

# Introduction

## Towards a Typography of Place

Psychogeography and environmental psychology both attempt to define the relationship between our surroundings and our being. This relationship between sites and ourselves gives birth to senses of place. Which really are our relationships with localities, expressed via our emotions, biographies, imaginations, stories, and personal experiences (Basso, 1996).

Presented here are three personally significant sites and three accompanying typeface interpretations of the personal relationship I have with these sites.

Sulphur Point explores theories of the political production of space as manifested in the port and recreational marine facilities of Sulphur Point, here in Tauranga, New Zealand.

Kulim Park explores how a local park redevelopment can inform a design brief for a typeface.

Turret Road delves into eugenics, solar evolution, science fiction and homeward conversations.

These typefaces represent research investigations into the generation of place based design methodologies, and site specific design languages for typographic development. Each typeface draws formal cues from the site and attempts to offer a place based contextual reading of the site specific narrativity inherent in its letterforms (Trimbur, 2002). A contextual narrativity which seeks to spatially locate each typeface and offer connotative interpretations which delve beyond the denotatively formal. This is an approach which allows typefaces such as Paul Renner's Futura to be seen, not only as Bauhausesque modernist formal expressions but also as the sensing of a zeitgeist (Challand, 2009).

## Bibliography

Basso, K.H. (1996). *Wisdom sits in places: Notes on a Western Apache landscape*. In Feld, S. and Basso, K.H. (Eds.), *Senses of place* (pp. 53–90). Santa Fe, New Mexico: School of American Research Press.

Trimbur, J. (2002). *Delivering the Message: Typography and the Materiality of Writing*. In *Rhetoric and Composition As Intellectual Work* (pp. 260–270). SIU Press.

Challand, S. (2009, June 19). *Know your type: Futura*. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/1jbhZki>

## Download

Typefaces can be downloaded from the following URLs.

### Sulphur Point

<https://fonts.google.com/specimen/Sulphur+Point>  
<https://nponies.github.io/sulphur-point/>

### Kulim Park

<https://fonts.google.com/specimen/Kulim+Park>  
<https://nponies.github.io/Kulim-Park/>

### Turret Road

<https://fonts.google.com/specimen/Turret+Road>  
<https://github.com/nponies/Turret-Road>

All typefaces licensed via the SIL Open Font License [OFL].



Port of  
Tauranga

Totara Street

Tauranga  
Container  
Terminal  
Sulphur Point

SH 2

SH 2

SH 2

Dive Crescent

Chapel Street

Chapel Street

Dive Crescent

Chapel Street

SH 2

Cameron Road

Takitimu Drive

Tauranga

East Coast Main Trunk

SH 2

Cameron Road

Devonport Road

East Coast Main Trunk

# Sulphur Point

## Site Analysis & Design Language

Sulphur Point (Te Pari Taha o Te Awanui), located in Tauranga is a mixture of port and recreational marine activities.

It was reclaimed from the original harbour sandbar into extensive port and marina facilities over a period starting in 1970 to mid-1990 (Tauranga City Libraries Staff, 2012).

My personal history with Sulphur Point is long and varied. I've fished off the rocks as a teenager, set out from the marina on family launches countless times, launched my own boat, watched the storm clouds roll over the Kaimai ranges and waited in the cold for trains to rumble past with a tired four-year-old on my shoulders.

Sulphur Point is a past half forgotten, and an anchor in the present.

Spatially Sulphur Point is an ode to parking, be it car parks, containers or boats; the primary function of Sulphur Point is to park. It's an organisational utopia of rigid divisions, rows and columns, yellow and white paint, order fenced from order. An expression of human dominion over nature. It's a space to pass through, not to linger. It's colonising design ethos as all good design should be, is stepped back and unnoticed, shaping spatial navigation, demanding usages and ensuring flow.

Sulphur Point is divided roughly into thirds, one third into public and the other two thirds into private, corporate spaces. Boat ramps on one side, the port on the other. A 2.4m high, rusting barbwire topped fence, neatly obscured by a row of generic landscaped vegetation in between.

Henri Lefebvre talks about the fetishisation of space in the service of state, where "space, already mystified and presumed innocent, is produced in

capitalism in a way that makes it appear all the more devoid of social relationships" (Ballvé, 2011). To the casual user, Sulphur Point is simply a place to carry out preordained, spatially scripted tasks, as Ballvé (2011) describes, a non-thing, an empty, static plane upon which people act and events unfold. The refusal of opportunity for other interpretations, to be childlike with a sense of play is certainly an expedient expression of capitalist organisational dogma. Here space is organised around commerce and notions of work and compartmentalised play. Even when transiting the space to reach moored boats and be 'free' on the ocean, members of the public are elements in a capitalist spatial composition, which seeks to erase them from the site.

By journeying through the Sulphur Point environment without any of its prescribed usages as an end goal I have sought to carve out my own personal perspective of, and locality within, the space. To ignore the ideological wayfinding, to observe, to blend personal histories and perceived materialities, is to subvert the ideology of the space.

When Sulphur Point's environment is viewed and experienced through the formal modernist compositional eye and thinking my institutionalised design training affords me, rigid organisational patterns begin to emerge. These patterns resonate most closely with Bauhaus functional units and an overarching spirit of the 'machine'. This is a space which is predicated on moving machines, a technological utopia.

Walter Gropius, when starting the Bauhaus sought to 'reconcile the artist and machine' (Snider, 2018) by using many of the same inherited techniques which are employed as planning constructs within the Sulphur Point spatial environment. The principles

most evident to me, as observer are;

+Simplicity	+Organisation
+Symmetry	+Economy
+Angularity	+Subtlety
+Abstraction	+Continuity
+Consistency	+Regularity
+Unity	+Sharpness

Deriving a series of utilitarian compositional rules from the observed environment enabled a straightforward mapping from the physical and ideological space of Sulphur Point to the conceptual and compositional space where a typeface might be drawn from. This design vernacular, allowed me to formulate a series of formal compositional rules which as Lewis, (2018) states “in this design process, a typographic composer is provided the affordance to mobilise the created letterforms as meaning-making artifacts”.

Historically the typography which embodies the expression of ideology closest to the spatial ideology of Sulphur Point is Bauhaus typography. A good example is Futura, whose geometric foundations are a reflection of Paul Renner sensing a zeitgeist (Challand, 2009). Futura is not strictly a Bauhaus typeface, as it makes concessions to legibility and utility which are absent from pure Bauhaus philosophic embodiments such as Herbert Bayer's “Universal” (Design History, 2011). Irrespective of purity of approach, these typefaces prioritise geometry, regular form, legibility and as Majoor (2018) suggests, an impression of construction.

## Formal Design Rules

The ideologies evident in the Sulphur Point environment are mediated through my personal compositional biases, design education, emotional

attachments and personal design *raison d'être*, to create useful and used artefacts. This moderating heliocentric approach, where the user sits at the center of a design universe is coupled with Bauhaus functional units to drive a typographic composition which formally references the ideologies and spatial organisation of the Sulphur Point environment.

