

I SIT IN THE SHADE of an ancient, dying juniper tree, cushioned on my Navajo saddle blankets. On all sides, the burning sun beats down on silent, empty desert. To right and left, long walls of sandstone mesas reach away into the distance, the shadows in their fluted clefts the color of claret. Before me, the desert drops sheer away into a vast valley, in which strangely eroded buttes of all delicate and intense shadings of vermilion, orange, and purple, tower into a cloudless turquoise sky.

VISTA: A FAMILY OF 36 FONTS DESIGNED BY XAVIER DUPRÉ

A B C D E F G H
I J K L M N O P Q
R S T U V W X Y Z
a b c d e f g h i j
k l m n o p q r s t
u v w x y z
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

VISTA SANS BOOK

VISTA

A family of 36 fonts designed by Xavier Dupré.

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AND EXCERPTS FROM THE BOOK

Everett Ruess: A Vagabond for Beauty



- light ital SC
- reg ital SC
- bold ital SC
- xbold ital SC

tengara Jawa

- pas de chiffres alignés
- petits chiffres SC.

nasoei
ofgggs
sneea
ntja
uuur

Sudirman

Surabaya

A B C D E F G H
I J K L M N O P Q
R S T U V W X Y Z
a b c d e f g h i j
k l m n o p q r s t
u v w x y z
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Vista design notes.

BY XAVIER DUPRÉ, 2005

THE CONCEPT FOR VISTA began in July of 2002, when I sketched a few characters in a notebook while staying in Sumatra on a one month holiday (see *previous page*). Most of the shop signs in Sumatra feature idiosyncratically decorative lettering, such as extreme slab serifs and triangular serifs (similar to lettering on storefronts in the Old West of America), and other unusual shapes.

In reaction to this, I intended to design a semi-serif typeface for text and display, that would retain some of these characteristics, while being serious enough to be useful for general application. I was inspired by Erik Spiekerman's FF Meta, which is very successful at combining the humanist appeal of calligraphic forms with the pragmatic simplicity of the sans.

When I returned home, I developed these initial ideas into a family named "Bagus," but the result was disappointing. So I was stuck; I needed to find a way to improve the design.

Then, two years later, in May of 2004, I revisited this unfinished family and redesigned all the characters. I threw out the serif companion to make the family simpler, narrower, and more useful. I found the right proportions for a text font; not too condensed to preserve comfort in reading, and not too wide for economy of space. The text weights are loosely spaced while the bold and black are spaced tightly. This type of spacing

Vista Sans Bold lower case a.
The soul of Vista.

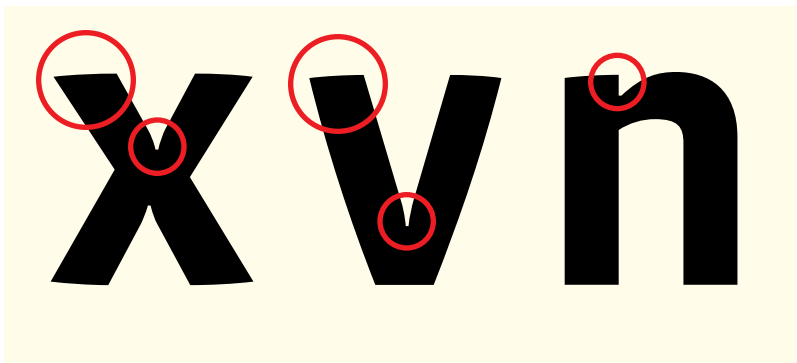
emphasizes the lightness and blackness of the respective weights. It also makes the lighter weights more legible when setting long texts at small sizes, while the Black weight, which is more appropriate for titling, is given more impact with the tighter spacing.

The most difficult characters to design in Vista (and most other typefaces for that matter) were the lowercase "a" and "g". But these are also the most interesting characters to design, as they can set the tone for the typeface. In Vista, the "a" became the most characteristic letter. It's the soul of Vista. The "a" has a special appeal to me; when I was a student, I learned to recognize and identify fonts by observing this character.

