

Journal of the best in international  
graphic design

grafik.



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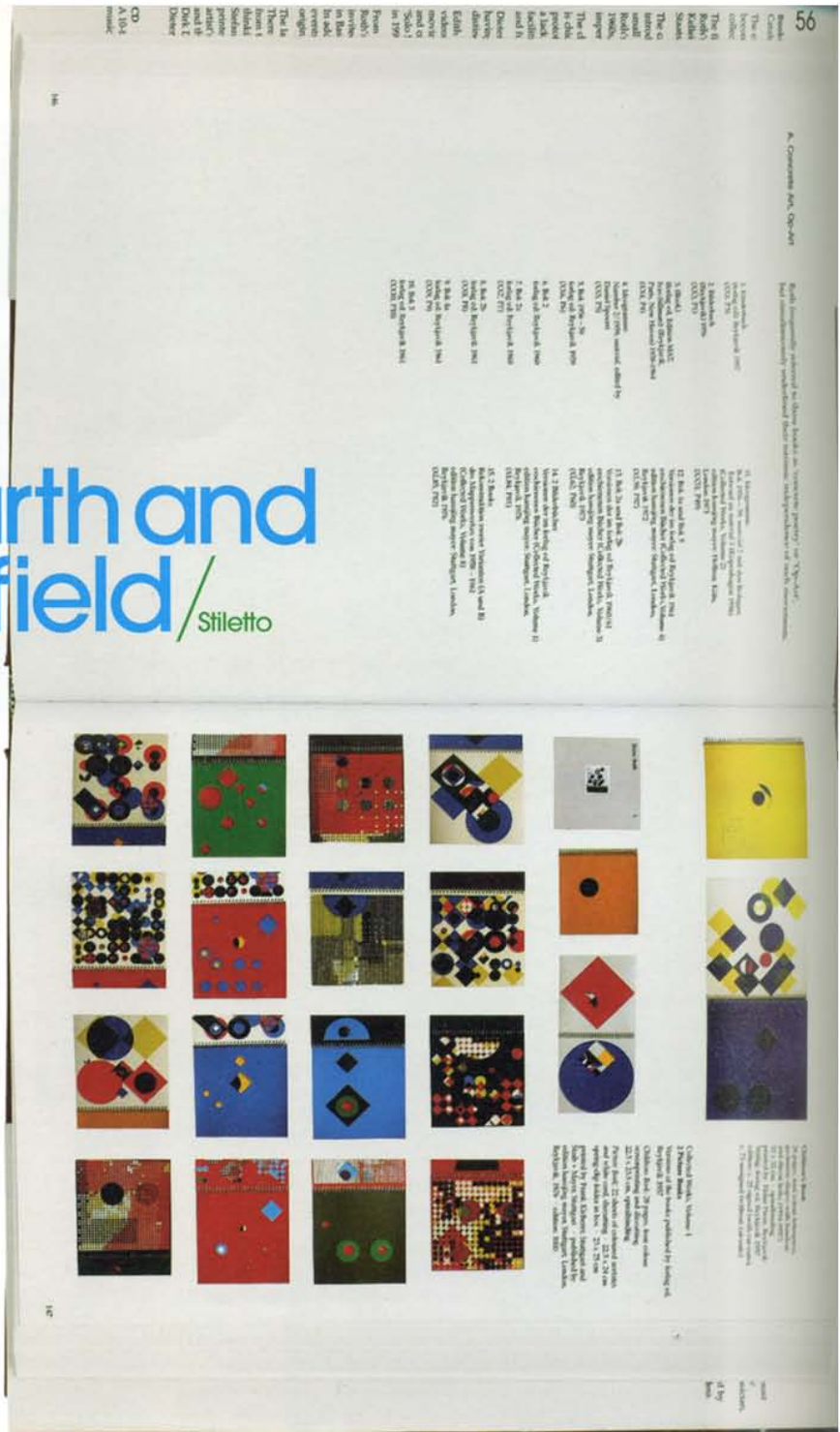
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What's on your Christmas list?  
Win a SEA poster, T-shirts and Phaidon's new book



Icon/06  
**Dieter Roth**  
 Chosen By  
**Stefanie Barth and  
 Julie Hirschfield** / Stiletto



A. Concrete Art, Op-art

Each composition selected to show Roth's "concrete poetry" or "Typo-  
 bild" arrangement of individual letters within a system, independent of such associations.

