


# DESIGN OF TYPEFACE WITH CONSTRUCTIVISTIC PROPERTIES AND RENOVATION OF PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL FOR MEMORIAL ROOM

Zalka Leskovar, Nace Pušnik 

University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Engineering,  
Department of Textiles, Graphic Arts and Design, Ljubljana, Slovenia

**Abstract:** *The diversity that occurs in the field of typography, more specifically in the planning and design of typefaces, plays an important role in our lives and in society more broadly. Therefore, purposeful product planning is important because it can facilitate our everyday communication and understanding of the environment. The goal of the collaborative project was to design a display typeface and use it in revised graphic products that, along with the typeface, fit the client, the Kosovel Memorial Room in Sežana, Slovenia. Srečko Kosovel is a well-known Slovenian poet whose work is representative of the cultural and social movement Constructivism. With new graphic products, we want to contribute to better publicity of Kosovel Memorial Room in Sežana. The theoretical part deals with the study and classification of typefaces in groups and larger sets. We also studied some basic properties of typefaces, contrast, stroke width and spacing, weight and height relationship within typefaces. We investigated the historical development of display typefaces, their properties, and their influence on various graphic products. Based on the content of the Kosovel Memorial Room, we examined the origin and development of the artistic avant-garde movement Constructivism abroad and in Slovenia. We highlighted important events in the life of Srečko Kosovel and familiarised ourselves with his work. Based on the client's needs, the existing promotional material (brochure, posters, etc.) was analysed in more detail. In addition, we conceptually prepared the typeface design, drawing on his other graphic products. The display typeface was used in revised graphic products that we designed in collaboration with the client. The final products were presented in February 2022 and will continue to promote Srečko Kosovel's work.*

**Keywords:** brochure, constructivism, display typeface, graphic product design, typeface design

## 1. INTRODUCTION

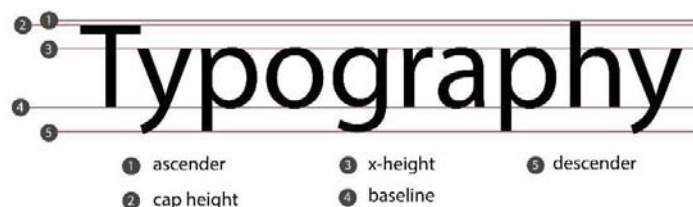
The preservation of cultural heritage and related monuments, memorials or other cultural institutions has been an indispensable part of culture for many years, and thus of the preservation of national consciousness. Increasingly, sub-areas that are commonly attributed to graphic design are also counted as part of cultural heritage. Here we would like to highlight the field of typography, which through the collection and analysis of typefaces can contribute an essential mosaic to the understanding of the past and provide guidelines for future development.

Typography is the science of fonts, typefaces and text design (Možina, 2003). Its basic function is visual communication and transmission of information to the reader with the help of type media (Možina, 2003). Great emphasis can be placed on the choice of typefaces, which are often most easily distinguished by the time period in which they were created. The order of development of typefaces would be (slightly different depending on the region, of course) the following: humanistic (Venetian Renaissance typefaces), galalde (French Renaissance typefaces), followed by transitional (Baroque typefaces), and modern (Classicist typefaces) (Možina, 2003). The typefaces differ mainly in the shape of the strokes, the contrast and position of the crossbar, for example in the letter e, and the thickness of the strokes. What they have in common is that these characteristics can be traced back to the time in which the typeface was created.

Historically, the basis for all typefaces can be found in calligraphy. In particular, calligraphy is an excellent starting point for determining where a particular letter has thin and thick strokes (of course, in the context of fonts that have different stroke widths) (Noordzij, 2006). Later developments, particularly the Industrial Revolution, contributed to the establishment of slab/square serif typefaces, characterized by angular serifs that are perpendicular to the base stroke. Still later, however, a reversal occurs when the letters also lose these shapes and we can speak of the development of San Serif (also lineale) typefaces. The latter typefaces can be divided into four groups, namely early, refined, geometric and humanistic (Možina, 2003).

The last three groups of typeface, which can be grouped into a series of accidental typefaces (Možina, 2003). These are glyphic, decorative, and display typefaces. In addition to the basic classification of

typefaces, different groups can be distinguished according to their characteristics, such as: contrast, inclination of the base axis, stroke endings, stroke width and difference in x-height. In the case of typefaces, different proportions can be defined depending on the arrangement of the lines that determine the height of the letters (*Figure 1*).