The "a" in Vista is inspired by blackletter. I wanted to incorporate the rhythm of blackletters; big contrast, emphasis on the vertical, graphic and strong looking. I combined this with humanist shapes to make a well-working text font. So the form and the rhythm of Vista are a blend of blackletter and humanist writing.

There are many subtle details in Vista that become interesting at large sizes; for example, the elegant, slightly bulging edge on some of the stroke endings. When I learned type design at Scriptorium de Toulouse, I drew the characters calligraphically by hand on tracing paper without a ruler. So my type designs were always very curvy and smooth, probably too much so.

Today, I try to make more useful designs by simplifying the shapes, but I still like curved forms. It's not so easy to add subtle curves to a sans design because, without serifs, there are fewer areas where one can introduce curved



Details such as bulging stroke endings, and matching square notched inside cusps and ink traps, give Vista much of its character.

details. So I experimented with adding the curves in slightly unusual places such as some of the stroke endings.

Other details include ink traps in some characters (x, v, w...) and squarely notched inside cusps in other characters (b, n, r...). Both of these treatments, while seemingly different approaches, add a square appearance to otherwise pointed areas, and unifies the characters.

When I finished the design of the regular weights, I found them very serious looking, so I added **alternate** forms to provide subtle variety for titling usage. To prevent over-usage of the alternates, which can easily result in unappealing typography, especially in the hands of a novice designer, only a select number of characters have alternate forms. Unlike traditional swash caps, the Vista alternates can easily be used for whole words or short sentences, striking a healthy balance between functionality and **expressiveness**.

A B C D E F G H
I J K L M N O P Q
R S T U V W X Y Z
a b c d e f g h i j
k l m n o p q r s t
u v w x y z
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

VISTA SANS MEDIUM

Vista has six weights...

à á â ã ä å

LIGHT BOOK REGULAR MEDIUM BOLD BLACK

Alternate character sets...

g

aKm

BOLD

g

aKm

BOLD ALTERNATES

Three kinds of numerals...

1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

OLD STYLE TABULAR

LINING TABULAR

1 2 3 4 5 6

SMALL CAPS LINING TABULAR

Italics and Small Caps.

YESTERDAY I WAS WAKENED by the lunatic howling of coyotes in broad daylight. I climbed up *Half Dome* and lunched on an overhanging rock, above the sheer drop fronting *Tenaya Canyon*. *Mirror Lake* was a disappointing reddish-brown mud puddle, and the valley was dry and yellow.

Vista

VISTA PACKAGE 1
LIGHT, REGULAR AND BOLD
PLUS ALTERNATES
AND ITALICS

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
0123456789
&\$ç£¥€%‰ÀÁÂÃÄÅÇÈÉÊËÌÍÎÏÑÒÓÔÕÖÙÚÛÜ
ÜÿàáâãäåçèéêëìíîïñòóôõöøùúüÿŒŠ†‡
ÆŒæœfiß@®©™ªº¼½¾¿,;:;&?;!_'"“”‘’„,/|\
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ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZabcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz1234
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZabcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz1234
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ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZabcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz1234

Vista

VISTA PACKAGE 3
BOOK, MEDIUM AND BLACK
PLUS ALTERNATES
AND ITALICS

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
0123456789
&\$ç£¥€%‰ÀÁÂÃÄÅÇÈÉÊËÌÍÎÏÑÒÓÔÕÖÙÚÛÜ
ÜÿàáâãäåçèéêëìíîïñòóôõöøùúüÿŒŠ†‡
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ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZabcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz1234
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZabcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz1234
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZabcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz1234
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ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZabcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz1234