The typographically useful signifiers which most readily signify some of the Bauhaus functional units are the circle and the straight line. How these signifiers are *rendered* within the glyphs of the typeface signifies the ‘simplicity’, ‘angularity’, ‘abstraction’, ‘economy’ and ‘sharpness’ Bauhaus compositional units. How the typeface employs these signifiers and applies them as the *in situ* design language across the entire glyph set signifies the more organisational units such as ‘unity’, ‘consistency’, ‘organisation’, ‘economy’, ‘subtlety’, ‘regularity’ and ‘symmetry’.

Following the basic structuralist approach above, I've contrasted some functional units into binary oppositions as a means of working backward, and error checking the basic compositional approach underpinning the typeface. A sample of these units follows;

simplicity < > complexity  
regularity < > irregularity  
angularity < > organic  
abstraction < > literal

On closer inspection, these oppositions break down and blur into each other. But as expressions of the modernist perspective encapsulated by both the Bauhaus and the spatial planners of the Sulphur Point environment, these oppositions direct the visual language of the typeface into what it should and shouldn't be.

The Sulphur Point (typeface) is a product of Sulphur Point's spatiality, it's influence on me and my interactions within it. The typeface represents a personal wrest of power from the space to create a new public artefact and the potential for new typographic spaces.

Documenting the Sulphur Point space involved photography, Dérive (drift), observation, wayfinding, and drawing. Photography, in particular, was perceived as a noteworthy deviation from the spaces normative usage patterns. Which is ironic, considering how thoroughly surveilled the space is.

Sulphur Point supports Western, Central and South Eastern European languages.

## Bibliography

Ballvé, T. (2011). *Lefebvre, Fetish, Critique / Territorial Masquerades*. Territorialmasquerades.net. Retrieved 19 March 2018, from <http://territorialmasquerades.net/lefebvre-fetish-critique>

Ballvé, T. (2011). *Spatiality & Power / Territorial Masquerades*. Territorialmasquerades.net. Retrieved 20 March 2018, from <http://territorialmasquerades.net/spatiality-power/>

Challand, S. (2009, June 19). *Know your type: Futura*. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/ljbhZki>

Design History. (2011). *Bauhaus Typography*. Retrieved from [http://www.designhistory.org/Avant\\_Garde\\_pages/BauhausType.html](http://www.designhistory.org/Avant_Garde_pages/BauhausType.html)

Tauranga City Libraries Staff. (2012, May 21). *European Timeline of Local Events*. Retrieved May 23, 2018, from [http://tauranga.kete.net.nz/tauranga\\_local\\_history/topics/show/584-european-timeline-of-local-events](http://tauranga.kete.net.nz/tauranga_local_history/topics/show/584-european-timeline-of-local-events)

Lewis, H. (2018). "Contextualizing Place as Type: Creating an Auburn Typeface" by Harry Lewis. Xchanges.org. Retrieved 19 March 2018, from <http://www.xchanges.org/contextualizing-place-as-type-creating>

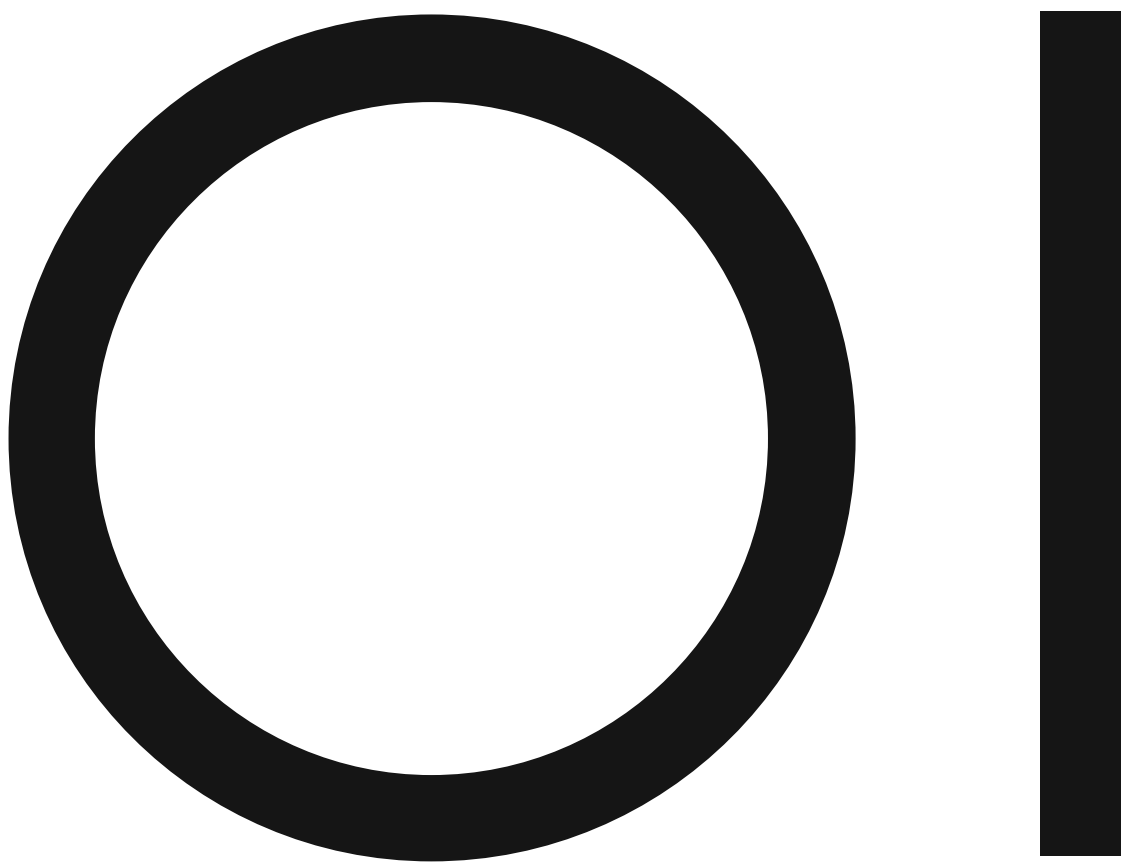
Majoer, M. (2018). *Typotheque: My Type Design Philosophy* by Martin Majoer. Typotheque.com. Retrieved 19 March 2018, from [https://www.typotheque.com/articles/my\\_type\\_design\\_philosophy](https://www.typotheque.com/articles/my_type_design_philosophy)

OpenStreetMap contributors. (n.d.). *OpenStreetMap*. Retrieved from <https://www.openstreetmap.org/#map=16/-37.6650/176.1674>

Snider, C. (2018). *Bauhaus : Philosophy*. Bauhaus.chrissnider.com. Retrieved 19 March 2018, from <http://bauhaus.chrissnider.com/pages/philosophy.html>