*Figure 1: Definition of typeface properties and determination of the relationships between them.*

In addition to the properties that determine the appearance of typefaces, they can also be defined according to their intended use (Bigelow et al., 2017). Thus, two groups can be defined: typefaces suitable for longer texts in a smaller format, and typefaces suitable for shorter texts in a larger format. The first group is characterized by the fact that their form does not demand much attention from the reader, so that she/he can fully concentrate on the written content. Due to their form, they have no relation to the content and do not contain decorative elements, so they have a low semantic value. The opposite is true for typefaces intended for short captions larger than 18 points (pt) (Bigelow et al., 2017). Such typefaces can be called display typefaces. They are characterized by the fact that they can also contain decorative elements and other design features that are undesirable in typefaces for longer texts (Puškarević, Nedeljković & Pušnik, 2018). The design features provide the semantic value of the text, i.e., the typeface is a carrier of meaning because of its form, which contains, for example, an emotional connotation (Puškarević, Nedeljković & Pušnik, 2018). In a sense, these typefaces can address the viewer with a form that reinforces the meaning of the text, adds a new connotation, or even contradicts the meaning with its connotation (Morrison, 1986).

## 2. METHODS

In accordance with the Kosovel Memorial Room, we wanted to create a display typeface that would attract the viewers by its appearance and remind them of the Slovenian poet Srečko Kosovel, who worked during the Constructivism period (Krkoč, 2014). Characteristic of constructivism in visual arts is that artists emphasised geometric shapes and constructions (Fran, 2020). Non-figurative paintings, photomontages, collages, and bold typefaces predominated. The colour palette was usually modest, often using red in addition to white and black, sometimes yellow, blue or another colour with a high degree of saturation (Strizver, 2017). In designing the typeface and graphic products, we adhered to the above principles mentioned. Our main focus was on the printed products for the Kosovel Memorial Room. They are used to communicate various information to target groups, mostly for promotional purposes. We limited ourselves to the design of a promotional poster, a leaflet and an information brochure.

The process of producing a display typeface was divided into four parts: determining basic features, conceptual design and sketches, vectorization and finishing, and determining metrics.

The typeface was used in the renewal of promotional materials (graphic products) for the Kosovel Memorial Room in Sežana, Slovenia. As part of the promotional materials, a poster, a leaflet and an information brochure had to be created. In order to best understand the idea and obtain relevant information, we conducted an interview with the responsible person prior to production and obtained the institution's opinion on the new materials. Existing promotional material served as the basis for the new material; analysis of formats, distribution of content, visuals and colour palette.

In the last part, we reviewed the promotional materials created. Using an online survey, we received responses from different age groups and, based on this, we were able to determine how successful we were in implementing the project.

The following describes the process of creating a typeface, promotional materials, and analysing of online survey.

### 3. RESULTS

#### 3.1 Typeface making process

The first feature of the typeface we defined was its purpose. We decided to design a display typeface suitable for larger sizes and whose form would be associated with constructivism and the poet Srečko Kosovel. The type ratios were defined in a size of 1000 units. According to the baseline, the ascender has a height of 750 units, the height of the capital letter was set at 725 units, the x-height at 500, and the descender at -250 units. According to the proportions, the Ekstaza typeface is defined as having a larger x-height.

For the basic idea of the typeface we chose the graphic portrait of Srečko Kosovel by August Černigoj (*Figure 2*). We were inspired mainly by the black areas and negative space. We decided to use a sans serif typeface, since typefaces without different weights are classified as technical typefaces, which is in line with the idea of constructivism.



*Figure 2: Portrait of Srečko Kosovel; author August Černigoj (Museums of the World, 2022)*

The letters are designed to look as if different strokes are connected. In this way, we wanted to emphasize the construction of the individual letter. Within the typeface, we wanted to keep the geometric shape of the circle, as it was often used as a basic geometric element in Constructivism. In addition, the shape of the circle can also be associated with Srečko Kosovel's characteristic glasses and considered his trademark.

In a conversation with the client, we realised that they want to show other, gentler styles in which the poet created, in addition to the characteristics of constructivism, so we were careful not to make the type too robust. On graph paper, we made sketches (*Figure 3*) on which we drew the capital letter S and the lowercase letters a, č, e, j, k, n, o, and r. We chose these letters as a basic orientation for the further design of the letters in the digital environment.



*Figure 3: Initial sketches on graph paper*

After sketching, we scanned the letters and transferred the photos into Adobe Illustrator. Using Illustrator, we roughly outlined the letters and vectorized them. Then the vector shapes were transferred to FontLab Studio 7, where further production of alphabetic and non-alphabetic characters took place. The first set of digitized characters is shown in Figure 4.

ABCČĆDEFGHIJKLMN  
OPQRSŠTUVWXYZŽ

abcčćdefghijklmn  
opqrsštuvwxyzž

0123456789

!#%&()=?+-€@;<>[]

Figure 4: The first set of digitized characters

Since we were not completely satisfied with the character set, we adjusted it a bit (Figure 5). We changed the capital letters A, V, W completely, made corrections to the letters that had round shapes, and made some changes to the letters that were not quite finished. We decided to make these changes because the first version of the typeface did not look constructivist enough.

