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UPPER AND LOWER CASE. THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF TYPOGRAPHICS

PUBLISHED BY INTERNATIONAL TYPEFACE CORPORATION, VOLUME 16, NUMBER 2, SPRING 1989. \$5.00



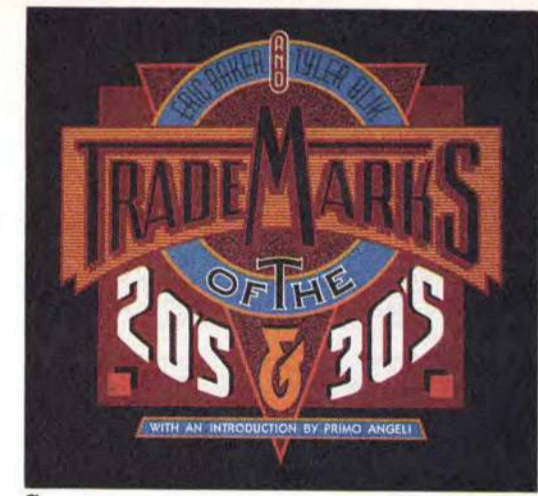
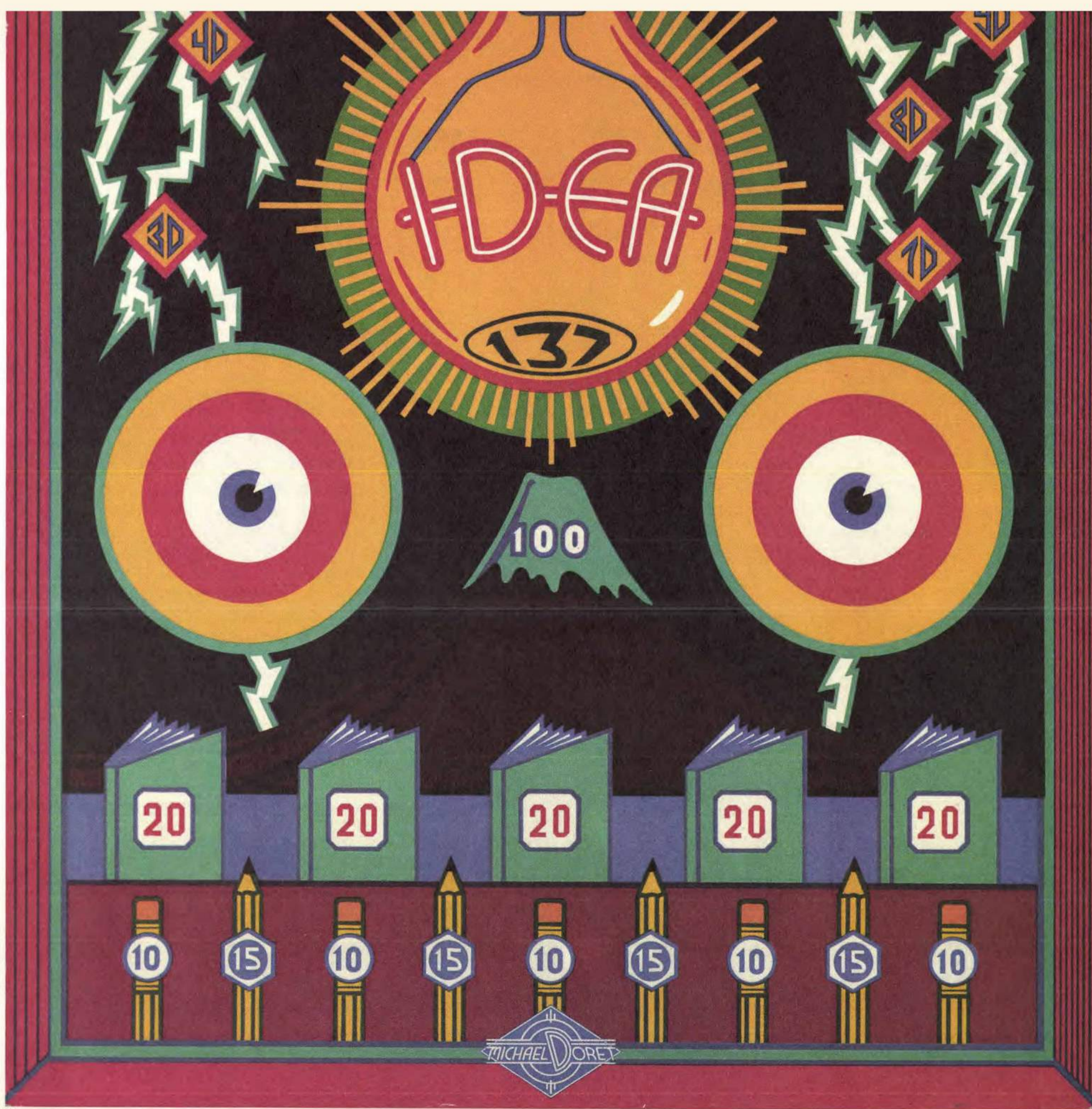


