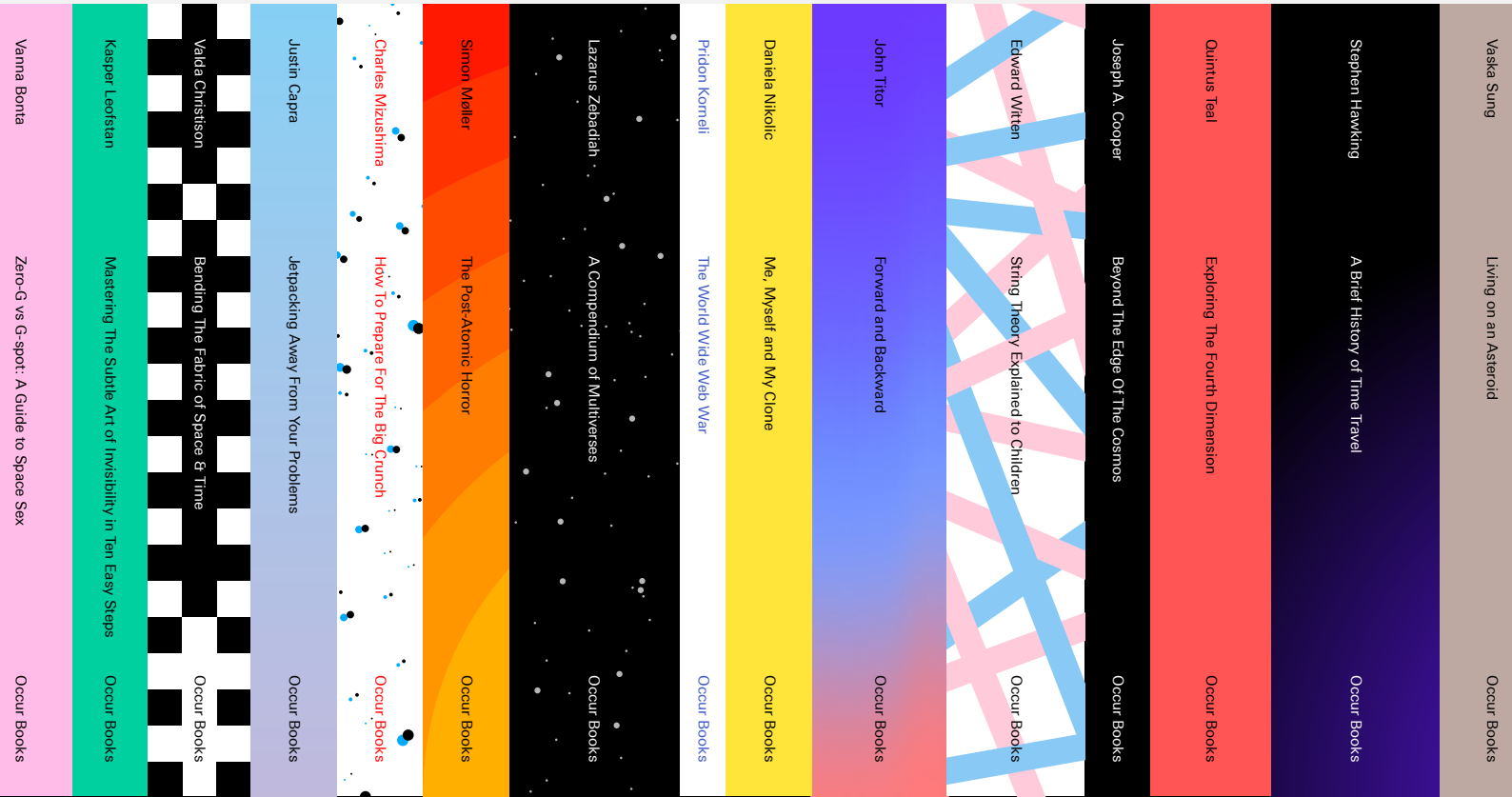


Introduction	3
The collection	4
The project	8
The genesis	10
The exhibitions	13
The author	18
Selected works	22
Q&A	28
Too Much is Too Much	31
Contact	38

Founded in 2084, Occur Books is an earth-based publishing house focusing on science, technology, history, society and philosophy.

It is mostly known for revolutionizing the publishing industry in the late 2080s when it decided to make use of the — then newly discovered — technology of time travel to distribute its books not only in space (on planet Earth and others) but also in time.

Its ultimate goal is to conceive a definitive collection of books by gathering and publishing the most essential manuscripts of all times.

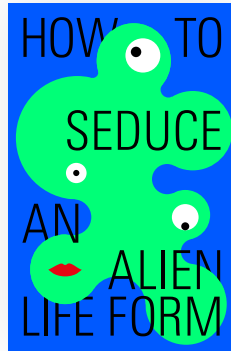


Stephen Hawking	A Brief History of Time Travel	01
Lazarus Zebadiah	A Compendium of Multiverses	02
Marin Van Groningen	A Guide to Mars' Best Tables	03
Valda Christison	Bending the Fabric of Space & Time	04
Joseph A. Cooper	Beyond the Edge of the Cosmos	05
Ray Kurzweil	Democratizing Transhumanism	06
Jean-Pierre Luminet	Discovering Black Holes	07
Grady McManus	Don't Drink and Teleport	08
Quintus Teal	Exploring the Fourth Dimension	09
John Titor	Forward and Backward	10
Manfred E. Bentsen	Going Down	11
Charles Mizushima	How to Prepare for the Big Crunch	12
Kaxjax O'Brien	How to Seduce an Alien Life Form	13
Ludovic Cruchot	Hyperspeed Limit	14
Justin Capra	Jetpacking Away From Your Problems	15
Vaska Sung	Living on an Asteroid	16
Kasper Leofstan	Mastering the Subtle Art of Invisibility in 10 Easy Steps	17
Daniela Nikolic	Me, Myself and My Clone	18
Lindsie Little	Mind Swapping: A How-To Guide	19
Philip J. Fry	Out of Sync: How To Deal with Post-Cryonic Societal Integration Disorder	20
Hugh Everett	Parallel Universes	21
Gilda Mounce	Print 'n' Cook	22
Cornel Alves	Space & Time: A Love Story	23
Edward Witten	String Theory Explained to Children	24
Susan Calvin	Teaching Your Robot How to Control Its Emotions	25
Sulislaw Voclain	Terraforming Your Own planet	26
Kim Swift	The 101 Best Portal Tricks	27
The Infinite Monkey	The Complete Works of the Infinite Monkey	28
HAL 9000	The Day Machines Took Over	29
Nina Rundstrom	The Death of Mirrors	30
Takako Novać	The Encyclopedia of Virtual Reality	31
Kaspar Agapios	The Grandfather Paradox: Dangers of Time Travel	32
Alva Kozlov	The Infinite Screen or The Death of Social Life	33
Cosmo Toloni	The Invisible Force: Understanding Dark Matter	34
Rebecca Roache	The Neuro-Prison Conundrum	35
Simon Møller	The Post-Atomic Horror	36
Kip Stephen Thorne	The Rudiments of Traveling Through Wormholes	37
Isaac Asimov	The Three Laws of Robotics	38
Sirius Fields	The Ultimate Atlas of the Universe	39
Pridon Korneli	The World Wide Web War	40
Rune Andersson	Thinking BIG: The Life and Work of Bjarke Ingels	41
Edward Corrick	Through The Event Horizon	42
Romulus Caroli	Too Much Is Too Much: The Fall of Google	43
Paul Mikael	World War III	44
Vanna Bonta	Zero-G vs G-spot: A Guide to Space Sex	45

