Our website: http://www.zetafonts.com
Quarantine free font collection: www.zetafonts.com/quarantype

Images can be found at this address:
https://www.dropbox.com/sh/5o57f90h1570cdI/AABk81SgaEwhrEljVidmF6lja?dl=0

RECENT AWARDS

**Kitten** - Print Magazine Typography & Lettering Awards 2016

**Heading** - Winter Type Games 2017 Bestseller (Myfonts.com)

**Blacker** - Font of the Month (Slanted Magazine November 2019), Best new families of 2019 (Myfonts.com)

**Kitsch** - Best new families of 2019 (Myfonts.com), Best fonts of 2019 (Fontspring)

**Tarif** - Best fonts of 2019 (Fontspring)

**Monterchi** - Typography Awards Communication Arts Magazine 2020, Font of the Month (Slanted Magazine November 2019), Top Hidden Gem of 2019 (Myfonts.com)

**Stinger** - Typography Awards Communication Arts Magazine 2021

ABOUT ZETAFONT

Zetafonts is an independent digital type foundry based in the heart of Florence, Italy. The foundry has been out of the 20-years long experience of its founders (Francesco Canovaro, Debora Manetti and Cosimo Lorenzo Pancini,) in typographical branding. It aims to produce typefaces that bridge the gap between practical and beautiful, providing finely crafted and innovative yet solid design tools for graphic designers, art directors and brand managers worldwide.

Its main difference from competitors stems in basing typeface development out of design thinking, creating typefaces with a clear “case of use situation”, tested against the present-world media landscape and with a strong “problem solving attitude”.

Its goal is to try to produce meaningful typefaces in a rapid-evolving market, where design is more and more inspired by quick-moving trends and epochal cultural changes worldwide.
Its cultural mission is to bridge the century-long history of typography with its aesthetic research with the needs of brand designers and managers in a connected, multicultural world.

**DESIGNERS BIO**

**Cosimo Lorenzo Pancini** bought his first typeface, an Arnold Boecklin leterset transfer, when he was nine years old. He has since then kept playing with letters both written and drawn, working as a type designer, visual arts teacher and art director for print, digital and video. He has designed over fifty typeface families for Zetafonts foundry that he co-founded with Debora Manetti and Francesco Canovaro. His typefaces include Cocogoose, Blacker (selected by Myfonts as one of the best new families of 2019), Monterchi (CA typography award 2020, Myfonts hidden gem 2019) and Stinger (CA typography award 2021). He lives in Florence with his wife, a cat named Bodoni and too many books.

**Francesco Canovaro** has found in visual design and typography the natural evolution of his studies in painting and computer programming. With Debora Manetti and Cosimo Lorenzo Pancini he founded the transmedia branding agency Kmzero and the digital type foundry Zetafonts, a label under which he has designed over forty typeface families and countless custom fonts. His typefaces include Aquawax, Heading (Winter Type Games 2017 Bestseller on Myfonts.com), Blacker (selected by Myfonts.com among the Best new families of 2019), Kitsch (selected by Fontspring.com among the Best fonts of 2019). As much feared as loved by his students in creative direction and typography courses, he is often seen at type conferences listening to talks while creating new typefaces on his laptop. He lives in Florence with his wife Debora and two kids whose names end with consonants.

**Debora Manetti** grew up in Tuscany and soon followed the artistic footsteps of his father, painter and polymath. Looking at him write all of Dante's Inferno by hand, she inherited his love for calligraphy and typography - a passion she later used to fuel her career as an art director, visual designer and branding strategist. She loves to design typefaces inspired by vernacular typography, which makes her smile for their often awkward but genuine spontaneity. She also has designed some custom handscript fonts for award-winning branding projects. Together with Francesco Canovaro and Cosimo Lorenzo Pancini, she is co-founder of the branding agency Kmzero and of Ligature, a company focused on the culture of type design (Zetafonts / Italiantype / Fontmood).

