



Introduction

Take a seat.

Boot up the machine.

Settle in.

Choose something.

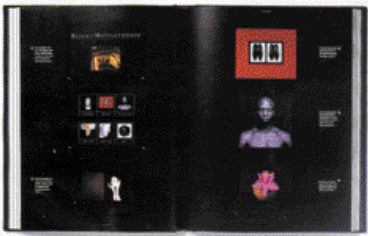
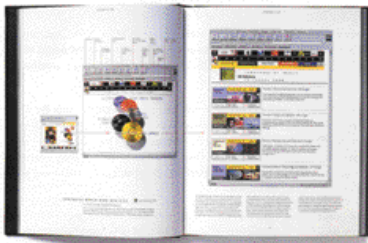
- Make a choice, and Cézanne's Nudes in a Landscape emerges from the darkness . . . make another choice, and scrutinize the contours of the brush strokes.
- Make a choice, and ask an expert about your transmission, which has been on the fritz lately.
- Make a choice, and flip through a catalogue of dingbats, fuzzy fonts, and clip art. . . make another choice, and make you own.
- Make a choice, and watch Charles Bukowski discuss the sorry state of poetry as he takes another draught of wine.
- Make a choice, and four spidery lines in blue, green, red, and gold shoot out from the Y-axis of a graph to describe the decline and fall of U.S. interest rates, the Japanese Yen, the Dow Jones Purchasing Managers Index, and five socially responsible mutual funds.
- Make a choice, and erase a field of stars with the arm of a child to reveal a collage of dramatic beauty and unexplored possibility.

This is the New Media. In our hands is a range of powerful tools created with digital technology. As if a magician's wand had passed over our desks, designers have been granted outlandish new powers for arranging visual space. The addition of sound, motion, and time invites us to explore areas previously inaccessible in print; the interactive potential, meanwhile, means that collaboration between designer and viewer has never been more promising. This book represents a harvest of

the finest design ideas in New Media over the past several years.

Yet there is precious little new about New Media. Humanity's earliest efforts to communicate beyond sightline and earshot—that is, for posterity or in scorn of mortality—often combined word and image, movement and music. In Egypt's during the 13th Century B.C., the dead were entombed with a book to take on their journey to Eternity. Whether in the form of papyrus, leather, or linen each copy of the book—entitled *The Book of the Coming Forth to Daylight*—was decorated with elaborate vignettes. During burial of the dead, a priest read from this book, the text and illustrations of which depicted in great detail the stages of rebirth, one of which was the weighing of the soul. The heart was placed into one pan of a scale, while on the other pan was placed the Feather of Maat, which symbolized Justice and Truth; the heart had to balance against the Feather. The background of such scenes were blanketed with hieroglyphs describing the scene.* Notwithstanding the absence of a nifty interface, all elements of the New Media are represented in such a ceremony. There is nothing new under the sun.

So, then, what exactly are we talking about when we talk about New Media? Do we need a new set of criteria with which to evaluate it? Do we require a new vocabulary to discuss it? While the projects included in this book can be extremely visual, do we risk losing something fundamental if we confine our inquiry to the ways we are accustomed to looking at printed work? Doesn't the form and intent of New Media work compel us to see it in terms of the awesome powers and frustrating limitations of the form?



What sense is there in faulting a poem for failing as a sculpture?

The tremendously sophisticated level of printed work that designers are accustomed to seeing and producing are absent from some of these pages. The printed rendered of a typical New Media project might seem aesthetically inelegant or typographically unsophisticated when set next to the work generated from a designer working exclusively in print. At the same time, perhaps, this New Media project will have taken advantage of media in ways that demonstrate superior functionality, structure, organization, and content. This is not to say that visual effect is inconsequential. It is. But style and beauty cannot be the sole standards of evaluation.

Each project chosen for this book has something about it—usually many things—that is spectacular. Maybe it was its wily navigation scheme, the elegant way information was layered, or its shrewdly rendered three-dimensional art. To provide context for these projects, the projects have been divided into four categories: Promotions, Titles, Tools, and Prototypes. These projects range from fully animated interactive game environments to World Wide Web Sites, from multimedia annual reports to desktop catalogues of fine art.

There are dynamic and often ephemeral components to most New Media work. These features can be lost when they are translated into the medium of print. For this reason, we have

written captions that document the apparent intent of the designers, as well as to elucidate certain transient elements of their work. We have also employed a iconographic system that shows at a glance some of the structural and navigational elements of the projects. These are described below:

HAND—Indicates that users have can navigate or to choose what to do next
MAGNIFYING GLASS—Indicates that viewers can gain microscopic and macroscopic views by zooming in or zooming out of views.
RED DOTTED LINES—Indicates navigational and structural links.
ISOMETRICS—Indicates certain hierarchical structures and layers.

Most New Media projects lack linearity; they are also rich in content. The rendering of such random pathways and complex informational strata is tremendously challenging in any media, regardless of the amount of space devoted to the task. Still, the immense portability and storage capacity—as well as the tactile pleasure and beauty of the printed page—remains unparalleled. Hence, the book you now hold. We hope it will serve as a valuable reference to the immense diversity and inventiveness of work being produced in New Media today, as well as inspiration for design of New Media in the future.

Still, there is nothing like the real thing. So when you have closed this book, take a seat. Boot up the machine. Settle in. Choose something.