# The Funky Functional Graphics of Michael Doret

Anyone who has been immersed in graphics for a long time may be jolted in a first encounter with Michael Doret's work. It's nothing like the tasteful, classy graphics we've been educated to admire...or even the razzle-dazzle punk-style computerized video graphics we're growing accustomed to. No, Michael Doret's designs are blatantly "old-fashioned," and it is precisely this courageous outmoded look that stops us in our tracks and eventually wins us over.

### The '20s, '30s, and early '40s

Doret's graphics recall an era when advertising was innocent; when people with something to sell, sold it hard...when those with something to say, said it loud and clear. Later, in the postwar years, advertising graphics took on sophisticated new ways. Psychologists probed the motivations and

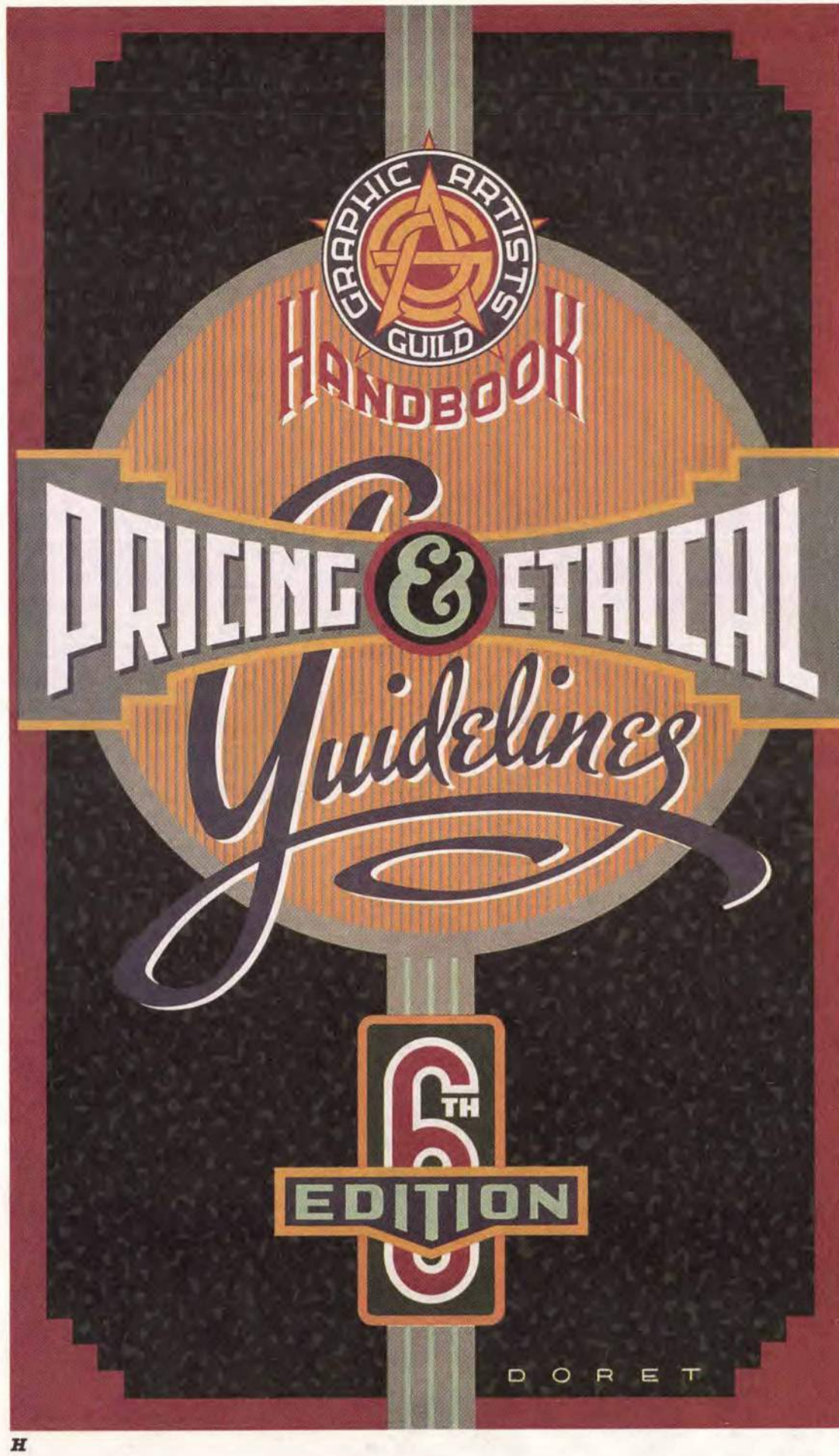
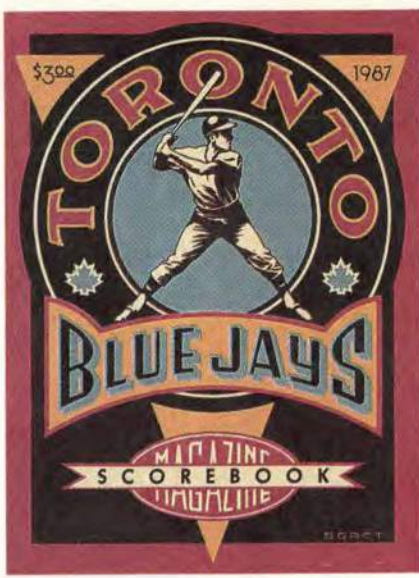
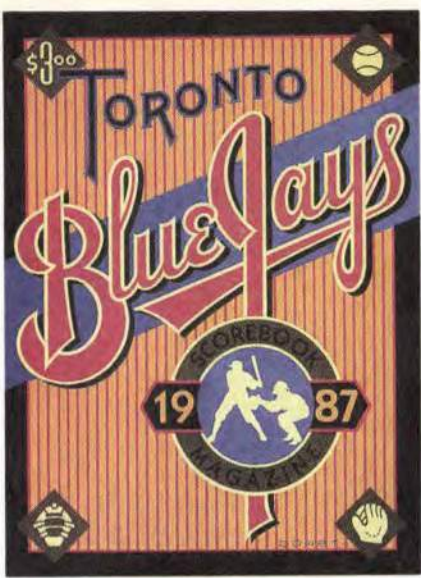