**Andrea Tartarelli** studied at the Academy of Fine Arts of Carrara and worked as a marble sculptor until he discovered graphics and typography. Since then, he has dedicated himself to the creation of typefaces, hoping that it would be not as tough as marble carving. It turned out he was terribly wrong. Afterwards, he went deeper into his typography studies at the Plantin Institute at Antwerp, and teaches Type Design at IED Florence. He designed Tarif (selected by Fontspring.com among the Best fonts of 2019), Malik (shortlisted for the Communication Arts Typography awards 2021) and has been co-designer on dozens of typefaces by Zetafonts including the award winning Blacker (selected by Myfonts as one of the best new families of 2019), Monterchi (CA typography award 2020, Myfonts hidden gem 2019) and Stinger (CA typography award 2021). He works and lives in Tuscany, Italy.

**Mario De Libero** was born in Livorno, on the coast of Tuscany. During his studies in visual communication at IED in Florence he fell in love with typography and soon joined Zetafonts as lead designer on the Italian Type label. Mario sees every letter as a music instrument that can do its best when playing well with the others in harmony: a typeface designer is like an orchestra director that must make sure all the voices are balanced. Always on the look for typography as a mean to rise empathy in others, he's been focusing lately
on historical re-designs and he’s responsible, among others, of the revival typefaces Cairoli and Etrusco (2020), both reviving the italian tradition of early twentieth century grotesque lead type.

Isabella Ahmadzadeh is a multidisciplinary visual and video artist born in Italy. She has worked for various companies in Florence and Milan and as a graphic designer for Gucci, specializing in photographic art direction. Her type design work was selected by AWDA Design Award in 2017 and her illustrations for Zetafonts Type Foundry were featured by Print Magazine for the Typography & Lettering Awards in 2016. She also exhibited at the WHY Festival 2020 alongside other leading artists and visual designers on the contemporary scene. She has worked for Studio RovaiWeber and cultural institutions of Florence. Since 2019, she is coordinator of the master of Graphic Design for IED (Istituto Europeo di Design) Firenze.

Sofia Bandini - Surrounded by art from birth, Sofia grew up as a curious girl and a careful observer. After her studies at IED in Florence she joined Zetafonts where she is working as a graphic and visual designer and as type designer, specializing in non-latin scripts. Her published work includes the font Eastman, Bogart, Garbata and Cocogoose. She believes that working with constancy and passion is the key to attract the attention of the typography user and create a connection with other designers.

Daily she receives different stimuli that allow her to have a 360 degree view of her work as a designer: following her instinct she succeeds in translating her intuitions into a delicate harmony between points.

HISTORY AND STUDIO SETUP:

1.1 How did you meet?

We met in 2001 while working together as art directors of a Florentine digital company, and decided to found our own agency, Studio Kmzero. In its first years Kmzeroagency has been working in the most diverse fields, from digital to advertising, but each time we ended up creating new characters, which were always a fundamental part of our projects. It happened for the magazine Ego [n] (ADCI award 2007), for the magazine Digitalic and for the blogs of Riccardo Luna: Startupitalia and Chefuturo! back in 2004. We realized that these fonts, created as branding and problem solving tools, would also work for other designers. For this reason we began to distribute them online, first with innovative licenses such as the creative commons, then on commercial platforms like myfonts and YouWorkForThem.

Images: Zetafonts_00_PARTNERS.jpg - Zetafonts Partners: from left Francesco Canovaro, Debora Manetti, Cosimo Lorenzo Pancini
Zetafonts_01_Proudly.jpg - The tagline of Zetafonts, inspired by the famous pangram “The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog”
Zetafonts_02_Life is Better.jpg - The motto of Zetafonts

1.2 How does your design background connect with type design?

Our design philosophy stems from our history and our 20+ years of experience in the field of branding, visual design and advertising. We try to develop fonts that are as beautiful as they are useful, and that are reliable working tools for graphic designers, art directors and brand managers around the world. For this reason, unlike many competitors, we like to develop typography with a precise aim, both from a technical point of view and from that of the reference industry. Our first fonts, for example, were affected by the post-millennium enthusiasm for web 2.0, with its rounded and minimal graphics, and an idea of simple and friendly technology: fonts like Arista that have been downloaded by over a million users on Dafont.com. Since then the market has already evolved a lot, going through different trends - from a slightly "hipster" taste for vintage lettering, to the geometric minimalism that now dominates the communication landscape.
Every time it has always been very important for us to know and anticipate these trends and related needs. An example of this is our most successful product, Cocogoose, which captured in 2014 the desire for a geometric but somewhat vintage style and which has been sold to thousands of customers around the world.