Sand Paintings

ALTERNATE LIGHT

Slim-trunked Aspens

ALTERNATE BOLD ITALIC

BURROS

ALTERNATE BOLD

Rattlesnake

ALTERNATE REGULAR ITALIC

Lukachukai Mountains

ALTERNATE LIGHT

Sunflower

ALTERNATE REGULAR

scarlet cactus blooms

ALTERNATE BOLD

Red Canyon

ALTERNATE BOLD ITALIC

Right now I am sitting on a hill

overlooking the *Marble Fork* of the *Kaweah River*. The colors are glorious—fleecy white clouds, a clear blue sky, distant blue hills flecked with snow, tall pines all around me, monstrous grey glacial boulders, and patches of sunlit moss on the fir trees. The snow water rushes and pounds through its rocky channel, tumbling frothily into lucent green pools.

VISTA SANS LIGHT & LIGHT ITALIC WITH ALTERNATE BOLD ITALIC 20/28 POINT

RIGHT NOW I AM SITTING ON A HILL overlooking the *Marble Fork* of the *Kaweah River*. The colors are glorious—fleecy white clouds, a clear blue sky, distant blue hills flecked with snow, tall pines all around me, monstrous grey glacial boulders, and patches of sunlit moss on the fir trees. The snow water rushes and pounds through its rocky channel, tumbling frothily into lucent green pools.

VISTA SANS ALTERNATE LIGHT & ALTERNATE LIGHT ITALIC WITH SMALL CAPS BOLD 20/28 POINT

SEEN FROM THE MOUNTAIN, the country between here and the *San Juan* and *Colorado* rivers and beyond them is as rough and impenetrable a territory as I have ever seen. Thousands of domes and towers of sandstone lift their rounded pink tops from blue and purple shadows. To the east, great canyons seam the desert, cutting vermilion gashes through the grey-green of the sage-topped mesas.

I remember well the tortuous trail leading out of *Copper Canyon* opposite *No Man's Mesa*. A vast expanse of brown country lay between the mesas. Far north was the silent, nearly empty canyon of the *San Juan*, with a vivid green strip of willows. Opposite me the mile-wide canyon was banded with blue-green, grey-blue, and delicate purple, surmounted by dull vermilion, which grew more vivid until at the rim of the mesa, the color was almost blindingly intense.

VISTA SANS LIGHT & LIGHT ITALIC WITH SMALL CAPS BOLD 10/14 POINT

SEEN FROM THE MOUNTAIN, the country between here and the *San Juan* and *Colorado* rivers and beyond them is as rough and impenetrable a territory as I have ever seen. Thousands of domes and towers of sandstone lift their rounded pink tops from blue and purple shadows. To the east, great canyons seam the desert, cutting vermilion gashes through the grey-green of the sage-topped mesas.

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VISTA SANS LIGHT & LIGHT ITALIC WITH SMALL CAPS BOLD 8/12 POINT

A HIGH WIND is roaring in the tops of the tall pines. The moon is just rising on the rim of the desert, far below. Stars gleam through the pine boughs and the filmy clouds that move across the night sky. Graceful, slim-trunked aspens reach upward under the towering pines. Their slender, curving branches are white in the firelight, and an occasional downward breeze flickers their pale green leaves.

VISTA SANS ALTERNATE REGULAR WITH SMALL CAPS BOLD 18/26 POINT

FOR A WHILE THE NORTHERLY SKY WAS CLEAR, and stars shone brilliantly through the pine boughs. Then darkness closed upon us, only to be rent by livid flashes of lightning, and thunder that seemed to shake the earth. The wind blew no longer and we traveled in an ominous, murky calm, occasionally slashed with lightning. Finally the clouds broke, and rain spattered down as I put on my slicker. We halted under a tall pine, and my sombrero sheltered the glow of a cigarette. The burros stood motionless with heads down and water dripping off their ears. In half an hour the rain was over and the skies cleared. By moonlight we climbed to the rim of the mountain and looked over vast silent stretches of desert. Miles away was the dim hulk of *Shiprock*—a ghostly galleon in a sea of sand.

