

Helvetica

The documentary Helvetica showed just how important typefaces can be. Typefaces can help people to communicate emotions better through text or just communicate better in general. Communication through type or the use of typefaces in general is a form of modernization. Modernism is both a philosophical movement and an art movement that, along with cultural trends and changes, arose from wide-scale and far-reaching transformations in western society during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Through modernism and modernization the world began to shift into a more technological place.

5 of the people featured in the documentary “Helvetica” are Matthew Carter, Erik Spiekermann, Rick Poynor, Wim Crowel and Massimo Vignelli. Here is a quote from each individual:

- 1) Matthew Carter: “Helvetica is good for typographers who don’t know what to say”
- 2) Erik Spiekermann: “It’s air, you know. It’s just there. There’s no choice. You have to breathe, so you have to use Helvetica.”

- 3) Rick Poynor: “ Type is saying things to us all the time. Typefaces express a mood, an atmosphere. They give words a certain coloring.”
- 4) Wim Crowel: “The meaning is in the content of the text and not in the typeface, and that is why we loved Helvetica very much.”
- 5) Massimo Vignelli “You can say ‘I Love you’ in Helvetica. And you can say it with Helvetica Extra Light if you want to be really fancy. Or you can say it with the Extra Bold if it’s really intensive and passionate, you know, and it might work.”

Helvetica was created in 1957 by Max medinger along with Eduard Hoffman at the Haas’Che Schriftgiesserei (Haas Type foundry) of Münchenstein, Switzerland. The name ‘Helvetica’ was given to the typeface in 1960 to make it easier to sell abroad (it was originally named Neue Haas Grotesk).

The documentary helped me to form the importance of using type as a visual voice in design by showing just how useful Type is. Through type you can do a lot. Not only is type a form of design, which helps things look better. It is also a form of communication, in terms of it can help convey a message better depending on what typeface is being used, whether it’s light, bold, italic, condensed, etc...Sometimes type just helps others to better understand what a designer may be trying to convey.

When Lars Müller said “Helvetica is the perfume of the city.”, I think what he means is that Helvetica is like a fresh scent not literally but in the sense that (at the time) it was something new and refreshing. And people could use it and appreciate it for what it is trying to do for the world or for people in general.

