

## Nicolas Portnoï

Freelance graphic designer based in Paris since 2004, Nicolas Portnoï works mostly for cultural institutions. He graduated in 2003 from the KABK (The Hague) after studying several years at the ENSAV de La Cambre (Brussels). More recently, he followed the CAS *Type Design* at the ZHDK (Zurich) which offered him his first extensive experience in type design before the *Expert Class Type Design* at the Plantin Institute for Typography (Antwerp).

This project aims to 'revive' a typeface from the end of the sixteenth century by Robert Granjon: the Double Pica Roman or *Gros-parangon*. Both the punches and two sets of matrices of this character are present in the Plantin-Moretus Museum's collections.

A rhythmic system in Granjon's typeface was investigated, in line with Frank Blokland's theories about the standardization and formalization for type from the Renaissance. To this effect, close-up photographs of the punches and matrices using a digital microscope were taken and one of the sets of punches was measured.

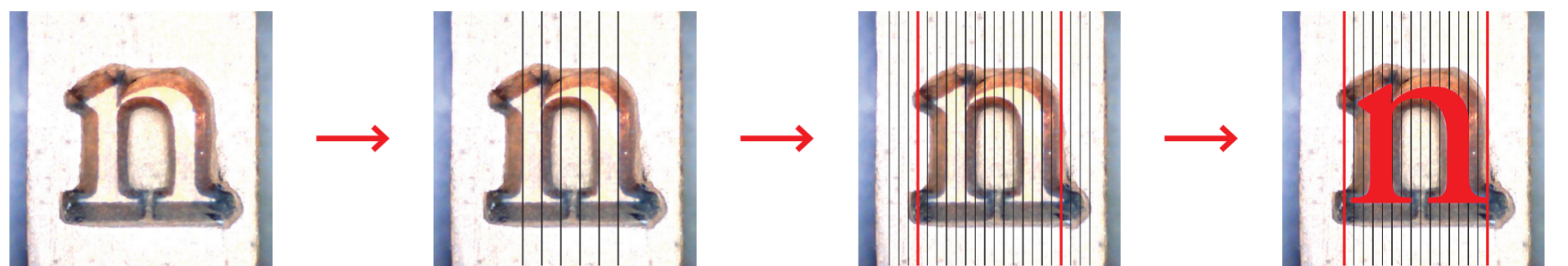
Using the stem width as a base unit shows a very strong indication of an underlying unitization of the characters' drawing. While the proportions of the type itself appear to be standardized, the measurements made of the matrices do not seem to show enough consistency for casting with fixed registers. Further analysis and historical investigations could help to give a better understanding of the matrices' dimensions.

Finally, the digitized characters were laid on top of a sample print from the Renaissance to assert the coherence with the original spacing of the typeface.

A lot of work remains to complete this 'revival'. Aside from the digitization of the remaining characters, interpretations and choices will also have to be made. All of which contribute to making this project particularly exciting.



Set of matrices (MA8) of Granjon's Double Pica Roman or *Gros-parangon* (1570).



Unitization and digitization of the characters from close-up photographs of the matrices.

