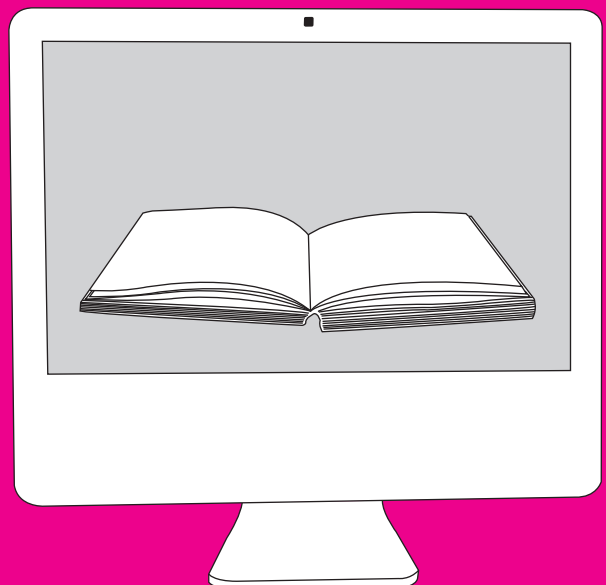


A Manifesto for the Book

Sarah Bodman
and Tom Sowden



A Manifesto for the Book

Sarah Bodman and Tom Sowden

with an edited selection of interviews, essays and case studies
from the project

What will be the canon for the artist's book in the 21st Century?

A Manifesto for the Book

Published by Impact Press at
The Centre for Fine Print Research
University of the West of England, Bristol
February 2010

Free download from:

<http://www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/canon.htm>

This publication is a result of a project funded by the
Arts and Humanities Research Council from March
2008 - February 2010: *What will be the canon for the artist's
book in the 21st Century?*

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Arts & Humanities
Research Council

ISBN 978-1-906501-04-4

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Editors Sarah Bodman and Tom Sowden

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University of the
West of England

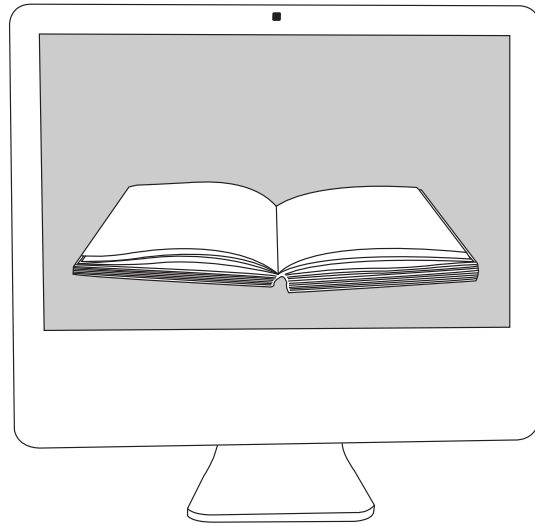


Centre for Fine Print Research

Impact Press, Centre for Fine Print Research
UWE, Bristol School of Creative Arts
Kennel Lodge Road, Bristol BS3 2JT
United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0) 117 32 84915
Fax: +44 (0) 117 32 85865
www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk
Sarah.Bodman@uwe.ac.uk
Tom.Sowden@uwe.ac.uk

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A Manifesto for the Book

Sarah Bodman and Tom Sowden

Book - artist's book - artist's publication - book art?

Ulises Carrión's *The New Art of Making Books* begins with: A book is a sequence of spaces.

If it is to be argued that a book has to be a sequence of *pages* inside a container, and if a container is considered as a physical entity – then as well as covers, a container must also be able to be a computer monitor, a mobile phone screen, a room, a box, the Internet. A series of pages can exist on paper or on a screen. On screens we scroll through the pages reflecting an original, historical book format. The big mainstream publishing houses have no problem terming screen-based works as books. Just look at the recent push for e-books from publishers and hardware manufacturers alike.

One of the key points of this project was to try and include all the book related activity that artists engage with. To include work that was being produced on, and exclusively for, digital technologies within the book arts field, and not leave it floundering uncomfortably on the edge, or given a different terminology altogether, if the artist considered what they were producing to be a book then we felt it should be included. For example the artist L. Vandegrift Davala whose recent work has utilised interactive digital technologies in the production of book works, and whose use of iPods is based upon a study of ancient Ethiopian scroll books and the idea of portability (Investigating the artist's book: L. Vandegrift Davala, <http://www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/canon.htm>).

At the start of this project we tried to draw a classification diagram, ABTREE, for the discipline that is generally known as artists' books. To be able to encompass some of those disciplines that relate to books or hang around on the periphery, perhaps straddling more than one discipline; we felt that a more inclusive term was needed. Inevitably the classification was drawn up based on process and working practice, rather than content. We tried to think of a title that was loose enough to encompass the artists producing multiples, screen-based work and audio books, as well as fine press, livres d'artistes and just plain old books. In the end we plumped for a term that was initially proposed via the online forum (<http://artistbooks.ning.com/group/21stcenturybook>) 'Artists' Publishing'.

It was a quick diagram, done on the hoof and considered only as a starting point, not a definition. The idea was to generate further debate, invite criticism and see if we could draw-up a more concrete picture of what can be

considered an artist's book. We also requested that those who took a diagram explored it and altered it according to how they would classify the subject. The response was good and we received back many diagrams that had been changed according to taste.

What became apparent to us later, was that the diagram was already wrong. As a tree diagram it was too rigid and too concerned with process. There couldn't be the cross-pollination that is often required as an artist - when you allow the content to drive the process, rather than the other way around. The diagram was missing the links between areas that would inevitably be needed to describe the working practice of many who produce books. Many who altered the diagram did just that, adding in connectors across, up and down to bring seemingly disparate disciplines together.

We also curated three exhibitions as part of the project under the term 'Artists' Publishing'. Although the exhibitions were well-received, the term itself was not. Publishing was welcomed by many artists as a term which allows Internet and digital output, but their main grievance with the term 'publishing' was that it removes the word 'book' from the subject area. We felt that 'publishing' would serve as an inclusive term for works produced with newer technologies, and works made around the notion of the book. Artists can publish their work physically: paper, book, pamphlets, and virtually: e-books, mobile-phone based, bluetooth, blogs, websites, and include multiples of ephemeral works such as badges, stickers (for example the *Wlepki* stickers with short stories on them in Poland – see Case Study 31 Wojciech Węgrzynski at www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/canon.htm). The most resistance to the term 'publishing' was from traditional book makers. They felt that the term was too slanted towards digital and ephemeral works at the expense of the physical, finely-produced book, and excluded them on the grounds that they did not 'publish' art. This was perceived as diluting the field through a deluge of e-publishing.

We too were slightly uncomfortable with the term Artists' Publishing. As much as we appreciate work that is 'published' by artists, it was not quite the inclusive term that we had hoped. By its nature, publishing tends to define work that is produced in multiple and distributed. For many, that is not what they do. Unique and sculptural books are no small part of the artists' books world and the term publishing does not appear to include these works. Neither does it seem a correct term for books produced in very small editions, which is again a significant theme within artists' books. As the project progressed we considered other terms that could be broad and inclusive enough to encompass any artist producing book-related work, but at the same time clear

enough to be understood and appreciated. We encountered examples of alternative publishing which we felt should be part of the study. Zenon Fajfer, Katarzyna Bazarnik and Radoslaw Nowakowski who fall under Fajfer's terminology umbrella of 'liberature', consider themselves as writers not artists, and do not think of the books that they produce as artists' books, Fajfer in particular is quite adamant that his work is liberature and not artists' books. "...despite their unconventional appearance, in fact, we have never thought about our books as artists' books, as their origins were literary. They grew out of texts (out of telling stories and expressing emotions) – that were seeking space to accommodate themselves in it ... [in liberature the] physical object ceases to be a mere medium for the text – the book does not contain a literary work, it is the literary work itself" (transl. KB)¹. And I specified elsewhere that the shape and structure of the book, its format and size, layout and kind of typeface, kind and colour of paper, illustrations, drawings and other graphic elements can be valid means of artistic expression."²

Radoslaw Nowakowski exhibits his books at European artist's book fairs, and has recently shown a selection of works: liberATorium, free books, December 2009 in Galeria AT, Poznan (http://free.art.pl/at/pl/ang/nowakowski_2009.htm). We feel that Fajfer's, Bazarnik's and Nowakowski's publications all sit within the field of the book arts - what they produce is liberature, but it is also art. Their reluctance to be classified as producers of artists' books is partly due to the way the term is perceived in Poland. If you say 'artist's book' it means a unique or sculptural book (often both), and this is not something that they associate their work with.

Liberature involves the consideration of all parts of the book as equal in value: original text, image, concept, format and presentation, and most importantly the creator's original intention of how the book should work, in particular with Fajfer and Bazarnik's work with authors such as James Joyce and Stéphane Mallarmé (<http://www.liberatura.art.pl>). In this respect, liberature is very much related to the intentions of an artist producing books.

Artists' books, book arts or artists' publishing?

Artists' books as a term refers only itself, it is the least inclusive term for the subject which does not even stretch to embracing zines, livres de luxe, fine press books or multiples. It is perhaps the end product and not the discipline.

Although we have looked for plenty of alternatives, it seems that 'book arts' is the most appropriate term to use

to as the umbrella heading under which all those who are working with the book format, in its many guises, can be classified. It is with some reluctance that we put forward this term, and feel it needs some explanation. For many, and perhaps particularly in the UK, there are connotations with the term 'book arts'. The immediate connotation is of a book produced from a background of little historical knowledge, wrapped up in the craft of producing the book with scant attention paid to content. Essentially the glitter covered, one-off, experimentally bound book made at home. Or the book shaped, wax-dipped, lead cast lump that is useless as both book or sculpture. We are generalising here so please don't take offence if you produce books using these methods. We take each artwork on its own merit, but they still need to be that - artworks. If too much emphasis is placed upon the craft of the book, then the message gets lost. If what the artist is saying is important, it doesn't matter if it is written or printed on paper, screen or a photocopied piece of paper.

It has become apparent that Book Arts is the most inclusive term. It includes 'book' which is of great concern to many of the practitioners we spoke with; it helps them to place their work, identifies their realm of practice, and is the most generous title through the sum of "arts" + "book". This allows the genre to extend its previous limits; if you can add arts to book it implies all works surrounding and related to the subject – 'art' adds an extension to the definition of a book. Instantly you can include: zines, multiples, livres de luxe, livres d'artiste, pamphlets, altered/reconfigured books, sculptural works, unique books, downloads, e-books, mobile-phone based books, blogs, Bluetooth, video, podcasts, performance, and any ephemera such as badges, stickers, postcards etc. Perhaps even liberature? It also allows for one-off works.



Excuse me, one moment, Becky Adams, romance novel badge, 2009

For example, it is the only term under which a unique badge by the artist Becky Adams fits, where a book has been used to create another artwork. The text has been cut from the pages of a romance novel and made into a badge. It could be argued that the page sits between two covers – the double-edged metal surround and metal back, it has text, it implies a story and the possibility of further occurrence, the text reads: *Excuse me, one moment.* It is not an artist's book, and as it is unique it has not been published in an edition, so all it can be is book art.

There is an implication though, that 'book arts' becomes not fine art but 'of the arts'. Traditionally, the term 'graphic arts' includes printmaking, illustration, and graphic design, which were perceived as inferior to original 'fine' art, until fine art print became appreciated as digital printmaking emerged. Previously 'commercial' processes of lithography and screenprint became part of the 'fine art' print processes, incorporating the hand of the artist against the possibilities of mass reproduction offered through digital print processes.

We now have distinctions between 'original digital prints' and the French term *Giclée* to better disguise the process of inkjet as a method of producing limited edition prints and books, and 'digital print publishing' through companies such as Blurb and Lulu, where there is the potential for an unlimited supply of the book as a democratic multiple.

There is also the question of whether this is necessary at all, do we need classification? Have these debates not raged on since artists started producing books without ever seeming to be resolved, yet books continue to be made, bought, collected and catalogued? Never mind trying to explain what an artist's book is to someone who has never seen or heard of one before. We believe that there is a need for a classifying terminology. We're not looking at a definition of artists' books – we are making a plea for the purposes of including both the traditional and emerging formats. Recognising a rich history and looking to the future, and being open enough to see how new technology can redefine what a book can be in the 21st century (as mainstream publishers are doing, if only because of the extra revenue that can be generated).

E-books

In the 21st Century we have to accept that artists will use any of the processes that are available to them to create and distribute their books. We have been very surprised by the amount of artists who have asked us if their books 'qualify' as artists' books as they have been produced using Blurb or Lulu. Surely artists can produce a book using whatever means are available to them?

Inspired by Maria Fusco's 1982, *DOOM KNOTS* (see - *Alternative methods of distribution for artists' books* and 1982, *DOOM KNOTS* essay at: www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/canon.htm) we invited the US artist EF Stevens to produce a book in the style of the Japanese *Keitai Shosetsu* for the project. Keitai Shosetsu, or mobile phone novels have made it into the best-seller lists in Japan. They consist of very short stories broken down into bites. The book *Awaiting Transmission* was written and sent by the artist in 160 character instalments to people who responded to the offer of the free transmissions, for 6 days from 31st October 2008 (see: <http://www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/efstevens08.htm>).

Andi McGarry is an example of an artist who previously eschewed digital technology in favour of the hand-produced, only to be seduced by the possibilities of it:

In 2007, several things occurred which changed the way I was publishing, what I published and how I published it. Sarah Bodman had sent me a questionnaire asking me amongst other things "Did I think computers would impact on the way I produced work?" the Luddite in me chortled as I picked up the quill pen to produce another hand made copy. Then I won a Folkatronics bursary with Visual Arts Ireland, this enabled me to run some Ideas in a DVD Video format and produce a DVD with a soundtrack. The DVD featured lots of underwater imagery and was also turned into a book - but this got me thinking - making movies was such fun, and there were a host of new challenges. Simultaneous acquisition of a laptop and a digital camera allowed me to explore the possibilities of movie making using a simple editing programme (Movie Maker) it had all become possible. I began making movies at a feverish rate. ... The movie camera allows for a different kind of landscape appreciation, via editing and with inclusion of sound track the synthesizer makes an entirely new form of artwork. I want my films to retain a notebook scrapbook journal feel. ... I have published a number of films on YouTube and as an outlet YouTube and similar sites are an interesting starting point. The work is available for free - thus the return of a kind of cheap multiple.³

The only problem with our attempt to include purely digital books (and e-books in particular) is that not many artists seem to be producing them at the moment. E-books as a mainstream rival to paper books also don't yet seem to be completely taking over the market. They are certainly gaining in popularity, but last year they accounted for only 3.3% of the trade sales book market.⁴

In part this has to do with the hardware that is available. Looking at the e-reader equipment at the Frankfurt Book

fair in 2008 was a distinctly underwhelming experience. The technology has been awkward, expensive and limited, and apart from Amazon's Kindle™, was not being embraced by very large numbers of users. What became apparent to us, seeing these clunky machines in Frankfurt, and often quoted in the media prior to January, is that for e-books to really take off, Apple needs to design and produce the hardware. Is the iPad the solution to boost e-book sales and start replacing printed, paper books? It is of course far too early to tell, but with its iBooks application that most major publishers have signed up to, it should surely give e-books a lift.

This could be seen as of little consequence to the artist working with books, even e-books, but what Apple has done since the inception of the iPhone is allow anyone to become a member of their developer programme. Anyone can write an 'app' for distribution, and this is set to continue with the iPad. So even if the iBooks app will not allow for distribution of artists' books (and we're not sure it will), there is still an avenue available to anyone so inclined. If nothing else it could be the push to make artists realise the possibilities of pushing artists' books into screen-based technologies.

The most pressing concerns or issues around books produced using new technologies are still:
How can they be collected?
How can they be stored and future-proofed?

We found no convincing answer to either question. Many curators and collectors, both public and private considered digital books outside of their remit. For example, Maria White (Investigating the artist's book: an interview with Maria White Chief Cataloguer at Tate Britain: www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/canon.htm) was adamant that digital books were not something that would be collected under the umbrella of Tate's artists' books collection.

Many artists, collectors, dealers and curators were unsure how outlets can – or even will – adapt to digital media, who would purchase it, and how it would, or if it should be collected. Many artists consider digital output via mobile phones, Internet, screen-based and e-books as a means of producing a democratic multiple, and are not necessarily concerned about monetary recompense, the longevity of the piece, or any archival possibility.

Utilising the Internet also opens up the potential for artists who make performative works of or around the book, allowing greater access to their performance or documentation via video, live streaming etc. But who will archive these works - what will collections of digital books be? A list of links to websites? And if so, these will never be stable collections due to the transient nature of

many Internet sites and the artworks produced there - as IP addresses change, host sites disappear, and technology rapidly moves on. How will any collection be kept up to date? Of course, it is not usually artists who concern themselves with the archival stability (or lack of) of their work - this is left to the collectors and curators to worry about.

A book work which explores the issues of Internet instability is *Deciphering Human Chromosome 16: We Report Here* by Sarah Jacobs. The *Deciphering Human Chromosome 16* bookworks use text in a visual way to document the ethical, economic, political and philosophical polemics associated with mapping the human genome. *We Report Here* is an e-book which contains links to c. 250 websites collected in the months following publication in the journal *Nature* of 'The sequence and analysis of duplication-rich human chromosome 16' (Vol. 432. Dec 2004). Its contents change over time as the websites change, migrate or disappear. Published by information as material, you can download the e-book free at: www.informationasmaterial.com/Work/Jacobs.htm

Another example of the instability of Internet applications in the face of constantly evolving technology is the Domesday Book project, conceived in 1983 as "a modern-day equivalent of the Domesday Book that would harness some of the potential of multimedia and provide a detailed snapshot or time capsule of British life in the mid-1980s".⁵ Material was collected, including 200,000 photographs, 24,000 maps, 8,000 data sets, and 60 minutes of moving pictures, all to be viewed on a specially developed videodisc Domesday player, which is now virtually obsolete. The original Domesday book (1086) of two million hand-written words, still survives.

Artists often see e-books and the Internet as a means to distribute free versions of existing physical books, some examples include:

Clifton Meador's *Internet Police Uniform Sites*

www.lulu.com/content/2375523

Chip Schilling's *Panthers*

www.indulgencepress.com/Books/Books.html

Tim Mosely's discussion in Case Study XXXII

www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/canon.htm

Andi McGarry's YouTube books

www.youtube.com/profile?user=AAAAAAndi#g/u

Angie Waller's Internet works

www.couchprojects.com

Radoslaw Nowakowski's hypertext works

www.liberatorium.com/liberlandia.html

www.liberatorium.com/emeryk/emeryk.html

Foundry Press downloads

www.foundrypress.co.uk/foundryarchive09.html

www.foundrypress.co.uk/foundryarchive08.html

www.foundrypress.co.uk/foundryarchive01.html

A book arts history

As important as it is to set parameters, a canon is not just a definition. It also needs to contain the iconic artworks and key historical references that can be used as the standard by which all can be judged and aspire to. In the case of book arts this has been done all too little, but things are changing. In the first Artists' Books Seminar which ran as part of this project ('How are artists using and investigating new media for publishing? Where are we going with this? Where will the books end up?'), Francis Elliott spoke of the need for bringing the key works together and how he is doing that through Wikipedia:

My basic idea, then, is simply to write a series of articles on artists' books, artists' multiples and exhibitions. Firstly, attempt a workable definition that sets up a contrast with *livre d'artiste*, secondly choose a series of works that exemplify the genre. Thirdly, cross-reference them to create a network that can act as a beginner's course as well as an archive to help research. In my experience, few of us are aware of many other artists' books and multiples, and there are few accepted iconic examples. In a reversal of post-modern orthodoxy, I think that we need to begin defining a workable canon.⁶

With some exceptions, books have not been seen as being as important as painting, sculpture and latterly performance art. Consequently books have also not been as well documented. What is needed is a bringing together of key works in one place, just as Francis Elliott is proposing. Wikipedia has its problems - a page can be doctored and falsified, as demonstrated by Emily Artinian at our conference in July 2009 (see Artinian's presentation at <http://www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/contrad09/artinian.htm>), or removed completely, but as a means of distribution it is unrivalled. The canon should be an introduction and guide to be followed and challenged and where better to do this than Wikipedia? Yes there should perhaps be less ephemeral versions 'published' (printed) along the way, but this is a predominantly modern history in flux, that needs the input of many, and the point of publishing is perhaps not yet upon us.

We personally feel that Francis Elliott is picking out the correct works to define a book arts history, but many will disagree. This again is where Wikipedia has its advantages. It is open to anyone with Internet access, and anyone can upload a page about the works that they feel need to be included in this history; in fact Elliott is appealing to people to do just that. It also allows for many different strands of artworks to be networked together. If people consider that having this knowledge is

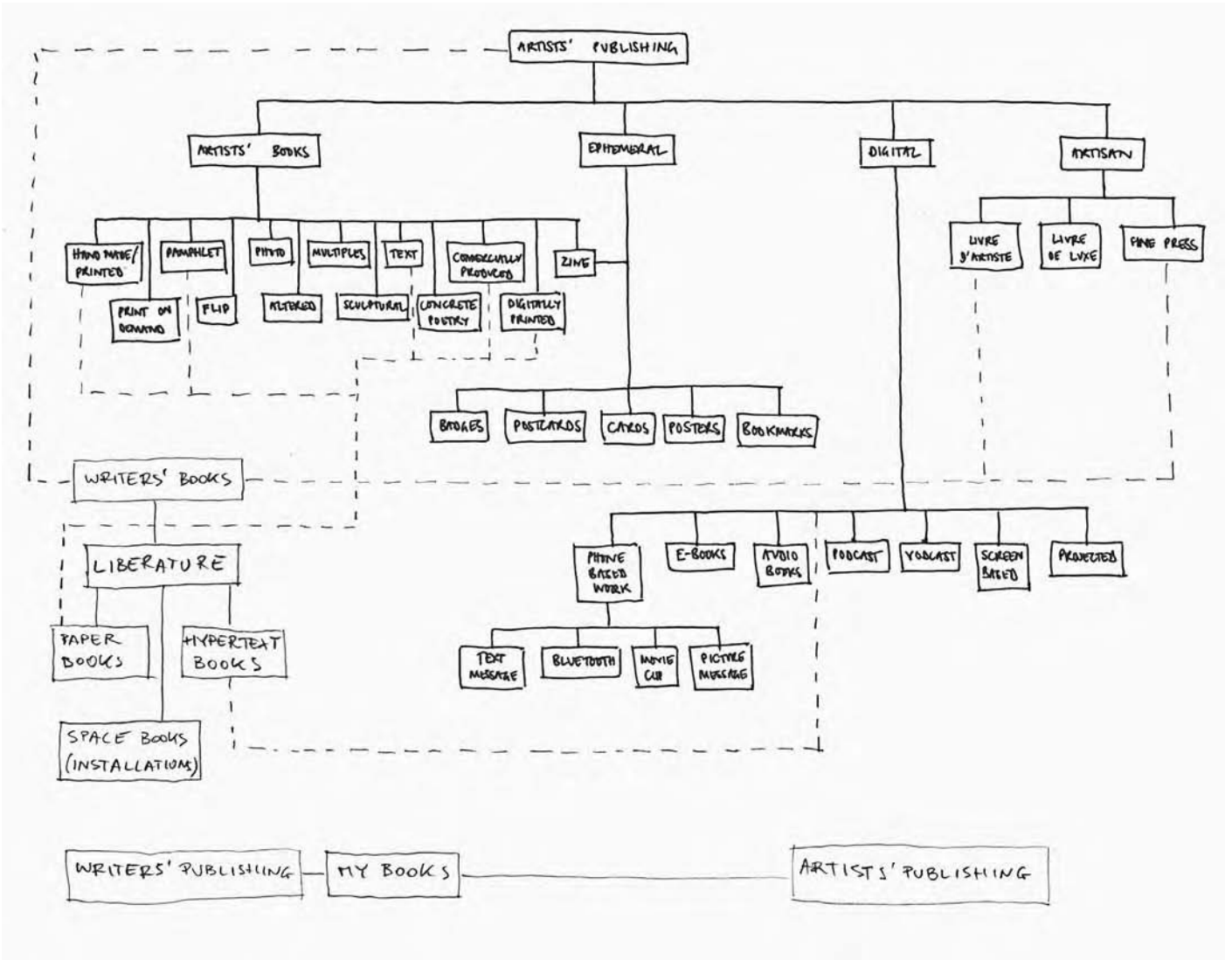
important in establishing an understanding of book arts, and to further discussion, then it needs to be uploaded and linked in. Providing it doesn't grow into an untamed monster, we would say that the more varied the output, the better. What a book *is* can be challenged, and its perceived history could change, and all of this needs to be included in the canon to further the discipline.

Book arts has its roots in an ancient tradition, but really only emerged as a major discipline in the 20th century; taking an established, culturally-significant object and manipulating it for artistic purposes. As we proceed further into the 21st century, and the notion of what this object can be changes, so too will the work that is produced. If an artist is producing a book in one of its now many guises, then we want that work to be included in a broad and varied field. Book arts needs to open, interdisciplinary and flexible enough to allow all who wish to join a place. The process must be of secondary importance, and the ideas need to come forward, then anything can be considered a book if that is the artist's intention.

To paraphrase Ulrike Stoltz: the discussion about artists' books might end up with a question that Sartre used to ask Simone de Beauvoir when she started writing: *What do you have to say?*⁷

Notes:

1. Zenon Fajfer, "liryka, epika, dramat, literatura", *Od Joyce'a do liberatury*, ed. Katarzyna Bazarnik (Kraków: Universitas, 2002) 233-239. Read the English text at: www.liberatura.pl/teksty-dostepne-nastronie.html
2. Katarzyna Bazarnik, "Zamiast wstepu", *ibid.* v. See also *Liberature* text and audio download at: www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/contrad09/liberature.htm
3. Artists' Publications – Andi McGarry, see page 91. www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/contrad09/andim.htm
4. eBook Sales Up 176% in 2009 by Craig Morgan Teicher, *Ebooknewser*, 23rd February 2010. http://www.mediabistro.com/ebooknewser/statistics/ebook_sales_up_176_in_2009_152894.asp?c=rss
5. *Lost in Cyberspace: The BBC Domesday Project and the Challenge of Digital Preservation*, by Douglas Brown, 2003. www.csa.com/discoveryguides/cyber/overview.php
6. *Possible Strategies For Exploiting Wikipedia For The Dissemination and Profiling of Artist's Books and Multiples on the Internet* – Francis Elliott, see p 55 for the full text.
7. For our interview with Ulrike Stoltz see page 29.



Radoslaw Nowakowski's ABTREE diagram

Radoslaw Nowakowski - Interview with Tom Sowden and Sarah Bodman: 24/06/08

R = Radoslaw Nowakowski

S = Sarah Bodman

T = Tom Sowden



The writer and artist Radoslaw Nowakowski has been creating and publishing his own books and artists' books "non-describing the world" since the 70s. The interview took place in Nowakowski's home in the hamlet of Dabrowa Dolna near Kielce, where many of his books are based, and we discussed both his own works and the development of artists' books over the last 20 years in Poland.

On the history of publishing books in Poland:

S – Can you tell us something about the history of how your work has developed?

R – In the case of Polish book art the recent history of this country is very important – it explains a lot. You must remember that after the war when we had here the communist regime, it was forbidden for us to print. The private printing business simply vanished. Before WWII we had a very good avant-garde poetry, experimenting with typography, almost like the Russian constructivists. People printed very interesting things. But to make things like that you need to co-operate with the printer, and the printer has to have a freedom of printing, not limited by censorship. That's very important. After the war you could print only in big

printing studios belonging to the state, and everything had to be censored. So that's the reason why we have a bit of difference in the interpretation of the artist's book.

S – Because you cannot print an edition, it is better to make a one-off book at home.

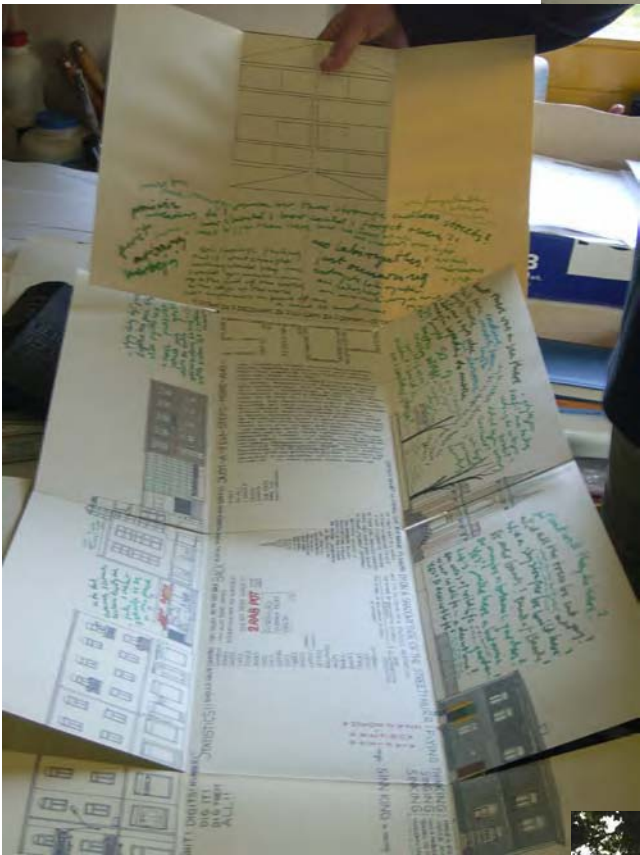
R – Yes, you're an artist, and you make a crazy object, so you can avoid censoring. No words, no meaning, and even if not politically correct, with no doubt not dangerous for the regime.

T – It can't be mass-produced.

R – Yes, of course. It won't have an impact on society because it's too abstract. Crowds will come to the gallery, just a few people. So OK, let them do it. We can even make the most of it and show it to the West. "We have such a crazy avant-garde artist – it is allowed, we can be proud. Look – we are a fantastic socialistic or communistic country, no one is suppressed here; we have such a fantastic artist who is doing crazy things". The story of the Tryzno's small press is a very good example. Pawel [Janusz Pawel Tryzno] is a graphic artist. Jadwiga, his wife, studied sociology at the University and was working at the Uni but due to political problems she had to give it up. They decided to found their small press basing on a very interesting gap in the regulations – it was all right to print things without censorship, if they were in editions of less than one hundred. As a graphic artist Pawel was allowed to have a press, so they began to work cooperating with a group of local poets. They printed a few dozens of copies not even knowing it was fine press or artist's book. That was the beginning. Later they got in touch with different foreign artists, and they spread into Europe so they began to be quite famous. And what is quite interesting is when we met in the 90s, we found that we had both started to make books at the same time, knowing nothing about each other.

I was working in Kielce. I had no chance for my books to be published, not only because of the stories that were in my books, the way I thought about the world, but also because of the form - I had started to put drawings into my books, I wanted to use colours, pictograms, various typefaces, and was thinking about different bindings, other book constructions than codex etc. In the end of the 70s in Poland it was absolutely impossible. So I thought, well, I have a typewriter, carbon paper, so I can produce at least five legible copies if I just type strongly enough... but then we had a total economic crisis, and there was no paper in Poland.

Luckily I played concerts abroad in a band, so I could bring paper from West Germany. People thought I was crazy spending money on paper, carbon paper and



SIENKIEWICZA STREET IN KIELCE, Radoslaw Nowakowski.
17 x 31 cm (folded) 50 x 1050 cm (unfolded), language: English, Polish, Esperanto and others, 2002, deskjet printer, hardbound (brown / yellow linen) + plywood box, open edition.

In May 2003 *Sienkiewicza Street in Kielce* was published by BWA Art Gallery in Kielce in edition of almost 500 copies.

In May 2005 this book won the 2nd Prize at the International Book Arts Fair Competition in Seoul.

“A man is walking along the street. It’s the main street in the town he does not know at all, where he has stopped accidentally and has to spend a few hours. He is not in a hurry, so he’s walking slowly looking around, listening, letting thoughts to flow across his head. He stops from time to time and then goes on walking flapping and clacking walking along the street-sentence”

<http://www.liberatorium.com/ulica/ulica.html>



type-writer ribbons. Necessity is the mother of invention. Like in the case of the Tryznos. They found a way to make fine press and artists' books, realising the trick with the regulations, and how to avoid censorship. As I found I had so little paper, I thought; if I type with less space between the lines and use both sides, I can spare my paper. And suddenly it was like an illumination! Now it looks almost like a book. So maybe if I make it smaller, not A4 but almost A5, it's almost the size of a book. And if I go to a bookbinder and they make a binding for me then I have a book. And five copies is definitely more than one copy. And then the next illumination was: wow! I can now be responsible for the whole book, I can design the whole book, I can think in the terms of a book not just in the terms of the text. That was a great discovery for me - it was like opening a door to a vast unexplored territory. But it was quite funny that at exactly the same time the Tryznos were thinking the same in Łódź, and we knew nothing about each other.¹

T- can you tell us more about the Tryznos?

R – They collect old machines, they make paper by themselves, they cooperate with different artists, with poets, writers, and they print brilliant, fantastic things. But themselves they are not writers – they don't write. I think their works can be classified as fine press books, although lately they make book objects and book installations, and probably the fair in Oxford [Fine Press Book Association Fair] would be a perfect place for them. And if we move on to Warsaw and the whole idea of a Polish book art exhibition, and all the projects organised by Alicja Slowikowska ², it is another kind of artist's book... There is a certain confusion... Well, once I was talking with someone from France, and he was a publisher of artists' books, and people in Poland were quite astonished – how was it possible for someone to 'publish' artists' books? An artist's book is understood here as a book, or an object referring to the idea of a book, made by the artist, so this means almost always a unique one-off book, like a painting or sculpture is.

S / T – Well, this really is making a lot of sense to us now, as we were wondering why all the books we have seen have been unique or sculptural, none of them in editions.

R – Yes, it's not for publishing. It must be a piece of art. Just take a look at a catalogue of the exhibitions organised by Alicja Slowikowska and read the CVs, 90% of those included are painters, graphic artists, sculptors, no writers – I'm the only one. Sometimes it might happen that the artist is also the author of a poem, but it's very typical that either they use no text at all, or they take someone's poem or piece of prose, or take a few words or two or three sentences but no more, so let's say

to write a novel in such an artistic way, is beyond their interest. But that's Warsaw – which is the one extreme. However, if you go to Poznan you will see another extreme. AT Gallery focuses on concrete poetry, book performance, and experimentation; they try to penetrate the concept of a book, of a text, so they sometimes make very abstract things which at first sight seem to have nothing to do with a book.³

Alicja is a very important person – when she launched the Polish Book Arts project in the beginning of the 90s, she began with a small exhibition of book illustrations by Warsaw artists only. The next year she added artists' books from all over Poland and somehow she succeeded to unite the book people in Poland giving us an opportunity to learn about each other.

T – So before her efforts, people were very separate in different areas, and they were not communicating at all?

R – That's right

T – And is that why then you've got these big regional differences? Like Poznan

R – Yes.

S – But were you not communicating with each other simply because nobody knew what each other was doing? There was no awareness of what was going on in different places.

R – Yeah.

S – So was that because of bad communication?

R – Yeah, calling Warsaw or Poznan in the 1980s was quite a big trouble. I know it's hard to imagine (even for myself when I think of the old times) how we could work and survive. But somehow we could do a lot of different and very nice things here. In 1989 everything turned upside down, and suddenly we could print, we could telephone, we could communicate, we could travel, so it was really great. As for myself, I had a lot of ideas in the 70s and 80s but I simply had to keep them in my mind, because I had no possibility to make them. In 1985 I made a crazy trip to Africa; I wanted to cross the whole of Africa but I succeeded to get a visa only to Algeria and I stopped in the middle of the Sahara. But that's not the point – the point is that when I was in Paris, someone told me: there is a fantastic shop you have to go to which has lots of coloured paper.

S – In Africa?

R – No, in Paris. So I went there, and now imagine:

it's 1985, I'm coming from Poland where there is no paper at all, and I'm in a shop and I see piles of paper of any colour, everything I could only imagine. What a headache! And I'm thinking maybe I should buy something? But what can I do? Can I buy let's say ten sheets of red and ten sheets of green and ten of purple, and I'll bring these things to Poland and start to write a book, and suddenly there are no more red pages, so what can I do then? So I decided: let's forget about it, and I found another solution for my book – for a story of my travel to Africa, which I will show to you later. So generally speaking, the point is, we had so many obstacles that it's hard to imagine right now, and of course every stick has two ends, as we used to say, so when you have a lot of obstacles, and if you have a passion, it means you can and must find a lot of energy inside – you start to be very inventive, you're looking for different solutions because you're so crazy about your ideas.

S – You find a means to do it one way or the other.

R – That's right. But on the other hand, sometimes I got so tired because I knew very well that I used so much energy for stupid simple things, that finally when I could do anything, I was too tired to start it. As I used to say we felt that playing a concert was like taking a rest after very hard work to arrange the concert and come to the venue, to travel. It was also like that in the case of books and writing – you have to use your friends to smuggle you some paper. (S – it's unbelievable) And finally you had it – one hundred sheets of white paper. (S – you'd be too scared to use it) and if I make a mistake, aah!

S – So what happened in Africa?

R – Well, I began my journey in May and I wanted to stop in Germany and France to earn some money, and I wanted to go to Africa in September or October, just to avoid the heat. But I only worked for one month in Germany, then I went to France, unfortunately I couldn't find any work, I had some money so I decided: let's go. I could only arrange a visa for Algeria, so I went there but it was July, so you can imagine: middle of July and almost middle of the Sahara. Extreme conditions. And when you enter it from the north of Algeria, there is no sand, but hundreds of kilometres of gravel, stones and rocks. When I finally reached sand dunes I stopped in an oasis and went for a walk out of it to see the sand - it was like standing in front of a wall of extreme light; the yellow dune and sun, extreme light. I had an impression that if I took one more step it would suck me in and I would never come back, so I found maybe it was not the right time to do that, and I said to myself: let's come back home. I had a book ready in my head so I came back home and made it. Of course it ended with the extremely yellow page.

On publishing and self-sufficiency in books:

T- as it has been so hard to produce books, when they are finally made, is it easy to sell them?

R – Our recent history resulted also in a lack of book markets - it's not like in Oxford for example. I went to Oxford [Fine Press Book Association Fair] and saw small presses from all over England, and that's not all of them, I know you have many more, and lots of customers buying, selling, collecting, discussing. Critics. Bibliophiles. Book-lovers. I would like to organise the same kind of fair in Poland, but we would have probably only two stands – myself and the Tryznos.

T – There's nobody else producing books?

R – Nobody else.

T – See, I would have thought from what you were saying about all the exhibition projects in Warsaw that there would be a lot of people making artists' books.

R – But an exhibition composed of mainly unique book-like objects and art pieces is something really different than a regular book fair.

T – Could you organise one that perhaps brought in artists from more countries, maybe invite people from all over Europe?

R – We could probably try, but the audience is also the problem. I think now it's much better than it was ten or fifteen years ago. The exhibitions curated by Alicja Slowikowska travelled a lot around Poland, and quite a lot of people saw it. They know now, at least, standard codex book is not the only kind of book that exists. However, in their mentalities an artist's book is a piece of art that belongs to the domain of art gallery, it's not for reading - it's only for looking. And what's more, because it's a piece of art, and because it's a one-off, it must be very expensive. My books are not unique pieces of art and they are not very expensive, but they are more expensive than regular books in a book store because I print them by myself. So if you want to buy one of my books you have to pay 100 or 150 pounds. For an ordinary reader here it's too much, very often even 15-20 pounds for a standard book is too much. So called middle-class in Poland, I mean intelligentsia, is still poor, or not rich enough. It's also the heritage of the previous regime, when workers were the driving force, the avant-garde of our society. Intellectuals had to be kept down. So that's why somebody sweeping floors in the hospital earned almost the same money as a surgeon. This way of thinking was imprinted in the mentality of my generation and and it's really difficult to get rid of it.

I'm afraid for a lot of people of my age it's still hard to understand that if you are a surgeon your responsibility is incomparable with the responsibility of someone sweeping floors.

S – So that's still the same? You'd still get paid the same?

R – No, now they are paid better. But it's still the mentality that matters. The most important thing about the transfer from socialism to democracy is not economy but mentality. People who spent 40 or 50 years in previous regime find it really difficult to just switch to a new system.

S – So if you showed people your books now, they would still say “why would I pay that price, because it should be the same as a normal book”?

R – Yes, and like I said, the so-called middle-class here is still not very rich. And there is a gap: no collectors, almost no bibliophiles – bibliophiles in Poland collect only ‘antique’ books. They go to second-hand book stores to buy books from before the war, or are looking for some rarities, but they are not interested in modern things. It's not like it is in Great Britain.

S – I think in Great Britain it's the same for bibliophiles; they're only vaguely interested in artists' books.

R – Myself, I have met in Britain, at least several collectors who buy new things. And if someone likes your book, it's not a big problem for them to spend more than usual - their budget is big enough. There is a kind of a need; they like to have something that is untypical, unconventional, unusual, and not a mass product; so they are quite aware of these kinds of values. There are quite a lot of people here who would like to have my books, but they simply can't afford to buy them, and I can't afford myself to sell them for almost nothing, so maybe 70% of my books I just simply gave away to friends as gifts.

S – Yes, we do that too.

T – Do you think it's changing though? Is it becoming cheaper to produce books and therefore your books become cheaper?

R – Yeah, I'd like it very much. The street book is a very good example of that [*Sienkiewicza Street*, Radoslaw Nowakowski (2003), offset litho print from original drawings and hand written text, edition of 500, published by BWA Kielce, Poland]. And I must say it was a big success because we could produced 500 copies of a really complex book and it's sold out.

S – But they weren't expensive though.

R – They weren't. About 5 years ago someone called me from the town authorities' promotions office, and said “Can you do something for our town, can we meet?” We talked about different ideas, finally I said, maybe I could do a book for you. And the guy said: “That's a nice idea if it's going to be a really unique book - in the sense that only Kielce will have it and no other town in the world, then OK, we can do it.” I came back home, made a quick mock up of the street book and a short description, brought it back and he presented it to the town council and they, to my utmost surprise, said “yes, let's do it”, and we signed a contract that I was to make just a few copies. I told him, it was very difficult for me to say exactly how the book would finally look, so when it was ready we would decide whether we were going to make an edition or I would produce single copies, as a gift for VIPs etc.

I spent one year producing the book and was due to finish it in December, but in October, with almost everything ready, we had an election (I had signed a contract with the authorities who were left-leaning, and they lost the election), and the new authorities were right-leaning. And there is a very good tradition here, that new authorities almost at once say that everything what the former authorities did was bad, nasty and awful. I was very worried, because I learned that the new mayor had decided to close the town promotion office as the guy who was working as the boss of this office was rather left-wing, so he was not acceptable to the right-wing mayor. But luckily, because the contract was signed, I completed the book and I was paid. That was OK, but the future of my street book looked very unclear. Luckily the local newspaper wrote about the book and I got a phone call from the city art gallery. They wanted to make an exhibition showing the whole process of creating my street book. I displayed all the drawings I made; well, I was doing everything in a very traditional way, just sitting in the street with a sheet of paper and a pencil and drawing every building. I spent there whole summer. Then I scanned everything, made a mock up of the whole street, then I wrote the text, then I redraw-rewrite everything on a tracing paper to integrate drawings and writings as much as possible, then scanned everything again, put colours, printed everything. I was to show all those stages in the gallery. But there was another big problem – are we going to make a catalogue for this exhibition? It would be nice, but what could we do? Maybe reproduce a few drawings? I was discussing it with a friend of mine working at the gallery, and suddenly the boss came to the room and he said: “It's a nonsense, we should print the whole book”. And she shouted: “You're right, we will do this!” The boss was horrified and would be happy to give this

idea up, but luckily my friend was brave and stubborn enough to arranged everything. The deal was very tricky; somehow we convinced the town that they should buy 100 copies to have them for gifts, and they were to pay just the normal retail price. In this way we got enough money to buy the paper for the printing. The printer said: “OK, I like the project, I like our home town. We have money for paper, so I can start printing now. I will be paid later, somehow.” So instead of money he got 100 copies. Myself, I got 100 copies and 200 copies went to the gallery. In such a tricky way we managed everything. The book became quite famous here, because it was very unusual. Although it was not available in normal book stores, and the promotion was rather a whispered one, the edition is sold out. So that’s a very good indication that probably it is possible to sell really very unusual books, and not necessarily they must be very expensive. No. Of course this book is a bit more than regular books (S – but not wildly so) but anyway you bought it in Oxford for 60 pounds. If you had the handmade copy you would have to pay five or six times more, because it takes me one week to assemble one copy. For the printer, one week was enough to produce 500 copies. That’s why the price was much lower. But the other problem is that you have to convince the publisher. That it’s worth taking a risk. That a serious book for grown up readers not necessarily must be a codex with black letters on white pages. They are very afraid of that. They are afraid of anything that is beyond conventions.

S – Yes, at home we probably couldn’t get a publisher to do that either.

T – Book Works maybe.

S – But then they’re different, they are already for artists’ books. The only person I know of is the artist Liz Workman, who made the series of books called “*great men’s houses*”, going to famous writers and politicians’ homes, and photographing certain aspects: doorknobs, chairs, fireplaces and windows. She made simple, inkjet printed books for about 10 pounds each. The series was noticed by Rizzoli publishers who decided they wanted to publish them, and they made a beautiful hardback, slipcased book in an edition of 5000 so you could buy the books online for £14, but how could you ever afford to do a book that beautiful for £14, you’d never be able to do that yourself. The simple inkjet versions were £10 each and the book they produced was an edition of all the books. That’s the only time I’ve ever heard of a publisher paying to make an artist book.

R – There’s another problem that is very typical for Poland, which is the lack of critics. It’s also very funny because when an exhibition is presented in an art gallery, only art critics come – they don’t read, they only look.

They used to say: “We know only something about art, we know nothing about literature”. Well, just try to bring literature critics, and they will write a review about your texts, but not about your books since they only read, they do not look. The big problem is that in the case of these books you have to do everything simultaneously. That’s the problem. It’s absolutely beyond their imagination.

S – I find that really surprising, in a country which has a reputation around the world as being both very literary and artistic, that there isn’t someone who’ll come along and write a review like that.

R – There was a time when I tried to find a publisher for my books, before I started quite seriously with my own computers and printers. Now I don’t bother so much about publishers because I can do everything at home by myself. The normal procedure was that you gave them a copy and then you had to wait for the reviews (I still have some of these reviews somewhere. Maybe at some time I will use them). It’s written very clearly that they didn’t feel ready to write anything about my drawings or other graphic elements of the book they understood a book as nothing but text. “I can only say that these are very nice things so maybe you could try to make a book for kids”. Another interesting thing is that the only point of reference that he could find was Apollinaire, Dada, maybe some Russian experimental works...

S – But that’s a long time ago.

R... and it was quite surprising for me that somebody who was supposed to be well educated, a specialist in literature, behaved like he knew nothing about the big tradition of illuminated books and hieroglyphic scripts.

S – Even if they were not aware of artists’ books you’d think they’d know something about how text and image must work together even in a ‘normal’ book – you’d think he’d have had some kind of idea.

R – Of course. The funny thing is that we are not proposing something entirely new and unknown; it’s just maybe one step further. I feel very strongly that behind me there is a big tradition of this kind of thinking. It is not like that I am a unique person. I don’t know if you know of it but there is such a book written by William Faulkner as a combination of two stories. *The Wild Palms* and *The Old Man*. I am a great fan of his writing. These two stories were published in one volume and at the end there was the translator’s note. And she wrote that originally the book was published in a very special way. Faulkner mixed two stories, there was one chapter of *The Wild Palms* and one chapter of *The Old Man*, then the next chapter of *The Wild Palms* and the next chapter of *The Old Man* and so on. The point is these are two

parallel stories taking place in the same space in the same time. The characters know nothing about each other, they never met, but thanks to the special construction of the book a reader can really feel the simultaneity of the stories. But he could do that only in the very first edition of the book – then the publisher said: “no, it’s too complicated”. The novels were separated and in following editions they were kept like that, although in one volume.

S – So really you never know, there might be many writers who were trying to be really experimental with their books but the publishers were saying ‘no’.

R – The problem was that they were somehow helpless, because they were dependent on the printers. Now with computers I’m independent. That’s fantastic. Of course there is another problem that a writer should know quite a lot about the book in general, about typography, design, editing etc. That makes the process of writing a book much more complicated. But it’s possible.

T – That’s right, it’s a lot of work.

S – It is a lot of work though. You think you do it as a writer and artist because you enjoy every aspect of writing and making it. But if you were a writer thinking “I need to publish my own book” there are many other elements to learn that might not come naturally to you, you might think I’d love to do that but might be terrible at design or not know which typeface to use.

On the design and production of books:

S – I know you use your computer to design your books, have you considered using any of the Internet publishers, that you can upload your book and pay for them to produce it? Because a lot of artists are using those now, sites that started for people to publish a photograph book or about their favourite recipes, so ‘normal’ books. But artists are using that facility to publish their books now. Is this something you might consider using in the future?

R – Well I don’t know.

S – I don’t know how that would relate to the costs of printing here because for us at home to actually physically print through a printer is still very expensive. And then you get printers who can print with digital print to a much better quality than we can, cheaper than traditional four-colour litho print. But with the Internet facility where you upload it and they print it...

T – One uses Xerox

S – Yes, Lulu use Xerox for text.

R – Right now in Kielce there are one or two digital printers you can send the file by email and they print your book. But still it is more expensive than to print using offset.

T – Well I suppose for us it’s cheaper to use offset if you’re producing five hundred or a thousand but if you want to produce ten or twenty...

R – It’s almost the same as I can do at home. But the problem is that it’s OK if there is nothing special going on with the book, if it is more or less regular. But if there is something strange going on inside the book then it’s almost impossible.

R – When the book is for example a triangle [*HASA RAPASA description of an impossible performance*].

S/T – Yes, of course.



HASA RAPASA - description of a performance impossible, Radoslaw Nowakowski. A3 triangle, trilingual version, language: Polish-English-Esperanto, 1997-1998 (imagined, written, printing started) 2001 (reedited, triangled), hardbound (dark green linen) + plywood box, open edition.

<http://www.liberatorium.com/hasa/rapasa.html>

On technology:

R – I am trying also to do some hypertext now. But you know that’s a different thing altogether because you can’t print them.

S – And you can't sell them.

R – Yes, you can't sell them, that's right. But they are on the Internet so they are available everywhere.

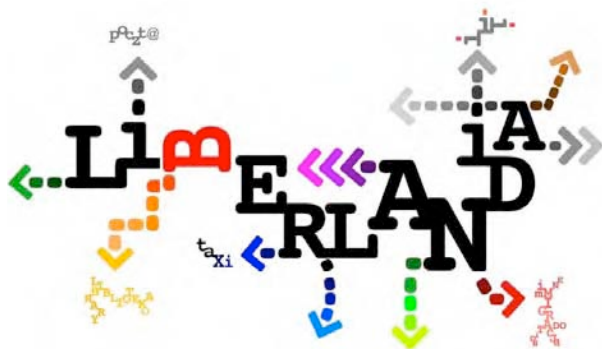
S – But with the things you've done as hypertext would you say those are artists' books or are they text. Are they still art to you?

R – It's not a typical hypertext.

S – So it's still different.

T – Can you see yourself working more with the Internet? Purely digital?

R – Right now I'm working on a new project and it's only for the Internet. But I'm going to also make a paper version of it in the future [<http://liberlandia.net>].



R - A few years ago I made a hypertext novel and we decided to publish it with Ha!art on a CD, but it turned out to be a 'worst seller'. But probably the problem was that the time we were thinking about publishing the CD, a few years ago, only a very small part of society had broadband Internet. Now it is getting more and more popular so there is almost no sense to publish hypertext on a CD because you can download everything very easily. And the other problem was that, as usual, in the case of my books, it was something in between. Let's say for my generation, for the people who are used to normal books, navigating hypertext is like black magic, it's too complicated. For the youngsters who can navigate perfectly there's too much reading in it, I'm afraid. So that's one of the problems that once again when we try to open the door to a new territory or to sneak in between two standards – either paper or Internet navigation, and it's something in between combining these two things, it's too much for a lot of people. But for some people it was quite a significant event, they liked the book very much and it was worth something to them.

S – But it's still a very forward way of publishing.

R – And you need to have a gold mine at the end of your garden.

S – That's the thing. For all the reference material we publish we try and do it online so it's free, but then if you're making books and you publish everything online, how do you make a living? I suppose you can pay per download but it's not quite the same is it.

T – No, and it seems that's not quite in the spirit of the Internet. People try and make money elsewhere, so for the person downloading it it's always free, but they're making money with advertising or, sponsored links. But I think people are more reluctant to pay for things on the Internet to download them.

R – There is another thing, which is more important for me than the problem of earning money or not earning money, and that is there are certain aspects of the paper book that simply can't be exported on the Internet – the physicality of the book, and vice versa. There are things you can do on the Internet that can't be exported to print. Once a friend of mine, when the first part of my hypertext novel was on the Internet, decided to print everything, and he was very proud of it – he showed me a pile of paper and said: "Look". The problem was that to read some of the parts you had to scroll the screen, sometimes both vertically and horizontally. And this scrolling is very important; it's a part of the story. Sometimes the text area is bigger than the screen, so the problem is that you never see the text entirely. You have to move it, either to the left or to the right, or up or down. And that's a part of the story, too. So when he tried to make a print screen, it was impossible for him to print the whole story. And it's a very nice example of how different media Internet and paper are. So it's not just that you cannot sell hypertext, in my opinion it should be for free.

S – Do you use the Internet to sell your work through your website?

R – Theoretically yes but so far I have sold only one book, of course the cheapest.

My website is my own, and this is very important because it's clean, you know, no ads, nothing like that, no banners, nothing is flickering. It's really cheap and I have two addresses at the moment, one is for my website and one is for the new hypertext project. I have 200 megabytes on a server for each site, the domains, and of course emails, which is maybe not so much but it's absolutely enough for my project – any time I can buy some additional space. And I decided it's much better because I can do everything I want to myself.

S – And with the hypertext - not just yours say - do you think people will have the same interest in collecting this in the future as they do works that are paper based?

R – That’s a good question.

T – Or does that matter?

S – I don’t know if it does matter.

T – Does it matter to you if people are collecting it or not?

R – I don’t know. But - collecting hypertext, here is a funny story - just a few years ago I was in New York and some of my books were bought by the Public Library in New York. They have a department for Slavic literature and there was a guy from Poland working there. About a year later he came to visit his family in Poland and he called me and asked “Could I come here and visit you?” I said OK. It was very funny, he came here by car with his sons, one was fifteen and the other was probably fourteen, and you know what was the very first question? “Where’s the Internet?” He apologised: “You know, my sons are wild youngsters from the New York jungle.” But at that time I had no broadband Internet I had only a modem that was very slow, and when they started to load the game they at once gave up. But whilst they were there, I told him I had just started to work on a hypertext, and the first two parts were already on the Internet. Well he took a look, and we were talking, eating, and then they went away, back to New York, and a couple of months later I got an email from him and it said “Here is a record from the New York Public Library for your hypertext novel”.

S – Ah, nice.

R – I was really astonished that they were already prepared for this kind of thing. At that time, my hypertext was published on a website for cultural events in Kielce because I didn’t have my own one. But it’s so easy just to close down a website, I can simply stop to pay and then it’s gone forever. And the other question is that now I am using html technology, but I’m not so very sure that in the next ten years it will be used. Maybe it won’t. Right now you have problems with some works you did ten or fifteen years ago,

S/T – Yes. We went to a seminar at the V&A a couple of months ago and they were talking about (not just artist’s books but any books) publishing via the Internet or publishing on CD or DVD, and how things have to become future proof if we’re going to collect them and store them for the nation. That you could have, potentially, all these archives that can’t be played in

fifteen years time, so they were saying “where do you stop?” If you have something that is on CD now and in ten years time you had the technology that took it off that CD and then put it on something else to allow it to still play, have you ruined the original format of how it should be viewed or heard?

R – You know, I had the same problem with my own music for example. I found that my audio cassettes got really old and there are some troubles to play them, so finally I decided to digitise them. I have the same problem with video – I have some of my concerts from fifteen- twenty years ago on VHS cassettes, and a big problem thinking of what to do with them.

T – So you have to reformat everything or keep an old machine to play them.

R – But the same could happen with DVD. Because now we think DVD will last for ever, but no – it will only last for some years. My first computer had a big floppy disk drive, and a small floppy disk drive. The relatively new one I bought two years ago, I forgot to say that I needed a floppy drive, and of course I brought it home and it only had a DVD drive. Well of course that’s standard – there’s no more floppy drive.

S – Or zips, we used to use zip drives all the time for transferring data, and you were using something that now in an equivalent physical size takes something like 500 times the amount of information.

T – USB, and memory sticks.

R – And there are quite a lot of interesting things on the Internet concerning design and art now, so it is a problem of how to keep it.

T- Are you worried about that? Is it something that concerns you or is this a problem for someone who wants to collect?

R – It would be nice to store them somewhere, just to be able to see them, to take a look at them in 50 or 100 years. So I imagined, in the case of hypertexts in the New York Public Library, a room with old computers, and for a hypertext novel written in 1995 there is a machine from 1995 with the software from 1995.

S – And you just switch it on and it pops up.

R – Well why not?

S – Well maybe somewhere there is.

T – Do you do that? Keep old machines to view the

older work on, or do you reformat it?

S – Just like they discussed at the V&A, if you keep the machine you've kept the integrity of the original piece, haven't you.

R – But, imagine the machine is broken.

S – Then it's lost forever. Maybe have the backup B version, that you've made onto DVD and then you have to change again.

R – Well, I have a big problem already then, because in the loft I have two old monitors, two old printers, old tape recorders, old TV sets and everything. We don't know what to do with this stuff – make a museum maybe! But you know new things are waiting, maybe in the next 2 or 3 years I will have to bring them downstairs to the cellar, or maybe dig a big hole to keep them in and make space for more old machines.



LIBERATORIUM an installation in September 2008 at the Public Library in Kielce, Poland. Liberature and hypertext - a reading room for books by Radoslaw Nowakowski. www.liberatorium.com



On marketing books:

S - If you're saying there's not much of an audience here for your books, do you sell most of your books outside of Poland?

R – Yes, but I have a feeling that I could sell more books if I could go there more often.

S – So that's important that you have to be there?

R – It's very important. I think that the best place for my books is definitely Great Britain – because of the language, I think that's quite obvious. But it was not like I started to sell my things all at once – no. I had to come two or three times without selling anything, then I started to sell my things. And it's quite clear that people need to get to know you first.

T – Yes, I think they do. We find that you can show a book three times before someone buys it.

R – If they see you there a few times they think 'oh that's a reliable guy'.

S – And then they will buy that book.

R – And it's exactly the same in Belgium or Germany, it's not enough to go there once – if you go only once they say OK, yeah – beautiful books, but we must think for a while.

S – I think that's quite universal.

R – The same happened in the case of Scandinavia, almost everywhere. So one time is not enough, two – also not enough. You need to go three or four times. But the problem is that I simply can't afford travelling like that.

S – It's a big investment.

R – To travel, to stay there. And the other problem is for me purely technical – it means that I simply have too many books right now, because so far I have produced twenty titles. So if I would like to take maybe two or three copies of each, some of them are quite big, then I need to go there by car.

S – Is it very expensive to freight things from here?

R – Yes, very expensive. And the other thing is that I'm getting older and I'm not very fond of carrying all those things. And another problem is that having so many books (if I want now to make an exhibition of all my books) it takes a lot of preparation. If I want to have a set of new books, just to print twenty titles is a lot of work. It wasn't like that years ago when I had two or three books.

S – So when you say that you have to print them all, does that mean for each title, for every book you print them one at a time.

R – These are open editions.

S – So you say I will make twenty more. Print on demand.

R – Yes.

T – Do you think you should use the Internet more to sell your work if it is hard to go to other places?

R – I don't know, I really don't know.

S – You just don't think it translates well enough?

T – Do you think that people will buy artists' books from the Internet in general?

R – I don't know, some people do - we have a very good Internet shop called Allegro and it's mainly for people to sell whatever you can imagine. It's a kind of an Internet auction. [Allegro is a Polish online auction website, similar to Ebay, www.allegro.pl]

So some people try to convince me that maybe I can try to sell my books through it, maybe it will work, maybe it won't - I risk nothing. But it still takes time to organise it.

S - Yes, and to check.

R – Just to check. So then I think I prefer to practice my drums.

S – I guess some people have been trying to sell their books through Ebay.

T – I don't know how successful that's been though.

S – I don't. Some people have sold well through Internet publishers like Blurb, they let you list your book if you print it through them, so that you go under a category and people can order your book from them, but then they deal with the whole selling side and give you the amount of money that you want. That's one way of doing it, so you don't have to get involved with the actual sales, so it takes the responsibility off of you to actually deal with the public.

T – But then again, the print on demand websites still need to make an artist's books section. Because at the moment there isn't one - you have to try and fit yourself in – art, or photography or writing.

S – If enough people do it they will give in and do it,

if every time you listed, you emailed them to say that should have been under artists' books, not under art book.