- 1. Roth's "concrete poetry" or "Typo-bild" arrangement of individual letters within a system, independent of such associations.
- 2. Roth's "concrete poetry" or "Typo-bild" arrangement of individual letters within a system, independent of such associations.
- 3. Roth's "concrete poetry" or "Typo-bild" arrangement of individual letters within a system, independent of such associations.
- 4. Roth's "concrete poetry" or "Typo-bild" arrangement of individual letters within a system, independent of such associations.
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- 24. Roth's "concrete poetry" or "Typo-bild" arrangement of individual letters within a system, independent of such associations.

Dieter Roth, "Concrete Poetry" or "Typo-bild", 1965. Each composition selected to show Roth's "concrete poetry" or "Typo-bild" arrangement of individual letters within a system, independent of such associations.



Interpreted by Dan Nadel  
 Spreads from Dieter Roth:  
 Books + Multiples by kind  
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 www.stilettonyc.com

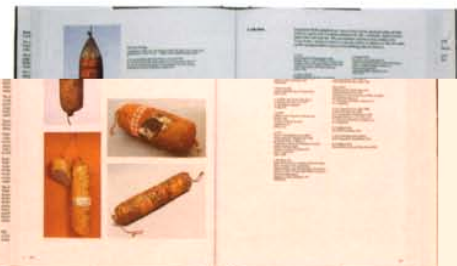


One of his most infamous projects in the series is Literature Sausage (1961–70): Roth cut up books in his disfavoured and carefully stuffed them into sausage skins; the contents of each skin were then helpfully labelled with his usual superb design and wit. None of these objects is precious—they are well-made, but rough-hewn enough to signal that they were made to be used, not coddled. This kind of playful-yet-critical-yet-visceral idea is the sort of upside-down thinking we hope to achieve in our own practice. His love of print cuts through his entire career, from editing poetry for the journal *Spirale* in the 1950s, to the books, to multiple adventures in fine-art printing. Even his exhibition posters, which he often executed himself, were process pieces: he would overprint, cross out, and otherwise destroy his own promotional materials, turning his programmed chaos back in on himself for private enjoyment and public consumption. His approach to his posters is a fine parallel to his career: he never cared to justify himself or to play the fine-art game. Nothing in his life and art was too valuable not to be messed with.

Dieter Roth didn't care. That's partly why we like him. If we all didn't care as much as he didn't care, the world would be a far, far more exciting place. Born in 1930 in Hanover, Germany, Roth was a restless and prolific artist who began as an apprentice to a graphic designer in Berne, Switzerland, spent some time in Denmark as a textile designer, and eventually settled on dividing his time between Iceland and Basel, Switzerland, where he died in 1998.

He was a poet, publisher, filmmaker, musician, sculptor, painter, designer and raconteur. The single thread that runs through his many practices is attitude: he refused all associations to art movements and was decidedly unprecious about his work. We could say that he cared so much about the work that the only way to go on

This kind of fearlessness—the Roth kind—is the core of his example to us. Only a consummate artist could care so much and so little, destroy so much, and yet produce art that intimidates, inspires and, best of all, opens up a window into a way of thinking (or not thinking) about creativity.



to produce—was to "not care", to simply ride the flow of his own artistic exploration, rather than stop to make sure each statement was just right. He likened this approach to "programmed chaos", or a kind of structured life and art in constant flux. After all, there has to be some structure.

For us, Roth has been an intermittent presence: bobbing up and down in our creative lives at various random points. Beyond his general example of artistic independence and proto-DIY ethos, we admire his ability to turn convention on its head. Alterations, a series of works that consumed much of his time in the 1960s and 70s, is perhaps our most direct contact with Roth. These books were all re-appropriations of various printed sources. He would reorder, die-cut, and rebind children's comics into a psychedelic bible; or a 473-page book would consist only of cut-up pages from the *Daily Mirror*, expertly rebound and reconceived as an art object.