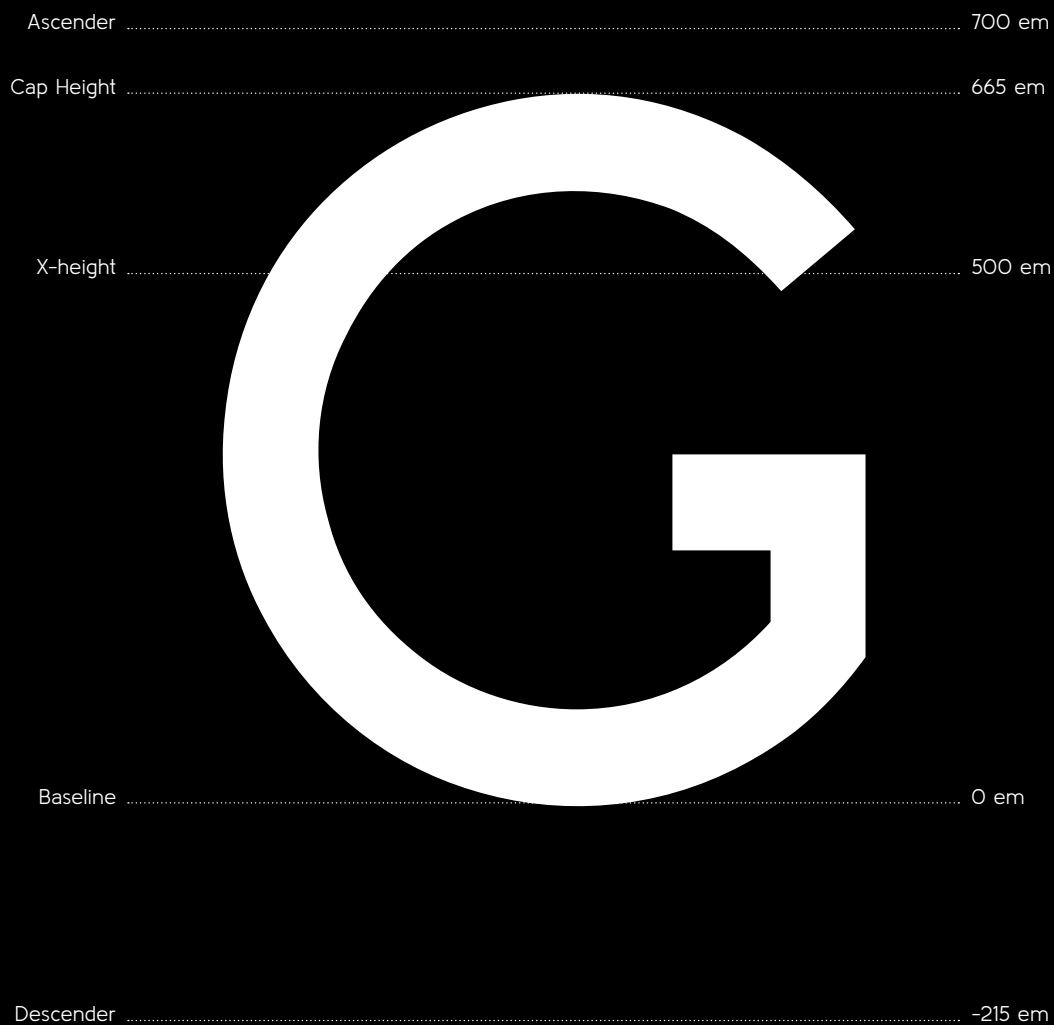


# Sulphur Point – Formal foundations



'O' and 'I' from Sulphur Point Regular, set at 450pt. The circle and the straight line are the geometric foundations of the glyphs in Sulphur Point. There is a slight degree of movement away from hard geometry when bowls intersect with stems. Reflecting an optical balancing of the typeface and a nod to utility.

# Sulphur Point – Anatomy





700 em ..... Ascender

665 em ..... Cap Height

500 em ..... X-height

0 em ..... Baseline

-215 em ..... Descender



d

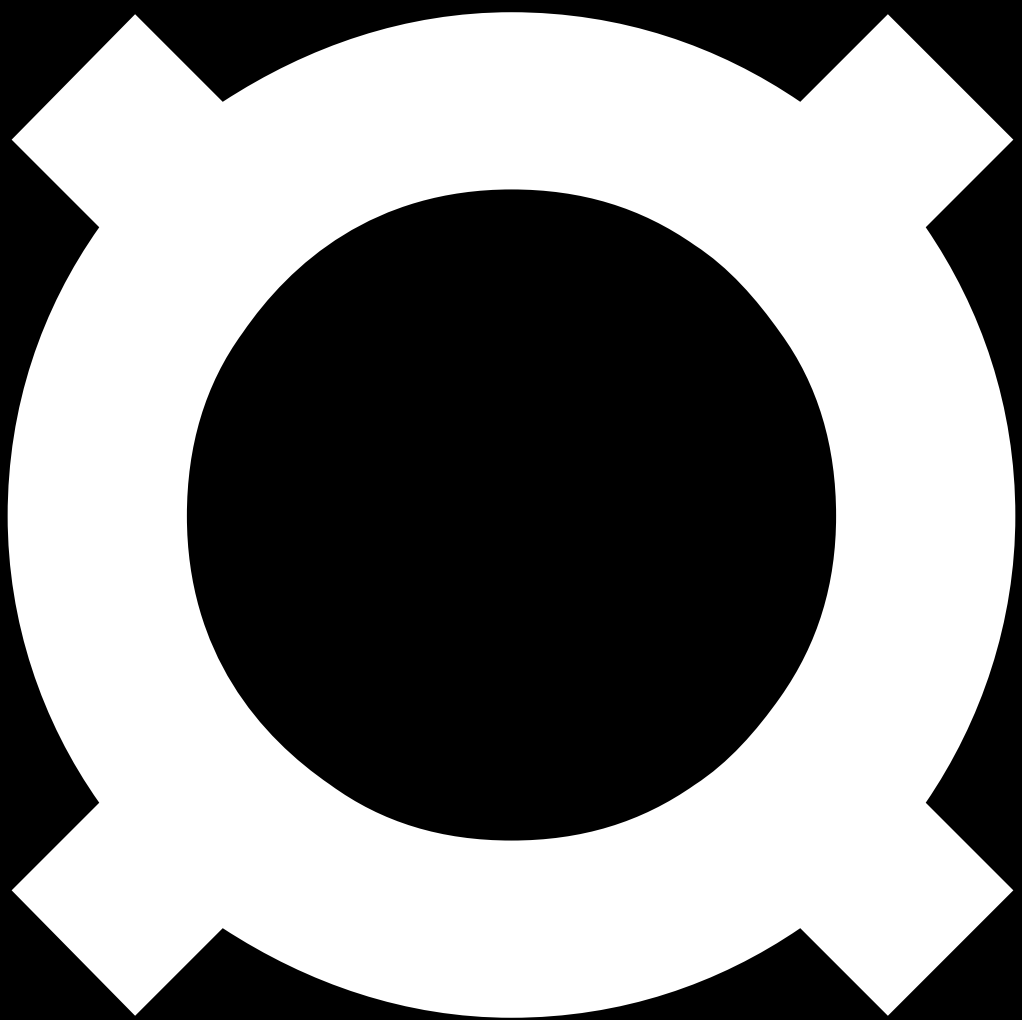
d

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# THE NEW TYPOGRAPHY DIFFERS FROM THE OLD IN THREE SERIES



Jan Tschichold

Henri Lefebvre

(1976)

Space is  
political.











rrace

Ngatai Road

reet

Short Street

Dillon Way

Ngatai Road

Kulim Park

East Coast Main Trunk

Crescent Road

Acklam Avenue

Ngatai Road

Kulim

P

Otumoetai  
Golf Course

# Kulim Park

## Site Analysis & Design Language

Kulim Park is currently undergoing a public consultation process for redevelopment direction by the Tauranga City Council as part of a wider strategy to evaluate and improve Tauranga's parks. The Council recognises that the current space is in need of redevelopment to better meet changes in usage patterns, improve play facilities, control flood waters, recognise Ngāi Tamarāwaho's cultural perspectives and values and make better connections between the park space and Te Awanui (Tauranga City Council, 2018).

