

## Original Letters

Just to clarify how the letters were originally built-probably in the mid 1980's. I'm unfortunately old enough to remember how this was done!

A clear Letraset film of the typeface, in this case Optima, was put on to a light projector. The projector was then set a distance from a wall to blow the text up to the required size. Paper was taped to the wall and the out-line was traced with a pounce wheel (which put a line of pin pricks along the edge of the projected image). Paper was then removed and taped to the sheet of metal where a chalk bag was tapped along the pattern holes to transfer the shape to the metal. This was then cut using a jigsaw. There was no repeat-ability to this process so there are differences to all the letters that were built. On top, the projection also created refraction so the letters are not quite square.

The original typeface, Optima, that was used does have a number of characteristics to it that gives it its look. Firstly, it is a flair serif so the ends of the letter stroke flair out consistently across the alphabet. The islands in letters such as P,B,R - lower case d,b,p,g are also the same or inverted to make the typeface a family.

As you can see from the photo attached this means that you have less than perfect seams and curves on the letters. This was fine for letters that were only to be viewed from 35 floors away.



Now that there are apartments facing the back of the letters and the light source is a single pin light rather than a solid illuminating face it is important that the artwork is both consistent and coherent or it will look poor.

## Methodology

Full size tracings of the letter faces were done when letters were removed from the roof. The backs and inside rims are inconsistent so we focused on the letter silhouette which is the defining shape of the letter.

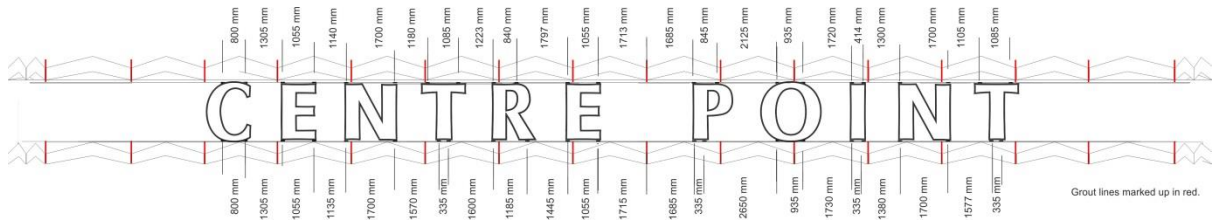
We laid out these patterns on grids 150mm square and re-drew the letters in Adobe Illustrator. Gaps that were in the letter faces were removed, curves were smoothed, & corners were sharpened.

We then over-laid the letters and it was quite clear that there were a number of discrepancies between the letters. Most are quite small, strokes of letters, cross strokes, shape of islands, location of islands, leg flair, all were slightly different no more that 15mm in most cases. Most of these discrepancies could be easily accounted for with the processes from above that the typeface was put through as well as the original fabrication technique.

The original clear design intent was obviously to put Optima on the building so we corrected all the text so the original typeface intent was adhered to. Effects of refraction were removed, letter strokes evened up, cross strokes and islands evened up so the typeface is consistent across the reading. This process also was done to balance up any variances that may have happened in the digitisation of the letters. Anything we have done here would be considered best practice for typesetting setting graphics. We are still adhering to the original letter spacing below.



## Result



As you can see there are no real visible differences in the overall layout or letter style. Character of the original design intent has been retained, but importantly now when viewed from up close the letters are smooth and crisp.

