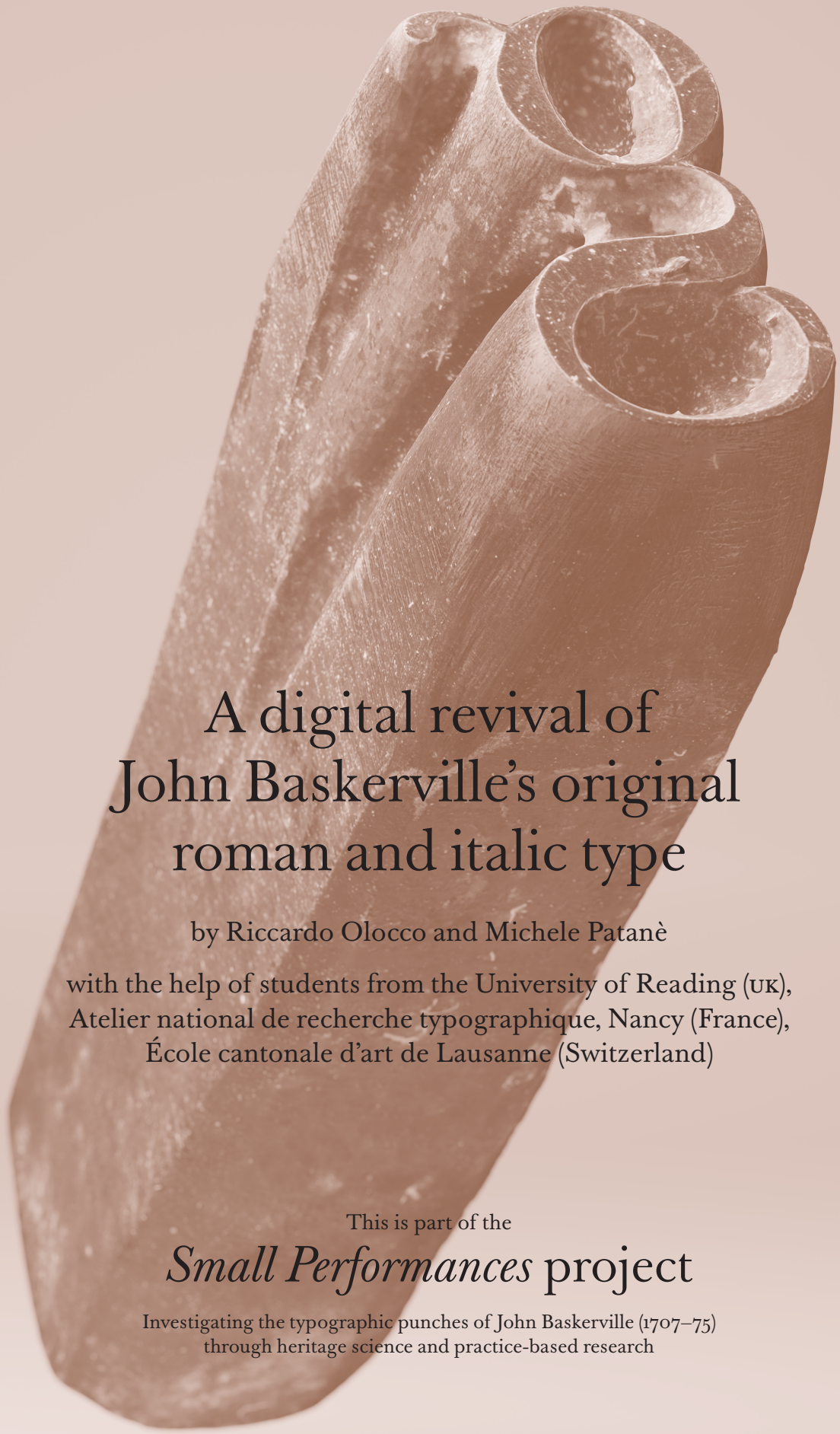
DISPLAY – 50 PT

Baskerville Punch



SUBHEAD – 30 PT

A digital revival of John Baskerville's original roman and italic type

TEXT – 14 PT

by Riccardo Olocco and Michele Patanè

with the help of students from the University of Reading (UK),
Atelier national de recherche typographique, Nancy (France),
École cantonale d'art de Lausanne (Switzerland)

SUBHEAD – 26 PT

This is part of the

Small Performances project

CAPTION – 10 PT

Investigating the typographic punches of John Baskerville (1707–75)
through heritage science and practice-based research



CAPTION – 8 PT

All of the texts in the specimens are direct quotations of John Baskerville's own words, taken either from the paratexts of his editions or from his letters, with the exception of pages 3, 5 and 18.

