

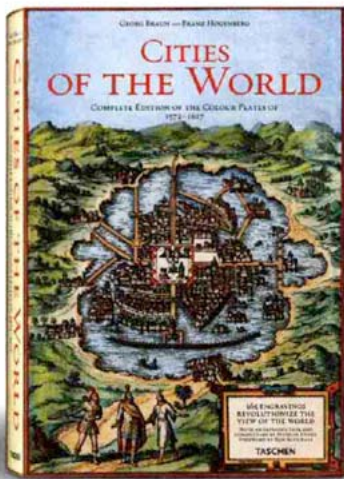
City Lights

A GORGEOUS FACSIMILE BRINGS RENAISSANCE-ERA URBANISM TO LIFE.



**CITIES OF THE WORLD:
COMPLETE EDITION OF THE COLOUR PLATES 1572-1617**

By Georg Braun and Franz Hogenberg, edited by Stephen Füssel
Taschen, \$200



BENEDIKT TASCHEN has done it again. That is, the German and international publishing visionary has conceived and sumptuously produced yet another massive facsimile volume that brings the European bibliographic past to vivid life and makes affordable something that in the original would be out of reach to all but the richest collectors. *Cities of the World*, a comprehensive illustrated compendium of urban life as it stood at the end of the 16th century, is a masterwork of bookmaking that belongs on the shelf next to Taschen's previous efforts, such as Albertus Seba's *Cabinet of Natural Curiosities* and Jean-Baptiste Bourguery's *Atlas of Anatomy*—if it doesn't collapse that shelf with its sheer weight.

A lifework for author-editor Georg Braun and engraver-in-chief Franz Hogenberg,

Cities of the World attempted, in seven volumes, a daunting cartographic feat: to compress all the cities of the contemporary world between covers, in pictures and words. Published in Latin, German and French versions, the volumes span the globe from London to Lübeck, extending as far east as Damascus and as far west as Mexico City and Cuzco. For their information, these two determined Germans relied not only on documentary research but also on contributions from travelers and mapmakers, which they freely solicited, in a manner that prefigures the interactive Web culture of today: "Should anyone not find their hometown or native city in either of these first two books," wrote the obliging Braun, "I would kindly invite them to draw it from life and send it to me. Then I will have it faithfully copied by the skilled Franz Hogenberg ..."

Hogenberg's skills were manifold. His illustrations, engraved on copper, are a quantum leap ahead of the woodcuts used in earlier efforts. In *Cities of the World* the finely incised lines are filled in with color, and a system of mixed perspectives and scales makes it possible to compress a tremendous amount into one image. One sees the cities from above as well as looking down the streets, while along the sides of the pages are other images representing local industries, historical events and political emblems. On the ground, tiny human figures go about their business. This book is a little like Jorge Luis Borges' magical "aleph," by which any location in the universe is visible from one vantage point. On a more mundane note, it's like a paper version of the satellite view on Google Maps.

This astonishing and beautiful book contains 363 hand-colored engravings, not only full-page reproductions but huge fold-outs. The image quality is superb, and the paper is stiff enough to withstand folding and unfolding. The all-cloth covers are worthy of the contents within. As one turns the pages, urban history comes to life.

—JOHN DORFMAN