Given the promising results, over the past five years we have decided to focus on typeface production, extending our team and increasing the quality and quantity of our catalog. Thanks to international works such as Kair (India) or Nuun (Qatar), we began to deal with non-Latin characters: Arabic, Greek, Cyrillic. Great visual design arises from attention to the global influences of the present and from the relationship with the lessons of the past: this is why we wanted to continue to develop our research and teaching activity, as well as our participation in the in collaboration with the European Institute of Design and associations, before with Aiap and then with ADCI.

To date, Zefonts has published more than 1800 different fonts, belonging to about a hundred typographic families. It is the first Italian foundry on Dafont.com, with over 22 million downloads, and the first on Behance.net with almost 250,000 appreciation. Zefonts fonts have been awarded by Print Magazine, Creative Review, Slanted Magazine and Myfonts.com.

Images: Zefonts_03_COCOGOOSE.jpg - The cocogoose character in action
Download: https://www.dropbox.com/s/lhgwr5o5ik7m0dl/CocogoosePro.zip?dl=0

1.2 Can you tell us a little bit about your own office set up and design workflow (hardware, software, methodology)?

Zefonts shares the workspace of Studio Kmzero in downtown Florence: a beautiful building with earthenware tiles and wood rafters, a few steps from Santa Croce Cathedral, that hosts find the marble inscriptions that inspired Herman Zapf's design for Optima. Zefonts designers all work on Macbook Pro personal computers, using mainly Glyphs and Adobe Creative Suite software. Our staff right now consists of four type designers, two graphic designers and a marketing/sales manager. To produce quality multi-language typefaces, in the past years we have also built a strong network of type and graphic designers who help us with non-latin scripts. We collaborate with Russian designers for Cyrillic letters, Egyptian and Lebanese designers for Arabic and are developing new collaborations with Indian and Chinese designers to expand our world scripts' expertise.

2. CREATIVE PROCESS

2.1 What is your methodology when creating a new typeface?

Having started our career as graphic designers, we know very well the moment in which - given a branding assignment, you’re tasked to find a typeface that embodies the values the clients want to be in the brand image. Often we realized that typefaces that we needed to express something didn't exist, especially when dealing with start-ups that had to communicate innovative ideas. Our first typefaces were born simply as a solution to design problems and we still try today to start from that, rather than from aesthetic research.

2.2 what is involved when you are creating your font designs?

We strongly believe that the practice of graphic design is deeply rooted in culture and knowledge, and that the best design pieces are those that can better relate to the collective unconscious of our society. To be able to create meaningful communication artifacts one has to continuously build and update a vocabulary of visual shorthand, references, memes and trends. This means that basically the whole of our visual culture is connected to any aspect of our design, and this translates in our type design choices too. For instance, we can easily see that now geometric sans serif typefaces are used by many designers, but to
create a new and interesting typeface in this field you have to assemble a complex puzzle of influences from design history, from the aesthetic ideals of geometric construction in the Renaissance with the rationalist approach of bauhaus, to the marketing choices behind the iPhone user interface.

2.3 In your opinion what makes a compelling font and which fonts do you prefer designing/working on? Why?

The design space for letters is extremely limited: you have very few elements and a little range of variation before you do something illegible or plain ugly. Still, in any typeface project, that threshold is where interesting things happen: with a tiny adjustment a boring letter becomes interesting, then excessive, then wrong. We had fun with this idea with our “Boring Sans” project, that allowed users to try that experience thanks to the sliders in Variable fonts. It also may happen that some projects are born in relation to “trends” that we see in contemporary visual panorama. For example, last year we noticed in many designers a sort of rebellion against the dominating geometric sans typefaces, and the interest in type with a very strong contrast and sharp serifs - that type blogger Jeremiah "Typewolf" Shoaf calls “evil serif”. Our font Blacker was born as an exploration in that field, looking for the qualities that we had not explored until that moment.

