

Culture



Above, the cover of "M to M of M/M (Paris)," published by Thames & Hudson, with Mathias Augustyniak, left, and Michaël Amzalag, right, photographed by Inez & Vinoodh. At right, a spread from the book, written by the British design historian Emily King. The book is organized around a particular alphabet, from "Mi" for Michaël to "Ma" for Mathias.



M/M (PARIS)/THAMES & HUDSON/DESIGNED BY GRAPHIC THOUGHT FACILITY

The books that can be judged by their covers

LONDON

Power of print becomes evident when content is presented in a clever way

BY ALICE RAWSTHORN

Whenever anyone drafts a hit list of familiar things that are likely to be rendered obsolete by digital technology, the printed book is almost always near the top.

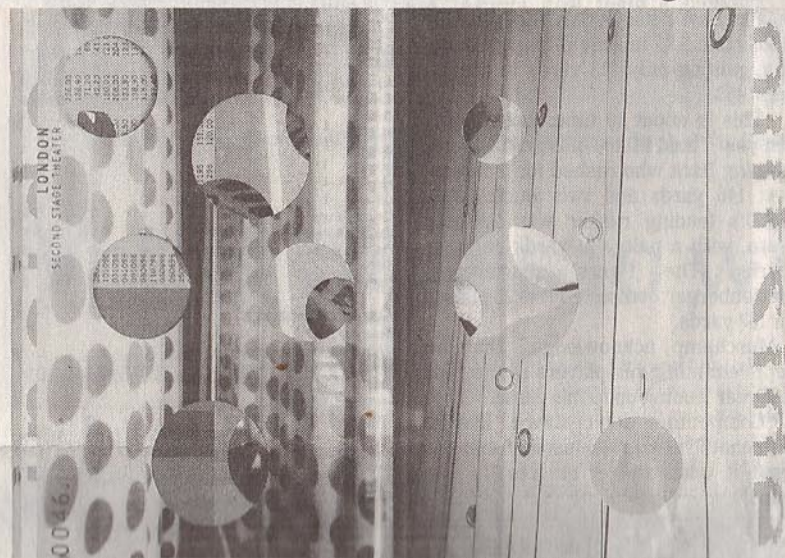
And why not? Who can justify wasting paper to print bulky books whose pages are prone to staining or tearing, when the digital and electronic versions are so much more convenient to use and store? But even though we don't need printed books as much as we once did, we can always be persuaded to want them, if they are cleverly designed.

If a designer produces a printed book that is compelling, possibly because it is luscious to look at, or presents its contents in an unusually ingenious or lucid way, we will still long to read it. Here are four recently published books on art and design whose designers have done just that.

"M TO M OF M/M (PARIS)"

Whenever Paul Neale and his colleagues at the British design group Graphic Thought Facility mentioned that they were designing a book about the work of their French counterparts, Michaël Amzalag and Mathias Augustyniak of M/M (Paris), the response was the same. "Everyone said: 'Why aren't they doing it themselves?'" Mr. Neale recalled. "Designing a book for other graphic designers is always tricky. We wanted to avoid producing a pastiche of M/M's work or a neutral response. Our guiding principle was to make their work look great and as digestible as possible."

Written by the British design histori-



an Emily King, "M to M of M/M (Paris)" is organized around the particular alphabet, a defining theme of M/M's output, though this alphabet runs from "Mi" for Michaël, to "Ma" for Mathias. The book begins with Mr. Amzalag's interview with Ms. King on page 311, and ends with Mr. Augustyniak's on page 310. Placed in alphabetical order between them are visual depictions of each design project and interviews with M/M's collaborators, with page 1 falling near the middle.

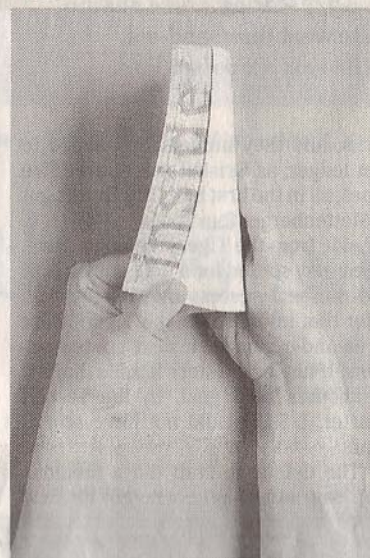
A portrait of Mr. Amzalag is on the front cover, and one of Mr. Augustyniak on the back. Both are based on Polaroids taken in 2000 as test shots for an album sleeve they were designing for the French musician Etienne Daho. "Book covers can be killers," Mr. Neale said. "We knew we wanted to use portraits of Michaël and Matt for this book, but not which ones so we chose the Etienne Daho portrait as a placeholder for our first presentation. As soon as they saw it, they remembered the Polaroids."

