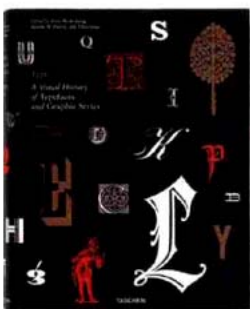




Type: A Visual History of Typefaces and Graphic Styles, Volume 2, 1901–1938



Edited by Cees W. de Jong, Alston W. Purvis and Jan Tholenaar
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Dutch publisher Jan Tholenaar owned one of the largest collections of vintage type specimens. These small booklets were promotional pieces aimed primarily at printers, each one either showing off a sampling of the typefaces

offered by a foundry or focusing on a specific one, displaying the characters at various sizes and settings and perhaps suggesting layouts and design combinations. Although he participated in the planning, sadly Tholenaar passed away just prior to the publication of this two-volume set of coffee table books. They are a glorious tribute to this now obsolete bit of ephemera that combined type, commerce, design, advertising and visual seduction. The first book covers specimens from 1628–1900, with concentration on the abundance of splendid Victorian-era materials, when industrial advancements made it possible to create elaborate and colorful ornamentation in printing. *Volume 2* covers the first decades of the 20th century, a transitional period during which typefaces increasingly became known by designer and not just by foundry, a period of rapid change in graphic design from the flowery and symbolic decorations of the Arts and Crafts movement to the geometry of modernism.

De Jong adds just a brief introduction in *Volume 2* and Purvis



provides a quick overview of the history of printing, foundries and type design. But, although the story of how Tholenaar amassed his collection is told in *Volume 1*, in the second book the stage is left to the artifacts

themselves—and that's actually

fine. Beautifully printed in color, the book's large pages allow many specimen sheets to be printed at, or larger than, actual size. Along with Arts and Crafts and lots of blackletter, there are designs in the style of Art Nouveau, Art Deco and the cleaner sans serifs favored by the young avant garde. Well-known type designers like Rudolf Koch (Kabel), George Peignot (Cochin) and Peter Behrens (Behrens Kursiv) are represented along with lesser known ones like Max Salzmann (Dolmen) and Hans Karl Gustav Möhring (Elegant Grotesk). Major foundries featured include D. Stempel, H. Berthold and J. G. Schelter & Giesecke.



Ornaments, fleurons, illustrative cuts, dingbats and other decorative items (*schmuck* in German) make up some of the most charming examples: flowers and leafy vines, dragons and gargoyles, Christmas tableaux, court jesters, elaborate initials that mimicked rubricated letters of the Middle Ages, and many other imaginative non-alphabetic elements. *Flinsch's Punkt Schmuck* from 1910 is a piquant display of ornamental dots that would be a timeless addition to any design today; and 1927's *Blickfang Schmuck* is a collection of geometric compositions in primary colors built up from the circle, square, triangle and line (and one lone heart).

The book also includes a few issues of *The Linotype Bulletin*, published by Mergenthaler in New York and, although the text is small, it's a delight to read the bits of the articles shown, like "The Autobiography of Capital B: Being a Graphic Tale of Creation and Embodiment, Not Without a Certain Punch" from 1923. Purvis writes, "The texts used in some type-specimen books merit a separate study. One often encounters witticisms, patriotic admonitions, literary references and quotations, writings on typographic history, and texts that promote the type being displayed." One particularly noteworthy example is the 1913 booklet *The Packard Series of Type*, which has this pithy observation, "Type is the finger post pointing to the difference between the progressive and ambitious printer and the person who just plods along with antiquated materials."

These books are mostly about display. Missing is the context that places these type specimens within political, cultural and design history. The volumes are already large and heavy; with the entire text presented in English, French and German, perhaps there just wasn't room for more narrative. Each volume includes a key card that unlocks an online trove of thousands of high-resolution scans. The end result is less text, but more type. Thus Tholenaar has truly shared his visual riches and type lovers will be grateful. —Angelynn Grant