ABCČĆDEFGHIJKLMN  
OPQRSŠTUVWXYZŽ

abcčćdefghijklmn  
opqrsštuvwxyzž

0123456789

!#%&/( )=?+-€@;.,:;<>[]

Figure 5: The second (final) set of digitized characters

The next step after the production of alphabetic and non-alphabetic characters was the adaptation of metrics. The process was based on the recommendations of Karen Cheng in the book *Designing Type* (Cheng, 2005). First, metrics were defined for the letters H and O, which were the basis for determining metrics for uppercase letters. The metrics were determined using different combinations of these two letters (HHH, OOO, HHOHH, HOHOH, OHOHOH...) and adjusted so that they were visually the same in all combinations. Based on the metrics for the letters H and O, we obtained five different values that were used to determine the metrics of the remaining letters. We repeated a similar procedure for lowercase letters, with the difference that we used the letters o and n as the basis. Based on the different combinations of these two letters, we determined the values to be visually the same in all combinations. Based on the metrics for the letters n and o, we determined six parameters. We applied the parameters to lowercase letters.

Despite the accurate determination of the metrics, it was necessary to determine the kerning pairs for some letters. In doing so, we compensated for whiteness by reducing the spacing between pairs of letters. This process is time-consuming because both alphabetic and non-alphabetic characters must be included in the combinations. Fontlab7 itself suggests the most common pairs. To speed up the process, we followed the list suggested by the program. For Slovenian and English (especially shorter) texts, where individual unordered combinations were still noticeable, the edited metrics were subsequently checked and adjusted according to visual suitability.

### 3.2 Promotional material making process

Based on the analysis, we came to the solution that the new information brochure will have a format of 200 × 790 mm, printed on both sides and folded into four equal parts. Thus, the folded format of the brochure will be 200 × 200 mm, forming a square related to the cube, one of the main elements of the Kosovel Memorial Room in Sežana. Figure 6 shows the described format, the four parts, the dimensions and the outlined topics that will fill a given page.

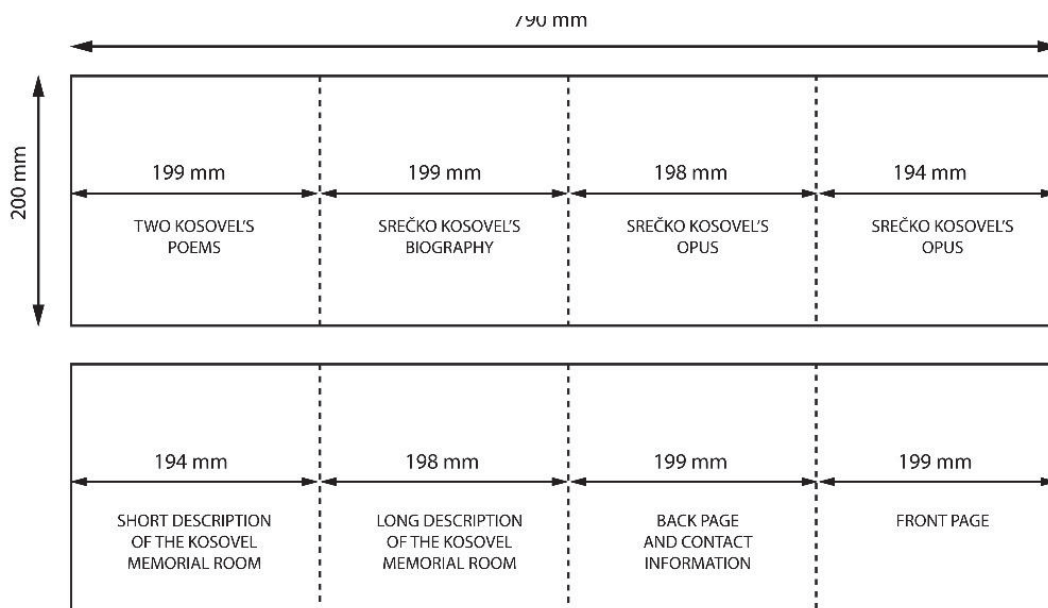


Figure 6: Plan of the information brochure with technical and content specifications.

In 2014, the memorial room of Kosovel was completely renovated. At the time of the renovation, architects and interior designers defined the space and its features; by this we mean primarily the use of colours. Based on this, we decided to use the colours blue, red, white and black in the revised information brochure to create accents. The selected colours are shown in Figure 7.



Figure 7: Colour selection for promotional material

We based the content of the information brochure on the previous brochure and created a similar layout for the content. The change that harmonized to some extent with the new folding style of the information brochure concerned the presentation or the structure of the contact information. The new folding style makes the contact information more noticeable as it is placed in a visible location.

We got the idea for the basic layout of the brochure from the appearance of the Kosovel Memorial Room (Figure 8), where we were most interested in the white walls with dark borders and the wooden floor, on which a red-blue pattern of lines is created by the blue light. The black borders on the walls come from the collection of poems *Integrali*.



Figure 8: Kosovel Memorial Room

Kosovel's art song *Flying Ship*, presented in the form of a collage (Figure 9), also served as inspiration for the design of the promotional material. We came up with the idea that longer texts can be broken down into smaller units using coloured backgrounds and irregular shapes, and so the text is presented in an information brochure in the form of a collage.