"VALERIA NAPOLEONE'S CATALOGUE OF EXQUISITE RECIPES"

When Valeria Napoleone decided to make a book of the recipes she had learned from her mother and grandmother as a child in Lombardy, northern Italy, she determined to combine her favorite family dishes with another love, contemporary art. Now based in London, Ms. Napoleone has an extensive collection of work by women artists and chose to illustrate her book with relevant works by them, including Tomma Abts, Spartacus Chetwynd, Aleksandra Mir and Francis Upritchard.

"The book has over 130 recipes and over 150 images, but I didn't want the connection between them to be literal," Ms. Napoleone said. "I wanted the designers to act as curators by orchestrating the location and lay-out of each image in a fresh and unexpected way. When I looked into different designers, I felt that Abäke really got the book."

Abäke, which is also based in London, wanted the book to reflect Ms. Napo-



PHOTOGRAPHS BY IRMA BOOM

leone's character and the personal nature of the project, and devised bespoke typefaces for the cover and inside pages. The former is inspired by the font used in the video game Pac-Man, and the latter based on the elegant typography designed by Giambattista Bodoni in northern Italy at the turn of the 19th century. The cover is bound in cloth like old-fashioned cookery books (though this cloth, called "Pepperoni," shimmers) and the paper is one that will age beautifully, especially if splattered with food.

"COLLECTION BOOK: MUSEUM BOIJMANS VAN BEUNINGEN"

Cataloging a museum's collection is fraught with complications, especially if, like Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam, it owns some 140,000 objects ranging from priceless old master paintings to a computer. When the

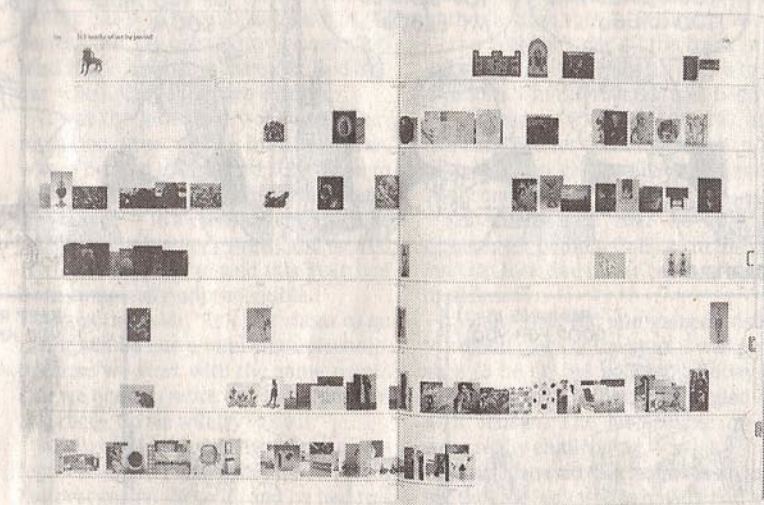
Dutch designer Joost Grootens was asked to chart its contents in a book, he decided to focus on 163 pieces, but to present them within the wider context of the collection. Mr. Grootens, who is best known for redesigning the atlas for the digital age, says that he envisages all of his books as "tools," and this one as "a printed database."

The design process began by developing a software tool to sort images of the pieces in the collection according to different criteria including size, age and type. (Among the themes are: Rotterdam, black and white, portraits of artists and, my favorite, tables.) The software also specified the layout of each page, and constructed charts to describe aspects of the collection's evolution. "Aesthetics did not come into play," Mr. Grootens said. "But there were all manner of visual surprises."

"MOVEMENTS 25% — INTRODUCTION TO A WORKING PROCESS"

Last but not least is "Movements 25% — Introduction to a Working Process," a book on the work of the Dutch designer Petra Blaisse in textiles and landscapes. Designed by Ms. Blaisse's compatriot Irma Boom, it was originally published in 2000, and has been reprinted to coincide with her exhibition in the Dutch Pavilion at the Venice Architecture Biennale.

Ms. Boom was struck by the recurrence of holes throughout Ms. Blaisse's work, and chose them as a defining motif in the book, which she modeled on the die-cut picture books made by the German-born artist Dieter Roth in the 1950s and 1960s. If you flip through it from the front, you will see images of Ms. Blaisse's landscape projects on matte paper, and the word "Outside" printed on the page edges. Flipping from the back reveals the textiles on glossy paper, and the word "Inside."



STUDIO JOOST GROOTENS

Above, inside the "Collection Book: Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen," designed by Studio Joost Grootens. Top, "Movement 25% — Introduction to a Working Process," designed by Irma Boom.

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