R – In my case, it should be under writers' books.

S – Or books by writers that aren't normal books.

On Literature, Liberateure, and classifying artists' books:

R – And now to our friends in Krakow [Katarzyna Bazarnik and Zenon Fajfer]⁴. Their idea is to show the big tradition of this kind of thinking. They convinced Ha!art publishing house to launch a 'liberateure' series. They want to present books that were written (classics) by very famous writers, to show the audience that it's really something well-rooted. It's not a frenzied stupid idea of some guys, there were some really serious writers who were sturrgling with the fundamental problems and relations of writing, speaking, thinking, the outer world and the inner world. The relation between the book and the world: maybe it is only the mirror or maybe a book creates its own universe or maybe it is a mock-up of the universe. So that's why they decided to start with the famous dice throwing by Mallarmé. It was the first full edition of this book in Poland with the original version and translations, printed exactly in the way Mallarmé imagined everything. And their next book was *The Unfortunates* by B.S Johnson. B.S Johnson is almost unknown in Poland. This book is not bound, it's just a bunch of loose pages in a box. The point of the project is to show people that these funny looking books are in fact very serious, often more serious than many a seriously looking book. It's a lovely idea of theirs and it's something very important that they are trying to attain.

S – I really hope we can talk more with them later, because what they're doing just fits into that whole understanding how artists' books move in and out of other fields as well.

R – Years ago I wrote a short essay 'six directions of the book' It's on my website [<http://liberatorium.com/teksty/6directions.html>]. I tried first to imagine that we have South, North, East, West, Zenith and Nadir of the book world and then I tried to answer the question: where are all these more and less crazy books? Very often we feel like being on opposite sides of a barricade and we are ready to kill each other because we can't accept each other's books. But in fact we are in one homogeneous space.

S – That's what we're trying to do with this whole project. Make everyone realise that there aren't any better or worse ways of thinking about artists' books.

R – And what’s interesting is that it’s very easy to indicate the extreme points: that’s a book object, that’s concrete poetry, this is fine press, that’s liberature. The problem is that you make such classifications and suddenly you find hundreds of books that are precisely in between.

T – Yes, and that’s what we want to show – how things overlap and how it could be classed as either or both.

S – Or nothing, or maybe there’s just one word for everything for them.

R – That’s the thing, the point of the whole business is that in our civilisation, in Western culture, there is a very clear and very strict distinction between form and content. And what I said about the critics - in the opinion of the average critic here in Poland, but I guess it’s the same in France and in the UK - the content is the text, while typography, illustration, drawings, paper, that’s the form. And the street book [*Sienkiewicza Street*] for example tells you something totally different. You can’t separate the text from the pictures.

S – No, and you can’t say I’m just going to read that.

R – If you take away the pictures - the text is just mumbling, it’s nonsense. If you push away the text, the drawings are also nothing, they are just standard drawings; any student of architecture can do drawings even better than that. It works only together. So I can say that the drawings are the text and the text is the drawings. There are no illustrations really, because the drawings don’t illustrate the text, it’s not like that. But it’s very difficult to convince people and explain to them that it is just like that. I can understand that for a scientist it’s much easier to make an assumption that the content of the utterance doesn’t depend on the way you speak. If I say to you ‘I love you’ it means always the same, which is total bullshit. Because I can say to you ‘I love you’ in such a way that you are perfectly sure that I hate you. It can be a real fun to watch politicians arguing.

S – Yeah, especially with a politician.

R – Especially. And then they usually say ‘I didn’t mean that, I was simply misunderstood’. But they forget about such simple things as the context, voice, body language, everything. There was a very interesting experiment made by Jacobson, a Russian linguist, years ago in the USSR, he asked a very famous Russian theatre director to get his actors say one very simple phrase, for example ‘good evening how are you’ and there was the audience sitting and listening to the actors, and the actors said it in different ways, trying to put into these words different meanings. The audience deciphered more than forty different meanings. Absolutely nothing was changed in

the text, only the form was changed which is supposed to have no meaning...

There is a second-hand book store in Kielce, where once a month a group of friends stay for the whole night to read books aloud. Each month they chose a new topic, for example on women’s day in March, they read books written by women or about women. A couple of months ago they decided to read my books. I agreed although I expected they might face some really big problems, for example: how can the green letters be read? and how about the blue ones? and what can they do when the font suddenly changes?

S – So, how would you read that aloud?

R – Well, I can write ‘he changed his voice and now it sounded soft and tender’, but instead of writing this I can change the font, chose a more round one. And you can use a lot of things like that, especially now in the age of computers. The false form-content distinction so deeply imprinted in us is really something very difficult to be overcome.

S – But it’s not even just an art thing, it’s the whole psychological thing in everybody, that they’re not related. It’s quite a lot to change.

R – Well, think of James Joyce...

T- Just like Katarzyna and Zenon

R – They are writers, and they also make theatre. For them a book is the extension of text. They follow James Joyce, for whom the structure of the whole book was very important, since it is also a conveyor for messages, too.

S – So every element of/within the book is part of the whole message, not only the text.

R – The difference between literature and liberature is that in literature only letter/ text is meaningful, so you can print the text with any font, on any kind of paper, and the meaning will not change, the message will remain exactly the same. This is what people usually think. But in fact this is a wishful thinking, because if you printed the Polish anthem on toilet paper with Russian letters you would provoke the biggest possible scandal here. And this is the territory they have begun to penetrate and exploit. The book is composed of many elements and the text is only one of them – how can all those elements be used to tell a story thus making it more powerful and complete? So that’s how they work. I must say the way I think about the book is almost the same.

T – Would you call yourself a book artist, part of liberature?

R – Like Katarzyna and Zenon I also started with writing, and all the other elements were just an extension of the text, and my idea was that the whole book could be involved in telling the story. But I studied architecture and I'm also a musician, so it was quite natural for me to combine all these elements. Writing or drawing is almost the same for me, especially for my hand. From my hand's point of view, drawing and writing are the same actions. Of course this is so in the case of handwriting and handdrawing, while printing is something different. Luckily we have computers, so I can design fonts, use tablets, I can quite easily combine drawing with writing etc. Nevertheless, the most important thing for me is to tell a story. All these technical things must help me to tell a story. When I came to Oxford I could see lots of people talking frantically about letterpress, inks, quality of paper - but they were never talking about literature, about the stories they are going to tell using their fantastic skills. I found it doesn't matter for them whether they print a fancy restaurant menu or a Shakespeare sonnet, the quality of print does matter.

S – Is paramount.

R – That's it. I must say I do appreciate also this attitude - because it's not that easy to print something well, it's also the art - but, what is most important for me is the question "how can I use those achievements to make my story better?" I love beauty, too. However sometimes the story I'm telling needs ugly fonts. Then I must print it ugly. With no doubt my approach to the book is more semantic than aesthetic.

Many thanks to Radoslaw Nowakowski for agreeing to be interviewed for this project, and for all of his subsequent help with contacts and translation in Poland.

You can view all of his works, books, essays and hypertexts at: <http://www.liberatorium.com>

Notes

1. Janusz Pawel Tryzno and Jadwiga Tryzno Book Art Museum, Łódź, Poland, interview: www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/trzynos.htm
2. Alicja Slowikowska, Biblioteka Narodowa (National Library), Warsaw, Poland, interview: www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/slowikowska.htm
3. Tomasz Wilmanski and Joanna Adamczewska, Galeria AT, Poznan, Poland, interview: www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/wilmanski.htm
4. Katarzyna Bazarnik and Zenon Fajfer: *Liberature: Literature In The Form Of The Book* www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/contrad09/liberature.htm

Some further reading on artists' books in Poland:

ALPHABET: An exhibition of visual and sound poetry, Book and What Next 5, Galeria At, Poznan, 2004
ISBN 83-988947-14-1

Book and What Next, Galeria At, Poznan, 2000
ISBN 83-911371-7-1

Galeria At 1982-2002, 20th Anniversary catalogue, Galeria At, Poznan, 2002, ISBN 83-988947-14-1

Liberature, Katarzyna Bazarnik and Zenon Fajfer, Krakow, 2005, ISBN 83-920115-2-X

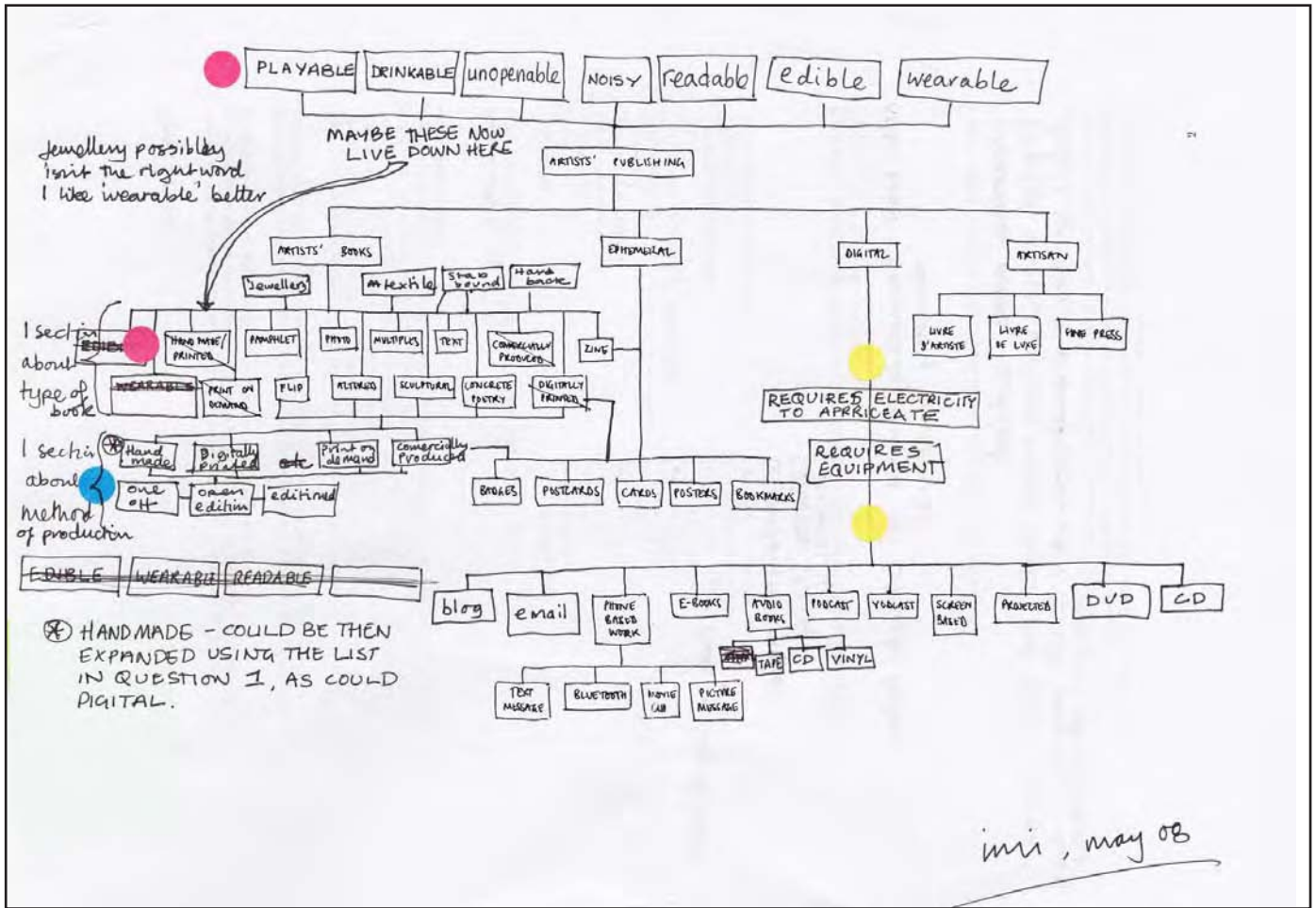
8th International Book Arts Festival TIME touring exhibition catalogue, published 2006, ISBN 83-88735-56-X

Correspondence des Arts – Polish Artists Books from Lodz, an exhibition at the National Library in Singapore, published 2005, ISBN 83-912352-4-6

Polish Contemporary Book Art Exhibition catalogue publication 2000, accompanying the 45th International Book Fair in Warsaw, published 2000, ISBN 83-86-784-43-1

Contemporary Polish Book Art Exhibition catalogue publication 1997, accompanying the 42nd International Book Fair in Warsaw, published 1997
ISBN 83-86-784-46-6

Contemporary Book Art Exhibition catalogue publication 1994-1998, Galeria DAP, Warszawa, published 1998,
ISBN 83-86-784-42-2



Imi Maufe's ABTree diagram

*Interview with Jeff Rathermel, MCBA, USA
Sarah Bodman and Tom Sowden, November 2008*



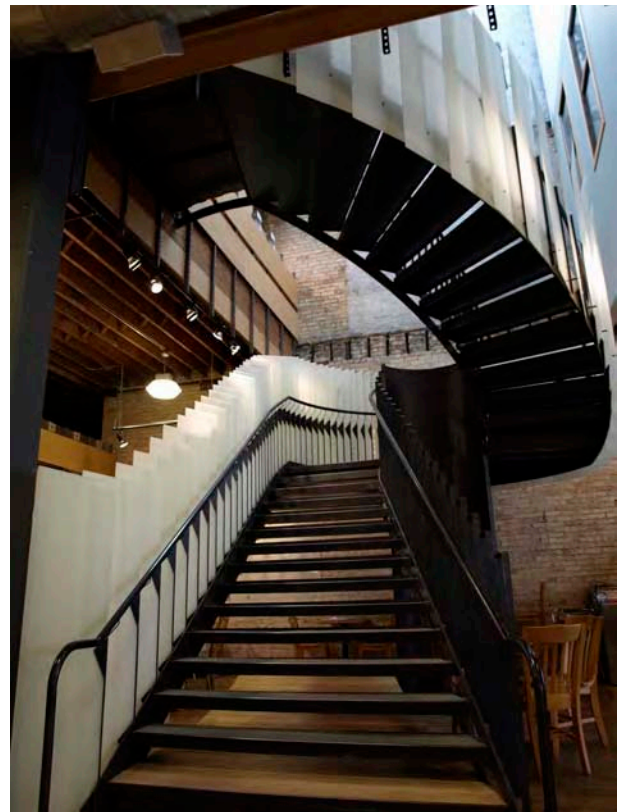
We visited the Minnesota Center for Book Arts (MCBA) en-route to Washington at the invitation of MCBA's Artistic Director Jeff Rathermel, in November 2008. As part of our visit we talked to Jeff about the set up at MCBA, gave a public lecture and ran surgeries for artists' books over two days at MCBA.

We thought that it would be of interest to include this report in our write-up as MCBA works on a model that we feel others could follow – in an ideal world there would be an MCBA in every city!

Before we had even entered the building we realised that this was a really special place. As we approached the entrance, about 20 schoolchildren ages around 6-7 poured out of the doors at 9am, having just finished a workshop to hand print an alphabet book, making a letter each. We thought that was impressive, but having met Jeff to begin a guided tour of the building, we walked into the studio the children had occupied only 10 minutes previously to find it had been immaculately cleaned and was ready for the next workshop which would start in a few minutes for teenagers from another school. This was just one of the experiences that made us realise that this artists' books center was the example of best practice for working with the book arts for artists, education and the wider community.



As our tour continued, through seemingly endless studios for papermaking, plate-making darkrooms, letterpress printing, bookbinding, linocut, woodcut, screenprinting, photopolymer printing, boxmaking, marbling, cutting, we understood why MCBA's history and mission statement includes their aim: "to advance the book as a vital contemporary art form, preserve the traditional crafts of bookmaking, inspire diverse artists and learners and engage audiences in educational, creative and interpretive experiences"... and "From the traditional crafts of papermaking, letterpress printing and bookbinding to experimental artmaking and self-publishing techniques, MCBA supports the limitless creative evolution of book arts."



As we passed yet another room, asking Jeff about the ages of the children we had seen earlier, he showed us another studio, equipped with a soft floor, for classes with children and their carers, for the even younger ages of 2- pre-kindergarten. This he explained, was to encourage the development of literacy in children from an early age, through a love of books and all the arts that surround them. This was the youngest class age we had ever heard of for book arts!

Teaching children a love of books and book arts is just one part of the huge amount of work and classes that occur on a daily basis at the center. Apart from classes for children of all ages, there are workshops for teachers – showing them how to use artists' books for class-related subjects such as developing arithmetic, motor skills and literacy for younger children up to making zines

and self-publishing books for older ones. Adult classes include anything related to any part of book production from fine leather bindings to simple folds, papermaking, printing and journalling. Family classes also range from card and box making to hand papermaking, accordion books and printing.

All of the above courses run on a regular basis alongside MCBA's artists programmes, which include a funded mentorship programme, a residency programme, Book Arts Fellowships, cooperatives and collaborative projects, a regular programme of exhibitions and sessions with artists, writers, etc, in the round table sessions. We were overwhelmed at the amount of activity that goes on; to timetable all of this each month must be a complicated task in itself.



One thing that was obvious was the enthusiasm for the book in all formats in any member of the team, from pre-school instructors to the artists who were using the workshops – to be part of this kind of community which revolves around a shared passion makes the center an inspirational place to work or visit. We wished we could have a similar operation in the UK.

The center is funded through a mix of income: corporate and foundation grants, government grants, individual donors, membership fees revenue, programme/workshop fees, sales of artworks and in-kind contributions. Jeff explained that MCBA part-owns the building it occupies in the Open Book Building - which focuses on the literary and book arts. The Open Book Building is shared by MCBA, Milkweed Editions publishing house, the Coffee Gallery and The Loft Literary Center, which runs a programme of creative writing classes, author readings and resources for the community of readers and writers (www.openbookmn.org).



The organisations share a book club room, resource library classrooms and meeting rooms, gallery and performance hall. MCBA occupies most of the ground and lower floors, with areas for exhibitions and meetings alongside the studio workshops, materials and bookshop and the beautiful, bespoke built reference library which houses their collection of artists' books and reference reading materials on the book arts. The shop provides a base for bookings and an income from materials, and also allows them to showcase a stock of c. 150 artists' books produced at the center, and those of local artists, reference books and materials. A regular exhibition programme in their galleries shows works by national and international artists, as well as touring shows.

Apart from the multitude of artists' books that must be created here each year, our favourite book project at MCBA was their Winter Book. Jeff showed us their most recent publication of the Winter Book, vispoeologiee an anthology of visual literature — exploring “visual

poetry, concrete poetry and post-language writing". This was their 19th Winter Book, and each publication brings together artists, designers, papermakers, printers, bookbinders, interns and community volunteers to create the edition of a handmade artist's book, in chapbook, standard or deluxe formats. Funds are raised for the center through the book's sales. You can view examples of the Winter Books at: www.mnbookarts.org/theshop/winterbook.html



During our visit we asked Jeff how he felt about the rise of technology and e-books, as the Artistic Director of a center which very much celebrates the handmade and support traditional means of printing and bookbinding. Jeff's answer was very much in keeping with the inclusive spirit of MCBA's intent of embracing all forms of the book arts.

Jeff – When people ask me “is this a book?” I tell them I look for the fundamentals: a contained narrative presented in relationship to sequence. It can be digital or physical. By container, I'm referring to the environment within which the work exists. So if it is an e-book, it exists within a screen or a projection. Or I suppose if you wanted to think about it in a really general way, it might exist within the whole stream of the web. There are similarities between e-books and mail art publications. They just involve different methods of delivery. I think that the questions people have with e-books are the same questions people had, or still have, with mail art. How can something so ephemeral exist as a book? Whether it's a group or if it's a series, I believe they can, but much depends on the artist's original intent.

Sarah – That is a good point. For our reading around project we asked artists to make works whether physical books, video or bookworks about the act of reading, and the German mail artist / book artist Ahlrich van Ohlen mailed us one page a day in the post for six days, and these were his six pages of a book, so it was an accumulation to create the whole.

Jeff – I like the idea of that, and, of course, Bonfire of the Vanities was first presented as chapter-based in Vanity Fair, a recent example of a long tradition. I think people wonder about e-books in terms of community. Some believe they facilitate isolationism. I see their great strength as fostering democratic distribution. What if Wikipedia were an interactive artist's book that people could continue to add to? The notion of continuously evolving content is an interesting concept.

Tom – So there's nothing digital that you wouldn't consider to be a book?

Jeff – I think the primary consideration involves sequence and the degree to which the viewer/reader is involved. To get real 'bookishness' in a digital book you need to give the viewer/ reader a lot of control.

A passively viewed streaming image of a book unfolding may work in some situations, but to fully function as a book you need to allow the viewer/ reader to really play around with sequence, with timing, and all of those aspects that make the book format so engaging. (1)

MCBA is an inclusive organisation, which consistently involves the local and regional community in their book arts programmes, and we received a warm welcome from staff and artists working in the studios. If you are in the area you should visit, and if not then do visit their information packed website: www.mnbookarts.org

Note 1. In an aside to Jeff's comments about allowing the reader control and interaction with e-books, there was an observation in the letters page of *The Guardian* newspaper (30/01/10) from a correspondent Chris Marshall about the recent launch of the iPad in an attempt to corner the e-book market. "...but no mention of the needs of the critical reader. Will the iPad let you underline sections and make notes in the margins? That would be fantastic." It would be great if viewers and readers could interact with artists' e-books in this manner.

Ulrike Stoltz: My personal Artists Books Tree: inspired and altered.

My system does look at **publications in general**. The great difference is probably the one between print <—> digital
(to establish this argument I would need to write a book ...)

As I do not want to go into hypertext, I look at the book as a medium:

There are:

_ordinary books <— and —> extraordinary books
(which for me is the most important or most interesting difference!)

_books <—> ephemera
(the book is generally meant to last longer than ephemera)

_books published by artists <—> book published by traditional publishing houses
(the poet/author is also an artist, isn't s/he?)

BUT

commercially published books may also be artists books (and vice versa)
(also the artist is looking for commercial success, isn't s/he?)

ALL books my be categorised according to

_their (media of) contents:

text (narrative, prose, lyrics, concrete poetry ...)

pictures:

_photographs (b/w or colour; documentary, still life, portraits, ...)

_drawings (pencil, ink, other techniques ...; abstract, figurative, ...)

_collage (glued, digital, ...)

_original prints (etchings, intaglio, woodcuts, linocuts, silk screen, ...)

_their media of production:

_one-of-a-kind: handmade: written, calligraphy, original drawings, collage ...

_multiplied:

_traditionally printed (either on a hand press or on an industrial press)

_letterpress (relief printing)

_offset

_silk screen

_etching

—...

_digitally printed:

_photocopy (at least modern photocopiers are digital ...)

_fax

_laser

_ink jet

—...

_potentially multiplyable (= print on demand)

_their book structure:

_codex (including pamphlets, flip books, pop-up books, altered books, zines ...)

_leprello (accordion, concertina)

_palm leaf binding (venetian blind)

_book objects, sculptural, multiples, ...

Furthermore, artists books can be attached to **different traditions:**

_arts and crafts

(William Morris, private presses, texts of "world literature": limited editions, signed and numbered, expensive)

_American tradition

(Fluxus, Neo-Dada, ...: book as democratic multiple, unlimited editions, unsigned, cheap)

_livre du peintre

(famous artists (Picasso, Matisse ...), very often texts of "world literature", original prints, limited editions, mostly in France)

_Handpressendrucke

(people who used to work as letterpress typographers and printers and became unemployed after the introduction of offset or did not like the "new" technique very much bought what otherwise would have ended up on the garbage and started printing books in their garages and cellars; limited editions, mostly in Germany)

Artists books can be divided according to the **interest of the artist:**

_the artists explores the medium book as such, its possibilities and limits;

_the artist makes a book as this seems to be the appropriate medium for what s/he wants to say with her work, but the book as a medium is not necessarily in the center of his/her attention.

Interview – with Ulrike Stoltz by Sarah Bodman and Tom Sowden at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste Braunschweig, Germany (14/01/09)

Ulrike Stoltz – So, what do you want to know?

Sarah Bodman – Well, we're making a proposal – we're not saying we're going to answer all the questions. At the end of this project we feel we will propose that the canon for the artist's book is a very inclusive proposition, so what we said we'd make is a manifesto at the end. Essentially it boils down to the fact that we believe that if you make a book on a mobile phone, it has the same value as a book that's made in finely bound leather, if the artist's intention is that it is read as a book.

U – OK, but that opens up the same discussion as in the sciences – the term of text has been opened up in the same way. Everything could be a text - the face can be read as a text, a wall can be read as a text, etc. So of course you can, and for certain purposes it is quite useful to, open up the term book in the same way as opening up the term text, because it opens up the mind. As the book is such an old medium it is a very conservative medium, it conserves our memories – which is one thing I used to oppose against like mad when I was younger. Now I can relax a little more and say maybe there's a little reason behind and about all this conservatism. I can also leave it as it is, or maybe even appreciate, but it depends. Anyway what I wanted to say is that the book has this tendency of being so conservative, which means when you start thinking about books you easily get into this way of thinking: 'It has always been like that, it can never be anything else. You can't change it.' So opening up the term of what a book could be is like opening up the mind of how to deal with books, how to think with books, how to use books, how to make books. Fine, I'm very much in agreement with that.

S – But also opening a Pandora's Box as well.

U – In the end I think it might be necessary to come back to say a text is a text, an image is an image, a book is a book and a telephone is a telephone. It is like when we look at prehistoric excavations, you have these stones that are the universal tool and these stones look very much like a (computer-)mouse. Very much. I've always said that the mouse is the universal tool, like these stone age things. So in a way we're kind of ... — this is the old metaphor that things are not being repeated, like on a spiral, but you get on at another level. So maybe that's where we are right now.

What I wanted to say regarding the book is that the book as a container, a means of transport for its contents and as a medium of communication crossing distances

as well as time, is a thing that can have different forms. Like a clay book was something else, and I would still regard it as a book. So maybe we're again changing the book format, like the papyrus scrolls, and then we got the codex, and maybe now we're shifting to another format.

S – Maybe not in the term artist's book, but if you think of e-publishing, the Kindle and the Sony reader, they don't negate books on paper, although perhaps it will kill a lot of publishing.

Tom Sowden – I'm not sure it will, I think it's just another means of presenting the book. I don't think it will kill the codex.

U – That's another thing, I can't think about artist's books in isolation. I mean a book is a book is a book is a book.

S – Exactly.

U – So the artist's book is a book that an artist makes, or even a person who is not an artist makes an artist's book, because it's an unusual book, not a commercial book being published by the commercial publishers.

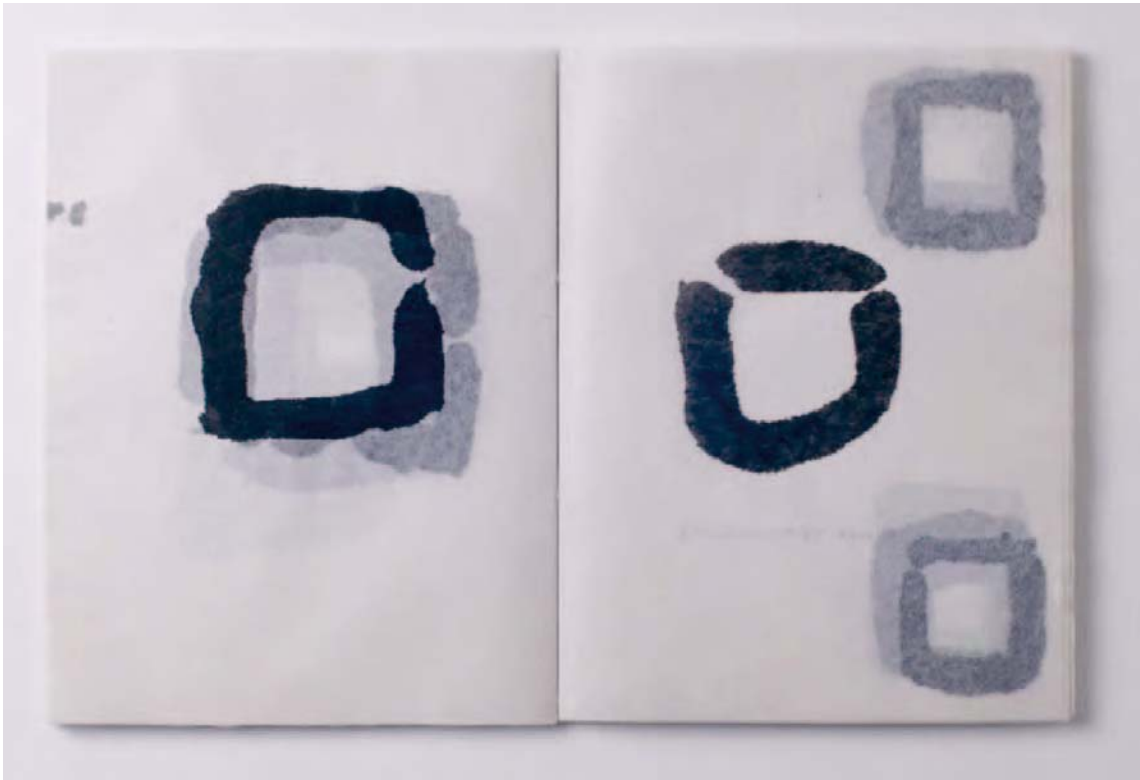
S – Yes.

U – So I mean when I started making books in Germany we had this term 'Künstlerbücher'. If you translate that literally you end up with artist's book. Or in French 'livres d'artistes', but the French term means something very different from what Künstlerbücher means and what artist's book means, so the translation doesn't fit at all. So where do I stand with my German background in the world of artists' books? Nobody in art history at University told us anything about artists' books, they didn't exist, so it took a while until I understood this is the neo-Fluxus history, this is the idea of the artists' book being large edition, not numbered, cheap. But that "cheap" idea came from the time when offset was new, and cheaper than letterpress. Now the whole technology has changed, which means we can't stick to these and talk about books just in terms of how they were produced, the idea has to materialise somehow, but still the general idea of what a book is, is maybe something that is a concept.

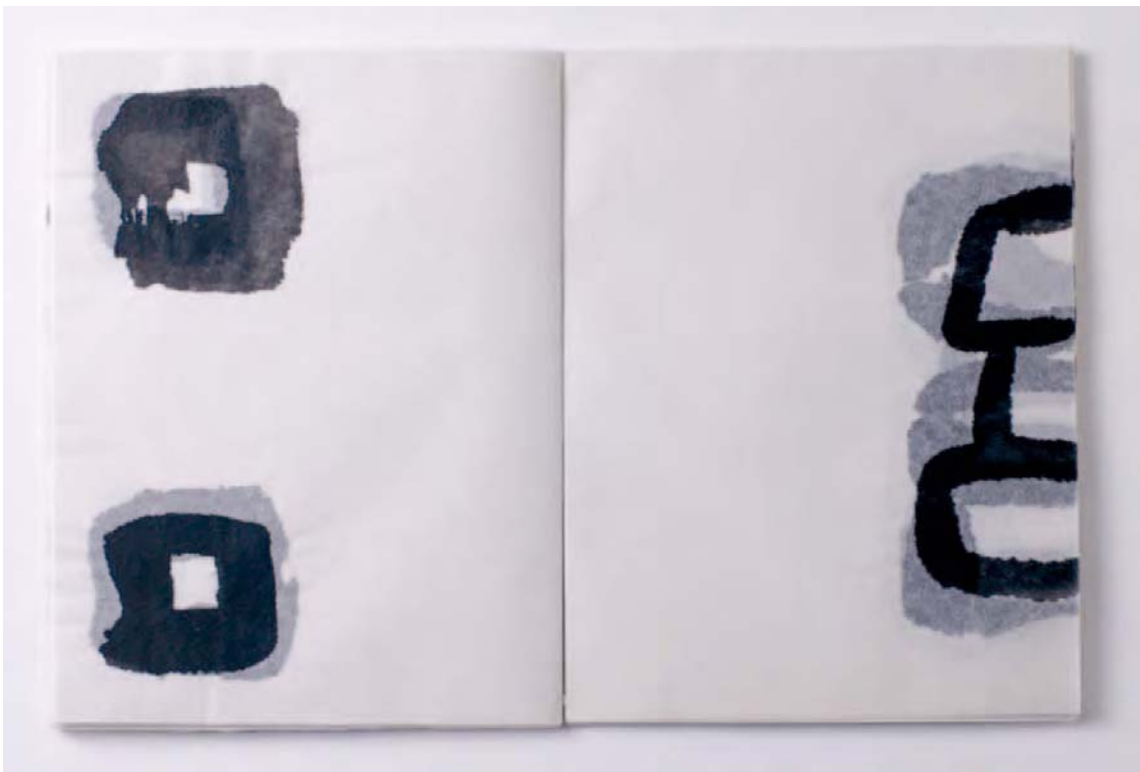
S – It is conceptual.

U – It is very conceptual. So I don't know what the canon of the artist's book would be, I have no idea.

T – Well I think that's the point we'd like to reach, where we present a manifesto and not a definitive answer. It's more about presenting an idea to generate discussion.



Above and below: *Dei Marmi*, Ulrike Stoltz, 2003. Ink drawings on Japanese paper. Coptic binding with parchment. 126 pages, 18 x 23 cm, (one-of-a-kind)



U – So you kind of get a collection of different points of view on the book and the artist's book.

S – Yes, for the book in general and not only artists' books. I thought that when we went to a seminar at the V&A a really nice point was made about the book becoming a digital object, like e-publishing, actually took all the pressure off the book as the object, and the book could actually be just its hand held self again. So the book as an object that someone really valued, what was in it, and what it was, was all important again.

U – This is very much the way I like to talk about lithography and handset type, because lithography once was an industrial way of printing, and as soon as the industry moved from stone to offset, nobody needed it any more. But the artists were still using it for their artwork, so this way of printing was released into ...

S – Into art, and now it's got that value.

U – Exactly. It's the same with handset type and maybe even with, I wouldn't say with the book as such, but with certain parts of the book. Still now, when I talk to my students and say there was a time before computer type, they look at me as if I come from the stone age, and I'm not that old!

S – Yes, but they are the digital natives. And they are only about twenty-five.

U – Yes, but the interesting thing is also what I see in my students. They are so used to working in digital, they are interested in having something to touch again. That was very difficult to argue here in Germany, because everybody suggested we throw away the type. I said I know people in America who are buying this stuff for a lot of money, and I'm not throwing away what I have here. This is ridiculous. This is not yesterday, this is the future to keep it, and the future is to have it with the digital stuff in the one room.

S – Yes. Exactly our thoughts.

U – It's a dream come true for me.

T – We were quite fortunate in that our university was reasonably forward thinking as well – it did through away a lot of type but it kept some, and we've now got an advantage over other universities that did just get rid of it all and just went purely digital.

U – I wouldn't take more [type] because we have a lot and we have a good selection, and what we don't have we don't have. I don't want a living museum, I want some of the stuff to work with and the rest is.

S – Well it's like the Tryzno's [Book Art Museum, Lodz, Poland] they are the perfect example of the people who've saved type because they set up a museum, but they will only take things that they will use or can be repaired to be used, and if it doesn't have a purpose it's not in there. It is a living museum and it's there for a reason.

U – I was never in the mood of feeling like Gutenberg bibliophile as such, and saying: "this is good because it's done in this old fashioned way". No, no, no, you have to use the old material in a new way, which is the only way letterpress can survive. All the rest is historic. I have difficulties with the idea that Gutenberg is looking across your shoulders at whatever you do. Suddenly you hear from behind something like, can you do it like that? Can you really? It was too much for me; I had to get away from that. Then but of course in a land like the USA where they don't have the tradition it's very important to celebrate that. Here it's already there.

T – I can understand why people do that and I think that they have their own market for doing that. I think that fine press is absolutely fine although it's not something I would consider an artists' book. I think it is purely for the bibliophile.

U – Coming from letterpress, for me the interesting thing was not doing the offset book in a large edition, but using the computer and the printer as being the box right beside the printer, not man at a machine. Using the printer as tools not only for designing books but for producing books. Then I'm right there where I was with my handset type and letterpress, because I have the full control and I decide during the process on the things I want to do, how I want them to be, what it looks like, the form and the content. It's all my decision. Again it is very close to lets say Aldus Manutius who was a publisher, printer, type designer, editor etc. All in one person – brilliant, that's something I love. I think that's something where the book development will go to, I mean we will have large publishing houses for a while, yes, but still the interesting thing might not be an artist's book as being a book produced by an artist like Duchamp and all this genius thing – which is old fashioned in my opinion anyway. The interesting thing will be desktop publishing – everybody now has the possibility to do these things if they want to, if they're interested. Kitchen table production, which is wonderful. One thing I observe from my own work as well as my students work and other things I see, is that producing is more interesting than reading. Producing is more interesting than perceiving.

S – It's activity isn't it – that feeling of actually making

U – Yes, and it's a much more fulfilling feeling. I mean

I'm a book maniac, I have always been reading like mad. I'm not a good sampler of whether a type is easy to read – I read anything. I'm a typographer and I know the standards of how to make type legible, but I read anything – it can be set in a very bad way and I still read it. But I read less. Years ago I would have said well I don't read on the screen, I have to print that out. Now I read more on the screen than I read in books.

S – I think we do – that's just the way we are now.

U – And my attention, you know – even my day has only 24 hours, I have a certain amount of sleep time, which I regret, but it is like that. The rest of my time is divided into different sectors, I mean I still have a pile of, let's say, five books beside my bed. But still it is a different way of reading – it has changed. I can observe myself, I can watch myself in a scientific laboratory and see this is not what it used to be. It has changed, and I have to admit that.

S – It's also the way you receive information now is electronically, whereas before you would have received it physically.

U – Yes, of course I don't have to read that many things because I have already read a lot of things, I don't know it all by heart but the older you get the more complex your mind becomes, maybe. I wanted to say I don't need to re-read books and I was thinking of an example in my mind of a book I don't need to re-read because I've read it already when I was a teenager, but that's not true. You go back to the books, you read it a second time and you read it in a different way. That's one of the advantages of the book.

S – Yes, that it's there for you. What were you saying Tom, about kids reading on screen?

T – Oh yes, I think it was Swedish or Norwegian researchers had been looking at the manner in which people read now, and in particular children who are learning. It's about teaching and about the materials that humans learn from, and they were saying that kids learn better, take in a lot more information and have a much longer attention span, if they're reading from a traditional book. If they're reading from the screen they don't take as much in and their attention span gets greatly reduced. They were saying that one of the reasons they believe is that there are too many distractions on the screen – even just the action of having to scroll down the page, it's not the same as turning a page in a book. Which I was quite interested in, but unfortunately I've only found a short article about it in a newspaper.

S – But what happens when they get the page-turner?

T – I don't know, but it's still not quite the same, is it?

S/U – No.

T – I think there's still a distraction turning a page on a screen. The way in which you now read then – as that's changed, has it influenced your production?

U – Indirectly. I think the main thing that has influenced my production is lack of time. I don't have enough time. I have been doing a lot of one-of-a-kind books, mainly because I don't have the time to do more. A very simple reason. I need to make my own books to have a counterweight for teaching. Teaching is like you give away yourself, you become empty and I have to refill my sources. I can only do that by making my own art. It's very simple and making my own art I also regard as research work, let's say on the fundamental ideas of what a book could be. I don't have to prove to myself that I can design a proper book, I know how to do that, but with the little time I have left I'm much more interested in experimenting. I'm much more interested in pushing the limits of the book. As I'm not part of the computer generation, the limit of the book in my work is not pushing it into, let's say, the mobile phone.

S – Sure.

U – This is not my cup of tea, this is something for younger people. So what's interesting for me is sometimes, not always, the book as meditation. I've done a book only with ink drawings of squares and then I looked at which squares I liked and put them in a book. The interesting thing is I gave this book to Marshall [Weber from Booklyn Artists Alliance], it's a one-of-a-kind book of course, and I gave it to Marshall who was trying to sell it in the States. After a year he gave the book back to me and said: "it's too subtle for the American market". Of course this is not the mainstream, if I pushed the limits of the book into the mobile phone it would sell because this is what people are interested in, but that wouldn't fit into what I'm interested in.

S – But as an artist you use what you want to use, and whatever you are interested in and the way you work. It doesn't matter if it's one year old or a hundred year old technology. Your immediate reaction is 'I will make the book like this', because that's the way it should be made.

U – Yes, and what I was always interested in the process of making books, was to find a way of combining the two poles. One thing I like to do is work very spontaneously – I like to draw these spontaneous 'things', but books as

such are very conceptual. You have to have a concept first otherwise you end up with a pile of loose sheets, and those are not a book. So I am always interested in experimenting with how to get these two extremes together, what sort of rules of the game, of methods, of how to deal with pen and paper, can I develop or find, to make books in the end. Sometimes I start with an idea for a book and end up with a pile of drawings or an installation, and I cannot press it into a book, it just doesn't work.

S – It doesn't want to be a book.

U – It just doesn't want to be, and sometimes I start and think: OK, I'll do a set of drawings, that was so with this book with the squares. In the end it was a book, but it was never planned as such. It's these extremes that I'm interested in, these balances.

S – That's what feels right isn't it, it's the way it ends up.

U – Yes exactly. As for teaching I like to inspire the students and I like to help them find out what they want. I'm not interested at all that their books look like they were my books – horrible – but sometimes you see that. Especially at art schools with teachers and their students work looks like the their work – it's boring.

T – Can I ask, how do you approach teaching the book to students? Do you have a philosophy?

U – No, I don't have a philosophy. I'm doing this module in the bachelor programme now, which is called The Book, and the students are in their third semester. They've just finished their foundation year which is part of the bachelor degree, we don't have any separate foundation year.

S – So is that a four year degree?

U – Three. Which is administration and politics and they want to save money etc. I have students that have come out of this, they have passed the entrance exam and have all the energy of: wow! now I'm studying! Then after one semester they get into the frustration of thinking 'hmm, everyone is cooking here with water and that is not what I was expecting'. Then after a year they slowly land on the ground of reality. Then they come into my course and I have ten or twelve students maximum in this course, for one semester. I hate repeating myself so I'm always doing different things. In the first book module I had ten students and I said to them: OK, we'll do one book all together. It'll be an ABC book, and each of them has three letters to do. I gave them the letters to make sure that not one person had three in a row, I wanted to mix that up. *The Journey Through the Alphabet*

was the working title. So they had to do a little research on the letter, or find a word that started with that letter. It could be either typographical or a book reference, or a journey reference – whatever. So they ended up with very different designs and they had just a double spread for their thing. One thing I wanted to make was a little edition with them, so that each of them got three books, plus three for the library and three for me. So we had some forty books. That was the kind of briefing I gave to them in the beginning and of the three spreads each of them had, at least on one a detail had to be letterpress. I wanted to mix the old technology, the new technology, the whole group together and in the end we decided in a collaborative process the title of the book – perfect. But I can't do it like that every semester or I get crazy.

I have one form that works very well. I'm doing small leaflets like schoolbooks, in various sizes, but just with this school book stitch, very simple. With that you can do anything. I've also done that in the foundation courses and I have a selection of various contents. I give the content and they do the design. As they have a little finished bound object in the end, that is a good kick of motivation. In former times there was an apprenticeship for a typesetter and I can't put in all the contents that those guys learned in their three years apprenticeship. In a graphic design course it's just absolutely impossible, although it would be great. I know that what I teach them is only fragments, fragments of what typography used to be, fragments of what book design used to be – it's fragments, in one course.

S – But then you hope that if they're really interested and they enjoy it, it's up to them to find out the rest.

U – That's true, motivation is everything. I trust once you're motivated you will do the rest, and it works quite well.

S – When you're teaching students, it's better to give them the basics and if they are really interested they will come back to you, or go to somewhere else or find out more by themselves.

T – That's also important for them long term, so that they'll continue to produce work, they'll continue to challenge themselves and find things out beyond being taught, so you need to do it.

U – Another thing is I've come to book design from reading and from type. I started making books because I liked to read.

S – I think a lot of people do.

U – Yes, but graphic designers don't like to read. After



Above and below: *ALPHABETys logbuch*, a collaboration by students Johannes Badzura, Susanne Hennig, Klara Hellena Kayser, Franziska Kühne, Christian Neumann, Sina Pardylla, Marie Schröter, Stefanie Weber, Dörthe Wilke, Frederik Wilken. Computer and handset type, digital and letterpress printing, 32 pages, A5 size, 45 copies, 2007/2008



half a page of A4 they say to me: “oh this is too much, I can’t read that”. Then at Nexus Press there’s this saying “you don’t have to read visual books” – which is great, which is lovely. They have a stamp there, we found it in one of the drawers, it says you don’t have to read visual books. Which is one of these ‘don’t be afraid, a visual book...

S – Is not going to hurt you.

U – It’s not so difficult.

S – It’s not going to challenge your intellect.

U – Which is nice, and of course I like photography and the book. I’ve always been interested in what can be said with pictures, that cannot be said with words. I mean John Berger has this wonderful ‘seeing comes before words’. True, true, true. The book is still a stage for the world and a stage for the picture and a stage for the interaction of word and picture and a stage for thinking, in whatever form they come. I don’t really care. I have been asked who my teachers were when I was studying, especially in typography, and I must say I’ve learnt much more from my dancing teacher than from everybody else. I remember that in modern dancing we had this exercise: “I am walking across the room” and suddenly I realised the page is the room, and the letters are walking across the room. With this experimental dance it was clear that walking across the room was not one line after the other, set in a box. So suddenly that was the breakthrough, that was really good. I think this way of thinking about what a book could be is also a guarantee for the survival of the book. I think the nineteenth century idea of what a book is, that will go, hopefully.

T – Publishers, certainly in the mainstream, want to distribute their books as widely as possible, so they will adopt any technology that will enable them to do it and therefore change the idea of what a book is. Then I think the artists follow, just a step behind perhaps, and utilise that technology in a slightly different way.

S – And how they experiment with selling too.

T – Yes, if e-books fall flat on their face because people just don’t want to buy them, then they will just disappear. Then they’ll explore different avenues and distribute their books in different ways and in whichever way will make them the most profit.

S – Then we’ll pick up on that when it gets cheaper to use.

U – I really think that the hand made book will become

more important, because people like to have something in their hands. I really think that the kitchen table book, so to speak, is one of the future things. If you say that, in a land like Germany where there is still this bibliophile tradition, they would look at me like – heretic!

S – Like zines, they’re getting glamour status now because photocopying isn’t seen so much anymore. People like Abigail Thomas making unique zines on a photocopier, or Maria Lucia Cattani making unique works from a multiples process.

U – Strange, isn’t it?

S – It’s just become another tool, a photocopy has got that status now because it’s not computer printed, not inkjet, not digital. Like drawing and Polaroid.

U – What I think is very important is that to work with the computer I need an electrical current, to open up a book I don’t. It can be transported, and it is not that easy to watch the data flow. I mean everybody can read everything I send through the web by email. If I look at it in a political way, the book still has this potential of being out of control.

S - And underground.

U – So yes, maybe that’s the future.

S – Yes, perhaps underground – anti-control.

U – I don’t want to get too romantic about that. I think the fundamental structure is transporting an idea from one place to another, and writing and the book is more or less the same. The books start as early as writing starts, I would say. Maybe the ways we transport the ideas become different.

S – But the ideas and the message could still be the same.

U – Yes, but we will get away from the mass produced pockets, books or things like that.

S – Well you never know, with the economy going down the pan that could sort a lot of things out anyway.

U – No more telephone books, no more dictionaries, all kinds of catalogues for selling stuff.

S – Celebrity novels.

U – Then when you look at it from the contents it’s very interesting to see what kind of content could remain.

S – What’s the important stuff for you?

U – I don't know, important is a relative thing, but let's say poetry – to whom is poetry really important? In poetry, if it's not spoken poetry, it's written poetry. Written poetry exists on websites etc. but the printed poetry in the book is also a gift. It's less information. I mean information is only one part of what the book brings, and then there is all the rest. Information can be in the information media, like the Internet, but if I have tracked the information from the book then there is something left which can be described as poetry, I would say. Which doesn't necessarily have to be a poem, it can be images for example. But the poetry part is also connected to the material because the material is part of poetry.

S – Yes, its presence.

U – Right, I'll stop! There is a quotation from a book by Heinrich von Kleist who is a very famous German author, and he talks about 'the slowly development of the idea or thought while talking', and this is exactly what I did. I didn't think before I spoke but while I was talking the ideas sort of shaped.

S – That's a nice quotation.

U – When I started to learn that "artists' books" are something very different from 'Künstlerbücher' and 'livres d'artistes' I got into this mood of needing to define what I make, and what an artists' book is. I ended up saying there is no artists' book at all, a book is a book is a book. In the book you have, let's say, different continents drifting around an ocean of possibilities. So I ended up saying there's ordinary books and extraordinary books – and the extraordinary book can also be published by a big publishing house. For me that was very important because it took out the art. Art is just one thing, and the book is the art object itself, devouring everything. That is not necessarily what the artist likes to hear!

S – You make the book, not the book makes your art.

U – Yes! But I'd like to turn it around.

S – John Bently was saying if you just take the word artists' off the front and just say this is a book and I made it, then people will buy it. The minute you put the word artist and get precious about that book, they don't want it.

U – As an artist I came to the point where I didn't want to be reduced to the book all the time, because I was really more than just making books. I mean, I consider myself to be a typographer, I'm not a type designer but I'm a typographer. As an artist one could say my position as an artist is very much influenced by typography and

the book. I never make a single drawing, I make a series of drawings and thinking in series' is very bookish I would say. I have a tendency not to draw in a realistic or figurative style, but I have a tendency towards very abstract drawings. Which has also to do with letters and letter forms, they are very abstract and not figurative at all. Then I've made installations together with Uta [Schneider] which are a kind of a book in a room. In ancient Egypt the temple was the book and the walls were the pages. That was my initial idea for making installations with text. Suddenly the text wanted to get out of the book and become part of the room. It is still in the tradition of the book, even if I do installations, but I don't want to be – as an artist – I don't want to be reduced to being a book artist.

S – Oh yes, 'aah you're a book artist, that's so sweet! You must love pressed flower paper.'

U – Even worse is when I finished studying and started working as a graphic designer and an artist, people would ask me what I do. I would say I make books, and they would say: "aah, children's books!"

S – Oh no, no!

U – Oh yes, more than once. I made several attempts to design children's books but never actually succeeded in making one. We were always in competition with other people and they always got the job. Once we got told why, and they said you're too modern. Great, isn't it! It was a page for a schoolbook, ordinary school books are packed with information and images – they're horrible. So we made it a clear construction, and we had white spaces all over the pages – they didn't like that! They didn't want the white.

They can't stand the white, they can't stand it. It's a psychological thing – not just a money thing. The interesting thing was when Esther Liu was here from Hong Kong, she talked about the whiteness of the book. She said 'you have to think of the white of the book – the white! The white!' And she gave wonderful examples. I say to students don't you remember that talk? Look at your book, look at the white, and turn your eyes. Don't just see everything that's there, but see also what's not there.

S – Yes. That's true.

U – Which is of course an East Asian tradition, and so difficult for us. But I think typographers can.

S – Because you think more about the space that's left behind.

U – Yes, good typographers see that. Did you ever read *Counterpunch* by Fred Smeijers? ¹

T & S – No

U – It is a very typographical book and he's a type designer. He was doing research on how type designers in former times would do their work. They had a piece of lead square and they would take away the outside, but how do you get the inner [which is called: the punch] out? He said they didn't do that by hand, but they would use another punch [the counterpunch]. They would shape this in the form so that in the end it would be the bit that would be the inner space of the a or the d, and they would use this and punch it.

S – So they're actually creating space.

U – The inner space is an object you can feel and touch, with this counter punch, and that has to do with thinking. This is amazing, this is one of my favourite books, it's really good. It's very nice to read, very instructive with nice drawings. He tells you how he developed this question, and how he did his research. How his father could help him, although he was never a type designer, he could help him with hints. He went to the museum [the Plantin Moretus in Antwerp], and you don't actually find the old tools, the counter punches, so he had to reconstruct how it would probably have been, without actually finding the counter punch on the desk. They don't exist [anymore, physically].

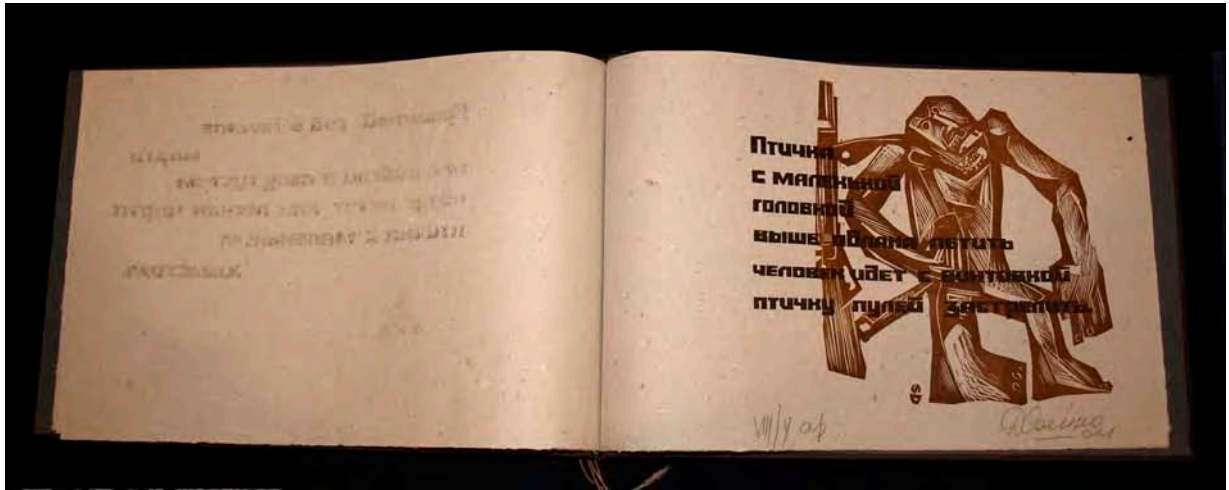
S – I suppose even if you think of people keeping things, you would think that they wouldn't keep something that meant nothing. Like the lead type people buy for decoration and stick it on their shelves. But you're not going to buy something that creates negative space are you?

U – No, fantastic.

For more information on Ulrike Stoltz, and her collaborative work with Uta Schneider as *usus*, see: www.boatbook.de

Note:

1. *Counterpunch*, Fred Smeijers, Hyphen Press, 1st edition 1997, ISBN 978-0-907259-42-8 (next edition to be published summer 2010)



The Bird Dmitry Sayenko, 2001. 6 pages with original text (linocut) and images (woodcuts) printed on hand made paper. Chinese bookbinding. Edition: 12 numbered and signed copies. 31 x 19 cm. Photograph Tom Sowden.



The Drawing Pin Dmitry Sayenko, 2004. 9 double pages with text (linocut) and images (woodcuts). 5 copies printed on pages from an old Soviet magazine published 1936-1938. Edition: 12 numbered and signed copies. 11.1 x 19 cm. Photograph Tom Sowden.

Dmitry Sayenko, interview

Sarah Bodman interviewed Dmitry Sayenko at the *BuchDruckKunst* at Museum der Arbeit, Hamburg (www.buchdruckkunst.de) and by email in January and February 2009.

Dmitry Sayenko was born in 1965 (Kiev). He graduated from Mukhina Art School, St. Petersburg, in 1995. He ventured into the field of artists' books in 1993, working with colour woodcut and linocut, and binding his own books by hand. He established his own publishing house Nikodim press in 2000.

His artists' books are exhibited and collected worldwide, and he regularly shows at fairs in London, Seoul, Hamburg and California. His books can be found in the collections of the Russian National Library, St. Petersburg; Eoun-ho Kim Collection, South Korea; Birmingham Museum of Art, UK, and Duke University, Durham, USA, amongst others. His books are also widely collected by German institutions including: Bischöflichen Dom - und Diözesanmuseum and Stadtbibliothek, Trier; Staatsbibliothek und Staatliche Museen Berlin; Sächsische Landesbibliothek - Staats - und Universitätsbibliothek (SLUB) Dresden, and Gutenberg Museum, Mainz.

SB. How long have you been making artists' books, and would you say that this is your main artistic practice?

DS. I began my work in this field in 1993 but all the same I consider 1996 as the year of my being born as a book artist. Since that time the art of the book has so absorbed me that now I consider it as my main profession, despite of the fact that sometimes I also paint, draw, and teach at the institute etc.

Were you aware that you were making artists' books when you started to make them?

No, I didn't know that I would be engaged in artists' books seriously and professionally. Furthermore, I did not know that in a few years I would become known thanks to my work in this field. But I believe in destiny and it has given me a chance. It happened like this: when I finished at the Mukhina Art School I had a vague idea about what I wished to be engaged in. A publishing house announced a competition for the best design of an ABC book for children and I won the tender, and the publishing house contracted me to create the book. But those times were unstable, Russia had started to live in the capitalist market and many people went bankrupt. Such was the situation with my publisher. Although at that moment my project was 90% complete, it was suspended, and I found myself in a strange situation: my

ABC book is almost made but hardly anybody will ever see it except the publishing house workers.

My hopes that the economic situation would soon return to normal and that the publisher would be able to find some thousand dollars to finish this project thawed like snow in the spring. Then I thought: what is preventing me from finishing this project in a different way? And I remembered the years that I studied printing processes (linocut, woodcut, etching etc). My experience with these was minor but all the same I already had tools and printing inks for this purpose, it was just a case of buying the paper and setting about finishing this project that became my principal task at that moment. But when I decided to adapt the design to use other materials, I realised that it wasn't going to be so easy. Also I had to think about one new fact: that the book will be a limited edition. So, instead of taking one year I made this book over three years.

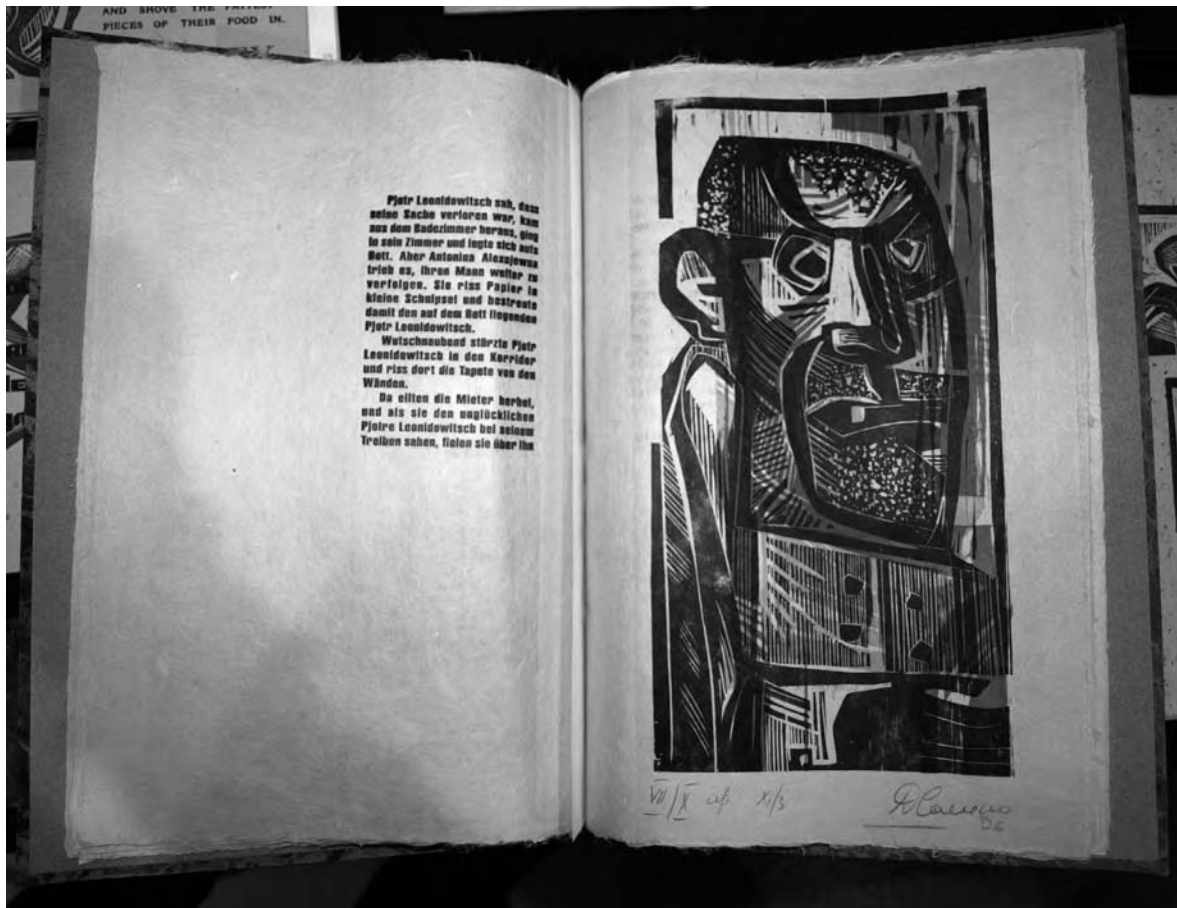
Now that I understand the complexity of the creating such a book I would never undertake that kind of project again, but at the time I was young, inexperienced and full of ambitions. These three traits also helped me to get into this orbit of the "artist's book" (by the way, I had not even heard this name until a few years later when went to London Artist's Book Fair then at Barbican Centre with my first books). Then there was my second, third book, then the fourth etc. but I remember my first book - as the first love, which seldom turns out happy but always unforgettable.

