.

None of the above qualities of the designer provided a challenge for the time.

DID THIS DESIGNER DO NOTABLE WORK IN FIELDS OTHER THAN WHAT WOULD BE CONSIDERED GRAPHIC DESIGN TODAY? EXPLAIN.

No, he created his type foundry and due to the type's he created being so popular, they completely overshadowed his other job that he had, gun engraver.

LIST AT LEAST ONE OTHER WORK THAT IS NOT NAMED IN THIS TIMELINE FOR WHICH THIS DESIGNER IS WELL KNOWN. IF WORK CO-CREATED, LIST THE OTHERS INVOLVED.

Specimen of Printing Types for His Majesty

EXPLAIN IF THIS FAME IS ONLY WITHIN DESIGN CIRCLES OR ANY OTHER SUBSET OF THE POPULATION.

His typefaces were so wildly popular that they were used worldwide.

DOES THIS WORK EXEMPLIFY ASPECTS EXPLAINED IN PREVIOUS QUESTIONS?

Yes, it shows that his work was so highly praised and enjoyed that even the King of Britain at the time contracted Caslon to create him typefaces to use for royal documents.

FOR WHAT IS THIS DESIGNER MOST NOTED? EXPLAIN.

He is most well-known nowadays for his self-titled set of typefaces that are built into most computers as a base typeface because it is so ubiquitous. There are many other typefaces that he helped create that were popular during his lifetime for their clarity and cleanliness.

IS THERE ANYTHING CONTROVERSIAL ABOUT THIS DESIGNER? EXPLAIN.

There is nothing notably controversial about this designer.

WHAT MATERIALS WERE MOST OFTEN USED BY THIS DESIGNER IN THE CREATION AND PRODUCTION OF WORK?

Paper, ink, and metal

EXPLAIN THIS DESIGNER'S EDUCATION/TRAINING, INCLUDING ACADEMIC, APPRENTICESHIPS, AND /OR MENTORSHIPS.

He apprenticed as a gunlock and barrel engraver before creating his own engraving shop in 1716. In 1720, he created his first sets of typefaces for some religious texts. Then in 1726, he created the typeface that would later bear his name.

DID THIS DESIGNER PROMOTE A SPECIFIC IDEOLOGY IN HIS/HER WORK? EXPLAIN.

I feel he wanted people to change their ideas of what books really are. He wanted them to become a separate thing than just a reprint of a hand-created book. He wanted printed books to be their own respected category of work. I think this because of how his typefaces were designed to be “extremely legible, yet graceful and classic...”

WHY IS THIS DESIGNER VIEWED AS ICONIC IN THE HISTORY OF GRAPHIC DESIGN?

The Caslon typefamily is so well-known that a saying that appeared for typeface choice for printed work was, “When in doubt, use Caslon.”¹ His work was ubiquitous during his life, and while not quite as popular as it was during his lifetime it is still common nowadays for anyone needing a clean typeface.

IS THERE ANY OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION TO KNOW ABOUT THIS DESIGNER?

One of the typefaces he created was used during the first printed version of the United States Declaration of Independence. There is also the fact that the foundry that Caslon created ran until 1937 when the last of it left was bought up by Stephenson Blake.

YOUR NAME: Drake French

GIVE YOUR EDUCATED OPINION OF THIS DESIGNER AND HIS/HER WORK. ALSO EXPLAIN WHAT INFLUENCE, IF ANY, THIS WORK HAS HAD ON YOUR OWN. A LACK OF INFLUENCE MUST BE EXPLAINED.

My opinion on Caslon is that he was a hugely influential type designer. He created many, many typefaces. Heck, the typeface example sheet on this project has 47 different typefaces on it. His namesake work exemplified the Old Style of typefaces with their wedge shaped serifs, high upright stress, and horizontal cross bars. His typefaces were so important during his lifetime that his type foundry became the exclusive type foundry of the King of Britain as well as one of his typefaces being used on the first printing of the Declaration of Independence in America. His work was used so much that people created phrases to help you choose typefaces. These sayings all pointed towards using one of Caslon's, most specifically Caslon.

I do appreciate his typefaces and can see why they were so popular during his time and why they are still used today.

They are very pleasing to read and look at. The way it is designed you can tell that Caslon knew what he was doing. His types just want you to read them by way of drawing you into them. The serifs look like little flags that pull you into the text and unifies the text as a whole. However, no matter how much I enjoy his typefaces, I can't say that his work has truly influenced me that much. I have always been more of a geometric sans serif kind of person. I love geometric shapes and the way geometric sans serifs use them. His typeface, while appealing, would not be my first choice if I was creating work for this reason.

Although if I ever decide to write a book and have it printed, I may use Caslon due to its clarity. Also if I decide to start creating typefaces (which I would enjoy doing someday), I would love to try and create a spinoff of one of Caslon's typefaces. It would be so much fun to try to create something as readable and nice as Caslon, but maybe in something more my style.

Overall, William Caslon is an under-appreciated master of type design as many type designers are. His typefaces were the groundwork necessary for future type designers, such as Baskerville, to evolve typefaces into even more styles than Caslon. Eventually leading to the Transitional style of typefaces then later onto the Modern style and the sans serifs that would come with Modern.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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