

EXPERT CLASS

TYPE DESIGN 2018–2019

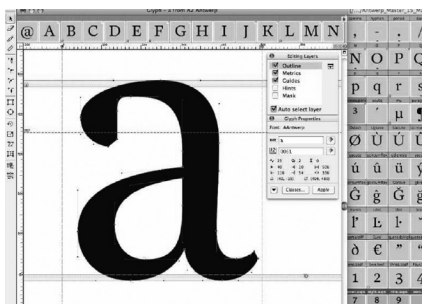


The Expert class Type design (EcTd) course comprises ten daylong sessions under the roof of the illustrious Museum Plantin-Moretus, divided over a period of roughly three quarters of a year. The purpose of the course is to facilitate research into, and analysis of, the conventional and technical aspects involved in the production of type, and how this reflects on typography. Furthermore, the intention of the course is meant to educate students how to design type into detail, to help them to develop an in-depth insight in digital font production, and to guide them in the process of gaining control over related software.

An important aspect of the course is the exchange of knowledge and experience between the students. This interaction is especially stimulated by a type-revival project, on which the students have to work intensively together. This revival is always based on historical type-foundry material from the unique collection of the Museum Plantin-Moretus. Alongside their participation in the revival project, each student has to design a new typeface –whether completely from scratch or being a revival, that for example, is also based on material from the museum’s collection.



The EcTd course is directed by Dr. Frank E. Blokland, type designer, font producer, software developer, and Senior Lecturer at the Royal Academy of Art (KABK) in The Hague. Blokland’s PhD-research at Leiden University, which was conducted to test the hypothesis that Gutenberg and his peers developed a standardized and unitized system for the production of textura type, which consequently was extrapolated for the production of the morphologically related roman-type model, plays an important role in the course. The students use the outcomes for further investigation of the relation between the morphology and patterning of Renaissance type.



The lessons about Python scripting are taught by Lukas Schneider, type designer, owner of the Revolver Type Foundry and scripter of the LS Cadencer tool for auto-spacing. Lukas holds a master’s degree from TypeMedia (KABK) and is also an EcTd laureate.

Requirements and admission

The EcTd course is targeted at graphic designers who have a great interest in type and typography. The course is very much internationally oriented and the students come from all over the world. Hence the lessons are taught in English. For entering the course, experience in graphic design, combined with basic drawing skills and knowledge of graphic-design software such as Adobe Illustrator, are considered a prerequisite.

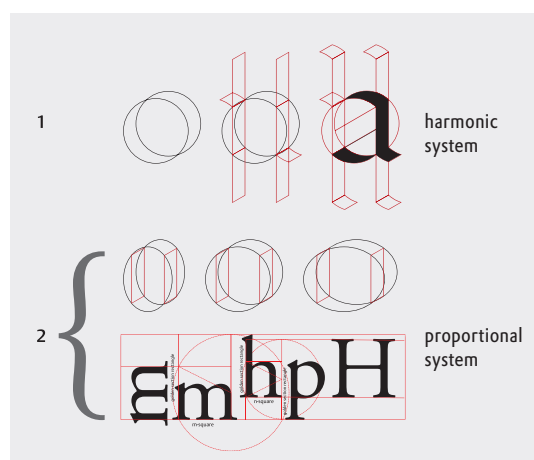
The course provides a good alternative for people who do not have time or the opportunity to follow, for example, the Type & Media master course at the Royal Academy of Art in The Hague (KABK) or the master course in type design at the University of Reading. However, in the course of time a number of students who already hold a Master degree in type design from aforementioned institutes joined the EcTd course.

Program, end terms, and diploma

During the first half of the course the students work together on a revival based on the invaluable historical material, i.e., punches, matrices, foundry type, and prints, from the collection of the Museum Plantin-Moretus. This revival forms the basis for an intensive exchange of insight, perception, and technical know-how between the students, often via closed groups on Facebook and Google.

During the second half of the course the students have to design and to technically develop a new typeface. Initial sketches and proposals are usually already made and discussed during the first half of the course. The joined revival and the personal typeface have to be presented in two different booklets with an accompanying text on the process and progress. Evaluation criteria for the personal project are: the depth of the study, the insight in the matter, the aesthetically and technical quality of the produced type, and the originality of the design project.

