

*"Marketing Modernism: American Midcentury Paperback Design"*

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I am drawn to books as objects. Art is as much my interest as reading is, and I'm endlessly interested in the points in history where the two fields meet most harmoniously. My collecting interest, then, focuses on the concept of the book as a design object. In particular, through my aesthetic understanding of books, I've grown to understand the relationship between design and marketing--particularly in terms of this lofty concept of "Modernism." My focus is on the way, starting in the late 1940s, an increasingly large middle class--who were increasingly educated--were marketed to through literature that was avant-garde, and how avant-garde art was used to draw them in. In particular, the way that cover art was used to explain that a book was for "serious readers" as opposed to "pulp readers"--people that bought their books in the supermarket.

The major techniques of design I've been drawn to are complete abstraction, typographical abstraction, and reflections of expressionism in book covers. Further, the design of the conventions themselves have been an important factor in denoting who a book was "for"--and asserting their position in the world of Modernism, Literature, and Design. I've collected books by important midcentury designers--Gyorgy Kepes, Roy Kuhlman, Milton Glaser, Seymour Chwast, and others. My collection has grown to exhibit a surprisingly cohesive set of design values, a surprisingly cohesive set of designers, as well as reflections of the meaning of Art, Literature, and the "Modern Thinker" in the 1940s, 50s, and 60s.

A large chunk of my collection comes from a series that is very close to my heart for its complete aesthetic value. The Time Readers Program began in the 1960s as a way to market to the new educated masses through 'artistic' and 'complex' books, and it ended up expanding the concept of Trade Paperbacks and design through creating a space for artists to experiment with book design principles. I've assembled them sporadically, learning as I went about editions, designers, and publishing methods. The first book of the series I purchased when I was about sixteen, and collecting them is my main hobby.

Most of my collection are examples of the way Modern, difficult-to-digest literature, was paired with more unconventional design, particularly nonfigural design, or covers that don't actually tell you anything about a story. Many of these editions were the first times certain authors had been printed in the United States: Eugene Ionesco, Samuel Beckett, Henry Miller, Jean Cocteau, et cetera. All were considered writers that couldn't be marketed, but through a close coalition of design and marketing, a new niche for literature was created that allowed these authors' works to be sold on large scale.

But it isn't just the story of this phenomenon that I love, but the works themselves. The Time Edition of Richard Hughes's *In Hazard* inspired me to start creating my own art as much as any gallery painting I have owned. And the experience of reading these books, like say, the ambiguous tiny copy of Nathanael West's *Miss Lonelyhearts* with rounded edges, turns the

reading experience into a full sensory experience, for me. And, through collecting these works, I've expanded as an artist, a reader, an art historian, and a book collector. I've grown to understand the holistic process of books, and the role they play in a wider book culture. And further, this collection as an exhibit can show people this depth, and create a sensory experience as much as a learning one.