01



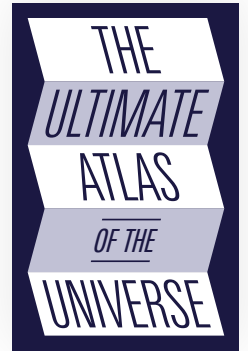
02



03



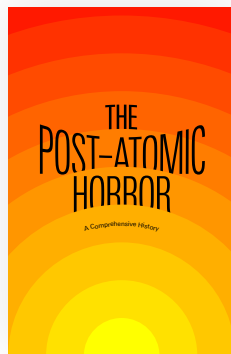
04



05



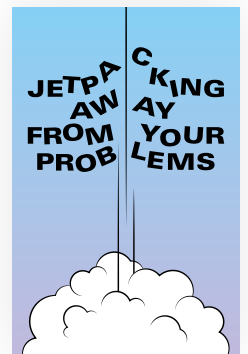
06



07



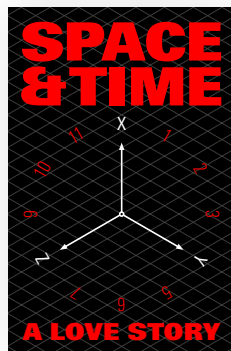
08



09



10



11



12



13



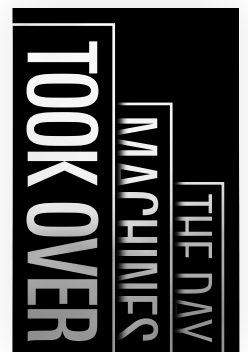
14

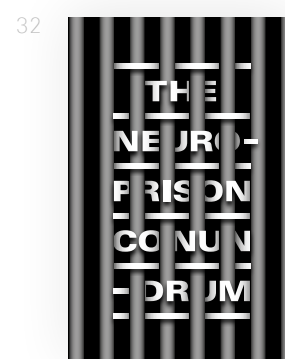
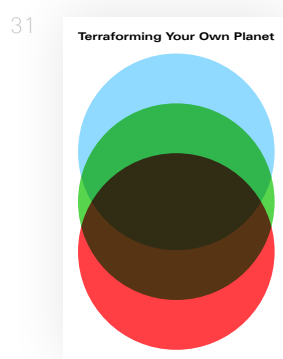
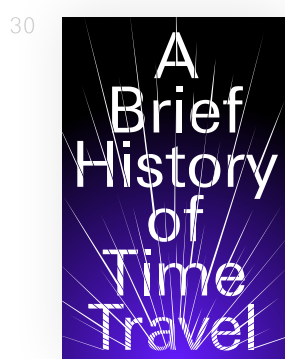
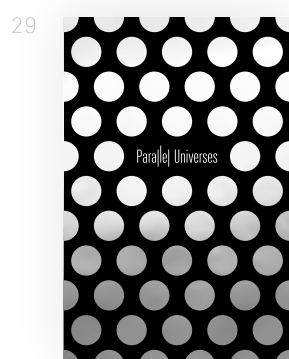
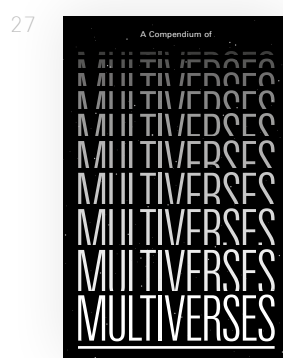
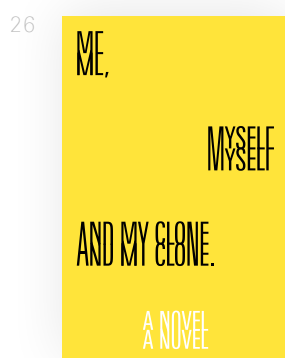
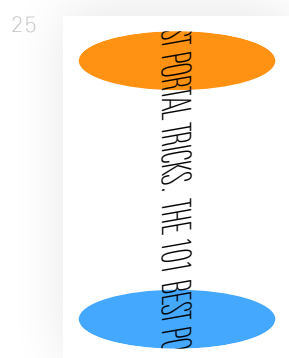
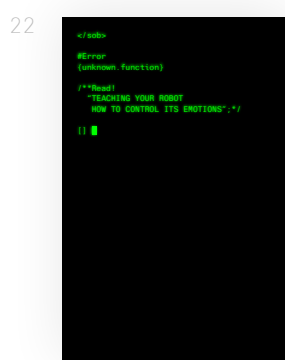
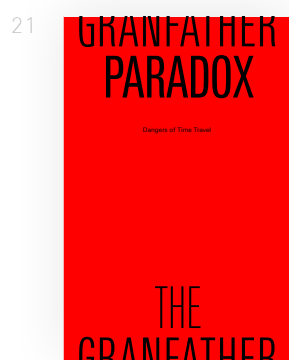
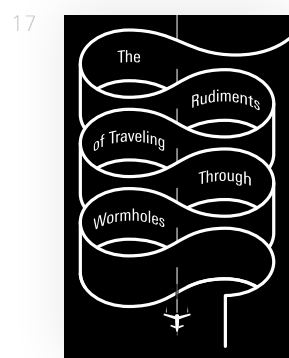


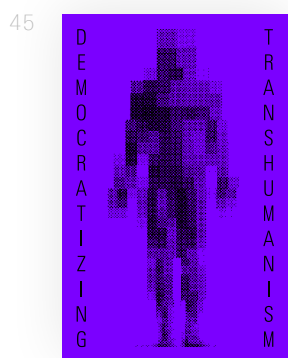
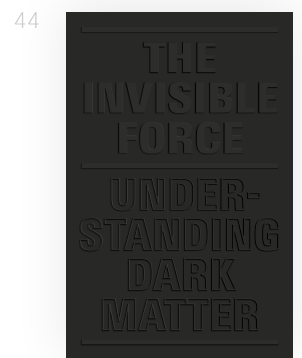
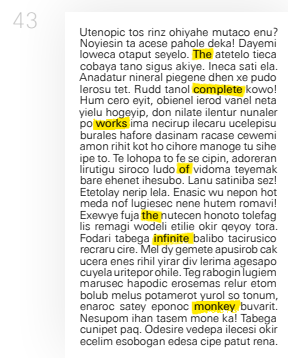
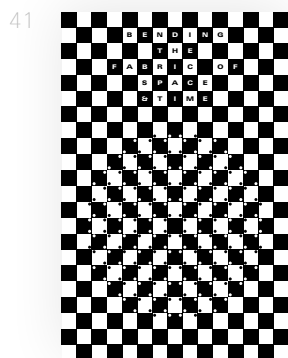
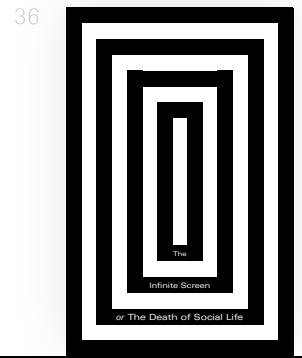
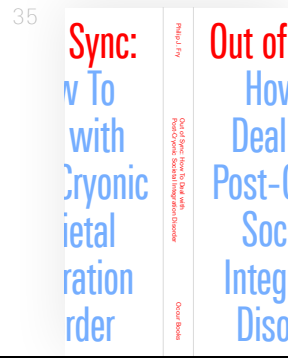
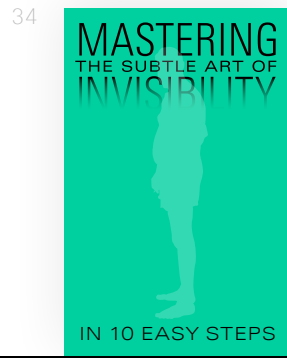
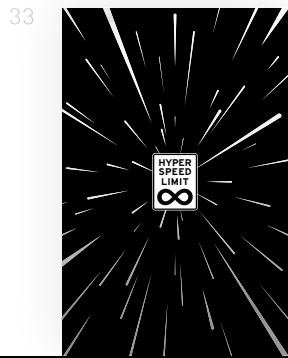
15



16







Occur Books is an on-going project by graphic designer Frédéric Tacer initiated in 2015 for the design festival *Une Saison Graphique* (Le Havre, France) where it was first exhibited.

