

= Transformation playing card =

A transformation playing card ( sometimes referred to as a transformation deck when assembled into a complete set ) is a type of playing card where an artist incorporates the pips of the non @-@ face cards into an artistic design . In a classical transformation playing card , the pips retain their standard position and coloration on the card . In some variations , the pips may be different in size , location or color . There is some debate as to whether these cards , often referred to as semi @-@ transformed , should be considered true transformation playing cards .

= = History = =

By the 19th century , the standard form for playing cards had become fixed in most of Europe and America . French cards used hearts , diamonds , spades and clubs . German cards used acorns , leaves , hearts and bells . It was at this time that designers in Germany , France and England began to draw small figures around the pips .

The first transformation playing cards were created by D.W. Soltan and D. Berger in 1801 as illustrations for a German edition of Hudibras . The cards illustrated were the 2 of hearts , 3 of hearts , 5 of hearts and 8 of hearts . In 1803 , John Nixon published the first complete set ( 52 cards ) of transformed cards . Titled Metastasis , this collection was also published as illustrations on sheets of paper . In 1804 , J.C. Cotta , a publisher and bookseller in Tübingen , Germany , produced the first set of transformation cards that was published as an actual deck of playing cards . These decks were published as almanacs , in which each of the 52 cards corresponded to one of the 52 weeks of the year .

In 1865 Dean and Son published a deck in which the pips have been changed in both size and location , being placed at the artist 's whim . Collectors debate as to whether or not this deck should be considered a transformation deck , due to these differences . The Dean and Son deck remained the only deck to manipulate the pips until the 1970s , when the practice gained some popularity . Today , cards that do not strictly adhere to standard pip placement , size and color are referred to as semi @-@ transformation playing cards .

An article entitled " Playing Card Squiggles . " was published in the December 1910 issue of Strand Magazine . Several Cotta cards were pictured , erroneously attributed to an unnamed French artist . Strand subsequently asked its readers to submit their own designs for card squiggles , which the magazine periodically published . John Butler Yeats was one of the first to contribute a card design to the magazine . The feature remained popular for some time .

= = Contemporary designs = =

Transformation playing cards like Art for the Earth by The Friends of the Earth and Under the Sea by the Marine Stewardship Counsel , are created for charity purposes , with different artists contributing art for each card . Similarly , other collective projects like Ultimate Deck from Dan & Dave and Stranger & Stranger or the series from Black Rock Collective brings multiple artists together to create semi @-@ transformation decks .

One of the more notable contemporary sets is the award winning The Key to the Kingdom , a semi @-@ transformation deck commissioned by London 's V & A Museum of Childhood and created by Tony Meeuwissen . It won the WH Smith Literary Award for best illustration and The Designers and Art Directory Association of London gold award . This set of cards was created around the theme of nursery rhymes and poems . The cards were sold with a book containing each poem and a picture of the corresponding card on the opposite page . Additionally , the deck was constructed as a puzzle contest laid out in the form of an original poem . The poem gave clues to pick certain cards , which then could be decrypted into a secret message . The prize of \$ 10 @,@ 000 and a golden key was won by Susan Kavanagh of Essex .

With the advent of Kickstarter and other crowdfunded websites , individual artists are more easily able to bring transformation and semi @-@ transformation decks to the public . Notable examples

include the series of semi @-@ transformation decks from Emmanuel Jose ( including Curator and Clipped Wings ) and Dave Ufford 's traditional transformation EclecDeck .