Images: Zetafonts_04_BLACKER.jpg, Zetafonts_05_BLACKER.jpg
Download https://www.dropbox.com/s/q7nrptp3xc5hcfl/BlackerPro.zip?dl=0

Images: Zetafonts_06_BORING.jpg
Download https://www.dropbox.com/s/u4z1yx3uydnjh94/BoringSans.zip?dl=0
https://www.dropbox.com/s/2cllw1sixqku22z/BoringSansVariableGX.ttf.zip?dl=0

2.4 What is the most difficult part of type design?

It might seem that the hardest part of creating a typeface is the initial phase, the discovery of a new and interesting shape. In reality, this part is the most fun and immediate, because few letters alone are not enough to define a typeface, and since they set the style and the rules to the others, they are the easiest to design, and the ones that give you more creative freedom. Instead, it is often the letters that are drawn last, such as S and X, or numbers, that are the most difficult to design because they have to adapt to all the others while maintaining a very precise and traditional shape.
And still, it’s not the hardest phase of the design. The most complex of the design choices are those regarding font branding: giving a typeface a name and an identity.

In the crowded font market, as a matter of fact, typefaces have to compete with others not only with their technical and aesthetic quality but also with the effectiveness of their naming and branding. Each name carries associations and references that must be immediate and meaningful for a worldwide audience. With few slides a typeface must be able to stir the attention of potential users, while communicating its scope of application clearly.

For example, when we designed a font by assembling different inspirations deriving from forgotten typefaces from the beginning of the century - a sort of typographic Frankenstein - we needed a name that expressed its somewhat monstrous but also ironic nature. We went through lists of names of giants, mythical creatures and monsters before we came up with the one that sounded right: the name of Harry Potter's monster-loving half-giant, Hagrid. From that moment, the name and the book character have become guiding elements in the development of the graphic design. Not much in wanting to mimic the fantasy aesthetic, but rather in evoking that sense of fascinating disgust we feel towards something that is weird and familiar at the same time. The feeling of the “uncanny”, that the Germans call unheimlich. Centering the name means clarifying the best way to demonstrate to users a possible universe of uses. Warner Bros, for example, would not have used one of our fonts for the film Aquaman if it had not found it
with an already assonant name (Aquawax) and above all with a graphic project already aimed at enhancing its digital and liquid nature at the same time.

Images: Zetafonts_07_HAGRID.jpg
Zetafonts_08_AQUAWAX.jpg

2.5 So the name should be the starting point of the project?

Not always. Very often the name is the point of arrival, to define the spirit of something that instead started essentially from the intention to tackle a specific problem. Born as brand designers, we always think of the needs of those who must communicate clearly and look for typefaces that are suitable for expressing precise values or work in certain contexts. It is a design thinking approach: we put ourselves in the shoes of the designer who will use our font to include in the design all those functions and aesthetic choices that we would like to have available.

3. TECHNICAL CHALLENGES

3.1 What about the specific technical challenges you face as a type designer?

The purely technical challenges (regarding cross-platform compatibility, software issues, font production workflow) are many, but far less interesting and difficult to deal with than the aesthetic and marketing decisions. In an overcrowded market, with so many skilled designers producing hundreds of new fonts each month, the real challenge is to try to create typefaces that will spark the attention of potential users, inspiring design choices and styles. We deal with that mainly through our experience in branding and graphic design, often starting from a design-related problem to create a typeface that will solve it for other professionals - while keeping an eye on current trends and styles.

3.2 Do new font technologies impact your approach to your own work?

We firmly believe in a design thinking approach, placing the starting point of a design process in the needs rather than in the tech opportunities. We try to include any usable new technology in our typefaces, while at the same time trying to create typefaces that are trusted tools rather than show-offs.