Speculation on the future of books, creative and conceptual playground, Occur Books is first and foremost an invitation to travel through time thanks to the wonderful and timeless medium that is the book.

Like a door leading into a virtually infinite literary world, a book's cover is the focus point for our experience with it. As a bibliophile, Frédéric Tacer has always been fascinated by the narrative aptitude and power of evocation of book covers. He wanted to explore these matters within the creation of a fictional publishing house.

The desire to imagine a collection of books from the future arose as a reaction to the so-called "death of books". Despite the various and relentless pleas of a fully digital era, the designer firmly believes in the durability and efficiency of printed books. In an attempt to bury a debate that he judges vain and stereotypical, he commits himself to demonstrate the existence of the books of tomorrow by trying to predict them.

Occur Books doesn't talk about the future of the book. It reveals the books of the future.

Above all, Frédéric Tacer contemplates this project as some sort of speculative time machine. Throughout history, numerous books have been considered as major witnesses of their time. Similarly, the output of Occur Books might be seen as glimpses of tomorrow, allegories of possible future.

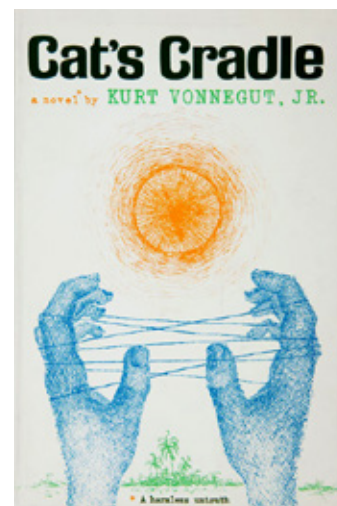
Justifying his work for the publisher-to-be by the invocation of the ultimate fantasy that is time travel (their collaboration started in 2025, when he was approached to design the cover of the *World Wide Web War* book, as a contemporary of this historic event), Frédéric Tacer chooses to make any notion of chronology obsolete, allowing him to imagine social matters from the near as much as far future.

In an exercise of futurology, the designer — and science fiction aficionado — amuses himself fantasizing future scenarios, drawing inspiration from his readings and insatiable curiosity for science, technology and future studies. He then focuses on shaping those visions of potential futures using his own language: graphic design.

The first signs of the project Occur Books appeared to Frédéric Tacer a few years ago while reading *Cat's Cradle*, the brilliant satirical science fiction novel written by Kurt Vonnegut in 1963.

The graphic designer surprised himself fantasizing about the potential look and feel of the *Book of Bokonor*, a scripture mentioned in the novel. What could be its size, its paper, its binding, its cover?

The thought of designing well-known (although made-up) books found in popular fiction then gradually led to the idea of imagining a fake publisher that would produce a collection of various books from the future.



Long confined to a few sketches lost in a notebook, that thought resurfaces in 2014 when Frédéric Tacer was invited by Vanina Pinter and Yann Owens (both teachers at the School of Fine Arts in Le Havre, France) to imagine an exhibition project for the upcoming edition of the design festival *Une Saison Graphique*.

The designer then decided to seize this opportunity and to make use of the resources made available to him to carry this project through.

Since his first visit to the School of Fine Arts in Le Havre, Tacer was seduced by the printing workshop run by Yann Owens¹ and galvanized by the creative energy radiating from it. A fruitful and exhilarating collaboration arose between the designer and

the artist/teacher who was in charge of printing the 40 book covers imagined for the exhibition². In the end, more than 2000 screen printed covers were manufactured by Yann Owens in his workshop from March to May 2015.

¹ yannowens.tumblr.com

² Five new titles were added to the collection in December 2015 when the project was exhibited to the Contemporary Editions Art Fair (SOON Paris).

↗ First edition cover of *Cat's Cradle*.

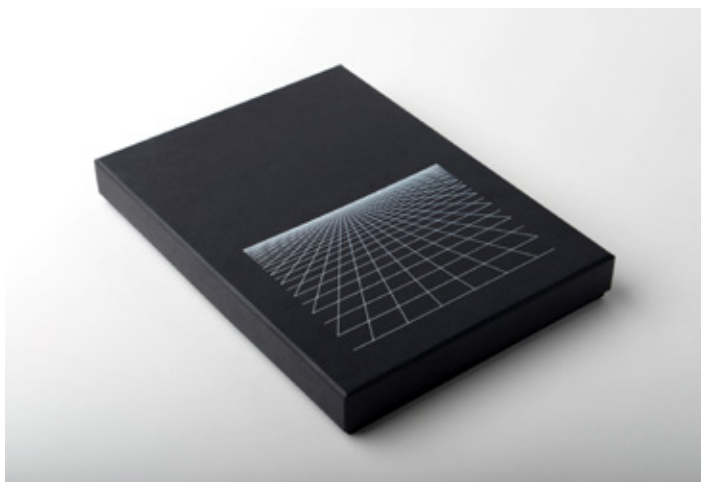
↓ Frédéric Tacer (left) and Yann Owens (right) during the opening of *Science Friction*.



Convinced that printed matter in general and books in particular will find redemption in smart and sensory design, Frédéric Tacer foresees a future where printed books might be scarcer but designed with even more care.

As a result, he often uses special print effects in his work (like embossing, hot foil, UV varnish, metallic inks, mirror papers, neon colors...) to emphasize the meaning

of his creations and convey the message not only by sight but also by touch.



Besides being featured in the exhibition, the result of this thorough and challenging printing process has been gathered in a limited edition box distributed by Franciscopolis Editions³. This monolith (as Tacer likes to call it) holds the 40 screen printed book covers from the Occur Books collection, an essay written by Vanina Pinter and Yann Owens as well as an exclusive

shot story written by Alice Dune and directly inspired by Occur Books. Like a time capsule, this black box acts as the witness of the future of books and the past of this exhibition.