You said that being young, inexperienced and full of ambition helped you get into the orbit of the artist's book but that you had not learned the name until you went to London, so what would you have called what you were making before you knew the term artist's book - and how did you find out about the Barbican fair?

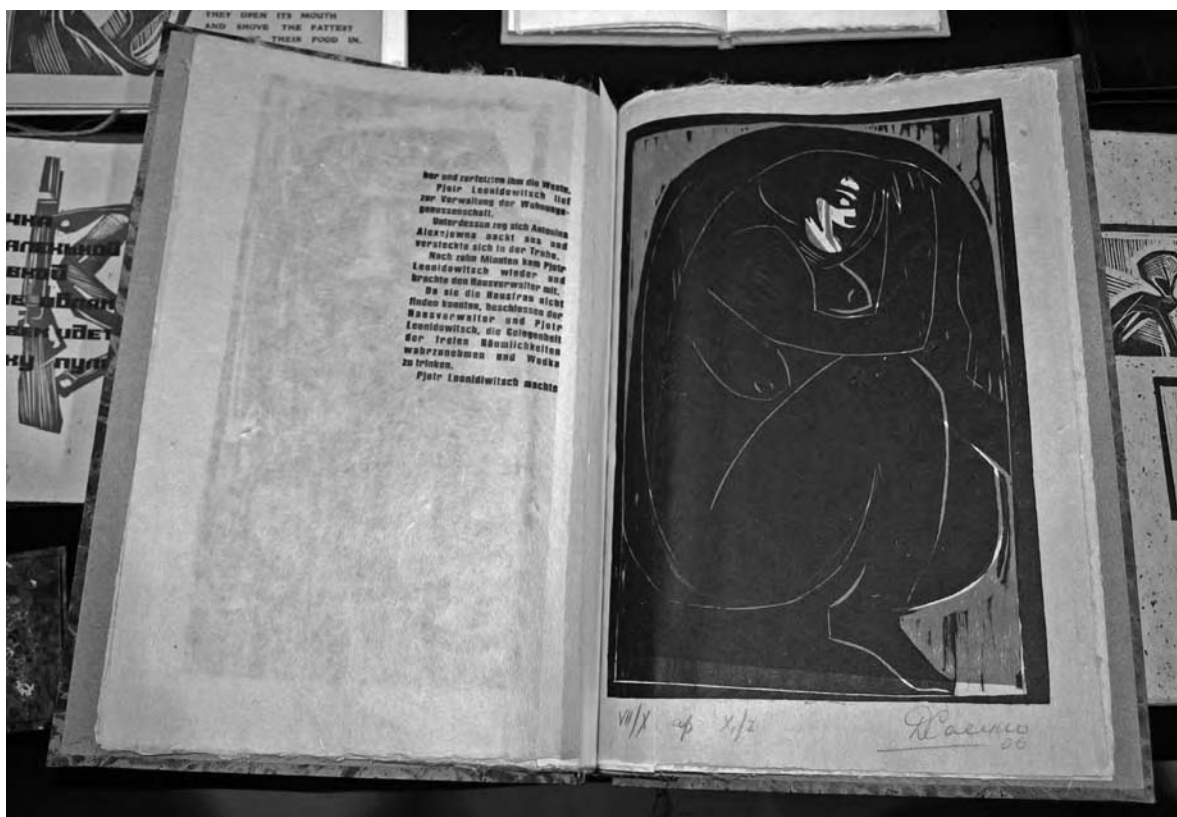
I called my first book a "limited edition or rare book". It was the ABC and certainly I did not know that it was a special kind of book as a result of my profession but intuitively I did know that others like it exist somewhere. This was my intuition. I found out the book fair at the Barbican from William Butler, a wood engraving collector and editor.

He told me about the artist's book as a genre when I met him in St. Petersburg and showed him my books and albums. He advised me to try to get some exposure at the London Artist's Book Fair organised by Marcus Campbell. Since that time I began to develop my 'book level' as book artist.

William Butler later wrote an article about me for *Parenthesis* journal (*Contemporary Wood Engraving in Russia*, William E Butler, *Parenthesis* Number 10, November 2004, <http://www.fpba.com/parenthesis/p10.html>).



Unexpected Drinking Bout Dmitry Sayenko, 2004. 5 woodcuts with German text (zinc plates) on hand made paper. Edition: 7 numbered and signed copies. 15.5 x 19 cm. Photograph Tom Sowden.



Unexpected Drinking Bout Dmitry Sayenko, 2004. 5 woodcuts with German text (zinc plates) on hand made paper. Edition: 7 numbered and signed copies. 15.5 x 19 cm. Photograph Tom Sowden.

Looking at your work I can feel a whole sense of the history of Russian books - do you feel that your books are particularly reflective of a Russian style?

I do not feel that my books are especially Russian but if it is felt by the onlooker it is because it's hidden, intuitive. I do not think that art has any national borders though it may originate from different cultures. But these borders are conditional and they define the originality of different national cultures. When we listen to Mozart's music we don't think of what nationality he was, because his music belongs to the whole world despite the fact that he is Austrian. Different cultures influence each other, get mixed up, as paints on a palette, and create new colours in which various cultural schools and traditions create a new kind of uniqueness.

Yet I assume that a lot of onlookers see my books and recollect the traditions of the Russian culture: such names as Michael Larionov, Natalia Goncharova, Vladimir Favorsky, El Lisitsky, Kazimir Malevich and others. Certainly they influenced me as a young artist. However at a more mature age it is desirable for an artist to establish his own style though it's not easy.

Where do you feel your work fits in the historical field of the artist's book in Russia?

As to the history of the artist's book in Russia, in my opinion, the most powerful and the brightest moment occurred in the beginning of the 20th century that is from the 1910-20s. It was a special time and the brightest "page" of the Russian avant-garde. Later, this page was pulled out from the book named "Russian Art" by the official propagandists of that time. The art of official Soviet propaganda did not wish to have such neighbour as the artist's book because it did not correspond with the official concepts of "socialist realism". But, as Michael Bulgakov wrote "manuscripts don't burn", and this pulled-out page wasn't gone and hasn't since burnt down.

The rebirth of artist's book in contemporary Russia began with Perestroika when the publishing houses collapsed and many of them stopped collaborating with artists and switched to text books or began to publish other productions which were easier to sell and didn't need artists' illustrations.

The artists then remembered this forgotten but not dead genre of the "artist's book". A lot of them made such books, but as we know, such work demands much concentration of forces and energy, and it is necessary for the book artist to love the book very much. At the same time, the artist's book is hard to sell because it is usually more expensive than other books. But I think that it is

not a commercial aim that makes an artist engaged in book art. That is why there are now very few artists who seriously work in this field in Russia.

Having interviewed artists in Poland recently, we realised that many of them made books in the way they did because they could not buy paper, or were not allowed to publish books. Have you had similar constraints? Or was that before you made books?

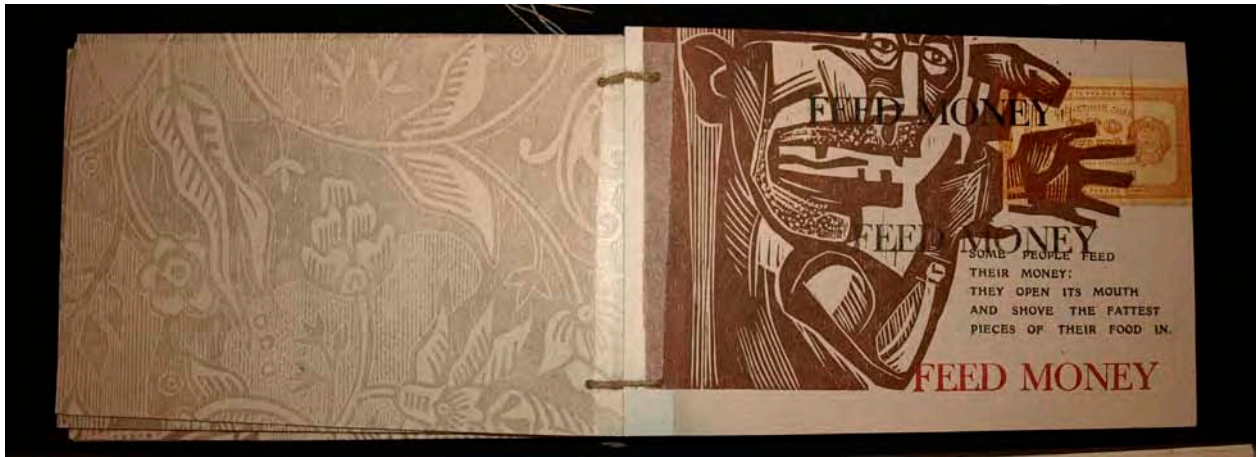
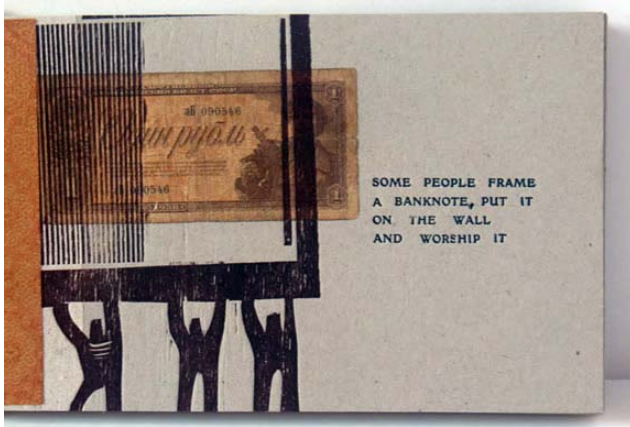
Yes really, here in Russia we have a much more limited choice of paper, than for example in England or in Germany. Although it is not necessarily because of this shortage that I make paper for my own books. For me, papermaking is some kind of meditation. It is the philosophical comprehension of how the end of an old life means a birth of a new one. I don't throw out paper waste. I process it and try to give new life to old things. I don't make my own paper for all of my books, only for those where it is necessary and in accordance with the general idea of the book.

Can you tell me anything about other artists making books in the Soviet Union, are there many? Do you have any kind of societies? You mentioned that there are no specialist artist's book fairs, but are there exhibitions?

If speaking about different book artists of the USSR; that period of 19th - 20th century of our book history was bright, and full of interesting names: Vladimir Lebedev (1891- 1967), Vladimir Favorsky (1886-1964) whom I already mentioned, Yury Vasnetsov (1900-1973) and many others. By the way, my father in those years was engaged in book illustration. Perhaps during my childhood I also absorbed his love for the book. I could watch my father making books, and I was seeing the whole of this process. But all the artists of that time were making books by traditional means (in cooperation with publishing houses where books were published in of millions of copies.)

Those years there was only "Samizdat" (books published illegally). But as a rule these were mainly textbooks by forbidden authors. Editioning and distribution of such literature was not only illegal, it was dangerous; if you were caught in this activity, it could mean that you were deprived of citizenship and banished from the USSR. A typical example of this was Alexander Solzhenitsyn and not just him, many writers were living as emigrés until Perestroika. But if we speak about artists' books as a genre, I don't know any examples of such books during that period.

In Russia there are no specialist artist's book fairs or exhibitions at all; when it is represented as a genre it is only as small section in the context of the general book market (as at Frankfurt book fair).



Above and right: *MONEYRIA* Dmitry Sayenko, 2004.
 11 cardboard pages with woodcuts and English text,
 with Russian banknotes from 1922-1948.
 Edition of 6 copies. 20 x 10 cm.
 Photographs Tom Sowden and Dmitry Sayenko



You say there are few artists who work with the book in Russia, so do artists in general know about books, is it an accepted artform? Or are you working in isolation?

Here I would like to define precisely the position that divides the concepts of “book artist as illustrator” and “book artist in the artist’s book field”. When I said that there are not enough artists I mean artists who work in the artist’s book field. And as to isolation it is true that I don’t live on a desert island and I cannot work in full isolation despite the fact that creativity by nature is in the field of loneliness. I cooperate with people who help me to make a quality product. They are translators (into English or German) they are bookbinders etc. In Germany I have some constant partners, and with them I do different books, but in this case I’m there as an illustrator and the curator of the overall book project. But the texts, design, cover, binding etc. are done by other people.

A writer, an artist, a composer – none of them work publicly. They show their creations to the public later, and as the process of creation is rather specific and demands concentration, therefore the process is a lonely one.

Are there people in Russia who collect your books? Are there any places you can sell them in Russia or are all of your contacts outside of the country?

We have no tradition of mass collecting in comparison with the rest of Europe. Certainly, in Russia there are a lot of collectors and admirers of certain genres of the fine arts. I’m not an exception. I have my circle of admirers too. The first collectors of mine were Russian. Foreign admirers appeared much later.

As to specialist shops with artists’ books we have none. All of my commercial contacts are through a principle of “Gypsy mail” (one collector acquires for his collection, other one to asks him to introduce him to artist, later the second collector acquires something for his collection, and so on). There are galleries that try to represent artists and to sell their books but we haven’t got the market. If you compare the general interest to books with painting or antiques, the book market is very insignificant. That’s why Russian artists who work in this genre are more well-known outside of Russia.

How important is it for you to use text? You work with the texts of writers (Alexander Pushkin, Daniel Harms and Marina Tzvetayeva) - How do you select them?

And, as you have recently published a book with your own text (The Tobacco Novels), do you feel this is something you will do more of in future?

When I choose the text I don’t have any preferences. The main criterion is that the text appeals to me, that I felt in it power which becomes subsequently for me an impulse for creating a book. That’s why I started to write my own texts and to think about books with my texts in them. In this case the combining of text and image by one author is very attractive for me. In this case I can think about the style of both the text and images simultaneously.

What does the term ‘artist’s book’ mean to you? If you had to - how would you describe it?

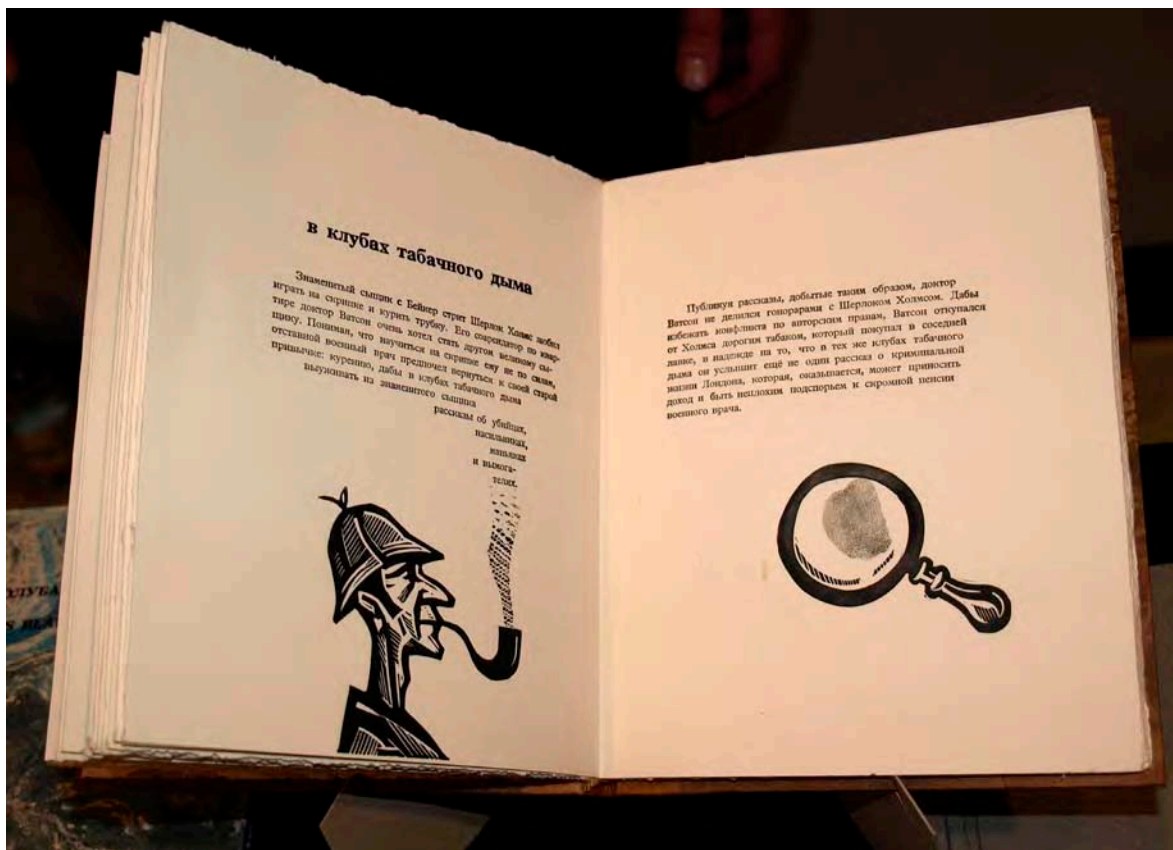
Well, as a concept rather vaguely. However I think I can divide this genre into some definite concepts:

1. The book as the result of activity of a writer as the author of texts and an artist as the illustrator.
2. The book in which an artist creates the general design and sometimes writes the texts. As a rule such books are made digitally and printed on home printers.
3. The book as “art object” (the artist creates certain a artspace in the framework of the book). Here we have the right to experiment as necessary. Materials which are used in these books are various - from classical (cardboard, paper, fabric) to modern (plastic, polythene, metal etc). Often in book objects artists use sculpture, small multiples etc. Such book must not be on a bookshelf but an exhibition podium.
4. The rare limited book. Here the artist is only the creator of illustrations. The print of these illustrations, the cover, the binding etc is done by other people. It is a product of collective creativity.

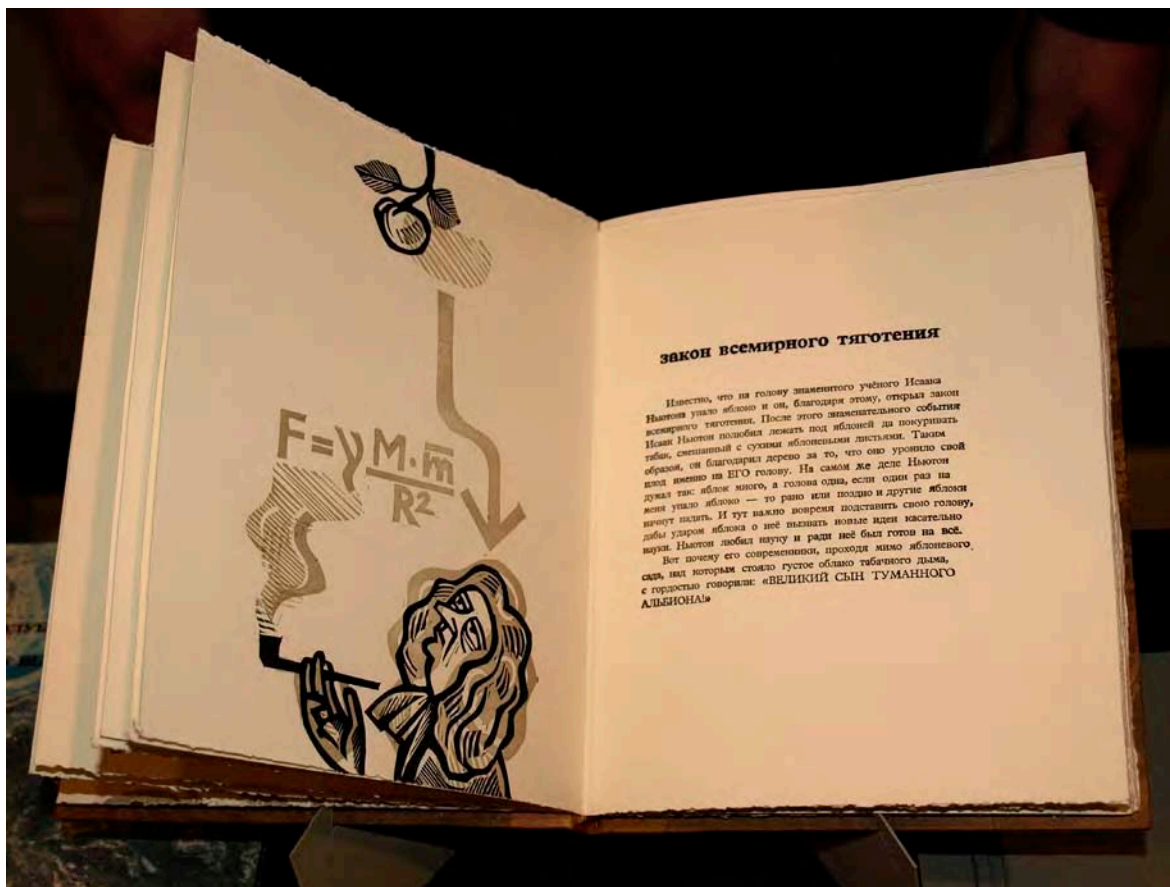
Concerning my own books I call them: “primeval books” it means that I try not to use new technologies and on the contrary I prefer the archaic ways of making books, but it concerns only the techniques and the method of creation. It is as beautiful and covetous as ancient cars or vinyl gramophones. It is the aesthetics of the past and consequently such aesthetics have their charms. As regards the fine art side, I should say that here I employ all the recent achievements of contemporary book graphics.

Were you taught about artists’ books in art school?

Tutors have started talking now about how necessary it is to teach students about artists’ books. Many people in Russia (even professionals) are still surprised to see books made in this way. As to my personal knowledge I can tell you with all certainty: everything that I am able to do with the book is thanks to my father. It doesn’t mean that



The Tobacco Novels Dmitry Sayenko, 2008. Published in English and Russian versions of 8 numbered copies each. 32 pages, images: woodcut and linocut, text: letterpress, Plantin 18 Bold on paper handmade by the artist. Bound with a leather spine, housed in a handmade slipcase. 21.5 x 30 cm. Photographs Tom Sowden.



at school I was taught nothing about books, more that the quantity was not enough for thorough study, and that what is taught at school is rather superficial - only general concepts of the book, illustration and information on graphic techniques, that is the knowledge I gained at art school. I am currently in the process of introducing the study of the artist's book as a separate field in education and research at our school.

You say that after Perestroika, that publishing houses stopped collaborating with artists as it was easier to sell books without illustrations: Before Perestroika was it easier to sell books with illustrations? Were these only official social realist books that were part of the approved system - and were artists paid to illustrate these works by the publishing houses?

In answer to the first part of your question - no, it is not easier to sell, but easier to make; the production costs of an edition without illustrations is much cheaper. That's why publishers stopped cooperating with artists, as they tried to reduce all expenses to a minimum. They also saved on paper choice, quality and so forth, and this is reflected in the appearance of the books that we see on the bookshelves in our shops. Over the last 15 years in St. Petersburg, ten faculties have appeared at institutes to train book artists, but the basis of these new faculties is not art, it is money. Education has rapidly become fee-paying, and the selection criteria has sharply decreased - because the basic criterion now is the student's ability to pay for his or her education (I teach and I see that the potential levels of students are very different). So, today they are students, but in the future they will be book artists, and I think we can all understand the implications of the *results* of such practice.

The second part of your question: Pre-Perestroika the Soviet system differed very much from the system which has replaced it living under capitalist laws.

Before Perestroika and capitalism, all publishing houses had subsidies from the state. They did not think of any monetary outlay at all, they just gave a general estimate for the finished edition.

For example, when my father took an order for book illustrations he knew in advance that the work would consist of:

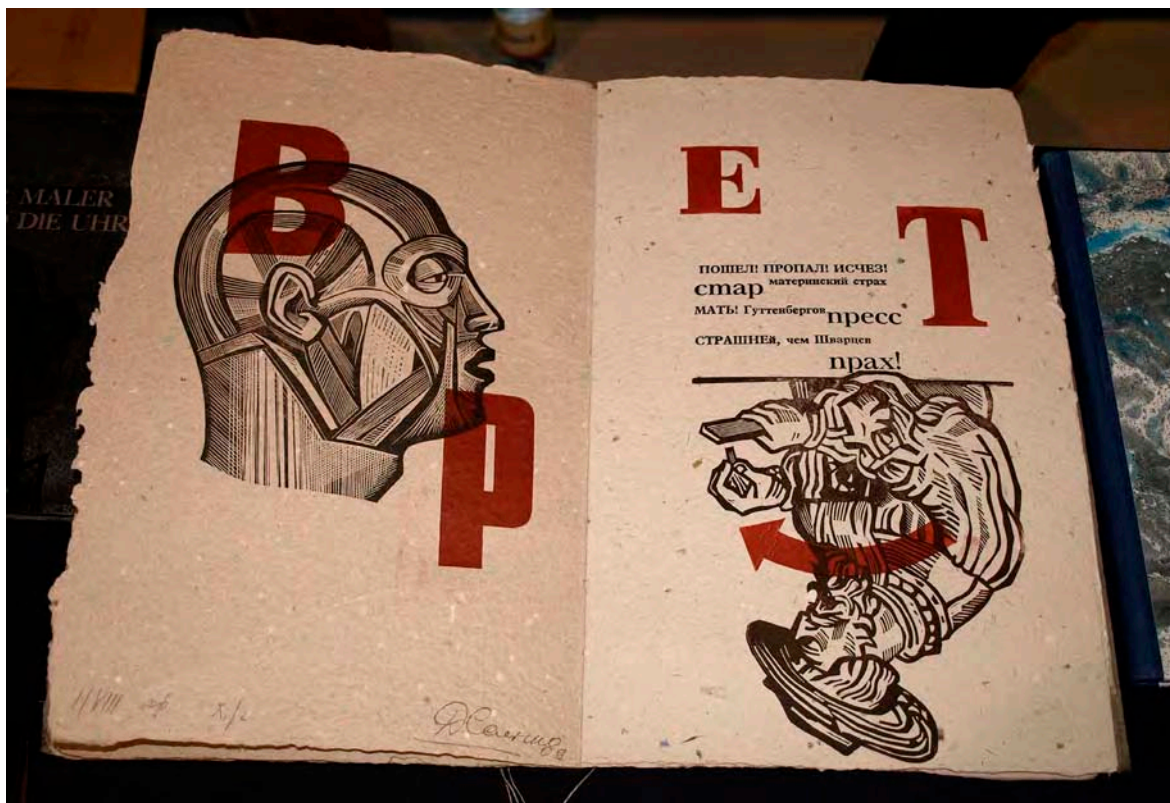
1. The cover (firm or soft, as indicated in the contract)
2. A quantity of large or small illustrations etc. He knew that this work will cost, for example 1500 roubles (which, by the way was considerable money at that time - in comparison, the average salary of a well-qualified worker was 200 roubles) In other words, if an artist illustrated two books in year, then they could live quite comfortably for that year. So not everything in the Soviet system worked so badly, there were also positive sides to that life.

Another thing that artist had no choice in, was the author whose work they would illustrate. There was a general plan of editions to be published during any given year. But, as a rule, artists of that time would illustrate contemporary writers. The illustration of classical literature was a great pleasure, and for a book artist it was a privilege. Thanks to the guardianship of the Soviet system we have a good vocational school which became a basis for Soviet book art (since the 1930s). The downfall of the Soviet system has actually broken the life of all creative professions. The new system did not do social orders or, better to say, forgot that many people previously employed for art remained without work. The Soviet system understood that the ideology is necessary - and that ideology is created by people who make art.

Today, publishers only involve artists who ask for low royalties such as students and amateurs; professional and aesthetic considerations are not part of their selection process. The main thing is that it is cheap. In my opinion it is a vicious psychology because today becomes tomorrow's history. And certainly it would not be desirable that about our time is spoken about in the future as the time of the decline of the book, despite the ocean of books which we see now in the larger bookshops. But this style (of magazines and cartoons) for me is alien, so I try to create a certain alternative in my own work, as these are my books and it is my personal point of view.

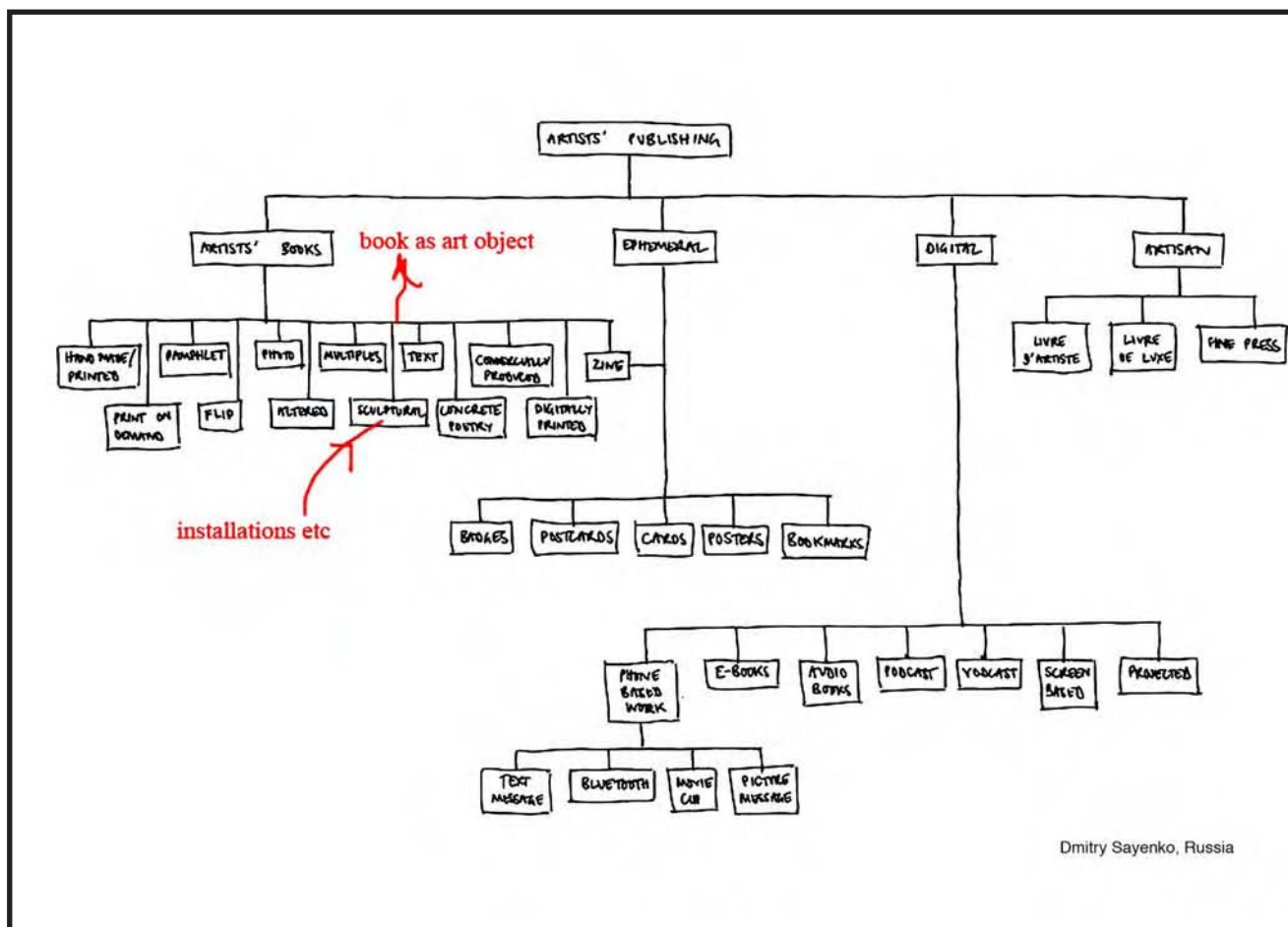
You also say that you enjoy not using new technologies because you see your books as primeval, you obviously care about the craft of the book and the aesthetics of production. So, how do you feel about new technologies and the fact that artists are publishing using the Internet and mobile phones - do you think these are valid means for artists to produce books?

I honestly watch the development of new technologies with pleasure. The books made in these ways are no less interesting for me than those produced by traditional means. But for my own aesthetic I prefer archaic methods. Probably it is due to my personal propensity for classics. For example I love to read magazines published in 18th and 19th centuries. It's the stylistics of the word formations and other culture, other aesthetics. It's possible to compare this with people striving to escape from the noise of big cities and to lodge somewhere in solitude where there are no signs of "civilisation". It's a certain protest against the glamour and gloss of contemporary mass culture. But I'm not revolutionary, I'm an artist and prefer to do what I love. For me it's a sign of my *internal freedom*.



Readers of Newspapers Dmitry Sayenko, 2009.

Text by Marina Tzvetaeva, images by Dmitry Sayenko. Edition of 8, 16 pages with woodcut images paper handmade by the artist incorporating old newspapers. Russian text: Plantin 18 Bold, leather spine, housed in a handmade slipcase. 25 x 40 cm. Photograph Tom Sowden.



Dmitry Sayenko, Russia

L. Vandegrift Davala, interview with Tom Sowden

L. Vandegrift Davala - is an artist based in County Sligo, Ireland, who works across a number of disciplines. Her recent work has utilised interactive digital technologies in the production of book works.

Tom Sowden – To gain some background into your practice, could you give me a little bit of history about your work and how you arrived at the book?

L. Vandegrift Davala – I began making books in 1984. I was living in Dublin (Ireland) at the time, and frequently visited the Chester Beatty Library and Gallery of Oriental Art. I had been making monotypes and had completed a series of portraits of the head of Delores. I could feel the ‘itch’ to break through to something, but of course this is a thing you feel long before you see a way forward.

At the Chester Beatty I had just been admiring a copy of Matisse’s *Charles D’Orleans*.

The paper construction of the book and cover, typical of many French 20th century artists’ books, offered me a different way to view my work. I realised that collecting a number of the portrait works together added to the complexity of the work’s content, while the hand-held format was distinctly not architectural, as all my work had been to this point. This immediately suggested a dialogue between images (nature and human) and that lead to one of the biggest conceptual breakthroughs: the spiritual (black and white images) and sensual (colour images). The book made itself from that point on. As many of the portraits had been done on April 1st, I entitled the work *Spirit and Sense of an April Fool*. The letterpress printing on the binding and colophon was the first of three works completed in collaboration with the master printer, Peter Gleason, at Killarney Print.

So, this first experience succeeded because this medium enabled me to combine things and processes that I loved: the monotype and calligraphic brush work, letterpress, gilding, construction of objects, revealing simple yet complex imagery, the dialogue between the sensual and spiritual, architectural versus hand-held.

As a result of *Spirit and Sense of an April Fool*, Dr. Patricia Donlon (who was then a curator at The Chester Beatty), invited me to become a ‘reader’ at the Library. I wanted to see the ways in which people had interacted with books and manuscripts, talismans and sacred texts. Together we spent about six months looking through Ethiopian satchel books, Indonesian parabaiaks, Japanese accordion books, healing talismans, Korans, prayer books and much more.

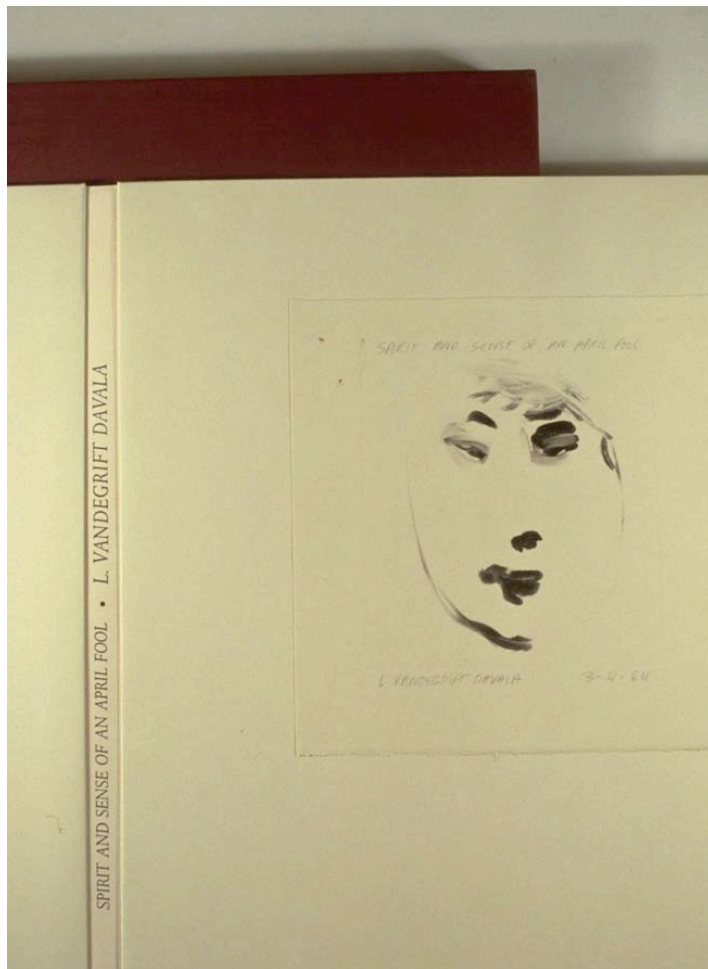
It wasn’t until 1990, when my own life became nomadic, and the experience at The Cheater Beatty had been absorbed that I began making portable art books in goatskin satchels, rough, sturdy and sacred.

Since 1984, I have arrived at many ways to make what are essentially still books, without actually setting out to do that. *The Procession: 12 Women, Movable Bookroom*, 2003, projection, and the *Incantation, Intonation, iHeal meditation Station*, 2007, delivered over a custom engraved video iPod® are more recent examples. The book format has answered a need - as it has throughout time.

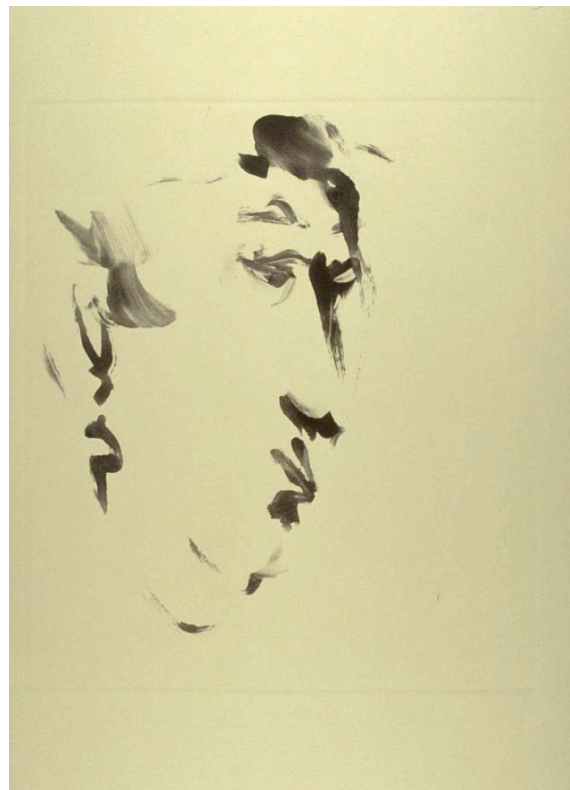
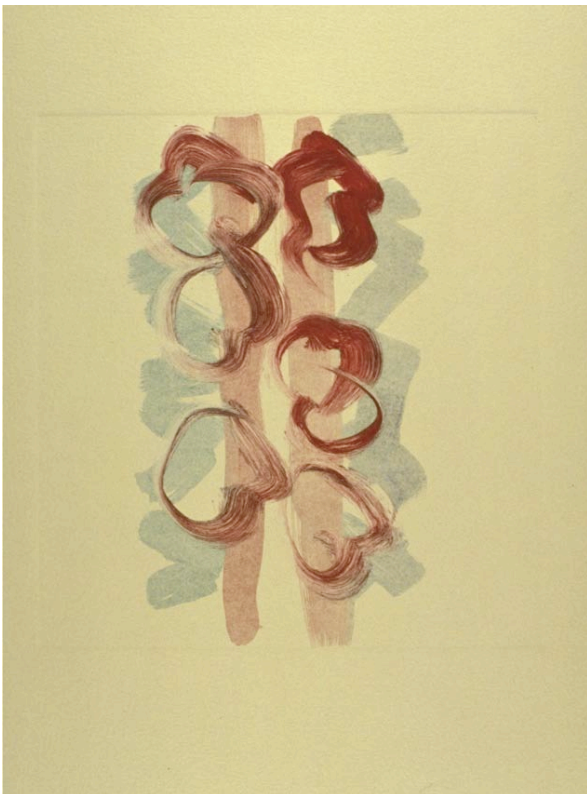


Above and below: *Re-member/ Fear Lent Wings*
L. Vandegrift Davala, 1991. Twenty-four oil monotypes and gold leaf on d’Arches, cedar covered with silk and goat binding and satchel slip case 8 ½ X 5 ½ X 1 ½ “
(Collection: Victoria & Albert Museum, London)





Above and below: *Spirit and Sense of an April Fool*
L. Vandegrift Davala, 1984. Fourteen oil monotypes, gold leaf,
letterpress on Arches, paper binding, slipcase. 23 1/2 X 19 1/2 X 1 3/4 "
(Collection: National Library of Ireland)





Procession: 12 Women: Movable Book Room, L. Vandegrift Davala, 2003. Digital model and life-sized projected work



Procession: 12 Women, L. Vandegrift Davala, 2001. Archival ink on Arches, edition of 9, 3 artist's proofs. Plexiglas slipcase, 4 1/2" high (Collection: Franklin Furnace collection, MoMA, NY)

I'm interested in how your practice developed from one of making "books in goatskin satchels, rough, sturdy and sacred" to the projections and work on an iPod®. Do you feel this was a natural progression? Are works on an iPod® now the modern portable medium, as the books you studied at the Chester Beatty Library had been in their day? Do you also feel that using new technologies allow you to retain the things that you first loved about books, in particular the sensual and the spiritual and architectural versus hand-held? Or is this less of an issue?

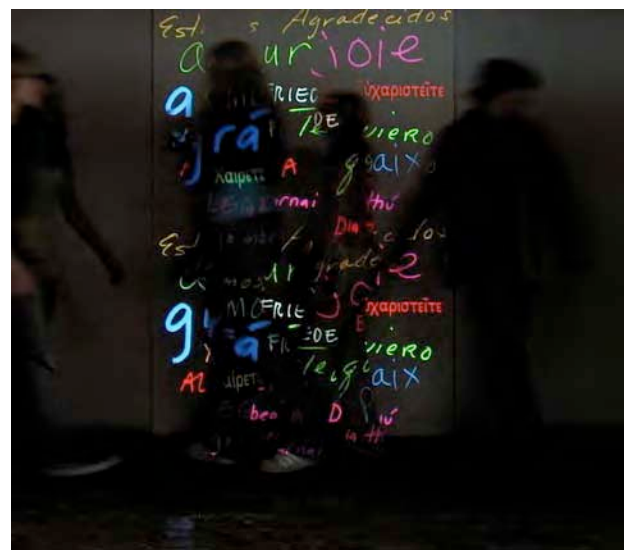
If you had told me, even 10 years ago, that I would be making any kind of art utilising digital technologies, I'd have been incredulous. But at the same time, and for more than 25 years, I was envisioning a kind of scale, and a transmission of imagery without losing integrity of mark, as well as the ability to have a more flexible relationship within architectural space; that only the use of technological solutions could provide. Needless to say, I did angst about taking the plunge.

In 1995, in addition to my work as a painter and book maker, my partner and I began AOV, an interactive media and web design firm. Over the next 5 years we designed interactive kiosks for museums, and business-to-business websites for international companies (Berman Museum of Art and Crayola.com). As my partner was the chief tech guy, this gave me a fantastic opportunity to dive into the medium, explore its potentials while utilising the artistic tools and standards I'd developed as a 'fine artist'. This was a time in which those distinctions were being re-defined, and I found I welcomed the paradigm shift. I gained access to people who could help me technically to develop imagery and prototypes and more importantly, new thinking. By the early part of this decade, I made the decision to bring these technologies into my work. My vision needed to go here, and my work as an artist would have stagnated, (regardless of my love for the precious materials and techniques of the earlier work) if I hadn't been able to also pursue these means. In 2003 I wrote:

"...authorship has been expressed in every way in which an artist can make, conduct or manage *and* transmit a mark, sound or movement. David Hockney recently argued that many painters have used optical and projection tools consistently from at least 1430 onwards (*Secret Knowledge*, Viking Studio, 2001). For anyone who has ever had a paintbrush in his or her hand and been involved in the process of representation – Hockney's discovery rings true. It's a major contribution to our understanding of what artists have done – and an indication of the inventive spirit that can continue. Those who employed optics (Van Eyck, Van der Weyden, Leonardo, Giorgione, Raphael, Holbein, Caravaggio, Vermeer, Halls, Ingres and many others) – did so secretly, for the most part, because of fears of

prejudice, misunderstanding, and devaluation of their work. Their decision to use optics was not a short cut, but a willful step closer to their subjective intentions – a step closer to their vision. My decision to use optical, digital, and projection technology is also - not a short cut – but a 'bull's eye' whose time has come.

Images that are light transmitted can 'mediate between visible and invisible realms', moving from solitary reflection to 'group entrancement'. There are a lot of factors to consider regarding the historical use of projection with regard to spiritual inference - materialising the sacred, appearing to make the absent present, immersive experiences, kinetic depth, and religion and theatre".



Incantation and Intonation/ "These Charms My Dear Charmides, are Beautiful Words" L. Vandegrift Davala, 2005. Portal light installation, threshold mounted, beautiful words in a variety of languages. Variable size.

I wasn't tired of leather, gold leaf and paper; I love them. But I needed additional tools to enable me to transmit, more completely, the vision I have always had. Need and purpose will dictate whether I use an iPod® or paper, a projection or the Internet (<http://www.dearcharmides.com>). You can see from the quote from 2003, that I was beginning to take the original ideas that always inspired my book making: portability, immersive experience, spiritual/sacred/personal transmission between 'realms', and manifesting them with the help of technology. The greater surprise for me, was finding that once again, what I was making – was a book.

As you stated, artists who employed optics did so secretly because of fears of prejudice, misunderstanding and devaluation of their work".



Above: *Incantation and Intonation/iHeal Meditation Station*, L. Vandegrift Davala, 2007. Video iPod® custom engraved with blessings, seven monotypes in oil, digitally transferred to the device and accompanied by spoken blessings in five languages.

Below: *Tuatha Dé Danann, Lords of Light And Masters of Time*, L. Vandegrift Davala, 2004

Architectural scale model for pre-fabricated installation to be assembled within a gallery space, consisting of a passage of light connected to a chamber of time, 15 x 12 x 48”.



Have you seen this as a problem as you have moved towards digitally produced books? Is it as well received and considered with the same importance as your paintings and books (in the traditional sense of the word)?

Can I also ask how you have distributed your digital work so as to reach your intended audience and has this been a problem for which you have had to adopt different models?

Finally, have you given any thought to how this work can be collected by both private collectors and institutions, especially considering the fast-paced nature of change within digital technologies and the speed at which certain platforms become obsolete?

Moving to digitally-produced work has perhaps been most welcomed and accepted in my book work. I think this has as much to do with the acceptance of experimentation within the book arts and the constant re-invention of the medium itself. The concept and very definition of the book has expanded *because we now have the technology to manifest new visions*. It was the research I did at the Chester Beatty in the 1980's that opened my view of the book as an art form. The breadth and variety in the design, construction, use and purpose of these books from the past 'illuminated' my view of the future possibilities. From the background I have already given you, you can see that this migration to technology has been a gradual process in which the new digital forms answered a subjective artistic need. I will say that the one area of resistance I have seen over these years has been regarding the use of digital technology to transmit or project figurative and non-figurative hand made marks and images (as versus filmed or photographic imagery).

This resistance is now breaking down, especially in light of the phenomenal work coming from Asia. I think, too, this is where I connect to my earlier comment about optics. It has somehow been assumed (for centuries) that artists making painted marks should not engage in any lens-based or digital manipulation of those marks. Now that the artistry and mastery of molding and shaping images, light and space using technology is becoming more widely manifest, this issue will resolve.

As regards distribution of the work, this is a bigger question. We are also in time of great change regarding the ways artists interface with society, do business, market ourselves, and maintain employment. Many of the decisions regarding the exhibition and distribution of artistic "products" have been, and continue to be affected by the progression of digital technology, and have moved beyond earlier accepted methods. The Internet was an instigator in this. The orthodox gallery system has had to

adapt, and artists are exploring more purposeful ways to be seen and do business.

I am working on making one of my works downloadable to MP3 players. I have utilised digital printing in another bookwork. I am currently working with a holographic expert to bring my most recent book concept into the free-form holographic projection that will enable it to be viewed and interacted with by viewers. Another current land art/land book project will use groups of participants (as many as 200) to participate in writing a line of poetry in light over a landscape in Ireland, filmed from the air. Some of these works are obviously projects for or in a public space, as are many of the works I presently pursue. In my experience, the aesthetic development of a project concept usually includes or 'leads to' an audience, because of the purposeful nature of this medium of the book.

As regards issues of collecting, MoMA in New York has set a precedent in collecting film, media, and technology-based art. Acceptance will grow as the technologies used in the production of works of art become more sophisticated, transparent in use, and serve the artistic intentions in the same way that any other mediums and techniques have in the past. Artists now have well over two decades of experience in writing contracts of sale for digital and conceptual works, as well as closely managing the edition sizes, intellectual property issues etc.

This knowledge, of course, should be taught at art colleges, and increasingly, it is. In general, at this point I feel that works are being considered on their merit as regards collection, and if anything it appears that we are beginning to see an increase in the public and private collection of art utilising technology. In my own experience, interest is increasing.

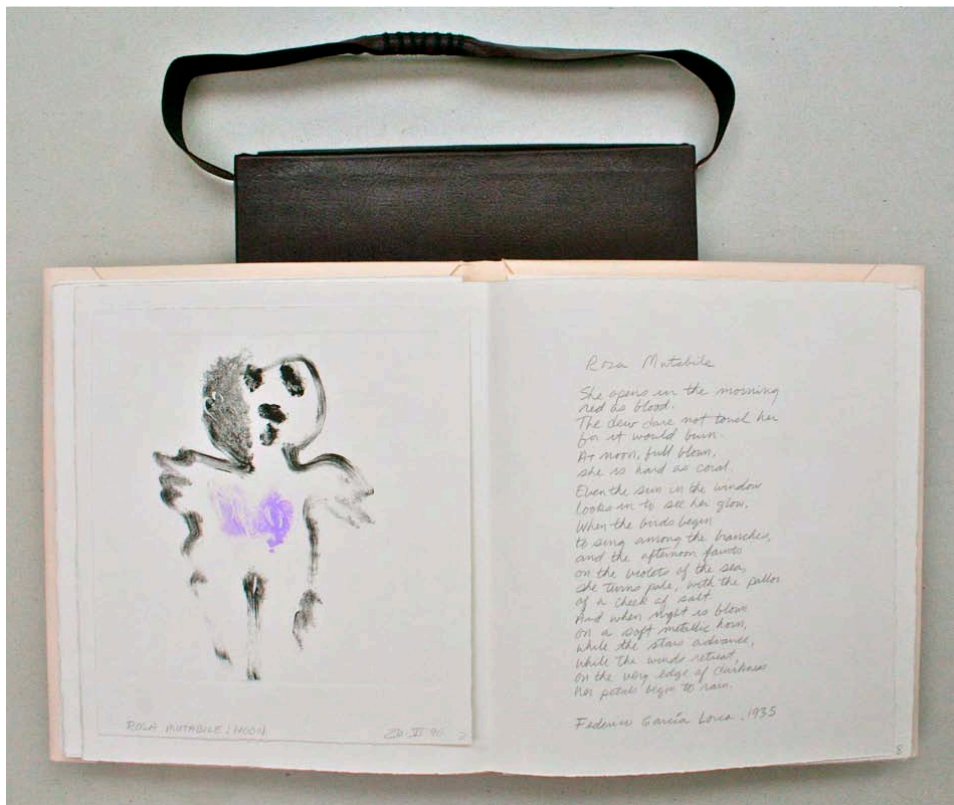
As you are at the cutting edge of utilising interactive technologies for the production of your book works (do you still title them as such or have they really become another discipline?), where do you see the work progressing?

Do you have plans for work for which you are waiting for developments in the technology or ideas for how current projects can expand?

I see these works, firstly, as a fulfillment of the *scent* of an idea, or as ways of capturing an essence. I think that all innovation comes from need. I didn't go into this space thinking that I would use this or that technology to make a book, but rather that I would do whatever I had to do to make certain ideas manifest. The work dictates the means. It has been a surprise to see that these works are actually artists' books, but I credit



Infanta Venus Records of a Heart (Rosa Mutabile) L. Vandegrift Davala, 1990-91
 Seventeen oil monotypes and handwriting on Arches, paper binding,
 goat leather satchel slipcase. 13 3/4 X 11 3/4 X 1 1/2 "



the durable, continuous and intimate relationship that humans have had with the book; and in some form we will always have it. So, yes they are books, and I think it is exciting that they are. It doesn't matter what I make them of, on some level they are always operating as book. We all see in a particular way, and clearly there is something about this group of book-like sensibilities that I keep re-visiting and maybe even re-inventing.

I'm curious to see where this develops. Yes I do have plans, and they do depend to some degree on the development of technologies. The work *Om & etc.* that will use free form holographic projection will take at least 9 months to get a working prototype. I have created many of the actual brush-made images that will inhabit the projected spaces. In some cases, such as *...for peace comes dropping slow*, the original concept has begun to expand and develop and I am working on completing the funding, and scheduling around the large number of participants. So technology, funding and logistics all become more important in these works, which can be frustrating. As an artist, you strive to get it done, get it made; make this elusive thing manifest. Eduardo Chillida, a sculptor I admire tremendously, said that "a work born a priori is born dead", and that you work from a sort of "whiff" of the idea. I have to agree with that, and my working methods in every medium have attested to that concept. There is a tremendous amount that I will not know until I have done the work, and completed it.

In conclusion, I would say that there is a tremendous amount of overlap in the disciplines utilised in the arts, media, communications and technologies. Traditional categories and labels will adapt to the genuine intentions of artists. My way of negotiating with the world around me has always begun with a paintbrush in hand, producing the calligraphic mark. The complete vision I have of an immersive experience incorporating scale and light can only happen by incorporating technology to facilitate and reveal that work.

Tom Sowden interviewed *L. Vandegrift Davala*
by email between January – March 2009
www.lvandegriftdavala.com

Possible Strategies For Exploiting Wikipedia For The Dissemination and Profiling of Artists' Books and Multiples on the Internet

Francis Elliott



Introduction

Have you seen this painting? Are you sure?
Where was it? What did the frame look like?
It is, of course, Monet's *Impression, Sunrise*.
Except it isn't.

It's a projection of a digital file of a screen grab of an RGB file, scanned from a book printed in CMYK taken from 4 metal plates created from 4 rolls of film taken from a layout page collaged with a photographic print taken from a CMYK slide taken of an oil painting. By my reckoning, it's gone through at least 8 major stages to be seen here today. In the process it's lost texture, scale, context, any accurate colour balance, and a lot of detail. And yet we all know it; this image has become an icon of early modernism, gaining gravity from such meanings as reputedly being the origin of the term Impressionism, the focus of snide remarks popularly believed to confirm the artist's revolutionary vision, and the augur of things to come. We don't need to have seen the original to understand its sign as an important staging post in modern art, as somehow relevant to our own practices.

A Working Definition of Art

I suspect that a work of art is the residue left in the imagination after you've left the room; our brain's wiring has been compared to a 2 dimensional grid, which is one reason why maps are so much easier to visualise than your local high street's shops in order, and why when I try to remember what my mother was wearing last time I saw her, I usually end up remembering what she was wearing in the last photo I saw of her. Paintings are, of course, a good way to create memorable information two dimensionally. So are photos. So is the Internet.

Towards A Working Definition of Artists' Books

I think the distinction between Artists' Books and multiples are problematic; many works hover between the two, such as Brecht's *Water Tam*, Duchamp's *Green Box*, Roth's *Literature Sausage* and Creed's *Crumpled Paper*.

I think the central theme of an artist's book is that it has a relationship, however tangential, to what we consider a book, whilst implicitly challenging its authority. By contrast, any book that implicitly accepts and exploits that authority veers toward being a livre d'artiste.

An artist's book is intended as a work in its own right and can be understood without reference to other pieces. It must also justify its form, being unable to separate its essential book-ness with its content. Unlike the livre d'artiste, it has a relationship to mass production and consumerism.

“The multiple sets up a resistance to the inevitable tide of consumerism”

“Artists' Books are books, or book like objects, over the final appearance of which an artist has had a high degree of control; where the book is intended as a work of art in itself”

(both Dr Stephen Bury)

Duchamp famously said that “one is unique, two a pair, and three are mass-produced”. I think that an artist's book has to be mass-producible, at the least. Its relationship to mass-production is central to its identity. Any work that fetishises the artist's hand veers toward the livre d'artiste, especially if that attributable authorship is central to its visceral gravity.

Documentary Possibilities

There is a well-known photograph of an exhibition by Andy Warhol at Leo Castelli gallery, New York in 1964. I wasn't there, but the photo works as a signifier of what it must have been like; each time I see one 24" flower, I feel cheated that there aren't a few more; in some ways I feel I know this show more than Sensation (18th September – 28th December 1997, Royal Academy of Art, London), say, which I did go to; without an iconic photo to act as a signifier, my memories of Sensation are far shakier than my false memories of Castelli's show of Warhol's *Flowers*.

I think that over the last fifty years, one of the defining changes in art practice has been the increased importance of the hermetically controlled environment, which has become far more important than individual works, which increasing look like beached relics that simply point at the original confluence.

From Monet's seminal sequence of Rouen Cathedral, exhibited in 1895, to Chris Ofili's *The Upper Room*, the high concept show has replaced the salon as the centre of artistic production. Artists' books have mirrored this progression; from the secondary illustrations in livre d'artistes, to the linear trajectories of monographs to the world-within-a-world contextualising of a modern artist's book.

Artists' books, as well as seminal exhibitions, stand to gain immeasurably from the possibilities of discussion, dissemination and contextualising that can be woven into essay published on the Internet. Indeed, it's only through these discussions, whether published traditionally or digitally, that any work acquires gravity.

Both media can benefit enormously from the kind of documentation available on the web.

The Spread of The Internet as Validation of Existence

If books have had the ability to dramatically increase the fame and influence of works of art in the past, then the Internet is poised to increase this communication of signs exponentially. Ever since broadband has become commonplace, the net has been able to transmit increasingly large pictorial files. Gone are the days of making a cup of tea whilst waiting for a download to happen. Whether we like it or not, students all over the world are researching every topic imaginable online; In effect, if an artwork doesn't exist online it becomes invisible, a bit like if a piece of music has never been recorded it ceases to exist. In my own practice, every time I apply for a group show, or exhibit, or sell a piece, my website and other presences on the web become central to my success or otherwise.

In effect, the Internet has become the new literacy.

One of the classic problems with the Internet has always been that a URL (uniform resource locator) is essentially no more than a phone number; if you don't know the exact address, you can't access the page you're looking for. This has meant that the few sites that catch the popular imagination, such as Google, have grown in importance exponentially, whilst similar sites, such as Alta Vista, diminish into insignificance. You can open as many art-based websites as you want, with as much public funding as you need, but the laws embedding sites into the popular imagination are as unpredictable as the laws governing why one great film sinks and another becomes iconic; sites that your mother has heard of are rare but invaluable: Amazon, Google, eBay.

One such site is Wikipedia.

About Wikipedia

Wikipedia is an online encyclopaedia, set up by Jimmy Wales and Larry Sanger in 2001. An experimental Hive Mind, to collect and collate as many viewpoints as possible, from anyone with access to a computer attached to a modem.

Web 2.0

Wikipedia is one of the most successful examples of 'web 2.0', a term coined by Tim O'Reilly in 2005 to describe the increasingly democratic interplay between users, encouraging dialogue and participation in the web rather than simply downloading authoritative texts, say. Wikipedia can be edited by absolutely anyone (unless they have been blocked). Anyone who logs in can write a new page. It is now, apparently, the world's largest encyclopaedia. Since anyone can edit it at any time, it is constantly changing, and has challenged the traditional notion of the encyclopaedia as authoritative, replacing it with a model that is more like a continual dialogue.

One of the key weaknesses of Wikipedia at the moment is its lack of articles on modern art. There are a number of reasons for this; copyright issues, low-visibility of contemporary art within the mainstream culture, lack of a historical narrative to frame a grid that is baffling in the extreme to all of us, wherever we come at it from.

A few years ago, when I started looking at Wikipedia seriously; there were no decent discographies of bands, these have now proliferated due to becoming a Wikiproject, and there are full-blown discographies on all sorts of musicians in all sorts of categories. It struck me that it should be possible to do the same with artists' books and multiples.

My Intention

My basic idea, then, is simply to write a series of articles on artists' books, artists' multiples and exhibitions. Firstly, attempt a workable definition that sets up a contrast with livres d'artistes, secondly choose a series of works that exemplify the genre. Thirdly, cross-reference them to create a network that can act as a beginner's course as well as an archive to help research.

