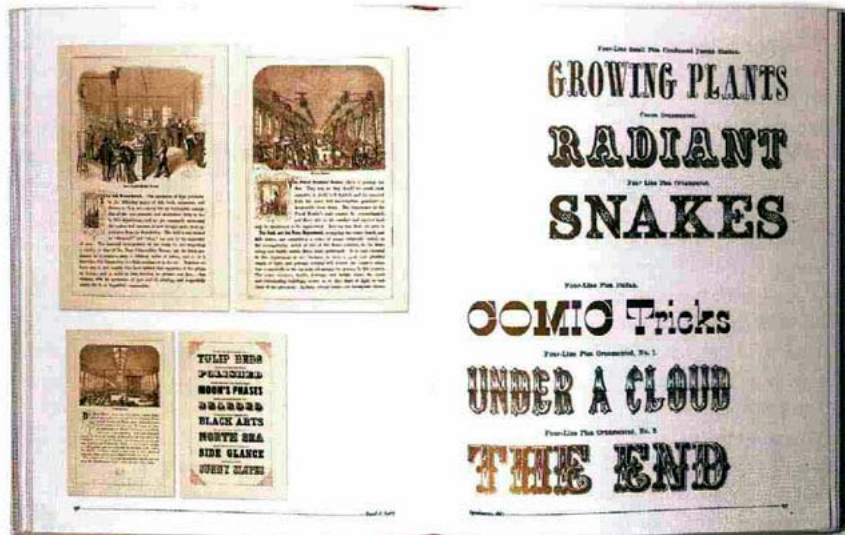


BOOKS

My Type

AN ENTHUSIAST'S COLLECTION REVEALS THE BEAUTIES OF PRINTING.



**TYPE: A VISUAL HISTORY
OF TYPEFACES AND
GRAPHIC STYLES
VOLUME 1, 1628-1900**

Edited by Cees W. de Jong,
Alston W. Purvis, Jan Tholenaar
Taschen, \$59.99



TYPOGRAPHICAL DESIGN IS the ultimate "art that conceals itself." That means you're not supposed to notice the font you're reading, or rather, that you're supposed to appreciate it only subliminally, without being distracted from the substance of the text. Unless, of course, you're a typography geek. In that case, you definitely notice. You know your Gotham from your Goudy, can distinguish the minutest variations of Caslon, and have come to hate Helvetica. Dutchman Jan Tholenaar is more than just a geek; he's a type collector. He has devoted decades to the acquisition of what are known as type specimens, with the same loving care and scholarship that others lavish on paintings or drawings.

Type specimens are artifacts of the printer's trade, intended for the purpose of showing prospective clients what the various typefaces look like and what they're capable of doing. Basically, they are sheets of paper or similar materials, often bound in covers and printed with samples of type faces, either short texts or simply letters, numbers and punctuation marks. Not too long ago, Tholenaar writes in his introduction, such specimens were easily and cheaply obtainable; today "they've become scarce and expensive. ... If I go into a bookseller's ... and ask if they have any type specimens, often the reply is, 'No, and whenever I do get one, it goes quickly; they seem to be real collector's items nowadays.'"

With this book (which is the first of two planned volumes; the second is forthcoming next month), Taschen has placed the cream of Tholenaar's collection within the reach of the reader, with the publishing house's usual attention to faithful and beautiful reproduction. The title positions the book as a comprehensive survey of the history of typography, but it's more a reflection of one man's taste. *Type* is no dry

catalogue; in fact, it's delightfully eccentric.

Tholenaar has a soft spot for 19th-century printing, which is often looked down upon today, with modernist design in favor. "It is Victorian printing, in particular, of which I'm particularly fond," he writes. "Sometimes it is truly lovely, and sometimes only beautiful in its ugliness." Many of the examples shown in this book are in the "Victorian fantasy" category, for example, for "ten-line pica comic" we see the letters D and C made up of whimsical human heads wearing caps. Many specimens have colorful borders and illustrations. In addition to the Latin script, there are type specimens for Greek, Russian, Hebrew, Arabic, Ottoman Turkish and Hindi, many of these produced in Germany.

The unifying factor of Tholenaar's collection is that all the type come from the so-called "lead era," in which the characters were cast in hot metal. That takes us from Gutenberg to the linotype machine. The computer is capable of a great deal in typography, but for Tholenaar and many other collectors, there is no romance in it.

—JOHN DORFMAN