Images of punches and typographic materials are reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.
Photographer: Mark Box.

The *Baskerville Punch* font family

DISPLAY – 36 PT

John Baskerville's types incorporated the main features of the popular calligraphic style of his time: the English round hand. Representing a turning point in the history of letterforms, they were admired by many European printers and punchcutters, including Bodoni and the Didots, who built on Baskerville's aesthetic in developing the 'modern type'.

SUBHEAD – 21 PT

Baskerville Punch is an open-source font family that aims to bring Baskerville's types back to life, based on the original punches cut between 1750 and 1775, which are preserved in Cambridge today.

The project began with three intensive workshops led by the designers on master's programmes in type design across Europe. These took place in 2025 at the University of Reading (UK), the ANRT in Nancy (France), and ECAL in Lausanne (Switzerland). Each workshop focused on a different optical size of Baskerville's types: *Great Primer* (16 pt) in Reading; two display sizes, *Two-Line English* and *Two-Line Double Pica* (approximately 28 and 40 pt), in Nancy; and two smaller text sizes, *Pica* and *Brevier* (12 and 8 pt), in Lausanne.

Using images of the original punches and enlarged reproductions of Baskerville's printed specimens as references, the students first analysed and sketched the letterforms before developing them digitally. Each workshop consisted of an intensive week of design, with regular critiques, discussions, and demonstrations. By the end of each week, the groups had completed a full set of uppercase and lowercase characters.

This work formed the basis of the Baskerville Punch font family. Working with the students allowed the designers to become intimately familiar with the original sources, and develop a deeper understanding of Baskerville's design choices.

Following the workshops, the designers first reviewed and redrew the basic alphabet to achieve a consistent family across the different optical sizes. They then increased the character set to enable wider language support, and provided a typeface suited to current use.

TEXT – 13 PT

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CAPTION – 8 PT

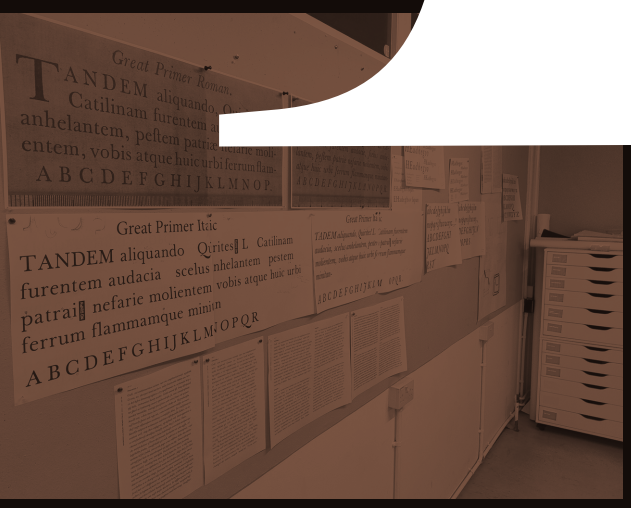
DISPLAY – 1000 PT











En los libros antiguos, la calidad de la página dependía tanto de la letra como del papel y de la tinta. Una composición equilibrada hacía más cómoda la lectura. Una tipografía óptima, precisa y expresiva daba al texto un ritmo sereno; el diseño cuidaba cada detalle y hacía que

Spanish

Při tisku staré knihy záleželo na přesnosti sazby i na kráse stránky. Čistý řádek, měkké křivky a pečlivě zvolené mezery dávaly textu přirozený rytmus. Každý řez písma měl svůj účel: úzké i široké tvary vedly oko čtenáře, zatímco drobné detaily a chuť experimentovat dotvářely charakter

Czech

A régi könyvek oldalain a betűk ritmusa, a papír felülete és a tinta mélysége együtt alakította az olvasás élményét. A gondos szedés nyugodt képet adott, miközben az ékezetek finom formája is hozzájárult a szöveg egységéhez. Egy jó kiadvány minden részlete számított, még a nyomtatás