As a regular user of this space with deep family ties to this area, I have a vested interest in engaging in this development process to ensure that it retains its amenity and desirability as a destination.

The redevelopment of Kulim Park is an opportunity to engage with this process typographically to create an artefact which is both from and is for the site. Like any design project which is seeking to alleviate communication problems, this project requires a brief, which as (Phillips, 2012) states is an early definition of the design problem and the possible descriptions of the strategy to solve it.

To arrive at a brief, a series of questions generally help to elucidate any potential problems to be solved. With the outcome predefined as a typeface these questions can be focused somewhat. Typographically, what problems does a typeface for and of, Kulim Park need to solve? Will it be employed primarily on wayfinding signage or pluralistically across a far wider range of communications mediums? What political, economic and social aspects of this site does this typeface need to attempt to incorporate, if any? Should it simply regress into series of literal illustrative dingbats or abstract itself into the formal norms of traditional typographic expression? Can it integrate

into the physical space as an expression of Mahi Toi and become a part of a play space? Should the typeface be serif or sans serif and what are the legibility ramifications from this choice?

As a designer with a design *raison d'être* focused on utility, creating a typeface which has the widest range of potential uses is far more satisfying as this sees the typeface put to work across a diverse range of outcomes. This approach pushes the typographic response into formally restrained, traditional typographic expression. Dingbats simply do not have the application reach of a 'standard' typeface such as Helvetica. To be literal is to be focused, to be abstract is to be broad.

Differences in legibility between sans serif and serif typefaces are not born out by research and it is better to make these decisions based on aesthetics as any competently designed typeface will be equally legible (Poole, 2012). Personally, I prefer the formal restraint in sans serif typefaces. When considering the community aspect of Kulim Park, humanist sans-serif typefaces with their touch of softness, open bowls and shift away from pure geometric forms more closely align with the emotive impression of the space.

Taking a meta view and considering the diverse role parks (*papa rēhia*) play in communities is useful for unpacking the political, cultural, economic and social aspects of the space and gives insight into which of these aspects are relevant for inclusion as elements for consideration when conceptualising and designing the typefaces glyphs. Generally speaking, parks have a number of benefits for communities, firstly they provide economic value alongside their health and environmental benefits and finally, they have social importance. Each is manifested in differing ways. Parks contribute

economically to local economies by increasing house values, increasing amenity and hence the desirability of locations, decrease stormwater effects and provide coastal buffers. The connection between personal and community health and the landscape is encapsulated in the Biophilia hypothesis by Wilson (1984). Anecdotally this is born out by the continued, regular patronage of park spaces by the public (Blaschke, 2013).

Socially parks provide gathering places, sites for social interaction, are open access and contribute to a tangible reflection of the quality of life in a community. They help provide a sense of identity for citizens and are a major factor in the perception of quality of life in a given community (nrpa, 2010). From this précis, a conclusion is reached that parks are beneficial for the communities they support and that any typeface which is from and for this space should also seek to be beneficial. Potentially, this can be achieved in a number of ways. First, the typeface should reflect the open access values that parks embody by using the permissive Open Font License (OFL) licensing scheme. Secondly, the typeface should reflect the diversity of cultures which use Kulim park via its language support. This is especially important when rendering macrons used in Māori.

## Brief

Distilling the above down into a brief for the design of Kulim Park (typeface) the following design goals and approaches are most salient. Categories each falls into a provided alongside.

- + Sans-serif (personal design bias)
- + Humanist (a reflection of accessibility and function of space)
- + Wide language support (accessibility, utility)

- + Available across a range of weights and styles (utility)
- + Open, relaxed design language (a reflection of accessibility and function of space)
- + Permissive license (accessibility, utility)

## Formal Language

Kulim Park is a humanist sans serif typeface, with a high x-height, open counter 'a', minimal degrees of contrast in stem width, inviting bowls and a design language aimed at encapsulating openness.

Western, Central and South Eastern European languages are supported.

## Bibliography

Blaschke, P. (2013). *Health and wellbeing benefits of conservation in New Zealand* (New Zealand, Department of Conservation). Wellington, WGTN: Publishing Team, Department of Conservation.

National Recreation and Park Association [NRPA] (2010). *Why Parks and Recreation are Essential Public Services*. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2kuLkHK>

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Poole, A. (2012). *Which Are More Legible: Serif or Sans Serif Typefaces?* Retrieved from <http://alexpoole.info/blog/which-are-more-legible-serif-or-sans-serif-typefaces/>

Tauranga City Council. (2018). *Have your say on Kulim Park*. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2xbrZXL>

Wilson, E. O. (1984). *Biophilia*. Harvard University Press.

Kulim Park – Available weights & styles

Kulim Park – Extra Light

*Kulim Park – Extra Light Italic*

Kulim Park – Light

*Kulim Park – Light Italic*

Kulim Park – Regular

*Kulim Park – Regular Italic*

**Kulim Park – Semi Bold**

***Kulim Park – Semi Bold Italic***

**Kulim Park – Bold**

***Kulim Park – Bold Italic***







## Kulim Park – Formal foundations

The image displays two large, bold lowercase letters, 'a' and 'y', from the Kulim Park Regular typeface. The 'a' is a humanist gothic style, featuring a high x-height and a rounded, open bowl. The 'y' has a high x-height and a restrained descender. Both letters are rendered in a solid black color, highlighting the subtle variations in stroke width characteristic of the typeface.

'a' and 'y' from Kulim Park Regular, set at 450pt. Depicting the open 'a' and lowercase 'y' and subtly variable stroke widths. Kulim Park is a humanist gothic (sans serif) typeface with a relatively high x-height and restrained descenders which are both aimed at increased legibility at smaller sizes.

