Six Survivors
from the Trükimuuseum

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from the Trükimuuseum, Tartu, Estonia

In June of 2016, we had a residency at the Estonian Printing Museum (now TYPA Centre) in Tartu. Founded in 2010, the core of the collection was formed from obsolete letterpress equipment and type from a few Soviet-era printshops. This included a large amount of wood type, some of which was made before the Second World War and perhaps before the Bolshevik Revolution.

This specimen portfolio presents six of the most interesting fonts: three Roman and three Cyrillic. We printed an example of every letter (though not every sort), a sample of the bottom of each font (for sawmark identification), and any replacement characters. We also printed a fragment of a wood engraving that had been reused to make a piece of type from a font of type that we did not print.

All of the prints were made using a Dingler iron handpress on dampened Hahnemühle Ingres paper.

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Clifton Meador & Daniel Mellis

This typeface with its distinctive ball terminals was hand cut, as can be seen by the absence of router marks in the negative spaces. However, the high degree of regularity among letterforms and the level of finish in the manufacturing, including the mortising to accomodate the slope, suggests that it was professionally produced. Also notable is the the clever, but not consistent, treatment of the diacritics in the 'Ä', 'Ö', and 'Ü'.

Similar to the wood type shown previous, this font was hand cut, very likely by a manufacturer of wood type. Of particular note are the jaunty counters of the 'O's and '0's, as well as the Cyrillic style 'К'.

This is a smaller size of the previous design, though it also includes a lowercase alphabet. Some of its unique features are the wedge of the 'i', the mortising in the 'A' to accomodate diacritics, and perhaps the world's ugliest 'g'. The presence of the 'õ', which appears only in Estonian, Hungarian loan words, and Portuguese, suggests that this type and the two previously shown were made in Estonia. The crudeness of two of the 'N's suggests that they are replacement letters, cut in a print shop.

This Cyrillic wood type is an extra-condensed French Clarendon, a style that was first developed in the United States. This is not surprising, as almost all of the Cyrillic type—in metal or wood—of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was based on Roman designs. The presence of a 'Ѣ' (*yat*, abolished in the Soviet Union in 1917) indicates that the type was made either in pre-Soviet Russia or during the first Estonian Republic, where Russian speakers had preserved the old orthography.

This Cyrillic wood type is an extra-condensed Latin design (i.e., posessing wedge-shaped serifs). As with the previous font, it also has a 'ѣ' (stored in the same case as the next type), but also more extraordinarily, two 'v's (*izhitsa*) and a 'ѳ' (*fita*).

In 1917, the former was only used in two words: 'мѵро' (*myrrh*) and 'сѵнодъ' (*synod*), and the latter was used only rarely and mostly in Greek loan words. There were very few capital letters; these might have been in a separate case that is now lost.

This wood type face is also a Latin, though it has unbracketed serifs to the bracketed ones of the previous. It does have the same three now-obsolete characters: three capital and lowercase 'Ѣ's, a capital and lowercase 'V', and a capital 'Ѳ'.

We also made an interesting discovery in a case of wood type Herold Condensed (approximately thirty-one ciceros). One of the letters, a 'B' (shown actual size on the opposite page) had been cut on the bottom of a fragment of a wood engraving. Mana Kaasik, a designer at the museum, quickly determined that it was from the cover of the memoirs, published in 1947, of Paul Pinna, an important figure in early Estonian theater. Fortuitously, copies of the book were for sale in two used bookstores in Tartu.

Shown overleaf is the engraving on the bottom of the 'B' together with a reproduction of the cover with a print of the engraving fragment tipped on.