Hungarian

Dans les livres anciens, l'équilibre entre l'encre, le papier et les lettres créait une page agréable à lire. Un texte soigné pouvait réunir clarté et élégance: l'œil suivait les courbes, tandis que l'œuvre imprimée gardait une forme nette. À Noël, un lecteur français pouvait admirer le cœur

French

Beim Setzen eines Buches zählte die Form der Lettern. Papier, Zeilenabstand und Farbe bestimmten den Eindruck. Sorgfältige Anordnung schuf Ruhe und Klarheit. Unterschiede in Größe und Gewicht gaben dem Text Rhythmus. Ästhetik und Maß prägten das Schriftbild;

German

Vecā grāmatā rūpīgs salikums savienoja burtu ritmu ar papīra un tintes kvalitāti. Skaidrs teksts ļāva lasītājam viegli uztvert domu, bet smalkas nianses piešķīra lappusei raksturu. Ģeometriskas formas, rūpīgi izvēlēta tinte un ziņas par izdevumu parādīja, kā pārdomāts salikums

Latvian

En bok kan føles tydelig og varm når tekst, papir og trykk spiller godt sammen. Før ble stor omsorg lagt i satsens rytme, linjeavstand og marger. Bokstavenes form ga siden karakter, mens jevn farge gjorde lesingen behagelig og åpen. Ærlig enkelhet kunne prege uttrykket. Øvelse ga si

Norwegian

Dawna książka łączyła tekst z wyraźnym rytmem strony. Odpowiedni papier, farba i kształt liter wpływały na charakter edycji. Staranny skład ułatwiał czytanie, a proporcje marginesów tworzyły równowagę. Właściwości kroju decydowały o wyglądzie słów,

Polish

CAPTION – 140 PT

I have

SUBHEAD – 95 PT

pursued the

DISPLAY – 55 PT

Scheme of printing

TEXT – 30 PT

and Letter founding for Seven

CAPTION – 20 PT

Years, with the most intense Application,
to the great prejudice of My Eyes, by the

TEXT – 16 PT

daily use of Microscopes, & at the expense of above
a thousand pounds, which really makes me short of
money; and tho' I have now brought it to some degree
of perfection, & have had very agreeable proofs of the
approbation of the public; I have no way of refunding the
Expense I have been at, without the patronage
of the University of Cambridge.

PUBLII VIRGILII

MARONIS

BUCOLICA

GEORGICA

ET

AENEIS

Ad optimorum Exemplarium fidem recenſita.

TO THE P LIC.

JOHN KERVIL roposes, by the advice and aſſiſtance of ſeveral lear en, to print, from the Cambridge edition corrected with oſſible care, an elegant edition of Virgil. The work wil rinted in quarto, on this writing royal paper, and with t er annex'd. The price of the volume in ſheets will be one a, no part of which will be required till the book is deliver will be put to preſs as ſoon as the number of Subſcribers ſ nount to five hundred, whoſe names will be prefixt to the All perſons who are inclined to encourage the undertakin deſired to ſend their names to JOHN BASKER LE in Birmingham; who will give ſpecimens of the work who are deſirous of ſeeing them.

Subſcriptions are alſo taken pecimens delivered by Meſſieurs R. and J. DODSLEY, Bookſeller Mall, London. MDCCLIV.

DISPLAY – 600 PT

24 PT

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRRSTUVWXYZ

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXY

0123456789 0123456789 0123456789

ÀÁÂÃÄÅĀĂĄÆÇĆĈĊČĎĐÈÉÊËĒĔĖĘĚĐ

ƎĜĞĠĢĤĦḤÌÍÎÏĨĪĬĮİIJĴĶĹĽĻĿŁÑŃŇŅŊ

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§†‡ª º ™ © ® % ‰ $ ¢ £ ¥ € ¤ + − = × ÷ < > ≠ ± ~ ≈ ° #

13 PT

I have sent a few Specimens to the Courts of Russia and Denmark, and shall endeavor to do the same to most of the Courts in Europe; in hopes of finding in some one of them a purchaser of the whole scheme, on the Condition of my never attempting another Type. I was saying this to a particular friend who reproached me with not giving my own country the preference, as it would (he was pleased to say) be a national Reproach to lose it: I told him, nothing but the greatest Necessity would put me upon it: and even then I should resign it with the utmost reluctance. He observed, the parliament had given a handsome

Baskerville Punch Text

35 PT

My price is two Guineas the sheet, without pressing, and two pounds seven to be pressed as other books which I have printed are.

