

My Study of Letterpress Typography

Preface (page 5)

This book is not something which can be called ‘a collection of my works’; rather, it is a collection of letterpress studies by a mere printer specialising in Western typography. This is what I pride myself on. I’m a jobbing printer, not working on large commercial prints, but when it comes to the quality of works, I never compromise. I’ve always strived to produce prints of excellent quality which are worthy of high recognition overseas.

Since its founding, the Kazui Press has always set its sights on the West. Every work in this book is a practice piece of my own to see whether my skills are acceptable by Western typographical standards.

Because the works were created by a genuine Japanese with little knowledge of English, there are naturally some typos. But the master type designer Hermann Zapf said to me, ‘It’s not a big problem. Their design and the choice of typeface are almost perfect. I guarantee it.’ Then he went on to say with a grin on his face, ‘Even the Bible omits *not*.’

Most of the main works here were printed in the 1970s. I no longer print such works anymore. Why is that? Because I’m not a designer nor artist – nothing but a letterpress printer. Though it may sound exaggerated, my ambition was fulfilled when Prof. Zapf recognized my works. So I decided to return to being a moneymaking printer. But still the quality on a par with European standards is my highest priority, so the price is definitely not affordable. I won’t take any jobs if this condition is not met. This is based on the principle of my master, private printer Yoshimitsu Inouye (in Japanese, written as ‘Kazui Inouye’). ‘Never take rush orders, spare no expense’ – these policies were instilled into my mind. Inouye placed the art of typography above anything else.

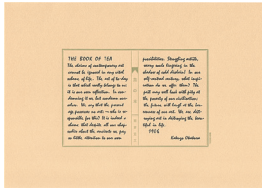
Letters do exist to read or record something. For that they must be legible and readable. Just playing on forms serves no purpose. Text has to be composed in a way which suits the content, no matter how simple and conventional the final product appears to be. This is the fundamental value of typography which Inouye taught me.

I want all the readers to see for themselves whether this value is embodied in my study.

Juzo Takaoka
The Kazui Press

Selected work descriptions

The Book of Tea (inserted before half title page)

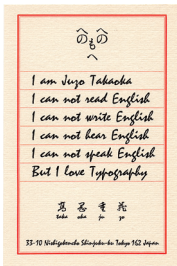


The Book of Tea by Kakuzo Okakura was published in 1906 from a New York publisher. Originally written in English, the book was designed to introduce Japanese culture to the West. Juzo chose a script typeface Mistral on the assumption that Kakuzo wrote the manuscript by hand, not on a typewriter.

The third line from the bottom of the text on the right side ended with ‘dest-’. The normal hyphenation of ‘destroying’ is ‘de-stroying’. ‘I did it that way on purpose to depict a careless stroke of pen by Kakuzo. It’s a kind of joke that even Kakuzo wouldn’t use hyphens correctly in the rough stage. I wanted to convey the image that this is still a draft, not a final print. So far nobody seems to notice it, but that’s what I expected. Isn’t it interesting?’

If following Western typography rules, a printing area should be set much higher, but in this work it was set a little lower, assuming that borders were printed in Japan using a printing block and that the carved marks were put at the bottom of the block as in the printing of ukiyo-e.

He-no-he-no-mo-he (page 41, a face drawn with Japanese hiragana characters)



When Juzo travelled abroad, people often spoke to him in English, taking for granted that he would understand English. This card, presented together with a business card, was used as a means of self-introduction in English. ‘It was quite popular. Looking at the card, they said to me with a surprised look, “You must be joking that you *cannot* do anything. You can do *everything!*”’ He chose Mistral for the English text, and his name was printed in a Japanese cursive script to fit the Latin typeface. Pronunciations in romaji were added to each Japanese kanji.

Business card (page 101)



Juzo visited D. Stempel AG for the first time in 1970. When he met the Art Department head Erich Schultz-Anker and presented this business card, Schultz-Anker said, ‘This card is flawless. Don’t ever think of redesigning it.’ Since then the design has remained unaltered even when the address or his title was changed.

(English translation by Mari Tashiro)