

COLLECT THE SET

**ARTS & ARCHITECTURE 1945-1954:  
THE COMPLETE REPRINT**

Ten volumes, with an introduction by David Travers. Cologne: Taschen. 2008. £400

This mammoth facsimile edition of *Arts & Architecture* magazine is the latest great stroke of absurdist publishing from Taschen, leaders in the field, whose heavyweight tomes continue to cripple coffee table across the globe. It slipstreams a similar venture with *Domus* magazine, the idea being to reprint and repackage leading design and architecture publications verbatim, complete with adverts, to celebrate the questing spirit of a particular age.

John Entenza's *Arts & Architecture* spanned a critical time in recent American history, from the end of the Second World War to the summer of love, in which mid-century modernism, now the predictable toast of style magazines everywhere, got going with a vengeance in a ferment of experimentation, enquiry and élan. This wallet-busting enterprise covers the period from 1945 to 1954, and a second volume (charting the changing waters from 1955 to 1967) is promised next year.

Some quick statistics: 10 years, 10 slipcases, 118 issues and more than 6,000 pages. It's a Brobdingnagian visual and textual banquet, staffed by an illustrious cast of architects, artists, writers and graphic designers, all refreshingly cocked and ready to seize the possibilities of post-war social and cultural renewal. Entenza's particular fixation, to find a way of making decent, low-cost homes on small plots, spawned the famous Case Study House Program, which unfolds here tantalisingly in real time through reports of the latest commissions and critiques of the finished products. Though much of the work and its proponents are now hugely familiar (the Eames, Ellwood, Soriano, Koenig, et al), seeing it in its original published context gives a sense of the radical energy that infused those heady times. Nothing like it had ever been done before, in terms of either architecture or magazine publishing, and though avant garde is an overused soubriquet, here it rang true. Entenza's rhetoric and ideas were brought to life by graphic pioneers such as Alvin Lustig and Herb Matter, whose abstract, economical layouts helped to forge a new visual language. Yet for all its flair and ground breaking, *Arts & Architecture* was a surprisingly minority interest publication. Its circulation never topped 10,000 – a figure that would have today's publishing directors