



**Staatsbibliothek
zu Berlin**

Preußischer Kulturbesitz

Department of Early Printed Books

Artistic Books

The collection of artistic books originated in the middle of the 1920ies and first began with a collection of printed works of the private press which had previously been dismissed in the State Library as “picture books” and which, accordingly, had been neglected in acquisition. This view was still based on the pragmatic acquisition policies of the 19th century, which were marked by the necessity of creating a modern users’ library. During the subsequent period, however, this perspective shifted, influenced not least by the library’s work on the “Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke” (Union Catalogue of Incunabula), which had sharpened appreciation for the beauty of the various kinds of type in their historical development.

By the second half of the 19th century a number of completely new possibilities for mass producing cheap books had arisen. These derived from the invention of the steam-powered press, the introduction of paper made from wood pulp, the use of steel engravings and lithography for illustrations and the predominant use of pre-fabricated publishers’ bindings. As a consequence of these advances, however, the quality of books in many cases left very much to be desired. This led to rising expectations on the part of producers and buyers in respect to the design of books and to the materials used to make them.

As a consequence of the evacuation measures taken during the Second World War, around 180 works were lost from the original collection, which is being extended on a regular basis up to the present day. Today the collection comprises about 10,000 items. Beyond that, it is also being enriched by publications with original graphics. When a work is admitted to this collection, its illustrators, designers, typographers and other special features are given special entries in the library’s catalogue.