Finally, in addition to this project and in order to get the students even more involved in his creative process, Frédéric Tacer took the opportunity of his multiple visits to Le Havre to organize a workshop dealing with the concept of futurology and questioning various printing techniques. Entitled *Science [Political] Fiction* and gathering for the first time art students (from the School of Fine Arts) and political science student (from the *Science Po* campus in le Havre), this workshop was inviting participants



³ www.franciscopolis.com/Frederic-Tacer-Occur-Books-2015

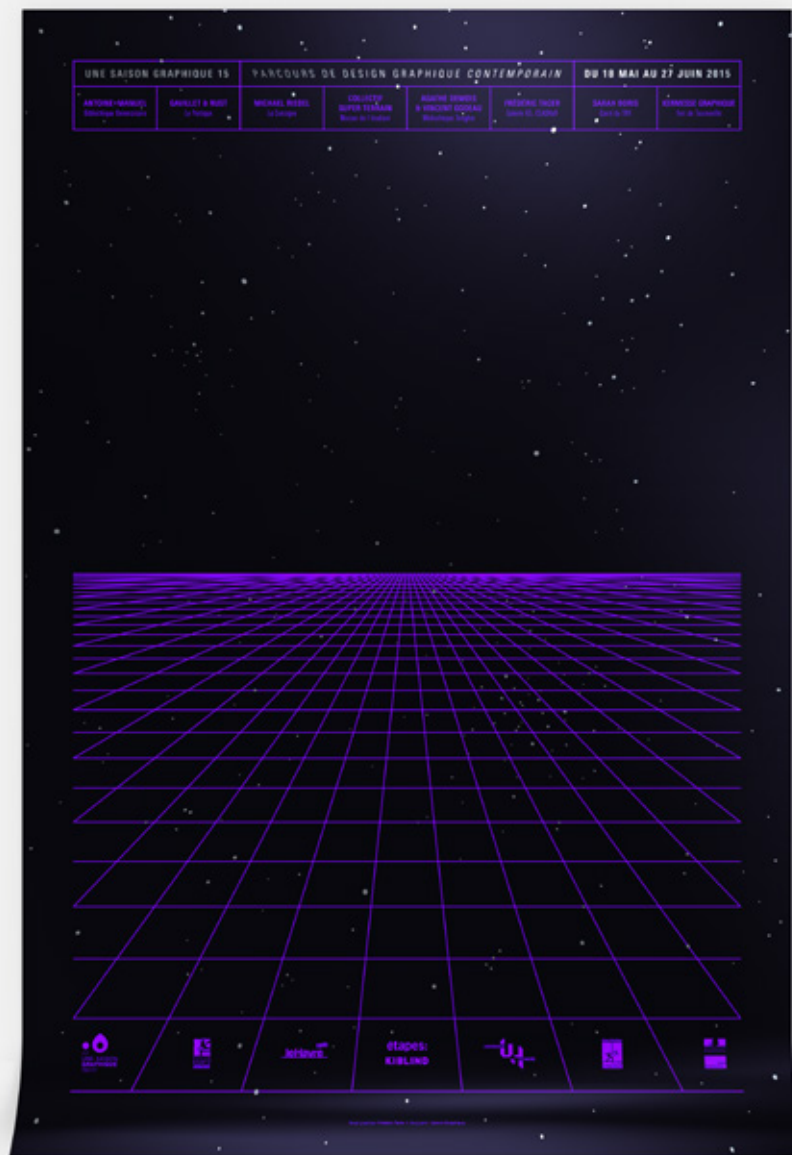
➤ Frédéric Tacer screen printing one of the covers in Yann Owen's workshop.

↑ The limited edition black box holding the 40 screen printed book covers created for the *Science Friction* exhibition.

➔ Frédéric Tacer with design students during the workshop *Science [Political] Fiction*.

to fantasize possible futures and to give them a reality through the creation of printed objects. A transhumanism fantasy, a dictatorial martian colony, a eugenic dystopia *à la* Aldous Huxley... a dozen scenarios were collectively imagined before being translated to a graphic form (posters, installations, experimental publications...). All of these works were finally scattered in the school and its surroundings alongside Frédéric Tacer's *Science Friction* exhibition.

↓ Poster for the *Science Friction* exhibition designed by Frédéric Tacer.



The project Occur Books was initiated in 2015 for the design festival *Une Saison Graphique* in Le Havre (France) and introduced to the public within Frédéric Tacer's solo exhibition *Science Friction* in May 2015.

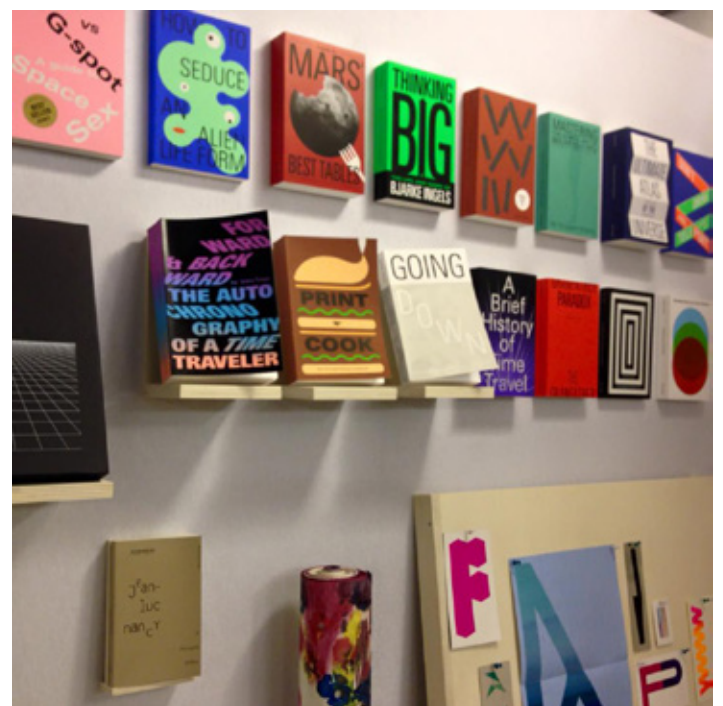
The project was also featured at the parisian contemporary editions art fair (*SOON Paris*) in December 2015 and exhibited at the prestigious *Palais de Tokyo* in Paris in April 2016 as part of the *Vision* group show.

