ETRVSCA SANS
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The influences and events along the journey which led to the founding of the first *sans serif* metal typeface in around 1816, are elusive and complex. The long eighteenth century gave rise to 'enlightened' arguments for the *primitive* ideal, and the necessary purity of architecture within a heated *Græco-Roman* debate.

This fuelled Piranesi to uphold Rome's authority by publishing evidence for an Etruscan lineage of design and ornament, where the seriffed Roman letter was preceded by an ancient serif-less Latin alphabet. On plate XLI of *Le Antitchità Romane*, Piranesi's *Plan of Nero's Nymphæum* has a distinctive pair of title blocks rendered as stone fragments, which present an inscriptional majuscule letter without serifs: ONIONIANA | NERONIONIANA. The 'E' on the second block has added serifs; clearly intentional, it symbolises the origins of Etruscan architecture, as the precedent for the Roman. It is this plate within Piranesi's published *'opera'*, which receives particular and sustained attention from a leading eighteenth-century neoclassical architectural practice in London.

· DEVELOPMENT · OF ·

A young John Soane produced a grandiose double colonnade design for a parliament building as part of his RA scholarship grand tour of Italy from 1778–80. Soane's: · DESIGN · FOR · A · BRITISH · SENATE · HOVSE · has previously been identified as Britain's earliest example of a deliberately serif-less letterform; one that leads to an increasing commercial use of what later becomes categorised as *Sans-serif* type. Soane's use of this letterform fully complimented his then radically pure *primitivist neoclassical* style, and as such his typography marks the birth of modernist design. His authority as a leading visionary architect and his influence over late eighteenth-century architecture was re-evaluated by the early modernists of the twentieth century.

Soane's earliest, still extant example of serif-less letterforms: TOVIOVRS · FIDELE, is inscribed on the Langley Park South Lodges in Norfolk. But Soane deploys serif-less titling on many of his drawings from 1784 when he is able to establish his practice, and begins to promote his desire for the *sans serif*.

This extensive **time-line information graphic** utilises Sir John Soane's original plan drawing of 1779 exhibited at the Royal Academy, Soane Museum number **SM 45/1/35**. Where drawing 7 is painstakingly redrawn and vectorised to create the backdrop for the historical origins of the sans serif letterform. The inset imagery is fully referenced with picture rights on the reverse of this broadsheet.

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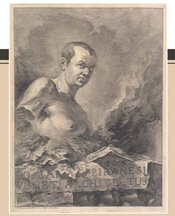
1 In 1686, Leonado Agostini publishes engravings of antique gems, which includes a gem of serif-less letters titled. *'Magic Letters'*. His earlier engraving of the *'Six Sacred Shields'* is an Etruscan inscribed gem which later becomes highly prized by the collector Baron Stosch.

3 Father Gio Nicola Forlivesi of Cometo, attempts to decipher inscriptions in the Etruscan tombs at Tarquinia within his fourteen letters of 1737-9, sent to a sceptical Anton Francesco Gori of the Etruscan Academy of Cortona.

4 Baron von Phillip Stosch acquires the *'Gemme Stosch'*; the Etruscan *'Five of the Seven Heroes of Thebes'* gem found c.1741; and publishes in 1756 his extensive collection of prized gems, including the serif-less inscribed Scarab 'TVTE'.



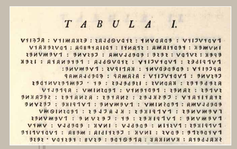
6 Late 1747, Giovanni Battista Piranesi embarks upon his most ambitious project, a complete survey of the antiquities of Rome – the four volume *'Le Antichità Romane'*.

7 1755-6 Giovanni Battista Piranesi produces the plate.XLI *'Pianta del Ninfeo di Nero'* depicting a serif-less majuscule letterform 'ONIONIANA' within two stone title blocks.

9 Piranesi visits the recently excavated Etruscan sites at Cometo and Chiusi c.1761. Later engraving his three Etruscan ornament plates for his 1765 *'Osservazioni...'* in support of an Etruscan origin.