buying habits of consumers. Advertisers softened their voices to charm and seduce readers to become buyers. Commercial artists and fine artists raided each others' territory and blurred the distinction between the two. Museums hung paintings of soup cans and Brillo boxes, and art directors reproduced fine art in their ads.

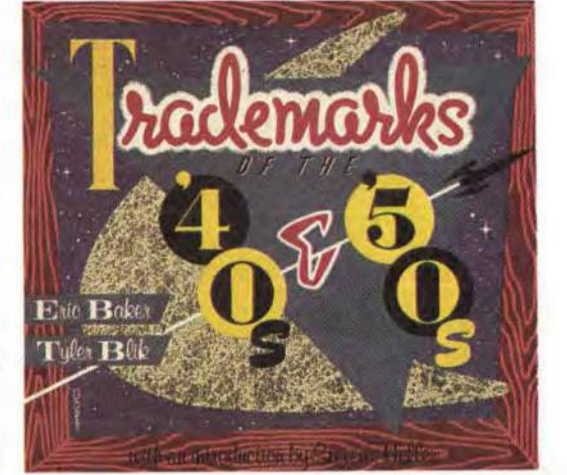
Although Michael Doret is a product of those postwar years, and his art school training was in painting and sculpture, there are no "fine art" pretensions in his work. He admits that he thoroughly enjoys defying trends...going against the mainstream. But he also enumerates some of the potent experiences that pointed him in the direction he has taken.

He recalls that as a youngster he was always intrigued with letterforms in the signs he saw around New York—the full-bodied, chocolate-colored letters on the Good Humor ice cream truck...the flamboyant posters and billboards of Coney Island's Luna Park...the spectacular illuminated signs of Times Square. During his college years he was particularly smitten with the psychedelic posters coming out of the San Francisco hippie scene. And when he arrived at Cooper Union in the '60s to study painting, the art world was in the





thrill of a hot new movement—Op Art. It was partly inspired by Josef Alber's work concerning the interaction of color. It was partly a reaction against the Abstract Expressionist movement. Painters like Victor Vasarely, Yaacov Agam and Richard Anuskievicz (Doret's teacher at Cooper Union) were among the artists who forged ahead with visual experiments, using flat color and simple geo-