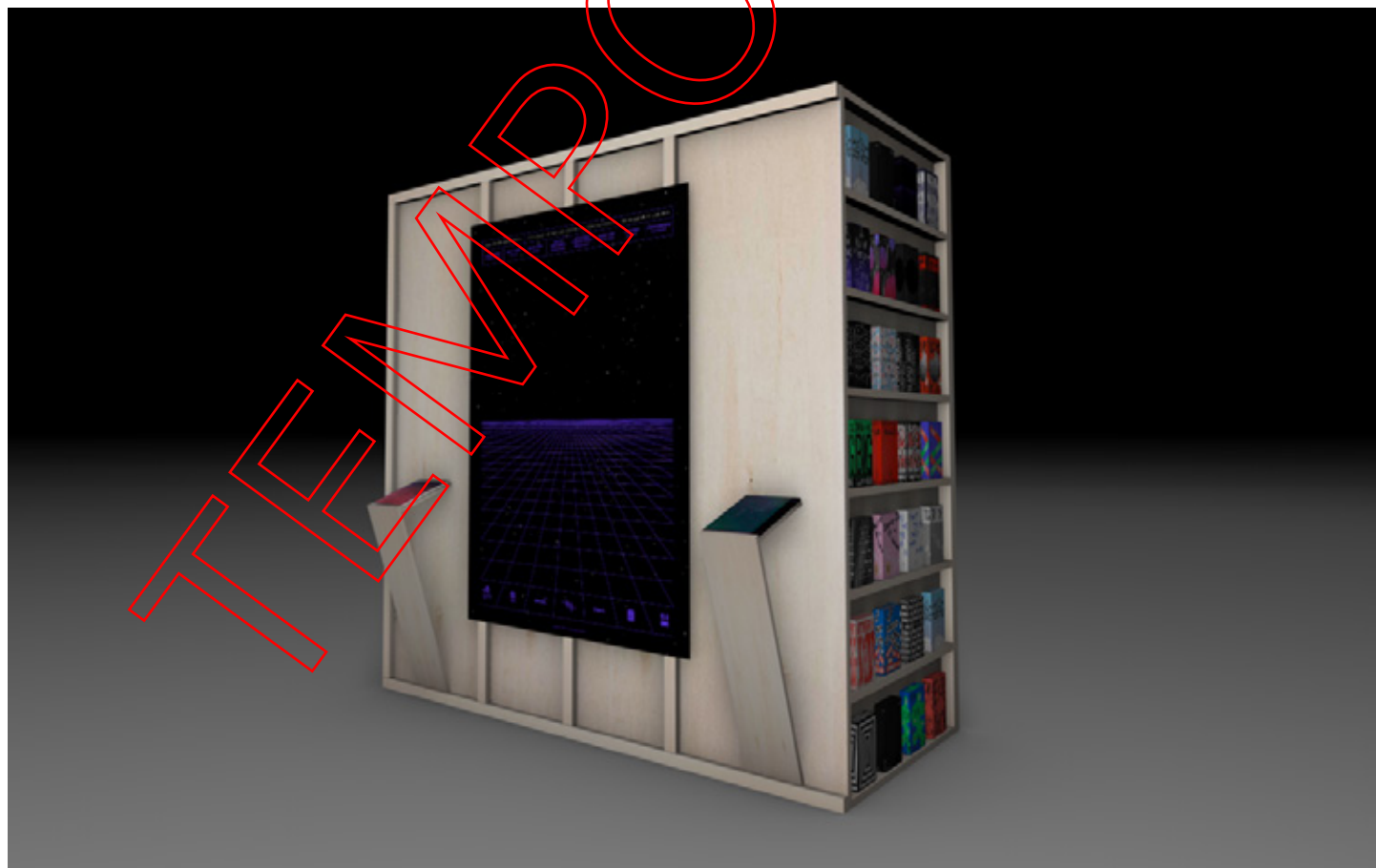
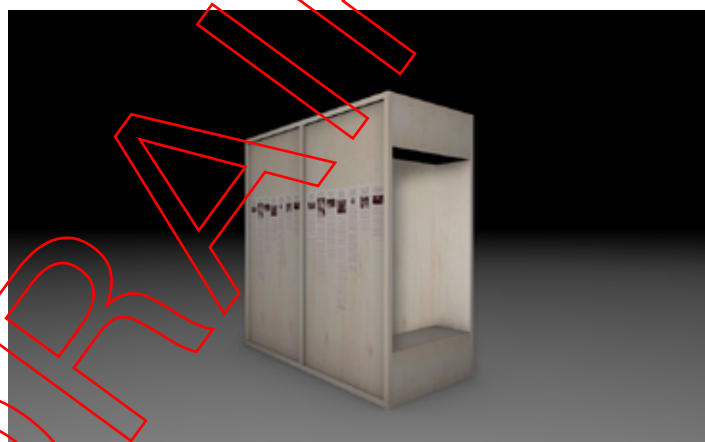
Interested in exhibiting Occur Books? Please contact info@occurbooks.com for more info.













Frédéric Tacer is an independent graphic designer born in 1985 in Rouen (France) and living in Paris.

He studied at the National College of Arts and Design in Paris and won multiple student competition awards including the French Art Directors Club in 2006 and the International Graphic Design Festival of Chaumont in 2007.

He graduated with highest honours in 2008 with a prospective project questioning the future of music and its visual representations which was selected by Wallpaper* Magazine as part of its Graduate Directory 2009.

Frédéric Tacer then moved to London and started working as an in-house designer at the ICA (Institute of Contemporary Arts) for which he designed, in collaboration with Sarah Boris, the visual identity that is still in use today.

He founded his own design practice (Studio Frederic Tacer) in Paris in 2010. His work includes projects for clients in both cultural and commercial fields on a wide range of media focusing on printed matter, editorial design, visual identity, environmental design, bespoke typefaces and digital projects.

His work has been exhibited internationally (UK, Netherlands, France, China, USA) and is featured in books and magazines such as Communication Arts (US), Étapes (FR), Green Patriot Posters (US), IdN Extra: Typo/graphic Posters (CN), Libération (FR), Love Earth (CN), Nice To Meet You Too (CN), Slanted (DE), So1o 2uo 3rio: Small Studio, Great Impact (CN), Wallpaper* (UK) as well as on various typography and design websites.

Besides his practice, Frédéric Tacer also teaches graphic design in art schools (Dijon National School of Art, Marne-la-Vallée School of Architecture...) and is regularly invited to give talks or take part to graduation juries.

Exhibitions

- 2016 *Vision*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, FR
- 2015 Soon Paris (The contemporary editions art fair), Bastille Design Center, Paris, FR
International Poster Exhibition, Graphic Design Festival Scotland, Glasgow, UK
Les Français Arrivent !, Haagse Kunstkring, The Hague, NL
Science Friction [Solo Show], Une Saison Graphique 15, Le Havre, FR
- 2014 *Behind The Seen* [Solo Show], D'Days, Paris, FR
Le Mois du graphisme d'Échirolle, FR
Fête du Graphisme, Cité de la Mode et du Design, Paris, FR
Leeds Print Festival, Gallery Munro House, Leeds, UK
Green Patriot Posters, Design Museum, Boston, US
- 2012 *Babel on demand*, Graphic Design Festival of Chaumont, FR
Public Notice: A Green Patriot Poster Salon, Ed. Varie Gallery, New York City, US
La Campagne, Point Éphémère, Paris, FR
Thanks, but no thanks, Beach London, London, UK
- 2011 *Music Covers*, Point Éphémère, Paris, FR
Graphic Design: Now in Production, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, US
Reason Design Emotion, Beijing International Design Triennial, Beijing, CN
- 2009 *Code_Source*, Graphic Design Festival of Chaumont, FR
- 2008 *The Most Beautiful French Book 2008*, Galerie Anatome, Paris, FR
9 french students projects, House of Iranian Artists, Tehran, IR
- 2007 Student exhibition, Les Subsistances, Graphic Design Festival of Chaumont, FR

Awards

- 2010 Contribution to the pop-up book *Jeux T'aime*, winner of the 7th *Nuit du Livre*, FR
- 2008 Part of the *Most Beautiful French Books 2008*, FR
Part of the *Wallpaper's Graduate Directory 2009*, UK
- 2007 14th student poster competition of the Chaumont Festival (3rd prize), FR
Le Café du Commerce annual poster competition (1st prize), FR
- 2006 37th student competition of the Art Directors Club (1st prize), FR

Publications (books)

- 2015 Exploring Typography, US
- 2014 Collections, Fête du graphisme, FR
- 2013 So1o 2uo 3rio: Small Studio, Great Impact, CN
IdN Extra: Typo/graphic Posters, CN
- 2012 Chaumont 2012 catalogue, FR
- 2011 Graphic Design: Now in Production, US
Love Earth, CN
- 2010 TypoLyrics – The Sound of Fonts, DE
Green Patriot Posters, US
Nice To Meet You Too, CN
- 2009 Étapes: 15 years of visual culture, FR
Chaumont 2009 catalogue, FR
- 2008 The Most Beautiful French Books 2008, FR
- 2006 37th Art Directors Club catalogue, FR

Publications (periodicals)