11 In 1780, Franceso Piranesi completes his fathers work on Paestum, and later releases his engravings of the Sarcophagus of Scipio in *'Monumenti degli Scipioni'* in 1785, with its 'primitive' serif-less latin inscriptions.

14 In 1842, *'Hypogæi'* by James Byres is posthumously published. This series of engravings of Tarquinia from the 1750's, depicts Byres with likely Piranesi, drawing the tombs. Later in 1848, George Dennis publishes 'Cities and Cemeteries of the Etruria' volumes 1 & 2 – at the peak of 'Etruscomania' in Britain.



2 Thomas Dempster's *'De Etruria Regali'* of 1616-9 is finally published by Thomas Coke (later the Earl of Leicester) and Filippo Buonarroti in 1723-4, which in parts, uses a serif-less Etruscan metal typeface.

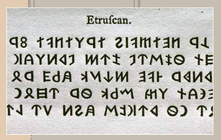
5 Anton Gori publishes *'Storia Antiquarian Etrusca'* in 1749, which includes an account of the translated Etruscan alphabet since the late 17thC, along with an engraving of the renown *'Gemme Stosch'*.

6 Pierre Jean Mariette heavily criticises Piranesi's *'Della Magnificenza...'* of 1761, in his *'Lettre'* published in the *'Gazette Littéraire de l'Europe'* in 1764, known as *'The Controversy'* for Greek, not Etruscan origins of architecture.

10 In 1764, Winckelmann publishes *'History of Art and Antiquity'*, including a frontispiece of the Gemma Storch *'Five Heroes...'*, considered amongst the most accomplished of inscribed sculptural gems.

12 Carlo Labruzzi, perceived collaborator on Soane's *'Castello d'Acqua'* 1779-80, the submission for a Palma Academy medal. Produces a large series of drawings along the Appian Way from 1789, including the serif-less inscriptions at the *'Tomb of the Scipios'*, whilst 'Cicerone' to the heir of Stourhead – Sir Richard Colt Hoare.

13 Alessandro Verri publishes *'La Notti Romane'*, a two-part popular novel published in 1792 and 1804, about the early Roman tombs and epitaphs of the Scipios. Translated into English in 1833.



B Caslon's Etruscan metal type used for *'De Primigenio Etruscorum Alphabeto Dissertatio'* by John Swinton is published in 1745-6.

F 1766-7, Sir William Hamilton publishes *'Etruscan, Greek and Roman Antiquities'* – with numerous engravings of reversed serif-less Etruscan, and serif-less Greek letterforms.

I An 'unknown draughtsman' produces Soane's plan drawing of · DESIGN · FOR · A · BRITISH · SENATE · HOVSE ·, with two serif-less *'tabula ansata'* title blocks – for the RA Summer Exhibition of 1779.

M Sculptor Thomas Banks produces the *'Boothby Monument'* from 1793, with serif-less letterforms in the manner of early Roman sepulchral inscriptions.

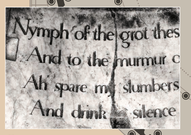
C In 1778 William Chambers, founding member of the RA, provides Soane with a *'Letter of Introduction'* for his trip to Rome, containing *"...forget not Piranesi, who you may see in my name..."*

J Soane's Norwich · COVNTY · GAOL · distinctive serif-less letter 'G' within a *'tabula ansata'* title block, drawn in 1789.

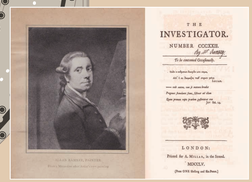
N William Caslon IV type specimen circa 1814, of *'Two Line English'*. The first sans serif metal typeface in Britain.

A William Camden's Britannia of 1586 is translated and republished throughout the eighteenth century by Edmund Gibson in 1722, and Richard Gough in 1789 and 1806. Editions which included a number of engravings containing the vestigial serif and serif-less letterforms of the ancient Britons.