In my experience, few of us are aware of many other artists' books and multiples, and there are few accepted iconic examples. In a reversal of post-modern orthodoxy, I think that we need to begin defining a workable canon.

It remains sufficiently difficult to access artists' books in this country, that I have never held a copy of *Twenty-six Gasoline Stations*, for example. And yet the history of artists' books in the second half of the 20th century is central to modern art; Manzoni's *Artist's Shit*, Weiner's *Statements*, Warhol's *Index*, Brecht's *Water Yam*, as well as notable examples by Hirst, Klein, Emin, Koons etc.

The approach to the book is itself a defining feature of each artist, and many movements, such as pop, conceptual art and post modernism, are defined by their approach to mass-production, especially to the printing process. Compare Anselm Kiefer's huge lead books, literally essays in heavy metal - to Warhol's playful use of pop-up paper aeroplanes and balloons in his self-mythologising *Index*.

A Brief How To Guide

To make a page, you need:

- 1/ To create a username on Wikipedia by pressing the log in/create account button top left.
- 2/ You have to wait 4 days before you can upload an image.
- 3/ Try out html possibilities in the sandbox, in effect, a giant blackboard that is constantly wiped clean every 12 hours.
- 4/ In your own account, you will find a user page in which you can fine-tune an article of your choice
- 5/ To create a page - search for the page of your choice, making sure that there isn't a page of that name already. The search engine Wikipedia uses is caps sensitive and punctuation sensitive; if no one has written that page already, then click on the create new page, copy and paste the entire article in your user page, and then press save. Bingo!!!
- 6/ To add pictures, you have to upload the image into Wikipedia before you can link the thumbnail to your account. If you own copyright, or it is an image in the public domain, then it can be uploaded into Wikipedia commons. If you are using a copyrighted image, then it has to be defended as a free-use rationale, citing that the image is low res, where it has come from, which article it is being used for, why it can't be replaced with an image in the public domain, why it is necessary to illustrate the article in question, and with a code defining it's provenance. These can be found within the help section under non-free content.
- 7/ Once you have created a page, you should cross reference it with links from other pages. You can also use categories at the bottom of the page. I suggest the use of the 'Artist's Books and Multiples' category.
- 8/ If you have a really great idea for a project, you can pin it up in ongoing projects, with a brief statement of intent, and see if any other Wikipedians take an interest. I propose to start one that any interested parties can add to.

My Own Pages On Wikipedia

So far, I have created a few pages*, for example; Piero Manzoni's *Linee*; Yves Klein's *Yves Peintures* and Kurt Schwitters' *An Anna Blume*.

Questions that have come up include:

- 1/ Whether to use English or original language in the descriptions
- 2/ How to justify illustrations
- 3/ How to get over the idea that someone can trash your writing
- 4/ How to get over the idea that you might trash other people's writing
- 5/ Learning how to speak the language
- 6/ Deciding if you should speak the language

My Extremely Incomplete List Of Seminal Bookworks & Multiples

- Jazz / Matisse 1947
Yves Peintures / Yves Klein 1954
Linee / Manzoni 1959
Bodies Of Air / Manzoni 1960
Twenty-six Gasoline Stations / Ruscha 1962
Daily Mail / Dieter Roth 1962
Water Yam / Brecht 1963
Statements / Weiner 1968
Laair / Bruce Nauman 1970
Reason/ Kozlowski 1972
Flash / Warhol 1968
Literature Sausage / Dieter Roth
Lost Day / Gilbert and George
Concorde / Wolfgang Tillmans
Yahoo / Paul McCarthy
Die-Cut Plug Wiring Diagram Book / Mark Pawson
Work No. 88: A sheet of A4 paper crumpled into a ball / Martin Creed

Cas Serafin's List

- Details Of Depression / Tracey Emin
World View / Emma Kaye
Will happiness find me? / Peter Fischli and David Weiss
Love Death of a Lady / Tal R
Annette Messager
On Karawa
Sophie Calle

(I think that I have only seen 4 of these, let alone held them.)

Stephen Bury's List

- Ruscha 'Twentysix gasoline stations', 1963
Boltanski 'Recherche et presentation de tout ce qui reste de mon enfance', 1969
Broodthaers 'A Voyage on the North Sea', 1974
Michael Snow 'Cover to cover', 1975
Susan Hiller 'Rough sea', 1976
Maciunas 'Flux paper events', 1976
LeWitt 'Autobiography', 1980
Yoko Terauchi 'Ebb & Flow', 1988
Simon Patterson 'Rex Reason', 1994 (paper ed. only !)
Fiona Banner 'The Nam', 1997

Anyone who wants to add these lists, or to change it in some way on Wikipedia, please do...

Intentions and Consequences

The basic aim of mine is to move the emphasis from the artist to the artwork - to discuss exhibitions as important vectors rather than as collections of individual works, for instance, and to have what little I know about artists' books challenged, augmented and filled in between the holes, by other like-minded enthusiasts.

I believe that the artist's book is central to the continued development of modern art, and that the Internet can go some way in addressing its main weakness; its discrete presence and individualised dialogue with a single viewer. Both are mirrored in the dialogue between the viewer and the viewed on web 2.0 sites such as Wikipedia.

Francis Elliott

London-based / space rockets / mass production / 'you think that you have come here to judge us, but really we have come here to judge you' / Foundry imprint / Bristol / 1994 / ICA mid 60s / 'angle of intent' / genericDamienhirst / Cas Serafin / Maurice Wyckaert / Writes stuff / watercress and Sun Ra
www.foundrypress.co.uk

This essay was first presented by Francis Elliott for the project's Seminar 1: *How are artists using and investigating new media for publishing? Where are we going with this? Where will the books end up?*

University of the West of England, Bristol
Thursday 8th May 2008
www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/seminar08.htm

See also: *NPOV* - Following on from her *Blue Notebook* article about the artists book page on Wikipedia (*Who cares where the apostrophe goes?*), her 2008 lecture - *Wikipedia the Oceanic Page*, and also Francis Elliott's discussion of Wikipedia, Emily Artinian took a closer look at how the artist's book pages on this collaborative encyclopedia have evolved. This was a presentation at our conference for this project which can be read or listened to at: www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/contrad09/artinian.htm

There was specific consideration of the site's Neutral Point of View (NPOV) rule, the widespread phenomenon of wikivandalism, and the ways in which some instances of this may constitute artist's book activity. The talk included a live intervention with audience participation - They brought their digital spray paint.

*Some of Francis Elliott's pages on Wikipedia:

Artist's books and multiples (category page)
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Artist's_books_and_multiples

Twentysix Gasoline Stations (Ed Ruscha)
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twentysix_Gasoline_Stations

Zone de Sensibilité Picturale Immatérielle (Yves Klein)
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zone_de_Sensibilité_Picturale_Immatérielle

Dimanche (Klein again)
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dimanche>

Linee (a multiple by Manzoni)
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linee>

Tango With Cows: Ferro-Concrete Poems (Vasily Kamensky)
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tango_With_Cows

Spice Chess (Takako Saito)
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spice_Chess

Die-Cut Plug Wiring Diagram Book (Mark Pawson)
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Die-Cut_Plug_Wiring_Diagram_Book

Russian Ballet (David Bomberg)
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Ballet_\(book\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Ballet_(book))

George Maciunas
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Maciunas

Dieter Roth
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dieter_Roth

See Francis Elliott's user page for his work to date and further planned contributions at:
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Franciselliott>

Interview with Sally Alatalo, artist and founder of Sara Ranchouse Publishing, at her studio in Chicago on Tuesday 4th November 2008 by Sarah Bodman and Tom Sowden

Sarah Bodman - How did you get started?

Sally Alatalo - I should show you my very first book that I made when I was a child. I think I started because I loved to read. This is one that I made for my mother [shows an early photograph album, see left]. It was before I'd read any books about how to make books, but I must have read something somewhere because it's got sewing in it. I don't remember having made it but... I think there were more photographs at some point.

Tom Sowden - How old were you when you made this?

SA - Oh I must have been under 9, 8 or 9. Oh, here there's a photograph of me, so I must have been that old. What is that? Maybe 8?

SB - That's just so well made

TS - It is incredible, especially at 8 or 9.

SA - It must be some kind of chain stitch, I hesitate to take it apart. But obviously they are materials that I had at hand, because I was really quite good at sewing, I made all of my own clothing often out of other clothes, like my dad's old shirts and things, and this is definitely a fabric that had been used for clothing, you know a cut off - salvaged. It's just scrap that I had around, and then this is Christmas paper, and this too, I don't remember even where I got the materials from, but I was re-using, and this has been a theme - I'm only thinking about this now - but this has been a theme that's resurfaced again and again in my works, to re-use things.

SB - You can see that with all of the fabrics in here.

SA - This has become quite important to me and I consider it an important part of my publishing production, and a really important part of my ethic. Which is to take the material that is left over from other projects and to use it, and of course I've done this with books. For the book fair [NY Art Book Fair] everybody had these bags produced in China to print things on, to sell book bags, and I thought well I'm going to make my own bags because I don't need to order up from China when I've got all this extra material. So my assistants and I started making these. And they're all different, you know, we're using different garnishes.

SB - They're beautiful!

SA - This is a panel from a jacket and the belt from a jacket, so we're working on these. It's not an issue of commerce it's an issue of use - it's a different kind of economy; it's an economy of recycling. I've done a lot of projects with romance novels, as material as well as texts, and I made this jacket that's insulated with romance novels. It becomes quite cold in here in winter-time and I think part of it is about that. Should I wear it?

TS/SB - Yes.

SA - (Puts jacket on) I wore it to an opening. Since we're going this material route I'm going to show you some projects that you might not be as familiar with, that have



Sally Alatalo's *Book Jacket*, insulated with romance novels.

to do with material and I just have to grab some folders.

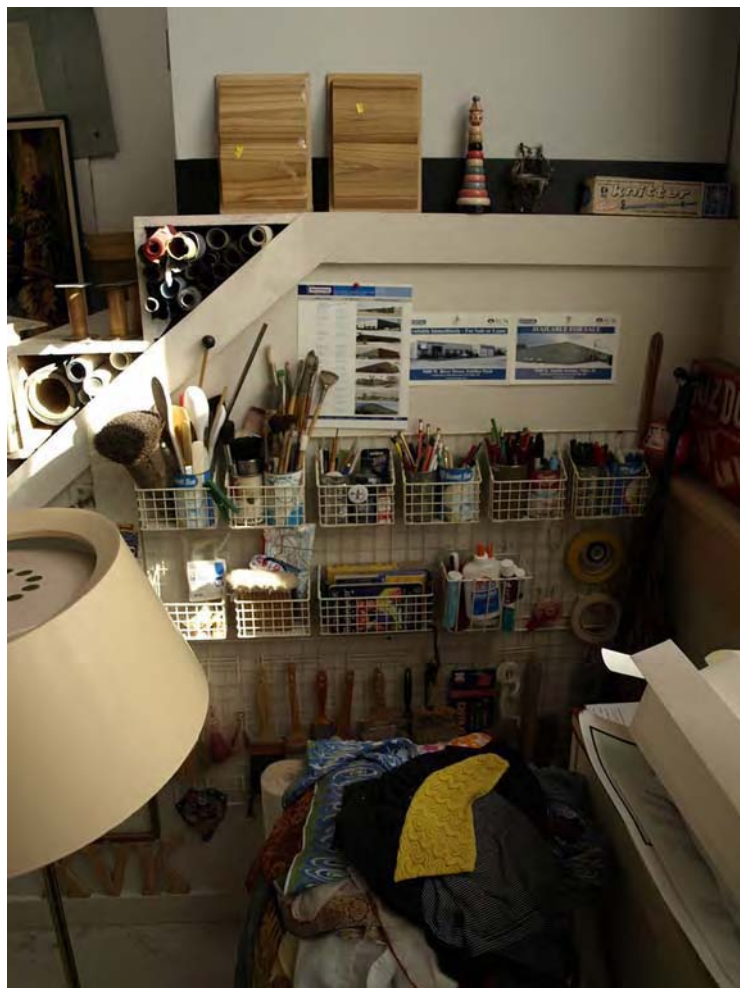
TS - Can I take some pictures of your photo album?

SA - Of course. The world will know! Make sure that you label it 'made as a child'.

SA - So this, with the romance as the material - I'd been doing genre fiction but I hadn't yet done a romance, I'd only done Westerns and detective stories. Karen Reimer, an artist and co-curator, assumed that I'd also done romance, and asked me to participate in a show called *What's Love Got To Do With It*, which was a show about romantic love. I said "well I haven't actually done a romance novel yet but I have another idea for a project", and the project was this rather minimal piece, where I built a wall on top of an existing gallery wall, and then I insulated it with romance novels. I called the piece *Keep Me Warm*. So you couldn't see the romance novels, and there was an element of trust that they were actually there - they were - but there was a label that said the title and that said 'dry wall, wood, 1293 romance novels', so that people, if they read the label, would become aware that it was insulated.



Sally Alatalo's first book, a photograph album, made at around the age of 9.



Sally Alatalo's studio.

SB - And were they shredded or just packed?

SA - No, they were packed. And so I have all those white boxes at the end there [indicating boxes at the far end of the hall]; all full of romance novels.

Let me show you a book that came out of that [walks away and brings back copies of *a rearranged affair* by Anita M-28, one of Sally's pseudonyms]. I'm thinking of doing another edition of these, because it's quite limited as it's made out of material. I don't know if you're familiar with this book? It's a series of romance novels that all have the same number of pages, and I rearranged them [and re-bound them] so each page is from a different book, but they're still in sequential order. So that came out of having the material of the books and wanting to do something with them. They're actually quite coherent, despite the fact that the characters change.

I think they're quite beautiful in that, as much as you try, you can't make them all the same. I've learned that as a publisher, despite my efforts to make things look uniform and machine made, you can't. Even machines aren't



a rearranged affair by Anita M-28 (Sally Alatalo)

perfect, which is very nice. Paper's really a breathing thing.

TS - Can I have a look? So each one of these is unique?

SA - And I've numbered them, which is unusual for me. There are 188.

TS - So two pages from each.

SA - Yes, one sheet, recto and verso. I did it twice, because I thought it made a certain kind of sense for the edition size to match the number of pages of a typical novel in the original series.

SB - So how many books did you use?

SA - It was 188 books, because I did it twice.

TS - Can you really read it? Does it make sense?

SA - Yeah, because the writers are given the form, so the climax occurs around the same page. I have performed these. They're funny because, you have to think about it a little bit, the story stays the same though the characters and the places change, and so suddenly you go from the Australian outback into maybe 19th century France, so they're really quite funny to perform, if you get the right points. There was one that had [pages from] one book that had been burned, which is quite a dramatic event.

TS - What, all the way through?

SA - Yeah, each page. You see that's page 165.

SB - Do you think somebody fell asleep by the fire or something?

SA - Yeah, or with a cigarette or something. And so, I love those kinds of events that transgress all of the edition.

TS - And is the burn mark on every single page from that book?

SA - More or less, but again since I did this twice it's not in every book, it's in half of the books. Here it is in this one. It looks like it doesn't go from the very front. These are the only three I have.

SB - Until you do it again.

SA - Yeah, but I'll do a different cover, because people like that. So, I've done several projects that have to do with these book collections that I've accrued, and the next one that came after that was a piece called *Keep Me Warm Wallpaper*. This was in Minnesota at Carleton College, and it was a 50' wide installation of repeat-pattern wallpaper. The rolls themselves were 9' long and 20" wide. It is a repeat pattern of romance novels. I also decorated the gallery with chintz fabric and curtains. It's about the idea of the romance novel being not just psychologically insulating, but physically as well.

So they're actually screenprinted onto long rolls of paper. Then I did another one called *Pink Romance*, for which I lined up all the books that had pink spines.

SB - Yes, they're related. Around the book.

SA - The first wallpaper I did was not a picture of books but was a reference to Charlotte Perkins Gilman's novella, *The Yellow Wallpaper*. I did it as part of a series called *Duz*, and it was a roll of wallpaper.



Some of Sally Alatalo's Wallpaper works in her studio.



Pink Romance installation, Sally Alatalo

So they're all kind of mixed up between pictures of books, literary references, printed multiples that I'm distributing like books.

TS - But all still based around the book.

SA - Yes. This was actually sold, this pink wallpaper, to a client on the Gold Coast here. She had me do her

powder room! Then I gave her some books to have, so people can read while they're on the loo.

SB - Fantastic.

SA - And this one, I did a lot of these for people. This was another [wallpaper] called *Worn Embraces*, and it's all spines that have embraces. I'm very proud of the skill I gained installing wallpaper. You see how it wraps around the electrical plate?

One woman asked me, "do you do [regular] wallpaper installations?" Would I install her wallpaper? And I said no, not unless it's wallpaper I made that you buy from me.

Anyway what I wanted to show you was that this *Pink Romance* took many different forms. In this exhibit in Minnesota with the chintz benches I did this piece that was really claustrophobic. Then there's the powder room, but then the first time I did it was just a wall in a gallery.

I don't know if you want to get the details, but just

seeing it in those different manifestations. I did those all vertical again because of the claustrophobic, impulsive collecting of romance novels. I read a couple of sociological studies of romance readers, which really influenced the ideas.

So that's how I got started. I guess there was kind of a big jump from re-using the material of the photo album to this.

SB/TS - Yes.

SA - There's a few years in there, a couple of decades in fact.

SB - But you can see it's a natural progression, can't you.

SA - With my more contemporary romance novels, that I think you're more familiar with, I'm recycling language. I really call it, in fact it is my new motto, "recycling language one word at a time". I like that it is also about recycling material. There is a lot of language out there that it is not terribly interesting, but it can be used to generate different ideas. I guess not too surprisingly, romance readers respond very positively to this work.

TS - Oh, they do?

SA - Because they are well aware of the compulsions and stereotypes of their own habit.

TS - Right.

SA - And this reiterates that. If anything I'm critiquing the publishers.

SB - Right, not taking the mickey out of people.

SA - I think that romance novels really offer quite an important diversion and distraction for many women especially, so I don't criticise that. But I do kind of want to add to that genre. I'm fascinated by that genre because there's so much work been done. There are so many readers, there are so many publications, there's so much activity - it's a huge part of our culture. I'm interested in exploring that as, in a way, to access a broader audience.

TS - Are your books available in stores that you could pick up a normal romance novel as well?

SA - They have been. Right now they're in more specialty shops, like Quimby's [Chicago], but I used to have them at Tower Records, when Tower Records existed. And Barnes and Noble, I had a contract with them, but the consignment contracts in those kinds of stores are, as you can imagine, miniscule. The people

who do them are maybe employed for two months at a time and then find something else, and it's a very tiny part of their operation. So I haven't pursued that again, but I was very happy to have infiltrated that at one time.

I don't know if you're familiar with Peter Huttinger? He curated a couple of important shows and he used to work with this project called Intermedia in Cincinnati that tried to get art work out of galleries and into more of a public space. He invited me to do readings at a book store and at a library, and I did a romance persona reading with this project and was advertised in the bookstore as 'a romance reader'.

I'll try to find that, I think that's in my box of paraphernalia. I thought that was a nice coup, though of course nobody came. There were some very kind staff at the book store who politely filled in the chairs, and a couple of artists, but the public didn't come, I was not Danielle Steel.

TS - Is that because you were an unknown?

SA - Yeah, and I had a weird name. You know my romance persona name is 'Anita M-28'?

SB/TS - Yeah.

SA - And I think I might have just been billed as M-28, it doesn't sound good.

SB - Why is it Anita M-28?

SA - The formula for creating your romance author pseudonym is that your own middle name becomes your first, and the street you grew up in is your second. And so I grew up up on a highway, so it's Anita M-28. That's a great party game. And your porn star is your first pet's name followed by your street name.

TS - Ah, we do it as mother's maiden name.

SA - And Sara Ranchouse, I don't know if I described the name? It derives from the fact Sally's a nickname for Sara. Sally is a diminutive form of Sara, like Nicky for Nicola. It also means Princess, but small princess. Then my last name is Alatalo, which is a Finnish name. Talo means house and Finns were named for their house historically, which is about the same as being named for your family, because families stayed in the same house. So my house that I'm named for was the lower house, Ala means lower. That was the house at the bottom of the hill - and it's where all the farm hands would stay. So it's kind of the bunk house. So I use Ranchouse as kind of an American translation of that. It's kind of

the American dream home, and it's a nice place to put books, good library spaces.

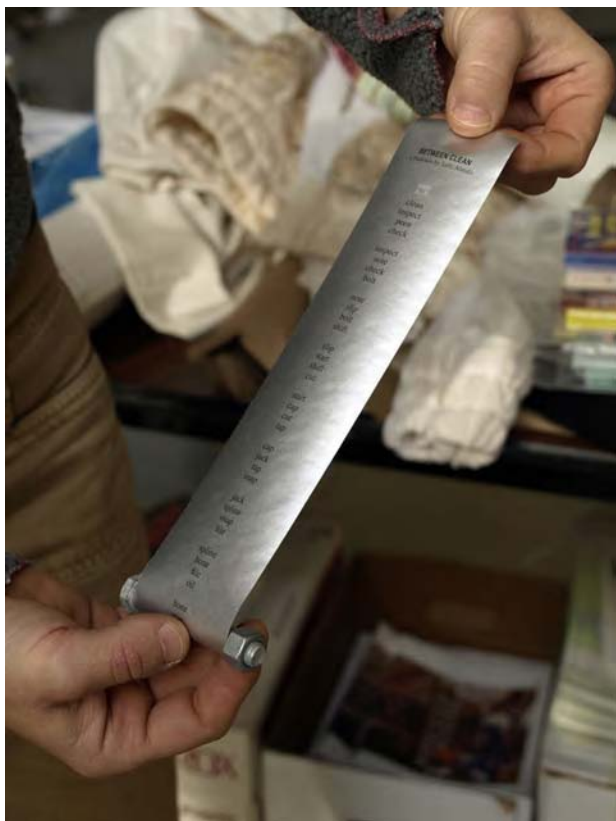
I'll show you another series. I'm intending to work in series, I'm quite interested in approaching publishing somewhat from a business perspective, even though business bores me to tears. I think that's why I attack the business model as it plays to a project. So as you probably know I've done things like book signings as performance.

SB - Yes.

SA - Publishing as a project has to do specifically with text. So I became quite interested in how to format texts, and this is a piece I did [shows *Between Clean*].

I inherited these car repair manuals from my father who was a mechanic, and I'm fascinated with the language, words like 'carburetor'. He was using this language in his work, and so I made these - it's a pantoum form. I made this poem, and I felt like the text really needed to be all on one page, and it's quite a long page, and I thought, well a scroll, it has to be a scroll. So the next problem was what kind of scroll, what do you scroll it onto? How big? The weight and all that, and this seemed to make sense.

I don't know if you're familiar with the pantoum form? The second and fourth line repeat as the first and third of the next stanza. Now they usually have more than one word in each line, they're usually phrases. But I'm



Between Clean, Sally Alatalo

very interested in the percussive nature of these words, and that it mirrors the mechanical work. You may have sensed this about me, but I'm hesitant to get too fussy about form, I am quite generic. So this was tough for me.

SB - It is quite a departure.

SA - But it made sense somehow, it's still quite a modest production and it's really nice to handle, it's a really nice weight.

TS - Yes, a very good weight.

SA - It's very particular that the design, the font, the size, and the length related to these silver materials that I already had in my studio. It's the longest length I could print on the equipment that I have. Again it is very intimate, even though for me it is quite object oriented, obviously, but it's still not fussy. It's quite humble I think.

SB - Yes it is.

SA - Working with Alison Knowles this summer, I spent some time with her in her New York State studio, she identified for me some things that I've been interested in, just by virtue of watching her work. She's very in tune to stumbling on experience and making it meaningful. So she'd see something and it would become the next project. For example my dog was with me, and I had a rag rug that I have for my dog, that she sleeps on and chews on, and there would be strips on the floor. Alison saw this and she picked them up and said 'Sally what is that?' And I would say 'oh that's a bit of Pippin's rug, a good munchie toy for her'. A couple of weeks after I got home, here in the mail is a piece of handmade paper with these strips of rag sewn to it, a gift for Pippin. It looks like a beautiful little painting as the rags are striped, and they're sewn.

I think that bolt piece was kind of inspired by that attention to looking at 'well what should it be?' what of my father's mechanical stuff. Sadly that wasn't one of the bolts that I inherited, but it was one I had in my studio and it was the right one. Everything was designed around that, so then I had to go and buy the multiples.

TS - What did the reference manuals look like originally?

SA - I'll show you, I've got a couple of them. I'm quite taken with his expertise as a mechanic, it's quite complicated stuff. I have several of these books from different years.

TS - Is this why you grew up on a highway as well?

SA - Yeah, because he had a gas station. This is another thing that is very important to me, to acknowledge these kinds of projects as books. Look at this, I mean why do we call things 'artists' books'? In my mind they're not so different from many books. I mean the content shifts, but the content shifts across books all the time.

SB - I suppose people say 'artists' just so it validates what they're doing.

SA - But I would call the programme at the Art Institute 'Books and Publishing', and get rid of the 'artists'.

SB - Books and Publishing or Books in Publishing?

SA - Books and Publishing, because we do teach some book binding instruction and all of that, which I think is important too. But it's in an art school, we don't call it artists' painting, we don't call it artists' sculpture to distinguish it.

SB - I know it's funny though isn't it. I think that that artists' books thing has come more from the makers hasn't it?

SA - Yeah.

SB - Because people get a bit snobby about artists' books.

SA - I think it comes from librarians.

SB - Yes?

TS - So it's a cataloguing term?

SB - Yeah, maybe.

SA - Maybe a bit of both.

SB - I think it's that thing of people maybe wanting to get away from the craft label that's put on them sometimes.

Maybe they said I'm an artist making books, because sometimes people say "oh what do you do then, are you an illustrator?"

SA - Or a design binder.

TS - Mind you, even then it's a confusing term for many people.

SA - I think that artist's book, from the perspective of an artist, it's come to me to denote that more, craft-based activity.

TS - I think particularly here, in the US, it has.

SA - Yes. And my audience is actually bigger in London than it is in Chicago. My friends are, my referees are; well everybody's European. I'm much more in sync with the European and British production than I am in the States.

SB - Yes I can see that.

TS - Ah that's interesting, because so far what we've seen in Chicago has been an open interpretation of the book, compared to some other places we've visited in the States, which have very much of a letterpress and binding kind of background. So I thought that here would be a lot more open. A bit more like London.

SA - There aren't that many people doing publishing in artist's book programmes, but now that Columbia College has gotten an offset press, well the students who were producing the paper (for the Knowles project I'm working on) were gossiping to me that they were heading more in a graphic design, publishing direction.

SB - Well we'll find out tomorrow. That's funny with the publishing though, with the [ABTree] diagram for the survey, that you did for us. Then we were trying to say well maybe it should be called 'artists' publishing' rather than artists' books, and everyone hated that idea.

TS - Really didn't like it as a term.

SB - Because they were saying well where's the 'book' gone? It was quite funny. We launched the forum discussion to let people get in there and start arguing.

SA - People do get bothered about it. My students always ask me, especially since now I'm starting to work more with writing students and less with the visual artists, they're particularly confused. And they say, "Sally, aren't these just books? Why aren't they just books?" And I'll say "you know, you can call them whatever you want, the person who made them can call them whatever they want, I don't really care". Well I guess I do care because we're talking about it, but I don't think what I do needs to be called 'artists' books', I think it needs to be called 'books'.

SB - I think that's why people didn't like 'publishing', whatever you do you need to have the word book in it as the definition. So rather than artists' publications, or publishing, it still had to be book.

TS - Well for many people the fact that it is a book is the most important aspect, so to lose that term, I think they

felt it devalued what they were doing.

SA - In one class that I'm teaching called 'Publishing as a Project', the word book doesn't appear in the name. And some people say, "well look at the scroll, is that a book form?" A lot of people will say "yes it is", and other people will say "I'm not sure". I would call it a scroll not a book. And online publishing, it's only a small part of my courses, and though it's not my area of expertise, students do come in with more of an expertise and that's how they want to do publishing. Publishing can be a bumper sticker. I don't feel compelled to limit it to the book, although again the book is my particular expertise.

SB - So maybe you could have 'book' as the header and 'publishing' is just one of the terms. So that you can have your badges and your stickers and all the stuff that we're trying to say 'they all belong to this family'.

SA - I think the web is an incredibly interesting vehicle for publishing - I mean I think people use it for publishing more than books now, well younger people, but I don't think it's a book. I think it's the web, I don't know what to call it. Why we want to borrow these terms I don't know. I guess it's a sense of familiarity, but I think it's a mistake to use that space only in the same way as we use a book space, because it's got so much more potential. I don't have time in my lifetime to do it. I mean I use the web as a catalogue, with some links.

SB - As a contact space.

SA - But I think it's an incredibly important and interesting space, and I'm not sure why it needs to be compared to or related to the book.

SB - Well I suppose people are interested in publishing on the web, not to say that we're doing much artists' publishing on the web - we use it more for our reference books and things like that where we can publish them as pdf e-books, so that they are free.

TS - At the end of this project the outcomes will only be available on the web.

SA - But that it can become a book if you want it to. That makes sense.

TS - In terms of distribution, it's got more scope, because most people now can access the internet. Whereas if we were to say at the end of this project we'll publish a manifesto as a book, it's more difficult to get it out there.

SB - It would cost a fortune as well. I suppose if you put

it up and people find it by accident as well then that's great too. But some, or a few artists who are actually just making free download books, just want to get it out there for people to see.

SA - Yeah, and well now thinking about it, that makes the most sense to me, that's a reason to make it look like a book online, because it's intended to be downloaded and printed as a book.

SB - Yes, printed out and assembled.

SA - Do you know a literary press called *featherproof*?

SB - No.

SA - featherproof.com. They do downloadable books, and they show you how to bind them.

SB - Oh nice. So do you buy the books from them or is it free?

SA - It's free. You can buy other books, and you can also buy the books that they put together in their way if you don't want to put them together yourself.

SB - We were thinking we might do something like that at the end of this project - make it all available as free downloads and then reformat it into a book and put it up on Blurb if people also want a physical object. People can order it at cost from there and we wouldn't have to pay to print it.

SA - I think what's interesting about featherproof is that they do show you the optimal way to produce it, and so there's a lesson in the structure of the book, which is so intelligent.

SB - It's such a nice idea.

TS - It's so generous as well, to give you a book and also show you how to produce it.

SA - I'm not sure if they might be a not-for-profit.

[Referring back her father's car mechanic books]
You know this book is vast - look at all this visual information - photographs, the caption, drawing, tables - it's all so beautiful.

TS - Yeah, and the work that's gone into producing a manual like that, all the different people involved.

SA - Before computers, and electronic typesetting, and it's annual.



A selection of Sara Ranchose publications (www.sararanchouse.com)

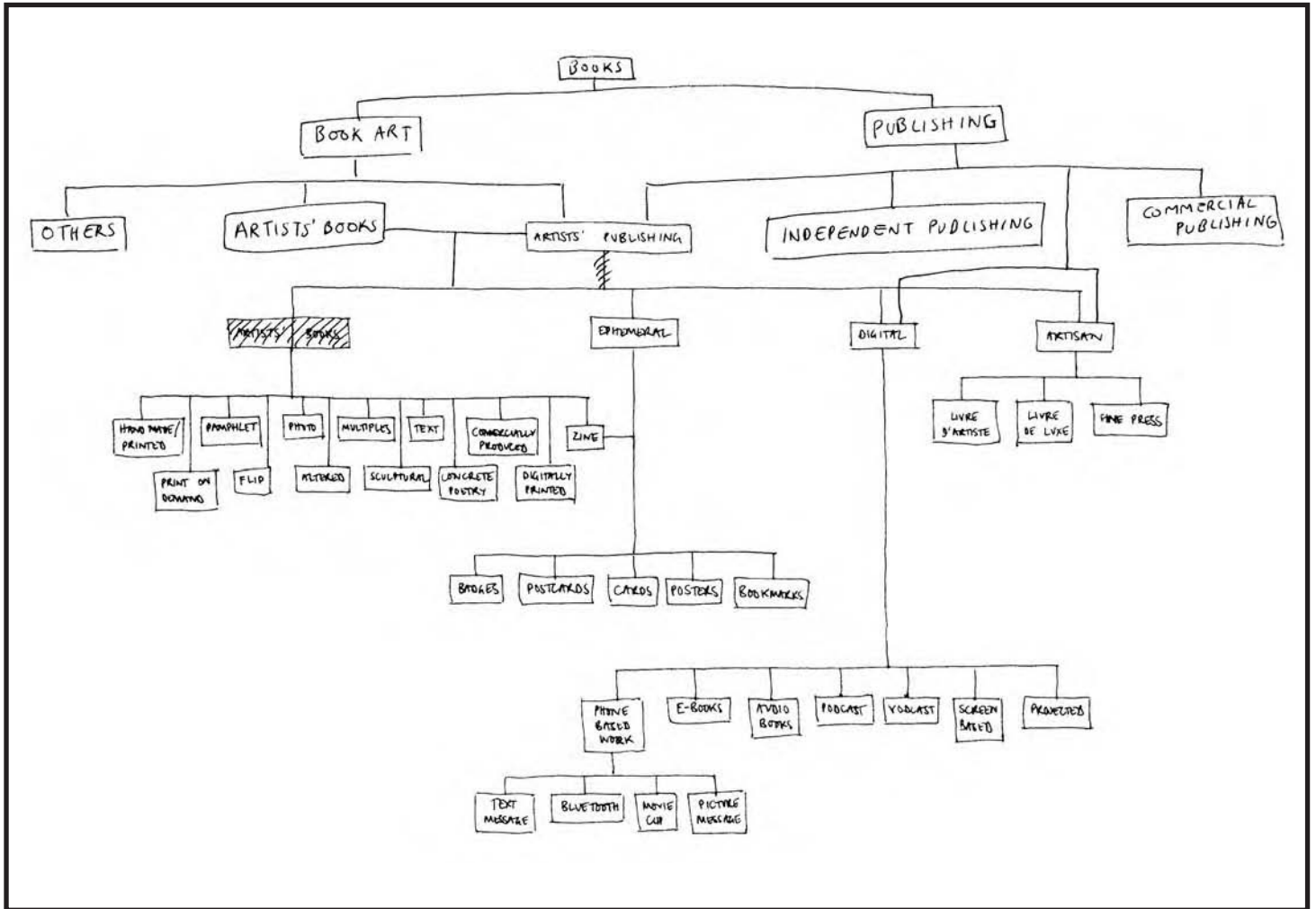
TS - I suppose parts would be reproduced each year because they wouldn't change.

SA - Right, 1935 to date. But the, I mean the words out of context - 'ignition timing', 'ignition removal'.

SB - You could have a lot of fun couldn't you?

SA - I've got about a million projects that I'm working on during my sabbatical year, I probably won't finish any of them.

Many thanks to *Sally Alatalo* for spending time with us and showing us her studio and publications. Sara Ranchose Publishing, a catalogue of books and information can be found at www.sararanchouse.com



Kyoko Tachibana's ABTREE diagram

Interview with Kyoko Tachibana, Sohon Studio, Sapporo, Japan

Sarah Bodman interviewed Kyoko Tachibana by email over June – July, 2009

Were you aware that you were making artists' books when you started to make them?

Yes. I started making books when I went onto MA in Book Arts at Camberwell College of Arts, London. Having done a degree in publishing, which, as a subject, seems to be business-orientated and centralised by the industry, it made me want to further explore the book form and its possibilities, and what kind of books I would like to associate with. Having said that, I must note that there are also publishers that are very much aware of the form and its relationship to the content or concept, and manage to sustain (or are struggling to sustain) themselves financially and be recognised by the industry. I also had an opportunity to do an internship with a publisher who publishes books with artists, which also inspired me a great deal.

We feel that the content and context of any artist's book is paramount, we are not so interested in categorising books into separate formats, but do you feel there are things that can or cannot be artists' books, or should or should not be?

What does the term 'artists' books' mean to you?

I do slightly feel incongruous about the term 'artists' books'. The term somehow implies that it's always artists who make such books or such work. You don't necessarily have to be an artist to make such work. But if people are using this term because anyone and everyone has their side as an artist, then I understand where they are coming from. Personally, 'book art' is a more appropriate term, as it suggests that the focus is on its aspect of creative activity or the subject, rather than who makes them. But on the other hand, 'artist's book' is more recognised than 'book art', I can also see the point of using the term.

I don't think books or book works should necessarily be in categories. But categories are useful to talk about the aspects and elements of the work - how the work can be interpreted in different ways, what is explored in the work. This I believe will help us understand more about the book art as a subject overall.

How would you describe an artist's book? What do you think of the term artists' publishing compared to artists' books?

I view artists' publishing as one way of producing artwork in multiples as opposed to the general idea of (commercial) publishing, whereas artists' books can be one-off artworks or artwork in multiples.

Can you tell us something about artists making books in Japan, are there many? Do you have any societies? We remember you mentioned in previous discussions that there were no special artists book fairs, but are there many exhibitions?

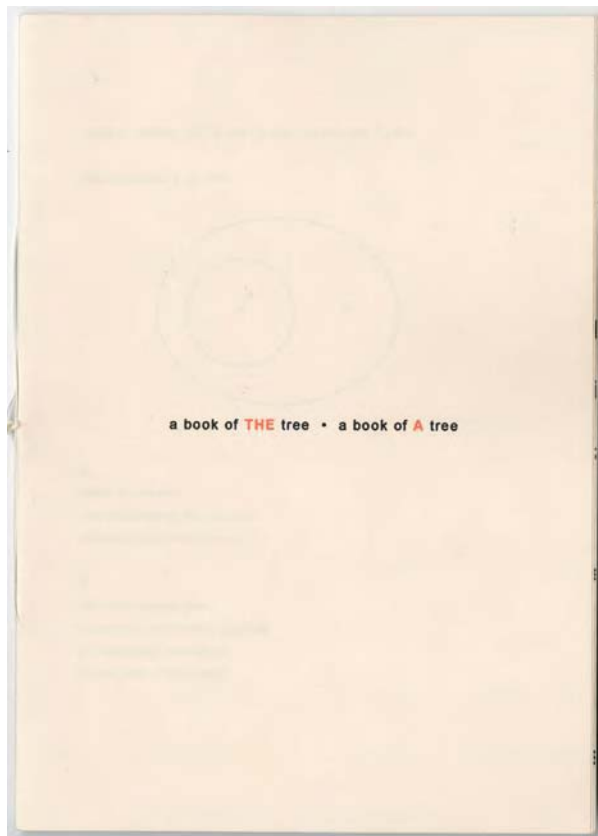
I haven't done a survey, so I can only speak from personal experience, but I think that there are a fair number of people who make books though not necessarily books that are strictly produced in the manner of artists' books. One thing that's almost certain is that there is hardly any community, society or academic institution to initiate communication of the subject amongst artists, academics or the public. This has much to do with the Japanese educational system and government policies. It's also difficult to address the problems or the reasons, as the interpretation and idea of books made by artists is, in a traditional context, different from the west. The traditional artists' books here are researched separately with a historical, social and cultural context specific to Japan, and contemporary artists' books are researched in the context of mainly European thought.

Urawa Museum of Art is probably the only major museum with a collection that specialises in 20th & 21st century artists' books/ book arts, and regularly holds exhibitions.

Smaller scale exhibitions and events in contemporary book art often take place in independent galleries, most notable one being "The Library" exhibition, which has been going on for the last 15 years (<http://www.h3.dion.ne.jp/~artspace/library2006-02.html>). In terms of art in collaboration with poetry, there have been a considerable number of exhibitions held elsewhere, from fairly major museums to more independent galleries, with 'book art' themes, but not necessarily recognised as 'book art/ artists' book' exhibitions. It also seems that there have been more Japanese artists' books shown in New York than in Japan over recent years.

Are the graphic arts feeding at all into artists' books now, or is everything still mostly Manga and graphic novels?

Manga is an established genre that's as major as literature. Graphic arts are another important factor in Japanese sense of aesthetics, and also the idea of fine arts and applied arts exist very close together. Many graphic designers make books nowadays, but in many cases they cannot get away from the commercial sense or the sense of decoration. Whether it's art or design, criticism doesn't really take place (hence no academic



A book of THE tree, a book of A tree, Kyoko Tachibana, inkjet-printed on recycled paper, 2003

There are a variety of considerable forms in which the content of a book can be presented. Which form should it be applied is decided upon the maker/author's intention as well as how they portray their object. This book is about different relationships of the maker/author to the object and how they affect their approach of making a book.

circles), which I feel is the reason why there's no much development in academic discussions about artists' books.

We have noticed that mobile phone novels are very popular in Japan now, are you aware of any artists making books using mobile phone technology?

Again, there are many mangas on mobile phones, which I imagine you already know about. There are many artists who work with interactive media, so I would like to see artists' books happening on mobile phones. At the moment there are only screensavers designed by artists/designers.

An example of manga on mobile:
http://www.nttsolmare.com/comic_cmoa/controller.php?fwd=preview&tid=1

In terms of technology, though this might not be appropriate information (or interesting enough), Keio University developed this system of viewing 3D pop-up on a 2D picture book:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ceTqz7zTEEY>

Going back to the mobile phonebooks, we have recently read that an American author will be publishing his next book on Twitter, is this something that has been done in Japan, considering the amount of books already published on mobile phones? And do you think artists will be utilising Twitter too?

There are some Twitter or Tumblr novels also in Japan, and it's often a case where these novels are later published as a book. I have read that one author decided to publish their novel on Twitter, and have published not only the text but with accompanying sound recording or music to it. These authors are either employing the function of Twitter or others in two ways: a collection of novels which conclude in 140 characters or each entry of 140 characters add up to one longer novel. There are also a few projects where one long novel is completed by posts from many different authors on Twitter.

But at the moment, it seems Twitter is used more as an experimental ground for literature rather than being used for an artwork. I haven't heard or seen any art work utilising Twitter, although I believe there is a lot of potential to be found in the medium just equally as other media.

What do you think the role of the physical artist's book is in the 21st Century - Does it still function as a democratic portable medium or do you think it will become marginalised as a luxury object?*

I think it will be in both ways. It had been a trend to publish books as luxury objects as they can be an experimental ground in terms of production in book publishing, whether or not these are for commercial purposes. In some ways they have contributed in helping make people aware of visual elements of the book. Sometimes it can be hard to draw a line whether a book is made just to decorate visually or purely for visual function according to the content. Technology will always keep progressing, hence a wider variety of media or forms will be developed. The important thing is to question how the physical function/design is associated with the content and to know which medium is most suitable, but in order to do that you have to be aware of what is the intention behind the book.

The novelty of books as luxury objects will soon wear off as the production costs are not cheap, and besides, the publishing industry (at least in Japan) is suffering the hardest time through recession and technological changes. All in all, people will have to focus on what is really needed, and hopefully they will be more experimental in the content and its physical form in every medium.

** 'Portable' before digital technology meant a hand-held book/object. It still does, but now this can also refer to mobile phone-based, text or Bluetooth, and e-readers. This we feel is still about a communication of ideas democratically, and in this sense the work is probably received freely from the artist.*

Does the digital book become not so much a container of ideas but a means of carrying a message without the constraints of the container?

Because of the nature of the medium, I think the digital book gives limits as well as freedom over the content. For certain contents, digital book could be the best format, and for others it might not serve the purpose appropriately. It is true that the digital book can make the communication more democratic in many ways, but it certainly cannot replace all the aspects that hand-held books have. On one hand, the digital book is easy to distribute, which was originally the purpose of having a portable medium, and it also saves the physical space. The technology has a lot of potential and it has its whole new field to be explored for new possibilities: the effect of its multiplicity on the content, new ways of distribution, interactivity... On the other hand, the digital book doesn't give the same effect in terms of the physical presentation of ideas. The technology will certainly change the structure of communication, and I think this will enrich our understanding of each medium and gives much wider variation of the concept of the book.

In terms of what you think a book can be, can you tell us more about the ideas behind your piece 'A book of THE tree a book of A tree', 2003?

This book was made based on my experience and in response to another book I'd made previously, which was also about a tree. I was interested in the idea that there are different degrees of consciousness or intuitiveness in making a book, which have a great effect on the method as well as the final outcome.

The previous book was made intuitively: I picked the subject from what was around me and decided to use the photographs I'd kept taking occasionally for no particular purpose. The book was made of pages of photographs that captured this particular tree in the communal garden and its surroundings including my flat, which depicts the distance between the tree and the private space. But the next book, *A book of THE tree a book of A tree*, focused more on the relationship between the maker/author and the tree as a subject. It was not about any particular tree, but a universal one. It showed more of an analytical approach in its visual elements as diagrams and grids were used to illustrate the differences. Lastly, the language also played an important role in this work. As in the title, indefinite particle A and definite article THE were used to describe the specificity and the universality, and in fact, these particles don't exist in my native Japanese.

I believe that making books is, after all, a conscious process whether or not you intend to do so. A book can be anything, but as the technology progresses and brings more options for expression and communication, it's important to be aware of the medium and the content in it. Thus, I hope there will be more places to discuss these issues whatever your association to the book is.

Kyoko Tachibana
www.sohonstudio.net
info@sohonstudio.net

Paulo Silveira with input from Maria Lucia Cattani about her recent work relating to the book 'Quadrantes/Quadrants'

Sarah Bodman interviewed Paulo Silveira and Maria Lucia Cattani by email November – December 2009

Dr Paulo Silveira lives and works in Porto Alegre, Brazil. He has degrees in; Fine Art (drawing and painting) and Communications, and a PhD in Visual Arts - History, Theory and Criticism, from the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS). Silveira is the coordinator of the publishing section of Editora da UFRGS, the author of *A página violada* (the violated page) 2001, and regularly writes articles on contemporary art and the artist's book. He is a member (heading the artists' books section) of the research group Veículos da Arte - Vehicles of Art.

Dr Maria Lucia Cattani, is an artist and professor at the UFRGS (Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul) Instituto de Artes in Porto Alegre Brazil, who works with artists' books, prints and site-specific pieces.

Were you aware that you were making artists' books when you first started to make them?

PS: I've never had much difficulty knowing what is or isn't an artist's book. When I approached artists' books I already knew they were. But I wasn't immediately familiar with the concept. I started studying painting and drawing in 1978 at the UFRGS (Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul) Instituto de Artes in Porto Alegre. In those days the snack-bar walls were covered with papers with proposals and projects (mail art, Brazilian conceptualism, etc.) It was a different language from those of the studios, a sign that one had to look for information outside the Art Institute. My interest started to develop in the 1980s. I was intrigued by the communicative creativity of Bruno Munari's "ordinary" books and wanted to see more. I was enchanted by the second edition of Augusto de Campos and Julio Plaza's *Poemobiles*, and Sol LeWitt's *Geometric figures & color*, at the now-closed Kosmos bookshop. I didn't buy them at the time because I had no money, but the quality of those key works became fixed in my mind. It wasn't painting or sculpture, but it was art, another art. Some years later I saw the *Book Arts in USA* exhibition in Rio de Janeiro, which ably demonstrated a plastic process that could stand alongside painting and sculpture... I attended a few individual workshops in the city's free studio. I did a two-year bookbinding course and joined the Center for Book Arts in New York. I began to visit all the exhibitions I could, and immersed myself in the catalogues of those I could not see. In short, I learnt a considerable amount

about artists' books, unique works, multiples, and their various formats. I am now almost exclusively focused on historiography, theory and research, but whenever possible I try to stimulate the production of published books, particularly in offset.

We feel that the content and context of any artist's book is paramount, we are not so interested in categorising books into separate formats, but do you feel there are things that can or cannot be artists' books, or should or should not be? Do you think there is any limit to the definition of an artist's book?

PS: I do think there are some limits for the definition of artists' books. Because in principle every definition needs to function. If not, why would we seek definitions? Clive Phillpot's proposal of almost 30 years ago is still the most appropriate, and not by chance is it the one accepted by libraries and museums. After all, libraries and museums do not have the time for conceptual digressions, needing foremost to catalogue, record and document. If Phillpot's guidelines continue to operate, they therefore still deserve our respect. The breadth and location of the boundary zones could perhaps be adjusted. As nothing is absolute, it helps if the boundaries can be mobile and permeable. I like to think of the image of a nebulous boundary. But there is no need to question the identity of works in the central or less debatable areas of the field.

What does the term 'artists books' mean to you? How would you describe an artist's book? What do you think of the term 'artists' publishing' compared to 'artists' books'?

PS: We are haunted by that first question, whether we like it or not, and we know it. And knowing that we are constantly being haunted is particularly difficult. It is strange, but despite proclaiming independence, artists are particularly sensitive to the concepts; they are the ones who most say that "this is", or "this isn't". Perhaps the problem lies not in the term "artists' books" but in the term "book". The book is commonly understood as a publication in the form of a codex. And if this is the common understanding, this conception of the book should, of course, be respected. But if we say "artist's book" we are emphasising an authorial, artistic and plastic quality that can create a modification of physical qualities. The codex format is, of course, perfect and unquestionable. But as a volume, a book can have other formats: as a roll, concertina, portfolio, etc. As a work (something spiritual) the book envisages a whole presented in a more or less complex unit that can be interpreted through reading (decoding signs or other similar procedures). In other words the book can take form as a noticeboard, a great tapestry etc., in a rhythmical-symbolic organisation subject to re-readings or new consultations. Lygia Pape's 1961 *Livro*



Above and below: artists' books on display in the exhibition space in Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais School of Fine Art central library for Perspectives of the Artist's Book



do tempo, consisting of 365 tempera-painted wooden panels mounted on a wall retains its “book” qualities through its aesthetic and symbolic structure, rather than through its design. That is an extreme case, and a totally textual (and visually insipid) booklet would perhaps be another extreme. As a reference point or marker, the generally accepted usage recognised by researchers could be accepted. In the broad sense, the artist’s book as a category therefore establishes and solves aesthetic and political problems that include works that take the book (the book as volume) as an operational pattern or instrumental reference. It therefore encompasses the more obvious and graphically fragile pamphlets and also the more surprising (or even ostentatious) book-objects and sculptural books. In the strict sense, the artist’s book is that book in which the artist is the author, of course, but which has to be related to art (and not to literature, mathematics, dentistry...). It is directly related to the intellectual knowledge the artist has of him- or herself. It normally takes the form of a codex, normally in an edition, but it would be no surprise if it broke with expectations. They can be unique or prototype works, but the idea of an “edition” is one of the qualifications that can better situate it within the field of contemporary art.

Maria Lucia - As someone who works with hands on media - print, paint, sculpture, site-specific, and who also embraces new technologies such as laser cutting and digital print, your production ethic of uniqueness from multiplication is really unusual.

Can you tell us more about your work in relation to ‘book’ and whether you see the installation works as larger-scale books – for example ‘Quadrantes/Quadrants’?

ML: My more recent work is concerned with finding a way of synthesising the duality generated by site-specific works, to produce work which involves an original site-specific element and multiples of it, but whose elements are integral – there being no longer an ‘original’ and a ‘copy’, or a ‘site-specific’ version and a ‘documentary’ version. All are parts of the work in its entirety – yet they are never seen together, only ‘apprehended’ through various processes; fragments, text, image, publication, artist’s book etc.

In this way the work can become bigger than one specific place and can incorporate several spaces simultaneously. Having moved from the paper to the wall, the work can now move from one space to several – linking several spaces into one.

“Quadrantes/Quadrants” is a work that was developed within these ideas during a research fellowship at University of the Arts London in 2007/8, and is now part of the artist’s-book collections of four academic

libraries: Camberwell College of Arts Library, Chelsea College of Art & Design Library, London College of Communication Library and Art Institute Library, Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. It was shown in the four libraries simultaneously in June 2008.

This work involves both old and new reproductive processes – letterpress, inkjet printing, laser-cut paper and panel, etc. and comprises four site-specific pieces, each containing originals and multiples. The pieces consist of four boxes containing one unique panel and three digital prints related to the other panels.



Quadrantes/Quadrants, Maria Lucia Cattani, 2008



Quadrantes/Quadrants, Maria Lucia Cattani, 2008

The panel and prints involve laser-cut marks which originate from a hand-drawn invented script. As the work was intended to be placed in libraries, I wanted to connect it in some way to some form of writing. The script may have been influenced by the incomprehensible (to me) Cuneiform writing I had seen on tablets at the British Museum, together with the street graffiti spreading across our cities. Mark making has been part of my work for many years but in this work I wanted the marks to take on a written structure, by forming lines.

The work also includes an artist’s book, which contains a smaller, modified version of the four prints in the libraries and a unique fragment of the original hand-drawn invented scripts that generated the work.



Above and below: Martha Hellion performance with balloon in which the public wrote messages on a hot-air balloon she had made for Perspectives of the Artist's Book, Belo Horizonte, Brazil



An edition of 100 copies was produced. The four original drawings were cut into 100 pieces, with one fragment being inserted into each book. Each book becomes unique through destruction of the original.

The books also contain four half-tone photographs of the libraries. More than 200 photographs of books and endless corridors of bookshelves were taken to select the four in the book. This material generated another bookwork which in turn was developed into a video work. The video shows the turning pages of a book of inkjet-printed manipulated photographs of bookshelves of four Academic Libraries mirrored onto the next page.

Quadrantes/Quadrants moves from original to multiple and back to original, dealing with the duality generated by uniqueness and copies and proposes no hierarchy between them. It has multiple outcomes related to reproductive processes but which developed from simple incomprehensible marks on a piece of paper.¹

Paulo – As the head of the artist's book section of the research group Veículos da Arte - Vehicles of Art, and the author of 'A página violada', 2001, how do you feel the awareness of artists' books has been (or is) developing in Brazil at this period in time – particularly as we become absorbed into the digital era? How do you think artists' books will adapt as technology develops? For example, if software or hardware become obsolete.

PS: The production of artists' books in Brazil has been small. There are many reasons for this, which I can explain elsewhere. But there were two periods of greater productivity, which resulted in appropriate participation in international events. The first was a long period of sparse production. That was the period of visual poetry, which had a greater presence here through concrete poetry. None of the poets of the time called their books artists' books, but some of them used the term "book-poem", and on a few occasions "book-object" or "book-work". The second period was in the 1980s, a period of excess and therefore open to all kinds of experiment. There was perhaps less graphic production (published books) in the 1990s, (no one wanted to use photocopies anymore, for example) but plastic production (unique and sculptural works) continued to be important. Nowadays we can see an increase in general interest. I think this has come from two directions: through workshops for young artists (who experiment with unique books) and through the incentive of postgraduate research (which is much better qualified to understand artists' writings and their associated graphic reflections). Brazilian universities are today encouraging the reassessment of conditions that had been forgotten, revealing artists and works, and, more importantly, supporting the application of critically aware looking. Furthermore, federal development programmes are

enabling the exchange of information with other university centres in Brazil and worldwide, which in some cases facilitating international exchanges of arts researchers. Art history, theory and criticism studies are becoming stronger every day. This is yielding concrete results. One example is the coming Brazilian Art History Committee (CBHA) conference in Rio de Janeiro in September 2010. The central topic will be "Art, work, fluxes", and the meeting will include an exclusive session on research into the artist's book.

In terms of the coming of the digital era, I am more interested in the use of informatics as a universal tool, which includes the design and finalisation of traditional, physical books. Everyone enjoys using image-editing software, but there is little of this. For example, I sense a lack of greater knowledge in the use of graphics software by artists (and by art teachers). The new technologies also exist for image publishing and page and plate preparation, but I do not know if they are reaching the classrooms and studios with the speed they should. They certainly will, but greater efforts are needed on the part of teachers and lecturers.

Would you consider publishing an artist's book on electronic paper? If so, are you looking/waiting for advances in technology before you do?

PS: It's interesting; we've been talking about this, technology, for some time, in terms of the future plans for our Distance Learning Secretariat (at UFRGS). But the focus has been pragmatic and very technical. For the time being, electronic paper seems to be just a specific site for texts and images that are still of poor quality in graphical terms. This will certainly quickly change for the better. And so, why not use it? The idea of having to research new procedures, software language and new hardware for something as enjoyable as art is wonderful, maintaining the network spirit essential to the artist's book. And it is also pleasant to recognise that even in this case some kind of baggage will be necessary, the same basic understanding that motivated Aldus Manutius five-hundred years ago in the Renaissance.

Do you have any concerns about the future of the book, for example the loss of traditional artisan skills? If so, how do you think this can be remedied?

PS: This question was partly answered above. In terms of the electronic book, I see no problems, I think it is another victory, another possibility. In terms of artisan qualities, there will doubtless be a loss of skills. That has already happened, and can be seen in certain exhibitions where books are the victims of the clumsiest binding. In my home city, the oldest and most respected (and



Above and below: Livrobjeto bookshop and art gallery, (directors: Marília Andrés Ribeiro and Fernando Pedro da Silva) showing important Brazilian book-objects by Arlindo Daibert, Claudia Renault, Daniel Escobar, Hilal Sami Hilal, Isaura Pena, Jorge dos Anjos, Marcos Benjamim, Maria do Carmo Freitas, Paulo Bruscky and Waltercio Caldas.



perhaps only) bookbinding school was closed a few years ago by the state government Education Secretariat, which wanted to convert it into a general craft skills centre for secondary education. That was where I studied bookbinding. I recall that a teacher from there was once invited to teach some classes to students at the UFRGS Instituto de Artes as part of the perception course. In short, for people wanting to make artisan books in Porto Alegre, it was already difficult, but it is even more so now. That can still be remedied, but it would need a major effort and policy change. The institutions have to be interested in meeting a demand that I imagine to be small. And training teachers will be another problem.

As you intend to establish a more consolidated collection of books at your University – Will the books be themed, or solely physical? Have you considered including artists' books that are to be viewed or listened to exclusively on digital equipment?

PS: We do indeed intend to foster the presence of artists' books in the library, but perhaps in association with the Pinacoteca collection. This is because the UFRGS Instituto de Artes library has very few artists' books registered in the system. What there is, is generally not catalogued as such. The subject "artist's book" (including books on the theory of the subject) began to be recorded following my discussions with the librarians in the late 1990s. Prior to that, books were catalogued under topics such as "art history", "photography", "creativity", etc. In terms of typology, it is sometimes "book", and sometimes "other documents", etc. And the term "book-object" is still not recognised in the search system. For the new purely theoretical Art History course starting in 2010, I and other researchers have requested recommended books for possible (or probable, I hope) acquisition. My acquisition list includes some of the main theory titles available, plus a subscription to *Art Libraries Journal*, with the explicit aim of providing some stimulus to the library and its users.

The Instituto de Artes gallery (which has the pre-modern name of Pinacoteca) is more flexible, but its website mentions only eighteen books in its collection (when consulted in December 2009, including some Argentine examples donated on the initiative of the Veículos da Arte group following an exhibition in 2006). Some effective possibilities for official and continuing actions are being considered, with the assistance of lecturers Helio Ferverza and Maria Lucia Cattani. A proposal should be made shortly. In the meantime we are doing as much as possible, with the utmost voluntary personal effort. And we are fostering the maintenance and strengthening of international institutional ties. A little of the knowledge already established at other universities needs to reach the Instituto de Artes. There is a need for learning and teaching.

Note: 1.

Maria Lucia Cattani's *Between one thing and another: original/multiple*, paper was presented at Impact Printmaking Conference, Saturday 19th September 2009. You can download the whole text from Cattani's presentation as a PDF at: www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/panel09.htm



Mats Kerstin Matsdotter preparing flax at Sollerön, the island where I live. They made towels, sheets and shirts from the woven linen.



Making shoes was just one of many handcrafts around Lake Siljan, where a wide variety of handcrafts were deeply rooted. The shoes belong to the traditional folk costume of Leksand located in the heart of Sweden, Dalarna, where I come from, and this book design is based on them.



Interiör från Mora.

The interior of a clock-making workshop in a Mora village 1800. The 'Mora Clock' became the name in Sweden for floor-standing clocks sold by travelling salesman from the Mora area.

*Tom Sowden interviewed Monica Langwe,
Swedish book artist & bookbinder, June - Nov 2009*

To start with I was wondering if you could give me a bit of background to your practice and an overview of the book arts/bookbinding scene in Sweden?

My forefathers

Making shoes was just one of many handcrafts around the Lake Siljan, where a wide variety of handcrafts were deeply rooted. There were plenty of raw materials and the land was not always suitable for farming.

These shoes belong to the traditional folk costume of Leksand located in the heart of Sweden, Dalarna, where I come from.

Here (opposite) you can see Mats Kerstin Matsdotter preparing flax at Sollerön, the island where I live. They made towels, sheets and shirts from the woven linen.

Besides the handcrafts needed for the household and typical for the area, there were also handcrafts produced, intended for sale outside of Dalarna. These 'sales trips' were undertaken from the 1500's to the beginning of the 1900's and brought the artisan in contact with other areas and traditions, which stimulated their industriousness and their innovation.

These people have been a great source of inspiration for me.

In the town of Mora where I come from, there were 12 different types of handcrafts being manufactured. From one of the villages came the horse that is so well-known outside of Sweden and which was originally carved by loggers as a toy for their children: the Dala-horse.

The picture (opposite) shows the interior of a clock-making workshop in a Mora village 1800. The 'Mora Clock' became the name in Sweden for floor-standing clocks sold by travelling salesman from the Mora area.