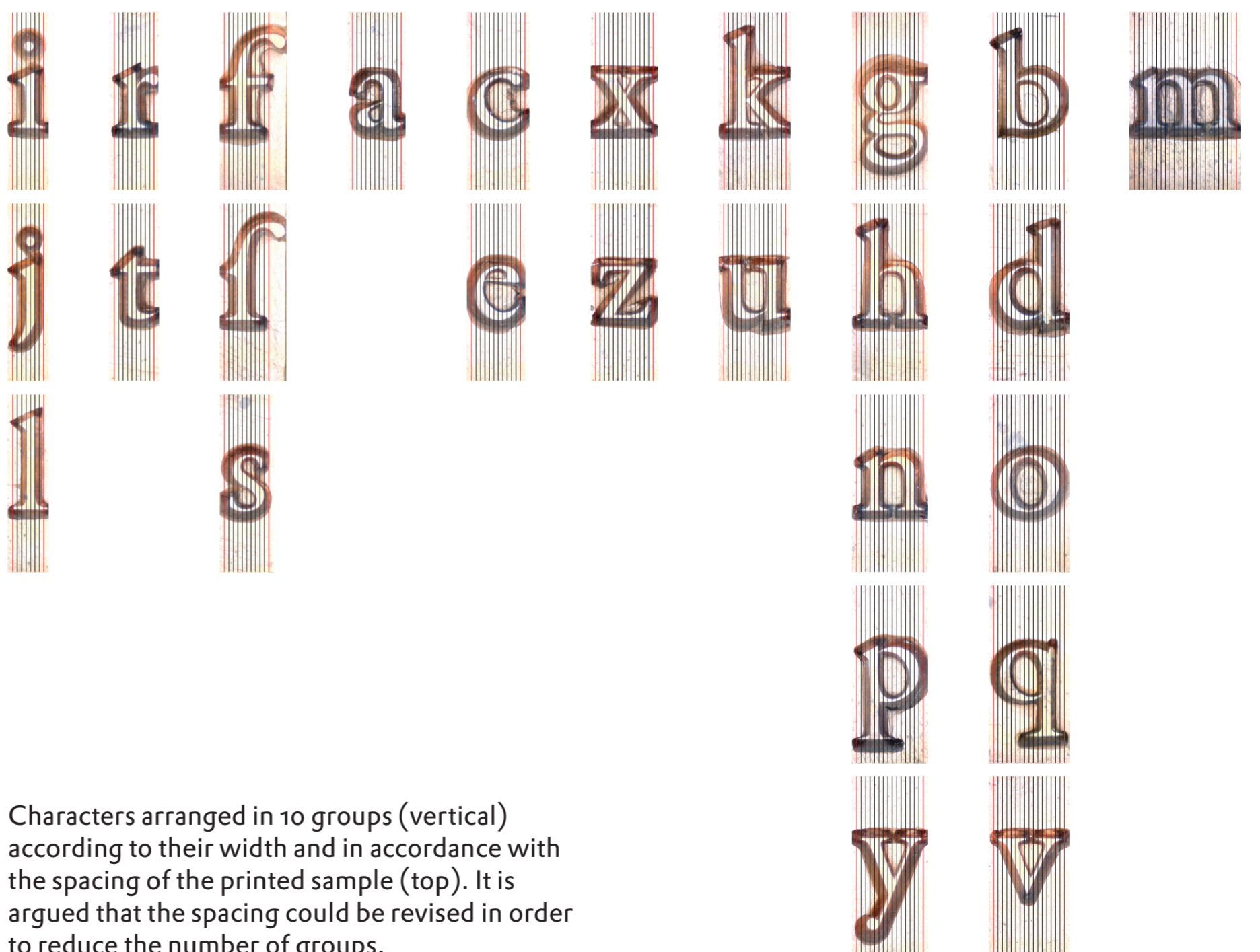


Digitized characters layed over a printed sample of Granjon's Double Pica Roman from *Psalterium* (1571).

# ascendonica


alfonſus rex arrag. idem dicere ſolet, ita demum matrimonium tranquille citraque querimonias exigi poſſe, ſi maritus ſurdus fiat, vxor caeca: innuens, opinor, foemineum genus obnoxium eſſe zelotypiae, atque hinc oriri rixas et querimonias: rurſum maritis permolſtam eſſe vxorum garrulitate: qua moleſtia cariturus ſit, ſi fiat ſurdus: nec illa vexabitur adulterij ſuſpicione, ſi careat oculis.

Sample text with the first digitized characters (text from Plantin's folio specimen c.1585).



Characters arranged in 10 groups (vertical) according to their width and in accordance with the spacing of the printed sample (top). It is argued that the spacing could be revised in order to reduce the number of groups.

Plantin Instituut voor Typografie

Plantin Genootschap vzw 



Museum Plantin-Moretus