

Investigation to Irma Boom, a Dutch graphic designer

The SHV Think Book.

Irma Boom was born in Holland, Lochem in 15 December 1960. She studied at the art academy in Enschede.

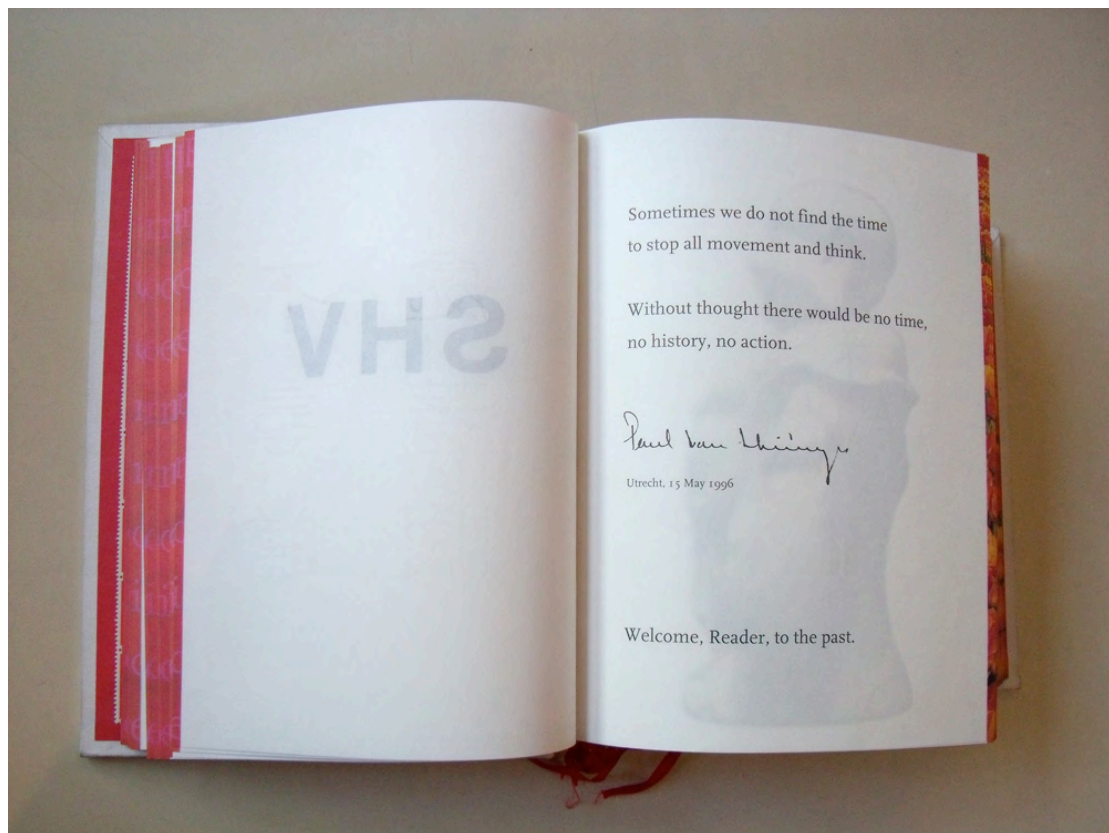
Soon she caught attention with her very precise and dedicated books and posters. She is an outstanding designer, that dared to do things that were very uncommon.

In 1991 she started for herself the Irma Boom office in the centre of Amsterdam. In this same year she started a project together with the art historian Johan Pijnappel and Paul Fentener van Vlissingen, who owned the SHV company, a coal trading company from origin but later on it also had businesses in food.

It is important that Fentener van Vlissingen was not just an ordinary head chief. He was a very good leader. He was the seventh generation of the family since his ancestor started it. The company has a deep history that goes through all the changes in the world and an economy.

Fentener van Vlissingen is a philanthropist that supports several humanistic projects. When he searched for someone to design a jubilee book, he asked Irma Boom to do it. It was a work of five years and it is a good representation of all the work and effort and love that has been putted in the company itself.

I saw the book myself, thanks to a meeting that Henk Groenendijk arranged for me with his sister Pau, who owns several works of Irma Boom. She also has the very rare SHV Think Book in her collection.



I didn't really expect that I would be so much impressed by the design of a book, until I was seeing it.

This book is a very exiting journey in every aspect.

At first you feel that Irma Boom totally got into her subject and her principal Fentener van Vlissingen. She had access to the personal archives of the family and the database of the company.

The effects in the book closely relate to the information she got. She composes the book out of the information that is there and brings it all together in an almost personal way, and I mean personal from the point of view of the family. (She doesn't let her own idea's or stories interfere with her work.)

Irma Boom was aware of the fact that no one really reads a book that has 2136 pages. So she made sure that you can read it in several ways. She filled it with a lot of jokes and references. She also includes quite some pictures of the dogs that the family did have, because mister van Vlissingen loves dogs.

The book has a white cover with only a relief that gives the title away. The idea behind it is that the book has to be used, touched, the white has to be contaminated with the dirt of the hands, and like that the letters in the relief show themselves after a while. (As a metaphor for the company that arose from hard working and the passing of the time?)

Behind the cover, in the space between the bounding and the stiff back of the book, is placed a mirror. If you peer in between you read the dates 1896 and 1996. The beginning and the present.

When you read the book from left to right, the paper cut shows a field of tulips, and when you read it from right to left, a poem appears on in the paper cut.



In the red you see white letters that do form a poem.

The photo's from the archive in the book are printed like they were on verge paper, a type of paper that was used in the 18th century.



Verge paper Printing effect, close up.

She uses the logo of the company as a monogram in the paper, the papers are marked, see trough, perforated and detailed with different types of ink. But they are not decorative, all these elements are coherent and follow the logic of the concept. There is a lot to explore in this Think Book!

For her work Irma Boom got a lot of awards and she is asked for many other projects as well. She has a prominent place in the Dutch design world.

Links to: Irma Boom's website <http://www.irmaboom.nl/>

Extra image SHV book and other works

<http://www.designmuseum.org/design/irma-boom>

To have a look inside the book

<http://www.kb.nl/galerie/stijl/059shv.html>

Eye Magazine article "the book as a sculpture

<http://www.eyemagazine.com/review.php?id=71&rid=474>

Interview with Irma Boom by Peter Bilak

http://www.peterb.sk/readings/irma_boom.html

finally the Chinese version

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/katanan/2953324353/in/photostream/>