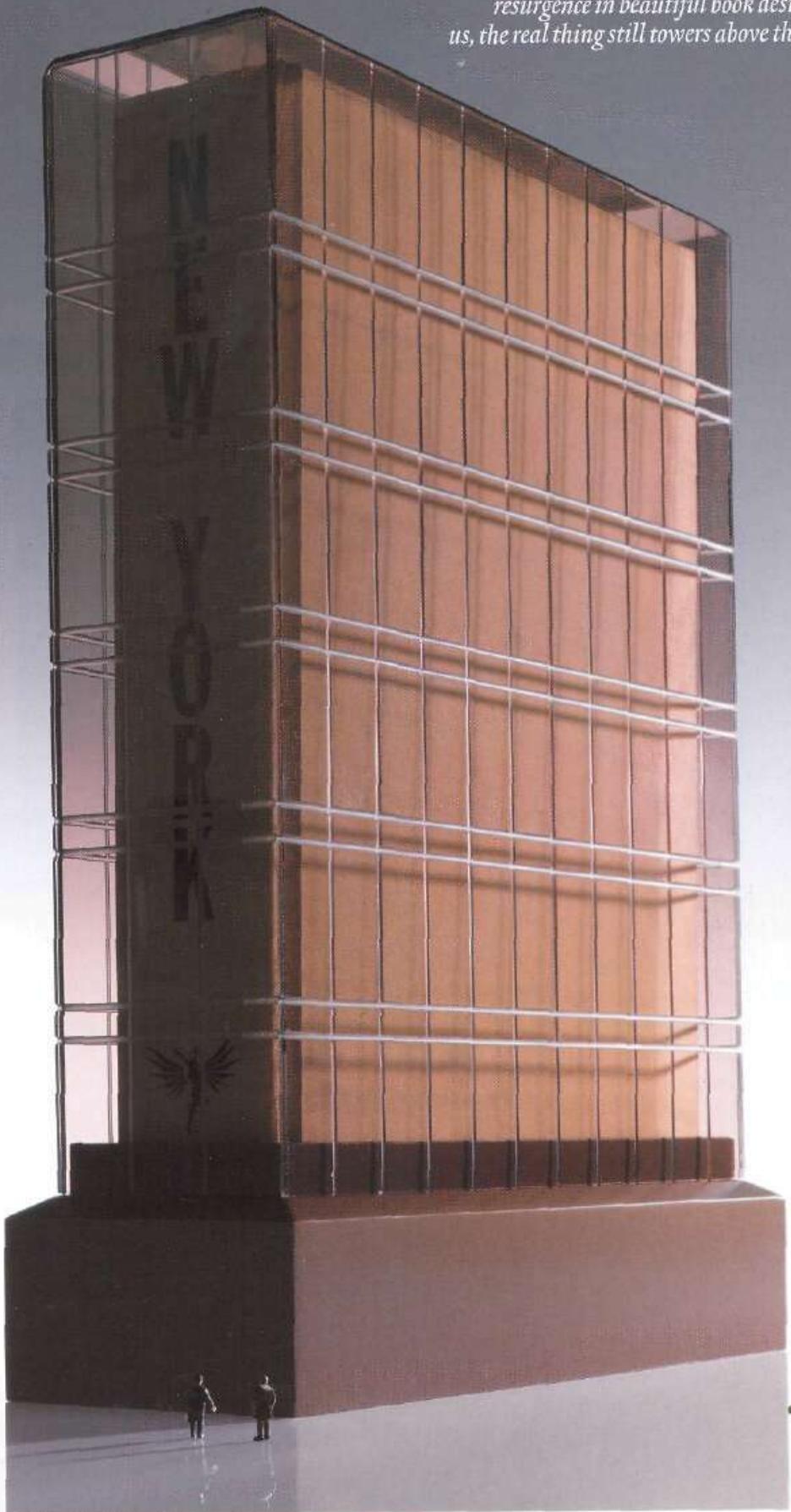