Baskerville Punch Display

20 PT

John Baskerville of Birmingham thinks proper to give notice that having now finished his edition of Virgil in one volume Quarto, it will be published the latter end of next month, price one guinea on sheets. He therefore desires that such gentlemen as intend to favour him with their names, will be pleased to send

Baskerville Punch Subhead

9 PT

If I find favor with the University, and they give me a grant to print an Edition of a prayer book according to the Specimen, I would as soon as Virgil was finished and a proper place could be found for their Reception, send to Cambridge two presses, Workmen and all other Requisites, but should be glad to take the Chance of the Edition to myself, and make the University such Considerations as they should think fit to prescribe. But my highest Ambition is to print a folio Bible, with the same letter of the inclosed Specimen, which would allow a handsome Margin, besides Notes, and which I would decorate with a neat black Ornament, between and round the Colums and marginal Notes, about a quarter as broad as the inclosed Specimen, which may serve to give a rude or imperfect Idea of what I mean and will appear more agreeable to every Eye than the coarse red lines of the best Editions. The Reason of my mentioning

Baskerville Punch Caption

VF OPSZ 85 – 58 PT

Amongst the several m
engaged my attention, the
pursued with so much s
as that of *Letter-Foundin*
admirer of the beauty of L
desirous of contributing t

I formed to my self Ideas
had yet appeared, and hav
a *Sett of Types* according t
their true p



CAPTION – 12 PT

Excerpt from John Baskerville's preface to

nechanic Arts that have
ere is no one which I have
steadiness and pleasure,
g. Having been an early
etters, I became insensibly
to the perfection of them.
of greater accuracy than
e endeavoured to produce
to what I conceived to be
proportion.



o his 1758 edition of Milton's *Paradise Lost*

35 PT

My price is two Guineas the sheet, without pressing, and two pounds seven to be pressed as other books which I have printed are.

Baskerville Punch Display

13 PT

I have sent a few Specimens to the Courts of Russia and Denmark, and shall endeavor to do the same to most of the Courts in Europe; in hopes of finding in some one of them a purchaser of the whole scheme, on the Condition of my never attempting another Type. I was saying this to a particular friend who reproached me with not giving my own country the preference, as it would (he was pleased to say) be a national Reproach to lose it: I told him, nothing but the greatest Necessity would put me upon it: and even then I should resign it with the utmost reluctance. He observed, the parliament had given a handsome premium for a quack

Baskerville Punch Text

9 PT

If I find favor with the University, and they give me a grant to print an Edition of a prayer book according to the Specimen, I would as soon as Virgil was finished and a proper place could be found for their Reception, send to Cambridge two presses, Workmen and all other Requisites, but should be glad to take the Chance of the Edition to myself, and make the University such Considerations as they should think fit to prescribe. But my highest Ambition is to print a folio Bible, with the same letter of the inclosed Specimen, which would allow a handsome Margin, besides Notes, and which I would decorate with a neat black Ornament, between and round the Colums and marginal Notes, about a quarter as broad as the inclosed Specimen, which may serve to give a rude or imperfect Idea of what I mean and will appear more agreeable to every Eye than the coarse red lines of the best Editions. The Reason of my mentioning a bible at this time is this; that

Baskerville Punch Caption

20 PT

John Baskerville of Birmingham thinks proper to give notice that having now finished his edition of Virgil in one volume Quarto, it will be published the latter end of next month, price one guinea on sheets. He therefore desires that such gentlemen as intend to favour him with their names, will be pleased to