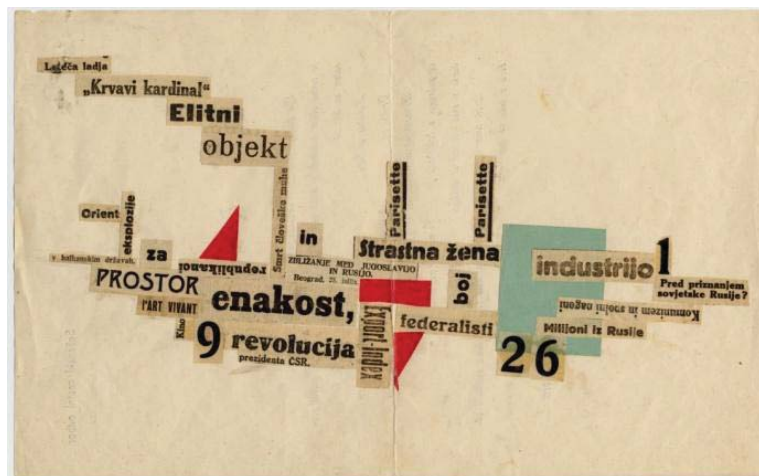


Figure 9: Kosovel's art song *The Flying Ship* (Digitalna knjižnica Slovenije, 2013)

For better design, we created a basic construction grid (Figure 10) to help align the lines of text in the various fields of the brochure. The grid was constructed so that each square was divided into 16 parts (4 x 4), which made the design easier and more efficient.

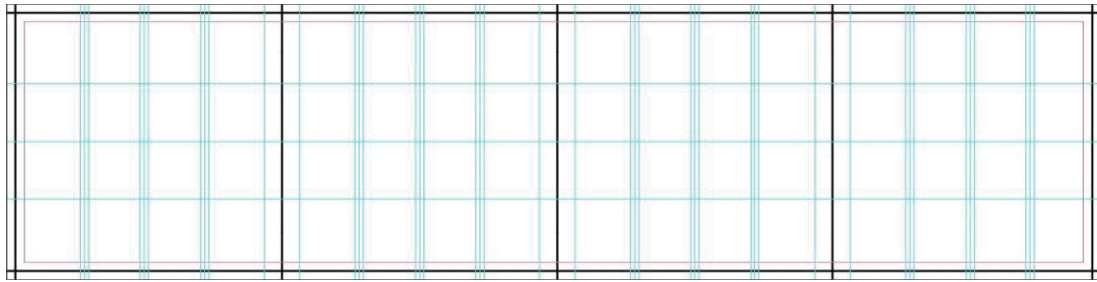


Figure 10: Basic construction grid

We added black lines to the borders (fold lines), reminiscent of the black borders in the Kosovel Memorial Room (Figure 8). We set the text on smaller, irregularly shaped colour areas. The colour areas were inconsistently shaped so that the alignment of the text alternated between left or right (Figure 11).

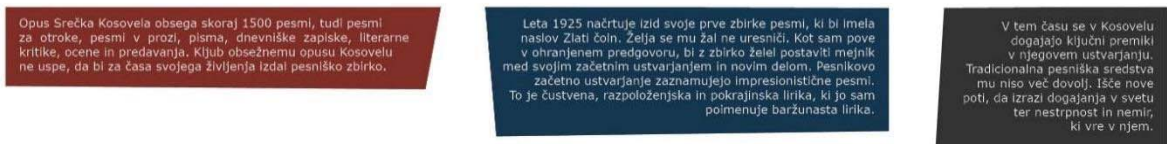


Figure 11: Display of colour plots and inconsistent text alignment

The text was supplemented by prefabricated graphic auxiliary elements (cubes, red-blue line pattern). Knowing that the information brochure would contain a longer text, it was decided to use the designed typeface only for titles and poems. The rest of the text was set in the typeface MS Reference Sans Serif Regular.

In designing the other graphic products, we started from the appearance of the information brochure (Figure 12), which was designed first as the most complex print product.



Figure 12: Information brochure for Kosovel Memorial Room

For the design of the poster we used the same colour scheme and basic graphic elements. According to the agreement with the client, the poster format B2 (707 × 500 mm) was required. The text on the poster is presented in the same way as in the information brochure; the coloured backgrounds on which the text is placed are used. The typeface created was used for the title. An example of a poster is shown in Figure 13.



Figure 13: Promotional poster for Kosovel Memorial Room

The last graphic product designed was a leaflet (Figure 14). We used a document measuring 210 × 99 mm. The chosen size allows printing three leaflets in A4 format. We designed the leaflet following the information brochure and poster and used the same graphic elements. The first page of the leaflet shows the title in the designed typeface, the second page contains the contact information and the logo of the Kosovel Memorial Room and the Sežana People's University, which manages the cultural monument Kosovel Memorial Room.