# Kulim Park – Anatomy

Ascender ..... 840 em  
Cap Height ..... 700 em

X-height ..... 500 em

Baseline ..... 0 em

Descender ..... -205 em

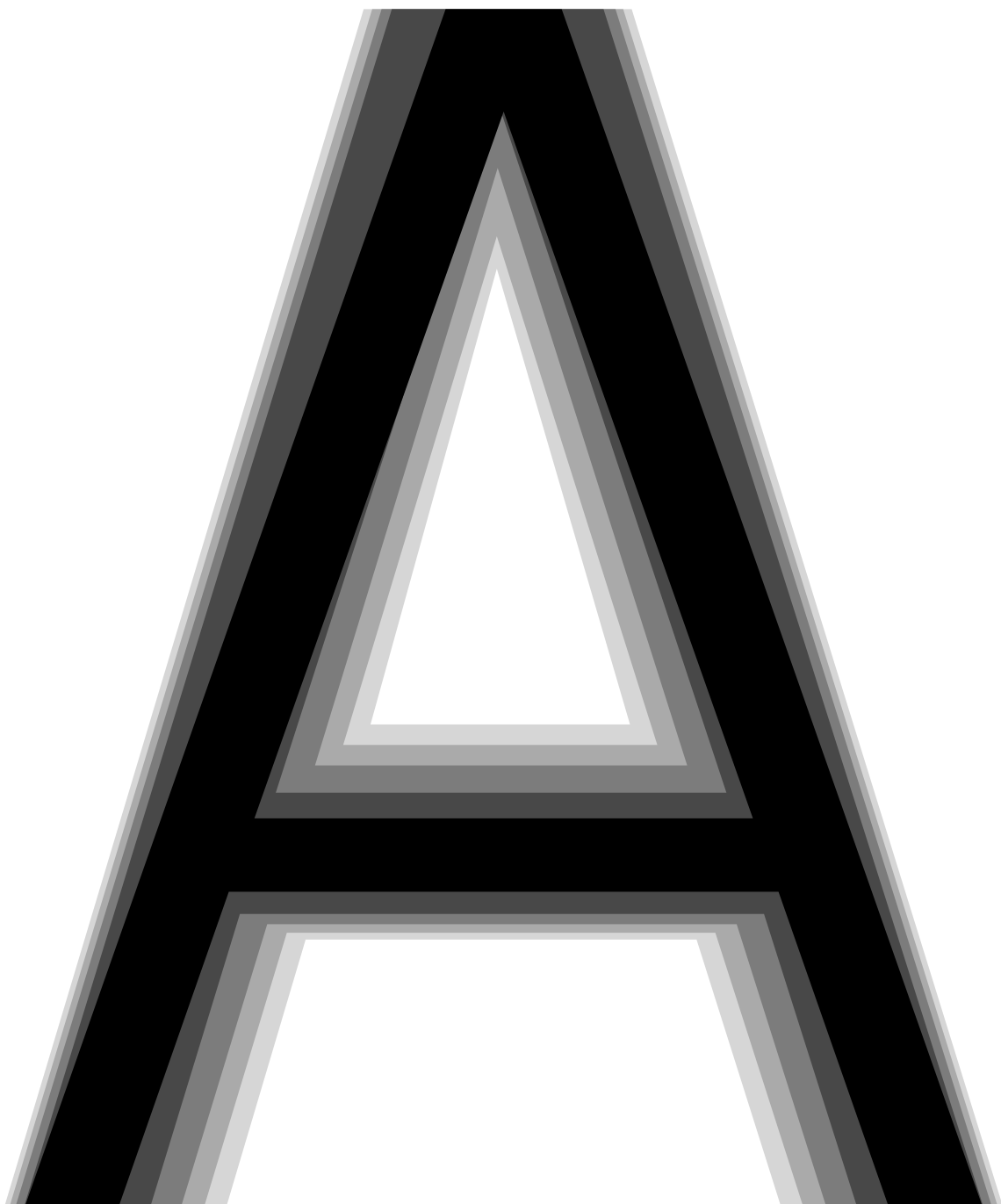
840 em ..... Ascender  
700 em ..... Cap Height

