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**Curious. Entertaining.
Stimulating. Provocative.
Occasionally controversial.**

Since 1975, a diminutive booklet in a black cover with a thin white rule has arrived periodically in the mailboxes of Pentagram associates, clients and friends. Subject matter has ranged from crop circles to Chairman Mao. From tin tabernacles to souvenir albums. Pentagram Papers are a compilation of ideas, collections, and, in many cases, curiosities that were previously unpublished.

Upon the 35th anniversary of the Papers, for the first time, the entire collection is available together in [THE PENTAGRAM PAPERS](#). Included are not only in-depth reproductions and detailed discussion of the Paper's origins, but also an exclusive new Paper created especially for the book and set into a tray inside its back cover. They've become collectibles for the recipients.

Where did the idea for these Papers come from? "We wanted something that would help us communicate on a regular basis to non-designers," says John McConnell, the partner who started the Papers. "These booklets became a way to talk about anything but what we do. The design industry makes brochures of their work. We wanted to create a publication that simply said, 'Isn't the world interesting?'"

The collection has evolved into an artifact of what has stimulated and inspired the firm over the years. It's interesting to see these diverse subjects come together in this consistent format. "In the early days, there were a lot of debates about format and size," says McConnell. "Some felt that every issue should be a different size. But I said no—that there was enormous value in repetition of the same size, with the same black-and-white cover. The only thing you could change on the cover was the image in the center, and the interior would be designed to suit the subject. So what you have is a collection."

All of Pentagram's partners are encouraged to contribute ideas to future issues of the Papers. For instance, Michael Bierut, a partner in the New York firm, brought "doo-wop" architecture to the table in



an issue he produced. He explains, "My wife, Dorothy, had amassed a bunch of pictures of signs in Wildwood, NJ. For fun, I put together a slide show and gave a presentation of the images at one of our partners' meetings. A few of my partners suggested I do a Pentagram paper about them. I liked the photographs, but didn't think they were interesting enough on their own to be published. Then we met a writer, Jon van Meter, who was working on a story about Wildwood for the *New Yorker* that never saw the light of day. He volunteered to adapt the text for our book. The design is meant to feel more mid-century modern—sans serif type, candy colors, big inset words, all offsetting the picture section that is the heart of the design."

Experience the Pentagram Papers for yourself in [this excerpt](#).

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