Figure 14: Leaflet for Kosovel Memorial Room



### 3.3 Online survey

With the online survey we wanted to check the success of the designed information brochure and the typeface used in it. The survey was sufficiently completed by 42 people, including 22 (52%) women and 20 (48%) men. All age groups were represented, with the majority of respondents between the ages of 18 and 29. In the survey, participants rated the extent to which they agreed with the statement, giving values from 1 to 5 (1 - I disagree, and 5 - I completely agree). The questions related to various visual aspects such as colour selection, appropriateness of typeface, layout design and text arrangement, and assessed the attractiveness of the appearance of the individual pages and the information brochure as a whole.

When asked if the appearance of the overall information brochure was appealing, 14 (33%) respondents answered that they fully agreed (rating 5), 20 (48%) agreed (rating 4), and 5 (12%) respondents described the appearance of the brochure as not appealing (rating 1 or 2). 3 (7%) respondents answered hesitantly (rating 3). The detailed results are shown in Figure 15. Similar results emerged for the individual pages of the brochure.

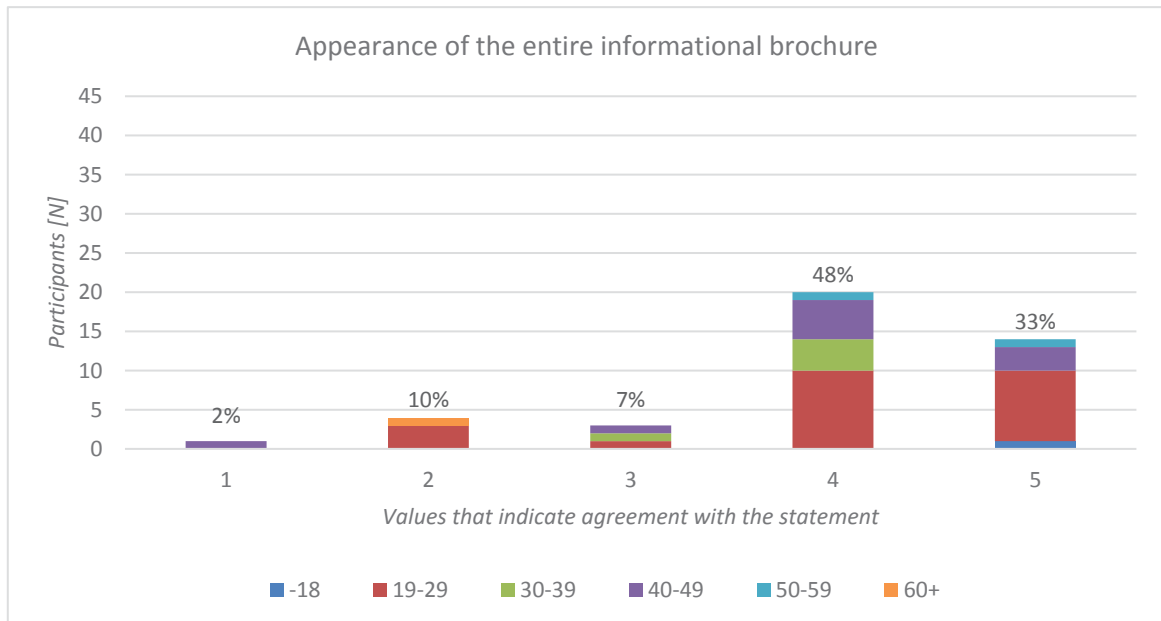


Figure 15: Diagram of responses with visible age groups to the question. "Overall, I find the look of the entire information brochure appealing."

Regarding the appearance of the cover, we were interested in how many people were attracted to reading it. 7 (16%) respondents said they were very attracted (rating 5), and 20 (48%) said they were attracted (rating 4). 12 (29%) responded hesitantly (rating 3), 1 (2%) respondent described the cover as unattractive (rating 2), and 2 (5%) respondents rated the cover as completely unattractive (rating 1). More detailed results are shown in Figure 16.

