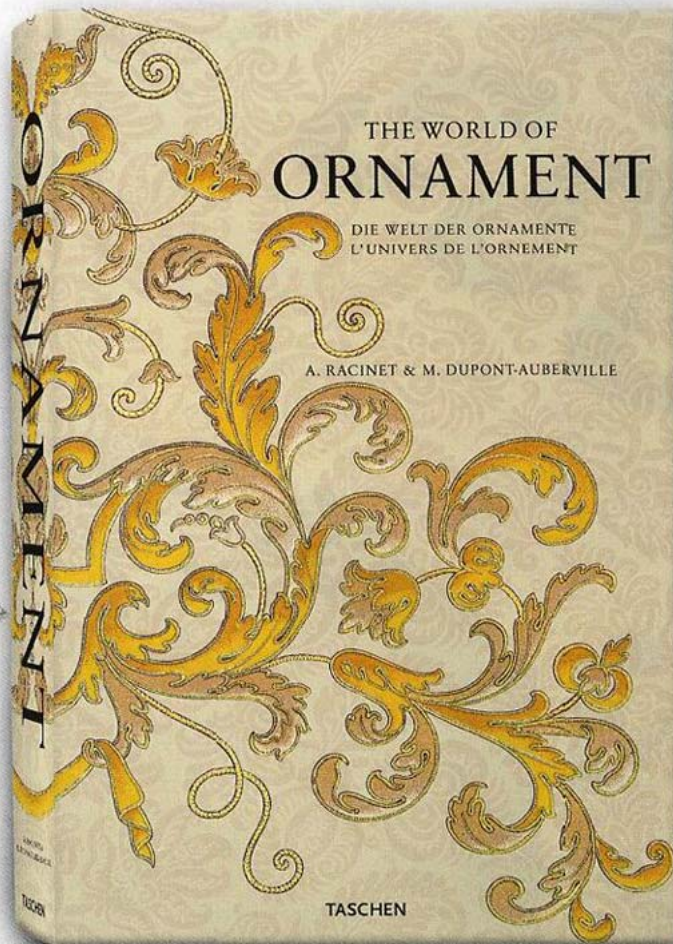


In print | The World of Ornament

world of orna- ment



Another thumper from Taschen, this time an encyclopaedic survey of ornament. Better still, you can take and use whatever you like!

Words by Gillian Serisier

There is always something wonderful about a new book and, if it brings a wealth of experience, a passionate beauty or an insightful observation, it will inform, challenge and elucidate our lives. *The World of Ornament* is a book to cherish and an object of beauty in itself: it is in fact a truly sumptuous publication.

More startling than the gorgeous reproductions though, are the waived copyrights. This is something to be checked twice in our age of copyright, but there it is, unrestricted reproduction permitted, and not just from the book but also from the CD ROM, which holds every image in easily identified and navigated folders. Speaking from the Cologne office of Taschen, art historian and instigator of the project, Petra Lamers-Schuetze comments on this decision: "We felt they [the images] should be used; it didn't make sense to publish without giving the right to use everything. It was out of print and lost its own copyright so it seems it is the best book on the subject with its ornamental character perfect for designers to use and develop ideas."

The book itself is an amalgam of two of the best encyclopaedic collections of ornament from the 19th century: Auguste Racinet's *L'Ornement polychrome* (two volumes, 1869-1888) and M Dupont-Auberville's *L'Ornement des tissus* (1877). For this publication Lamers-Schuetze searched for the best possible copies to reproduce from. Eventually the Racinet volumes were found and purchased; however, a perfect copy of the Dupont-Auberville was not available for sale. This slight glitch in proceedings was overcome by the very generous loan of an "exceptional copy" by a book antiquarian and the process of compiling into one publication began.

The original publications extended the tradition of 'ideas books' used for interior decorating, pattern-making and fabric design into an encyclopaedic reference to the patterns of the known world and antiquity. Ranging from Egyptian to Polynesian, and African to Chinese, the patterns have been sourced from fabric, art, engraving, carving, illuminations and caves, with a short text for each. The various periods and centuries have also been mined for ornamentation with the Classical, Byzantine and the Renaissance all yielding pattern and detail in great quantity. The original function of the 'ideas book' remains true of this reproduction despite the decidedly 19th century interpretations of the collected patterns, making this an exceptional storyboarding or inspirational tool.

Originally executed using the chromolithographic process of printing, which utilises a series of plate lithographs in layers to achieve a rich and multi-hued image, this bibliotheca represents the renaissance of publishing. Remarkable objects in themselves, these books commanded a following of collectors who subscribed to the publishers for no reason other than to own the object.

More than a means for enabling the mass reproduction of patterning and ornamentation, these books were the starting point for new ideas fostering movements such as art nouveau where pattern and ornament are reinterpreted to a new model of style and elegance.

By allowing unfettered reproduction of the patterns and ornaments in *The World of Ornament*, Taschen is following not only the tradition of Racinet and Dupont-Auberville, but also the spirit in which these remarkable works were assembled. That it has created a CD to make this even easier speaks volumes for Taschen as a publishing house. "The CD ROM makes sense. We thought right from the beginning that it would be a good idea," says Lamers-Schuetze.