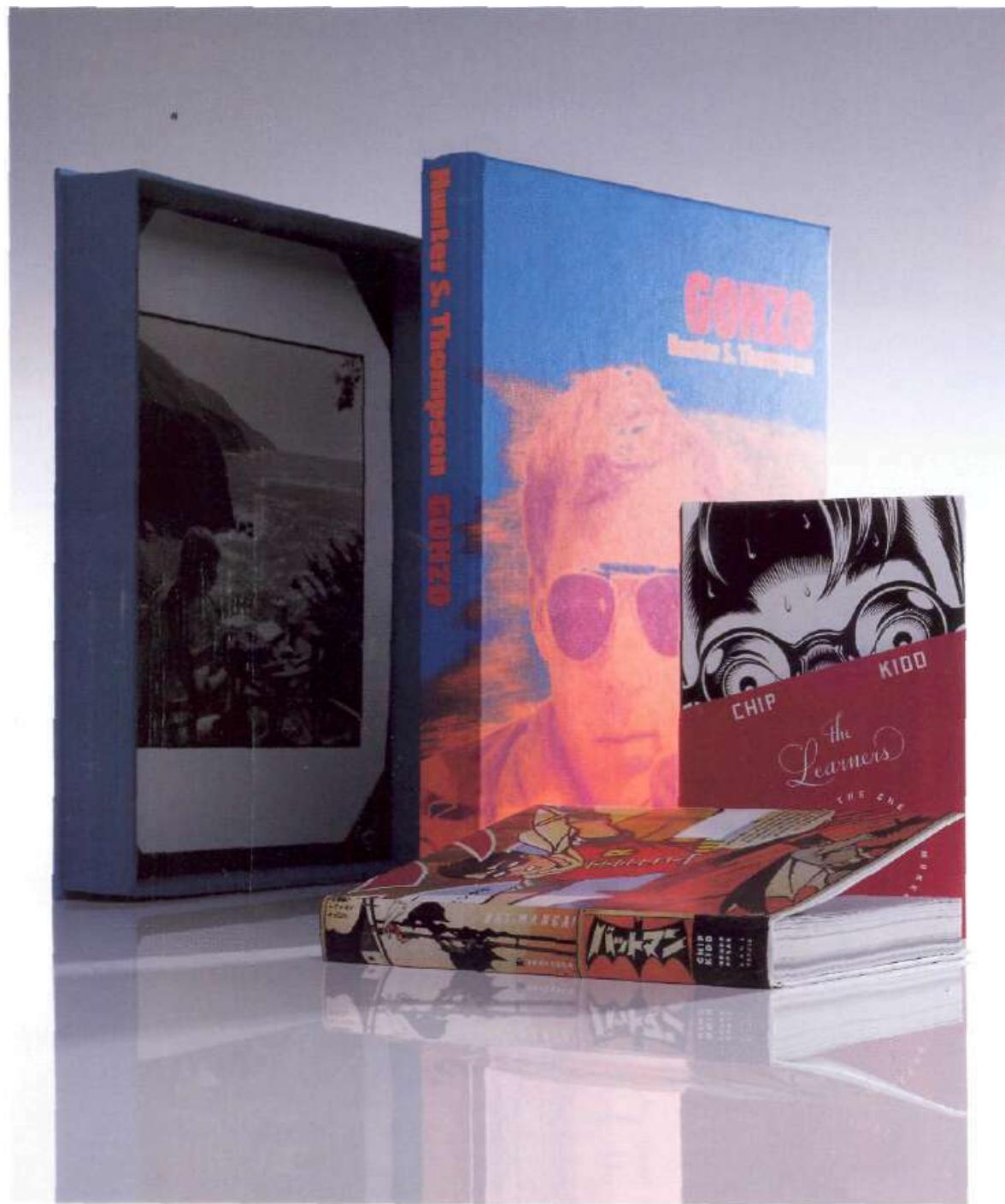