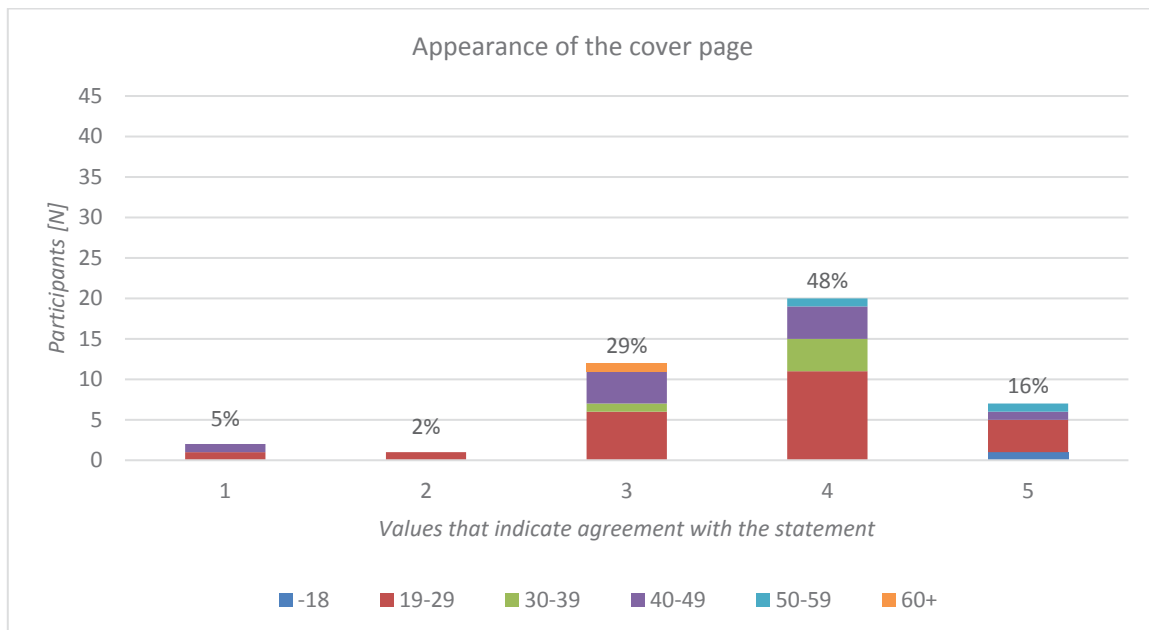


Figure 16: Representation of responses with visible age groups to the question. "The title page attracts me to read the information brochure"

In general, respondents found the page with the photo of Srečko Kosovel (see Figure 17) the most attractive. On this page, only 3 (7%) respondents described the appearance of the page as unattractive (rating 2), 8 (19%) answered hesitantly, 19 (45%) said the page was attractive (rating 4), and 12 (29%) said the page was very attractive (rating 5).

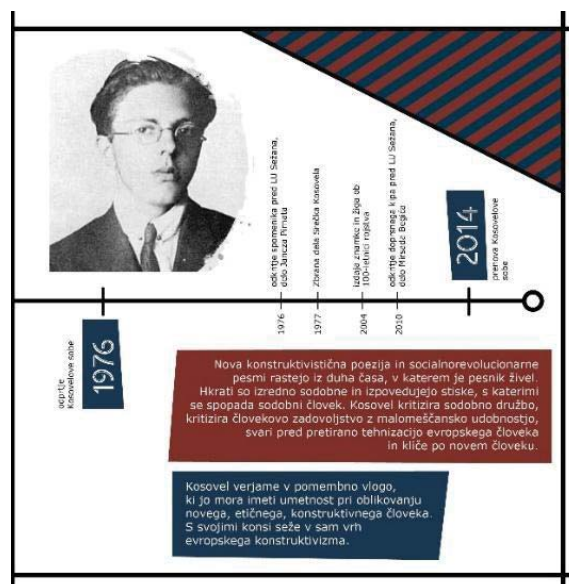


Figure 17: Best graded page from online survey

When asked if colours connect them to constructivism, 25 (60%) respondents answered "yes" (rating 4 or 5), 11 (26%) respondents answered "hesitantly" (rating 3), and 6 (14%) respondents answered "no" (rating 2). No one responded with "disagree at all" (rating 1). More detailed results are shown in Figure 18.

As many as 34 (81%) respondents confirmed that the colour contrasts are sufficiently visible, and 34 (81%) respondents answered that the colour scheme is generally appropriate.

