

BORING BORING BORING BORING BORING BORING BORING

By Zach Plague – Featherproof Books

With his hybrid typo/graphic novel, roughly 250 perfect-bound pages mark a patently ambitious debut by Zach Plague, a Chicago-based designer-cum-author. Foremost, Plague's *boring* is a novel whose purpose remains simple: to be read front to back. The story, while rather unremarkable in its naked narrative incarnation, chronicles a loosely-plotted, twisted generational satire. Set in a small city whose entire lifeblood is the existence of its university, Uni-Arts is the breeding ground for Plague's characters. As over-privileged hipsters and Daddy's Money preps, they indulge in every decadent misstep a 19-year-old's brain cavity can handle. And they all think that they're reinventing art nouveau while kicking its legs out from under it. Plague's prose is well-written in many spots, rife with lavish descriptions and portraiture. Its plot is rather bare-bones, suffering from a nebulous, surface-skimming thread attempting to connect each vignette to the next. However, that's where part two of Plague's conceptual novel picks up the slack. While *boring's* story lacks flourish, the book is tied together by its aesthetic, each page brilliantly designed as a separate canvas. Implementing more than 100 fonts and typefaces throughout the work and also incorporating handwritten portions, Plague attempts to use each visual as a nod to the subtext. On top of creating new formats for page orientation, borders, and backdrops, each character receives his or her own font, and words within the text are emphasized with different typefaces and weights. In tandem with the light plot, the visual appeals to the psyche, cueing the reader's thoughts to ruminate on the accentuated words and their alternative implications. It's a straightforward idea with endless possibilities and Plague tackles it with grace. Thoughtfully designed as nine separate posters then cut down and bound, there are aesthetic threads that jump from page to page. It's a hell of a head-turn to the book in its traditional form, and only gains more prominence hand-in-hand with its subject matter. Sure, there's the irony of the cultural art satire chaffing against Plague's insanely designed conceptual work. But Plague's book caused a lot of thinking, turning back pages, and fascination on my end – and hell, part of the fun was the weird looks I got while reading it on the train. (Meredith Turits)

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