

1. This photograph of Gerard was taken by Michaël Ferron and dates from around the end of the 1990s. Gerard sent it to me for a booklet on Paradox that was published by dTL in 2000, and for which I wrote the introductory text.



2. The booklet, nicely designed by the Dutch graphic designer Sander Neijns, also contains a type specimen. dTL Paradox is a highly delicate and sophisticated typeface, which is influenced by 18th-century type designs. Around 2000 Gerard was investigating the work of especially François-Ambroise Didot and his punchcutter Louis Vafflard.

However, the roman of Paradox is mostly referring to the romain du roi, the 'king's roman', developed under the supervision of Philippe Grandjean for the Royal Print Office of Louis XIV of France. The cursive shows the 'interrupted' construction of the italics from Fournier le Jeune, a style also visible in the Petit Canon Italique from the Belgian punchcutter Jacques-François Rosart.



3. Although the design of dTL Paradox obviously contains 18th-century characteristics, Gerard's extremely recognisable idiom is clearly visible everywhere. Hence, Paradox is not a revival –if only because Gerard, in line with, for example, Jan van Krimpen, did not like revivals at all. He considered it wiser if font producers would spend their energy on the development of new type designs, instead of on historical ones.



4. Eight years before Paradox I released dTL Argo, a typeface that is completely different, but which is undoubtedly also very 'Ungerish'. The production of Argo began when Gerard was working for Hell still, but it was continued for urw in Hamburg. Eventually it ended up at the Dutch Type Library.

I will focus here especially on Argo: not only because it is a very strong type design, but because its development is also illustrative for the changing font- and related production technology roughly three decades ago. The IKARUS format was exchanged for the Bézier format, and floppy disks for CD-ROM's (and later for USB sticks and direct downloads).

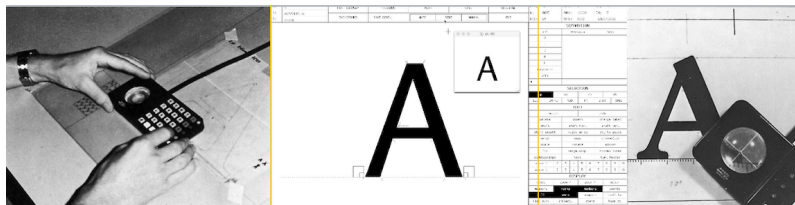


5. Personally I met Gerard for the first time mid 1980s. At that time there were only a handful of Dutch type designers of whom a typeface had been published. On the photo, taken by Philip Mechanicus and dating from 1987, you see from left to right Gerard, Sem Hartz, Chris Brand, Dick Dooijes and Bram de Does. Clearly Gerard is the youngest of the group. As you may know, the number of type designers rapidly increased during the next decades, due to the rise of desktoppublishing.

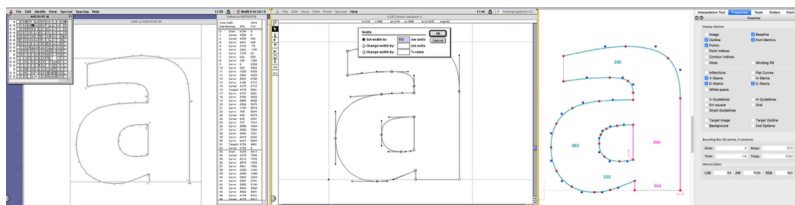


6. Around 1990 Gerard started to work as designer and advisor for urw in Hamburg. This company was lead by Peter Karow, who was one of the three owners and the inventor of the IKARUS format. This format made the conversion from analogue to digital contours a relatively simple and straightforward proces. On the photo from 1989 you see Karow sitting together with another giant of the type world, Hermann Zapf, with whom he worked closely together.

Before Adobe introduced the PostScript format, typefaces were mainly developed for and by manufacturers of type-setting machines. All had their proprietary font formats and the IKARUS contours could be converted to these different formats. Hence, companies such as Scangraphic, for which I did some work in the early 1990s, used the IKARUS system.



7. Initially Argo was digitised at urw using the IKARUS system on a VAX computer. Analogue contours were marked with curve, corner, and tangent points and then manually converted using a lens-cursor, of which the position is absolute, in contrast with the relative position of a mouse.



8. Later on, most of the production work was done at DTL, using at first IKARUS M (image on the left) before the production was proceeded in Bézier format using Fontographer (in the center), and later using DTL's proprietary tools, which were, and still are, developed together with urw. These tools also made editing of quadratic splines for TrueType fonts possible, as one can see on the image on the right.