500 em ..... X-height

0 em ..... Baseline

-205 em ..... Descender

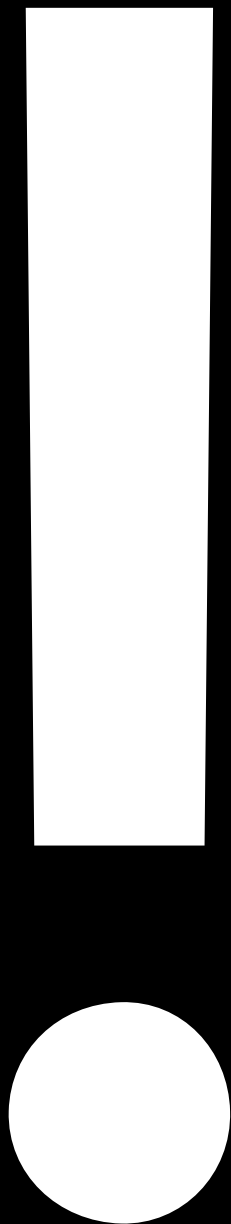


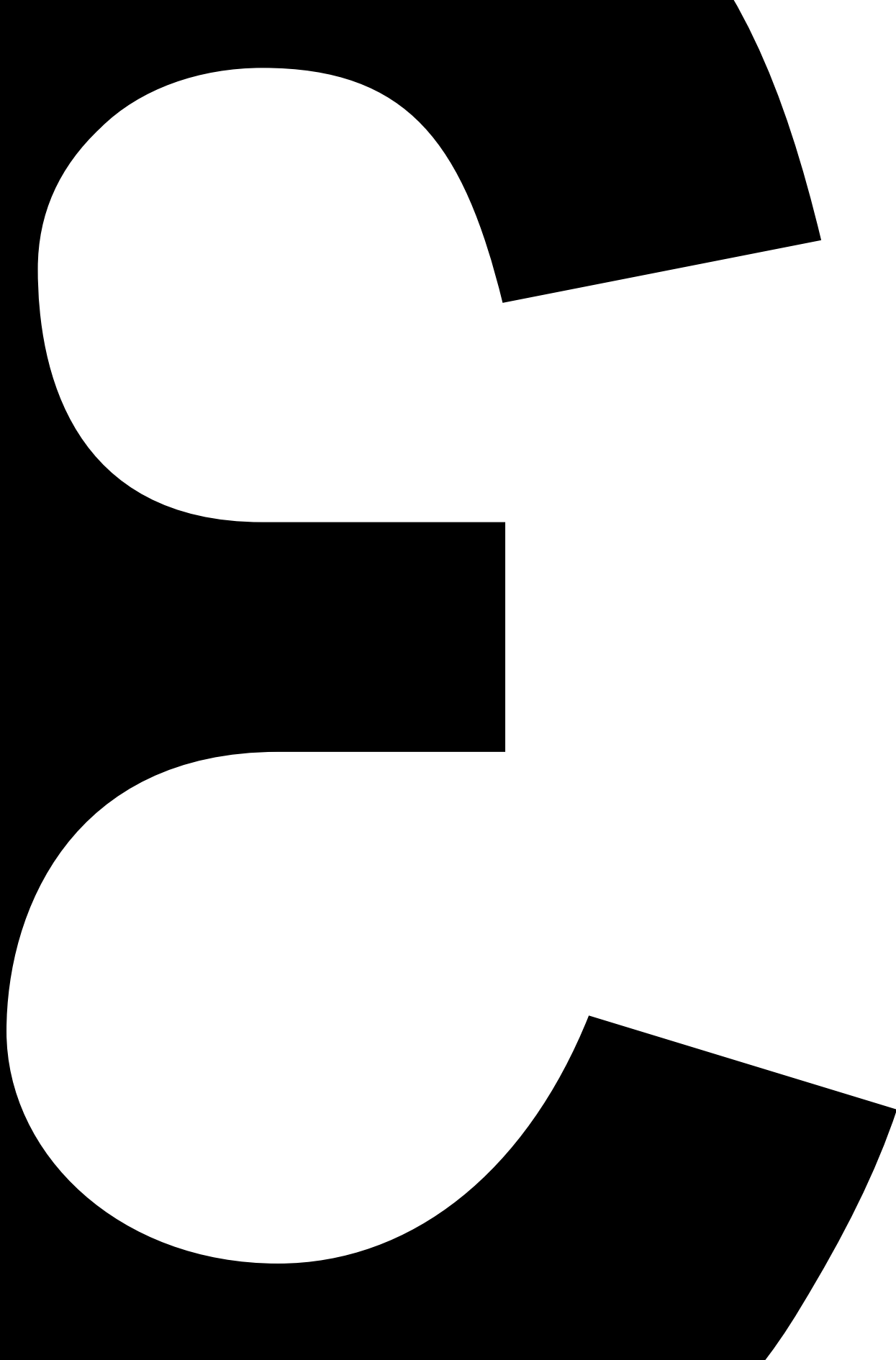




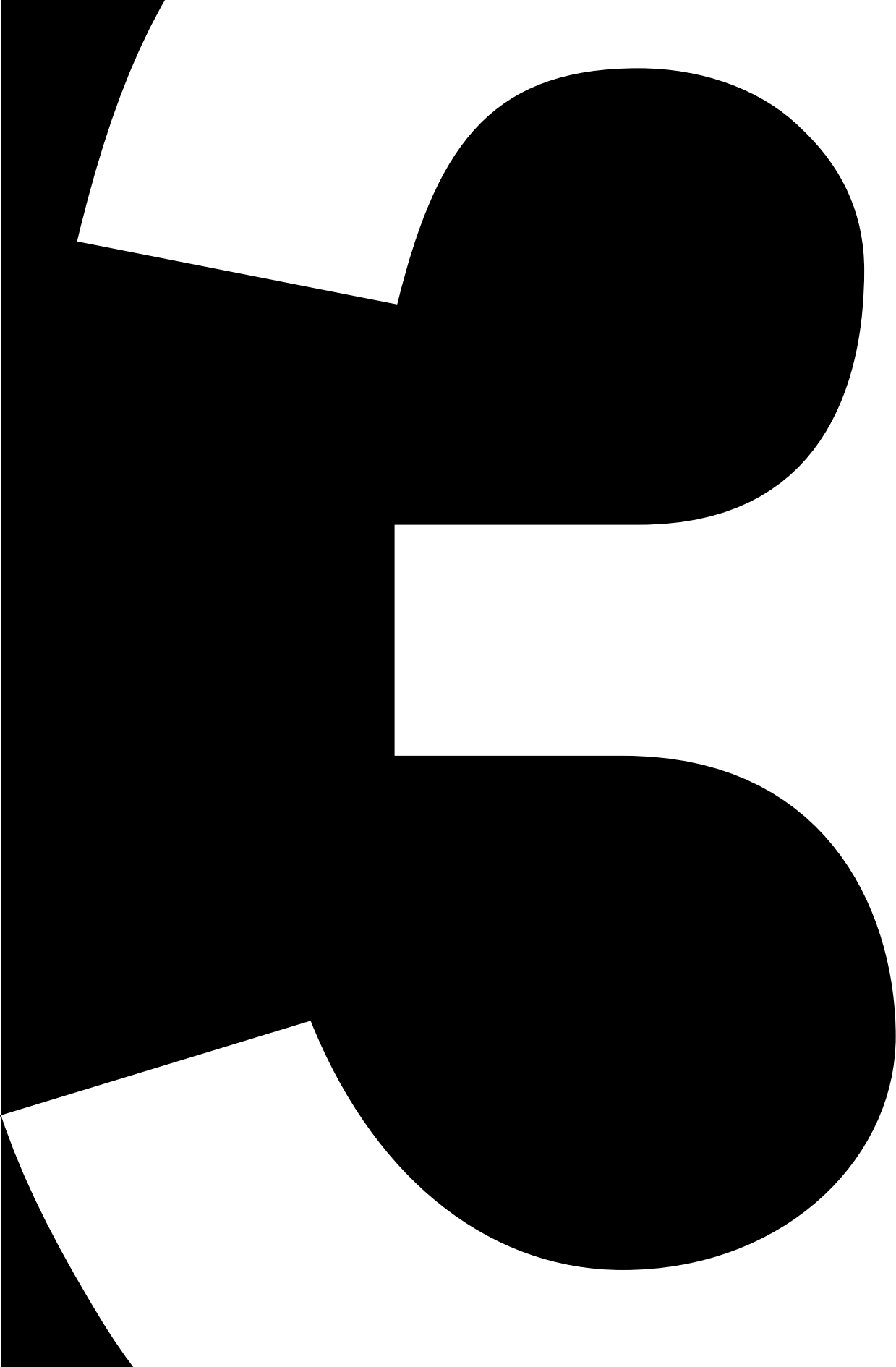


**AUTHORIS**  
**PERSONN**  
**ONLY PA**  
**THIS POI**











# Turret Road

## Site Analysis & Design Language

Turret Road started as a conversation with my 4-year-old son regarding the cyclical nature of life and how our heavier atoms were/are created in the supernova deaths of giant stars.

Conversations such as this remind me of a passage in *Gattaca* where Vincent, who finally has attained his dream of reaching the stars realises that he now has much to leave behind.

'For someone who was never meant for this world, I must confess I'm suddenly having a hard time leaving it. Of course, they say every atom in our bodies was once part of a star. Maybe I'm not leaving... maybe I'm going home.' (Nicol, 1997)

That I'm reminded of *Gattaca* when talking with my son is salient. In the world framed by *Gattaca*, he would be a natural born, an 'In-Valid' (Nicol, 1997). His a life dictated by the dice roll of genetic combinations rather than by the careful selection and edition towards a eugenically ideal 'valid' which supposedly represent the best features of their parents.

The genetic dice roll for my son involved a chance of inheriting Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy (HCM), a genetic heart condition where the hearts ventricular septum thickens abnormally. Most people with this condition lead normal lives (The Cardiac Inherited Disease Group, 2017). However, on his Mothers side of the family, HCM or in her case Hypertrophic Obstructive Cardiomyopathy (HOCM) has required medical intervention and has had a significant impact on quality of life.

Faced with this chance, would have I chosen to edit this gene out if technology allowed it? Building towards the world depicted in *Gattaca*? At the time of his conception, technology such as CRISPR/Cas9

was in embryonic development but has matured rapidly since. Coupled with genetic studies such as the HCM gene mapping project run by the Cardiac Inherited Disease Group (CIDG) here in New Zealand the ability to edit this gene out of a parents gene pool will become available.

