

THE NOBLEST ROMAN  
A HISTORY OF THE CENTAUR TYPES  
OF BRUCE ROGERS  
BY JERRY KELLY & MISHA BELETSKY

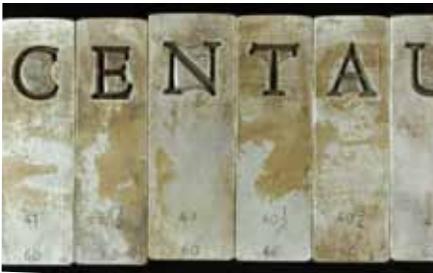
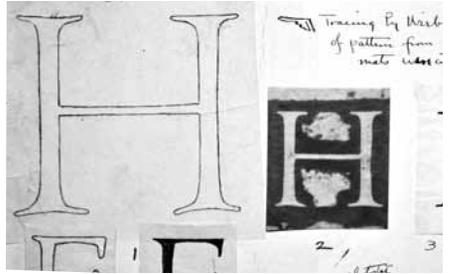


SAN FRANCISCO  
THE BOOK CLUB OF CALIFORNIA  
2016



TRIAL NO. 1.                      CENTAUR 252-2

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ENGLISH AND  
 GEORGE B. IVES

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**B**RUCE ROGERS was a towering figure in the history of graphic arts, and remains one of the most important American book designers of the twentieth century. The unrivaled subtlety of his style also sets apart Rogers's most widespread accomplishment, the Centaur type. This type was born of the late-nineteenth-century quest to create a modern revival of Nicolas Jenson's humanist roman of 1470, long held by scholars to be both the origin and the apogee of the Venetian roman, and which has inspired designers from William Morris to Robert Slimbach to attempt types based on Jenson's graceful proportions, elegant spacing, and evenness of color. None of these succeeded as well as Bruce Rogers's Centaur, which stands as a perennial classic, as sublime as it is impossible to replicate. According to Daniel Berkeley Updike, Centaur proved "one of the best roman fonts designed in America, and of its kind, the best anywhere." Stanley Morison praised Centaur for the design's departures from the Jenson original, calling attention to its "unique grace [and] modest individuality." It was Robert Grabhorn who called Centaur "the noblest roman of them all," and the high opinion of this type still holds today. In her introduction to this book, Amelia Hugill-Fontanel, Associate Curator of RIT's Cary Graphic Arts Collection, writes, "Rogers's enlightened hand created an extraordinary masterpiece of type design, melding the best characteristics of the fifteenth and twentieth centuries."

The story of Bruce Rogers's work on his Centaur type parallels key developments in the history of modern design and aesthetics, and involves many of the major figures in twentieth-century typography – designers, punchcutters, printers, publishers, and historians – who appear in the numerous and informative sidebar biographies that augment the primary text. Set in Jerry Kelly's recent digital rendering of Rogers's original foundry Centaur, this engaging narrative is the result of significant new research, and is lushly illustrated with original drawings and proofs from the Monotype archives and the Library of Congress: photographs, type specimens, sample text pages, broadsides, promotional brochures, letters, and other ephemera, including a tipped-in type specimen letterpress printed from the newly recast foundry capitals – a type that has not been cast for over a century. Every iteration of Centaur is chronicled, from the original foundry type that was cast and acquired for the exclusive use by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, to the type's conversion to the Monotype machine involving Stanley Morison, and its ultimate adaptation as a digital face.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

JERRY KELLY is a book designer, calligrapher, type designer, and typographer. Since the late 1970s he has designed hundreds of books for numerous clients, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Pierpont Morgan Library, The American Federation of the Arts, The American Academy of Arts and Letters, The Grolier Club, Cambridge University Press, David R. Godine Publisher, International Typeface Corporation (ITC), and others. His work has received numerous awards, including more than thirty selections in the American Institute of Graphic Arts's prestigious "Fifty Books of the Year" awards for excellence in book design. Since 1978 he has been a partner at the Kelly-Winterton Press and at the Nonpareil Typefoundry, an independent type design firm.

MISHA BELETSKY is the President of The Typophiles and Art Director at Abbeville Press, a publisher of fine illustrated books in New York. He has earned a number of awards from design competitions, including AIGA "Fifty Books of the Year", New York Book Show, I.D. Magazine Design Review, and Carl Hertzog Award for Excellence in Fine Printing. Misha is an Editorial Board Member of Type Journal and a member of the Non-Latin Advisory Board of the Type Directors Club.



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*The Noblest Roman: A History of the Centaur Type of Bruce Rogers* is 138 pages, including a 16-page analysis of the use of Centaur by the Grabhorn Press of San Francisco, exclusive to the BCC edition. The book measures 7 x 10", is bound in paper over boards with a letterpress titling label, slipcased. There are 300 copies, each signed and numbered by both authors. Each numbered copy contains a letterpress supplement designed, typeset, and printed by Jerry Kelly.

The price is \$150 (plus applicable sales tax and shipping). BCC members may pre-order the book until September 12, 2016, by telephoning the Book Club of California at (800) 869-7657 or by emailing [info@bccbooks.org](mailto:info@bccbooks.org). As soon as Book Club of California members' pre-publication orders have been filled, member requests for second copies and non-member requests for first copies will be honored in order of receipt.

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