# Cover story

*The digital revolution may be in full swing, but a resurgence in beautiful book design means, for us, the real thing still towers above the competition*

**HIGH CONCEPT**  
The half-metre tall,  
16kg *New York* from  
Gloria Publishing,  
which comes in a  
Lucite tower case  
and features 1,200  
photographs that  
best define the city



**OUTSIDE THE BOX**

This page: from left to right, limited edition Gonzo box set by Hunter S. Thompson; and Chip Kidd's comics compendium *Bat-ManGal* and second novel *The Learners*.

**F**

or many, the golden age of modern book design was the 1960s. With a new series of Penguin paperbacks setting the design agenda with daring, intelligent covers by Derek Birdsall, there was a major shift in how books were marketed, sold and understood by the paying customer. Suddenly, the everyman didn't get books from the library, but went and bought his own copies.

Now, more books are being printed than ever before. The marketplace is saturated, and all the big retail outlets are in fierce price wars, cutting into the profits of the publishers. It's bad news, but in fact it has made many publishers look again at the art of book production. The production of original, beautifully

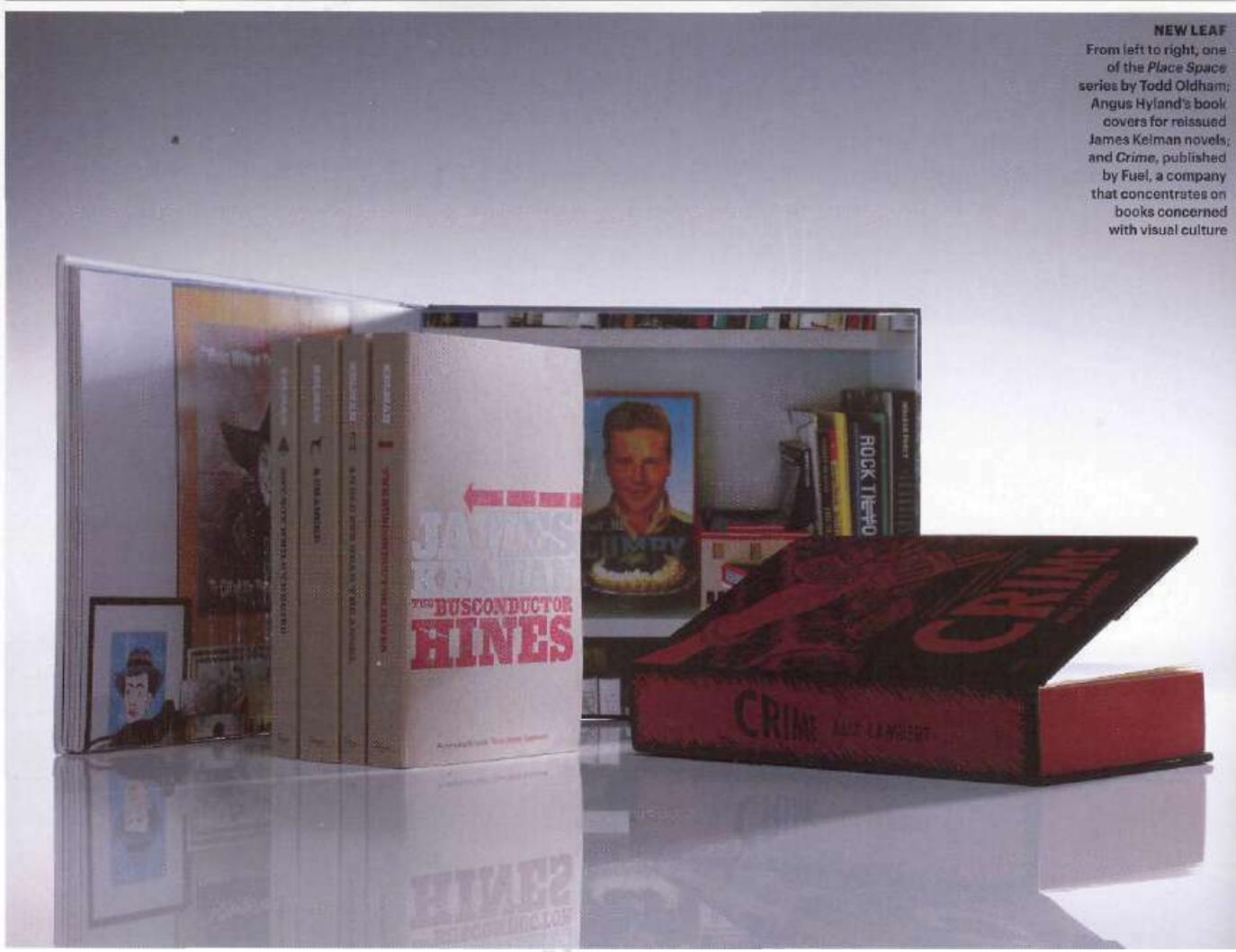
designed books, collections and limited editions is seen as a way out, navigating around vicious price wars. Now, more than ever, publishers are emphasising the book as 'object' over the appeal of cheaper print runs to squeeze out higher profit margins. Though publishers such as Taschen, Steidl and Phaidon have always specialised in the large format coffee table book, there is now a larger trend for quality special editions, and an interest in good design. Just as the book market is in crisis, we are enjoying a renaissance in innovative book production.

Designer Todd Oldham's *Place Space*, published by LA-based publisher Ammo Books in June, is a bold new design series that explores brilliant, singular 'places'

and the curiously devoted people that created them, including Amy Sedaris, Cindy Sherman and Michael Graves. Each book's unique location is presented in vast, full-bleed photographs.