My family

My father, who was a teacher, came from the west of Dalarna where the tradition of fur sewing was established. The tailors walked from farm to farm and made clothes, coats, jackets and skirts from sheepskins from the farm. See the woman's jacket in the picture of the clock-makers workshop.

My mother came from Ångermanland in the north of Sweden where flax cultivating, linen making and other textile handicrafts were common. My mother and

grandmother were always making something by hand during my childhood – embroidery, knitting, crochet – and they were always very careful with the finish and choosing the materials. I naturally picked up handcraft skills.

I also grew up in a time when you had to be economical in your household, you did not have, as today, an unlimited resource of different materials. My mother had kitchen drawers filled with strings, paper clips, plastic film, greaseproof paper – so this became my workshop as a child. I even remember making small books and bags out of the plastic film and the greaseproof paper with potato prints on them. I remember that it was important they had a nice rustle and feeling when you turned the pages.

When I was about twelve years old my father became ill and then died when I was fifteen. This had an effect on my work. Before his illness I got top marks in school, but during this time I had difficulties concentrating on my schoolwork, especially the theoretical part, and therefore I did better in arts and crafts.

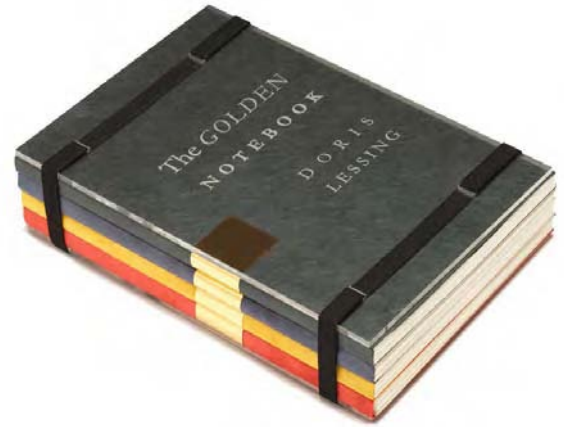
My education

A combination of my upbringing, difficulties with the theory at school and good results in arts and crafts, made me want to work within the arts. I left the three year upper secondary school after two years, to take a place in art school.

Why did I study arts and not crafts? It think at that time, without being aware of it, it was a natural step to develop my knowledge instead of just inheriting my parents handicraft skills.

After three years studying in different art schools I started to feel something was missing, I missed the feeling of 'completeness' from the handcraft skills. I also felt that my hands wanted to do more. Painting was more like an endless process that made me feel lost and did not respond to my way of thinking at that time. Instead of paint on the paper I began looking at the structure and design of the paper. I worked as a trainee at an old paper mill in Dalarna, Gryckso hand paper mill and had a short period as a trainee at the Basel papirmühle in Switzerland. I also began looking into products made out of paper.

I did not always feel comfortable in this tradition with its strong values regarding craftsmanship. I have always wanted more and sometimes I felt this tradition was a restriction my freedom. Nowadays I am grateful for having this traditional framework to work against. I am using it as a diving board in search of my own design.



A selection of Monica Langwe's design bindings for Nobel Prize winning novels, made each year for exhibition as part of the "Bokbindarmästarföreningen" at the Nobel Museum in Stockholm, www.nobelmuseum.se

Through the years I have participated in various courses in the arts, hand-made paper and bookbinding. It is perhaps no coincidence that one of the few extensive bookbinding courses in Scandinavia is located in Dalarna, Sweden. Together with hand-made paper maker Karl-Erik Hedberg, I have also recently rented the Grycksbo hand-paper workshop in Dalarna to develop special paper with watermarks for bookbinders, book artists and others who are interested.

Handmade books are a very interesting product that can be made out of hand-made paper. I wanted to learn more about them and discovered that the only bookbinding school in the whole of Scandinavia was 35 kilometres from my home! I originally planned to go for one year to learn the basics in binding books, but ended up studying for three and a half years. In the third year I studied historical bindings and in the last six months I studied bookbinding at different museums and archives. After that I also took part in a course called 'creative contractor' so that I was able to be more businesslike.

Today I feel like the circle is closed. I have in a strange way, and without being aware of it, integrated art, handmade paper, bookbinding and all the handicrafts from the environment in which I grew up. I have also caught up in my theoretical studies now that I study, analyse and make books about books.

I do not miss the feeling of 'completeness' from the handcraft skills anymore. I also feel that my hands are free to make embroidery, knitting, crochet and all other crafts I use in my book art. With my painting, that was more like an endless process that made me feel lost, now it feels like a gift when I do illustrations, design my books and try to think 'outside the box'.

I use my history as a trampoline when carrying the old techniques into modern interpretations.

Swedish Book Art

Swedish book art as a subject field is very small. The people who work in this field are mostly artists who are interested in working with ideas in the book form. They have their backgrounds as artists and generally do not have any knowledge of bookbinding or book printing. A one-year book arts course has just started in Stockholm at the College of Printmaking Arts. Starting with graphic techniques they then develop different ways of working with art in the book form (<http://www.grafikskolan.se/grafikskolan.html>).

Personally as an artist and a bookbinder I miss a subject field/area where both bookbinding skills and artistic knowledge are important criteria. Therefore I have taken

the initiative in organising a book art exhibition in 2010 at Gallery Astley, Sweden. The exhibitors are working both with bookbinding and art. The exhibitors are: Monica Langwe Berg, Sweden. Manne Dahlstedt, Sweden. Anders Zitting, Sweden. Adam Larsson, Sweden. Leif Malmgren, Sweden. Lännart Mänd, Estonia. Carmencho Arregui, Italy. Jan Peter Zimmerlich, Switzerland. Sün Evrard, France. Annika Mattson Baudry, France.

I have noticed a slight difference in how artists use the term 'book art'. People that come from a background in art often use the term artists' books and those that come from a background in craft often use the term book art. They both have art and craft in their working field, but they have different starting points. These are not official terms in Sweden but something I have noticed.

I was also wondering if you could give me a little more background information to the project that you did where you asked professional bookbinders to make books inspired by the Estonian limp bindings?

My main goal with this project was to make old bookbinding techniques accessible to bookbinders all over the world. I wanted to show and teach the original bindings without being a 'middleman'. I wanted the readers to be inspired directly from the originals. I wanted them to start fresh without other people's values and interpretation. In many bookbinding books of today you learn another person's interpretation of binding techniques. When we start from the beginning we are able to think in an entirely new way.

I would also like to inspire technical and artistic development. When the reader gets access to these old techniques I want to show how binders can take the idea of the original and with innovation and imagination, produce some really new bindings. I want to create whole new avenues for development, with the past as a constant source of inspiration.

I use my upbringing as a trampoline when carrying the old forgotten bindings into modern interpretations and into the future. My respect for the skill of the handicrafts from the past, make me feel humble and gives me a strong will to elevate these old bookbinders/bindings to a higher status. Hopefully I will allow access to not only old techniques, but also to another way of thinking from the past that can help develop new techniques.

You say that you notice that those who use the term 'artists' books' come from a starting point of art, whereas those using the 'book art' come from a starting point of craft. Where do you see your own work? Do you feel that your work falls into both terms?

Since my latest training was in the field of bookbinding, it's possible that my present work falls a bit more into bookbinding. Though that may not be necessarily clear to the public. I see it as a process where I gradually pick up my artistic skills. I will always feel that my work falls into both terms and I can work deliberately with both areas or choose to work more with one or another.

Does the exhibition you are organising at Gallery Astley help to define your work and those who work in a similar way?

The main goal with the exhibition is to encourage the exhibitors to feel free working across artists' books and book arts, and to show work based on both subject fields.

Will exhibitions like yours, and also courses such as the one you mentioned in Stockholm, help to develop a larger audience and increase the number of people producing books in Sweden? Is this something that you consider important?

I think exhibitions and courses like this, in the long run, will open up investigation, discovery and combine these two working fields to a greater extent. Both, among the practitioners and the public. I think it's all about a natural development where Sweden and Scandinavia are following other countries that are further ahead. Is it important? Yes, but the process and the natural development is more important than the artist's book itself.

What do you see as the future of your work?

Lately, I have had several enquiries asking if I want to give courses for artists and bookbinders. By doing this I can encourage people to feel free working in an interdisciplinary way and to produce work based on both subject fields.

After the exhibition in Gallery Astley I'm planning to continue working with an exhibition on my own called 'Vintage Stories' where I use old used material and old techniques in new ways.

What do you see as the future of artists' books/book arts in Sweden?

I have noticed that artists have become more interested in bookbinding techniques and that bookbinders have become more interested in 'artistic bookbinding'.

I think from almost not having a future at all, the future of artists' books/book arts now exists and will develop in different ways. I have also noticed that Denmark has recently started a book art group.

[www.nordicbookarts.ning.com]

Is there any limit for you as to what can be called an artist's book or book art?

I think there always will be personal practical limits depending on the practitioner's frame of reference, experience and education which they will, of course, always struggle against. There will also be personal limits within the public depending on their points of reference, which they hopefully will try to expand. I think there will probably also be a lot of professional opinions trying to define the terms in different places and times. The work itself will most likely live a life of its own and developing despite all limits.

And finally, do you have any concerns for the future of the artist's book, primarily in Sweden, but also in general?

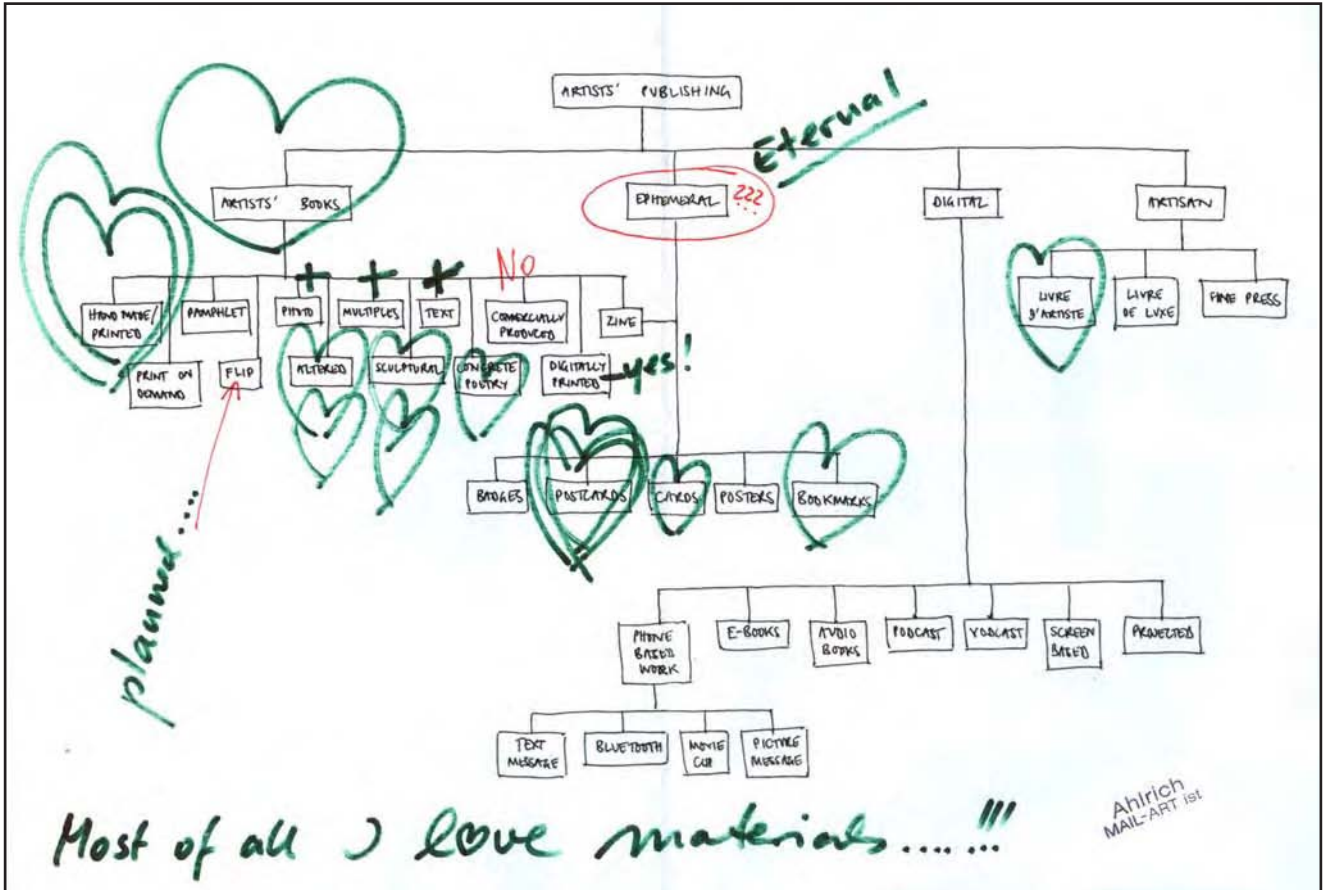
Personally in all my work, exhibitions, book publishing, courses etc. I will continue struggling against my own limits and try to be able to feel free working across disciplines, showing and teaching work based on both subject fields. Finally, I also hope Scandinavia in time will be an interesting place for book arts/artists' books. In general I think traditional craft techniques will find a new place in modern artwork. We are getting further and further away from work done by our hands and I think there will be a time where we will bring it home again but in a whole new context, that is more artistic and non-traditional and based on a need of working with our hands.



For more information on Monica and her work see: www.langwe.se

Limp bindings from Tallinn - Monica Langwe Berg was published in *The Bonefolder* Volume 5, No. 1, Fall 2008, ISSN 1555-6565. Available for free download: www.philobiblon.com/bonefolder

Monica Langwe is part of www.bokbindarkompetens.se a Nordic network of bookbinders and contemporaries.



Ahlich van Ohlen's ABTREE diagram



Tate Britain's artists' books collection store

*Interview with Maria White – Chief Cataloguer,
Tate Britain, by Sarah Bodman and Tom Sowden
(22/10/08)*

We met Maria White at Tate Britain (www.tate.org.uk), in their collection store to talk about Tate's definition of artists' books and what is collected under that definition.

M - Tate Library has a collection of about 4,500 artists' books, dating from the 1960s onwards. The collection is international but with an emphasis on British artists. We have works by Ed Ruscha, Sol LeWitt, Dieter Roth, Lawrence Weiner, Telfer Stokes, Helen Douglas, Richard Long, Hamish Fulton, Ron King, Ian Tyson, Stuart Mugridge, John Dilnot, John McDowall, and of course both of you. As well as the artists' books we also collect ephemera about artists' books

S – So this would also cover cards and postcards?

M – Yes, private view card and postcards, flyers for books and exhibitions, plus small exhibition and book fair catalogues, even paper bags.

S - I bought a copy of Stephen Fowler's Home Made Record Sleeves last week, and it came in a bag with a lovely handmade sticker on, so yes, I can see you would want to keep things like that. And then I thought, I had better keep the bag as well.

M – Yes, absolutely that kind of thing. Luckily we have volunteers who do the general ephemera, and every so often I divert them to doing the artist's book ephemera, which I have to do again soon because I've got another great big box of stuff upstairs. In fact, the next show in the cabinets outside the entrance here will be selections from the ephemera collection. You do get some amazing pieces; private view cards can come in all sorts of lovely shapes and formats.

S – But that's a nice job though isn't it, to sort through all of this.

M – Oh yes. When I retire I'm going to be a sorter of ephemera.

Do you want to see our collection on the shelves? I have a box of books here that I have just sorted out for a group visit on Friday.

T – is that a student group?

M – Yes, we have quite a few group visits for students who are focusing on artists' books each year, which we hold in the Archive and Special Collections Room.

S – I notice that you have two copies of some books, the

Sophie Calle's for example, why is that?

M – We do get books donated, sometimes from galleries if they produce something in association with an artist. Sometimes we are given books which people are unsure if they are an artist's book or a catalogue, or multiple.

T – Actually, some of these books are beginning to blur the boundaries a bit aren't they?

M – Yes, I'm finding it more and more so; library staff are coming to me more often with things saying "what is this, what do I do with this? Is this an artists' book?" And it is quite difficult actually.

S – Because a lot of them could be catalogues or were intended to be documents?

M – Yes, and it's deciding what is and isn't. Artists might be involved in the design of a number of things which are actually catalogues or books documenting the artist's work. So where do you put them? Sometimes whether the book contains an essay helps but in a collection like this one may not always be that pure.

S – That's usually the clincher for us, if you open it and there's an essay about the artist's work at the front then it's, aah, this isn't an artist's book, it is actually a catalogue pretending to be one.

T – What about multiples?

M – We don't collect multiples.

T – Just books?

M – Just books.

T – And if the ephemera comes, it's just stuff that is sent to you?

M – The ephemera, yes. Our statement on what we do collect, and how we classify a book, is this: "a book (i.e. normally a number of pages attached to each other in some way) wholly, or primarily conceived by (though not necessarily actually made/printed by) an artist, and usually produced in a cheap, multiple edition for wide dissemination." We do not collect livres d'artiste, illustrated books, unique books.

S – Well, with technology developing now, is some of this going to change?

M – I'm very old fashioned about it I have to say, I'm very traditional. And I don't think a book which exists on computer is a book.

S – So if an artist had made something that they said is a book, and it was produced as a free download or on a mobile phone...

M – It would fall outside of our collection.

T – Do you think that if, and I don't know if they will, artists increasingly started to work purely in the digital arena you'd start to create a collection or archive here?

M – I think if it really did take off we'd have to, but what - other than the artists' books - the library collects is documentation rather than works. So the artists' books collection is the only collection of artworks. So what we might say is that if people are making all these works to be stored and viewed in the computer's environment, what used to be called computer art, actually falls within the remit of the gallery rather than of the library.

S – Because we were thinking that a lot of e-books and books produced using developing technology will be made by artists. Last week we were in Germany at the Frankfurt Book Fair. Amazon were touted by the organisers as being there for a major presentation on the new Kindle, which we really wanted to see, but they did one for about 10 minutes and then left, they didn't even have a stand to show it to anyone. So we didn't get to try Amazon's digital reader at all.

T – We found one stand with three different types of e-readers on – one of which was a prototype that won't be released until next year. And I've seen it in the news for the last 8 months, it's on the Internet, and it still won't be released for another year. And we could see why, because we had a go on it, and it was pretty awful.

S – You assume they're going to look great, like an i-Pod, but they actually look terrible, as if you've just popped into Argos and bought a dodgy 1980's plastic toy.

T – The screens on them were awful - like when you go into a mobile phone shop and they have the pretend screens on the phones, they almost look like that. There's no real light behind them, but they're still quite high contrast – so they're trying to make it look like a printed page rather than a screen. They're really trying to make them appeal to people who like to read paper-based books, and trying to copy everything you like about reading a book. Another thing I think that doesn't work in their favour is that it's all black and white. And everything else now - mobile phones and i-Pods have quite high-definition colour screens. None of the e-readers had moving image, it was all purely static.

S – Whereas the download mobile phone book we got free from the Blackbetty™ stand on Tom's phone was great (www.blackbetty.org), they've got moving image,

colour, different use of graphics, and we both thought, now here is something that really does have some potential for artists' books.

T – And it purely exists in the format of being viewed on the mobile phone. So things like that are obviously going to impact on us at some point, whether anyone wants them to or not.

M – We have a definition, as you know which says a book is 'a number of pages attached together in some way' and that's the collecting policy.

S – What if it's a collection of pages on the screen?

M – Where's the attachment to the thing though? Oh God!!

S – So really it's paper-based only forever is it?

M – Material based.

S – Physical, handleable?

M – Yes.

T – So, physical it is then. And the other problem is if you start collecting digital that technology will change so quickly.

M – Absolutely.

T – So you'd have to collect it in such a way that it'd still be viewable.

M – Yes. For example, we've had people requesting videos and of course we have no means of playing them. We have old Betamax video works and we don't have a player, and records but no record player.

S - We were saying obviously, if artists' start working with digital media, well I say started, some people have been doing it for years, but your main terminology for work in the book format is 'artists' books' and everything spreads out from that. We started a forum online the other week asking people what they thought of the term 'artists' publishing' – how do you feel about that as a term?

T – It has not been well received!

M – I can definitely see why. Why do other people not like it?

T – People have said it's too modern, it wasn't traditional enough, the focus strays from the physicality of the book. I think people like to have 'books', as a distinct term.

S - People definitely want to have 'book' in there.

M - But then if you're making books...?

S - Well yes, but then if you think there are artists who say their sole practice is making books, who might be excited about the possibility of working with electronic paper, or to broadcast something through a mobile phone, but in their head it's still a book isn't it?

M - Yes, it's still a book.

S - For the artist it's still a book even if it isn't necessarily thought of as one by the people looking at it. Maybe if you'd never seen an artist's book before and someone showed you a phone and said "read this text", they might say, "So what? It's a phone, with words on it". But if you were an artist and you were working with the book and someone said 'you can use this technology', I think - well for me anyway - it would still be a book that I'd made.

T - Yes, I would too.

S - We were also talking about 'book works', because that still has the 'book'.

M - Well for artists it doesn't matter at all what the definitions are. It only really matters for collectors and librarians who have to deal with this

S - And people who write about it and teach it.

M - Yes.

T - But it does matter for artists as well, as we've found in the forums. They do, of course, like to be able to classify what they make themselves.

M - Sorry, what I meant was for them they follow where their work takes them. They are not bothered about boundaries.

S - But it's what it's called that is more important to you than to them.

T - Going back to that question, do you think - keep it as 'artists' books' but expand what the book could be?

M - Aah. But you've still got the problem because, as you know, there has always been a problem with the term 'artists' books'. But before you even get on to the 'book' there is the apostrophe...

S/T - Don't get us started on that one!

M - I suppose what I am saying is that I'm not exactly going to run out of this type of 'book' that we collect.

S - Oh no, no - I don't think so. We hear so many people saying digital will take over, but it won't.

M - It won't but there is, as you say, another area that we are possibly ignoring, which is taking place. And that is a problem. But there's no way I can afford to look at that, either time wise, money wise or storage wise.

S - But what if you had plenty of time and money?

M - In a perfect world I would get someone else to collect it within this institution.

S - If that happened, would it be collected as part of something related to books? Or just collected as part of the gallery?

M - I would think of it as something other than a book.

S - So that's the difference isn't it.

M - Yes.

T - Is it that it's a multiple, or is that something different again?

M - No, as I would think of a multiple as being something physical.

S - I think what we're going to cause at the end of all this is a lot of arguments, which is what we said would happen at the very beginning.

T - We are of course playing devil's advocate as well, just to see what reaction we'll get. But also going to Frankfurt last week, one of the specific reasons we went was to see the digital publishing section. It's minute! And the majority of it had nothing to see for actual publishing because it was all about file sharing - it was companies who are writing software in order to be able to publish, but there were very few people actually publishing. It was all about securely sending your files to clients. And actually that surprised me because I thought it would be a bigger part of the book fair, so I wonder really, people are talking about digital replacing physical, and then you go to that and you see how small it is, and you think - well it won't be any time soon.

M - I think perhaps within a library context the e-books that you hear about at the moment are documentary books rather than creative books.

S - But something's going to have to give soon, not so much in the collections' policies but for accepting artists' books made in these formats. We'll just have to wait a bit longer before we know how big this will be.



Paddle Notes 2002, Andi McGarry

This book was produced in reference to an area of the Wexford coastline, which is immediately accessible to me by rowing boat. I make quite a few books which are based upon actual journeys, travelogues of a sort; whether they be river journeys, sea journeys or land based. A journey is such a good starting point. The landscape you pass through and the impact of landscape upon you. *Paddle Notes 2002* is a visual narrative which charts the course of a joyfully crafted adventure in high summer with the family in a rowing boat in the Irish Sea. I used simple Indian Ink drawings to encapsulate a group of connected moments from sketches taken during the adventure. They were then immersed in marbling inks to suggest swirly blue seas. Unlimited edition, each book unique, Ireland, 2002. 15 x 11 x 2 cms, heavy cartridge paper, Indian Ink, marbling ink, glue.



A still from Andi McGarry's *Sandwich Day* - Sun Moon and Stars Press Books and Films 1 - "New series of Books and films on a loved up theme. A combination of pictures words movies and music." <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FW13yfcCf8>

Artists' Publications – Andi McGarry

In 1986 I formed the Sun Moon and Stars Press having graduated from Brighton two years previously. I'd fallen in love with a girl who lived in Wexford and I spent a long time trying to convince her of my intentions. This involved a lot of travelling back and forth to Ireland and eventually moving over. During that summer I'd been working on a fishing boat in the Irish sea and had produced along with a few boxes of fish - a catch of poems. My first book was born - *Rhyme of the unseasoned mariner*. I made the book by hand physically typing each copy then hand painting each illustration and stapling the spine. I had worked up a master copy from which all the books were subsequently generated - a bit like a mad monk. Each copy was a version- similar but different to every other version. A unique edition in fact. Making a copy from the master copy was a method that worked for me. This set up the modus operandi for future sun moon and stars press book production.

Between 1986 and 2007, I produced 180 titles using this method. My mission statement in 1986 was to "Circulate Organic Ideas" - what I meant by that was I was going to produce books with my take on things, made in such a way that the evolution of the works and Ideas and means of production would all be connected via strong themes and a recognisable house style. I was the most cookie publishing house that I knew.

WHY PUBLISH AT ALL?

I wanted to test the water - I felt I was on to something and using the book form seemed appropriate. I received some interest in my publications via reviews particularly Stephanie Brown's column in *Artists' Newsletter*, there were also cheques in the post and publicity. This was great encouragement and feedback. I decided to explore other Ideas in book formats. I quickly established certain themes and styles in the books.

The books featured figurative scenes with words tumbling alongside. Words of a poetic nature - but not necessarily poems. Images and words combined sometimes a little haphazardly. Juxtaposed maybe.

My books were certainly recognisable - the papers I used I tore down from big sheets creating a characteristic (a false deckle I would call it) Hand typing and writing the words ensured plenty of typos and spelling mistakes.

For me the content and the format of the publication are all parts of the same circle. In book terms "Totality" in the words of Keith Smith not just the content, binding, paper, covers how it moves everything and I would even include the marketing in that.

Being in charge of the totality of the book was essential in my book making activities. In most of the 180 titles created I was the Author illustrator poet bookmaker.

Being involved in all stages of production in the commercial book world is unusual. Organising a book is a bit like organising a film there are many parts elements that all need to come together to make it work as one. I like putting a thing together.

When I started making books they were priced at £2 each. Today they might be £50-£300. My anvil has been constantly clanging with new ideas and a hotly forged book can sometimes be made within hours of the inspiration happening. I revel in this idea of "speedy production", no queues or waiting in lines, I had recipes sorted for" Instabook cooking. "Speedy books" in the words of Radoslaw Nowakowski. Sometimes a book would grow out of several different experiences over a long period.

CONTENT

The figurative elements would usually be some form of depiction of humans in the landscape and this remained fairly constant through the years- inky figures in landscape paddling boats across a horizon, or jumping cracks on the Burren, maybe figures in love running and leaping with fiery desire. These figures have been teeming through the pages gallivanting cavorting singing dancing and drinking and dishing out kisses via twists and turns just as in life. My narratives have twizzled around these figures never shy of poetry or humour.

The themes and ideas bore some resemblance to my situation, the current landscape, the state of mind, they might loosely describe events they are often disguised with a little poetics, or a little invention for flavour or spice.

MARKETING WORK

Via the Wexford Artists Book exhibition which I conceived and co-organised for 10 years I was able to see a lot of Artists Books 1st hand. This exposure had quite an influence and effect on my practice and my continued involvement in book arts. I also went to lots of artist's book fairs in London - I liked the fact that my own works were nicely different from most other makers. I took a stand at Frankfurt Bookfair in 2000 and also went to Seoul in Korea. Selling work behind a table is quite hard, but marketing/networking is an important part of the process and at the end you see a work go all the way thru from idea to sale - You certainly need a hard head and be in for the long haul.

Such testing encounters really do call into question why an artist would go to such lengths to publish at all?



Stills from *Just for the hell of it*, Andi McGarry, 2009

Just for the Hell of it, it's a certain kind of mental state, doing something mad or bizzare or something totally unexpected or something stupendously new and exciting-Just for the absolute hell of it. Obviously this is a bit of a love story too. I wrote the song to accompany the film and the film is a story taken from one of my books. February 21, 2009
www.youtube.com/watch?v=dIsvzdt3arg&feature=channel

I think it comes with the territory, it's a part of their remit, part of their artistic licence, like lettered rock they will strut their stuff - because they need to/ want to / have to. Exhibitionists is a word containing exhibition. We need to show others fellows strangers colleagues - that we are alive and kicking- Did I show you this yet? Exhibitions are often called "Shows" and it is the showing that the other magic ingredient is finally released and realised - when the people see the creation.

SEA CHANGE

In 2007 several things occurred which changed the way I was publishing, what I published and how I published it.

Sarah Bodman had sent me a questionnaire asking me amongst other things "Did I think computers would impact on the way I produced work?" the Luddite in me chortled as I picked up the quill pen to produce another hand made copy.

Then I won a folkatronics bursary with Visual Arts Ireland, this enabled me to run some Ideas in a DVD Video format and produce a DVD with a soundtrack. The DVD featured lots of underwater imagery and was also turned into a book- but this got me thinking - making movies was such fun, and there were a host of new challenges.

Simultaneous acquisition of a laptop and a digital camera allowed me to explore the possibilities of movie making using a simple editing programme (movie maker) it had all become possible. I began making movies at a feverish rate.

A trip to Geordie land for a birthday to go play with the old band, stirred up longings for music making. On my return to Ireland I said to my partner "I wish there was someone here to make music with." The next morning as the fates would have it a guy approached me asking would I like to form a band to do a benefit. Working with other people making music has all kinds of bonus features - a perfect antidote for isolationists, as collaboration is the order of the day - and the house is filled with music.

With in a year, and after several band reformations, recording music, coupled with movie making, creating soundtracks, editing the film and producing DVDs, and then publishing them- sun moon and stars press films swung into production and has produced 30 DVD films to date. Visual Publications in the form of DVD movies opens up whole new area of possibilities.

NEW OLD THEMES

In my films I often use myself as the figure running through the landscape. Further collaborations are

required in movie making finding a good cinematographer for example. The figure moves through animating the landscape providing a focus. Running jumping leaping walking. There are still elements of fun humour and like all good artists books - surprises. My ideas always want to be blurring our side outdoors taking you some place you didn't quite expect.

The movie camera allows for a different kind of landscape appreciation, via editing and with inclusion of sound track the synthesizer makes an entirely new form of artwork. I want my films to retain a notebook scrapbook journal feel. In my film "flag man" it was the soundtrack that I decided upon first - we then went out and filmed the ideas that came from those words. I think of the music as an audio narrative- in lieu of acting and drama perhaps.

I have published a number of films on YouTube and as an outlet YouTube and similar sites are an interesting starting point. The work is available for free - thus the return of a kind of cheap multiple.

I love seeing my work on a big screen too at festivals and in new situations, there is lots of potential for these visual publications - and this makes the making worth while. Its great to follow a thing through from idea to consumption.

My most recent film "Gone in 38 seconds" was a commissioned documentary film featuring a guy who bought his partner a double-decker bus, the shortened version you will see contains lots of the elements of fun and landscape which interest me.

I intend to develop my interest in documentary films as a route for uncovering other ideas. In September 2009 I co-organised the 1st Wexford Independent Documentary Film Festival - which took place in the village where I live. I am delighted in the films and what is now possible with simple equipment. These are indeed exciting times for artists to be publishing in.

Andi McGarry 2009

This essay was first presented as a talk at the project's conference: *Traditional and emerging formats of artists' books: Where do we go from here?* (09/07/09-10/07/09). You can listen to an audio version or download the text file at <http://www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/contrad09/andim.htm>

Andi McGarry's YouTube books:

www.youtube.com/profile?user=AAAAAAndi#g/u

sunmoonandstarspress@hotmail.com



Joan Flasch Artists' Books Collection, at the The John M. Flaxman Library
The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, USA



Interview with Doro Böhme, Ramon Cartwright, Andrew Blackley and Elissa Papendick at the Joan Flasch Artists' Books Collection at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, by Sarah Bodman and Tom Sowden (03/11/08)

Sarah Bodman - I don't know how long have you got to spend with us?

Doro Boehme – I have plenty of time; it's already past the mid term in our semester and it slows down in terms of class visits to one or two per day. Now I mainly have to deal with individual students who visit with specific projects, whereas at the beginning of the term traffic is crazy. Every fall we think we can't possibly top the number of visitors and then we do. We have all freshmen come through here.

Tom Sowden – From every course?

D – Each and every one. Each class visit takes about one hour. It's mandatory in their first semester that they come here.

S – From any course?

D – Yes.

S – That's brilliant!

D – So everyone will, at one point or another in the first semester, come through here. If the instructor has a specific focus for their class, which they usually do, they send me the syllabus in advance and then I select appropriate material, or the instructors select material themselves, and then the class looks at that. The visit also allows us to tell them about the collection, tell them about self-publishing as one possible vehicle for their future endeavours that they should be aware of.

T – Does that mean that every course engages with books in some way?

D – It's really a special collections tour that brings them here. There are a few special collections in the school, and this is one of them. Most of them also visit the Video Data Bank, a fabulous resource which collects the history of video as an art form from the '60s onwards. They are one of the largest video art distributors in the world, but what they also have is a series of artists' interviews, so the students can go there and listen to other artists speak about their work - it's really beneficial for them.

S – Is the interest in books here because of you?

D – I don't know if it's because of me, but I hope my work is at least contributing to it. We tried to make sure that they insert us into the first year programme and the person who oversaw first year programme and curricular activities at that time was receptive to the idea.

S – It's brilliant though, isn't it.

D – I've been working here for eleven years, and Sally [Alatalo] worked here before me, I think for about two years. She was also faculty in printmaking at the time so obviously she could only make the room available on a very limited number of hours and mainly to printmaking and art history students, mostly by appointment only. Currently I'm the only staff member responsible for this collection, in addition to other special collections. I have been able to enlarge the collection's audience with programming events and exhibitions, and by inserting myself into other on-campus activities. For example because of the readings I host here in collaboration with the writing department, people come in who might otherwise not think of the artist's book collection as something that has anything to offer for them.

S – And then they realise that it's totally appropriate for them.

D – Exactly, so now it's writing, fibre, of course art history, visual communication, painting and drawing, etc. Except for maybe historic preservation pretty much every department of the school uses our material. Even the fashion students; they come for structures, one instructor brings them to look at folds and a book's architecture and then they translate that into fabric. Film and New Media classes come in. The official name is a bit of a misnomer. It's called artists' book collection but there's really a lot of other material too. It's always been a collection that goes beyond the book format in whichever way you might stretch the definition; there are objects in here, sound art as well, zines, mail art, many types of formats. I don't have to worry at all with "is it still book or is it not", because I can collect it anyway if it benefits my users.

T – Who started the collection?

D – The library. They started to buy material in the '60s as it was being produced and had the books circulate within the main collection. So all our Ruscha books have a library stamp and look quite used - they have no market value. I think sometime in the '70s staff realised that these books should not be checked out, then pulled them all from the main collection and prepared a title and author list. The material was then separated and housed behind the reference desk. Already there was one librarian who got really involved in book making, wanted

to do more with this collection and started to think about a database. He then worked out a list of descriptors specifically tailored to this type of material that was later used by a lot of other libraries, and he started to design and implement a very helpful database. Unfortunately he migrated it, over the course of decades, across various platforms and it eventually grew into something no one else knew how to work with. He then died unexpectedly and we couldn't transfer these records into our online database.

S – Oh no!

D – We ended up creating the interface we're using now, the one you can access on the web, but we still have his database because we haven't been able to transfer all the records over. We're still in the process of transferring them manually, with the help of volunteers.

S – It does look really good, the database.

D – Oh, thank you, I like it too. It was mainly the work of our digital resources librarian who just left - for a better job.

T – So you were saying you collect anything around the book?

D – First of all I have a fairly limited budget. There are other places in the city [Chicago] that I can rely on, for example the Newberry Library, which is a private research library that collects along the history of printmaking and fine press printing. So already that's an area I don't have to worry about at all. The Museum of Contemporary Art has a fantastic artists' book collection. I'm not quite sure who keeps adding to it and what. The Art Institute of Chicago has a prints and drawings collection, so I don't need to worry about broadsides. I just keep our curricular departments in mind, and Columbia College and other neighbouring institutions, since everyone in the city and beyond, many other institutions use us.

S – So if you were a student at Columbia you'd be more likely to come here?

D – Oh, definitely, they all come here since they don't have their own in-school collection.

S – And you collect ephemera around books as well?

D – Yeah, everything anyone ever sends me that is remotely connected to the collection I will keep. Unfortunately at this point there is no web access for our ephemera files, that's one of the next projects.

S – That's a huge project though, isn't it?

D – Yes, but even if we just had a generic record for each artist's or publisher's file which says it may contain such and such material. Right now we don't have anything even though there's such great stuff in there.

T – Is that available to people as well?

D – Yeah; if they come in and want to find out about a specific artist, we check to see if we have something. If so we'll just give them the file.

S – They're so lucky!

D – I think they are! For example with material on Printed Matter in New York, institutions like that who have been in existence for a long time - we have a nice timeline of their activities.

T – So are you collecting any digital artworks?

D – Well, sometime around 2000, web art was just coming to my attention and I was worried about specific works I had seen disappearing again, and I contacted the artists directly; this was still at a stage where they could burn the work onto a CD for me and sent me that. And then shortly after that the medium basically exploded with interactivity and from that point on all I could do was take snapshots of it since there were no longer finite pieces. But then I'm just too small of a one-woman operation here to have the time and means to concern myself with preservation of electronic works. Other people are doing it, and with better expertise and resources. I'm sure you've seen it on the website – we have this link to web and net art, our "archives" now consist of just bookmarking interesting works. Once the links are dead...

T – That's it, right.

D – I still have these early pieces on CD, but I just couldn't keep it up.

T – No.

D – I rarely buy something that is just in digital form, usually work that's in conjunction with a book, but if it's an artist whose work we have and now he or she has a project that ends up as a DVD, then yes, I buy it too.

T – OK.

D - I've really found it so rewarding for visitors to not worry at all about definition issues, but to have this mass of different approaches and formats and see it bounce

off of each other, and they start feeling like 'I can really do anything, I can really select the medium that's most appropriate for this specific concept, no matter what it is'. They benefit if, in addition to books, they can also listen to sound works or see work on the computer. However I have noticed over the last years a definite desire to make something that they can touch; with all the digital overload, it's so clear.

S – Part of what we're looking at is how things like e-books will be collected, or if they'll be collected. We were with Maria White, from Tate Britain last week and we asked if artists' starting publishing more and more on e-books would they collect them? She was just like no – it's not part of anything that we do and if it was it would be the responsibility of the gallery to collect that, it's not the responsibility of the library at all.

T - And I think she was saying, a bit like you've been saying as well, when you start collecting that, trying to preserve it, to keep it in a format that is still readable in the future. It's not a route she wants to go down.

D - I just can't, you know?

S – But I suppose it's different here because you've got digital collections elsewhere in the school, with film and stuff, so...

D – Right, and ideally I'm hoping for that.. And we've just got a new president here at the school - there are new presidents all over this country - who's very interested in getting more collaborations going with the museum, because the institution is still unbelievably divided, these two parts: school and museum. We are under one umbrella administrative layer on the top, but I don't think the museum sees that relationship as being very beneficial for them. The school maybe more so, especially the art history department of course.

S – Does the museum belong to the school?

D- Yes, and for the students it's great. It's really great for them. I'll show you our main library later, very small, but the school can keep it that way because there's the fifth largest art library in the country just across the street in the museum and the students have access to that.

S – Wow, oh, imagine that, that's lucky.

D – That library has everything, it's unbelievable! I used to work there while I went to grad school, it's fantastic. There is collaboration between us librarians, but for example digital works – the museum department for contemporary art would obviously concern themselves with that.

T – And they are doing that, are they?

D –I would hope so. By proxy I would delegate it to them.

S – It's not your job, no.

D- However I should think more about how to make sure that digital works stay accessible. For example the exhibition catalogue for the 'Consistency of Shadows' exhibition, I recently put in the CD but it didn't work any longer on my newest Mac, I simply couldn't open it. I can still open it on my PC and that show was, what, only five years ago?

S – I suppose you think that, with a little CD, it will keep you going for about twenty years.

D – Yeah. I was more worried about the CD decaying, but of course the software changes so quickly.

S – It's what they said at the V&A, in the summer we were talking about changes in digital and where do you actually stop. If someone had done an artwork on a cassette and then you don't have a machine to play a cassette on anymore, do you transfer it to a CD? Has that ruined the authenticity of the piece or is it more important to keep it playable?

T – And then do you collect a machine for that work?

D – Yeah, that's what I was thinking, we need to keeping everything: record player and cassette player.

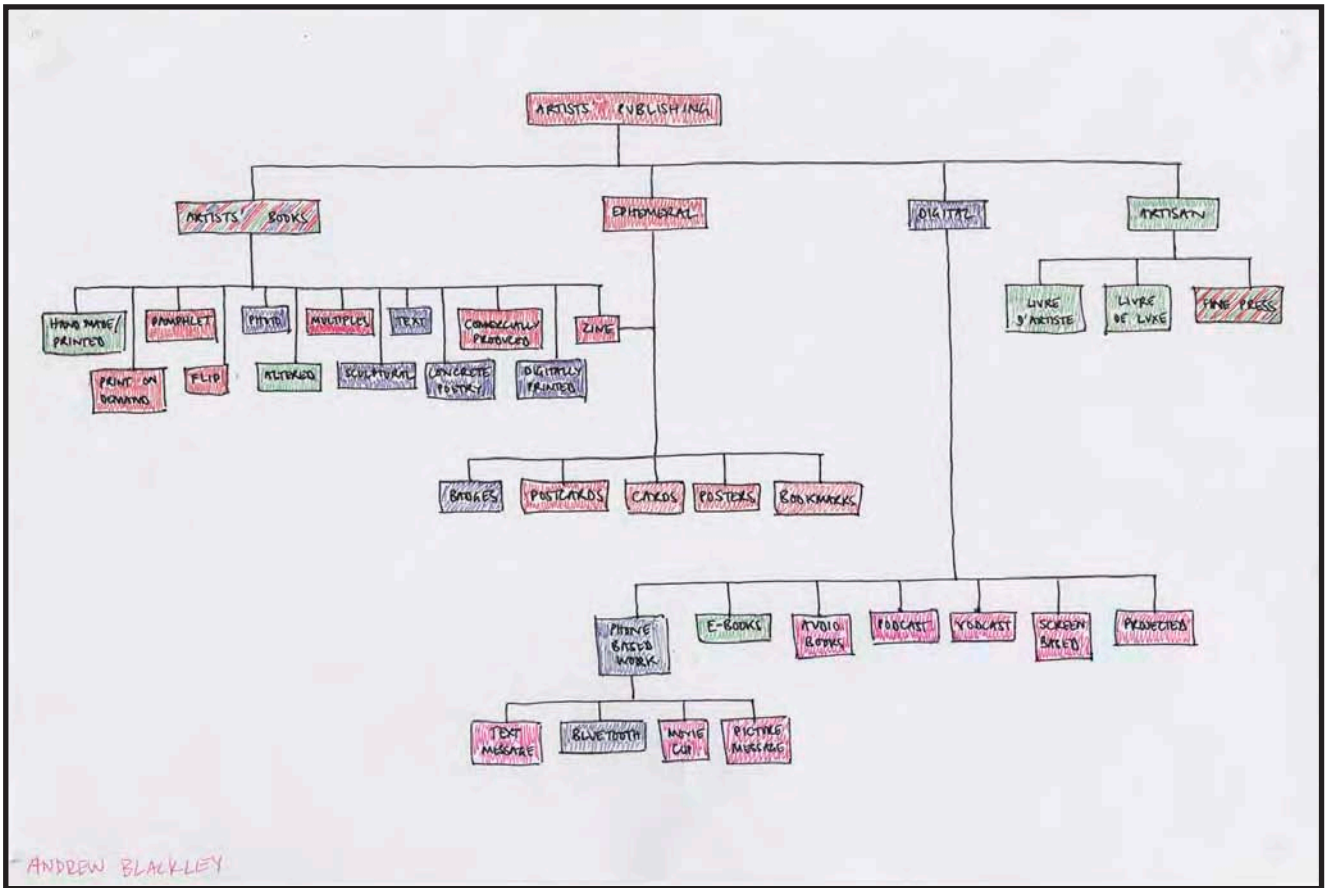
S – Well, it's having the space though isn't it? To house all of those things and then what happens when they break? Do you get another one? Is there even another one?

D – That's what made me worry about web art in the first place. I have books in the collection that include these big floppy discs. I called Apple's archives, but even they can't play it anymore. One is in a book by Paul Zelevansky, and I thought I'll transfer it so that at least I have the data accessible somewhere, somehow but sofar I have not been able to.

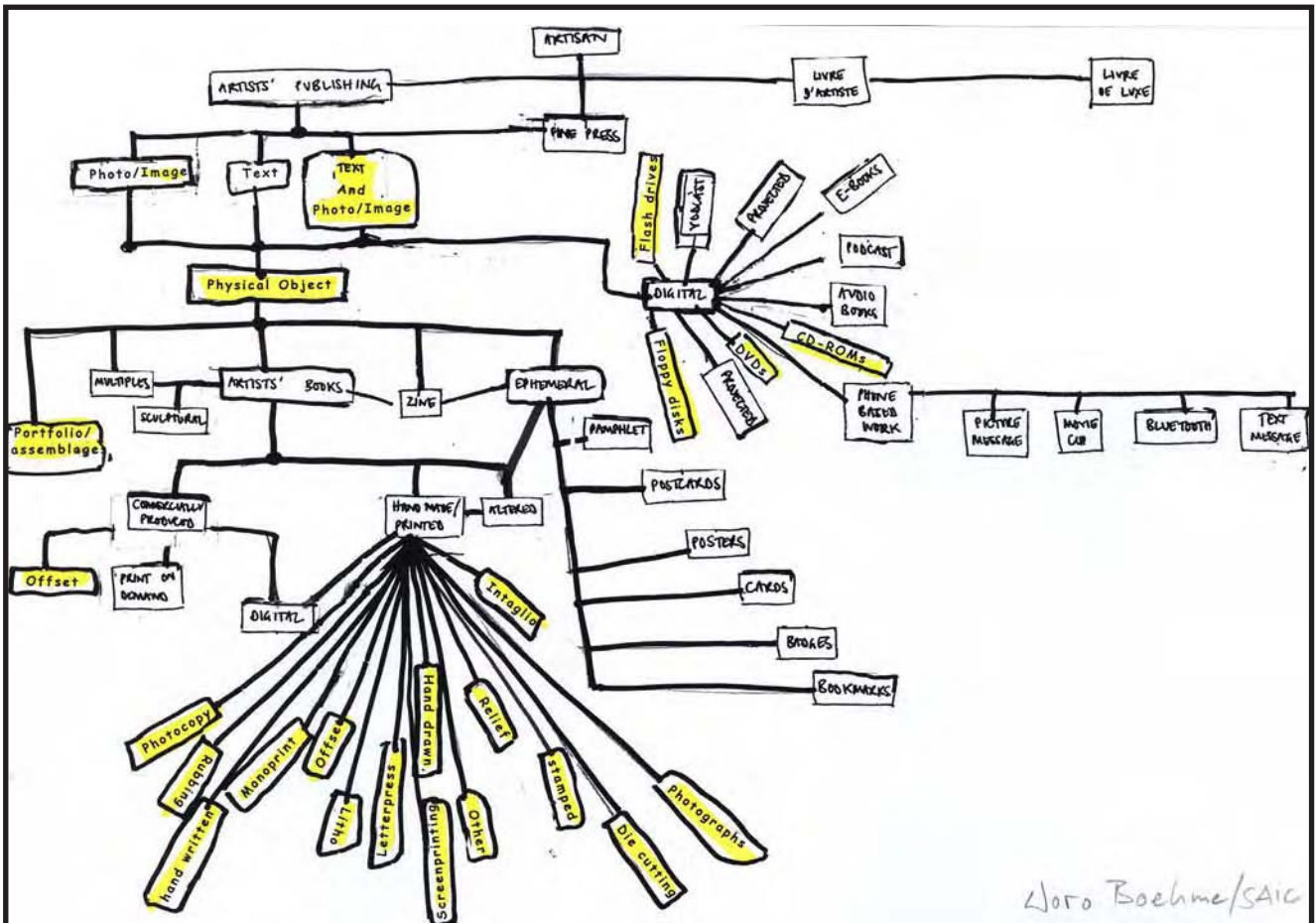
S – Someone, somewhere must have.

D – I've even contacted the artist; he says he is in the same predicament, he has no record of it.

T – But then aren't some of these things meant to be ephemeral? Like web art, isn't it meant to just have a short lifespan?



ABTREE diagrams by Andrew Blackley (above) and Doro Böhme (below), 2009



D – Maybe, but still the librarian part of my heart bleeds. Fluxus ephemera was made to be ephemeral and maybe no one was really worrying about them but now it's really good to have them around. All the Futurists' little leaflets - would be great to see them. Things will die and for the better, sometimes, but at least I want to keep a few examples.

S – Yes, so people can see a pattern in publishing. The fact that it is so easy for people to publish on the internet or to produce e-books, or even using Blurb, anyone can do anything now, but that doesn't necessarily mean that everything that is made is good.

D – No!

S – It could mean a lot more to sift through before you find the good stuff.

T – But I suppose with collecting, you have to have some form of quality control so you choose what to collect and what not to.

D – Yes, and many artists in the past have been such bad archivists of their own work. I think that might have changed, but even today they often don't keep good records. Now that forms of researching and archiving are one of the hot topics in contemporary art, maybe it's going to be different.

S – Yes, and also I think with computers, people are a bit more willing to type up. They have records of things buried in their computer, but they are there.

D – Yes, I know. It was the same with my own work - I couldn't care less; once a piece was done someone else could worry about keeping it up. That's very foolish.

S – So are you seeing many artists sending you, or showing you, books that are published through services like blurb or lulu?

D – Yes, not a lot yet, but it's definitely coming. Clif [Clifton Meador], that's all he currently does on the lower end of his production. Again, I haven't had much time to figure out what that means for a collection like ours in terms of longevity or preservation issues. I'm not even sure what the printing process involves.

T – It's a form of laser printing that they use.

D – And I have to assume that neither ink nor paper are archival.

S – Probably not, no.

T – But then the Ruscha's books, they weren't particularly archival, just mass-produced.

D – Right, right. But he offset [lithography printed] his.

T – Yes.

S – But you're OK with that?

D – Yes. This is a teaching institution, and an instructional collection. I'm as much worried about longevity as I am about making it available.

S – You're not saving for the nation.

D – Yes. For the visitors to see what's currently being produced, how people make their ideas and concepts available, that's my main overarching topic.

S – But you're ok with those kinds of publications? Because there was a discussion on the Book_Arts-L the other week about whether books published by print on demand services are artists' books? Some people were saying 'no, of course it isn't', then many others were saying 'well, of course it is'.

T – I think the thing that some people objected to was that there was no hand of the artist in the physical production.

D – But we have so many great examples of that type of work. There is such blurriness between disciplines and increasingly so. If Roni Horn says this is what I want my book to look like, but then a graphic designer helps her with the layout, who am I to say that this is not an artists' book, that the graphic designer's contribution makes it less artistic. I mean, I'm just not concerned about this as a dilemma. If it's a work of art, in any published format, and not simply documenting art then it falls within my parameters of collecting. I think I'm not a very good example of an artists' book collection for your project!

S – Oh no, you are, you're a brilliant example because you are progressive in the way you collect things, and you're very supportive of artists as well.

T – And inclusive.

D – I'm definitely inclusive! I missed one talk at the conference last Saturday [New York Book Fair 2008]. It was about institutional collecting, which of course I would have loved to hear but I had to fly back [to Chicago]. From what I know, other institutions have a very different approach, and are more concerned with the craft aspect. But that sometimes does us no favours.

S – Yes, it almost turns it the other way, because there may be no content, or the content might not have any value. There's so much effort put into producing this beautiful object that it doesn't even actually matter what goes into it, does it?

D – Right, right, and also consider just the type of access we have. People come in, they wash their hands, and then they can look at whatever they want, for any length of time, any amount of material, without much intervention or restriction on our part. Beautifully crafted and delicate books could not support this type of access.

S – And they also cost a fortune.

D - Yes, I would have to restrict access, and I just don't want to do this. I'd rather leave it open. We love it when people know nothing about the format or the collection, sometimes they don't even know what they want to look at, and then we talk with them and eventually find out a very specific concern of theirs, or maybe they've done some sort of printing, and then we start pulling material and they get all excited and we keep pulling more. We really enjoy this moment of liberation for them, when they see what all is possible and available.

S – So when you're cataloguing something, do you say it is just an artist's book, or do you have other subcategories?

D – I have a pre-cataloguing worksheet that I fill out when I get the item, which then goes on to the cataloguer. I don't create the actual record, but I formulate a notes field that describes the piece and I assign from the descriptors that we have established.

S – So essentially everything is a book when it comes in?

D – It can be a book, it can be a multiple, a 'zine, a poster.... Only exhibition catalogues and reference books are catalogued separately.

T – So, roughly how many books do you collect a year?

D – We're a little behind. Well, we're not a little behind we're a lot behind in our cataloguing. I already inherited about 1,000 books or so in the backlogs and we're barely getting through with what I buy on an annual basis. There are only two cataloguers for the entire library. The pre-cataloguing is rather time consuming, then the work gets photographed so that we can put the cover up on our website, then it goes on to the cataloguers and they have so many other things to deal with in the library. For this collection, we are adding maybe 300, 350 titles a year.

S – That's a lot.

D – In the years that I have worked here the collection, its size has more than doubled. We have well over 4,000, and it grows pretty rapidly. Others, MoMA for example, are of course much bigger.

S – Yes, but that's their job, isn't it!

D – (laughs). There are times during the semester I can't do anything other than patron services, I wouldn't even have time to buy anything and deal with the paperwork, but now [in November] I can buy and catalogue. Then, during January, traffic picks up again. The public service is really intense for a few months every fall and every spring, and during that time it has complete priority.

S – It's a pretty demanding job, really.

D – Yeah, it's a good job.

(Andrew Blackley, Ramon Cartwright and Elissa Papendick enter the room and join in the discussion)

T and S – Hello.

S – So what are your jobs here?

Andrew Blackley – We are the assistants to the special collection. We monitor classes and individual visits, but also work with the cataloguing, scanning and...

D – ..everything else! They help with shows, they work on other archives, correspondence,...

S – We're doing a project for the next 15 months and what we're trying to do is publish some ideas that will help unify the Book Arts a little bit, To say that this is a really big field and everybody is a part of it. So what we're doing is trying to bring everyone together who are disagreeing about what is and isn't an artists' book, I suppose is the simplest way of summing it up. So we're just trying to find some ideas of what people think are and aren't.

T – We were keen to come here because it's such an inclusive collection. We were just discussing how the selection policy doesn't have a very narrow definition of an artists' book, it just seems to be lots of different things all based around the book.

A – I think there's also separation between an artist's book and an artist's publication. A book doesn't have to be a codex, but I think there's something really beneficial achieved when you have an editioned, produced, disseminated, distributable product, versus something

that is playing upon the medium of the book. I'm not sure if one is better than the other, but I think there's a separation that could be identified, I don't think it would be – I think it might be beneficial actually.

S – We made this diagram (showing a copy of the ABTREE diagram classifying all branches of artists' books under the term Artists' Publications) to try and get people to think about how artists' books are classified. We were trying to think of a word that you could use that wouldn't be artist's book necessarily, if you were going to include things like podcasts and screen based work? Then could you still say artist's book or could you say artists' publishing?

T – The term publishing didn't go down very well.

S – It went down like a lead balloon.

Ramon Cartwright – A huge umbrella under which all this exists?

S – Yes, but a lot of people were really against that, because once you took the word book away then it changed everything. Even we believe that the word book should still be in their somewhere as the main header.

T – But we're not putting this out as definitive, it's there to be talked about.

A – I also think there's a lot of other lateral moves within this. For example under the artisan umbrella, how does a hand made book work with that.

S – So the zine could be in both?

A – Absolutely.

D – Yeah, I think it will become much more of a web.

S – That would be nice, if that could be our final diagram, it would just be a crazy jumble of everything and then just put books on top.

A – I'm also really interested in how books, artists' books and publications function in 2008, as opposed to say, the 60's. With a lot of information coming from the Internet and digitally, books while they're finite they also don't have to worry about being updated and deleted. I think that the finite or materialist character, or I guess nature of a book is important. We relate to books in a particular way today rather than we do a web page. But then that brings in things like the e-book and the digital book and printing-on-demand in general. That really changes the traditional method of printing books where you print 200 of these and they sit as inventory, until you distribute

them or sell them.

S – Have any of you published through blurb or lulu?

A – I have, yeah.

S – Did that work out?

A – Yeah, I it was OK. I print myself so I would rather do it myself. Not as a creation of labour, but it was not really good printing, and it's also very expensive.

T – Do you also find it's quite constricting? Because you really have a limited choice.

A – Absolutely, they set up a template or two or three and that's all you have to work with.

T – Going back to what you were saying about a book in 2008 as opposed to one in the 60's. The idea that they were talking about, with conceptual art in particular, was the democratic multiple. Is that not now the Internet, because it's so much more democratic than a book can ever be? Just distributing a book is pretty difficult.

A – I think we automatically think that the Internet can be more democratic than it may actually be, and a book once material and printed, doesn't have the fear of being deleted or regulated, or falling under searching laws. Or only available to those with, I mean most of us have computers at home, but when we say most we're talking about the community which we live and work in, not everyone has internet access at home.

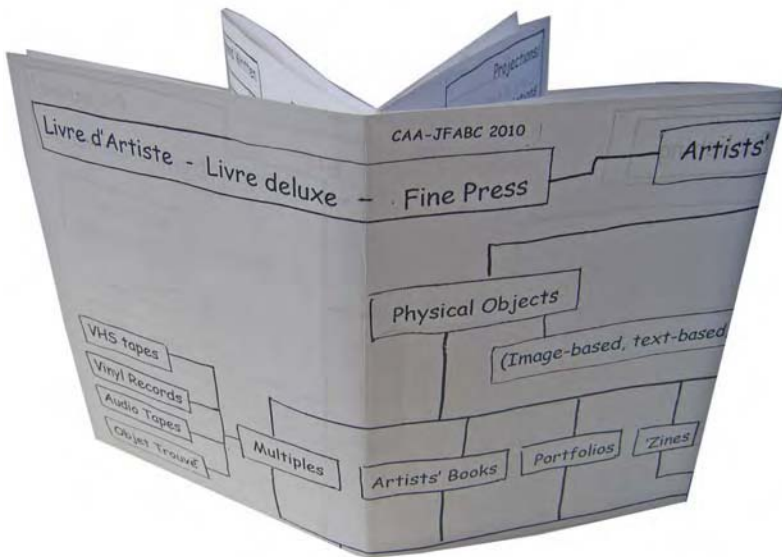
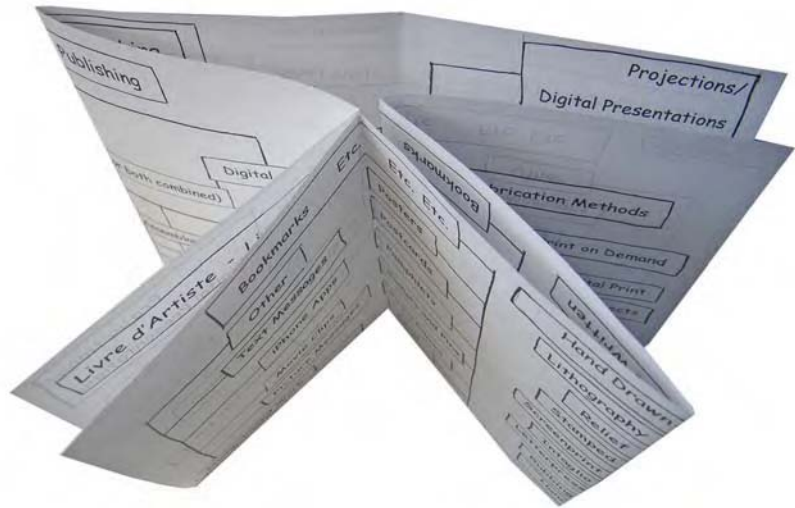
R – But what I do agree with is the idea that the Internet, or work that exists in a digital format invites participation, it's a heightened level of participation. Books you handle them, it's an intimate situation at the same time. But at the same time I think the artists' book, largely those from the past, have become in some way fetishistic. Objects that were this subversive act outside of the gallery system, but now these things have been appropriated and they are part of the gallery system.

S – Like with the Ruscha books, they were like three dollars originally, but now they're so expensive.