- 2016 Fisheye Magazine 16, FR
- 2015 Étapes: 227, FR
BBF 6 - Matières Graphiques, FR
Slanted 25, DE
- 2014 Libération 24.01.2014, FR
- 2013 Piauí 84, BR
Étapes: 215, FR
- 2012 Communication Arts, US
- 2011 Slanted 15, DE
Étapes: 189, FR
- 2009 Ink 4, FR
Slanted 7, DE
Wallpaper* 118, UK
- 2008 Étapes: 161, FR
- 2007 Étapes: 145, FR

Workshops & Teaching

- 2015 *Science [Politique] Fiction*, ESADHaR, Le Havre, FR
Rallye Typographique, Lycée Charles de Gaulle, Chaumont, FR
- 2013 — 2016 Graphic design teacher at ENSA Dijon, FR
- 2013 *Environment, Navigation, Situation, Adaptation* (w/ V. Desclaux), ENSA Dijon, FR
- 2012 — 2016 *Voyage et mise en page* (collective workshop), EAVT, Marne-la-vallée, FR
- 2012 *Support sensible*, École Duperré, Paris, FR
Abrakadabra (w/ Y. Cayla), ENSAAMA, Paris, FR
- 2011 *L'intelligence des Affiches* (w/ Y. Cayla), ENSAAMA, Paris, FR
- 2010 *After Design* (w/ Y. Cayla), ENSAAMA, Paris, FR

Lectures

- 2015 *Une Saison Graphique 15*, ESADHaR, Le Havre, FR
- 2014 *Œuvres Utiles*, Cinéma À l’Affiche, Chaumont, FR
- 2013 École Supérieure d’Art & Design, Le Havre, FR
Bellecour École d’Art, Lyon, FR
- 2008 *Pecha Kucha 6*, Le Divan du Monde, Paris, FR

Jetpacking Away From Your Problems

by Justin Capra



The Ultimate Atlas of the Universe

by Sirius Fields



**A Brief History
of Time Travel**
by Stephen Hawking



**Zero-G vs G-spot:
A Guide
to Space Sex**
by Vanna Bonta



Exploring
the 4th Dimension
by Quintus Teal



String Theory
Explained
to Children
by Edward Witten



Discovering Black Holes

by Jean-Pierre Luminet

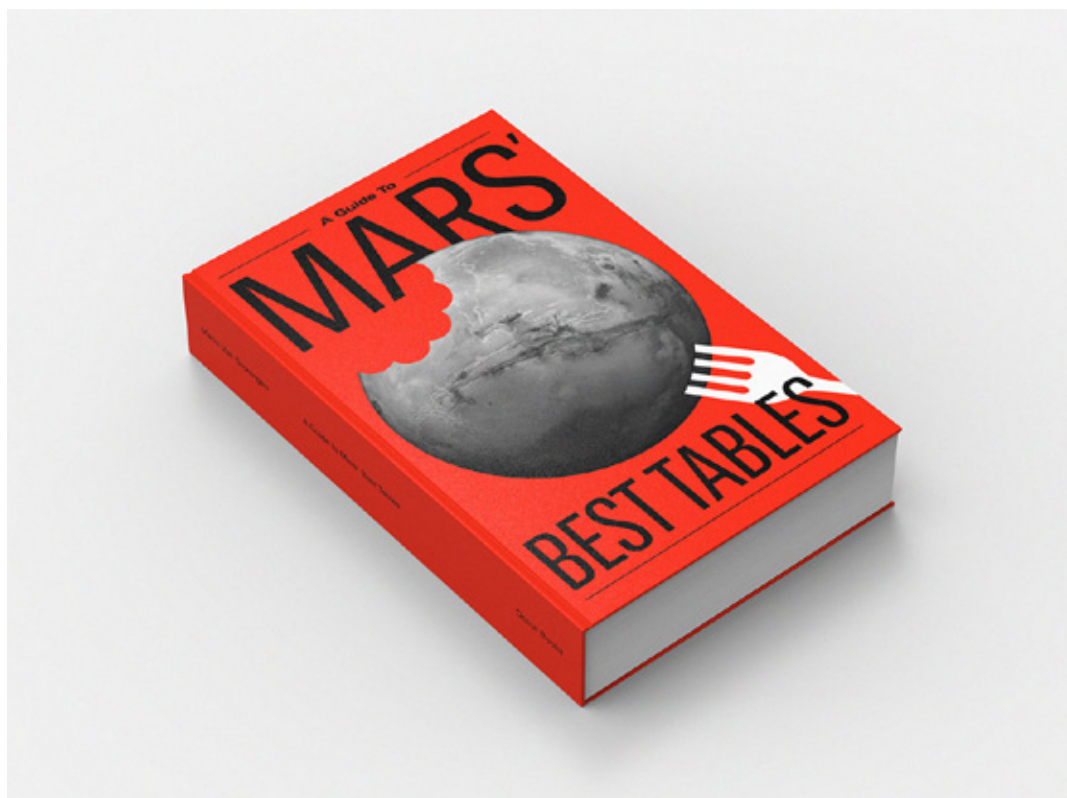


Too Much Is Too Much: The Fall of Google

by Romulus Caroli



A Guide to
Mars' Best Tables
by Marin Van Groningen



The Day Machines
Took Over
by HAL 9000



**The World
Wide Web War**
by Pridon Korneli



Print 'n' Cook
by Gilda Mounce



In parallel of his solo show at the School of Fine Arts in Le Havre, Frédéric Tacer sat down with Vanina Pinter (teacher and design theorist) to talk about the whys and wherefores of his project. Here are some excerpts from this conversation.

Vanina Pinter Isn't it strange, inappropriate or provocative to talk about the future of the book only through the prism of its printed form?

Frédéric Tacer Provocative, maybe. Inappropriate, I don't think so. In our digital era, it is indeed common to see people questioning the future of the book under its printed form. I find it regrettable and kind of silly to be completely honest (especially when it comes to the never-ending "physical vs. digital" dichotomy).

Of course, digital technologies bring evolutions with which the book can't compete (boundless and instantaneous libraries, dynamic texts, interactions, etc.) but conversely, no computer, no smartphone, no e-reader will bring you the satisfaction of finding a rare gem in a bookshop, the simple pleasure of a top-notch print work or the distinctive smell of an old book.

Nevertheless, this is not a conservative statement. As a digital native, I consume a lot of digital information myself. I just like to think that the book and the digital world can naturally coexist, could learn from each other and that the rise of one doesn't necessarily imply the fall of the other. It is quite obvious that every major technological innovation brought a state of uncertainty with them, but let's not succumb to the pervading alarmism.

VP How will the book evolve according to you?

FT My belief is that the publishing business will ineluctably split in two. On one hand, a dematerialized production which will prove to be perfect to distribute the ever-growing number of disposable information flooding our media nowadays. On the other hand, a printed production maybe less frequent but more selective, more lasting and — above all — more qualitative (in terms of form as much as content).

VP How do you consider books?

FT To my mind, a book is a content as much as container. I like its materiality, its feel, its smell, its practicality and the obviousness of its form. I also love the fact that my bookshelves are [literally] filled with memories.

It might be a silly anecdote but I put a different bookmark in every new book I read. It can be a train ticket, a restaurant bill, an exhibition or concert ticket, a photograph or even a random drawing on a simple piece of paper...

In addition to their inherent evocative nature, each book then becomes a small time capsule that I like to rediscover once in a while. No digital support can compete with that.

VP What is your relationship with science fiction?

