Notes and news

BOOKS & PRINTING IN THE NETHERLANDS 1995

January

The Museum of the Book/Museum Meermanno-Westreenianum in The Hague has made an important acquisition. The collector A.S.A. Struik gave the nation his collection of foreign bookbindings, the oldest dating from the end of the nineteenth century. He had previously given his collection of Dutch bindings to the Amsterdam University Library. [de Volkskrant 04.01.1995, NRC Handelsblad 04.01.1995, De Boekenwereld, 12 (1996), no. 3 (February)]

Boekblad, the magazine for Dutch booksellers, has changed its body type to Quadraat by Fred Smeijers. Smeijers designed an accompanying bold condensed heading type especially for Boekblad. In a letter to the editor, E.G. van Velzen declares this variant, named ‘Boekblad’, to be ugly and a plagiarism (of Lectura). Fred Smeijers replies, refuting the charges convincingly, in the same issue. [Boekblad 20.01.1995, see also 06.01.1995]

Boekengek (78 pp.) by Hub. Hubben appeared as a ‘Copper Monday’ publication of the publisher De Buitenkant, typesetter Chang Chi Lan-Ying, printer Jan de Jong, and Minotaurus Bookshop (specialized in books about books), all in Amsterdam. It reprints a number of Hubben’s columns on books and printing written for the morning paper de Volkskrant. This booklet, bound in red velvet, was designed by Jan Willem Stas.

On 23 January the life of Alje Olthof (b. 1935) came to an end. Olthof was a book designer highly regarded by cognisanti. He worked for various publishers. The announcement of his death in de Volkskrant on 27 January came from De Arbeiderspers, Querido, and Weekbladpers Groep. Others included Meulenhoff, Wolters-Noordhoff, Gary Schwartz, Brill, and Architectura & Natura Pers. His last book design was Jan van Male fotograaf, with text by Nicolaas Matsier. This Architectura & Natura Press publication received an award in 1996 as one of The Best Book Designs of 1995. In his obituary in Boekblad (3 February), Gary Schwartz wrote: ‘For Alje, typographic quality wasn’t just a professional achievement, it was a part of his attitude toward life. He worked not so much from a vision of design as from a feeling for how things ought to be: clothes, behaviour, language, personal and professional relations — everything was to be thorough and highly competent, with good taste and suited to the circumstances — but still pithy, convincing, and executed with panache. Alje was ever comparing and judging — with plenty of sympathy and understanding, but with his aesthetic knife close at hand.’ [NRC Handelsblad 26.01.1995, Compres 20 (1995), no. 3 (8 February)]

On 26 January Rank Xerox organized a hands-on symposium at the Technical University in Delft covering the latest developments in publishing under the title,
The medium is the message. [Boekblad 06.01.1995, NRC Handelsblad 21.01.1995]

In two rooms of the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, Walter Nikkels has designed two poems by the Irish poet Seamus Heaney. [de Volkskrant 26.01.1995]

Naar de letter. Handboek editiewetenschap [To the letter: a handbook of editorial scholarship] (460 pp.) by Marita Mathijsen has been published under the auspices of the Constantijn Huygens Instituut of the Koninklijke Nederlandse Academie van Wetenschappen. [Boekblad 27.01.1995, Vrij Nederland 27.05.1995, De Boekenwereld, 13 (1996), no. 1 (October)]

In January the Dutch Type Library in 's-Hertogenbosch issued a type specimen, vtrl. fontoverzicht (52 pp.), in a small edition. It is an in-house laserprinter production.

Emigre, a publishing house located in Sacramento, California, issued a type specimen around January. Emigre fonts (64 pp.) includes work by Rudy VanderLans (Ruud van der Lans), formerly a student at the Koninklijke Academie voor Beeldende Kunsten in The Hague.

The printing office H. Gianotten b.v. in Tilburg commemorated their 75th anniversary with In-druk, van wiergedruk tot grafschrift by Ed Schilders, apparently issued around January. Schilders follows the path of a text from typesetting house to bindery, and offers many historical anecdotes.

February

On 1 February an Amsterdam branch of FontShop - a firm that issues and distributes digital type - opened at Westerstraat 176. [Compres 20 (1995), no. 3 (8 February)]

Het Scryption - a Tilburg museum devoted to the technology and design of letterforms and office equipment - maintained a popular approach in their exhibition on the history of our alphabet: 'A Is Een Koetje (dat staat op zijn kop).'</The exhibition ran from 7 February through 18 June, and was accompanied by a catalogue. 'Letterunica' and 'lettermultiples' by Ewald Spieker (b. 1950) were on display at the same museum from 7 February through 13 May. The Spieker exhibition appeared as part of the project 'Kunstkabinet,' which presents work on the dividing line between letterforms and art. [press release 06.01.1995, de Volkskrant 11.02.1995]

From 16 February through 31 March the Library of the Royal Dutch Book Trade Association at the Amsterdam University Library devoted a small exhibition to the nineteenth-century author Multatuli and his printers and publishers.

The calendar Letters kijken, written and designed by Gerrit Noordzij (b. 1931) for the Bankiva Group, won the trade journal Graficus’s annual calendar contest. [Boekblad 24.02.1995]

Adriaan de Jonge and Vincent Westzaan published Cum libello in angelo (Amsterdam 1995), around February (though still as a New Year's publication) in an edition of 200 copies. It was written by Frank E. Blokland, who compares the metal-type era with the digital. This booklet (21 pp.) is the first publication to use the typeface vtrl. Fleischmann, a revival by the German Erhard Kaiser.

A new issue of Gerrit Noordzij's newsletter Letterletter appeared, probably around February: 'The Burgundian issue' (no. 13, 16 pp.). Letterletter is published twice a year by The Enschedé Font Foundry under the aegis of the Association Typographique Internationale.