Students who positively complete the course obtain an officially recognized post-college certificate.



Subjects investigated – with related research questions

1 Type, typography, and conventions:

What are the restrictions of the systems inherited from the times of foundry type, i.e., with characters on solid rectangles? What do we know about the factors that influenced the proportions and details of the archetypal roman and italic type models? What is the relation between letterforms and typographical conventions? Where do the conventions for present-day digital typography come from?

2 Form, proportions, construction, contrast-sorts, and contrast:

What forms the origin of the proportions, shapes, and details of the historical and modern typefaces that are in use today? Why and in what respect do characters from the style periods differ? What is the relation of type and typography to architecture, sculpture, painting, and music? Which methods can be used to classify type? How and to what extent are the type classifications of, for example, Maximilien Vox and Gerrit Noordzij comparable and overall useful? What is the relation to matters such as contrast-sort and contrast of, for example, serifs?

3 Type design, idiom, and revivals:

What distinguishes one type designer from another? Why and by what features do we recognize and distinguish the type designs of, for example, Garamont, Granjon, Eric Gill, Hermann Zapf, and Jan van Krimpen? What is a revival exactly? How should historical prints be interpreted? How and to what extent should a revival be standardized and adapted to present-day digital technology?

Digital technology: matters and software discussed (summary)

- 1 Manual conversion of analogue drawings with a digitizer/lens cursor (IKARUS format) or via autotracing, versus direct drawing on screen.
- 2 Contour description and font formats: the IKARUS format, cubic Bézier curves (PostScript Type1 / OpenType CFF) and quadratic Bézier curves (TrueType / OpenType TTF).
- 3 Font-production tools: Glyphs, RoboFont, FontLab Studio, FontForge, FoundryMaster, OTMaster.
- 4 Glyph databases: development of the glyph set. The construction of character sets. The support of multiple codepages. The (auto) spacing of type.
- 5 Data management and quality control: checking and improving the consistency of font data.
- 6 Font-format processing: the (batch) generation of kerning, OpenType Layout features, and hinting.
- 7 An in-depth introduction in Python scripting: two daylong sessions taught by guest lecturer Lukas Schneider, who developed the LS Cadencer and LS Consistencer tools

New: Introduction in Python scripting

The course culminates in an exhibition that yearly takes place at the Museum Plantin-Moretus, or occasionally at an exquisite location elsewhere in Belgium or the Netherlands.

Lukas Schneider will provide for two daylong sessions on scripting. As an highly experienced type designer, as well as owner of the Revolver Type Foundry, Lukas is very much familiar with the handling of large amounts of font data. He also scripted the LS Cadencer tool for auto-spacing that is based on algorithms from Frank E. Blokland, who is the EcTd-course's main lecturer. Currently Schneider and Blokland jointly develop another Python tool: LS Consistencer. This small application is, as its name reveals, meant for batch-controlling consistency aspects, such as character widths and stem thickness, within a type design.

Lessons are in English

Lecturers: Dr. Frank E. Blokland and Lukas Schneider

Calendar: Ten Wednesdays:
November 14 and December 12, 2018,
January 9, January 30, February 20,
March 13, April 3, April 24,
May 15 and June 12, 2019.
From 10.00 till 16.40 h.

Location: Museum Plantin-Moretus,
Vrijdagmarkt 22, 2000 Antwerp,
Belgium

Enrolment fee: €1750

Enrol by sending an email to
plantin.instituut@stad.antwerpen.be



Required equipment

EcTd students are expected to bring with them a laptop running macOS, Windows, or Linux. They are provided with font production software in the form of demo and open-source versions. Furthermore some analogue equipment is required: drawing and tracing paper (A4 – 120 grams), propelling pencil (maximum 0.5 mm) with hb or b leads, an eraser, black felt-tip pens (round head, various thicknesses), Stanley knife cutter, adhesive tape, 30 cm ruler (0.5 mm increments) and a broad nib (preferably a Parallel Pen with a 6 mm nib).