Also published by Ammo is *Gonzo* by Hunter S. Thompson, which features an introduction by Johnny Depp and great art direction. It's a fantastic package that includes a specially designed box, which contains the book itself and a limited-edition gallery-quality photo by Thompson. There were only 3,000 copies printed and the book will almost certainly increase in value in the short term.

*New York*, the 756-page limited edition published by Gloria, pushes the envelope in terms of scale and ambition even »



**NEW LEAF**  
From left to right: one of the *Place Space* series by Todd Oldham; Angus Hyland's book covers for reissued James Kelman novels; and *Crime*, published by Fuel, a company that concentrates on books concerned with visual culture

further. The 50cm-tall book represents the ultimate expression in high-end, luxury publishing, and is superbly designed. But at £7,600 a copy, you have to be a pretty serious collector — and free of back problems — to pick one up.

But books don't have to be expensive or luxuriant to be well designed. Some of the larger publishers, while maintaining the big print runs, have always been focused on good design. The work of Chip Kidd at Alfred A Knopf has helped spark a revolution in the art of American book packaging, so it's no surprise that his own novel, *The Learners* (out this month from Scribner, a division of Simon & Schuster), has great cover art. Another Kidd project, a fantastic comics compendium, *Bat-Manga! The Secret History of Batman in Japan*, is out from Pantheon in November. It features translated original Batman and Robin comics, produced by and for the Japanese in 1966 and 1967.

Cult fiction also lends itself to great design. Polygon's reissue of the novels and short stories of James Kelman, described by *The New York Times Magazine* as the 'Godfather of the Scottish Beats', is due out this summer. Four of the book covers were designed by Pentagram's Angus Hyland. Meanwhile, a powerfully designed and edited investigation into crime, both in cinema and the real world, is published by Fuel this month. *Crime*

#### INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO

##### 2008 design masterpieces to treasure

###### 01. PLACE SPACE SERIES

By Todd Oldham (Ammo Books, \$20 each, [www.ammobooks.com](http://www.ammobooks.com))

###### 02. GONZO (LIMITED EDITION)

By Hunter S Thompson (Ammo Books, \$400, [www.ammobooks.com](http://www.ammobooks.com))

###### 03. NEW YORK

(Gloria Publishing, £7,600, [www.gloriabooks.co.uk](http://www.gloriabooks.co.uk))

###### 04. THE LEARNERS

By Chip Kidd (Scribner, \$26, [www.simonsays.com](http://www.simonsays.com))

###### 05. BAT-MANGA!

By Chip Kidd (Pantheon Books, \$30, [www.randomhouse.com/pantheon](http://www.randomhouse.com/pantheon))

###### 06. JAMES KELMAN REISSUES

Designed by Angus Hyland (Polygon, £8 each, [www.polygon.birlinn.co.uk](http://www.polygon.birlinn.co.uk))

###### 07. CRIME

By Alix Lambert (Fuel Publishing, £23, [www.fuel-design.com](http://www.fuel-design.com))

###### 08. ARKANSAS

By John Brandon (McSweeney's, \$22, [www.mcsweeney.net](http://www.mcsweeney.net))

###### 09. FUTURENTERTAINMENT

Designed by Vince Frost (Phaidon, \$30, [www.phaidon.com](http://www.phaidon.com))

features interviews with Ben Affleck, David Cronenberg and David Mamet, and with its impressive contributors and art direction, it may well be a collector's item soon. Meanwhile, the ludicrously prolific publishing empire McSweeney's, founded by author Dave Eggers, continues to produce interesting and beautifully packaged books, such as *Arkansas* by first-time author John Brandon.

But will good design ultimately concede to digital books? Art director Vince Frost thinks so: 'The book has been replaced already. A book is an old-fashioned form of communication. We are all writers and publishers. We make our own content and share it with the world with ease. It's a break-down of traditional monopolies that have controlled our literary diet for too long.' Fittingly, Frost has art-directed a new book called *Futurentertainment*, which is all about the amazing things that have happened and are happening in the digital world. Published by Phaidon, you will note that it is, in fact, a book.

Kidd thinks the book has a longer shelf life: 'What no one seems to get is that people don't want to read books on a screen. The printed book as a piece of technology has yet to be improved.' So there you go. Long live the book! \*

Dan Crowe is the author of *How I Write: The Secret Lives of Authors* (Rizzoli)