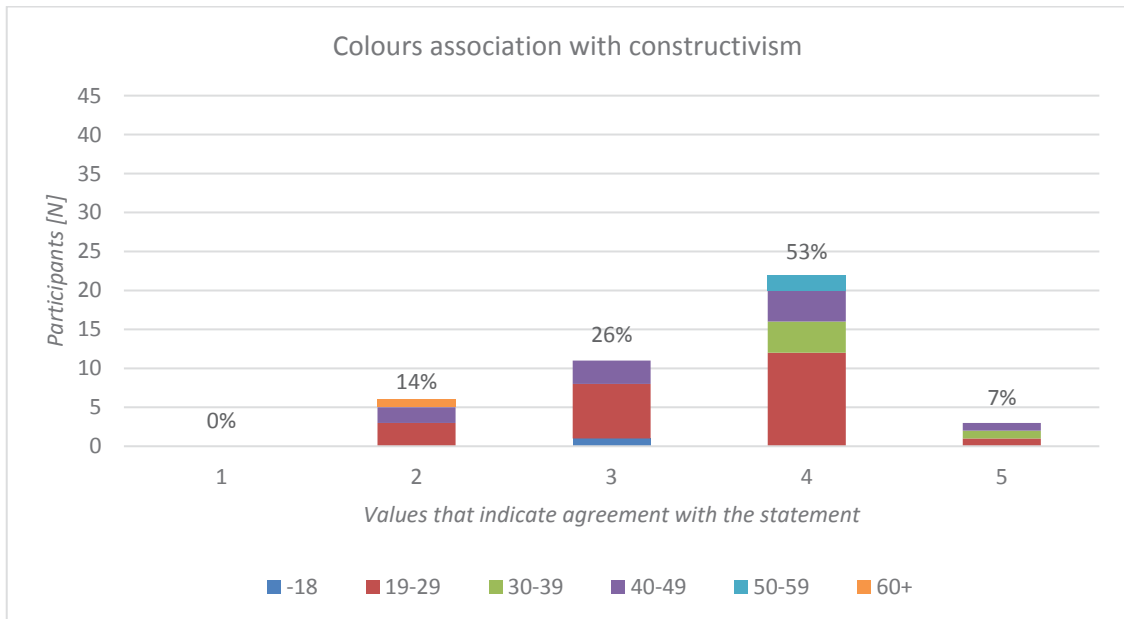


Figure 18: Representation of the answers with visible age groups to the question. "The colours of the information brochure associate me with constructivism".

A few questions also about the Ekstaza typeface. When asked if you find the shape of the letters interesting, 15 (36%) fully agreed (rating 5), and another 25 (60%) respondents answered in the affirmative (rating 4). 2 (4%) answered hesitantly (rating 3). No one responded "disagree" (rating 2) or "disagree at all" (rating 1). More detailed results are shown in Figure 19.

27(63%) respondents also confirmed that the shape of the letters reminded them of constructivism. In the information brochure, the Ekstaza typeface is also used to present two poems by Kosovel. 35 (83%) of the respondents confirmed that they consider the choice of the typeface appropriate for presenting Kosovel's poems, 4 (10%) were undecided, 3 (7%) of the respondents disagreed with the choice of the typeface.

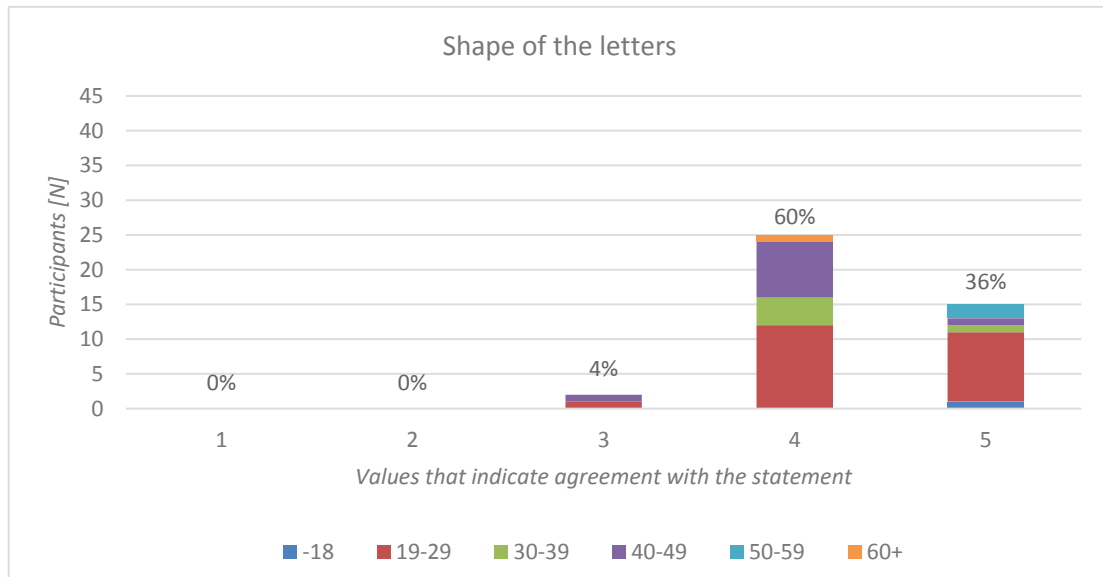


Figure 19: Representation of the answers with visible age groups to the question. "I find the shape of the letters interesting."

In the information brochure, the text was divided into shorter sections several times and placed on different coloured areas. Most of the respondents confirmed that such a design stimulated them to read and made the appearance of the page more interesting. 8 (19%) of them answered "strongly agree"

(rating 5) and 19 (45%) answered "agree" (rating 4). 12 (29%) answered hesitantly (rating 3), 2 (5%) disagreed, and 1 (2%) disagreed at all. More detailed results are shown in Figure 20.

Most respondents also had no difficulty identifying how the different text boxes followed one another. In general, they felt that the elements in the brochure were arranged in a way that made sense. 39 (92%) confirmed that the contact information was placed in a highly visible location.