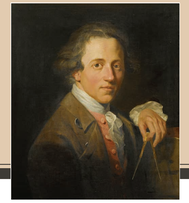
D Soane's first employer, and mentor George Dance (the younger), who undertook his own grand tour of Italy in 1759-65. Where he produced measured drawings of inscriptions from the *'Temple of Vesta'* in Tivoli the *'Temple of Vespasian'* in Rome, accompanied by Piranesi in 1762.



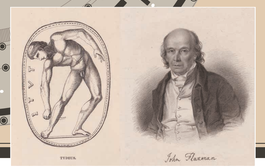
G Sir Henry Hoare's partially serif-less inscription of c.1748 *"Nymph of the grot..."*, a translation from Latin by Pope, situated in the Grotto pool at Stourhead in Wiltshire.



E Portraitist, Allan Ramsay, fervently attacks Piranesi's architectural ideology within his *'Dialogue on Taste'*, first published in 1753 in *'The Investigator'*, and re-releases it again in 1762.



H A young John Soane (aged 25), embarks on his grand tour of 1778-80. Where he is greeted by Piranesi in the summer of 1778 – just prior to Piranesi's death in the November.



L Soane's peer, John Flaxman RA, proposes a serif-less inscription on a design for a monument for Lord Nelson in 1799, and later publishes his 'TVTE' Gem engraving with its serif-less Etruscan letterforms, in his *'Lectures on Sculpture' of 1829*.

· SERIF-LESS · TYPE ·

Piranesi's 'magnificence' of baroque fuelled engravings, come under renewed attack from the painter Allan Ramsay in 1762 and the critic Monsieur Mariette in 1764. Enraging Piranesi to counter with the publication of his *'Osservazioni'* in 1765, within which he upholds the *Tuscan Order* as the primordial – as opposed to the Greek *Doric*. But the weight of evidence had turned against him with the widely circulated Le Roy's *Les Ruines... Grèce* of 1758 and Winckelmann's *History of Art* in 1764; and the nationalist publications from the founders of the *Etruscan Academy Cortona* such as Anton Gori, cease to be influential. Piranesi at his death is forced to concede the debate with the publication of his final works on Pæstum, – that these Greek base-less columns denote the true origin of architecture; but that they are *"on Italian soil"*.

It is his heir Francesco Piranesi, who renews the interest in serif-less letterforms seen in early Roman epitaphs. Following the rediscovery of the *'tomb of the Scipios'* in 1780, he releases his engravings of the 'Monumenti degli Scipioni' in 1785.

As his reputation grew John Soane takes on 'pupils' and assistants, the first being John Sanders and later Thomas Chawner – both of whom execute serif-less titling on Soane designs from 1784-90; on proposals for a Dilettanti Museum, on the Evelyn Memorial in Felbridge, on the Norwich Gaol and the Langley Park Lodges. Also on a proposal for a Cambridge University Library Museum, and ultimately on the Lothbury extension at the Bank of England.

Soane's circle of peers: Thomas Banks and John Flaxman, begin utilising the *'antique'* letter for annotating their sculptures and monuments, and the letterform becomes an accepted vernacular when defining the 'classical'. Expeditions and discoveries in Italy, Greece and Egypt in the early nineteenth century lead to some significant exhibitions in London, giving rise to both Etrusco' and Egyptomania. Resulting in the desire for the first available metal typeface for printing, struck by William Caslon IV circa 1814-16, titled: *Two Lines English Egyptian.* JM

DEVELOPMENT OF SERIF-LESS TYPE is set in **ETRVSCA Sans** from emfoundry.com which was developed from the historical research of designer Jon Melton who investigated the South Lodges at Langley Park inscription back in 2012. He has written about Soane's fascination with the serif-less letter and delivered his evidence for *The True source of the Sans* at ATypI18 Antwerp. Soane Sans capitals were developed into the font **ETRVSCA Sans** which comes in two weights regular and bold – that reflect the contexts of the origins of the sans serif. It features Latin, Greek and Etruscan glyphs, has Piranesi's influential open initials derived from **ONIONIANA**, and european accented characters, and the open type features of contextual and stylistic alternates, small caps, standard and discretionary ligatures, superiors and inferiors, symbols and ornaments.

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