Baskerville Punch Subhead

As you have

DISPLAY – 75 PT

been pleased to treat me

SUBHEAD – 35 PT

WITH THE UTMOST FREEDOM

DISPLAY – 70 PT

& GOOD NATURE,

& have declared yourself no friend

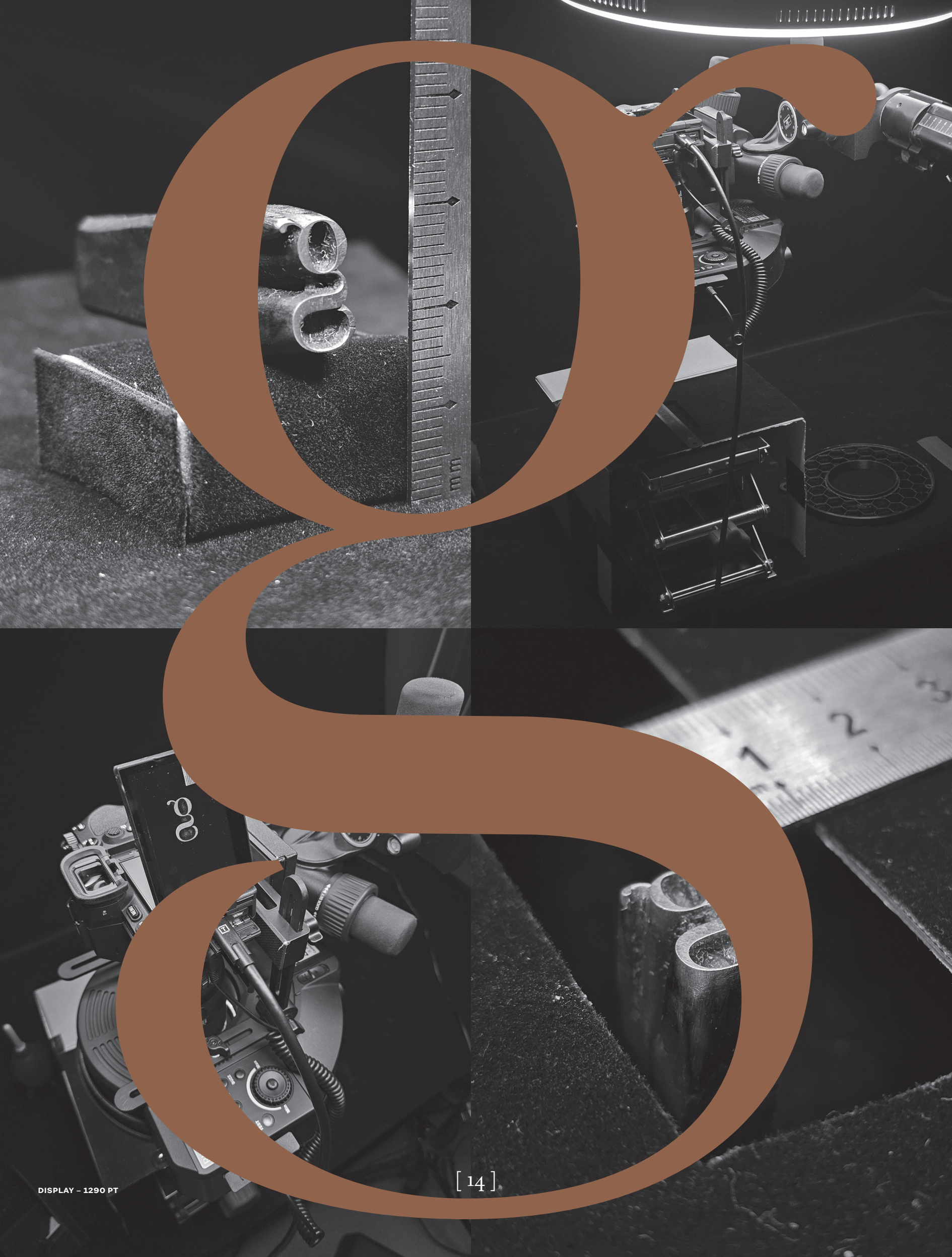
SUBHEAD – 25 PT

to Ceremony

CAPTION – 50 PT

Excerpt from a letter to an unnamed friend, 1757

TEXT – 12 PT



DISPLAY – 1290 PT

I have sent a few Specimens to the Courts of Russia and Denmark.

DISPLAY – 40 PT

The Ink, presses, Chases, Moulds for casting & all the apparatus for printing were made in my own Shops.