PAUL PINNA

MÄLESTUSED

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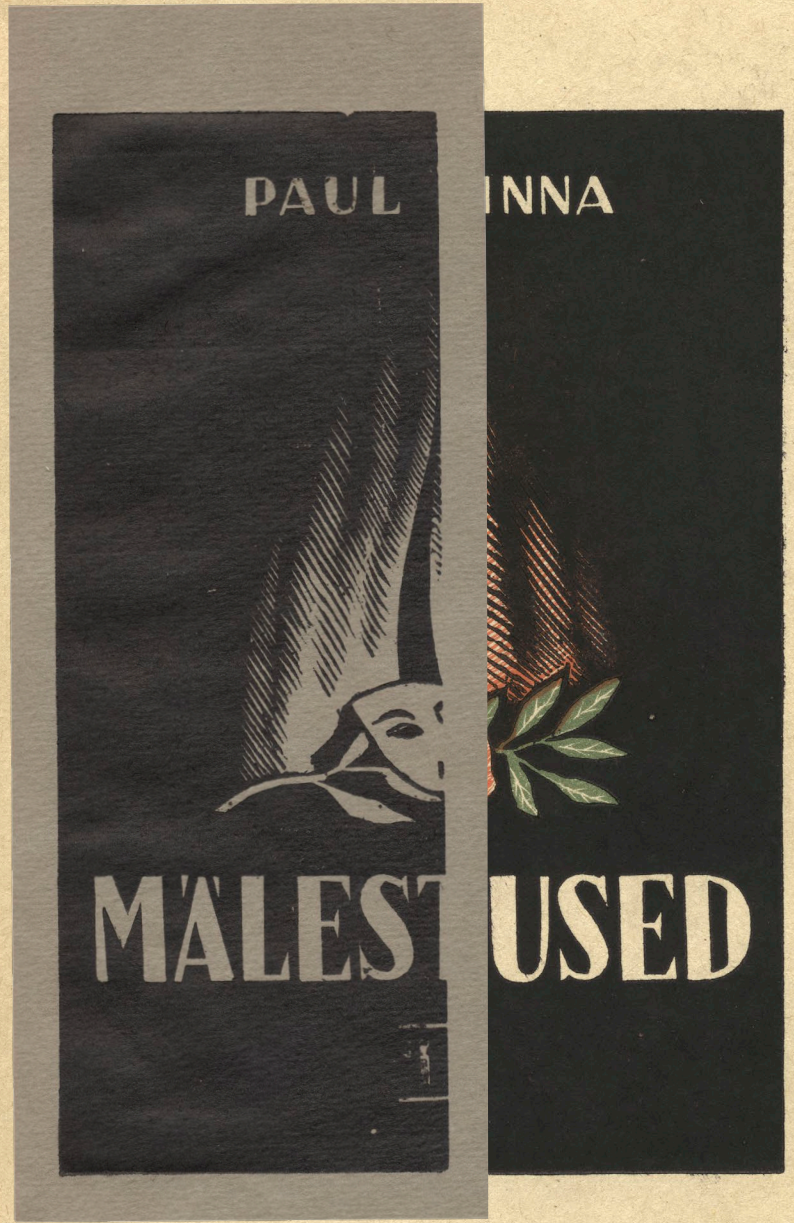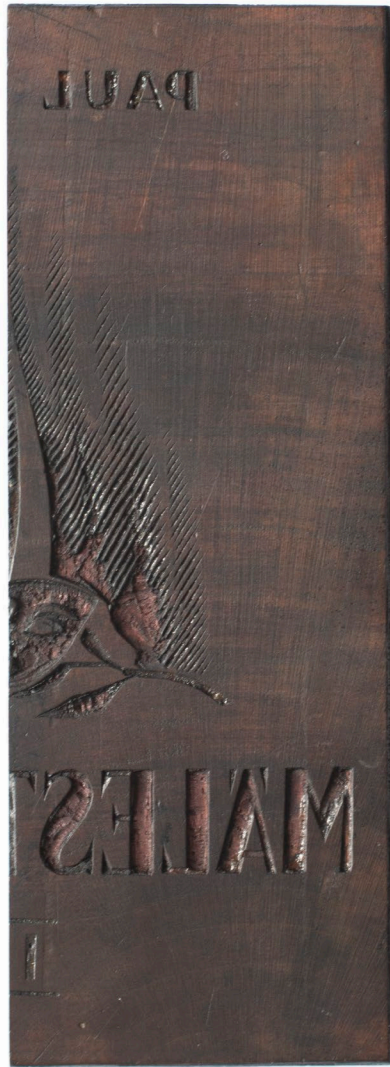