



Univers:
Virtual Reality
Type Specimen
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From the digitized aesthetics of the 80s and 90s to contemporary experiments with augmented reality, 3D typography has been a constant topic of interest in type design. However, most experiments are illustratively fabricated to construct a 3D illusion or using physical materials. In other cases, 3D typography is presented as a 2-dimensional object that happens to exist in a 3-dimensional space, such as in augmented reality applications. What this type of interaction lacks is a true sense of immersion which can come from the utilization of virtual reality (VR) tools, such as CAVE 2—an all-encompassing virtual reality environment that does not require the user to wear a head mounted display.

Univers is an interactive and immersive typography specimen. In graphic design, a type specimen is a document that provides an overview of a typeface and highlights its various weights and most notable features. This virtual type specimen provides the opportunity for the design students to experience dimensional type that not only exists to represent language and describe objects, but becomes an object itself. The environment is modeled after the kitsch aesthetics of early 90s educational keyboarding games and is geared towards an audience of student designers, where the goal is not only to learn but to have fun while you do it.

This exploration allows participants to experience type at a micro level, directly opposing our common interaction with letter forms, which is usually from a macro perspective. When interacting with *Univers*, participants gain a new perspective and appreciation for type design and its possibilities in a 3-dimensional space. As of now, very little research has been done in the field of VR typography. Therefore, this exploration demonstrates how our ubiquitous typographic systems were conceived prior to the conception of a virtual reality space, where almost anything is possible. With new VR technologies enabling explorations such as this type specimen, we can begin to test the limits of 3D type.

Note: Univers is a typeface (font), designed by Adrian Frutiger in 1954, and is one of the most popular modern typefaces of the 21st century.