TEXT – 28 PT

I have made all the hast in my power to forward to you a Specimen of a common prayer book as perfect as I can make it. The Size is calculated for people who begin to want Spectacles but are ashamed to use them at Church.

TEXT – 12 PT

DISPLAY – 180 PT

Virgil finished

DISPLAY – 130 PT

proper place

DISPLAY – 90 PT

workmen & all

TEXT – 60 PT

but should be glad to take

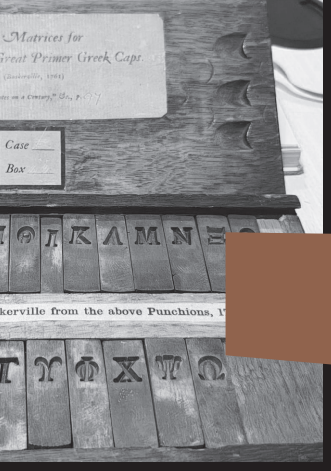
TEXT – 40 PT

make the University such

CAPTION – 30 PT

the Chance of the Edition to myself

CAPTION – 22 PT







CAPTION – 1000 PT



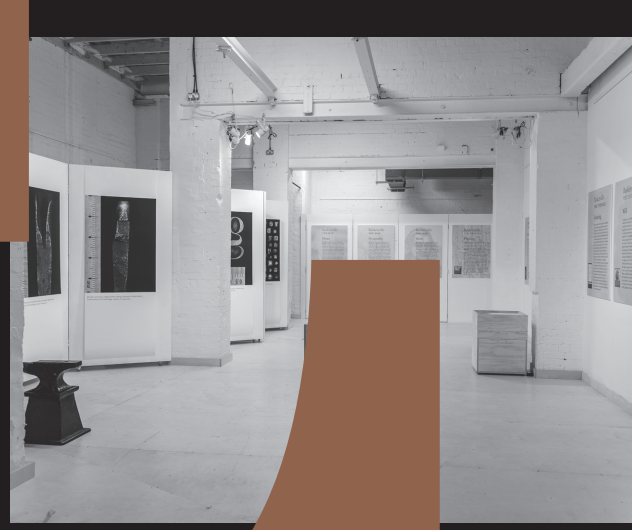
















DISPLAY – 36 PT

SUBHEAD – 17 PT

TEXT – 13 PT

CAPTION – 8 PT

The *Small Performances* project

Printing is the invention of the millennium, and a democratiser of knowledge – but how it happens through the creation and application of typefaces is not generally known. John Baskerville (1707–75) was England's foremost printer and the Baskerville typeface – what he called his 'small performances' – is familiar to billions of readers and users of standard computer software across the world.

Small Performances is an interdisciplinary project which is making a substantial contribution to the history of printing technology. At its heart is the exceptional collection of typographic punches designed, cut, and used at Baskerville's workshop in Birmingham, which are now held at Cambridge University Library. Individually engraved in steel, punches were the first of three stages in the manufacturing of metal type – one that posed challenges in both materials and design – and therefore they preserve otherwise inaccessible information that can be unlocked through scientific study.

Bringing together printing historians, archaeologists, heritage scientists, craftspeople, and type designers around the AHRC-funded Cambridge Heritage Science Hub (CHERISH), the project is reconstructing eighteenth-century punch-making techniques using pioneering scientific and artisanal methods. Our approach involves microscopy, chemical analyses, 3D modelling, advanced imaging and computational shape analysis in the laboratory, as well as practical experimentation engaging jewellers, engravers, blacksmiths, and typeface designers who are helping disentangle the craft whilst also learning historical techniques that may be of use in their own trade.

The project aims to open a new chapter in the history of world technology, and a novel form of research engagement among academics, practitioners, and laypeople, made visible through 3D models, digital editions, new typeface designs, and practical and creative workshops. All of our methods, results and outputs are offered in open access. Besides expanding our knowledge of Baskerville and his significance as a typeface designer and cultural figure, we hope to transform our understanding of the collection of punches and benefit current industrial and craft applications, as well as educational projects.