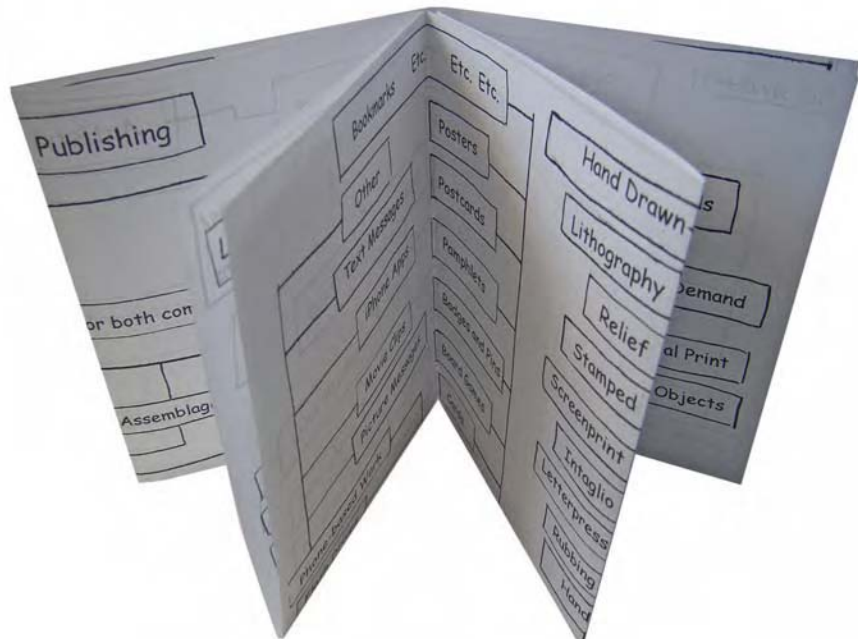
D – The publisher in the end went bankrupt because he couldn't make money; he literally had to stop publishing Ruscha's books.

S – And we saw them, how much were they at Frankfurt at the book fair?

T – One was 3,000 Euros, around about that sort of price.



An updated ABTREE diagram sent by Doro Böhme from the Joan Flasch Artists' Books Collection in 2010, which can be cut and folded to make a reversible book. See the last page of this interview.



A – Whereas I think at least the philosophy of conceptual art still exists within the means of digital format. Here's this thing you can't necessarily put a price tag on. It's sort of ephemeral information.

Elissa Papendick – I wonder what happens though when you print it out, how has that changed the form. Is that successful as a printout or is it only successful in the art form that an artist made it, which was online?

T – Yes, we also met a Polish artist, Radoslaw Nowakowski, who is working with hypertext, so really can only exist online. He particularly likes it because he likes that unpredictability of it, there's no set pathway through the text, and really he can only achieve that with hypertext – he couldn't achieve that with the printed book.

S – We were saying it was impossible to print out. His friend tried to do it, and he had one sentence that just went right across for ever and ever and ever.

E – Ah, see that's good, because that way you can't have a permanent copy of it.

S – No.

E – I like that.

T – And he's also distributing it for free, because it's just available on his website, which is quite a nice

A – That's another thing, the artists who let you download pdf's of their books, that's exciting.

S – So does anyone have any opinions on what they don't think an artists' book is? Anything that some people are saying are artists' books and you think, no actually they're not? For instance we've been looking at things that people with phone, Bluetooth, phone, texts, e-books, hypertext. Does that still fit into your world of what a book is?

R – I think it has to and I really think that that's one of the most beneficial experiences of working here. My vocabulary has broadened in some way, you know, just through experience and helping to catalog material that falls under this umbrella – as you have it defined in artists' publishing, but we'll just say artists' books, for the sake of eloquence. I think that there has to be some flexibility in terms of a definition, in order to progress. In order to leave a pathway open for change in the future.

A – I think there should be a definite relationship with media. In the 60's books were a commercial,

cultural production, which is a cultural production of it's time. We still obviously make books and printed publications currently, but I think a relationship to, as media progresses, Bluetooth, the internet or whatnot is an appropriate relationship. I don't know if this is a preference of mine or if this is my definition of artists' books, but I think that the individual hand made book occupies a really awkward space. I don't think it carries the same spirit of publishing and artists' books than somebody who embraces media. I'll probably leave it at that being a preference, but I stand by the fact that I think that this is printed material, or printed media, and that could be just two or it could be two thousand or the internet, but I think that it should be an immediate process.

S – We heard somewhere that because of internet publishing and e-readers and everything else, the pressure has been taken away from the book as a physical object, to be the carrier of the world's knowledge, so that it could be just a book again and people could really think about which book they wanted or whether the book was worth being made. It made the physical book much more special because then you didn't get all the terrible books being published, they could just be on the net and you could download them.

T – One thing I'm interested in is what are your backgrounds in? Are you all students?

R – Currently students in the printmaking department, in the print media department.

A – I'm also a graduate student in the print media department.

E – I'm in the art history and arts administration dual-degree programme, and I was a cataloguer before I came here; there's definitely interest in libraries but specifically in artists' books.

S – It seems like the print media programme is a really strong course to be on for books.

R – On that course, just as we're discussing here, there's a lot of different opinions of what a book is or what a book should be, or what's a good book or what's a bad book. There are courses in publishing and offset printing, there's also bookbinding, which is very different. Whereas letterpress is in a completely different department.

S – Really?

A – Right, that's part of the visual communications department.

D – There are four courses offered within Printmaking and labelled ‘artists’ books’. Depending on the instructor they really teach practical skills as well as the history and concept, some more skill-focussed than others.

R – There’s also exploratory thematic classes like a course called ‘book material-form and structure, Sally (Alatalo) taught that. And you’re right, the fibres department teaches courses in book making and zines and screen printing.

A – There are two or three art history classes that have a relationship towards this, with artists’ books as art, text as art or related phenomena.

S – That’s good.

D – In general I get to see more books that have been made in the visual communications or in the writing departments than in the printmaking department.

R – I think so too, yeah.

A – Yes, I agree.

E – There was a woman who was just in here who was taking a painting-bookbinding class. I hadn’t heard of that class before.

T – So are books a feature across most of the courses here?

A – Well, I know that in the first year programme, as a freshman, there’s a research studio class where they all come through here (the Joan Flasch collection in the library) and they all have to fulfil a book related project.

T – So that’s more about the research side of it than production.

R – Right, they do accomplish a book project in that class, but it’s a research studio class.

S – But you do actually learn about the contextual history of artists’ books as well, it’s not just that you learn how to make them, you also learn why they exist and everything, that’s good.

A – We have a really open curriculum, no one’s going to force you to make a book, but you could spend four years only making books – it’s really open.

S – That’s really nice because you’ll find in a lot of places you’ll be taught how to make it, how to print it, how to bind it, but not necessarily anything about why it’s there in the world in the first place.

T – But then also you’ve got such a fantastic resource here to refer back to.

S – Yes, that’s true – how could anyone not know what an artists’ book was by the time they’ve come through – it’s a good way to do it, get them in the first year and then keep...

E – Yeah, and then a lot of the classes just keep coming again and again.

R – It is pretty fascinating, it becomes this crash course in what special collections is, it creates a really great mood of research and practice, knowing what’s available to you as a student.

S – I think one hour in here as a first year and I’d have just been in here all day every day.

E – With some of the first years who come in here, they don’t know what it’s about or how to interact with the books - it’s very surprising.

S – So when you come here as students, do you come straight from high school to university?

R – That’s pretty normal, that’s not an unusual way of doing it.

E – There are people who do take a few years off, but they are usually an anomaly.

S – But then they’re taking their years off to go and do anything, not to have a foundation.

R – But I think what you’re discussing is like a core studio practice maybe. As a freshmen or a sophomore you’re taking really general classes within various modes of practice and by the time you reach your junior year, at that point maybe you branch out and have a focus. As Andrew already pointed out, this school is interdisciplinary as a philosophy, so it’s not really guiding you in any way or holding your hand, in the sense that who will be a sculptor, and who will be in fashion. You do have some flexibility in terms of what all your practices will include.

S – So really I suppose there’s no reason to think that anybody, before they get that first year research class through here, would know what an artists’ book was. You wouldn’t know that when you’re at school or anything?

D – You could, if you had a really good high school teacher. We’re teaching summer programmes for high school teachers, we’re having high school classes come in here during the semester, and I’m going into public

schools with selections of books.

S – So it is a possibility then?

D – Yes, definitely.

S – Because I think in Europe that probably isn't.

T – I think it's quite alien to a lot of people when they first encounter them, and they don't really encounter them at all until they reach University level.

S – No, although they do at Minnesota.

T – Yeah, that's great. We've just come from Minneapolis and at the centre for book arts there they work with kids from three, upwards. So they know what artists' books are from quite a young age.

D – Chicago doesn't have anything like Minneapolis and New York, a centre for book arts. Columbia (College Chicago) offers community classes, and I'll be teaching one in the spring as part of the continuing studies programme here. Anyone can take such a class, but there is little else in regards to artists' books specifically.

S – But then you've got a lot of universities here, haven't you? I mean we noticed that, walking around yesterday, there are so many departments of every college, every other building is a university, so I suppose you don't need a centre if you've got your collection, the museum's got a collection...

D – Except that it's hard for the general public to take classes in these institutions. They can come in here to view work, but they don't have access then to any printmaking facilities.

S – And it's whether they know. I think obviously the centre at Minneapolis was so big and successful because there wasn't anything else like it.

T – I think they're quite exceptional as well; I haven't come across anything else like it that does that.

A – Getting back to your question about exposure to books, I think the biggest surprise is that artists' don't necessarily work within a gallery structure all the time, and that these aren't just reproductions of works that have been in galleries or museums, or in a studio, but that the work can exist in this format. I think that might be the biggest surprise or the light that turns on in someone's head as they have exposure to artists' books.

R – I do notice, just in introducing this collection to younger classes that come through, it's that very point

that these are not reproductions or evidence of some other art practice, but that this is the art. And then it becomes this different way of engaging with the work.

A – And you're touching it, and you're experiencing it.

S – Right. You're not going to get this with any other kind of work, are you, especially in a gallery, you're not going to go up and touch everything.

E – Yeah, I think that's really important.

T – Do you think digital has freed up book arts in any way? Just the ease of producing a book now, you could do it at home, it doesn't take that much equipment in order to be able to print?

R – I'm noticing that a lot more students are creating a lot more zines, and are creating their own artist's book work, and removing the stigma of self publishing. Self publishing is becoming ever easier in some way.

T – Has the quality gone down, though?

R – Right, right, right.

A – With Microsoft Office and Creative Suite, we're all printers and publishers and designers and editors, and about twenty years ago maybe that wasn't the same relationship people had to printing. Like the fact that we have a printer right here and that I can just print something on a whim is really different than it used to be.

R – Do you have a written definition of an artist's book?

S – I think it's an artist's book if the artist who made it says it's a book.

T – Actually there's a bit of an argument going on, well, a very small argument. We've got a forum running as part of the project we're working on, and we've been talking about this and both of us, I think, come from that viewpoint of if an artist says it's a book, it's a book. But there are a lot of people who don't like that.

S – But we're just trying to start lots of arguments, just to get people's views because obviously not everyone agrees, but sometimes if you're talking to people and they do all agree there's not really much point in doing it. When we have it up online we can't really say some generic statement that everyone's going to go 'yeah, yeah that's fine, that's broad enough to fit me in and them in', so we're trying to be a bit more argumentative on the forum, hoping that we get some strong reactions for and against so that it actually makes more people join in and talk, although we've had a lot of people join the forum

and not actually say anything yet.

D – So you don't think that for example sequencing or a few other basic book parameters will do?

T – I don't often see artists' who haven't worked with that and are then calling their work a book, in fact I don't think I have ever seen that. You often see that when someone is referring to it as a book, the origins are in the book. For example, sequence or narrative. I suppose you could argue then if somebody presented, I don't know I can't think of an example,

S – A potato.

T – Yeah, then I'd like to know why, I'd like them to explain it. And if they were convincing enough, I'd take it.

S – But at the Minnesota Center for Book Arts, they were saying how the tray of cupcakes was a book?

T – Were they?

S – They were just practising explaining books. So the tray was the cover, and the covers of the cupcakes were the pages, and the contents were the cupcakes, and they were saying at this rate we could make anything a book.

D – On that panel about web art that I mentioned earlier [in New York], the first question was if these web works are artists' books, and I think they are not. However, the work still has its value in a collection like ours for other reasons, but I wouldn't think of it as a form of book art.

S – But is it that you wouldn't think of it as book art for the collection, or you wouldn't think of it as book art at all ever, personally?

D – I would think it has its place in this collection, but I wouldn't think of it as book art at all, ever.

S – I think that there are variations on that, some I think, yeah, actually are quite successful web-based books, but some that you're just like, no that doesn't really need to be.

T – I suppose it depends on what it is, because Radoslaw Nowakowski, who we mentioned earlier, he comes from a book background. Originally, it was all done on a typewriter, and could only be produced in small editions, otherwise it would attract the attention of the authorities. From there it has built up and when we interviewed him it was almost like he's been working towards this web-based hypertext work, this is what he's really wanted to do, but he's been waiting for the technology. So I would

still class that really as book arts because of the origins of his work, even though it will only ever exist on the web.

S – But then there is a narrative running through it. It's hypertext but it's a hypertext, novel or artists' book just without a clearly defined sequence.

T – Interestingly, he doesn't class himself as a book artist.

S – No, he says he's just a writer. We say you're an artist. But then he doesn't classify himself as a book artist because of the way other people in Poland perceive book art. When he comes to the UK he's a book artist, and he's actually done fairs alongside us as a book artist, but at home he's a writer. So it's those kinds of things we're looking at for the project. Trying to have some kind of universal language I suppose, something so that someone can say, I'm an X, or that my books are this, and anyone anywhere would understand.

T – Perhaps an impossible task.

D – Yeah, maybe.

S – Well, that's what we're going to propose should happen, we're not going to actually make it happen.

T – Actually if I was going to get rid of a classification from artists' books, it would be the artisan book because so much of what I see there is craft. It's somebody else's text, it's somebody else's images, it's just beautifully produced.

T – And that's the least artist's book to me, out of all of it.

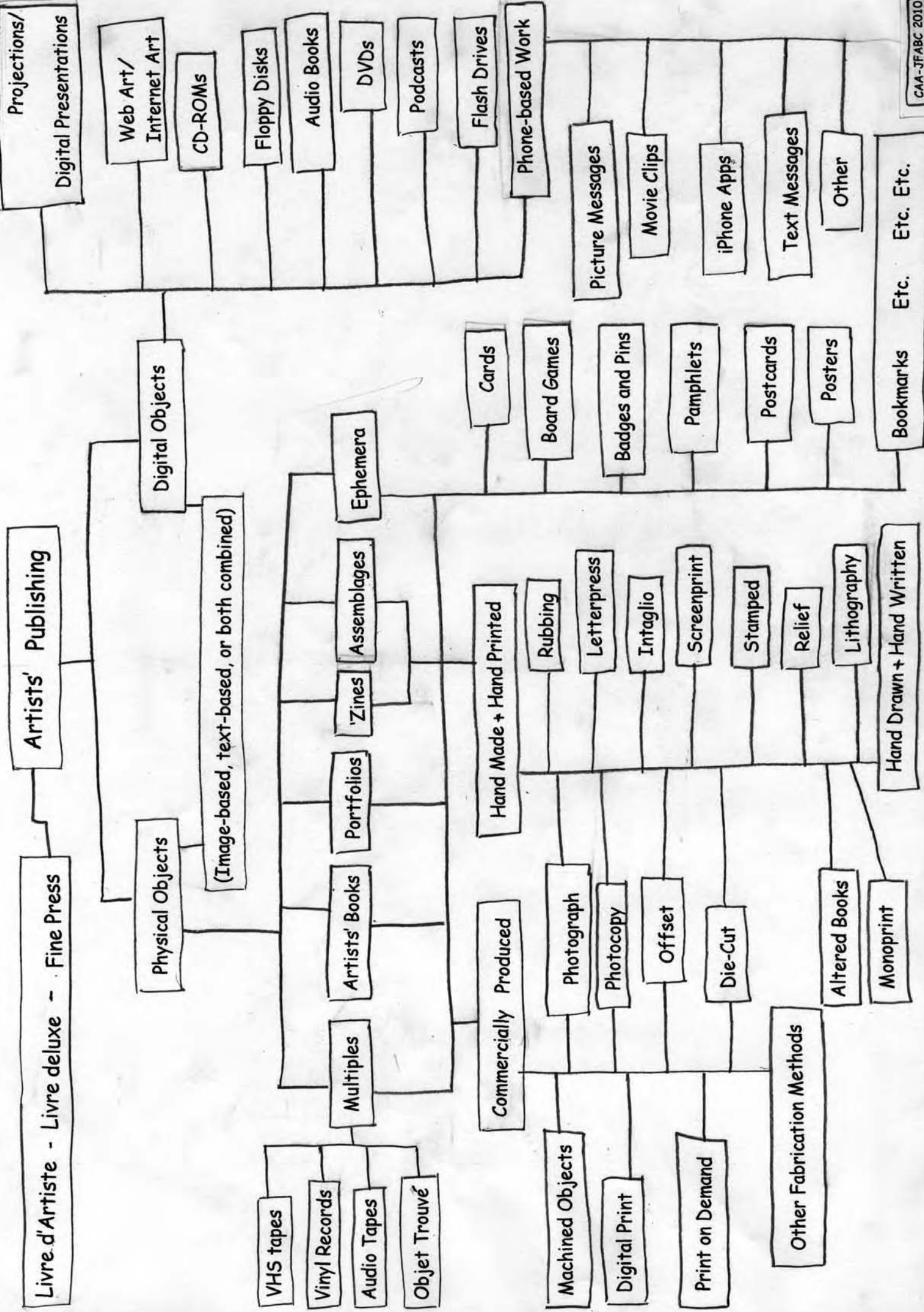
S – But then you're going to get the old school who disagree.

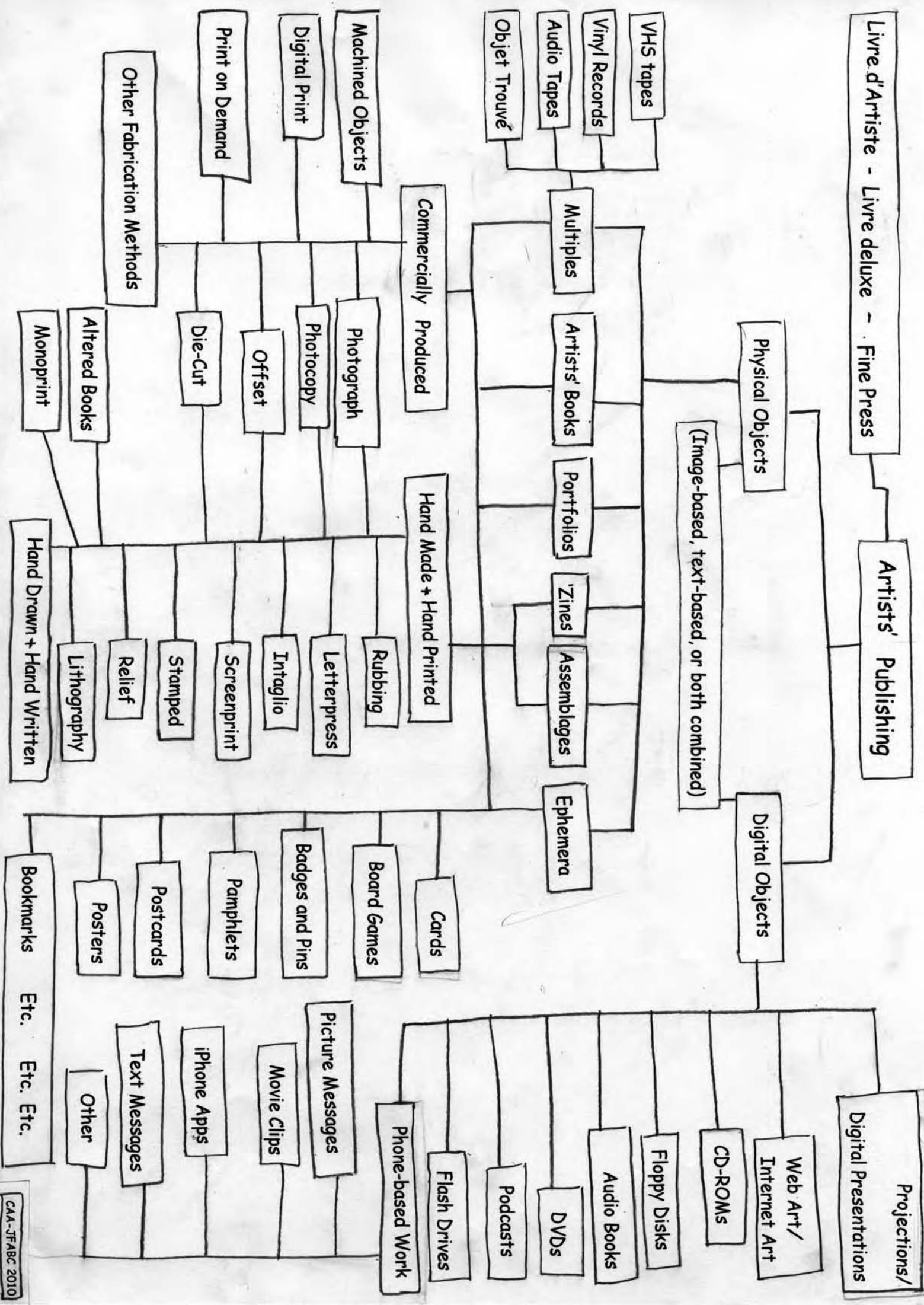
R – Yeah, that's the major argument right there. It's those two camps and what the philosophies were between the two. That is the source of contention.

S – That's not saying if somebody made their own beautiful letterpress book you'd get rid of that, it's just that it is fine press and not an artist's book.

T – For me content is the most important part. In most of the cases the content is there but it's not their content. It's somebody else's and that's where I have the problem.

Joan Flasch Artists' Books Collection contains over 4,000 artists' books, catalogues, multiples, and examples of experimental art forms. You can view the online database at: <http://digital-libraries.saic.edu>





*Interview with Eriko Hirashima founder of
LA LIBRERIA artists' bookshop in Singapore
Tom Sowden, via email July - Nov 2009*

How and why did you start an artist's bookshop in Singapore?

The reason I started LA LIBRERIA was as a natural consequence of my practice. I started it because book arts were not known to people in Singapore and I had some difficulties in both making and finding books. The arts environment was different from in the UK. Pursuing book activities was not easy for me in the beginning because I was a foreigner and didn't have any connections in Singapore. My limited job and academic experiences in the Arts, were also of little help in the beginning.

So I chose to use the business sector to link my interests and background. I adopted a bookshop model as my platform to promote the books and book arts. Although LA LIBRERIA has a bookshop format, it is like a long-term book project for me. The goal of the project is not as important, because I see the process as the work. In addition, the experiences I have gained through the process are the most exciting part. It is this that has become the motivation for me to continue LA LIBRERIA.

How has LA LIBRERIA progressed and how does it operate now?

Unlike galleries or museums in the UK, you don't see many art related books, or even critical art books, in the bookstores in Singapore. LA LIBRERIA started to function as both an alternative art space and an artists' bookshop. The intention was to emphasize the books [as art] by having them placed in 'the art space'. It was also originally located in between two major art schools to appeal to art students.



The first LA LIBRERIA space.

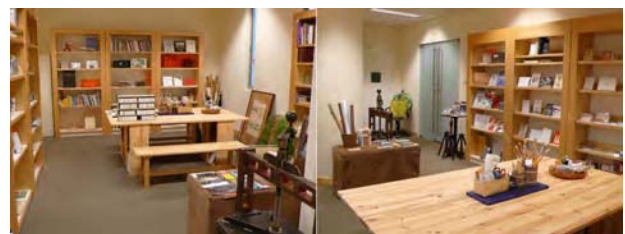
My initial intention was just to let people experience the books in LA LIBRERIA before talking about book arts. The idea of the alternative space was actually quite helpful so gradually people became more interested in the idea of artists' books, though their idea of book arts was slightly different from mine. In the 5 years since starting LA LIBRERIA it now carries more local and regional artists' books, as well as books from Europe

and the US in the shop. After the shop was relocated inside the National University of Singapore museum, LA LIBRERIA has concentrated more on the making of books. In its new location, the art space has been replaced by a workshop space and holds bookbinding workshops regularly.

Books for the shop are normally taken on consignment and LA LIBRERIA is trying to support more local and regional artists. As there is little attention paid to environmental issues in Asia, LA LIBRERIA uses regionally made wood-free papers and recycled papers in the book making classes. At the moment, I am doing everything alone, so there are limitations to what I can do. I really want to find someone who can support and work together with me towards the same goals in Singapore.

What is your selection policy at LA LIBRERIA?

I try to choose a variety of artists' books for the shop because I feel I have to show or introduce many types of books. I assume that these books contain a variety of elements and push the boundaries of the form. I am perhaps more interested in the concepts and the techniques used in making of the books and book-like formats. LA LIBRERIA stocks limited editions, exhibition catalogues, mass publications such as 'zines as well as handmade one-off books.



The new LA LIBRERIA space at the University Cultural Centre

You talk about La Libreria as a long-term book project with the goal not being important. How far into the process do you think you are? Is there a goal at all, or is it only the process?

The reason why I said the goal was not as important is because I can't predict the future shape of LA LIBRERIA and I think it is better to investigate what I can do in each situation. Therefore it is difficult for me to see how far away the ending is from here. This [LA LIBRERIA] project has been working in an inexperienced environment and I have had to learn and understand the local culture at the same time. The goal is the result of the process of the project. The achievement of the project will not be determined by me. In short, I expect to see possibilities of growth in book arts in Singapore from this process. This goal will lead me to the next phase in the project.



With your relocation into the University museum do you now feel that you are moving away from the business sector?

It feels the same in some ways, because LA LIBRERIA uses a business format, but I feel the activities of LA LIBRERIA are becoming more educational after I moved into the University museum.

As LA LIBRERIA has moved from having an art space to more of a workshop, which do you think has had the greatest impact on the appreciation of book arts in Singapore? Are you now having an impact on education?

Most of the participants in my binding workshop see the books more as crafts works, which is a limited perspective for book arts. On the other hand, the art space was good for showing a variety of books had a marginally better impact on the public. I am wary of just throwing the books out there without context and I think doing both workshops and small talks/seminars may get better results. Because of the activities of LA LIBRERIA, I have been given opportunities to teach and conduct workshops on book arts in two of the three universities here. I hope what I am doing is having an influence educationally and artistically in Singapore.

With your new location and with you working in universities, is the audience for artists' books and the number of people producing books continuing to grow in Singapore and the region?

I think that it is gradually growing in Singapore. My experience is with Singapore, I can't speak for the entire region. As far as the new location is concerned, the bookshop is not easily accessible for a general public, but I feel it is a suitable location for the workshop space.

It is interesting that most of LA LIBRERIA's book customers are either from the university or people who already have relationship with the museum. The people who attend my book making workshops are more from the general public.

How has LA LIBRERIA impacted on your practice?

I have come to understand the differences between the creative mind and the business mind. Although LA LIBRERIA started as a part of my book art project, over time marketing has acquired more weight so I can no longer simply look at this as an art project.



Do you continue to produce your own artist's books or do you find that LA LIBRERIA has taken over and even become your practice?

Yes, I do. I will continue to produce actual books.

LA LIBRERIA can be seen as part of my overall book project and my experiences with LA LIBRERIA have informed my book art practice, giving me a different point of view. In my view, my book works and LA LIBRERIA are in line with each other.

They can be seen as part of a long term process, but the LA LIBRERIA phase can also be seen as a completed work.

What is the immediate future for LA LIBRERIA? Do you have any plans on how you will be taking it forward?

The next phase for LA LIBRERIA is to organise an artists' books show in Singapore this year, showing works by Japanese and Singaporean artists. This event will be the first step to raise the profile of book arts in Singapore. It will be an opportunity for local book artists and the general public to know more about book arts from different cultures.

Looking at what you produce, and what you distribute through LA LIBRERIA, is there any limit to the definition of an artist's book?

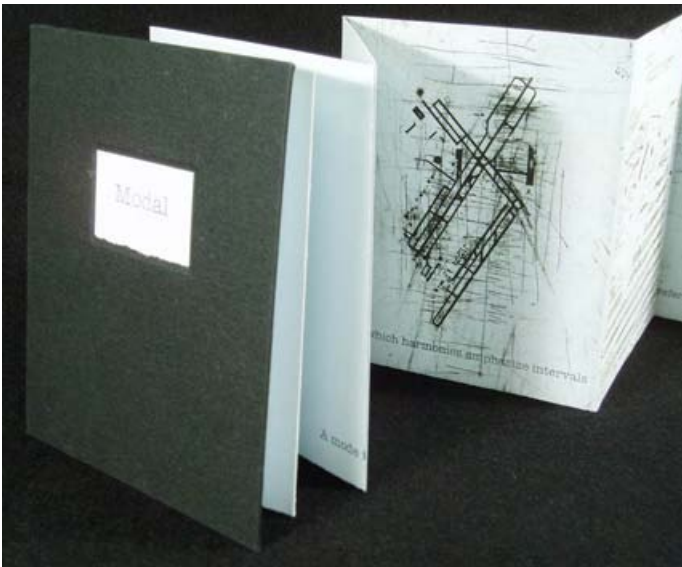
To survive in business, LA LIBRERIA had to maintain a vague position. As a bookshop I deal with book works that fit within the size of the bookshelves in the shop. Previously when LA LIBRERIA had the alternative space, I was able to showcase a wider range of artists' books.

And finally, do you have any concerns for the future of the artist's book, primarily in Singapore, but also in general?

The background of book arts is already complex. The nature of the book has the ability to involve multiple fields. New technology may help to generate new ideas but artists' books are created by the artists. The future of the form is in their hands.

The direction of book arts in Singapore is very open. Singapore is a good location to link with other South East Asian countries. Therefore, it may have unique possibilities in the future. However, there is a lack of appreciation for teaching traditional techniques in art education right now. For instance, the art schools in Singapore are just beginning to have printmaking or book making facilities, therefore most students don't have a chance to gain a physical understanding of book making.

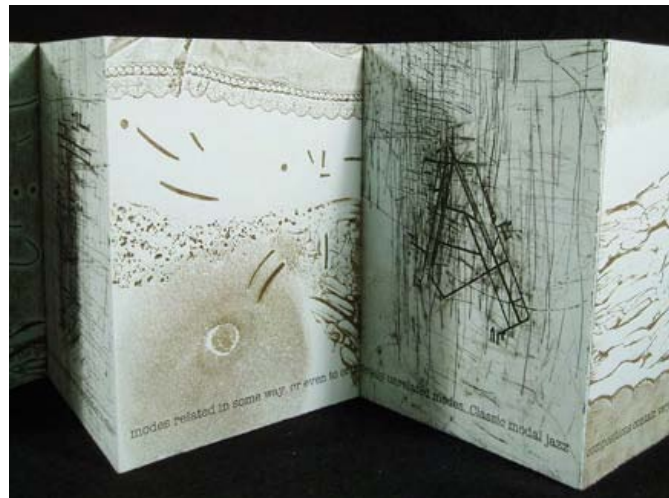
LA LIBRERIA
University Cultural Centre
NUS Museum, Level 3
50 Kent Ridge Crescent
119279
Singapore
www.lalibreria.com.sg



Modal, 2007

5.25 x 6.75 x .75 inches closed; 56 x 6.75 x 5 inches open.

Collaborative artist's book with Charlie Cohan. Intaglio (drypoint and photoetch, Cohan) and relief collograph (Risseuw) with xerox transferred text on Magnani Pescia blue paper with black cloth covered board covers. Edition 6. Colophon states, "The Kind of Blue" (1959) album by Miles Davis, with John Coltrane, Cannonball Adderley, Bill Evans, Wynton Kelly, Paul Chambers, and Jimmy Cobb is an example of classic modal jazz. "There will be fewer chords", Davis told them, "but infinite possibilities as to what to do with them." Modal was collaboratively created and produced by Charles Cohan and John Risseuw in loving tribute to Davis' achievement, in Cortona, Italy, during July 2007, using drypoint intaglio and relief on Magnani Pescia blue. Paul Chambers, after "All Blues" was recorded in one take, said, "Damn, that's a hard mother."



Interview with John Risseeuw

Sarah Bodman and Tom Sowden 24/09/08



Born in Wisconsin in 1945, John L. Risseeuw received his BS, MA, and MFA degrees in printmaking from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1968, 1972, and 1973, respectively. He has been involved in book arts since 1967. He has taught art at Arizona State University since 1980, when he came to establish book arts courses within the printmaking area as well as a book arts press. Previously, he taught at the University of South Dakota and the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

At ASU, John teaches courses in Fine Printing & Bookmaking, Papermaking, Artists' Books, and Photo Processes for Printmaking. He is the proprietor of his own Cabbagehead Press and Director of ASU's Pyracantha Press. His prints and books, many on handmade paper, have been exhibited nationally and internationally in over 400 competitive, solo, and invitational exhibitions. His work is in public collections in London, Budapest, The Hague, Montreal, Edmonton, Offenbach am Main, Oxford, Birmingham, Shanghai, Xian, Chengdu, Washington, New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Atlanta, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Seattle, New Haven, and numerous university libraries.

Over four decades, John's art has often touched on political and social themes, including political corruption, equal rights, environmental abuse, fascism, illegal wars, arms proliferation, and sheer idiocy. Recent prints on handmade paper about landmines and the detritus of war are generating fundraising for agencies that assist mine victims and work for mine clearance.

Sarah Bodman – Maybe if we could start with how you teach. Do you have students who come in specifically to make artists' books or print?

John Risseeuw – The students who are coming to the programme not in classes you mean? Because we offer a slightly different structure to you. We offer classes, and they're very media oriented classes. So you take a class in lithography, or intaglio, or screen print. I teach one class that's called fine printing and bookmaking, which is basically a letterpress class that includes some simple book structures. The students begin the semester learning the fundamentals of letterpress, typesetting and press operation, and through the term I introduce them to the simplest book forms, so that when they get to the end they always have to execute a final project in letterpress, and if they choose to do it in book form then they can do.

S – So it could be a print.

J – It could be a series of prints or broadsides, or it could be a simple book. Quite a few of them do.

Tom Sowden – Where are these students from? Are they coming from all different courses and just taking this class?

J – They are. My classes are offered within the printmaking division of the School of Art, but they are available to students from all media. Our students identify themselves by area, in the undergraduate students are doing a Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) in printmaking, drawing, intermedia, ceramics, sculpture, photography and so on. But my classes have always been open to all students. In fact they're open to students outside of the School of Art. In my university, graphic design used to be part of the School of Art but it moved about 15 years ago to what was then the College of Architecture, and became the College of Design – they renamed it, restructured it. So they're part of the pre-professional programmes in the College of Design, and I've always had graphic design students come to take my class. Their instructors encourage them. But it's not a requirement for them, it's an elective.

In addition to that I also have students from the creative writing programme and the English Department. Some of them are encouraged to come and take my class. In our History Department we have a certificate programme in scholarly publishing. These are masters or PhD students in history, and sometimes in English, who are intending to go to work for small presses or university presses as editors or production assistants and things like that. So they come and take my class. Many of them have never had an art class before and they learn to print



One Night 1997

5" x 7" closed; 17" x 7" open. Artist's book. Letterpress. 8 pp.

Edition 28 on Amora with handmade paper covers; 12 on various handmade papers by the artist.



and they learn to design a page and do it all. The result is that every term my class has a different composition, and it's always a blend of students who are visually oriented and text oriented in different ways. They're all coming to the same medium for different reasons, which gives the class a very rich texture.

S – I bet it does.

J – The exchanges that the students have between themselves are sometimes quite entertaining.

S – So when they come to class will many of them know what an artists' book is before they start?

J – Well here's an interesting thing that might be a slight fine point. I also teach a class called artists' books and that one is a non-printing class where I teach book structure and binding techniques, and the students make mostly one of a kind books, and it's much more of a conceptually based class. It's technique in that they have to learn binding and folding and structure, but then they do seven or eight books through the term. They start out by making what we call an origami book because it's one piece of paper folded that makes a book. So the very first book they make is made like that, and then they make a simple codex. Later they have to make an accordion book. So those books are based on structure and they have to develop content that's appropriate for those structures.

That class also always has a mix of students from different disciplines, so if they happen to be printmaking students and have access to the print studios they may well do their books in editions and they get extra credit for that. If they've had my letterpress class before they can also use the studio to do that, but they also may be photo students with access to the digital lab, or they may simply have good digital skills and so they may do that. But the medium of the bookmaking they do is up to them, it's not part of the instruction of the class. I'm talking about ideas and structures. Another book that they have to do in that class is a book on a copy machine. So the structure is up to them, but they have to make a book that utilises the concept of copying and multiples and even some of the things that a copy machine can do like reduce and enlarge and copy of a copy and degradation and things like that. So they have to come up with book content that somehow plays off the multiple copy machine. Then from that project they do an edition so that everyone in the class gets a copy.

S – Oh that's a great idea.

J – They also do an altered book in that class, which is a real stretch for some students.

S – It is hard work though, if you haven't done it before, because they start thinking oh, yes, I can do this, and then 25 pages in when they realise there's another 200 to go.

J – That's right, and they're altering what their technique is. Some altered books can take two or three years.

S – When you say they are working with the concept as well, are they getting classes? Are you teaching them how to marry concept and context with format, so they're not just floundering around by themselves?

J – My classes are all considered upper division classes for third and fourth year undergraduates, or for graduate level students. So presumably they've had conceptual training in a number of classes before they get to my class, so they shouldn't be floundering too much.

T – Do you find then that the students, because you were saying that different students have different access to facilities, that they do produce a very broad range of books?

J – Yeah.

T – Quite traditional I suppose, by traditional I mean like letterpress, and utilising digital technology as well, so there's quite a broad spectrum.

J – Yeah. Students who are in the fibres area, for instance, may be screen printing, they make books out of cloth, because that's their inclination. So it varies a lot.

S – Do they get classes in history of book arts?

J – No, I give it in that class.

S – Because otherwise they wouldn't have it?

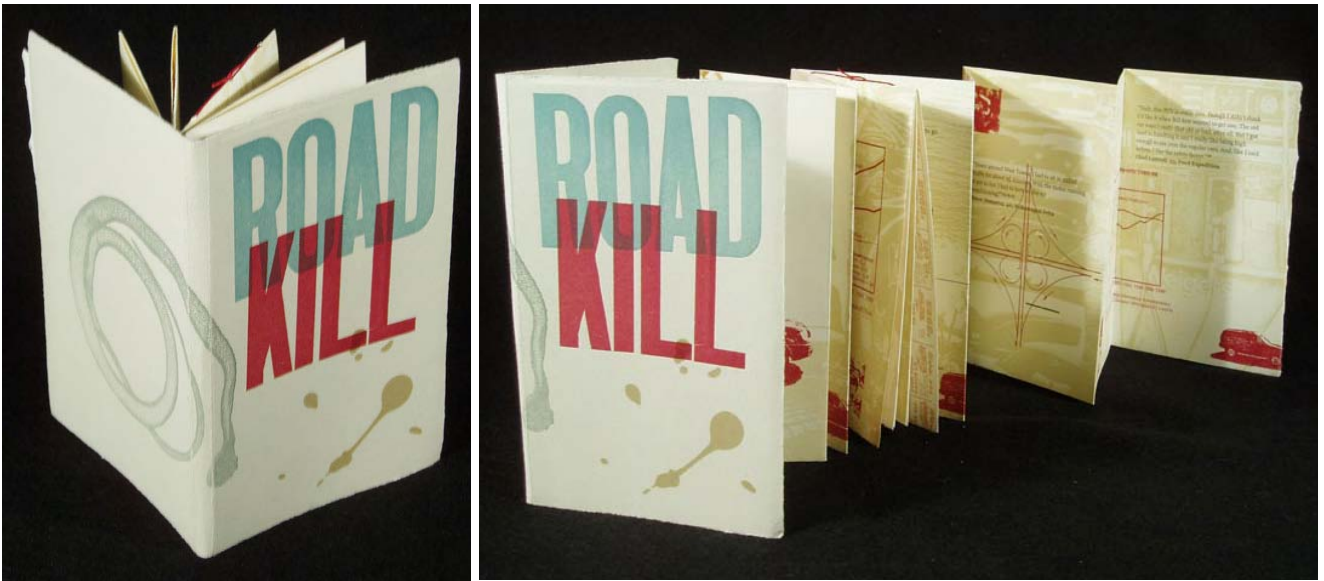
J – Exactly. I teach history in all of my classes. I teach it in the fine printing class, when I teach paper making I teach the history in that one.

S – But when most of them come to you they probably haven't made an artists' book before then?

J – It's turning out now that they have.

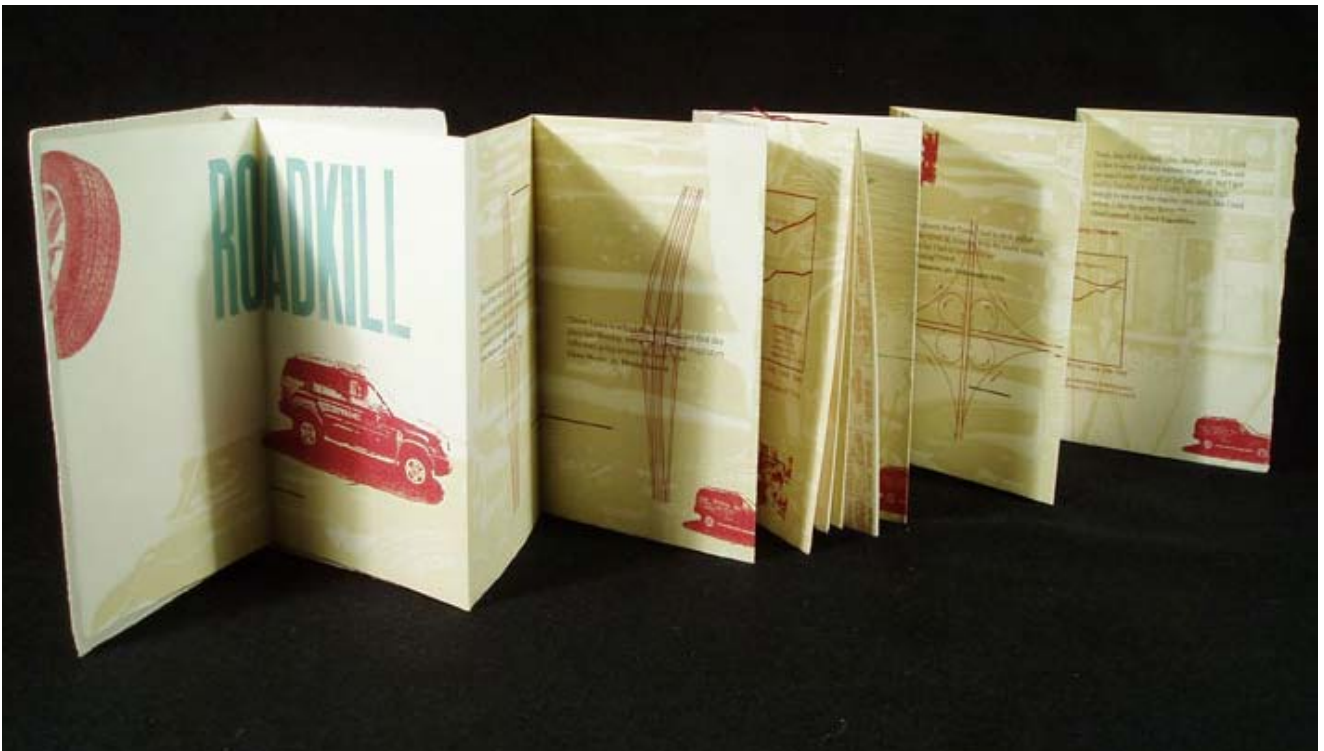
S – Ah that's good.

J – Partly because in our programme our graduate students are teaching assistants for the foundation classes for first year students. Basic design and drawing and so on. When the printmaking students teach those courses they always work some print techniques, and quite often books, into the assignments for the classes. Grad students



Roadkill 2001

4.5" x 7" closed; 36" x 7" open. Collaborative artist's book with Beauvais Lyons and John Nolt. Plate lithography, letterpress, and screenprint on Rives heavyweight (text) and Rives BFK gray (cover). 5 runs lithography, 5 runs letterpress, 3 runs screenprint. A complex accordion structure with a hidden codex section, glued on one edge into the paper cover. Edition 50.



from other disciplines may or may not do that.

S – So it's really a trickle down of what you've taught is then feeding back to you.

J – Yeah, but I'm getting more and more students now who have made books in some basic courses, or somewhere they've been exposed to bookmaking.

S – Do you think that they've got any kind of awareness of the history and what goes on in the world of artists' books before they get to you?

J – No. They know it as a technique but they don't know anything else.

T – Do many continue to produce books as well?

J – They do. My fine printing class has a second term to it, so once they've got that basic introduction they can take it a second time. And in that class, because they've already learnt what to do, they concentrate on making two book projects in the term, one small one and one large one. They basically spend the whole term designing and creating two books. Sometimes then they'll even study with me independently after that.

S – Is that as part of the press or just the class?

J – That's not part of the press, that's separate. We do utilise the advanced students, in fact I require the advanced students to give us at least a certain number of hours of assistance. So when we're on the press, or binding or doing other things, they are seeing us do that, because I think they learn a great deal just by watching, but you have to force them.

S – (Laughs) Force them to watch you work?

J – Yeah, we do that. But sometimes when we say we have a press at the school people mistakenly assume that the output of the press is created by students, and so I have to be clear about that. There are a few schools where they do that and the students are creating publications as part of their studies. And there's value in that. But for me it's very hard to maintain quality, and the standards that we have in our press.

S – Sure. No I always assumed your press was just dealing with artists' and writers and the students did in class, but I'd have thought most presses were like that, here anyway. I wouldn't assume that they would publish student work. It would be pretty amazing to get a press to print a student's work.

J – Yeah. I never publish student work.

S – So how long has the press been going independently?

J – The press at the university – I formed it in 1982.

S – Did that just happen, or did it happen for a reason?

J – No, I was hired in 1980. They created a new faculty position and the chair of the department at that time, it was a department of art, we later became a school of art, the chair became a director, same thing. So the chair was a printmaker at that time, and the dean of the college was a printmaker. Jules Huller. The two of them decided that they wanted to add a book arts faculty position to the printmaking faculty. So they just created it. This is actually a really important point, because almost everywhere else in the States where book arts is done it's sort of evolved. It happened because someone on faculty decided to pursue book arts as their personal interest and they started offering course and so on. But it wasn't institutionalised. It wasn't seen as a medium to establish in the curriculum, and then you hire somebody to come in to do it, which is what these people did. It's pretty unique. It also means that the medium is less fragile at this school than at other ones.

S – Because they've got more of an investment in it.

J – Yeah. Presumably at any point in the last 30 years if I'd have left they would have hired someone else to continue what I was doing.

S – That's pretty good.

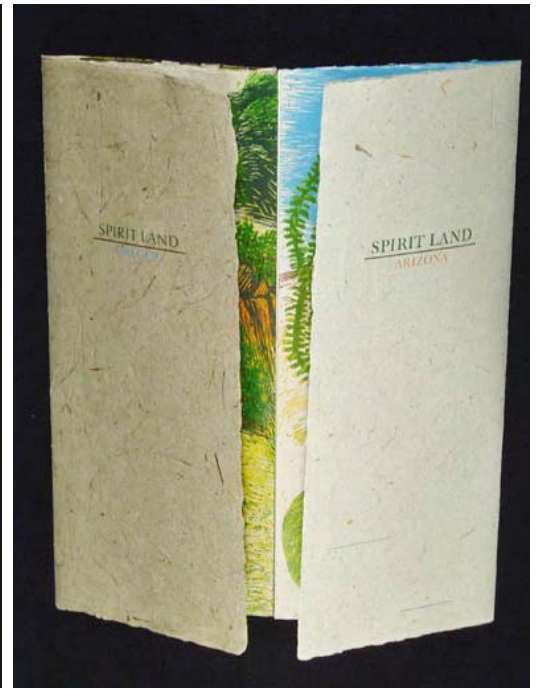
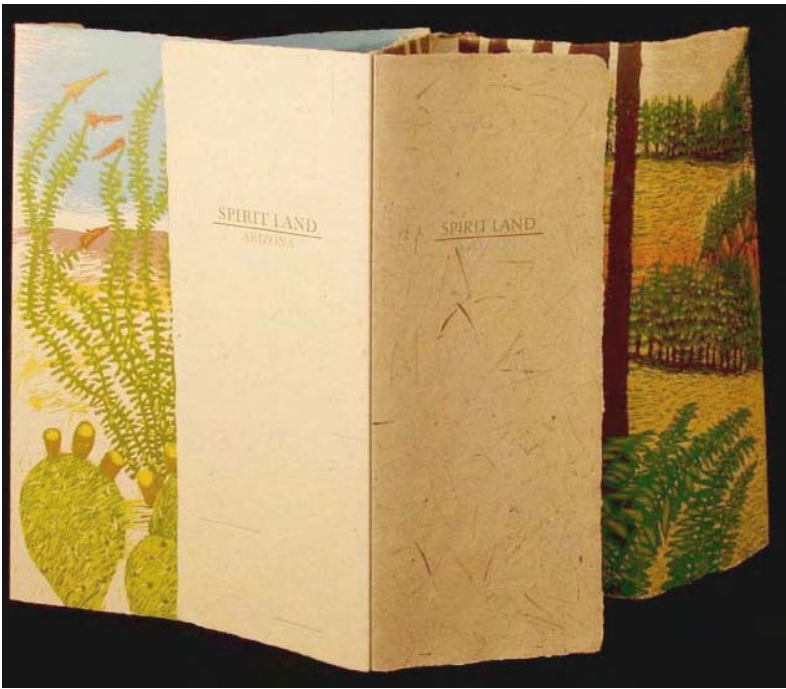
J – It's what I was hired to do, whereas at a lot of other places that person leaves, the press falls, they immediately redefine the position to who they want to hire.

S – I think you find that in a lot of places, it's particular to who's there.

T – Don't you find in those other places where it has grown up with someone already within the institution, it does become part of the curriculum?

J – Eventually it does, yeah, but it's a different process in getting there. Then it's dependant on the individual. If they're really successful, they become recognised, whatever work they do is recognised, then the administrators pay attention and they support it and they insert it into the curriculum. It happens but it's idiosyncratic.

So anyway, before I went there I was at another school, where they hired me to teach graphic design and printmaking. Because of my interest, I set up a letterpress workshop. I got donated presses and type



Spirit Land, 1996

16" x 6" closed; 16" x 28" open.

Collaborative artist's book with Peggy Prentice.

Woodcuts and letterpress on "French Door" style bookform of handmade plant fibre paper. Edition 50.



and equipment, and I was doing it at that school, but it was exactly what we were talking about. When this job position was announced and I applied and got it, part of their charge when I started was to not only provide courses on the curriculum in book arts but to also establish a publishing press. So it took a while to acquire equipment, and get the courses up and running.

S – That’s really nice though, to think you could start from scratch. And they just say right we want this, go and do it.

J – Yeah, and they gave me three years of special capital budget for purchasing the equipment. We had remodelling done to this room and things like that.

S – So with the press, do you have the say over what is produced? How many books a year you publish?

J – Yeah. How many years per book! Because I’m a full time faculty member, I have a full teaching load and I do the press, so the press becomes part of my research. Because they knew what they wanted when they hired me but they didn’t know how it was done, I got to define all of that. When I arrived and started the press, I started doing projects and made it clear that the decision making process was with me. I never set up an editorial board that would end up telling me what I was going to publish, and there are good reasons for doing that in other situations, I just didn’t want to be part of it. At various times I have had disagreements with administrators, and I always felt that if it got to a point where they wanted me to print things I didn’t want to print, I would say you know this is my research, and I’ll do it my way or I don’t have to do it. I’ll just teach my full time classes and do something else, and if you want a press to be done that way then hire someone else. It has never gotten to that point.

T – So do you invite artists to work with you as you’ve got control over all the stages?

J – Yeah.

T – Do you work within a certain style, is there a style to your press?

J – No, it’s constantly evolving. I’ve only brought two books from the press so I can’t show you, but if I had you’d see the first book I printed was a new edition of Shakespeare’s *Venus and Adonis*. It was a classic piece of fine printing, and then you get into the evolution of the artists’ book, part of which comes out of the fine printing tradition, part of which comes out of some other traditions, so I came to it like that. I did that and I did a couple of books of poetry and they were fine

printing and design challenges for me. At the same time as I was doing those, we had a collaborative printmaking studio with a master printer in the school and we had a collaborative photographic studio with a master photographer. Both of them worked with guest artists to do new editions of art in those different mediums. At some point we got together and we decided we’re all doing similar activities, so we combined our studios theoretically and called it the Visual Arts Research Institute. We invited artists to come and collaborate with any or all of us to use any or all of our media. So then there were artists who were doing sets of lithographs and I would do the title page and colophon, and they would be bound. Or we would add letterpress to a print that someone had done of a photograph. One photographer did a series of colour photographs that were mounted on pages and there were letterpress additions at the bottom of each one, and things like that.

These collaborations got more and more complex and elaborate and fun. They were all happening while I was doing some of these more traditional publications, fine printing pieces. We realised at some point that we were no longer just producing new collaborative work, we were actually investigating the process of creativity and collaboration itself, so there’s an archive of interviews of the artists that we worked with, and all of the archive material produced for each of those projects. So you can see how the artist thought while they were working.

S – That’s very nice.

J - Then we started writing grants. We applied for an NEA grant for dual artist collaborations where we brought two people in who would collaborate with each other, and with us, in order to create something. When we brought people in, we told them that they had the luxury and the flexibility to fail, because we treated this as research and research doesn’t always produce a product. Certainly not a product that will necessarily sell. So we did have some collaborations where nothing was produced, but quite often those artists would go back to their studios, use whatever they had done with us and produce new work later.

S – Yeah, that is still important because you were the people who set them off on that track in the first place.

J – Exactly. And that’s what university research should be doing.

S – Should be.

J – Partly because all of us had advanced degrees and we were all working artists ourselves, we were moving well beyond the traditional hierarchical structure of

collaboration where you've got the artist-thinker and the technician. None of us were comfortable with that model any longer. So our ideas were becoming parts of the collaboration with people. We finally decided that what we wanted to do was to start establishing the context for collaborations, and then bring artists in to do work under those ideas. Instead of simply inviting, or in some cases just taking whoever happened to be a guest artist working in the school that term, and saying if you want to do a print we'll do a print with you.

S – So you're working together and not for them.

J – Yeah, and we're choosing who's going to come. One of the first projects we did was in 1990 with three Hungarians, right after the Soviet block fell apart. It was a poet and two visual artists and all three of them had had their work banned by the state at some point. Our theme that we brought them in to work under was freedom and oppression. So they came and it was the worst collaboration we ever did. It was so difficult. We learned that artists who work under oppression become very difficult people, and they don't share very well, they don't collaborate very well. They wanted us to be technicians but they wouldn't share ideas. It's a really really long story. They also were alcoholic and they smoked a lot and you can't do either on our campus, so after the first two meetings they wouldn't come to campus, and we had to meet elsewhere. The poet sat at the bar across the street from the university drinking and writing new poetry. He actually wrote interesting new poetry which ended up becoming part of our publication, but it was really difficult. It turned out the two artists didn't get along either, and we found out some of this stuff much later.

So that's the kind of direction we were moving in, and then around 1991 there was an economic crisis. State funding dropped greatly and we got a new director who closed the two research facilities, the two collaborative studios. She found that she couldn't actually fire the master printer and the master photographer, that's harder to do than just closing a programme, so their status was changed and they became faculty. They're teaching, but they don't collaborate any more.

S – So does that mean you're the only person there who's doing their own research through the studio, through the press?

J – Yeah. Because the press doesn't have its own room. It's in the same room that I teach in, and because I teach full-time and do the press, they couldn't eliminate it.

S – Because that would mean getting rid of all the class studios too?

J – Yeah, and we just continued. At that point we lost the annual funding that was in the budget for the press, so we fund the press through sales, we are able to keep all of the sales money from selling our books.

S – Does that work, do you actually make enough?

J – Yeah. And we have written grants to support projects.

T – Do you still work under the same sort of model now you haven't got the master printer and the master photographer? Do you come up with the project idea and then invite people in?

J – You know it varies a lot. I said it was evolving and it's a little more peripatetic than that. In 1986 because I was producing these books and teaching, and it was apparent that it was a pretty big stress on my time, they created a staff position for a staff printer to my press. My colleague Dan Mayer joined me, and so it's now the two of us who actually make decisions on what projects we're going to take on.

So, for instance, Dan knew a sound poet and suggested that we should collaborate with her. I agreed and then we invited her in, we had a meeting, talked about it and it looked possible, so we went from there. With another project, there was a Macedonian composer who was visiting the School of Music, and by coincidence I went to Macedonia – I was invited to give a paper at a symposium – and he was there. I met him there and was introduced to his work, then he came the following summer to our School of Music and I saw him again, and we started talking and you know we kind of connected and decided we could do this project. So there isn't any one structure or publishing concept that we work under.

S – It just evolves.

J – Yeah. What's evolved for us is that we no longer want to do things like books of poetry, because there are lots of presses that are doing traditional fine printing. I figure that with our position related to research at a university we should be pushing boundaries and we should be doing new things, so I wanted to pursue this kind of collaboration with people in other disciplines and see what would happen, that we could publish in some way.

I wanted to do a project with a musician and someone in another discipline and see what they'd produce. I had met this guy that taught saxophone, he was one of the top five, maybe the top three, saxophone teachers in the United States. I really liked him and he was really open. I had another friend and he was in mathematics, and the guy in math was really interested but he couldn't commit

to the project. I thought a mathematician and a musician would be a great combination.

So when he dropped out we went to the creative writing department and there was a writer there whose classes I had observed one time and gotten to know. When I asked him he just fell all over himself to join the project, he was so happy. The musician and the writer found they had baseball in common among other things, so in our first meetings they were starting to come up with the idea of maybe writing an opera, and it would be a stage performance. I don't know how we would have ended up actually publishing anything out of it, probably a CD and a book containing that.

Then the writer very abruptly left the faculty and went to another school, and suddenly he was no longer there. Still thought we could do it long distance. He said he was still committed to it so we could do that. Then, last summer I think, the musician retired abruptly because the dean appointed a new director of the school of music who he felt he couldn't work under. He'd been there for so many years he decided he could retire and he did. I'm still pushing these two people to try to exchange ideas and collaborate, but I don't think it's going to happen.

T – Is there a time scale on these projects?

J – No, whatever they take.

S – But it's worth it, isn't it? If it works.

J – Oh yeah. That Hungarian project took four years, they were with us for four weeks in 1990, and in 1994 Dan flew to Budapest with the completed project to get them signed.

S – So when you say if you publish music on a CD and book to contain it and work with it, do you think that the CD could be the book itself? That the book would be on the CD?

J – It's possible, but I think there would always be a container for that CD that would be part of the creation.

T – Is it quite important to you to have the printed element within it?

J – Yeah.

T – You wouldn't abandon that if it didn't suit the project?

J – I would consider it depending on the content, but I'm pretty certain that I'll always find a way to have a printed element.

S – I suppose if you've got the press and that's where you work and that's the way everyone works, then that's obviously what comes out of it isn't it.

J – The tactility of the print and paper is too much a part of my creativity. We were talking for a while about inviting a Canadian poet to work with us. He's done some terrific things that are solely performance, it's voice modulation, sounds and words and so on. It's possible that if that happened, or something like that happened, it would be a recorded piece that would be on a CD or even on a small flash drive or something like that. But that still needs to be presented to people in some way, and if it's a CD we're not going to buy plastic cases and issue it that way.

S – Because they're all so beautifully produced, do you make quite small editions of everything?

J – They vary a lot. One book has an edition of 90 in handmade paper and 115 on commercial recycled paper. Another is 200.

S – So they're fairly large editions then.

J – Not always. The editions of my own books from my own press are generally smaller. One is 50, one is three and another is six.

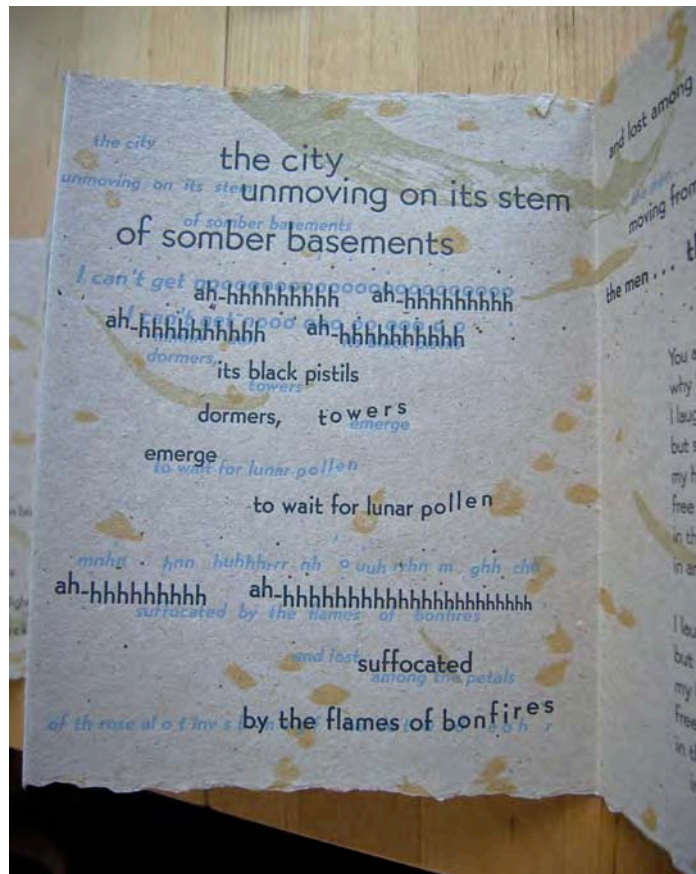
T – Because you were saying selling the books helps fund the press, how do you market the books? Do you have collectors ready to take them?

