

BOD ONI

& the man
& the typeface

GIAMBATTISTA

Giambattista Bodoni was born on February 16, 1740 in Saluzzo, Italy. The son of a printer, Bodoni left to apprentice of Abbate Ruffierei in the Vatican polygot press of the Propaganda Fide in Rome. It was here that Bodoni impressed his superiors so much with his abilities and mastery of ancient languages and types that he was given permission to place his own name on his first books, a Coptic Missal and a version of the Tibetan alphabet. In 1768 the Duke of Parma asked him to manage the Royal Press-“Stamperia Reale”. Here he produced Italian, Greek, and Latin books and similar printed materials for court use. At first Bodoni employed many of the fonts of Pierre Fournier of Paris, old-style typefaces, with a large amount of decorative detail also placed on the page. However he gradually adopted

the typographical theories of the French printer, Pierre Didot, and by 1787 he was printing pages with the modern typefaces of his own design with almost no decoration. In “Stamperia Reale” Bodoni created his first font pattern book entitled “Saggio tipografivo di fregie e maiuscole”. By 1775, Bodoni printed the homage book “Epithalamia exoticis linguis reddita”, which was written in 25 languages. In 1791 to appease Bodoni, Duke Ferdinand allowed him to establish his own printing works in his palace. Here Bodoni produced an edition de luxe of Virgil and Torquato Tasso’s “La Gerusalemme liberate”. In 1806, Bodoni printed the Lord’s Prayer in 155 languages, in 1808 the “Iliad” by Homer. Although he printed many important works, as a whole his books were better known for their typographical beauty and excellence than their textual accuracy. The large margins and bold display of his books are artistic and technical masterpieces intended more to be admired than used; his works were often inaccurate and difficult to read.

Type well used is invisible as type, just as the perfect talking voice is the unnoticed vehicle for the transmission of words, ideas.

Beatrice Warde "Printing Should Be Invisible"

Giambattista Bodoni's most important work is considered to be the two-volume "Manuale tipografico" published posthumously in 1818, five years after his death, by his widow Margherita Dali'Aglio. It contained Bodoni's enormous selection of typefaces, of 291 roman and italic typefaces, presenting 373 characters, 34 Greek and 48 Oriental or exotic ones. It also included a

collection of flowering ornamentals and geometric patterns. The last years of Bodoni's life brought international fame- he received compliments from the pope and was honored with a pension by Napoleon Bonaparte. Giambattista Bodoni died on November 29, 1813 in Parma Italy.

BODONI 72

TYPE SPECIMEN

book AaBbCcDdEeFfGgHhIiJj
KkLlMmNnOoPpQqRrSs
TtUuVvWwXxYyZz
1234567890^\$!?!&{(%

book italic *AaBbCcDdEeFfGgHhIiJj*
KkLlMmNnOoPpQqRrSs
TtUuVvWwXxYyZz
1234567890^\$!?!&{(%

bold **AaBbCcDdEeFfGgHhIiJj**
KkLlMmNnOoPpQqRrSs
TtUuVvWwXxYyZz
1234567890^\$!?!&{(%

Characteristics & Anatomy



Bodoni is the Romantic modern serif typeface designed by Giambattista Bodoni in 1798. For the typeface Bodoni, Giambattista Bodoni drew his influence from the Romains du Roi, with its flat, unbracketed serifs, and the high contrast types of John Baskerville—specifically Baskerville,

to which Bodoni bears a great deal of resemblance to in order to create the elegant type known today. Bodoni introduced a regularity to the typeface, deciding that letters should be created by the combination of a limited number of identical units. This regularity lends itself to the vertical

rationalist axis coupled with strong horizontal stress furnishes to create as sense of control. However the verticality of the letter forms tend to lead the eyes up and down, interfering with a text's fluidity. The extreme contrast between the thick upright strokes and the abrupt, sharp

right angle hairline serifs also lends the typeface a sense of elegance and grace befitting the bridge between the Victorian Era and design today. The formal, austere typeface lends itself well to lots of space—both in generous margins and leading—and its verticality does not lend itself well to extended sections of text.

evolution & anatomy

Originally punch cut by hand himself, Bodoni's original typeface was printed on luxurious paper with intense black ink. The text type was widely spaced between lines and given generous margins befitting the elegance of the type. Bodoni's type has been adapted various times since the original design. During the time of metal type, every serious foundry had it's own unique adaptation of Bodoni. In today's time there is not one single "Bodoni" but a range of adaptations each with their own unique and distinct flavor. Universally however Bodoni

typefaces suffer from a particular kind of legibility degradation known as "dazzle" caused by the thick vertical lines. Most current digital fonts generate different point sizes while printers working with metal type adjusted the designs subtly for different sizes, such as opening up counters and expanding the width in small sizes. Bodoni tends to stress this difference and many digital renditions are based on designs adjusted for larger sizes with thin hairlines so downscaling renders the type difficult to read. At ten points the typeface begins to lose it's defining characteristics due to this dazzle affect and therefore Bodoni is most suited as a display typeface.

B b

BODONI 72
unbracketed hairline serif
right angle less pronounced

B b

BODONI BE
unbracketed hairline serif
sharp right angle

A type of revolutionary novelty
may be extremely beautiful in
itself; but, for the creatures of
habit that we are, its very novelty
tends to make it illegible, at any
rate to begin with.

Aldous Huxley
"Typography for the Twentieth Century Reader"

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