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Caroline Archer-Parré
Ann-Marie Carey
Maciej Pawlikowski

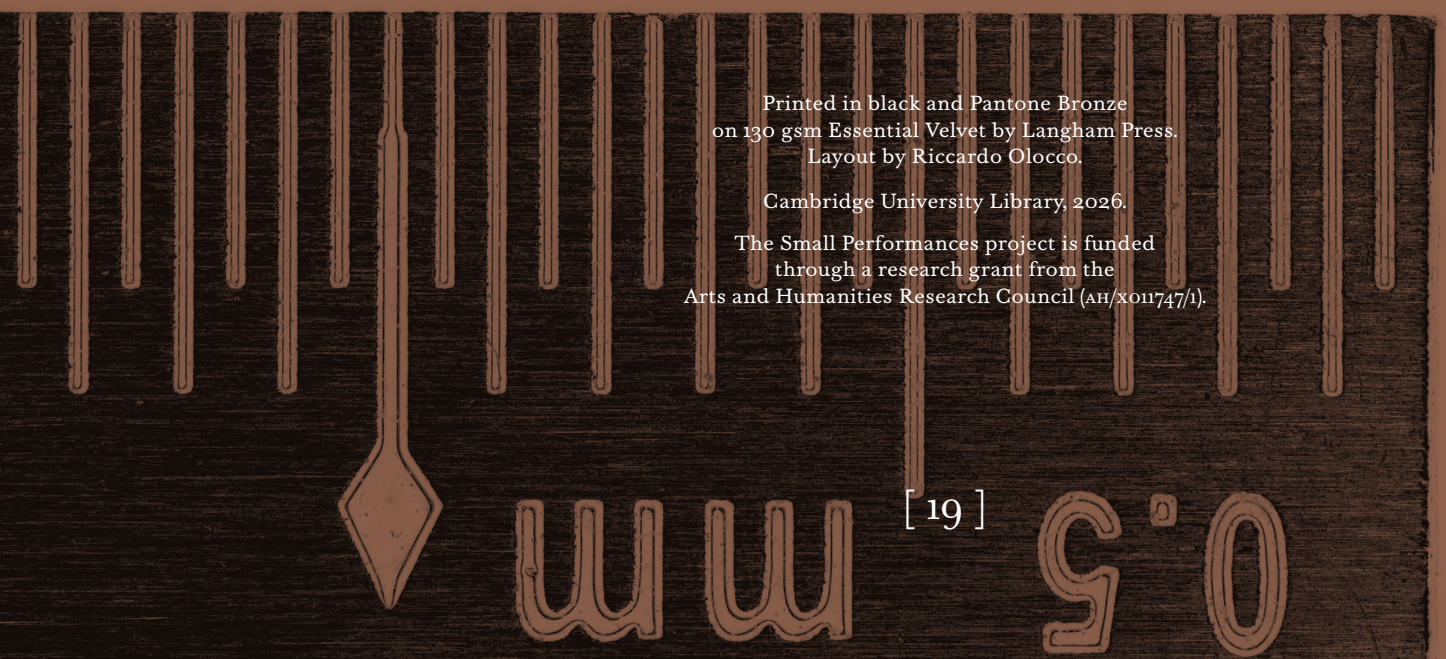
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Photographic enlargement of the face
of Baskerville's 60-point capital Q punch

CAPTION – 12 PT



CAPTION – 8 PT

Printed in black and Pantone Bronze
on 130 gsm Essential Velvet by Langham Press.
Layout by Riccardo Olocco.

Cambridge University Library, 2026.

The Small Performances project is funded
through a research grant from the
Arts and Humanities Research Council (AH/X011747/1).

20 PT

TANDEM aliquando
Quirites! L. Catilinam
furentem audacia,
scelsum anhelantem

Baskerville Punch Display

TANDEM aliquando
Quirites! L. Catilinam
furentem audacia,
scelsum anhelantem

Baskerville Punch Subhead

TANDEM aliquando
Quirites! L. Catilinam
furentem audacia,
scelsum anhelantem

Baskerville Punch Text

TANDEM aliquando
Quirites! L. Catilinam
furentem audacia,
scelsum anhelantem

Baskerville Punch Caption

To download the Baskerville Punch font family and find out more about the project,
visit www.baskervillepunches.org

CAPTION – 10 PT

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

SMALL PERFORMANCES BASKERVILLE PUNCHES

BIRMINGHAM CITY University

UKRI Arts and Humanities Research Council