J – We do. Most of our sales are to university library collections. Marketing is probably our weakest area because we don't have someone who can do the marketing for us, and we're always ready to go on to the next project rather than spend our time doing the marketing. Whenever we finish a project we do promotion pieces such as announcements, postcards or something. Send it to our mailing list, put the book in exhibitions where it gets exposure, and really that's about it.

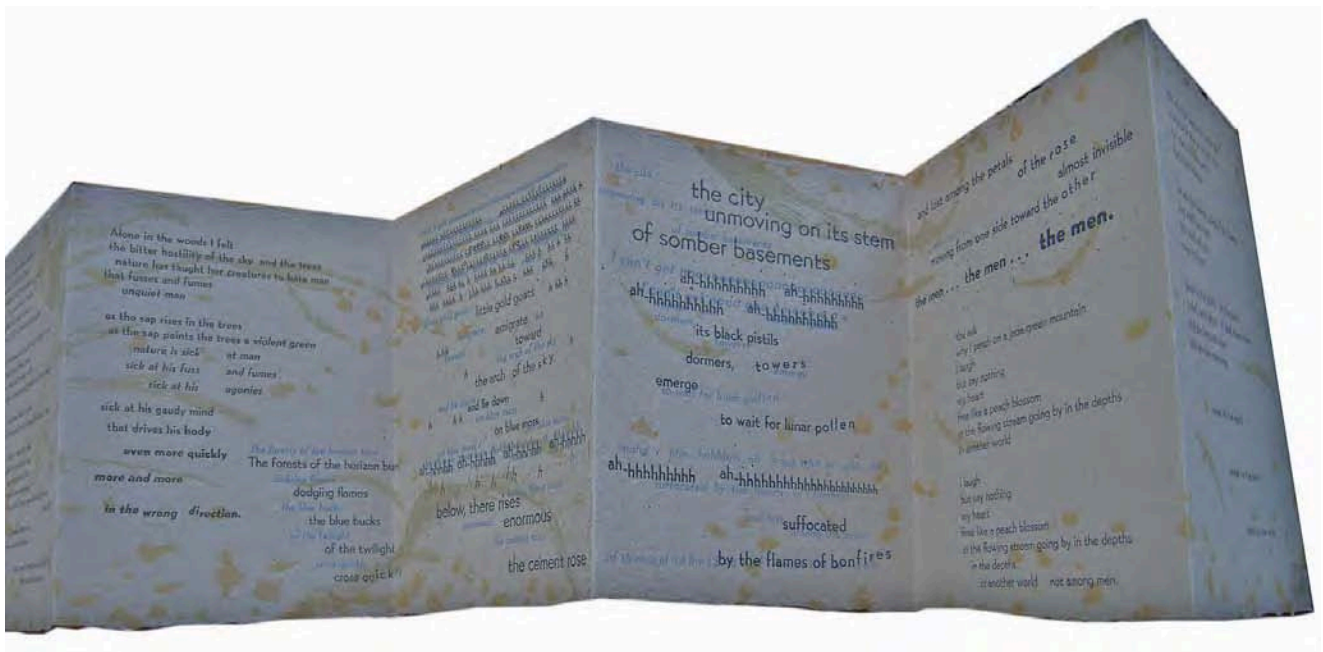
T – But they still sell well?

J – Not all of them, no. We have a couple of books that have sold out but we have almost all of the other ones available, in the back of my office on shelves! Some fine printer, and I don't remember who, said a long time ago you can print and sell 200 hundred copies of almost anything, you just have to find the market for it and do the promotion. But if you want to you can sell out 200 copies of anything.

S – You probably could, but then you'd devote as much



Eco Songs by Dimitrije Buzarovski. 2000. 7" x 5.5". Printed letterpress from handset Palatino and Neuland types and digital Bernhard Gothic with scanned plantforms from polymer plates. Bound at the press and held in a handmade paper slipcase. Edition of 90 on handmade paper, 115 on recycled commercial paper. A song cycle based on poetic works by Chief Dan George, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Stevie Smith, Alfonsina Storni, Li Po, and the Book of Job. An artist's book printed and constructed of five different papers made from plant fibers from around the world. A codex section contains the poems as originally written. An accordion section displays the lyrics in visual typography, followed by a CD of the music. A last section of back matter gives information about the composer Buzarovski, the soprano Nan Hughes, the poets, and a colophon about the making of the book.



time to selling it as you did to producing it.

J – I've known printers who have been very oriented towards the business part of it, marketing and exactly how do you price. They work out all of these formulas. I'm just not fond of that at all.

T – You've got two presses haven't you? The one with the School of Art...

J – And then my own imprint, which I've had since 1972.

T – Is that mainly producing your own work?

J – Yeah.

T – Do you work with other people as well?

J – I've done a few projects with other people and I published a book of poetry under my imprint in the early 80's, but with that going on at school, full time teaching, the time just never allowed me to go further. I was interested but couldn't do it.

T – Would you say your own work falls within the fine press or the artisan category?

J – Those categories get blurred, but probably fine press. I have one book, produced in an edition of two, that is more of an artists' book, but a lot of people looking at it would assume that it's fine press produced. I don't do artists' books from my press that are what I consider to be a sloppy one of a kind things that some people do so well.

S – Where did that come from I wonder? Because it seems to be something that happens a lot, people doing a one-off terrible book. It's really odd for us to understand because we don't really have that tradition over here. You can go to the States and actually see some things that are actually really rather horrible, but really expensive.

J – Oh yeah.

S – What I don't understand is not really how that happened, but how people can continue to make that work, because who's supporting that, who's buying that and encouraging them to make more. If it was one of your students or something you'd be like – don't do it. But it does seem to happen doesn't it? And it's not just the fact that people are making them, it's the fact that people must be buying them.

T – There's a market for them.

J – It's actually pretty complex, the answer to that. Contributing factors come from a couple of different

directions. One of them is, for lack of a better, term the home craft tradition. People doing things at home. They go to craft stores and they buy glitter and they buy yarn and a hole punch and they can make a book. Then they take a weekend class in binding and they learn structures and suddenly they're applying that kind of aesthetic to something that almost looks like an artists' book. I think that another contributor to that is the traditions of the art market, at least in the United States, that favours the unique object over the multiple. We can't seem to get over that, we can't break the gatekeepers' hold on the tradition that comes out of the French academy. The pyramid with painting at the top. There are still people who verbalise a separation between art and craft, where in practice it's completely blurred. I mean that's where letterpress was a craft, is a craft. Paper making, same thing. Yet very few people have problems accepting those as fine art, except for the critics, the gallery owners, the museum curators and directors who still are so strongly out of that tradition that identifies minor arts and major arts. Art that's for the wall is more important than art for the hand.

S – So really if you made you hideous unique book you could say right that's it, it's a sculpture it's not a book, it's an object.

J – Right, they can call it sculpture they can call it an object, and if there's only one of them then it's got value. If it exists in multiple they have the word reproduction hanging around the back of their head, and it diminishes it's value.

S – That's really amazingly backward thinking, because there's so many other people who have moved beyond that in the States.

T – Yeah, and isn't value also based on the idea or the content?

J – Of course, ultimately it is. But value, especially in the States where you have this structure of the art market, it's all driven by money. They just can't move away from that. One of the things that drives the recognition of this kind of work is that gallery owners don't make enough money by selling a \$500 book. If I do an edition of 20 and they sell for \$500 each they don't make enough money from the sale, even if they sell two or three from an exhibition. But if they're selling a one of a kind book and it's selling for \$5000, that's something they're interested in. So it comes down to that very simple bit of economics, and if it's not in the galleries some critics won't see it. If it doesn't have the recognition of being shown in a gallery the critics won't value it, or write about it. So it's a self-perpetuating system.



Cypress & Wind, 2005

6 x 7.5 inches. Collaborative artist's book with Claudia Smigrod. Silver gelatin pinhole photographs on Fabriano paper with hand-written text in a 4-signature German Long-stitch binding with paper-wrapped boards. Edition of 3.



S – Yes, whenever you get anyone writing about artists' book fairs or big events, they don't put it in the arts section it's always in the literary section. Look at these amazing things...

J – I always tell my students that I value multiples. I'm drawn to multiples because I love the process, all of the processes. I love the idea of making multiple art that I can sell more than once and that I can display more than once. I can have a piece that's on display simultaneously in three or four places, and it's collections and the number of people that have access to it is multiplied. For me, that's value. Some of the students who are still forming their aesthetics find that they agree with that, but the reality doesn't support it very well.

S – Do you think people's perception of the book is changing at all in the USA? Or even students and artists?

J – Yeah, I've said for some time now that I can remember 30 years ago if you told someone you made books they said 'what? You can make a book?' Now you can run into someone in the grocery store and you can say you make books and they say, 'Yeah my kid made books at school.' It's worked its way down. So in the public schools, teachers are making books with their young students. Now we've got students entering university having made books before that, and not too long ago that wasn't the case.

T – Is this books as in bookbinding, or is this books as in artists' books?

J – A little broader than that. Having made a book, understanding something about binding structure, putting pages together. It might have been something like putting a book together for a science project or a literature project, or it might have been for an art project. But the fact that an ordinary person can make a book, and that it can have value, and that it can be a piece of art, I think that is what's percolating down.

The other thing that's been quoted fairly often is the number of book artists in the States. In the 1970s it was something like under 300. In the schools that I have taught in, starting programmes from books, teaching students who are going out to other places and starting book programmes, the multiplication in the last couple of decades has just been terrific. You've got these arts centres in many cities where they teach classes, book classes are now constantly part of the curricula in those places.

T – Do you want to talk a bit more about your own work?

J – Well I've realised that all but three of these works [that were on display] are collaborations. I guess that's an important point that we can talk about in different ways. Like I said these two are collaborations because I was teaching in Italy. I talked my colleagues into collaborating because we had our students collaborate. I was teaching a book class and the photo teacher, she and I decided that we would force our students to collaborate with each other on one project.

S – So you felt you should do the same!

J – Yeah, in both cases I said if we're going to have our students do it then we should do it, too. So it's a nice way to make something happen.

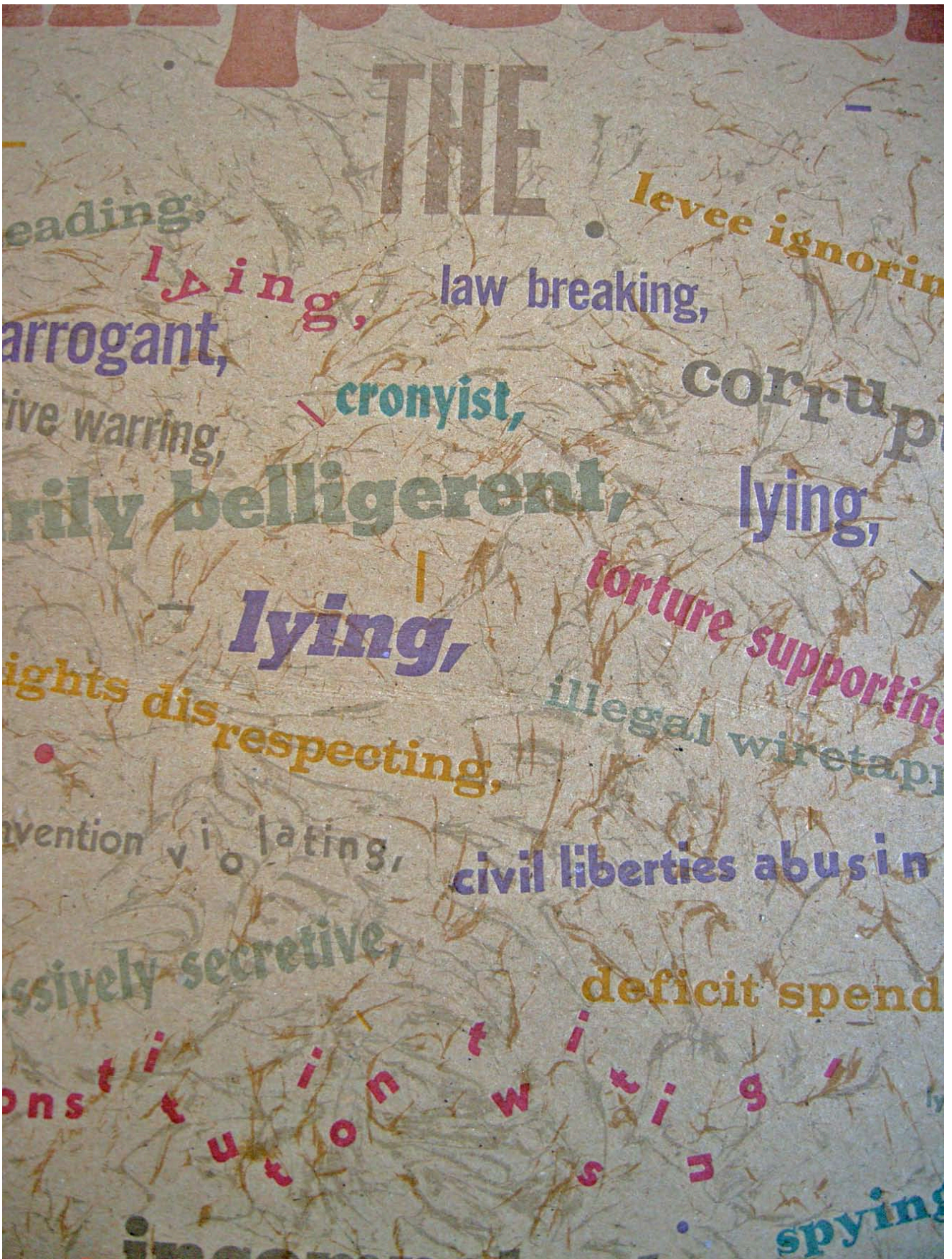
T – It's a nice vehicle for collaborations.

J - Yeah, and what I've learned over the years is that the best collaborations end up giving results that you never would have got without doing them. It forces you to think differently, collaboration always forces you to give up some territory and maybe get uncomfortable; that's always a rich experience.

S – Some of your work's quite political as well. Is that something that is conscious all the time or that sometimes you think I've just got to say this?

J – Exactly. Sometimes I've done things where I've just had to say something. Those things are always in my mind. I had some great examples when I was a student in the late 60's, of artists' who were putting that kind of content in their art. So it was apparent to me that not only could you do that, but that there was value in doing that. When I found that I was secure enough in my ideas that I could do it, it was really liberating. So, once I had done that there was just no turning back.

I've given this lecture quite a number of times now in the last few years, where I look back over my years of making art and talk about all the politics that have come in. I often say it was just a matter of circumstance of when I was a student in the 60s and that I happened to be where I was, at the University of Wisconsin, where there was a great deal of activity. Bill Weege and Warrington Colescott happened to be there and making prints that had that content, so I had the models. Then when I was in graduate school in 1971, 72 and 73 we had the Watergate hearings on live in the studio all day long when we were making art. You know, it was just infused in everything that was going on, so it's no surprise that I was doing impeach Nixon prints at that time. And prints about Vietnam and things like that.



Impeach the Idiots
Letterpress print on handmade paper

At the same time I was doing silly things. I've always done art on humour and silly personal issues. I was making edible prints at that time, silk screening edible inks onto cookies, and some of those became political actually. Just kind of always pushing at the envelope and trying things out. I told my students that one of the things I loved about making art, in particular the printmaking that I've done, is doing things that people look at and say how do you do that? I love being able to do things that other people don't do. Or totally surprise people and they can't figure it out. Some kind of ego in there I guess.

S – I don't think so. It's more like curiosity isn't it.

J – Yeah. So [referring back to] the books on the table, this one is about our response to the Miles Davis Kind of Blue album. Charlie Cohan and I both love jazz and love that album, so that became the basis for the book. It's called *Modal* because it's about modal jazz. We looked up and wrote this statement about modal jazz, which goes across the bottom of the pages. There are five pairs of images for each of the five songs on the album. I did the image on the left and he did the one on the right. So it's kind of straight forward but it's something we love. This one, TM, is about Thelonious Monk, also about jazz.

S – Jazz and music seem to play quite an important part in your work as well.

J – Yeah, and I have some letterpress prints that also respond to jazz and jazz artists. I think in one of my lectures I say I would love to spend the rest of my career making art based on jazz, if only I could do that. But these damn politicians keep getting in the way. This one book has photographs from Claudia Smigrod, pinhole photographs of the Cyprus trees in Italy that line the roads. She had a couple of pictures of the trees and we liked them, so she decided to take some more. We found out that the trees that line the road on the way to Cortona were planted after World War 1. They memorialise the soldiers who died in WW1. That's what those trees are about.

S – Is that a route that they would have marched, or is it just somewhere people go so they all see them all the time.

J – just to remind the residents of the local boys who died. They then become part of that landscape, so there's reference to that in this hand written text, which is written so sloppily that you can barely read it

S – I was looking at it earlier I was trying really hard to...

J – Yeah, it does say something but, well, that's a different

decision, to make it nearly unreadable. Which is also something I've done fairly often in the past, nonsense text and unreadable texts, and overlapping texts that really make it hard for people to get, people have to work at it.

T – Text obviously plays an important part in your work, more so than image?

J – At times, yeah. As a student long ago I just started putting in text with images, and didn't think about it. No-one was using the term Postmodern yet, but that's what it's about. It's about incorporating all of the influences of our culture. I grew up in this culture that's so heavily influenced by advertising, that text in front of our eyes is part of our lives. So it's not unnatural to use it. But it just happened and I realised later why I was doing it.

S – It is one of those things that slowly creeps in and I suppose if you work in letterpress a lot, I'd imagine you automatically think in text before you thought in image sometimes just because of the way you work.

J – And text is image. I did a series of letterpress prints where I was consciously trying to use letterpress as a printmaking medium. I was finding back then that people were seeing my work with words, and they said 'oh that's a poster'. Or, at best, they would say it's a broadside, but they couldn't see it as art. I did a long series of pieces using letterpress and sometimes other image techniques to try to make pieces that people would look at and realise were art. That was after I had become conscious of what I was doing so I started exploiting it.

S – Do you think you'll always work with letterpress?

J – Yeah. I have a press and type at home.

S – We noticed that a lot of colleges in the UK threw all their letterpress away a while ago, but people keep giving us more and more. The students are getting really into it. They got into it a few years ago because it helped them to understand things on the computer, but now you see that the graphics and illustration students are actually learning it because it gives them a little extra when they go for jobs.

T – It wasn't that long ago that the computer was everything, and everything else was redundant.

J – You know I had the same story, but from before the computer was everything. I had some design student, maybe in 1988 I think, who took my class several times and produced a really nice book in letterpress and screen print. It had Perspex covers on it, a pretty unique piece. She then got into the Yale graduate programme in design and they told her that it was that piece in her portfolio

that got her in, because it put her apart from all the other high level graphic design portfolios that have the usual class exercises. So letterpress did it for her, before the computer. Then we went through that period where they all gravitated only to the computer and modern.

S – Now they're all coming back again.

T – Or spreading.

J – I tell my graphic design students who show up for my class that they're going to be better typographers from having done that by hand. They may never print again but they're going to be better at it.

S – Of course. It's just the basic fundamental logic of how everything works. Just seeing their faces the first time they realise that is brilliant.

J – The same is true with those scholarly publishing students, who are going to be editors. They'll never print again, but it helps them understand printing, the process and books in a way that the academics just don't.

T – Going the other way then, has the computer influenced your work over the years? Or has it taken more of a role in the production of your books?

J – A minor role. I have not moved into using the computer heavily in preparation for my work, or in doing polymer typography. I've done some, but not like some people. The middle section of that book [*Eco Songs*] is all polymer with the overlapping. The story here is that after I met Dimitrije Buzarovski we decided to do this book because he had written a song cycle based on 6 poems about man's relationship to the environment. We decided to do a book based on it and wrote letters to all these papermakers around the world and asked them to send us plant fibres. Dan and I then separated them in groups and made the papers for the five sections of the book. The first section of the book has the poems as they were first written, and that's all hand set. Then you get to the middle section of the book and it has the same text as appears in the music, with repetition and sound and overlap and using typography to try to explain visually what happens in the music.

T – A bit like the concrete music.

J – Yeah, very much out of the concrete poetry tradition which I'm very close to. It's a visual/oral/tactile experience. In order to do that typography involves a computer, because you never run out of h's, or periods. We also took plants and put them on the scanner and scanned them into Photoshop, and made transparencies, so all these plant images are created

straight from the plant. At the end of the book there's another codex section that has biographies of composer, the soprano and the poets. Then the colophon has all of the information about the plant fibres, where they came from, plus it has the printed information.

S – I think that's what I like about your books. Whenever you think you've seen the book there's always like another something, like a secret pocket at the end or something.

J – We realised we couldn't make enough handmade paper for all of the CD's, so there's 90 copies on the handmade and then 115 copies of the same book printed on commercial recycled paper. So in this one the paper represents the ecology of the world, which is what the text's about, so it has this unity to it. This circular feeling. In the book printed on commercial paper it's similar, because it's recycled paper. Really very similar, it's just half the price of this one. It was a really fun project, but it took quite a while.

S – I think it's the thing as well, you can always tell if someone's enjoyed making the book.

J – When it was done Dan went to the Frankfurt book fair, I think in 2000, and then to Macedonia on his way home. He brought Dimitrije his copies. Dimitrije then had a public performance of this that he had set up with a children's choir. They actually had the book on display while the children were performing it.

S – Brilliant. So that really was complete multimedia production.

J – This book, *Roadkill*, was done in a week. I was a guest artist at the University of Tennessee, and the printmaker there, Beauvais Lyons, suggested we collaborate on a print. I said well let's not do a print, let's do a book, and I want you to find a third collaborator. So he talked to a guy, a friend of his who teaches in the philosophy department. He teaches courses in environmental ethics and had co-written a book about the ecology of east Tennessee. One chapter was about the effect of transportation on the environment, so that was the basis for a book.

When I went I had the form of a book figured out, one piece of paper printed on two sides. On the Monday morning we met with our collaborators and the students who were going to help, and everybody got the concept. Then the students all had assignments. Some went to the library to find source material, some went to the Internet to find source material, and we started laying out plates and printing. Beauvais, as you may know, does mock archaeology.

S – Yes, his Hokes Archives.

J – A lot of hoaxes in his art. So we wrote these quotations that are throughout the book. A lot of people assume they are real. Quotations from people and the names of their cars. Each of them is footnoted, so you read the entries on all these pages, and then you can go to the inside of the book where the notes and footnotes are.

S – A whole fake biography.

J – Yeah, and it turns out that this is the real part, these are the facts that support the quotes. We wrote them to get to the fact that brake linings contain asbestos, so every time you hit the breaks asbestos goes into the air. The rate of cancer among guys that work in brake shops is like 300 times higher than the rest of the population. So that's what it was about. We also screen printed dirty motor oil and flock adhesive and put Tennessee dirt into the adhesive.

S – Oh lovely, so it's real road dirt?

J – Yeah it's real dirt.

T – So much of the visual imagery was collected by the students.

J – Yeah. On Monday they started collecting and we started making the first plates, and on Saturday afternoon we were cutting and folding and sewing these together.

S – That's amazing. And how many did you make?

J – The edition is 50. All of the students who worked got a copy, and we put a copy in their library and then divided them up. It's been sold out for years.

Oh, and on our second day our philosopher collaborator came in with this dead snake that he'd found on the road near his house. We'd already decided on the title of *Roadkill*, and then he found the dead snake. We put it on the scanner, scanned it into Photoshop and manipulated it. We then sent the file to a place that made an engraving so we could print it on the cover two days later. Fun book.

It's really nice to have a production that lasts one week, with a lot of people working really hard. I was up until 2 o'clock each night,

This book *Spirit Land*, started when I was asked to do a collaboration in handmade paper for a symposium in New York in 1996. I contacted Peggy Prentice, who's

one of the two twins who started the Twinrocker paper mill, and she teaches at the University of Oregon. So we agreed to do a project but we really talked about a lot of different things, like what are we going to do together in handmade paper at a distance. Finally we settled on this book, *Spirit Land*. She made paper from Oregon plant fibres and I made paper from Arizona plant fibres. We then designed this book by fax. We drew the diagram of the structure then faxed it back and forth, and kept on doing that until we had it worked out. After we made the paper she printed these multiple colour wood block prints on the Oregon side and the Arizona side. Then she sent the paper back to me and I printed the rest in letterpress. So when you lift this flap you have a list of endangered plant species of Arizona and endangered plant species of Oregon. But there's more.

S – There always is!

J – See you lift this up, and you turn it sideways and it becomes the landscape of Arizona with a poem written by an Arizona poet about the environment. And of course the same thing on this side for Oregon.

S – Did you say the paper is made from fibres from each state?

J – Right, and we designed it like this so that the viewer has to manipulate it and turn it around and touch this paper. You know that from the beginning because the folder that holds the book is made from fibres and dirt from both places, plus broken shells from the Oregon shore and pine needles, so it's very rough and tactile. It tells you to pay attention.

S – It also tells you to pick it up, because obviously if someone makes something that tactile they want you to handle it.

J – Yeah. Then on the back there's a double colophon that explains the fibres that went into each paper, who did what and signed by the artists and the two writers who wrote these poems for this book – they hadn't been previously published. The edition is 50, and this book has sold remarkably well.

S – It's a really successful book isn't it. Because it works on so many different levels.

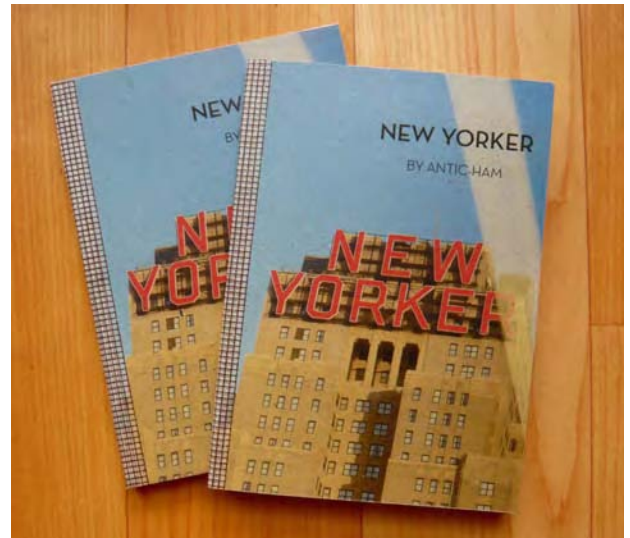
J – It can also become a sculptural object. There are several ways to open it and display it. Usually when I send it for exhibitions I'll send two or three copies.

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Flowers by Antic Ham 12 screenprints with added colouring from drawings of flowers. Printed on vintage tracing paper and hand painted wallpaper. 2009



New Yorker by Antic Ham. Photographs taken in the streets of Soho, Chelsea and Queens in New York. Drawings of visitors at The New York Art Book Fair at PS1 MoMA. 44 pages, 169 copies, Inkjet, 10.5 x 15 cm, 2009



11 small antiques by Antic (Antique) Ham. Accordion book with 11 drawings of antiques purchased by the artist, 2009



Behind the Story of the Queen by Antic Ham. The book contains 43 different interiors of envelopes and used stamps of the Queen of England, bought in the Oxfam shop in Oxford. 2009

Case Study Interview with Antic-Ham, Artist, South Korea, October 2009

Were you aware that you were making artists books when you started to make them?

In summer 2004, after taking a design course I made a small book with my drawings, collages and writings. This was the first book I made by myself, and at that time I didn't know anything about artists' books.

What does the term 'artists books' mean to you? How would you describe an artist's book? What do you think of the term artists' publishing compared to artists' books?

Through my books I share parts of myself with others. I show myself through the books I make, like painters do with their paintings, musicians do with music and dancers with their performance.

Artists' books should reveal the artist's own good sense and confidence in expressing their feelings in the appropriate physical format of the book. Artists' books have two aspects, which are the content, and the book as a material object. Artists must think about both the content and materiality of the book at the same time. Materials for books, the way it is bound, a cover, how the pages will be turned, the construction and sequence and of course the content. The artist must ultimately control all these things, which go towards making a book.

We feel that the content and context of any artist's book is paramount, we are not so interested in categorising books into separate formats, but do you feel there are things that can or cannot be artists' books, or should or should not be?

I fully agree that content and contexts are important. Also the pleasure derived from the book itself is very precious to me. I feel enthusiastic, moved and impressed by artists' books, not only by the content of the book, but when the form transmits the contents at once. Formats are important only in conjunction with the content, it has no meaning without the content. And I think any format is possible if artists have confidence and concepts about the books they make. Books made with stones, books bound by light, books covered by time or books that can be opened only by imagination. I think anything is possible. Is it too extreme? But why not?

We noticed at the book arts fair in COEX, Seoul that there were many books called artists books that were actually blank books, which we felt were more examples of fine binding

Do you think there a difference in the perception of an artist's book in Korea?

Actually many people are still making blank books and fine binding books and call themselves book artists. It is just because they don't know the definition of artists' books (many people don't even know the words). This is also because under the term 'book art' in Korea, people include artists' books, paper crafts, fine binding, book workshops for children, portfolios etc.

There are no clear distinctions between any kinds of book works, but anyway all bookworks are slightly or totally different. It needs to be better defined in Korea. Many artists in Korea are making artists' books though, and as the numbers are increasing annually, the situation will improve.

Are many artists publishing their books through publish-on-demand sites in Korea?

Many artists, designers and illustrators are fascinated by making books. Some are making books mostly with fine binding. Recently young designers and artists are making zines and books through 'self publishing'. It is quite a new trend and very interesting.

How do Korean artist's book societies operate?

There are quite a few associations for book art in Korea. They are always very busy doing many things like discussing reunions or cooperation with other associations, organising staff, providing a service of certification for teaching book art and also arranging regular book exhibitions, events and fairs. I can see there is some competition between them, but I know there are many people who are active and passionate so I hope artist's book organisations here will be better in the future.

Are there many artists who use digital or new technology? You have mentioned that it is cheaper/easier to produce large editions of books, particularly in Seoul, does that apply to all types of production or just digital?

In Seoul it is very easy to access digital processing and all associated printing techniques and materials, which are relatively cheap. You can easily find many materials to make books and can apply different possibilities to produce affordable books.

If you were researching artists' books, is there much reference material available, and is the subject taught at art schools?

I know some people who are teaching book art at schools and there are different kinds of courses. But I'm not sure how well artists' books are represented in these courses. As I said still all kinds of book works are mixed in Korea. And I'm not aware of any official collections or libraries

for artists' books, but I know some artists and professors who have private collections they use for teaching.

We have noticed that mobile phone novels are very popular in Asia - particularly Japan, now, and e-books continue to join the market are you aware of any artists making books using mobile phone or e-book technology in Korea?

Mobile phone novels are not yet popular in Korea, I don't know any artist using these technologies but I think there must be some out there.

Has digital technology and the computer helped in the production of your artists' books?

Most of my books are made on my personal computer except one-off books and my screenprinted books. The biggest advantage is that I can edit images and work like collage for my books and make the layouts using programmes like Photoshop®.

As I print them myself on my printer I can control the whole process and can experiment with different materials and papers. I'm not so good at experimenting with new technologies and I'm not used to working with them, but always I try to learn and slowly I'm getting better.

Have you been using the Internet to sell your work? Is this a popular way to market artists' books in Korea?

I started recently to sell my books through the Internet by announcing new books by email to potential customers. So far I can't say that the result is great but I like to do this because it is also good publicity for my work and myself in a way. Also I'm trying to sell through EBay. It is not so popular to sell artists' books using the Internet in Korea, it hasn't caught on yet, but some young artists and designers are working with the Internet and are also selling zines and books.

How do you think bookshops/galleries/specialist shops can adapt to distributing artists' books in Korea?

I find that even good bookshops for art and design cannot adapt to distribute our books which are small editions, and relatively expensive compared to normal published books. It needs good understanding and relationship between book artists and bookshops or galleries to present artists' books. There is a routine system in the normal bookshop, which is difficult to apply to artists' books.

Do you have any concerns about the future of the book, for example the loss of traditional artisan skills? If so, how do you think this can be remedied?

I'm not so concerned about that. Books are still made today with human interventions in the process and this will go on. This is just natural evolution like everything else. Of course I'm worried that professional skills from the past are disappearing slowly in Korea. But I don't think there is something I can do particularly to stop that. The important thing is a social consensus and support for people trying to keep those skills with passion and faith

Do you think that the difference in the way artists' books are made (or viewed) in the East and in the West will eventually change? Have you noticed anything that is particular to either?

Changes are natural and will get faster as the distance between East and West is getting smaller. Sometimes I feel artists in the East give too much importance to the physical aspect of the book but this also is changing quickly. It is getting increasingly popular to collaborate with artists of many other nationalities.

Something exotic has always fascinated people. I see many Western artists interested in the traditional skills and materials from the East. And Eastern students study art in the West. In this field there is no borderline any more and both influences will mix together. In the end artists' own specificity and character will prevail.

Antic-Ham exhibits her work internationally.

Examples of her books can be seen at:

www.anticcham.com

<http://blog.naver.com/anticcham>

<http://anticcham.blogspot.com>

<http://franticcham.blogspot.com>

Some information about artists' books in Korea

Mediabus is an independent publisher based in Seoul, MAP Mediabus Artist Publications publishes books and zines for emerging & established artists.
<http://mediabus.org>

D.I.Y. Satellite an artist's book by Song hojun (mediabus No. 18) can be downloaded from:
<http://mediabus.org/index.php?/publications/18-diy-satellite/>

<http://www.bookarts.pe.kr/intro.html>
Na-Rae Kim's Bookpress, book arts association website for her own gallery of work and Seongnam International Book Arts Fair. Keith Smith's *Structure of the Visual Book* was translated into Korean by Na-Rae Kim in 2004.

Artists

The Sujak Book Art Studio: www.thesujak.com

Ji Heeseung: <http://bookstory.org>

Book Arts, Making Books

Myung Sook Lee, 2004, Communication Design, Seoul, Korea, ISBN 89 90551 15 3 13600

Hong In Young:
<http://artistbooks.ning.com/profile/Honginyoung>

You can see images of books by Korean artists from Stand 9 - Korean Book Art at the 5th Artists' Books + Multiples Fair organised by Noreen Grahame of grahame galleries + editions, Australia at: www.grahamegalleries.com/?cat=49



given, 2008. Handmade paper, pulp printing, & relief, binding: single segment case bound. 22 x 16 x 3 cm. Edition of 8 with 3 artist's proofs.



volatile actions, 2007
Handmade paper, pulp printing & relief print, binding; single segment case bound. 45 x 16 x 1.5 cm.
Edition of 8 with 3 artist's proofs.



Lookback, 2009
Banana paper, recycled cotton fabric & pulp printing, binding: single segment case bound. 25 x 30 x 1 cm.
Edition of 8 with 3 artist's proofs.



flight of the paper balloons, Codex Event 4, 13 unique collaborative artists' books by: Sara Bowen, Darren Bryant, Liz Deckers, Rebekah Evans, Louise Irving, Joanna Kambourian and Tim Mosely (2007), variable sizes, handmade paper, pulp-printing, screenprint, rubber stamps.

*Case study interview with Tim Mosely
Artist, Australia*

Creative practice

I have made books since the early 1980s although I didn't come across the term 'artist's book' until 1990 when my books were called artists' books by other professionals making them. The first artist's book I saw was a relief-printed flick book by then Sydney based artist Jennifer Marshall during my printmaking studies at Sydney College of the Arts. I don't recall it being identified as an artist's book - however it's had a lasting impact on me and set me on a course to make books.

We feel that the content and context of any artist's book is paramount, we are not so interested in categorising books into separate formats, but do you feel there are things that can or cannot be artists' books, or should or should not be?

I'm an artist who makes books - amongst other objects, I give primacy to the artwork in an artist's book above the medium of the book, I see the book as a medium in much the same way as etching, painting, digital imaging and bronze are mediums.

I choose the book as a device that broadens my visual vocabulary, enhancing my capacity to engage with the content of my art practice.

When I need to work with a definition of an artist's book I find myself strongly drawn to Germano Celant's writing for the 1981 exhibition *book as artwork*. While describing the book *function* by Joseph Kosuth, Celant's final sentence of his essay reads: "which becomes a work of art through the book", (translated). This idea that the artwork relies on the book to exist sets the stage for my engagement with artists' books and the measure against which I evaluate any artwork that is called an artist's book. The extent to which an artwork relies on the form of the book determines the significance of that artwork to the discipline / medium, which consequentially will be inextricably linked to its significance as an artwork.

What does the term 'artists' books' actually mean to you?

The term 'artist's book' has received considerable currency in the public domain and as such I think its here to stay (for some time at least). As a term I have some reservations about it, though in general I'm happy to adopt it. It's simple and easy to interpret. My reservations lie in the idea that the "authors" of these books are or need to be identified, i.e. artists, this has the potential to act as reading instructions, and to separate all that books can be from where artists might take them. The very concerns raised by "Book Arts"

practitioners demonstrate this separation. Part of what appears to be driving the public's engagement with artists' books is that the book is such a cultural artefact, one that the public can relate to. To set apart books that artists make in any way from their heritage would present a means of estrangement from the public.

Technology and Tradition

Here in Australia there have been voices raised within commercial galleries that the generous embrace of digital print by Australian printmaking teaching departments has had some drawbacks. In particular the word 'print' has been altered in the public arena, it now predominately references digital reproduction from an original - considerably devaluing the public perception of an etching as such. Some galleries specifically refrain from referring to etchings, lithographs etc. as prints. The value of digital artworks is without question, however the naming of a new medium can effect a loss in another. In this context the term 'artists' publishing' represents a considered approach to the medium. Most of what is put forward as artists' books in contemporary art practice would be well located within this term. In particular the role of the multiple in publishing, printmaking, digital imaging and books draws a compelling relationship between them. I find within my practice that I am referring to the "artists' books" I make simply as books, and I wonder if the term 'artists publishing' would allow a simpler critical engagement within the field / discipline. One where the issues of the multiple can be discussed across a diverse field. The term artists' publishing describes an activity, a pursuit rather than an object and as such seems far more conducive to critical engagement. Referring back to Celant's 1981 essay he describes a series of artists' books, including the Kosuth mentioned earlier, that were part of a "new publishing intent".

As someone who works with hands on media - print, pulp-print, and also embraces new technologies - do you see yourself more of an artisan book maker?

One of the reasons I make books is because people are able to touch them; the more I have touched a book in its making, the more my content is conveyed. For this reason the digital printing of my books as such is counter productive to my content. Ironically if the reader is only able to access my book via digital means I would rather they have access to that than not. I see myself as an artist who makes paper, makes prints, makes books, makes images and makes content, and I find that as my art practice has developed it is not what I make that defines my ideas of myself but rather - that I am making.

Would you envisage producing books that were created and distributed digitally? Perhaps using an e-reader (Kindle etc.) and if so would you consider them to be a book or a publication?

As the digital revolution advances and access to music over the web has forced major international companies to re-evaluate how they sell their products, I find myself investigating ways in which I can provide my artwork freely over the Internet. For example having made an artist's book I am evaluating to potential to make a digital copy of it and making it available for interested parties to be able to download as a set of PDFs with instructions on how to print them out and bind them. I would see these books as artworks first, and then as books that the reader / downloader would need to bind themselves.

It is a generous intent, to make digital versions of your books for people to download as free PDFs. We notice that a good proportion of your work is based on Australian history, particularly the politics surrounding the story of Ned Kelly and his family, such as aesthetic distance. Your recent works 'pflight of the paper balloons' and 'lookback' are charged with political content. Do you see your books as carriers for activism, a means to promote social change?

The series *pflight of the paper balloons* grew out of a collaboration that was inspired by the paper balloon festivals held in Taiwan. With 'crossing boundaries' as part of the starting point it was inevitable that the books took on the very contentious issue of "boat people" in Australia, an issue that has divided the Australian public since John Howard as prime minister turned it into a racist issue to win an election he was about to lose. The books allowed me as well as the other collaborators to voice our opinion outside of a "political" framework. I don't think we are trying to effect change so much as trying to speak about the issue; the media here appears to do so much of the "thinking & speaking" about this issue, and it needs to be talked about by the general community outside of the media.

Lookback is again about voicing an opinion across two very charged issues, that of the role of missionaries in cultural change and secondly the totally misplaced and theologically incorrect religious notion that white is right and black is wrong. Having spent my childhood in Papua New Guinea with friends who had brown skin I have a distinct perspective on these issues and lately I find that I need to express them. Unspoken thoughts are insulated from the "real" world and it's only when you express your thoughts that you can begin to evaluate them. It's with this in mind that I have made *lookback*, acting as both a vehicle to talk about my experiences and to evaluate my thoughts on the issues. Overall I don't think I'm an activist nor am I trying to promote change, I do want to talk about some issues, and to clarify my experience about them. I have effortlessly

crossed boundaries with my white skin that many of my childhood friends can only dream of crossing, this sits very uncomfortably with me.

Do you feel that having your books as free downloads becomes a wider social act? A means of offering an alternative view of history to a global audience?

Definitely a social act, I have been particularly intrigued with Francis Elliott's *Picasso's Guitar* published in 2007 [<http://www.franciselliott.com/foundryarchive09.htm>]. The idea of downloading for free, art that you can make yourself, speaks of social engagement, one of inclusiveness. I find that people in general will respond to any other person's story if it is honest, and the more copies of the story there are, the more people will respond to it.

Teaching, History and Theory

Obviously there must be an interest in artists' books where you work (at Southern Cross University, NSW) you have staff making books, a collection and the SCU award exhibition each year. So, may we ask you a few questions about teaching:

Do you have students who come in specifically to make artists' books in printmaking? And are these students from many different courses?

Yes, students do come specifically to make artists' books, although they represent a very small percentage of the students who complete the book and paper components of the printmaking programme. Most students who choose to work with books have done so after being introduced to them in the printmaking programme. The papermaking and artists' books components in particular, have drawn students from other regions in Australia as well as from other programs at SCU,

Do they use traditional and/or digital methods of production?

Digital imaging processes have been incorporated into the teaching programme at SCU, and students are able to choose the degree to which they incorporate them into their art practice. The artists' books made on the course range from wholly traditional through to predominantly digital.

Are they taught about the context or history of the artist's book? Are they aware of the international field, of what goes on in the world of artists' books?

An overview of the histories of the development of the artist's book is included in the course as a part of the printmaking programme, students are introduced to the arenas on the Internet and the relevant journals that can give them access to what's going on in regard to artists'

books, both nationally and internationally. Distance is a factor of life in Australia and the web has proved invaluable in dealing with it.

The Future of the Book

Artist Books 3.0 was founded in Australia, and there seems to be a lot of activity by galleries and publishers, and events like Mackay. Do you think people's awareness of the artist's book is growing in Australia? How do you see the field developing throughout Australasia?

Like elsewhere the book as a medium of creative practice (visual, literary or other) continues to attract attention in Australia; it still offers enormous potential to combine image and text, making it a particularly potent medium in our information rich cultures.

In particular the book's portability, ease of storage and its accessibility to the public continue to make it attractive to Australian artists. Currently there are three prizes dedicated to artist's book production in Australia with prize money from \$3,000.00 to \$10,000.00. This represents significant activity around artists' books in a country with a relatively low population. How the book develops as a medium in Australasia is an emerging story. Clearly the enormous status of books in European cultures, in particular the codex, has played a very key role in the development of artists' books.

For artists' books to develop in other cultures the field will need to engage with the relevant heritages and art practices. The work *TIANSHU (a book from the sky)* by Beijing born artist Xu Bing demonstrates such an engagement. Relying on "the material-cultural conventions and forms of traditional Chinese book-making and bibliography" (hanshanhost.demonweb.co.uk/specials/xubingts.html), Xu Bing's books contribute to the field not only for the significance of their content and production but in particular because they are from another cultural heritage. With papermaking, bookmaking, woodblock printing and related heritages - as celebrated so clearly in the opening of the Beijing Olympic Games, Asia's engagement with artists' books is a space to watch. The Queensland Art Gallery exhibited *TIANSHU* in Australia in 1994 and holds one of four copies of the work.

Do you think there is any limit to the definition of an artist's book?

Yes, although I think it varies around the context that the term is used in. If the term is used to describe the book as a medium then I think there definitely needs to be clear limits as to what an artist's book is, limits that need to be discussed within the discipline. However if the term is used to describe creative activity then I think that there is only one limit; that the limits can only be extended by

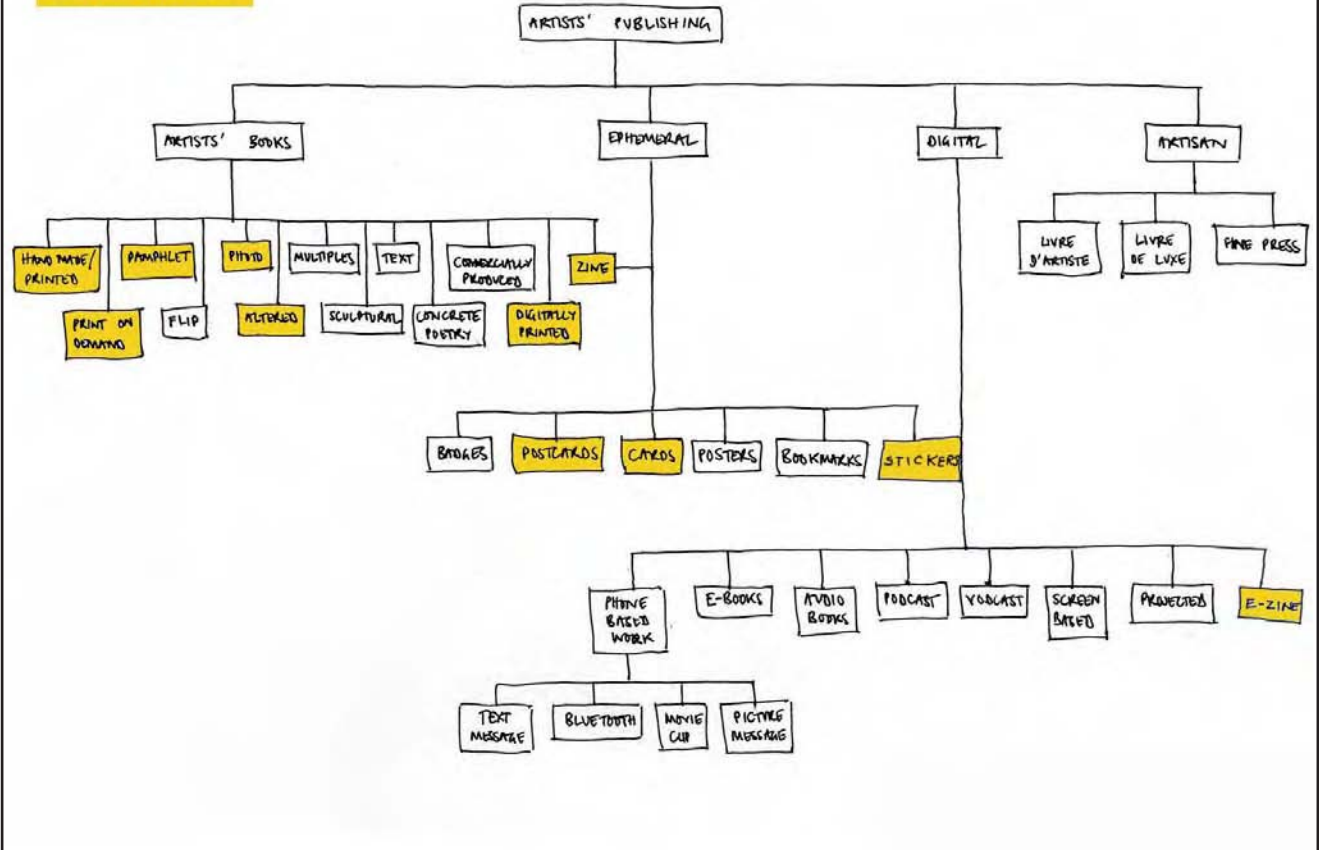
practice - by the making of work that extends the limits. Definitions will always change, even the ones set in concrete so to say, however I also find that to extend the limits of a definition will effect an exclusion at some point, even if the extension was motivated by the desire to include.

Do you have any concerns about the future of the book, for example the loss of traditional artisan skills? If so, how do you think this can be remedied?

Basically no. Clearly artisans' skills can be lost, can lose their relevance to culture, and the book's significance in our culture(s) has shifted due to the digital resources that we now have access to. However I am very confident that the continued growing interest in artists' books is directly related to the onset of digital media. This has been either as a reaction to the digital or, as I rather think, released from their "bonds" books have been identified as a potent medium in visual languages by creative arts practitioners.

Tim Mosely was interviewed by email Oct-Dec 2009
www.silverwattlepress.com
tim.mosely@silverwattlepress.com

baysan yüksel



Above - Altered Book, 2009, 20,5 cm x 20 cm, 12 pages

*Case study interview with Baysan Yüksel
(also producing work as Bayananderson)
2nd Year Masters Fine Art (painting) student
Marmara University, Istanbul, Turkey*

Creative practice

There are no modules or workshops in artists' books at her college and the subject is not taught in practice or theory. Some students there make zines but not many make books, Baysan started producing her own books three years ago, more recently she has been producing zines and ephemera (postcards, stickers etc.)

"When I produced my first book, I knew it was artist's book, and I would say that around 20% percent of my work is made in a book format. Before that I was filling notebooks and doing printed zines and stuff, then later I started to make books. Some people know what I mean when I say they are artists' books, some try to understand, and some are not even close to understanding or knowing."

"I usually make books myself not as a college project (although one of the books "life" was a school project), I was trying to exorcise some of my own self-censorship. The other ones are personal projects, and I also make journals about wherever I travel. Usually it takes one day to one month to finish a book, with the Travel Journals size limited to how many days I stay in the city I have travelled to. Sometimes I make several pages a day and some days I don't make any pages, it depends on the day."

"I collect everything I find interesting; old magazines, things I find on streets, stuff that belongs to other people whom I may not know, fabrics, etc. I put them in a huge box and I usually forget what I've collected and when I decide to make a book these materials have a big influence. Before I make a book I find a topic that I'm interested in, and then think about the sizes and how the book should look, then I open my huge box full of materials and start doing the book. It takes one day to one month to finish a book. I use glue, drawings, fabrics and anything possible that would fit in the book. And my methods change from book to book."

ABTREE

I think my works fit into "artists' books" and "handmade books" within the ABTREE (opposite), as these are the categories I mostly work under. But it varies from book to book; I also make zines and digitally printed books and web e-zines.

Technology and Tradition

I prefer to make traditional work. But I do make digital work as well. I think there is always another way to adopt technologies as they develop. I prefer to produce my own books manually. I use digital methods if I want to make multiples of the books I have previously made as one-offs, so I can make zines out of them. I do also use digital print of drawings made on the computer in my handmade one-off books. So I use digital as an instrument to make traditional works.

I don't make traditional prints, most of my work is hand painted or drawn, but I'm more into traditional than digital prints. I think they are more emotional than digital ones. Also I believe the quality is better. In digital prints resolution can be a problem. I mostly use my computer to organise the pages, to scan books and for digital archiving. If you ask about successful methods, when making handmade books I don't the have chance to reconsider what I've done. I choose a topic but I don't plan what the pages will look like.

So it's spontaneous. I like that it is spontaneous because mistakes like over gluing pages make me feel that it has been done by a human being. So I prefer to call this method successful.

I have also printed a book with a publisher. I would like to call this unsuccessful due to the publisher I had to deal with – as the book turned out to be terrible in quality of publishing and printing; but of course this changes from publisher to publisher. I now prefer to print for myself at home (digital) black and white zines are successes for me, as you can control the whole printing process yourself. And web-based zines are successful as they look perfect on a colour screen. But the thing I don't like about this is that you can't touch them and I think it makes it hard for the viewer to make connection with them.

Cost of production does influence some of my production methods, when I make an edition of books or zines the cost involved makes me keep the size as small as it could be. And sometimes, it also makes me to change the designs of the books to make them less expensive to produce.

Yes, new technologies do influence my creative process, such as the continual development of computer technology which now lets me add animations, gif images and sound into my books, but then this is all only on digital platforms.

I haven't really thought about producing an artists' book on electronic paper on an e-reader before, but why not if the technology is available? But the books would be different than the ones I am doing now.



Time Zone - Altered Book, 2009, 20.5 cm x 20 cm, 10 pages



Robot - Altered Book, 2006, 13.5 cm x 13.5 cm, 28 pages

I think they would be more like moving images but not like animations. I would really like to find out more about the context of artists' books."

Marketing and Distribution

Yüksel is part of the group of artists 18 kopek (18kopek.com), who regularly collaborate with each other to make books. "Most of our projects come out spontaneously. All of us are related to the arts and graduated from art departments, but we also do things for a living such as commercial graphic design, animation for web sites or TV commercials. So mostly in a sarcastic way we come together and create tiny art projects to keep us sane."

"Kopek means dog in Turkish. The name 18 kopek comes from 18 dogs. The story is that in Istanbul there are a lot of dogs living in the street and most people feed them, pet them and take care of them, and each dog has characteristics of his/her own. The name comes from the 18 different dogs that live in the Moda area (a small neighborhood beside the sea in Istanbul) where the members of the group also live. What brings us all together is that our viewpoints on the world and the arts are very similar and probably our humour.

18kopek.com itself is a collaborative project that my friends and I are doing. Our first idea was to make a magazine, and we thought the easiest way to do this would be online. So we produced the first 2 issues as such. There were no themes in either issue, we just told people to do something funny in their own style - most people did sarcastic stuff.

Another idea was to make the magazine different with each issue, so for the third issue - which will be coming out soon - we asked artists (mostly working in plastic arts / sculpture) to make a song - so the third issue will be online and downloadable as an album. We are mostly experimental with the magazine, and we hope that future issues will also be different from one another."



baska simdi yok, 18 kopek's book produced in Istanbul

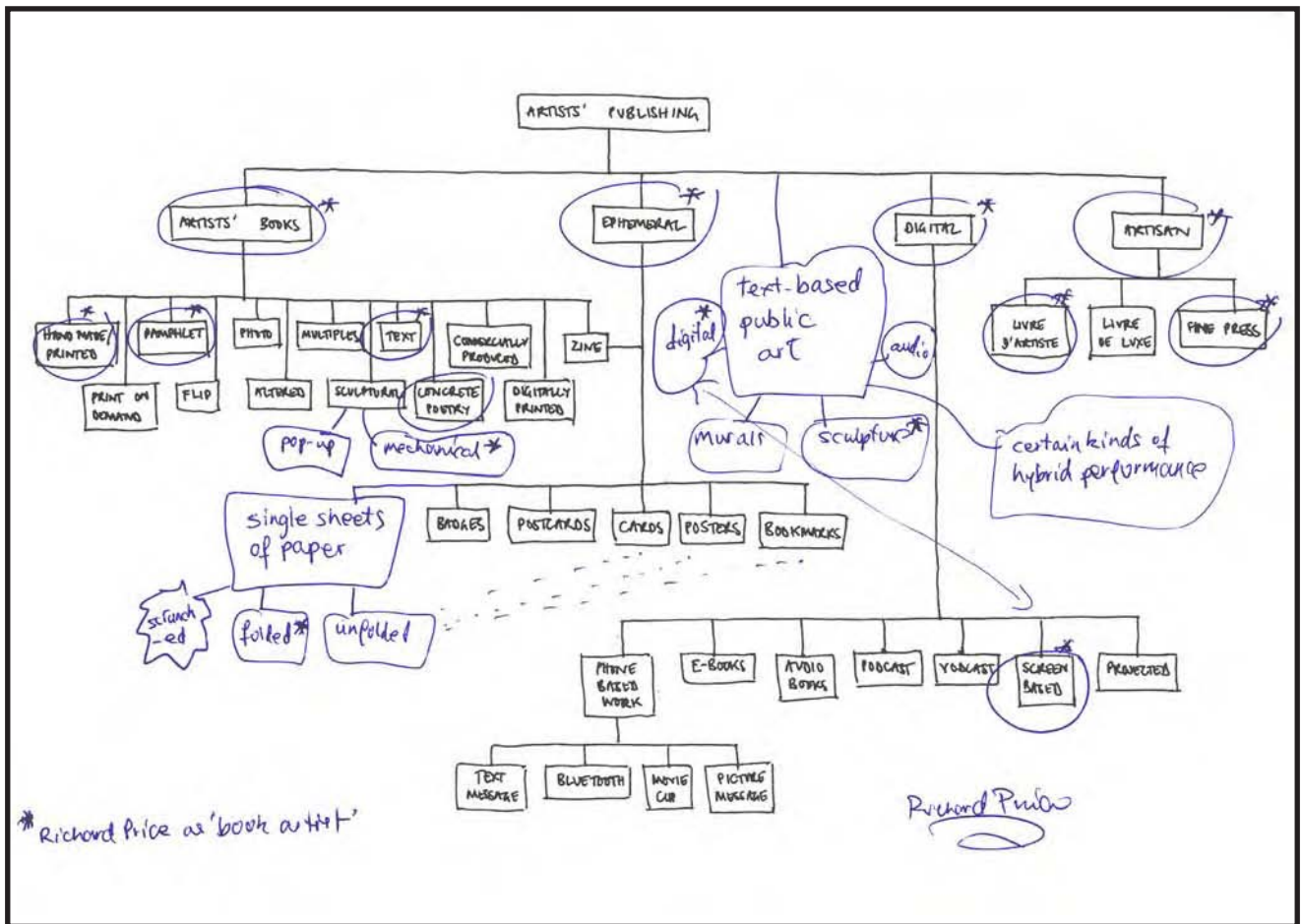
One of 18 kopek's book pieces produced in Istanbul is *baska simdi yok* (which can be viewed at <http://baskasimdiyok.blogspot.com>). Each artist had 90 seconds to fill a page before passing it on to the next person. The collaborators were: Didem Çabukel, Ufuk Atan, Baysan Yüksel, Özgür Erman, Çağlar Biyikoglu and Akin Biyikoglu. "Baska simdi yok, the name of the project means in Turkish 'there is no other now'. So it was just a one-off project but we will be making more collaborative books, and I will also be making more of my own books in the future."

The Future of the Book

"Thinking about the term "artists' books" It is the same here in Turkey, this is what people would call them. Before the 80s they were referred to as 'sketch books of an artist'. But it has changed since then and now we call them artists' books. Most Turkish artists keep a sketchbook and a few do make artists' books. But I don't know of any place to see artists' books here. Sometimes in galleries as part of a show you can see a few artists' books.

In Turkey, the most common category is the e-zine and zines for artists' books. Handmade books are not very well known and not many people are interested in them. Sketchbook works are much more widespread. I don't think it would matter to me how artists' books are categorised, though I'm not comfortable at the thought of too many categories"

Baysan Yüksel was interviewed by email (August – December 2008)
<http://bayananderson.com>
info@bayananderson.com



The Mechanical Word (Vol. 1 - 5). Designed and produced by Karen Bleitz with texts by Richard Price. Aluminium and screenprinted polypropylene with screenprinted polypropylene slippase. 24 x 24 x 3cm, 4pp, limited to 15 signed copies. Circle Press, London, 2005

Case Study - Richard Price, Artist and Poet, UK
www.hydrohotel.net

Creative practice

Production processes for artists' books include: Inkjet, Laser printed, Screen-based/Internet, Letterpress, Sculptural book, Mechanical apparatus, and embossing.

However, within these cases/categories I work with another book artist: my role is to provide text (and its sense of timing and spacing), as well as to generally discuss the overall form with the collaborator as part of its development.

ABTREE

With reference to the ABTREE (opposite), my work is across the range of: artists' books, pamphlets, concrete poetry, mechanical, pop-up, digital, sculptural, fine press works, livres d'artiste, artisan, text-based public art, audio, murals, text works, and single sheets of folded paper. These are the projects I have been involved in so far but I am interested in what different forms offer and hope to work in more genres.

I think the difference between 'artisan' and 'artists' books' is iffy. I would merge them: it's a false distinction that's probably obscuring politicised aesthetic rather than format/technical differences. By politicised I mean in the way that 'folk', 'pop', 'rock', 'indie' and 'classical', say, are differentiated in music, but with artists' books probably further rooted in a proxy class system related to educational allegiances such as university, art schools, and varieties of art theory; for example, is 'internationalist' avant-garde work a lingua franca, a frictionless (safe, transferable) commodity and/or a US 'universal' brand? I don't mean that to exhaust the options....

