

BOOKS

TYPE AROUND TOWN DECODES THE VISUAL LANGUAGE OF THE CITY

T*ype Around Town: The Art of Noticing Typography* holds the magnifying glass closer to the written typeface that defines Calcutta, yet largely remains on the margins of public consciousness. Taking note of the typography that forms the city's visual language, *Type Around Town* captures the fonts, letters and styles unique to Calcutta, much like its food, festivals and clothing at a broader level.

It brings into focus the type styles painted with remarkable precision on public transport, such as buses that keep zooming past us. It also brings back into public consciousness styles influenced by European aesthetics, as well as those that may have ceased to exist in the literary world but remain alive in the stories of brands that have endured for decades here.

Arshdeep Singh, who spearheaded the project at Kwazi Design and is also the owner of Artsy — Coffee & Culture in Minto Park, tells us: "Growing up in Calcutta, I've always been curious about the many cultural influences that shape the city, both regional and colonial. During Covid, when life slowed down, I found myself walking through the city more intentionally, noticing details I had earlier overlooked. That's when I began to see how much typography quietly contributes to Calcutta's visual identity."

Continuing, he adds: "From old shop signs to marble plaques and hand-painted boards, there was also a growing sense that much of this was fading away or being replaced. What started as photographing and archiving these details evolved into something deeper. We



began building narratives around them, uncovering stories of craft, context and changing times. As a team at Kwazi, we also started exploring how these elements could be reinterpreted, not just as remnants of the past but as forms that still hold relevance today. At the time, we didn't fully know it would become a book, but slowly, *Type Around Town* took shape as a way to preserve, understand and reframe this visual layer of the city," said Singh, informing that

the project also extends beyond the book into merchandise such as postcards, tote bags, keychains and notebooks, available at his cafe.

Each page of this extremely handy coffee-table book feels like revisiting the past while noticing the present with a renewed sense of curiosity. It also underscores the genius of the invisible hands contributing to the city's visual culture, which comes alive especially during

elections. Behind promotions and political campaigns, each stroke of a letter speaks volumes about the artist and their artistry. Beyond handwritten typography, *Type Around Town* also draws attention to the illuminated signs of iconic brands that speak of sophistication, playfulness and modernity.

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