3.3 What about open type and variable fonts?

We think Open Type features and Variable Fonts options are often too obscure for the casual font user and what they lack is a viable “killer application” to make them useful outside the designer niche. If software developers don’t start to address this need, they will probably keep being obscure design gimmicks rather than widely used tools. Apps that could make the potential of Open Type and Variable Fonts more useful to the general public could make more people aware of the wonderful possibilities in today’s font technologies.

4 BUSINESS MODEL AND CASE HISTORY

4.1 Can you share where your fonts have been used now and in the past (as many examples that you want to share)?

Our business model is based on free distribution of our typefaces for noncommercial use, according to creative commons license. This means that our typefaces have been downloaded and used countless
times: we total over 22 million downloads on dafont and we have seen them used countless times by designers all over the world. As for the commercial clients, we had big brands like Google, Apple, Warner Bros, Netflix, Sky, using our typefaces for the more diverse uses, from a Google doodle to the logo of the movie Aquaman.

4.2 What type project gave you more satisfaction?

The Coco Gothic family is probably the best known and most widespread among those we have produced. Created essentially for use in the fashion field, it contains a series of stylistic variations for each decade of the century: like Cocomat which evokes the roaring twenties, Cocosignum which mimics the lettering of italian thirties, Cocogoose which evokes the 40s and so on. We have defined it as "a time travel font": we are now developing a version that uses variable font technology to allow users to accurately calibrate, via a slider, the presence or absence of "vintage" elements in their typography.

Images: Zetafonts_13_COCO.jpg, Zetafonts_14_COCO.jpg
Download: https://www.dropbox.com/s/szy14y1poel9a8/Coco%20Gothic%20Regular.zip?dl=0

Another successful project is Monterchi, designed in 2019 for art director Riccardo Falcinelli who commissioned it to us for the branding of a painting by Renaissance master Piero Della Francesca's. The typeface is made peculiar by the many ligatures inspired by medieval inscriptions. The complete alphabet eventually contains over a thousand characters, and was selected in 2019 by Communication Arts as one of the best type designs of the year.

Images: Zetafonts_15_MONTERCHI.jpg, Zetafonts_16_MONTERCHI.jpg

Another project we are very proud of is Quarantype, developed in March 2020 as a reaction to the anxiety of the Covid-19 lockdown. The ten fonts of the Quarantype project where conceived, developed and released in just 3 weeks and tried to be about all the things that the quarantine made us miss. We thought of a free distribution for this project, because it was a small way to contribute to this emergency: an initiative to nourish the projects of those who had to face a new business in the most disheartening moment in recent history.

Images: Zetafonts_17_QUARANTYPE.jpg
Download: (www.zetafonts.com/quarantype)

We are also very proud of our Italian Type line, working on the revival of forgotten historical lead type like Cairoli and Etrusco, two lost typefaces by Nebiolo from the early 1930s that had never been digitized until now.

Image: Zetafonts_18_TYPEFACEBOX.jpg - Promotional packaging for italiantype and zetafonts
Article on CAIROLI - https://zetafonts.com/blog/rediscovering-cairol/

5 ABOUT THE TYPE DESIGN PROFESSION

5.1 From your observation as a font designer, is it a competitive field of design?

The whole visual design field has become globally overcrowded in the last years. But, as designers grew in number and skills, rising the bar of the competition, new markets and possibilities have appeared. Creating a career requests a lot of dedication and self-control, but can be immensely rewarding.
5.2 What have you disliked about the experiences you’ve had as a typographer?

We were lucky enough to get to type design after years of bad experiences in graphic design. We could then avoid many of the mistakes we did: lack of self-confidence, sloppiness, artsy expectations. Having learnt from our errors, we went into type design with a pragmatic approach that we still have, and that never had us have bad experience.