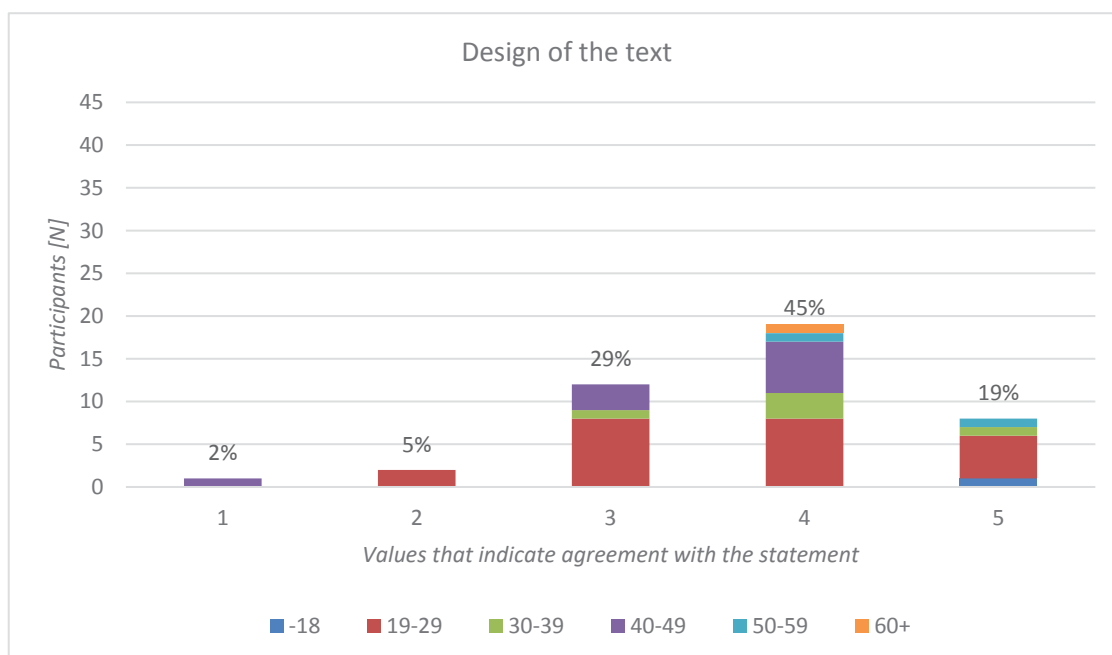


Figure 20: Representation of the answers with visible age groups to the question. "The layout of the text, divided into shorter sections, encourages me to read the text"

#### 4. DISCUSSION

Ekstaza typeface was named after one of the most famous songs from Srečko Kosovel rich oeuvre. The typeface is suitable for use in larger formats, especially for titles, conditionally also for shorter texts to be displayed in larger formats. It can be defined as a decorative typeface, according to its characteristics it can partially belong to the group of linear typefaces, as it has no serifs and differences in stroke width.

The base stroke consists of two lines, which are in a ratio of 5:2 for the lowercase letters; for the uppercase letters, the ratio is slightly different due to the thickness of the strokes, which are wider, and we had to make sure visually that the uppercase and lowercase letters look as equal as possible.

There is a blank space between the lines used as the basic element. There is also a blank space between the individual strokes of the letters, as they are not completely connected in the letter design. This feature is visible in almost all letters, especially noticeable in letters with round strokes (O, Q, U, o). In the case of a spine (letter s), the feature is particularly noticeable because the two parts of the letter are not perfectly aligned. In the case of the round stroke, we based our design on the shape of a perfect circle, which we adapted in the manufacturing process to give the font a more constructive look. Characteristic of our typeface is that the inclined strokes, with the exception of the letter X, are curved rather than straight. For this reason, we have adapted the letters A, V and W so that they are not symmetrical and consist of a vertical stroke and a rounded stroke.

Similar curved strokes are also found in the uppercase letters K, M, N, R, X, Y, Z, and Ž, and in the lowercase letters k, v, w, x, y, z, and ž. The typeface is characterized by open ends of round strokes, which can be seen mainly in the uppercase letters C, Č, Ć, G, S, Š, and in the lowercase letters c, č, e, f, g, r, s, š, and t. To emphasize the type form even more, we have used some design features on individual letters. The uppercase letter J is below the baseline, the curved strokes of the uppercase letter M do not reach the baseline, the letter X has a special asymmetrical shape, the letter Y is cup-shaped, and we also decided to make the lowercase letters a and g monocular.

The typeface was used for headlines and larger text in a new information brochure, poster, and leaflet for the Kosovel Memorial Room in Sežana. We conducted a survey to review the design of the brochure and find out what the opinion is about the typeface we designed that is part of the information brochure.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The aim of the project was to design a display typeface and use it in renovated graphic products for the Kosovel Memorial Room in Sežana. The typeface should be associated with constructivism and Srečko Kosovel, which we confirmed in the survey, where the appearance of the typeface seemed interesting to the respondents and they associated it with the period of constructivism. This confirms its otherness and semantic value, characteristic of display typefaces.

The survey also confirmed that the typeface is suitable for headlines and shorter texts, which confirms the purpose of using the display typeface. The client, with whom we cooperated at all stages of the project, was satisfied with all graphic products, especially the information brochure. The brochure is used as promotional material at the Kosovel Memorial Room in Sežana from February 2022. In this way, the project directly contributed to the promotion of Slovenian culture and the heritage of Srečko Kosovel.

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