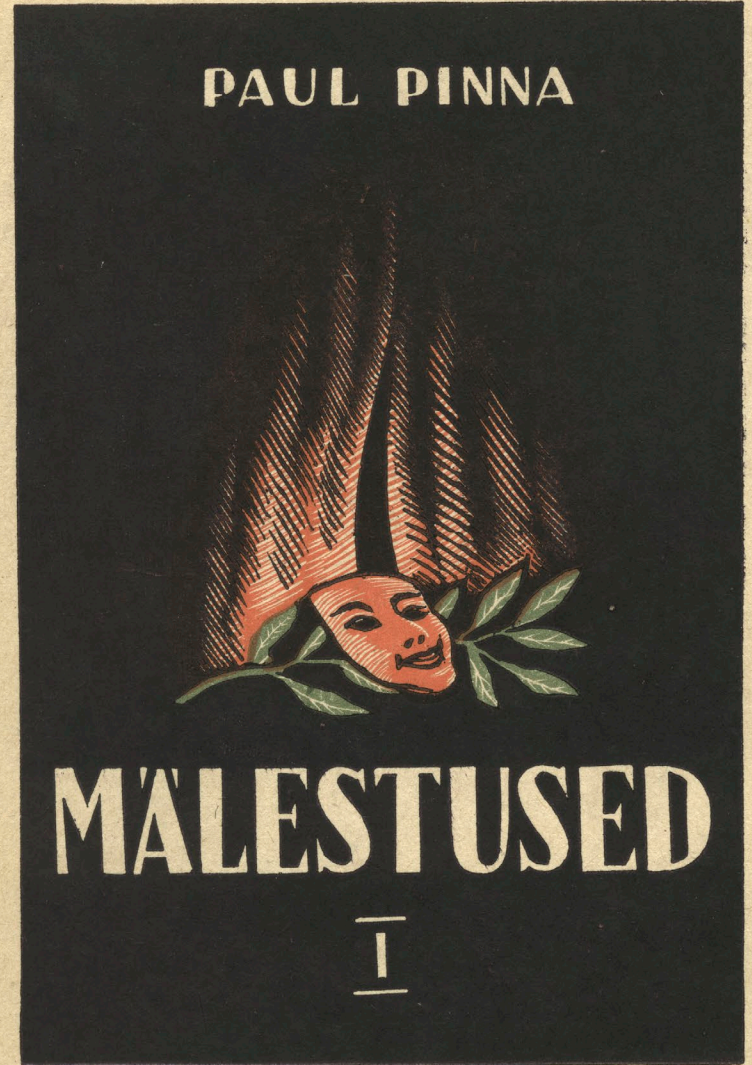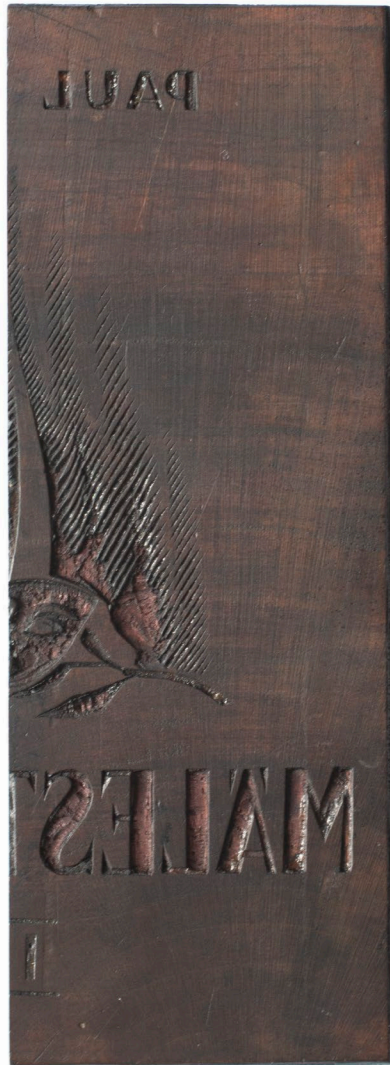
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