9. Gerard described DTL Argo as 'the sans serif to go with Swift'. Actually according to him, 'it was created by taking Swift, removing the serifs, and then letting the letters go their own way.' Gerard applied an early prototype on two stamps, which he designed in 1990.

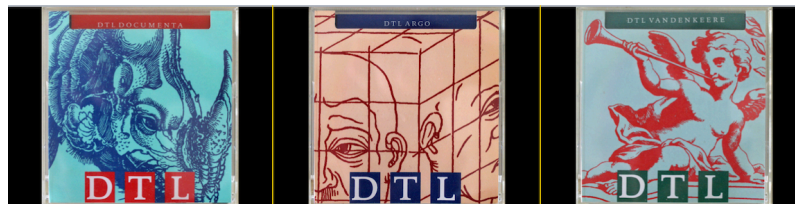


10. Just removing the serifs may sound simple, but actually it is not. Although a sans serif is by definition a typeface without serifs, theoretically one only can safely remove the serifs of a slab serif.

After all, serifs are an indicator of, besides the contrast-flow, the contrast, and in case of a slab serif the thin parts optically equal the thick parts. Conversely one can add serifs to sans serifs without many –if any– modifications. However, Argo balances successfully and elegantly on the edge with a relatively high contrast, as the manicule (pointing hand) indicates.



11. Originally the weight range of Argo reached from Light to Black. At the DTL Studio two extremely bold weights, namely 'Heavy' and 'Ultra Heavy', were added, besides small caps with a special set of numerals and some other refinements.

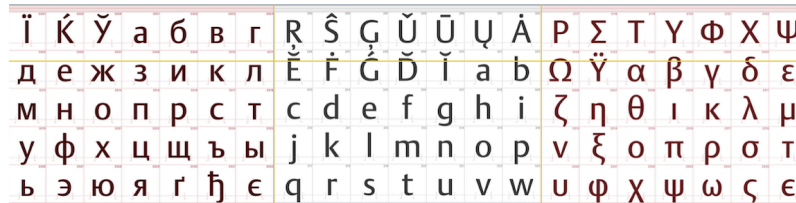


12. In 1992 fonts were commonly delivered on floppy disks in, for example, plastic boxes. I designed DTL's packages and labels for the floppies and made special ranges with color codes for respectively new serif typefaces, sans-serifs, and for revivals. Here you see three packages from a series of six.



13. When the euro was introduced in 1999, a template for designing the currency sign was distributed by Brussels. Many type designers more or less ignored these guidelines: the euro sign is usually designed as a condensed capital /C with two crossbars. Its width is, like all currency signs, usually set to that of the tabular figures.

However, Gerard did not like this concept much and when I made the euro signs for Argo he sent me his alternative, very personal design for, if I recall correctly, Swift or Capitoileum. Hence, in line with these I made alternative versions for DTL Argo too, which I placed in the small-caps sets.



14. Roughly eight years ago I was even somewhat more personally involved in the development of DTL Argo when I added Cyrillic and Greek versions for the full range of weights and styles.



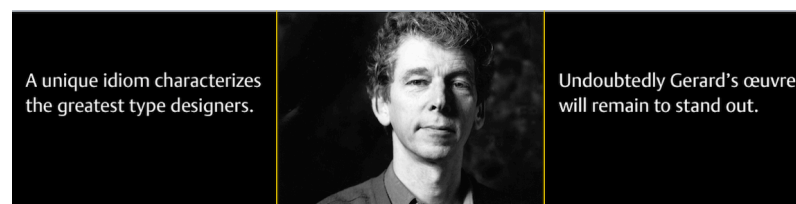
15. A few years after its release, DTL Argo became, together with Adobe Minion, the corporate identity typeface of the New York Stock Exchange. It was in use there for more than a decade. Another big client was and still is Emerson Electronics. Argo is also the typeface used for the signage at Keflavik International Airport in Reykjavik, Iceland.

Gerard expected Argo not be used for way-finding applications, 'where neutrality is apparently a virtue', as he noted. However, the relatively high contrast makes Argo extremely useful for this purpose. In 2011, when the annual ATypI conference was organised in Reykjavik, I recall Gerard saying that he quite liked the country at first sight.



16. Around 1992 Gerard sent me an A5-sized marker sketch for a DTL Argo poster. It ended up in a drawer and, to be honest, I forgot all about it. Recently I discovered the sketch. Tonight's event seemed to me a good occasion to realise the poster after almost 27 years: not as the originally intended design, but as an enlarged reproduction of the original sketch.

Last week the poster was nicely printed by Lenoirschuring in Amsterdam on paper that comes close to the structure and color of the paper on which the original sketch was made.



17. Thank you for your attention.