VISTA SANS REGULAR & REGULAR ITALIC WITH SMALL CAPS BOLD 10/14 POINT

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VISTA SANS REGULAR & REGULAR ITALIC WITH SMALL CAPS BOLD 8/12 POINT

Coyotes

ALTERNATE BOOK ITALIC

Western Boundaries

ALTERNATE MEDIUM ITALIC

Backbones and Saddles

ALTERNATE BLACK

ARIZONA

ALTERNATE BLACK & BLACK

The rim of the bowl

ALTERNATE BOOK

DESERT SUN

ALTERNATE BLACK ITALIC

Monument Valley

ALTERNATE MEDIUM

TURQUOISE SKY

ALTERNATE BOOK

Summer draws on, the shrill song of the *cicadas* is over, and the scarlet cactus blooms are gone. Columbine and Sego Lily have vanished, too. Now only sunflower, and in shaded canyons, the Scarlet Bugler, are found. In these last few days the heat has been intense, and *siestas* have been in order. I have traversed only at dawn and evening, often at sunset, under the stars. I shall never forget coming down the *Lukachukai Mountains* at dusk, with the blood-red moon falling through the pine branches as I descended.

VISTA SANS BOOK & BOOK ITALIC WITH ALTERNATE BLACK ITALIC 18/26 POINT

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VISTA SANS ALTERNATE BOOK & ALTERNATE BOOK ITALIC WITH SMALL CAPS BLACK 18/26 POINT

I REACHED THE WINDY CLIFF LEDGE just as the first red light gleamed in the east. A smoky-gray light spread along the cloud fringes, and a smoldering orange glowed at the tops of the distant peaks. Then black storm clouds swept down dramatically from the north, enveloping the valleys. One cloudbank detached itself and blew over *Mount Hoffman* and me with a flurry of snow. Soon it was gone and the westerly sky was clear. I looked down on the western brink, at lakes and snowbanks on the northern cliff, at peaks and stormclouds on the southern slope, to *Yosemite* valley, and *Tenaya Canyon*, walled in by *Clouds Rest* and *Half Dome*, and on the eastern escarpment, upon *May Lake*, *Tenaya lake*, like a bronze shield in a flash of sunlight, and the snowy peaks of *Tioga*.

VISTA SANS BOOK & BOOK ITALIC WITH SMALL CAPS BLACK 10/14 POINT

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VISTA SANS BOOK & BOOK ITALIC WITH SMALL CAPS BLACK 8/12 POINT

THE LAKE is almost invisible from above, and only a faint, very steep path leads down to it. Grey cliffs rise sheerly from the other side of the lake, which is deep green, mysterious, and unfathomable. On a little promontory nearby, I watch the moving panoramas of clouds, the gray mountains dotted with trees, and the long, undulating cloud shadows moving over distant forests. A little waterfall rushes musically down from the cliff. The reassuring tinkle of burro bells sounds nearby. I shall probably reach *Yosemite* by October.

VISTA SANS ALTERNATE MEDIUM & ALTERNATE MEDIUM ITALIC WITH SMALL CAPS BLACK 18/26 POINT

FAR TO THE NORTH AND EAST the purple mesas stretched. Cloud banks arched everywhere overhead, stretching in long lines to the horizons. There was an endless variety of cloud forms, like swirls of smoke, *like puff balls*. Here and there where a sunshaft pierced a low hung cloud bar, the mesas were golden brown and vermilion.

Then the treeless western hills were rimmed with orange that faded to green and deep blue. A cold clear breeze caressed me and the full moon rolled through the clouds. The lunatic quaver of a coyote—silence and sleep.

VISTA SANS MEDIUM & MEDIUM ITALIC WITH SMALL CAPS BLACK 10/14 POINT

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VISTA SANS MEDIUM & MEDIUM ITALIC WITH SMALL CAPS BLACK 8/12 POINT