FT It is a true passion. Since my early childhood, science fiction has forged my imagination. I'm fascinated by its potential to speak about a contemporary matter by projecting and extrapolating it in time.

It's partly from this passion that Occur Books was created. Big sci-fi lover but mediocre writer, I was seduced by the idea of being able to tell stories through the unique spectrum of book covers. I felt the need to externalize all the anticipation ideas I gathered throughout the years. Just this once, it was also the opportunity for the graphic designer that I am to think the form as much as the content.

VP Why did you choose *Univers* as the exclusive typeface?

FT At the beginning of the project, I felt the necessity to establish common graphic rules in order to visually link the various creations. The well-named font family *Univers* designed by Adrian Frutiger in the 50s quickly felt like the obvious choice. Besides its timeless curves, the set of weights and widths it offers is large enough to allow multiples typographic variations without repetition while assuring a visual consistency throughout the collection.

The Occur Books covers are mostly typography-based. I consider this project as a creative playground within which I can freely test out the expressive typographic manipulations that I'm obsessed with. I needed a functional and versatile typeface to do so.

VP In what way does this project talk about the design of tomorrow?

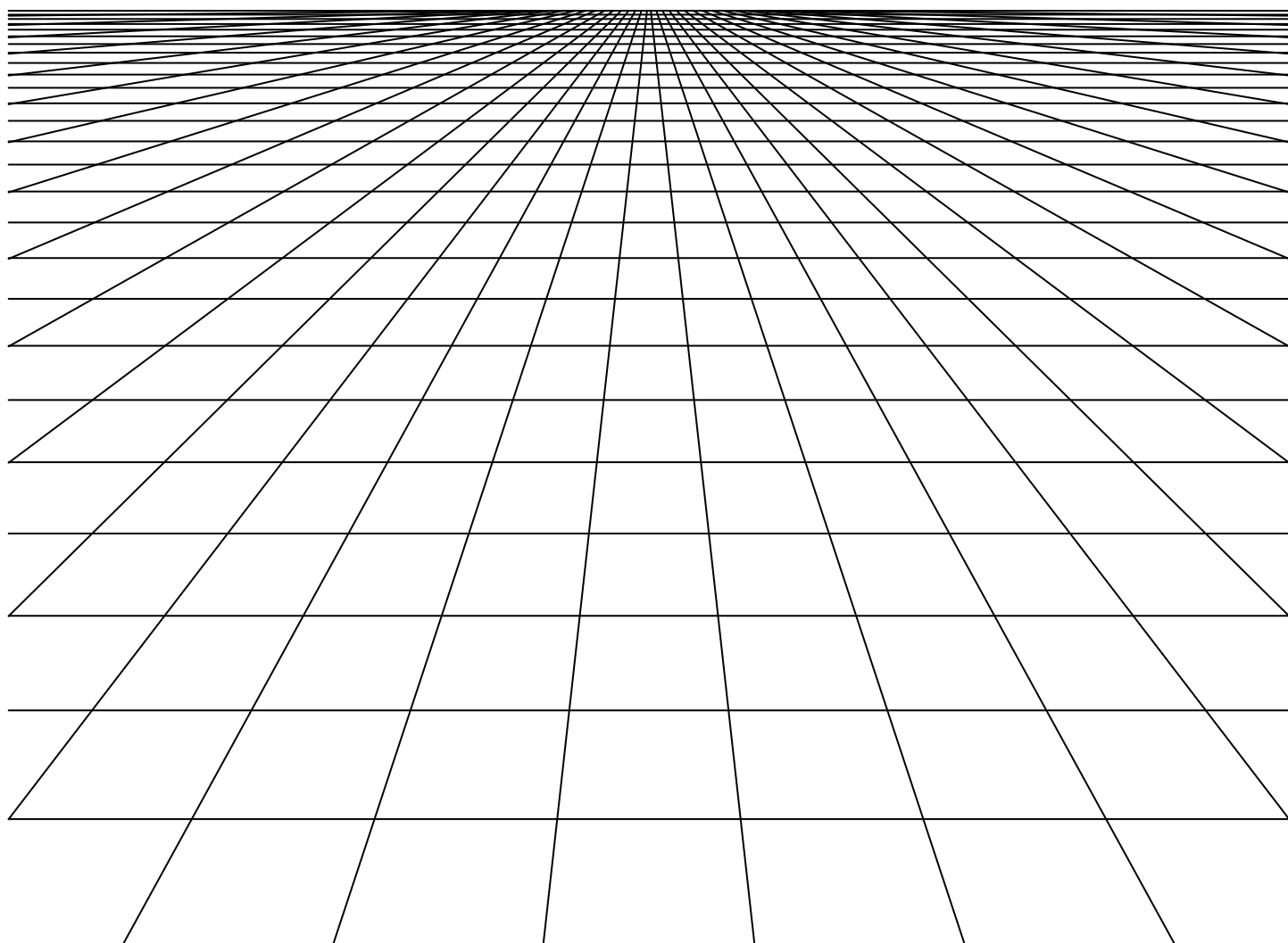
FT I don't have the ambition nor feel legitimate to talk about the "design of tomorrow". Quite the contrary, my work is mostly inspired by the avant-garde of the twentieth century and by designers from the post-war decades. I'm always aiming at simplicity in my graphic design work. A sense of obviousness almost. I truly believe in the timeless power of minimalism and I secretly hope this aspect of graphic design will be predominant in the future.

VP What is the purpose if this project?

FT More than a speculation on the future of books, Occur Books is an invitation to travel in the future(s). As a science fiction *aficionado*, I'm also very interested in actual science and the more I read about contemporary discoveries, the more I realise that we're living in a world that has nothing to envy to the future fantasized by science fiction authors of the last decades. The anticipation of yesterday is, more than ever, the reality of today and all the topics my "books" deal with are nothing but extrapolations of contemporary researchs, theories or phenomenons. "The future is already here, once said William Gibson. It's just not very evenly distributed."

Too Much Is Too Much is an exclusive science fiction short story inspired by *Occur Books* and written by the mysterious Alice Dune.

It depicts an odd future in which books are reduced to their very own covers and where readers are regarded as genuine authors because of their natural ability to project themselves in a book title and to speculate about its potential content...



The catalogue was rather short: *Exploring the 4th Dimension*, *Too Much Is Too Much: The Fall of Google*, *A Brief History of Time Travel*. The books were displayed on a simple rack of polished pearwood, a successful combination of modern design and tradition.

The librarian sat in a wheelchair, the blanket over his knees concealing the cause of his infirmity. He wore a quaint hat of black velvet that looked like a round French cheese box, with a golden tassel hanging over the side. The features of his face were sagging, the wrinkles across his forehead pushing down shaggy eyebrows, the eyebrows falling over lids which dropped over eyes already half buried in the purple pouches that spilled down his cheekbones. His cheeks were two deflated sacks encompassing a mouth whose corners formed a deeply entranced delta reaching around a chin which was germinating into hairy barbs.

His nose, which would once have been described as aquiline, now arched almost to his lower lip like a stalagmite looking forward to be united to a stalagmite.

A wild tangle of hairs had colonized his nostrils and ears. He looked like one of those ancient ruins succumbing before the onslaught of Time and being reclaimed by an opportunistic Nature.

"Three books? Is that all? And you call it the library of the future? I call it unnatural!" Easty Badgerhead's tone resonated with the wounded accents that had become her vocal signature over the media. Unnaturalness was Secretary of State Badgerhead's sworn enemy. Or rather her own conception of what natural was. There were so many facets of her artificial environment she took for granted that it never occurred to her how unnatural they were. Shoes, computers, libraries. What more artificial than a book?