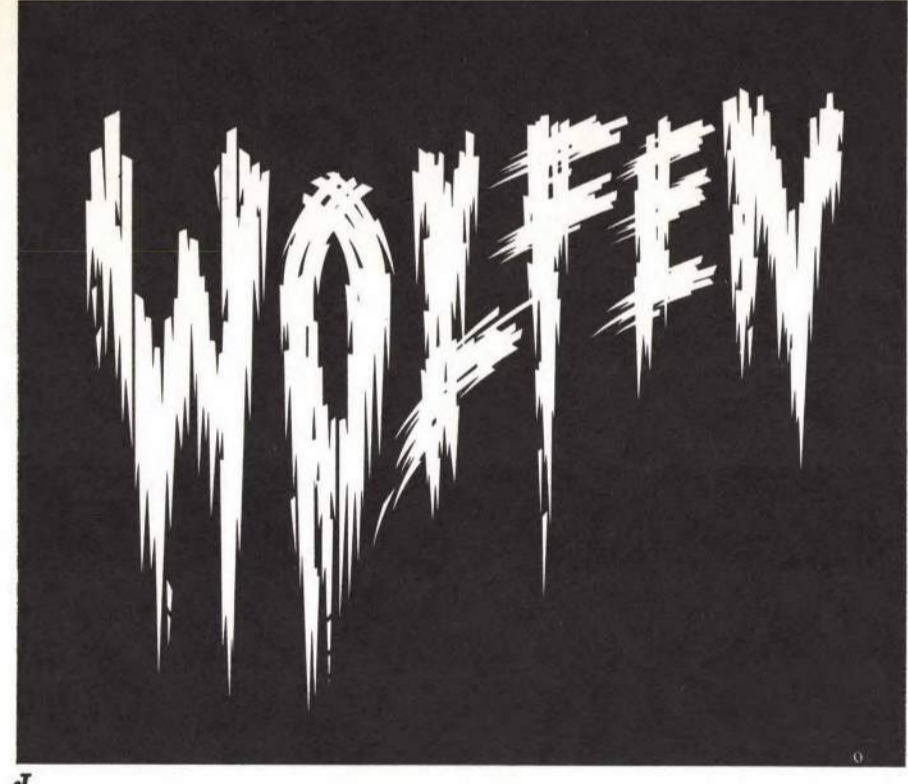


metric shapes to create optical illusions and conundrums. There is no question in Doret's mind that all those fond experiences with color, geometrics, and expressive letterforms propelled him toward the funky, offbeat graphics that have become his specialty.

**A Virtuoso of the Drawing Board**

At first glance, Doret's designs look deceptively simple. On closer look, we can see that each one is a complex amalgam of diverse elements under such precise control they bond together in immutable unity. There is no element that can be removed or moved even a hairsbreadth without collapsing the whole. That's what good design is all about.

In Doret's projects in particular, where the lettering must be fitted into circles, ribbons, swashes and



all manner of geometric and free-form shapes, precision is the operative word. Unfortunately, there are no simple solutions. He can never turn to a type specimen book for his letterforms (unless a client specifically requests that the lettering resemble an established typeface). In each job the words must be styled and manipulated to fit his design. His style has compelled him to become a lettering designer. With each new project he creates a new alphabet, always concentrating on capturing the character of the words and fitting them into their designated spaces.

Because of the precise handling and the subtle decisions he must make, it's almost impossible for him to farm out any part of the finished work. While he is drawing the letters, he is constantly adjusting sizes, shapes, negative spaces, drop shadows, the angle of a serif and the color relationships. So his design style forces him to do the finished art on his projects as well. And as long as he's at it, he does the mechanicals too, which, according to ad managers and printers, are nothing short of perfection.

The problem-solving and concepts are exhilarating for Doret. The execution is painstaking and tedious. But for someone who loves symmetry and order, letterforms, and a free hand with color, Doret has chosen the precisely right direction. *Marion Muller*



- A Poster announcing Simon and Garfunkel concert.
- B Cover for Idea, the Japanese magazine of graphic arts.
- C Cover design for book on trademarks
- D, E Covers for Scorebook, magazine distributed at baseball games.
- F Logo for Columbia jazz recordings, used on records, tapes and CDs.
- G Logo for Readers' Digest records, jackets and brochures.
- H Book cover.
- I Cover design for book on trademarks.
- J Title treatment for feature film.
- K Logo for greeting card company.
- L Logo design for Leo Burnett Co., Chicago, announcing construction of their own building.
- M Logo for game by Parker Bros.