5.3 What have been the pros and cons of working in the font industry, in your own experience?

As any other tech-driven profession, the ever-evolving panorama can be stimulating but also anxiety-inducing. As new media, formats and technologies evolve, we can't avoid thinking that the market could change dramatically, making today’s standards obsolete in a few years. And while this has made our workstyle much lighter, allowing for maximum personal freedom ("my office is my laptop!") and opening wider, global markets for our creations, on the other side we feel that - living more and more in the present moment - is much more hard to create something that will be able to stand the test of time.

5.4 In a world with thousands of fonts available, is there still room for new typefaces?

In the World, according to our calculation, there are about 250,000 commercial font families, with more than a thousand new published each per month. It is a crowded field, but the whole panorama of visual design is, after all: there are countless agencies around the world that need new and current methods to communicate their ideas and their products. As Erik Spiekermann once said, "We need new characters when we need a new tee-shirt, a new book, a new music CD or a new film". The forms of the imagination and the global taste are constantly evolving and the expressive possibilities are endless.

5.5 It means that type design must follow global taste?

It's quite clear that the font industry has become similar to the fashion one, with many players influencing each other and producing hastily to catch the market trends and tastes. This has led to many typefaces being too similar as they reflect contemporary trends that may be insubstantial in the long run. The overflow of geometric sans typefaces, or the hundreds of new releases of brush scripts in the indie market, all speak of this widespread desire for “the newest facelift of an old typeface”. Digital markets are often encouraging this behaviour and - if we could - we would probably like them to change this, giving more exposure to new trends and unexpected designs rather than pushing the more commercially viable revamp of an old favourite.

On the other side, it is true that the world of visual communication today is very similar to that of fashion design, with some prominent creatives who are trendsetters, influencing a large number of creatives who must adapt quickly to be on the wave of global taste. Type design is not dissimilar and designers sometimes have to look very hard for that small significant difference that can make a font stand out from the rest without being “out of fashion”.

It's something that interests us a lot and in 2020 we have created the Type Trends Look Book, a 140 page guide to typographic trends that we distribute for free on our website.

*Images: Zetafonts_19_TRENDBOOK1.jpg - The TypeTrends LookBook 2020 volume*

*Download: https://zetafonts.com/blog/type-trends-2020*

5.5 What advice would you give to someone who is considering a career in type design?

First of all, study and learn as much as possible from the best schools and the work of the past masters. Then, don’t obsess on a single project, but learn to test your skills in many different typeface styles and
design briefs. And finally, try to make work that is at the same time consistent and usable but unexpected and exciting!

6 MISCELLANEOUS QUESTIONS

6.1 What are your thoughts on font pairing? Have you got any suggestions?

Font pairing has always been an elusive subject for us as designers. Balancing typeface use in a project is something that depends not only on personal taste but on many project-specific conditions. It’s quite difficult to give the last word on it.

On one side there are some very pragmatical ground rules - like the ones that suggest not to use in the same projects fonts that are too similar. If you choose a humanist grotesque for the body text (like our Body), for example, it would make little sense to have another grotesque (like Cairoli) for the titling as the similarities would be felt more like errors. Better to create contrast, using a serif, a slab or at least a geometric sans typeface - something that creates an interesting visual juxtaposition. When we were young we had a very basic version of this rule: “just one serif, just one sans per project”: it's not always 100% true but can be a good starting point, together with another rule of thumb: “don't use too many different typefaces for your project”.

Often we forget, for example, that a good typeface family can allow us enough variations in its weight and width range to make it usable in various design contexts. You could write a text using our Klein typeface, for example, and then use the condensed variant for titling, or side notes. Or you could use a typeface, like Erotique or Monterchi, which gives you the full range of sans, serif and text versions.

But naturally you may want to have a marked contrast, for example by juxtaposing a very digital typeface like our Antipasto to something that has an handmade feel, like Freehand. Still, you should be careful to select typefaces that are somehow related if you want a common typographic feel to your composition. If you use our Cocogoose typeface, a geometric grotesk with slightly rounded corners and a vintage feel, you'd probably want to pair it with a typeface like Radcliffe, which follows a Clarendon design and feels like a modern classic and not a digital type, or with a script like Banana Yeti, with his strong “forties” inspiration.