"A natural library would have its shelves in people's minds," Ian said aloud. He knew Easty Badgerhead would fail to notice the irony of his observation. She only heard what she wanted to hear, which made Ian's job as a consultant an easy one. She never consulted anyone but her own self. The old librarian, however, gazed at him with approval, nodding his head.

"Exactly. Back to Nature. Precisely." Ian was happy to watch surprise distort Easty's features, until they resumed their default settings, a mixture of distrust and hostility. The old man, once launched, would not stop.

"First we try to reduce the number of books. You can't wean readers overnight, but the objectice is to have only one book, with a title so fraught with multiple entendre that it could suggest anything. I briefly considered *Biblion*, but I was afraid Islamists might object." He was full of a zealot's enthusiasm. To channel the excess energy he could not spend in words, he would run circles around the room, moving his wheelchair with prodigious speed, as if it were an extension of his own body — which, Ian thought, might be exactly the case. He probably had implants that allowed him to handle it — though handle was perhap inappropriate in the context — operate it, maybe, like an extra member.

Now and then the old man would glance at his visitors to make sure they were listening. He eventually parked himself before Ian, grasping the lapels of his coat in skeletal hands, pulling at them as if he were ringing bells. An unearthly smell arose from him, and as he gazed at the tangled white hair, the two-day growth of beard and the suspicious shades under his nails, Ian realized it was the smell of an unwashed body, a natural smell, and his gorge rose. He smiled politely and stepped back.

"These are science-fiction titles," Easty Badgerhead was saying. The old man's plea for a return to nature had shaken but not daunted her. "A library is more than that..."

The librarian made a noise like a clockwork hen, a brassy, clanking cackle which Ian translated as a laugh. He watched the old man draw out a piece of... cloth? What was it called? A... handkerchief. Yes, that was right, a handkerchief. He shuddered with revulsion. A piece of cloth into which the old man had secreted who knows what bodily fluids and now used to wipe his face.

"Open them, go ahead, do!"

Easty Badgerhead hesitated. She did not like being ordered about, but she was inquisitive. She walked to the rack and lifted the cover of *To Much is Too Much*.

The sight that met her eyes drew a small shriek.

"There is nothing inside!"

The old man seemed to go into a seizure, but as it turned out, he was only convulsed with laughter.

"And yet Madam Secretary you just said this was science fiction."

"I said science fiction titles. "

"You see them as science fiction titles, but another reader might understand them as scientific works.."

Ian listened in silence. His own first impression had of history books, or perhaps books about politics. *Too Much is Too Much*... He frowned, cudgelling his memory. The title rang a bell. Wasn't it about the scandal that had marked the 2050s when it was revealed that Google had supported a group of degrowthists sponsoring the rise of Islamic terrorism in order to drastically cull the planet's population? For the first time he was intrigued.

"*Too Much is too Much?*" It's a novel, the Secretary of State protested. It's about a succession war within Google after the suspicious deaths of Larry Page and Sergueï Brin. The heirs are told that Sergueï Brin had his DNA cloned and Brin's family take advantage of the lack of legal precedent to appoint the clone as Google's CEO. I know it because the chancellor raised the problem during a government meeting and cited the lawsuit Google intended against the author of the novel." Easty Badgerhead's voice had the triumphant ring she used when she thought she had overwhelmed an adversary. The media had turned it into an audio meme.

The old man's frightful cackle again rent the air of the library.

"What if I told you it is a well documented report of the way a Chinese startup brought down the Google empire? Or how Google's search algorithms were rendered obsolete by the discovery of analogical computing? What if I told you it is a five-canto epic celebrating the rise and fall of a numerical empire? Every

time someone walks into the library and looks at the books, they offer their own version of their contents. And yet there is only one book, one title, and nothing inside. Do you realize how elegant that concept is? One title spawning millions of books and millions of authors." His enthusiasm produced multiple secretions which made the handkerchief necessary. Ian turned his head.

"But —"

The old man glared at the Secretary of State.

"You think you live in the future and that I am an old relic, but the truth is, you are stuck in the past. This is the dawn of a revolution. After enslaving men into proletarians, post-industrial society found it was more profitable to oppress them by turning them into consumers. But they had not reckoned with the numerical revolution. Now it has come, blurring the frontiers between producers and consumers. People can write, communicate, compose music, produce artwork without formal training in government or corporate schools and institutions. Analogical computing has accelerated the trend. No more code writing, no more specialists interfacing between man and the machine. The computer is directly plugged into our brains, individual brains are interconnected. Creation follows organic routes before taking shape in the real world. It's Michelangelo sculpting his David without mallet or chisel, Beethoven writing the Ninth Symphony directly before the orchestra, Mozart — Ah, Mozart! Do you know how many versions of the Requiem we would have today if you politicians did not resist progress?"

"Emptying libraries is progress?"

"Turning readers into authors, abolishing the barriers between creation and consumption. Give one book to a thousand readers, and they will give you a thousand readings in return. Do you know how many contradictory pages have been written to expound the Bible or the Quran? Why give people a text since they will distort it into a new one? The danger, you see, are those who use the authority of a book to brainwash idiots. Blank the pages of a book, and the illiterate are no longer so. Did proto-Mycenian poets write down their works?"

"So building a new tower of Babel would be progress?"

"Would you rather have individuals impose their own perverted version of texts within a sect before they launch their adepts into criminal and suicidal operations? Non, Madam Secretary. When each reader is the author of the book he is reading, there will no longer be any manipulation of texts. Individuals will be free to think for themselves, unless of course they are insane. I cannot guarantee there won't be any psychopaths left, or madmen, but they will be on their own, and not part of a secret army. It will be an end to cults, gangs, armies, religions, hordes, clans, mafias, triads and reading clubs. "

"But doing away with printed books — it's like burning books, it's a nazi thing!" The old man waved the argument away.

"A book does not exist unless someone reads it. Every time you fail to read a book, it's tantamount to burning it. A book is not a paper or digital artefact, it's hard work, first writing it, then reading it. We do not make away with books, we skip the printed stage or the display. We only keep the act of writing and reading, but combined into just one intellectual performance."

Ian closed his eyes to avoid the sight of the handkerchief being plied assiduously.

"You want to create a world of autistic —"

"You, Madam Secretary, want to maintain a world where a minority impose their views on the masses."

"You deny the creative process."

"I democratize it."

"There is not creation without an audience, a public, spectators!"

"That's a fascist view of society. You think there is an elite whose duty is to create, and a lower class whose role is to consume. Allow me to observe that the relationship between artist and consumer is a purely mercantile one and not some sort of communion between creator and audience. Artists make a living out of their art, and they need people to buy their books or pay for their concert

seats. But once we have done away with this mercantile relationship, we will be free to invent another. We shall build a hundred different bridges between creators, write novels with a thousand hands, or history books summoning millions of witnesses."

No one had ever accused Easty Badgerhead of being a fascist without paying dearly for it. The small pearwood rack was light enough to serve as a weapon, sturdy enough to do for the fragile skull of the old man. Too Much is Too Much, the Rise and Fall of Google lay on the ground, absorbing blood like blotting paper.

"Recycled paper." Ian observed approvingly.

"I did not say all was bad in the project." Easty Badgerhead replied. Since she had not yet dropped the pearwood rack, Ian thought it would be wise to agree.