Technology such as gene editing is now outpacing ethics (Lunshof, 2017) on meta societal levels and on personal levels.

Tracing back to the dice roll. If I could have influenced the roll, would have I? Yes.

## Formal language

Turret Road's design language is based on the use of hard angles and rigid regular stroke widths as a denotative reference to the machine, order, and rationality. Connotatively the typeface references, cold hard space, voices of the void and future dystopia's.

Turret Road is rendered as a sans serif typeface with a relatively high x-height, relatively wide glyph widths, open bowls, low contrast stems and is primarily intended for usage at larger point sizes.

Western, Central and South Eastern European languages are supported.

## Bibliography

Nicol, A. (1997). *Gattaca*. Los Angeles: Columbia Pictures Corporation.

The Cardiac Inherited Disease Group. (2017). *Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy (HCM)*. Retrieved from <http://www.cidg.org.nz/patients-families/cardiac-inherited-diseases/hypertrophic-cardiomyopathy-hcm/>

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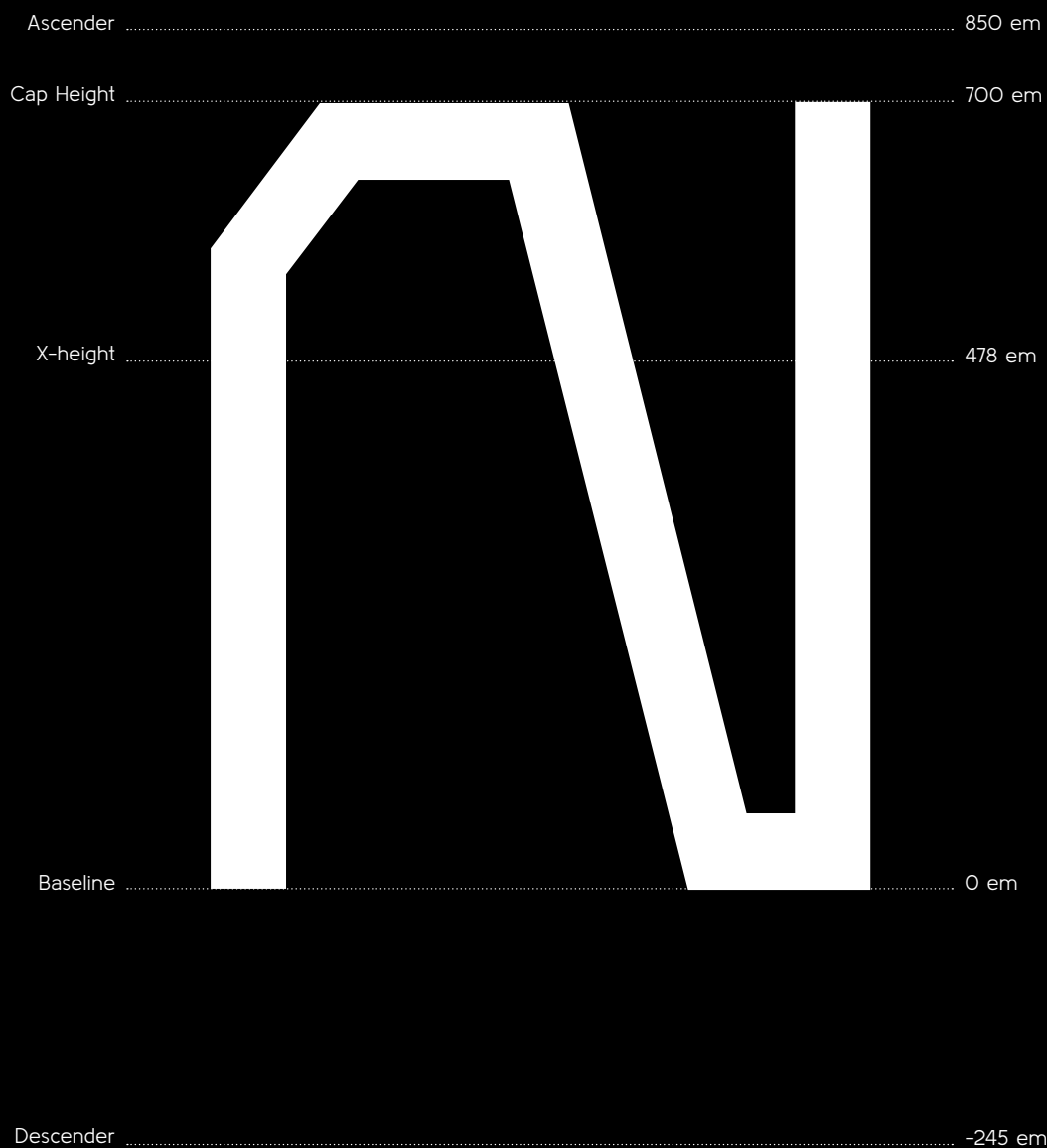
Wikimages. (2012, January 9). *Free Image on Pixabay - Sun, Fireball, Solar Flare*. Retrieved from <https://pixabay.com/en/sun-fireball-solar-flare-sunlight-11582/>

## Turret Road – Formal foundations



'X' and w' from Turret Road Regular, set at 400pt. Demonstrating uniform stroke widths, lack of contrast and angular glyph design language.

