Paper works

It's a rare occasion to see a new book published about newspaper design. But Koos Staal of Staal&Duiker Designers in Haren/Berlin nevertheless has done just that. **Paperworks NL** is a personal monument over a long professional career but also a welcome addition to the bookshelf of anyone interested in the mechanics behind making news look good and communicate well at the same time. And the book even feels good in your hands.

NAVIGATION One of the first new things designers introduced in newspapers was a consistent organization of content – and a clear way to navigate through the paper.

LOGO LOGO! The logo, or nameplate, of a newspaper is the first important visual element that meets the readers' eyes. The logo is also the paper's corporate identity and very difficult to redesign.

SHIT TO PRINT The scandal-focused daily newspaper has never really taken off in the Netherlands like it has in most other European countries. Koos Staal gives his version of an explanation why, as well as shows colourful sketches for a Dutch tabloid that never made it to the newsstand: "End of exercise – and maybe for the best".

HIDDEN TREASURES *Paperworks NL* exploits what you can do with the printed media – the middle section of pages are folded with perforated edges and can be cut open manually to reveal facsimile prints of Koos Staal's newspaper designs as they were originally published.

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As the title suggests, *Paperworks NL* focuses on newspaper design in the Netherlands. From here, and from his office in Berlin Koos Staal travels to Europe and Asia as well as throughout his own country to work as a design consultant. He has conducted more then fifty redesigns so far, and besides being a newspaper specialist is also a designer of corporate identities, exhibitions, magazines and books.

The examples in the book are almost entirely Koos Staal's own work, but the principles behind them are universal, and can therefore easily be useful for people interested in news design everywhere.

The introduction is a quick walk-through of the "forty years' time [when] newspaper design has evolved from the mere filling of pages to the functional use of typography and strong visual language" – or in short, how news design became a profession.

The years coincide with Koos Staal's own professional career, and this personal tale of his background forms the basis for the more practical chapters that follow.

How it works

The major part of the book is a very thorough description of how newspapers are designed and produced – from the basic overall creation of the publication's identity and experimenting with format to the more practical design decisions about grid, typography, and colours. These elements are, says Koos Staal, actually a rather limited palette to work with every day – but in combination, they "make a rich medium for whispering, talking or shouting".

SMALL BUT GREAT Every detail has been considered carefully in preparation for *Paperworks NL*. Here Koos Staal shows some of the miniature dummy books he made to get a feeling of the flow of the pages. Photos: Lars Pryds

And this is where the designer comes in – arranging these elements both creatively and in respect for the written word. Koos Staal describes how the work of a newspaper designer is different from that of many other designers. Once a design concept has been approved, the designer – if he's an external consultant – exits and leaves the production and daily design of the pages to newspaper staff. Therefore, one of the most important parts of a redesign process is to make way for the interaction between publisher, editors, colleagues, in-house graphic designers and marketing department.

This book could be a great inspiration to make this interaction happen and to create a better understanding of the processes in news(paper) design. The very personal approach to explaining the projects gives the reader a hands-on feeling – Koos Staal really knows what he's talking about. It's not a lifetime of experience being shown here – Koos Staal is very much alive and experimenting with new projects – but already he's managed to pick up nearly as much as anyone could expect in a lifetime.

The feeling of paper

Although one chapter at the end of the book contemplates that new media such as tablets and the web will, perhaps, take over the role of the printed paper, this is a book about print on paper. It's no surprise then, that the book itself is an experiment with form – in a very delicate and tactile way. The cover is a rough grey cardboard quality and the middle section of the book consists of 'folded' and perforated pages, giving the reader the choice of reading as it is – or open the pages at the perforation at the edges, revealing on the 'inside pages' prints of Koos Staal's actual newspapers. This way, you're "left with a 'used book'. Just like an already read newspaper. If that is not newspaper-atmosphere … ?" as he says. ■

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