# Turret Road – Anatomy



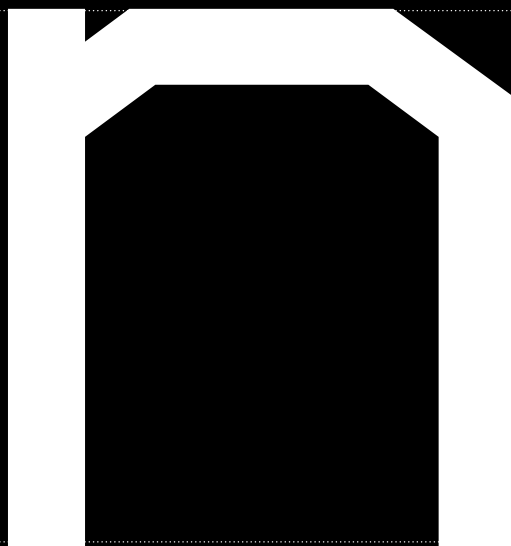
850 em ..... Ascender

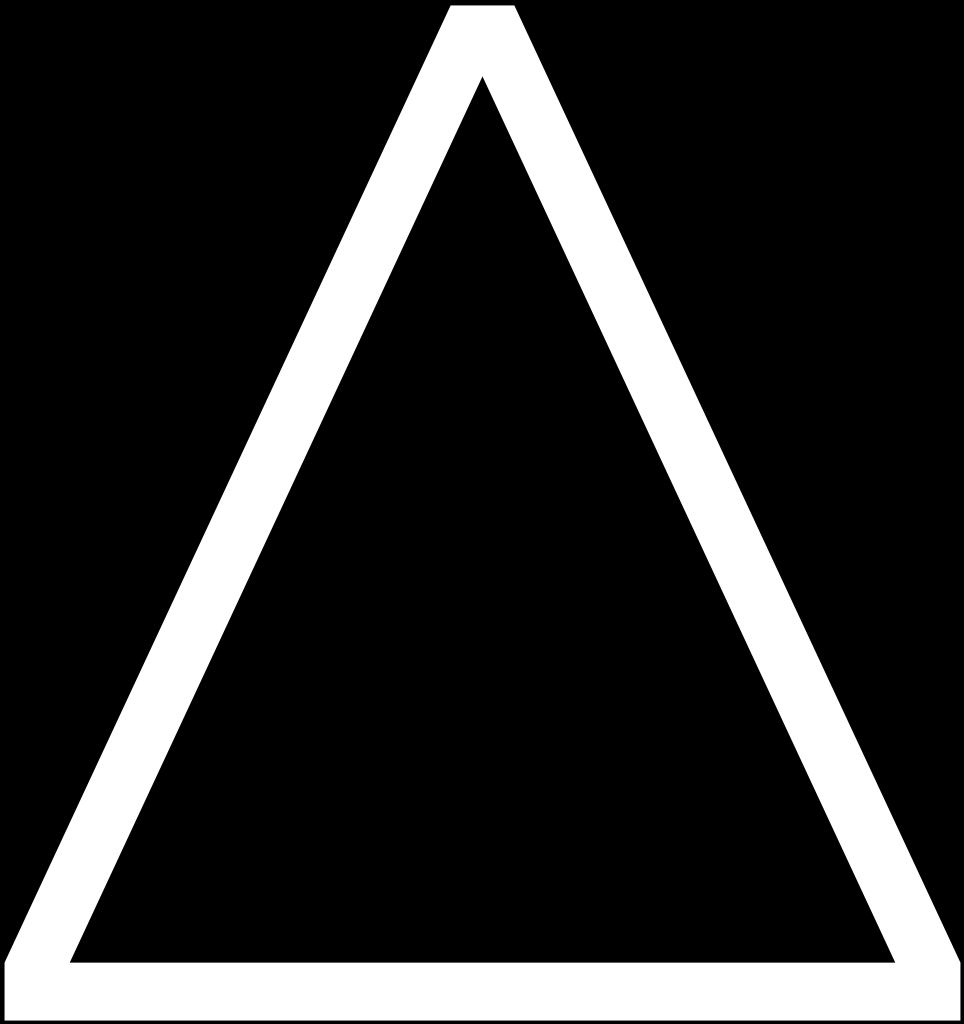
700 em ..... Cap Height

478 em ..... X-height

0 em ..... Baseline

-245 em ..... Descender



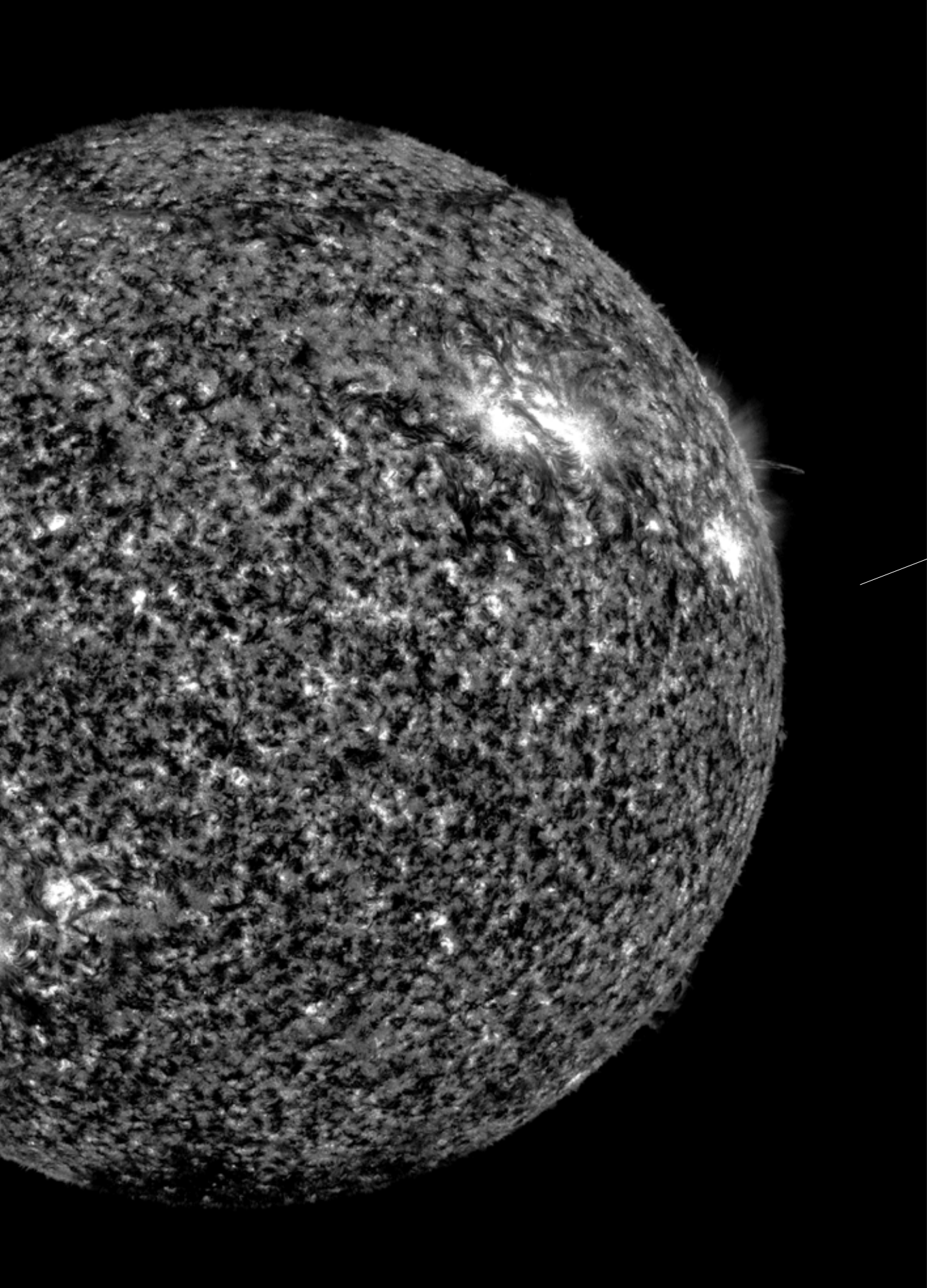




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MY GOD,  
IT'S FULL OF  
STARS

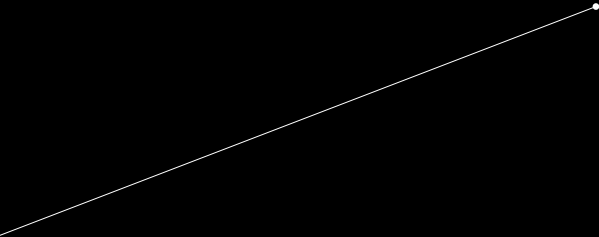




Surface temperature is between

5027°C

5727°C





# GATTACA

They used to say that a child conceived in love has a greater chance of happiness. They don't say that anymore.