There are also text-based murals and public sculpture that seem to me, part of the text-based artist's spectrum of activity.

Technology and Tradition

Over time I have moved from being a more traditional (but not too traditional) poet towards one working on books that foreground formal qualities: embossing, folding, digital permutations, metal cogs etc. This is either initiated by my collaborators whose work I then respond to in text (with Karen Bleitz, *The Mechanical Word*, and Ronald King, *little but often*), or initiated by me with my collaborators responding (with Ronald King,

gift horse, and with Julie Johnstone, folded). In almost all cases there is a feedback loop in which we gently shape each of our contributions before finalizing the work. I am not sure that my existing digital work will be adaptable or preservable as technology develops. Although I am very much concerned professionally about this issue for digital content in general, for my own work I worry less and tend to feel the immediate performance is most important and lack of longevity c'est la vie...

The computer has helped to conceptualise and model work before production; communicate faster; in digital, produce a back-lit 'nostalgia for the present'.

All methods of production and collaboration have been a great experience, creatively and through friendship/ideas of collaborators. I think the only problems encountered have been those of miscalculating the expense of high-production items, and trying to have text seen as doing conceptual work (the tag of 'poet' is not always helpful for the work's reception in artistic circles). The rules and play of poetry are key to my understanding of many artist's books, perhaps especially when 'poets' aren't the artists concerned.

New technologies do influence my creative process – as a text-based artist who was part of the Informationist grouping of poets writing texts that respond to technological shift, to try to offer analogues to new technologies, is a particular aim (www.hydrohotel.net/informationist1.htm).

Marketing and Distribution

The presses I work with do the majority of selling but where I've co-published (rare) or have stock then I usually sell through readings, one to one contact and at book fairs. My work is also marketed through my own website (www.hydrohotel.net), collaborator's sites and Internet bookshops. The general public is my main target audience, as I'd love people to love our books!

I have collaborated on purely digital media distributed via the web for free but that was only a sample of a larger work (hotel motel motel with Simon Lewandowski) that was the result of a successful bid for an installation at a books festival. It was installed in full in a public space; and we charged an artist's fee for that. I don't think bookshops will adapt well at all to distributing digital works, it is likely that online sellers will do the job instead. I think the general public, private collectors and some institutions will collect work in this format. Institutions will collect nervously as they need to think long term.

The Future of the Book

I think if there is any limit to the definition of an artist's book then it would be a fuzzy one. I'm not sure that a definition is helpful, I like an improvisational approach to this... That's a passport I don't want to check.

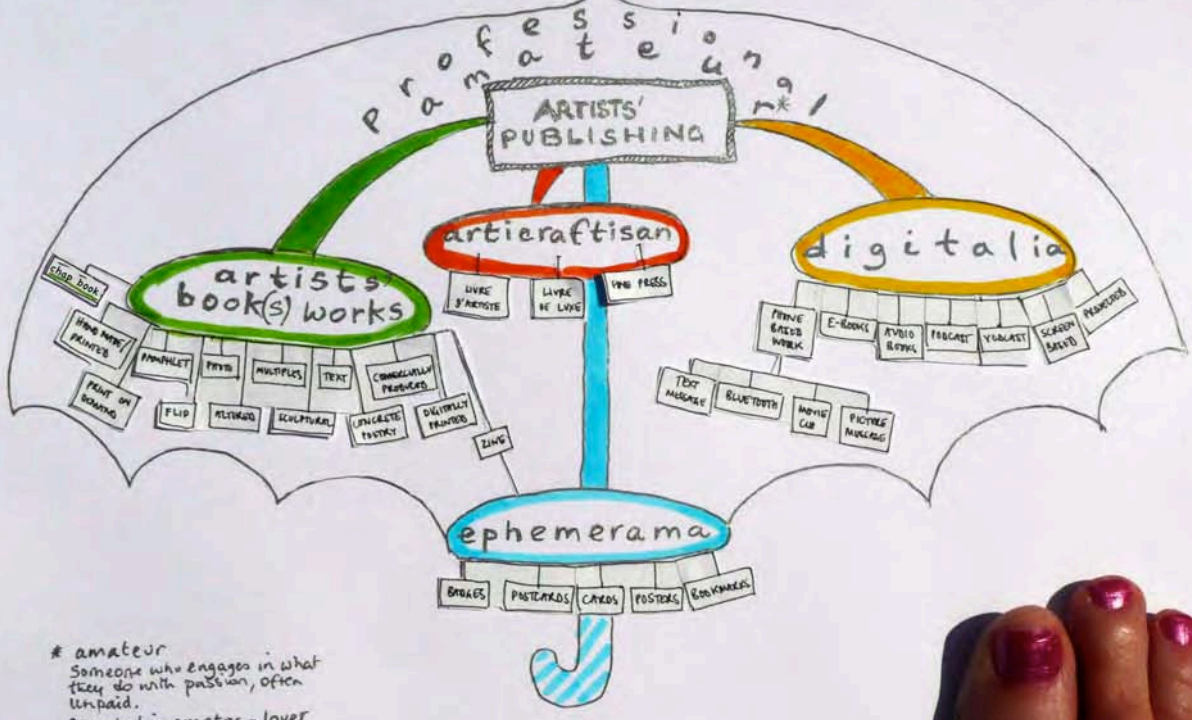
I don't really have any concerns about the future of the artist's book: I like to work with the Now and if it morphs into something else I'll be happy to work in that medium, too.



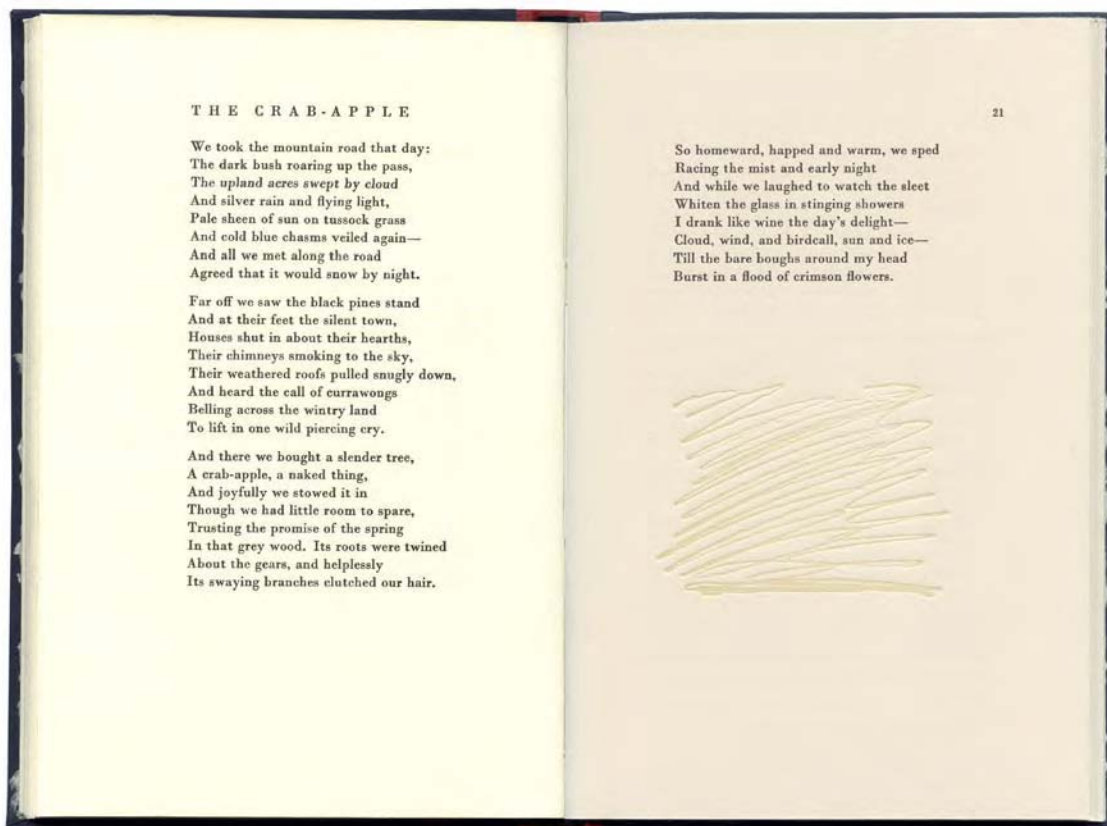
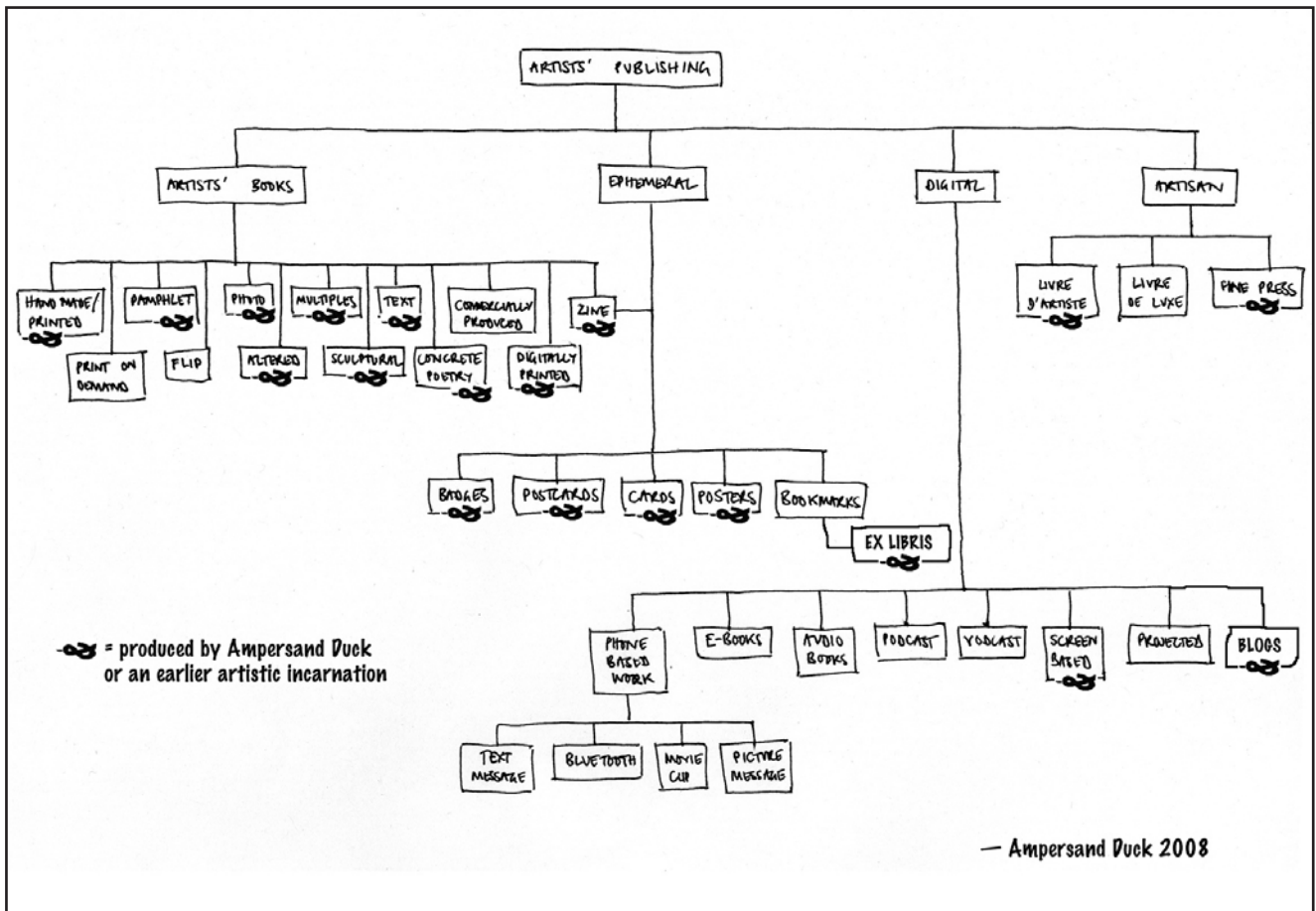
Three stills from *Hotel, Motel, Motel*.
A digital collaboration with Simon Lewandowski, premiered at the Hull Literature Festival, 2008. View the video at: www.hydrohotel.net/HOTELMOTELMOTET_STANZA_2.mov

playfull adjustments to your lovely model

By Lilla Duignan June 29th 2009



Lilla Duignan's ABTREE diagram



Ampersand Duck: *Transmigration* (2008), page spread. Poetry by Nan McDonald with drawings by Jan Brown. Handset letterpress in Bodoni accompanied by relief prints on 280gsm Arches BFK grey paper, in a cased binding of ochre Buckram and relief-printed navy Wibalin paper with a dustjacket of acid-free acetate. 40pp. 240 x 163 mm. Edition of 90.

Case Study - Caren Florance, Ampersand Duck Press/Publisher, Australia
ampersandduck@gmail.com
www.ampersandduck.com
www.ampersandduck.blogspot.com

Creative Practice

Methods of Production for artists' books include: inkjet printing, digital printing, laser printing, computer software manipulation, letterpress, linocut, woodcut, etching, altered books, sculptural books, photocopy, painting, drawing, papercut, papermaking, sewing... anything that straddles visual arts.

I consider an artist's book to be a book-like production by an artist. The artist DOESN'T have to be identified as a book artist, and I find much of the work I find most interesting has been made by artists who don't identify as book artists and just experiment with the book form.

ABTREE

With reference to the ABTREE (opposite), my work is all over the tree. I position my publishing/artmaking name, Ampersand Duck, as a private press because that label has traditional connotations of an artist/artisan/maker producing what they wish to make without commercial publishing pressures. I have expanded that idea to suit contemporary times, allowing anything I produce, whether it be digital, bookarts or fine press productions, to sit under my 'private press' umbrella. The umbrella also covers any collaborations I undertake, so in those cases 'Ampersand Duck' is both me as an individual and also a publishing entity, and as such has been registered as a business name.

I like to think the 'Ampersand' part (AND) denotes the importance of collaboration to my practice.

The one thing you haven't got on the diagram is BLOG, and I think this is a valid form of artistic publishing. I think of my blog as an autobiographical and ongoing artist's book. I also know of artists who maintain a blog as part of their artistic practice, and I think these online activities should be viewed as artistic publishing.

I would add 'BLOG' to the line below 'digital', along with e-books and audio books. I think it is a separate category to 'screen-based'. I keep my blog separate from my website, as one is evolving organically and the other is progressing formally.

Technology and Tradition

My production methods have shifted as technology and facilities have opened up to me. Early in my making career, I was at home with a baby and no studio, and limited access to presses etc. So my output was small and used lower technology – and I had no access to the Internet. As I have progressed, I have gained access to facilities and online activities (and those online facilities have improved and developed exponentially!), and my child is older and less dependent, so I have the luxury of increased time and technology. I have access to institutional letterpress facilities, and have recently set up my own personal studio workshop. So I have gone from making small, unique and relatively simple works to producing more elaborate and structurally more demanding larger editions of fine press books. I also teach book-arts methods and production techniques, so a lot of my methods develop as I share ideas with students, and teach them things that they or I then invert or customise.

If you produce publications using digital technology is it a concern that software or hardware may become obsolete?

Yes. I have worked as a freelance designer over the years with mainstream publishing, and many of the scholarly layouts I have produced are now problematic due to changes in software and back-up technology. I can see that this will happen in other arenas. I see digital productions as being as fragile and ephemeral as unique copies of artists' books.

I saw my blog for many years as an ephemeral production, but it is now being archived by the National Library of Australia's Pandora project, which made a commitment to sustaining the software that will allow people to read it in the future! I still have my doubts about their capacity to fulfil that promise, but it did change my outlook for the blog: it felt like a more stable entity, which made me rethink my writing a bit.

I use mainly traditional methods due to the quality of production, but also because I love the time it consumes. I am a big fan of Slow Making, even if I can't manage to have a Slow Life. I love the idea of being a 'tradition bearer' (as someone called me recently), but I don't really feel like I earn that title, because I cut corners and push the technology in more contemporary ways when I want to. The production methods I use (letterpress, hand-sewn bindings) are as endangered in my country as the panda is in China, and while it feels important to keep them alive in public view, I have missed out on the kind of formal training that would allow me to feel secure to teach them formally. *S* I try to pass on the fun of the process so that others will want to keep it alive after me.

Production methods are generally successful if they are used for the right reasons. I do not adhere to any one 'method' of production. I believe that artistic publication is for the most part content-driven, and the production should be dictated by what the idea needs to become an entity. I don't think any form of production can be revered or privileged over any other. That old adage – don't blame the tool, blame the user – is very true.

The computer is very important. I make productions, I plan productions, I research things and source materials, all using my computer. I have never been averse to combining new and old technology. To do so would be churlish.

New technologies do influence my production. Layout software has eased my production immeasurably, allowing me to make mock-ups and layout plans without hours of pencil and calculator. Photoshop and other programmes have made digital experimentation and production easy (perhaps too easy!). I also use the internet to communicate with bookbinders and printers and to research bookbinding and letterpress methods. Australia has few resources, and we are such a small book community that swift communication with overseas makers is a blessing. I am also constantly playing with different materials that emerge with improved commercial packaging and offset and digital printing methods.

I would consider publishing an artist's book on electronic 'paper' if I had the right content and motivation for doing so. Electronic publishing suits certain visual content; my fine press publishing uses content and production methods that emphasise the materiality of books (for example, embossing prints, or using laid paper that has a definite texture and look). I might use electronic publishing if I wanted a certain luminosity of image that I just couldn't achieve with more material methods. Or to disseminate a book that was just too labour-intensive to produce by hand but I felt deserved a much wider audience.

Are you producing any books that are not hand printed but use purely digital media?

Yes, I see my blog that way. I also have an online reproduction of an artist's book on my website that has been physically lost, so it now seems only to exist online.

Does cost influence your methods of production? If so, how?

Yes. Thanks to geographic factors, paper is very expensive here in Australia. In the past I have only been able to afford small runs of books, or have used materials found at hand. I applied for, and got, an ACT



Ampersand Duck, *Grieving: Hold* (2009). Vintage book spine, letterpress offcuts, antique cotton thread, metal rod. c. 800 x 220 x 60 mm.

Government grant to purchase materials to produce two fine press editions. I only asked for material funding, because the time factor is too extensive to price. That funding allowed me to make the two editions, which are staring to fund further editions and various other publications. However, I still need to work in paid jobs to supplement production costs.

Other, smaller publications are still made with what is lying around me. Again, idea-driven books do not need to be lush and expensively produced to be effective. I would like to reiterate that in my publication ideology, there is no hierarchy of production as long as the end production has a combination of method and content that works together.

Marketing and Distribution

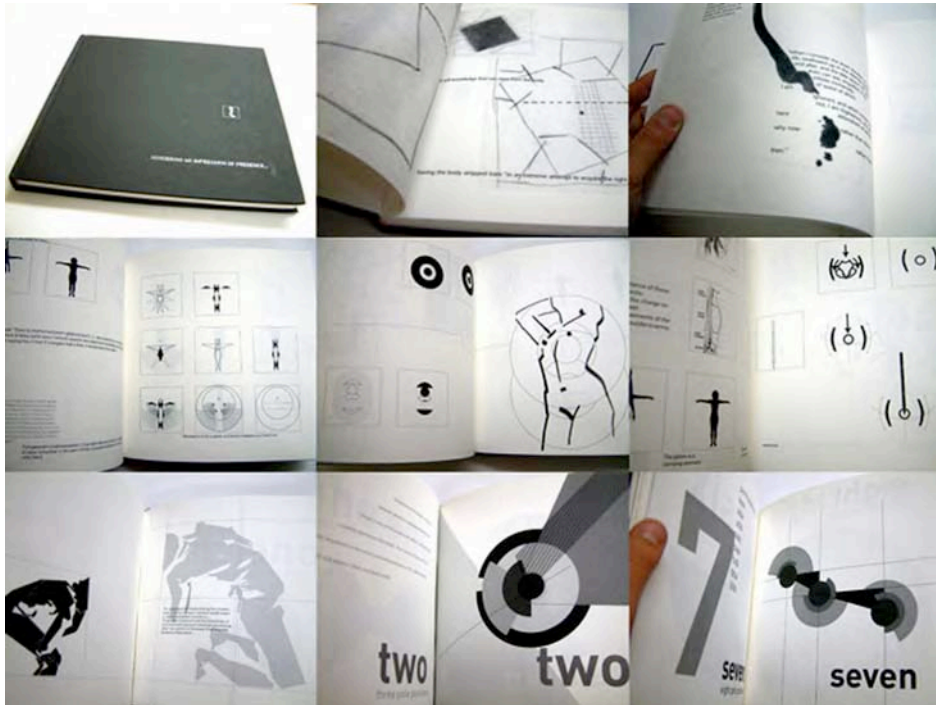
I sell the majority of my artists' books through my website, blog and exhibitions. I am researching other methods of distribution (like retail). As my productions are quite varied, I have a variety of 'target' audiences. My fine press editions are still quite new, and because Australia has lost most of its private presses there is no public awareness of the genre, so I am still exploring ways to reach interested parties. I have talked a lot about my publications on my blog, which gets a reasonable readership. I have sold copies of both fine press and book-arts productions via this audience. I write an irregular newsletter (Snail Mail) that I send through the post rather than electronically, and my mailing list is slowly growing. I think people still like to get things through the mail, especially envelopes without windows.

If we only made things that we knew would sell, how much art would actually get made? Sometimes you just have to make, and hope that someone else will respond accordingly. I have a lot to improve upon with marketing my work. I get so busy actually making that I forget about the distribution. I'd love to have an agent! I don't think book-arts agents exist, do they? I'm following some bookshop leads, but it's Catch-22, looping between making time and administrative time.

The Future of the Book

I have grave concerns for traditional letterpress and bookbinding in Australia, where there is very little equipment left and even fewer people able to teach the use of it. I am trying to teach what skills I have to students, but they have very little patience for hand-setting type, as it is extremely time-consuming.

I am not sure how this can be remedied in my country. I have just started a small residency programme in my personal studio, inviting a couple of graduating art students a year to make broadsides with me, in the hope that I can fan some flames. I think all I can do is keep making and inviting collaborations, and hope that it inspires others.



Rendering an impression of presence, 2001



Cloud making machines, bookwork commissioned by KOAC and AIGCO, industrial gas companies, 2005.

Case Study - Lina Hakim, Artist, Lebanon
www.matchboxflight.com
lina@matchboxflight.com

ABTREE

With reference to the ABTREE, my works sits somewhere between 'Artist's books', 'Ephemeral', and 'Digital'.

I think 'Installation' should be added to the diagram, as it's not quite the same as 'Sculptural'. I think almost every item can in a way be linked to another. But doing that would replace the diagram with a nonsensical mishmash.

Creative practice

Production processes for artists' books include: Inkjet, Laser printed, Screen based/Internet, Letterpress, Screenprint, Etching, Lithography, Altered book, Sculptural book, Photocopy, Hand-drawn/Letraset, Installation.

I think of what I do as work/play: a composite of the notions of effort and recreation that renders them inseparable. In terms of process, I enjoy laborious tasks and/or elaborate systems and rules, especially (if not exclusively) when they subvert means of productivity, when they put forward uselessness, excess, or failure as valid ways of being and doing. I paradoxically take as much pleasure in engaging in effortless exercises or uncomplicated gestures, mostly when they hint at problematic matters or suggest challenging ideas. In fact, in my practice, these two methods are inextricably linked: play can only be serious and work can only be fun.

What I work/play with is the thoughts and things that furnish the everyday, a realm in which the book has featured in various roles. These are some of the roles that the book has played in my practice: embodiment of the process of reading, aesthetic material, format for democratic distribution, vehicle for thoughts, collection of objects, archive for memory, laboratory for experimentation, environment with its own rules, and space where fact and fiction can coexist.

Technology and Tradition

Over time, I would say that my productions methods both have and haven't changed. The basic methods are pretty much the same, but the combinations vary.

My bookworks fall mostly into the digital category in terms of production: the easiest and cheapest way to the democratic multiple.

I do also use many traditional methods to address craft as a process or the actual 'thingness' of the book.

The computer has definitely helped in the production of my artists' books. I trained as a graphic designer and have worked in print production, so the computer is the quickest way for me to produce layouts and prepare for print production when working on a big (in terms of number of pages or of copies) project. I also use it for photographic editing and typesetting for test printouts. I've also recently started playing around with video.

On small editions however, I prefer to use more traditional printing and setting techniques (collage, etching, screen printing), mostly because of the directness of the process. Cutting and folding books into sculptural narratives is, I think, my most successful means of production. This probably has to do with the accessibility of the final product, and maybe also with the fact that I have been doing it for so long that I can try to push the technique a little bit further with every new project.

Cost definitely does influence my methods of production. My general rule is that I'm allowed to invest in the next project only a bit more than what I have earned from the previous one. Of course, rules are there to be broken. Otherwise I would not be making anything at all!

I don't think I would consider publishing an artist's book on electronic paper. I like the accessible aspects of books, and the experiments I have been making with video have to do with the ubiquity of its format, not its 'newness'.

Is there anything else you would like to add about your production methods?

I think I'd like to add a word about collecting and recycling as methods. I find that collecting (objects, elements, stories...) is not just a process of preparation for a book, but a book in itself. I have been struggling with how to present an accumulation of objects without them being just a list and each item an exemplary, trying instead to put forward the uniqueness of each within the collection. I think it is a bit of a curatorial project where different permutations of the elements at hand can be considered in one construct. Book content? Index? Exhibition? Not sure...

Whatever it is, I think of it as very connected to recycling of both materials and full projects that can get re-formatted or re-thought. I think it all has to do with the changing meaning of objects, and looking for ways to allow them to do that within concrete formats.

Marketing and Distribution

I sell the majority of my artists' books by email contact, but the Book Art Bookshop in London also holds a few.

My target audience? Anyone who would enjoy them. Institutions are particularly good because they provide accessibility to a larger audience and a catalogued preservation of the work.

I haven't used any websites to sell my work, but the Internet has helped me sell to people who have expressed interest through email.

I think maybe an artist's book collective fair with free stands would allow for a lot more people to show and sell their work.

The Future of the Book

Do you think there is any limit to the definition of an artist's book?

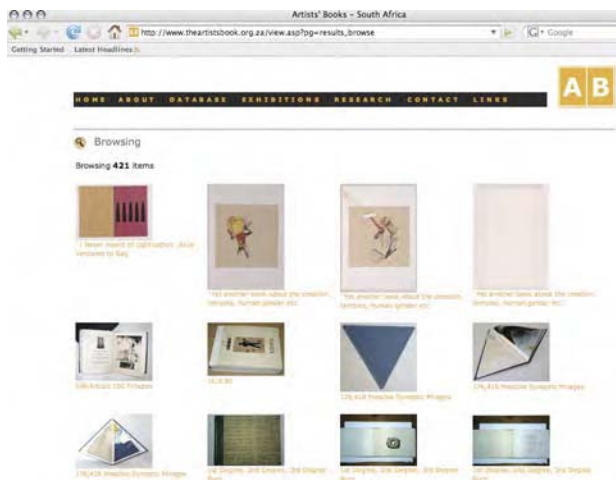
I think the definition would have to depend on each book artist. Anything with a quality of 'bookness' (that addresses the book or reading, that is made with book materials or processes, or that can be 'read') and that is conceived as an artistic object is, for me, an artist's book.

I don't really have any concerns about the future of the book: I don't see the book disappearing any time soon.



Reading "Munjid al Tullab". Modified book, part of the "Pincaux Pour Plumes" shown at Surssock Museum, Beirut, Lebanon, 2006 (selected by Galerie Janine Rubeiz).

Case study interview with David Paton
Artist / Academic - Senior Lecturer: Visual Art
University of Johannesburg, South Africa



www.theartistsbook.org.za

David Paton is the creator of this research website, made to share information, development and ideas around the South African Artist's Book over the last 15 years. It shows a vast range of the prolific artists' books production in South Africa, with a searchable database of artists, including images of their books. We met in July 2008 in Bristol to briefly discuss some key pointers of the state of the contemporary artist's book in South Africa.

History

In South Africa, there is still little public appreciation of the field of artists' books and the artists making them and there are, still, no formal graduate courses in the book arts at Universities in South Africa. However there is still a traceable history of book art production in South African universities and there exist a number of artists who are committed to the book arts in the country. The internationally renowned Johannesburg-based collector of artists' books, Jack Ginsberg, has tried to provide people with a sense of the difference between an artist's book and other art forms, through public access to his massive collection. Through my association with Jack, and the production of the website we have worked for an awareness of the artists' book and a more readily understanding of its vitality in the country. Now that more people are aware of and visit Jack's collection of artists' books for their own research, the subject is becoming more accepted. As more people explore and make artists' books, we are also seeing extremely interesting related work: book-objects, textual work, and box-based works.

Teaching

In their first year, Fine Art students at the University of Johannesburg (UJ, formerly the Technikon Witwatersrand) have a project in printmaking to produce handmade books based on the Bill of Rights. This involvement with the book has its roots in an interest in the book arts by current and former staff in the department who include, Kim Berman, Philippa Hobbs, Sr. Sheila Flynn and Willem Boshoff. Many important book artists in South Africa: Giulio Tambellini, Flip Hatting, Sonya Strafella and Carol Hofmeyr amongst others, received their introduction to the genre as students of the Department. UJ's Graphic Design students undertake book-design in their 3rd and 4th year, but they print and bind them outside of the university.

At the Michaelis School of Fine Art (University of Cape Town) their printmaking department has, for many years, included tuition in fine press and artists' books, with post-graduate students sometimes producing artists' books as part of their output. Some of these books can be found in the School's *Katrine Harries Print Cabinet* (KHPK – found at <http://cca.uct.ac.za/collections/print-cabinet/>). Most Fine Art Departments of Universities of Technology (formerly 'Technikons') such as the Durban University of Technology (DUT) and the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) have, over the years, taught aspects of papermaking, book-binding and the rudiments of the book arts. Some senior students from the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, have, from time to time, explored the book as a means of conveying their ideas and body of practical work: Paul Emmanuel and Jonah Sack are two who have gone on to produce fine artists' books.

Some presses and books by artists

Pippa Skotnes and Malcolm Payne ran the Axeage Private Press in Cape Town in the 90s, (there are 10 examples of Skotnes's books on the online database at http://www.theartistsbook.org.za/view.asp?pg=pub_item&ItemID=DP/129&show).

More recently, Skotnes's books include academic studies of the Cape San or Bushman such as the important *Claim to the country: the Archive of Lucy Lloyd and Wilhelm Bleek*.

The master printmaker Malcolm Christian has run the Caversham Centre for Artists and Writers, in KwaZulu Natal, since it was founded in 1985 to give South African artists access to a professional collaborative printmaking studio (www.cavershamcentre.org). The centre has worked with important local artists who include: William Kentridge, David Koloane, Zwelethu Mthethwa,

Deborah Bell, Mmakgabo Sebidi, Robert Hodgins, Bonnie Ntshalintshal, Wonderboy Nxumalo, Ezekiel Mabote, Vulindlela Nyoni and Sarah Tabane.

Kim Berman and Nhlanhla Xaba founded the Artist Proof Studio (APS) in Newtown, Johannesburg, in 1991. Kim Berman is an Associate Professor specialising in Printmaking at the University of Johannesburg and Director of the Artist Proof Studio which works with artists and the wider community (<http://www.artistproofstudio.org.za>), she has produced many artists' books, collaboratively and individually (you can see examples of her work online at: http://www.theartistsbook.org.za/view.asp?pg=pub_item&ItemID=GB/10063&show).

The Artists' Press, founded by Tamarind Master Printer, Mark Attwood, in White River, Mpumalanga produces limited edition prints and artists' books using lithography, etching, monoprint and letterpress (you can see some of the books produced by The Artists' Press online at <http://www.artists-press.net/artists-books.htm>).

Perhaps the most committed South African book-artists include: Giulio Tambellini (who now resides in the UK), Paul Emmanuel, Stephan Erasmus, Cecil and Pippa Skotnes, Kim Berman, Peter Clarke, Chris Diedericks, William Kentridge, Judith Mason and Elizabeth Vels, but a glance at the number of entries on the database will indicate how widespread the artist's book has become in South African visual culture (view the list online at http://www.theartistsbook.org.za/view.asp?pg=pub_results&producers=yes)

David Paton's own research into South African artists' books

The www.theartistsbook.org.za website is a wonderful tool for research dissemination which includes:

A database of all South African artists' books researched to date.

Essays, journal articles, conference papers, talks and information of interest in the field.

A full online catalogue of the first exhibition of artists' books held in South Africa: *Artists' Books From the Ginsberg Collection*, at the Johannesburg Art Gallery in 1996.

A digital catalogue of *Navigating The Bookscape: Artists' Books And The Digital Interface*. An exhibition curated by David Paton at the Aardklop Arts Festival, September 2006 and the University of Johannesburg FADA Gallery, October 2006.

Texts from Paton's dissertation: *South African Artists' Books and Book-objects Since 1960* with downloadable essays:

* A BRIEF HISTORY OF SIGNIFICANT PRECURSORS OF INTERNATIONAL ARTISTS' BOOKS

* TOWARDS A HISTORY OF SOUTH AFRICAN ARTISTS' BOOKS

* WILLEM BOSHOFF AND THE BOOK

* TOWARDS AN ANALYTICAL DESCRIPTION OF SOUTH AFRICAN ARTISTS' BOOKS

Many other downloadable essays including:

* IDEOLOGIES AND IDENTITIES IN DIGITAL ARTISTS' BOOKS: PARALLELS BETWEEN CHARLES SANDISON'S *CARMINA FIGURATA* AND WILLEM BOSHOFF'S *KYKAFRIKAANS*

* A CONTEMPORARY NOVEL AND THE ARTIST'S BOOK: TRACING SHARED AND UNDERMINED CONVENTIONS IN SELECTED EXAMPLES OF BOTH

* THE SOUND OF A BOOK: SOUND AS GENERATOR OF NARRATIVE IN THE RECEPTION OF SELECTED NEW MEDIA OBJECTS AS BOOKS. This is an article, published in *Image & Text*, 2007 Number 13. ISSN 1020 1497(pp 66-79) by Paton, about specific works in the exhibition: *Navigating the Bookscape: Artists' Books and the Digital Interface*. It explores sound as a narrative device in these digital artists' books, which fundamentally enhances the reading and reception of these works within the conventions and experience of the book.

You can download the whole article as a PDF at: www.theartistsbook.org.za/view.asp?pg=research

For the *Navigating the Bookscape* exhibition, Paton selected seventeen artists' books from the collection of Jack Ginsberg:

These 17 books facilitated an argument that many of the conventions of the digital environment or electronic screen, i.e. scrolling, multiple page openings, hypertexts, interactivity and navigation, amongst other phenomena, have been presupposed, suggested or in fact achieved in the 'phenomenal' or Artist's Book and that the book, in the hands of the artist, becomes infused with what Johanna Drucker (2003: np) terms "interpretive acts".

And so I attempted to explore the suggestive ways in which these 17 South African books were already virtual, where the codex, as an interactive and dynamic form, was grounded in what it did rather than what it was.¹

(1. The reading of a codex remains one of the most interactive and hypertextual of experiences evidenced by a reader's ability to flip from place to place in a book and consult the index – itself a remarkable example of a hypertextual database.)

Paton also commissioned five artists who were given a brief to explore the relationship between the traditional codex and digital print, production or output through a range of options which included production of books through projected/electronic/web means, to creating a conventional book through digital means:

Kim Lieberman, Andre Venter, Paul Emmanuel, Giulio Tambellini and Marc Edwards to each produce a work which, while exploring elements of the digital environment, also attempted to acknowledge the conventions, and experience of, negotiating one's way through a book.

You can view the works produced for the exhibition and read the complete text online, where Paton makes some really interesting points about sound bookworks and digital media, one of which is:

A question which may be asked of technology, is where exactly its information, and by extension its content, resides when the machine is switched off? With the advent of digital memory which is internally calibrated through clocks, default memory settings, tiny batteries and other devices, information is (usually) stored and kept safe from loss. We have come to expect this every time we reboot our PCs and laptops, each time we switch our cell phones back on. In today's sophisticated software environment, an ability to remember every detail of data at the nano-moment before a power failure, and its ability to return that information without loss has become more than simply an advantage, it has become critical!

This ability to preserve and retain is, in my view, founded upon the printed page, upon the book's role of recording, retaining and redelivering the exact information again and again, faithfully and without corruption. It is perhaps this infallibility which caused the book to be burned and destroyed when deemed a carrier of corruption, while as a material object, it remained neutral and constant.

Yet it is perhaps a question one may begin to ask

of the codex. If the digital clock keeps 'ticking' and updating, in the case of the computer or cell phone when switched off, while the book remains dormant when closed, does the digital not have some other advantage² in the manner in which its technological self can constantly update and thus change – a notion internationally acknowledged in that remarkable 1-second duration between 31:12:99:23:59:59 and 01:01:00:00:00:00 when so many people believed that their world would be traumatically transformed. (2007:4-5).

(2. Notwithstanding the fact that the purpose of *Navigating the Bookscape* was to undermine conventional notions of the advantages of the digital over paper-based books, the point here is to acknowledge the potential advantage of digital update as a space of change.)

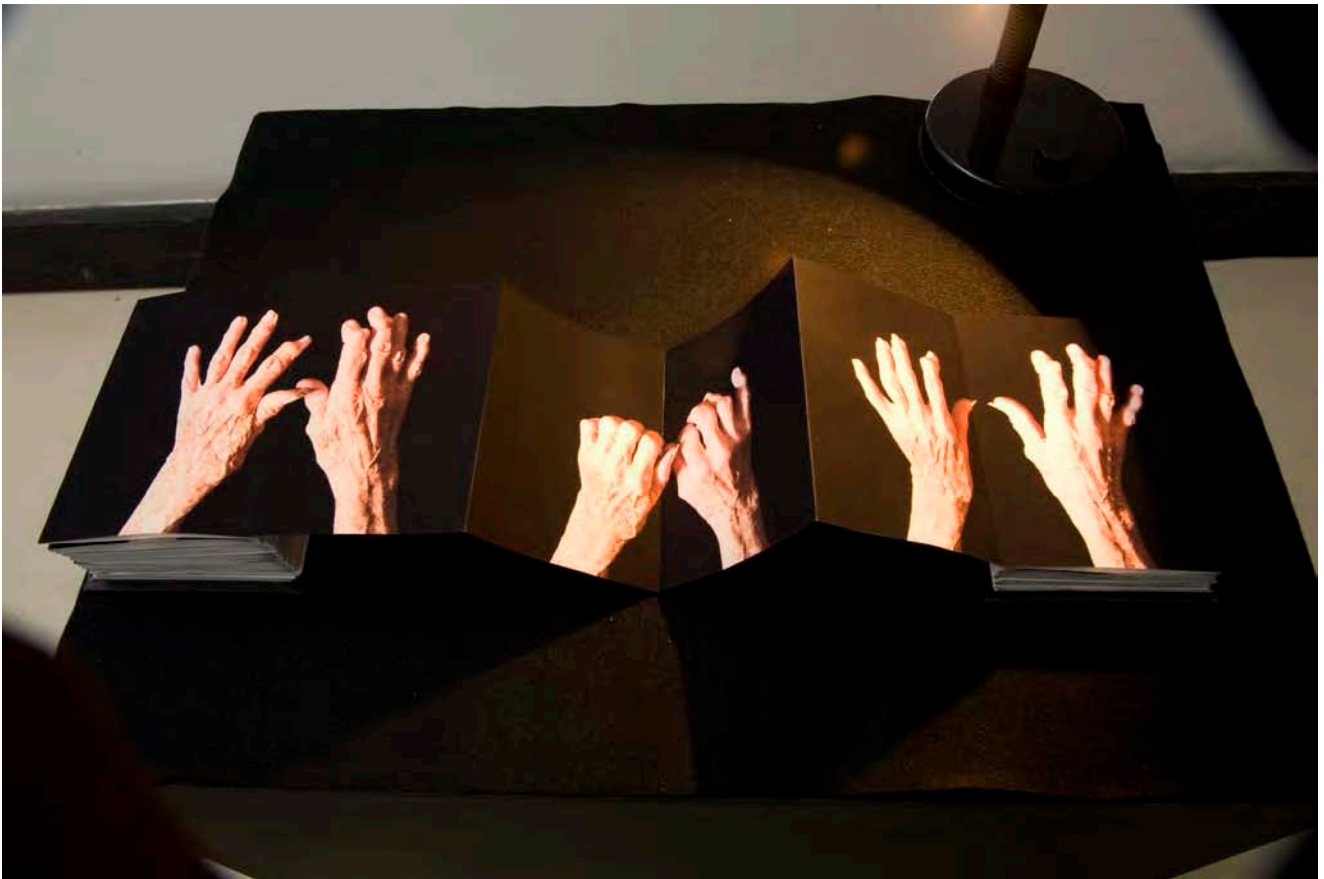
The notes and further reading also offer invaluable background and pointers including, for example: *The Virtual Codex from Page Space to E-space* by Johanna Drucker, 2003 was a lecture presented to the Syracuse University History of the Book Seminar, April 25, 2003. The text and some images can be viewed online at: <http://www.philobiblon.com/drucker/#johanna>

Paton's most recent artist's book project, titled *Speaking in Tongues* (2009), is an installation incorporating a small format, 308-page unique hand-bound, digitally printed book, accompanied by a video projection.



Of the installation, Paton states:

The book is divided into 2 chapters: The 1st, *Speaking Digitally* comprises an animated series of my youngest son, Liam's, subtly moving hands while gaming on-line. The 2nd chapter, *Digitally Speaking* is an animated series of my mother, Shirley's, dynamically moving hands while conducting a conversation with the artist. The book is designed for multiple openings and multiple ways of negotiating the narrative: it can be paged



Speaking in Tongues (2009) an installation incorporating a small format, 308-page unique hand-bound, digitally printed book, accompanied by a video projection.

through page by page or it can be opened in such a way as to allow both chapters to be paged through simultaneously. It is possible to open the book in its entirety so that every page is visible; very unbook-like. The concertina-fold structure hints at being a possible flip book, given its small size, facilitating the ability of the pages to be flipped so as to pass like the video. But its structure hinders the successful flipping of the pages in order to replicate the video images which are intimately projected ahead of it. Being difficult to handle, it refuses to keep a stable form: a book with a mind of its own is an idea that appeals to me.

The many still drawings of my son's hands for the rapidly animated 'sliced' section of the video are locked onto a double page spread and given a slower, more contemplative duration which they do not receive in the video. Likewise, the long contemplative sections of the video, which detail my mother's hands, are reduced, in the book, to a manageable size which can be haptically and quickly manipulated. A book of active hands, held in the hands and manipulated seemed like an interesting idea. By avoiding a spine, the hands pass across the gutter without visual and structural interruption. The title refers to the faith I

need to make art in a space and time which actively fights against this very activity as well as the faith I have in a visual language which does not communicate conventionally. My mother, who speaks in tongues, and who has probably read more books than most, might like this idea, while the idea of 'the passing of clock-time' vs. psychological *duration* is, of course, Henri Bergson's.

Sarah Bodman interviewed David Paton over July 2008

www.theartistsbook.org.za

**Case Study - Karen Hanmer, Artist and Designer
Bookbinder, USA**

www.karenhanmer.com

New work: www.karenhanmer.com/gallery

Guild of Book Workers exhibition:

www.guildofbookworkers.org/gallery
markingtime

Creative practice

Production processes for artists' books include: Inkjet, Laser printed, Sculptural books.

ABTREE

With reference to the ABTREE, my work is 90% of the time in the Artists' Books category, 10% in the Ephemeral category. Within the artists' books category, my work would fit in about half of the sub categories: sculptural, handmade, flip, photo, text, sculptural, digitally printed.

In general, the categories under Artists' Books are not mutually exclusive - some describe content, some structure, some method of production. Maybe you could have the existing boxes organised into these three groupings?

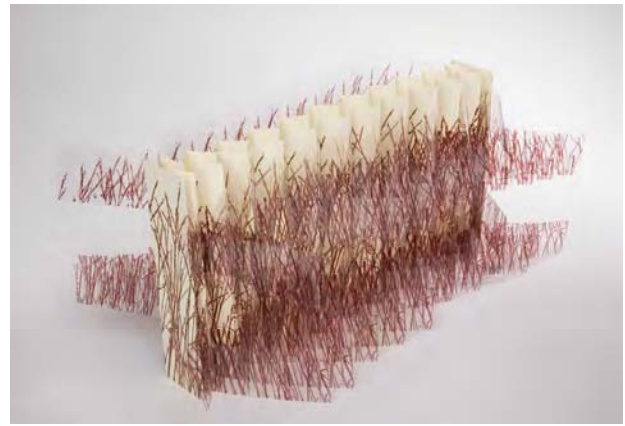
I'm disappointed that there is no place on this chart for my other interest, design binding. This absence does clarify for me why binding is often excluded in conversations about book arts - binding is about craft, and if well done it is very much about ideas, but is not at all about publishing or printmaking. Maybe we could link binding in the diagram with a dotted line - a couple of metres long - to Artisan?

Technology and Tradition

Over time, I'm getting more efficient in my production of editioned work, but this has nothing to do with the use of technology. Software development has made laying out text and controlling colour easier.

I've always used the computer to design and produce my artists' books. I also do fine binding, and I use the computer to create my design, to print templates of the shapes of onlays and their placement, etc.

I have also used digital print-on-demand to produce an exhibition catalogue. It was not as fine quality as offset, but I never would have been able to afford to have a catalogue for the project otherwise.



Bluestem, 2006

Pigment inkjet prints on polyester film, double sided variation on flag book. Illustration in collaboration with Henry Maron. Inspired by Willa Cather's *My Antonia*, and quote from the text printed on one end panel: "Everywhere, as far as the eye could reach, there was nothing but rough, shaggy, red grass... And there was so much motion in it; the whole country seemed, somehow, to be running."

Edition of 25. 8 x 10 x .5" closed, 8 x 9 x 18" open

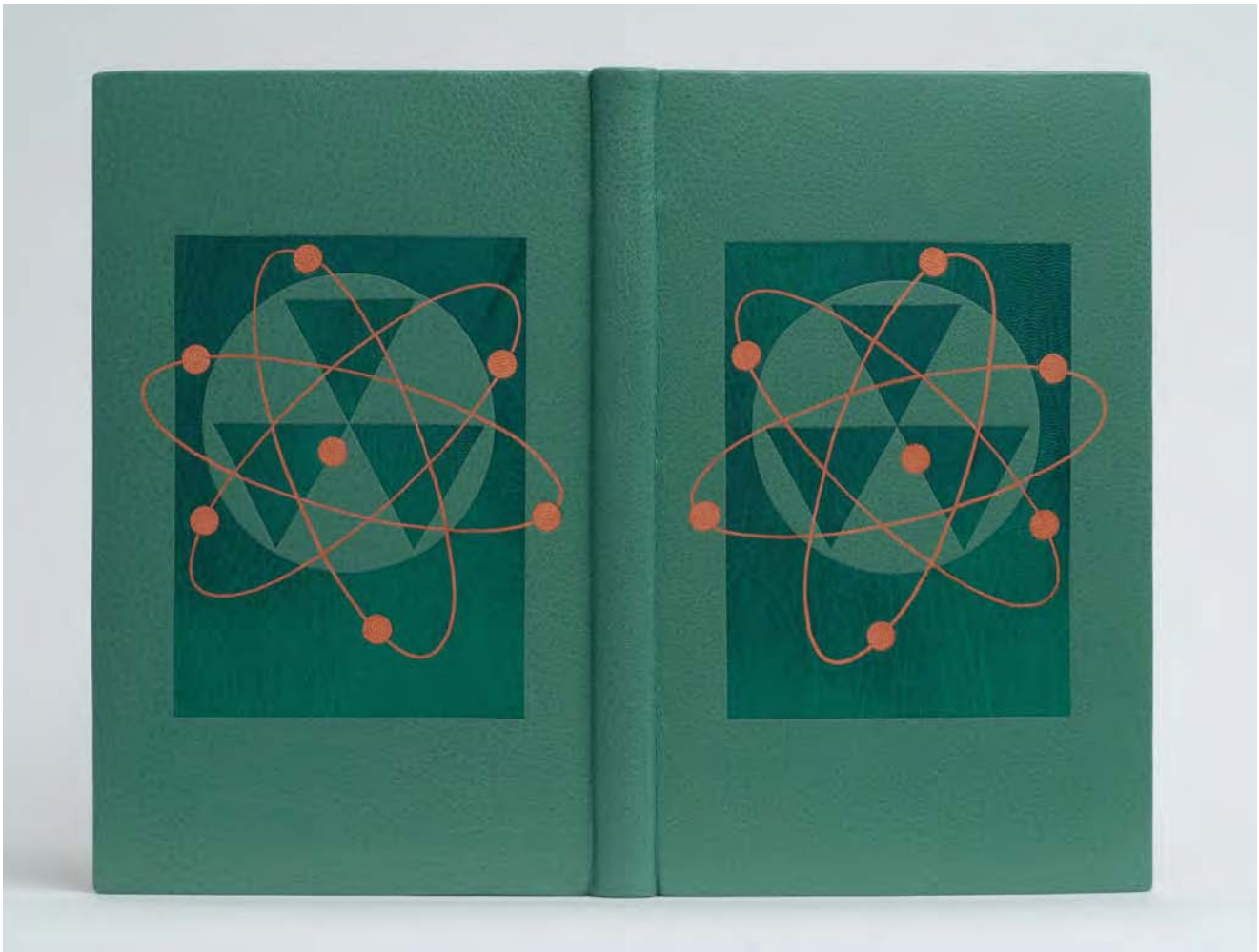
Costs can also influence my methods of production in several ways:

The coated-for-inkjet paper is much expensive than paper for printmaking or regular text weight paper. Sometimes the extra detail the coated paper can produce is necessary, sometimes not.

Also, sometimes an upgrade to one of the software packages I use would make something I want to do much easier, or additional, expensive software would allow me to do something I can't (for example, another driver for my printer that would allow me to print longer than Epson's limit of 44").

With new technologies, I'm thinking mostly of advances in printing and substrates, not ways to go paperless. I'm not so interested in working with electronic paper or screen-based works. In creating my own work, I'm still pretty wedded to of making something that the viewer holds in their hand - that a key to getting the viewer to feel emotionally is having them hold something, feel it physically, get their body involved as they manipulate the structure. Feel the weight and texture of the materials. Feel the resistance or submissiveness of the materials as they move through pages or play with the structure. Listen to the sound the book makes as the pages or parts move.

I'm not sure yet how the viewer could get similar sensations by sitting in front of a monitor, keyboard or mouse, or with a handheld device.



Oppenheimer Is Watching Me: A Memoir

Jeff Porter, University of Iowa Press, 2007

French technique fine binding: sewn on flattened cords laced into boards, covered in full buffalo. Goatskin backpared onlay and inlaid lines. Goatskin edge-to-edge doublure, with impression from inlaid leather lines visible on suede flyleaves. Hand sewn silk headbands, gilt top edge. 9.5 x 6 x .75". Design inspired by author's vignettes of growing up during the Cold War: both the paranoia of nuclear attack and a landscape filled with playful pop culture atomic references. 2009

Marketing and Distribution

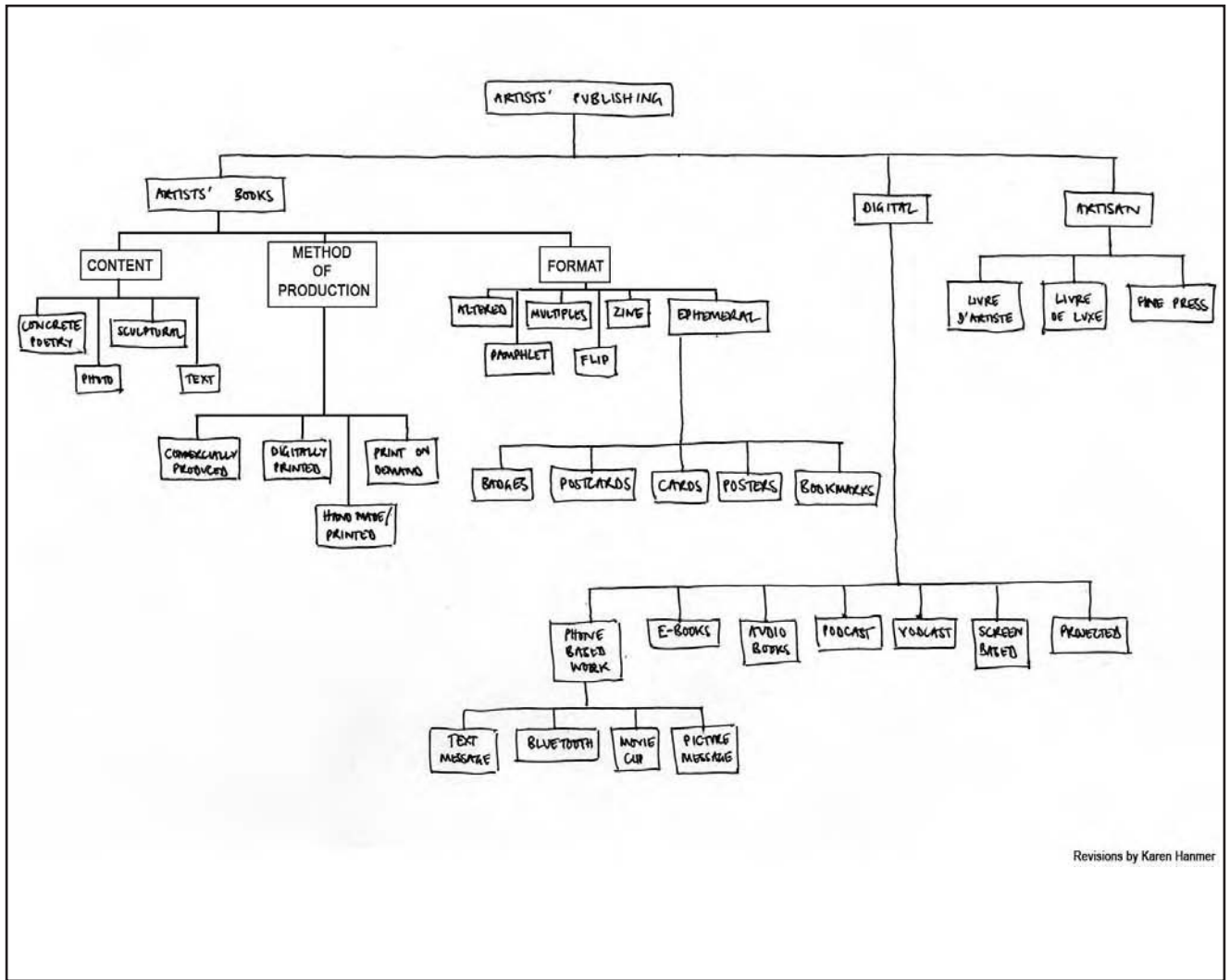
I would say that my main target audience is institutional collectors. I sell the majority of my artists' books in descending order: Response to an annual (paper) mailing announcing my new work; Sales by my dealer; Book fairs; In personal sales calls. I also sell through my own website and through my dealer's website.

The Future of the Book

No, I don't think that there is any limit to the definition of an artist's book, I would say that it is a work of art in book form with structure and content produced as a unified whole.

I don't think the loss of traditional artisan skills is an issue. There will continue to be people who want to make something by hand, people who want to teach the skills they use in their own studio practice (though maybe through other means than college courses), and collectors who appreciate such objects.

At the same that time artists' bookmaking is going digital, and publishing is becoming paperless, there is a revival of interest in learning traditional leather binding, letterpress, and other traditional methods.



Revisions by Karen Hanmer



Sky, Gino Gini, 2003. Unique book, mixed media, 20 x 16 x 3 cm.



Soul nourishing - to Neper 2003. Mixed media: cloth, modelling paste, sand. 30 x 40 cm. Unique book, which will be exhibited at the IV Egyptian Biennale Alexandria in 2010.

**Case Study - Fernanda Fedi and Gino Gini
Artists, Italy**

fernanda-fedi@tiscali.it
gino-gini@libero.it

Fedi and Gini are the Commissioners for International Participation in the Bibliotheca Alexandrina Fourth International Biennale for the Artist's book, 2010, Egypt.

Creative Practice

Fernanda Fedi - Production processes for artists' books include: Inkjet printed, Letterpress, Laser printed, Linocut, Print-on-demand, Woodcut, Etching, Lithography, Altered book, Sculptural book, Hand-drawn/Letraset.

Gino Gini - Production processes for artists' books include: Letterpress, Print-on-demand, Screenprint, Lithography, Altered book, Photocopy, Hand-drawn/Letraset

ABTREE

Fernanda Fedi - With reference to the ABTREE, most of my artists' books sit in the ARTISAN category: Livre d'Artiste, Livre de Luxe, Fine Press, and also in the ARTISTS' BOOKS category: Sculptural, Multiples, Digitally Printed.

Re the diagram, I don't think that 'postcards', 'cards', 'posters', should be placed under the heading 'EPHIMERAL' - are we speaking about artists' books deriving from ephemeral and from zine?

Gino Gini - With reference to the ABTREE, mostly I fit in the ARTISAN CATEGORY, sometimes in DIGITAL.

Re the diagram, everything may be put in as it is, or in other ways, so I have no dispute with your choices.

Technology and Tradition

Fernanda Fedi - My production methods have not changed very much over time. They follow my research in the field of art regarding writings, archaic words and the material I use to put them on a surface; sand, glue and different papers. Only when I create an artist's book together with a poet do I make use of new technologies, digital print or simply computers. The computer has helped me to realise some precious artists' books together with some poets, making written words interact with my signs and writings.

As an artist, I don't really use new technology. To adapt my work to new technologies, I must learn new programmes, work with new machines. But I am also interested in learning processes. If someone invites me to create a book through new technological means and shows me what I can expect from the technology, it would be an interesting experience. But I would need a deep understanding of it to realise something worthwhile. My creative process may be influenced by new technologies but it is the artist who adapts new technologies to his/her thought and imagination.

I don't think that traditional methods automatically mean quality. It is the thought and the realisation of the artist that makes a book high quality. The artist lives in his/her time. The artist is the conscious pioneer of the society in which he or she lives. Traditional doesn't mean anything - it is just the way of creating something with means adopted in the past but with other meanings. The quality and the depth depend only on each single artist.

I don't know about electronic paper and many new technologies. I never wait for the development of new technology; I just get on with my ideas and creations. I believe technologies may be also negative, when they make the artist, little by little, homologous to all other artists in the world: I believe in difference.

I have nothing else to add about production methods, just an appeal to all artists to: 'Never to be slaves, also never be the slaves of a machine'.



Cielo, Gino Gini. Unique book, mixed media, 2003.

Gino Gini - In 1976 I created my first artist's book. The change in my production methods is related to the development of my poetry. In my work, I prefer to produce the artist's book in one single copy; unicum.

Each production technique has its values, whether traditional or digital. Traditional methods have wider material possibilities for application and many different types of materials, from papers to copper

can be used. Generally traditional methods are more successful for me, they guarantee less copies and a more active participation by the artist. In some cases I have realised that new technologies offered me different ways of creating a book. Each artist researches his own technology. Regarding my own work, as a 'Visual Poetry' artist, writing is the main component, and handwritten words above all. I think traditional technologies are more suited to my work.

Marketing and Distribution

Fernanda Fedi - When creating my books I don't think about success in terms of a sale. Internal artistic impulse drives me first and foremost. That may be a limit when it comes to promoting my work, but it is also a great strength. What I realise when visiting museums and libraries is that a lot of them prefer artists' books printed by an editor/publisher, and lack object books, monotype books, precious books in small editions.



La tragedie de l'Ecriture 2003. Fernanda Fedi. Mixed media: engraved wood, coloured paints. 42 x 23 x 3 cm. Unique book.

Of course, cost influences my method of production. If I can't find an editor/publisher who will take on all the costs of production: through different types of printing, ancient or new, then I must invent something that I can afford.

I sometimes create books of a certain importance using digital print, generally for a collector. Everything is useful for promotion, but I do prefer to work on precious books, monotype books or limited edition.

I don't have a big market. My sales are supported by some public or private collectors or libraries (sometimes with donations to Museum). As for my audience it's not a culture of mass - there are just a limited number of people that follow a certain kind of artistic research.

I have not yet used the Internet to market my work. I don't know how bookshops/galleries/specialist shops can, or will adapt to distribute books produced using solely digital media. As to who will collect it; everything may be bought - the basis is promotion and the quality and seriousness of what is proposed.

Gino Gini - I sometimes use digital media when this media is required by my work, but not to increase sales or distribution. Museums, galleries, bookshops, private collectors are the main client for my books. As an audience, private collectors give me the greatest satisfaction. I have not yet used the Internet to market my work. Digital media are more difficult to sell though bookshops and galleries, I think that Museums and Libraries are the right places to collect digital books.

Nowadays the artist's book is having a resurgence here. In Italy, there are many exhibitions. However, the market is feeble, because the artist's book is a personal object and consequently can only be appreciated by a certain type of collector.

The Future of the Book

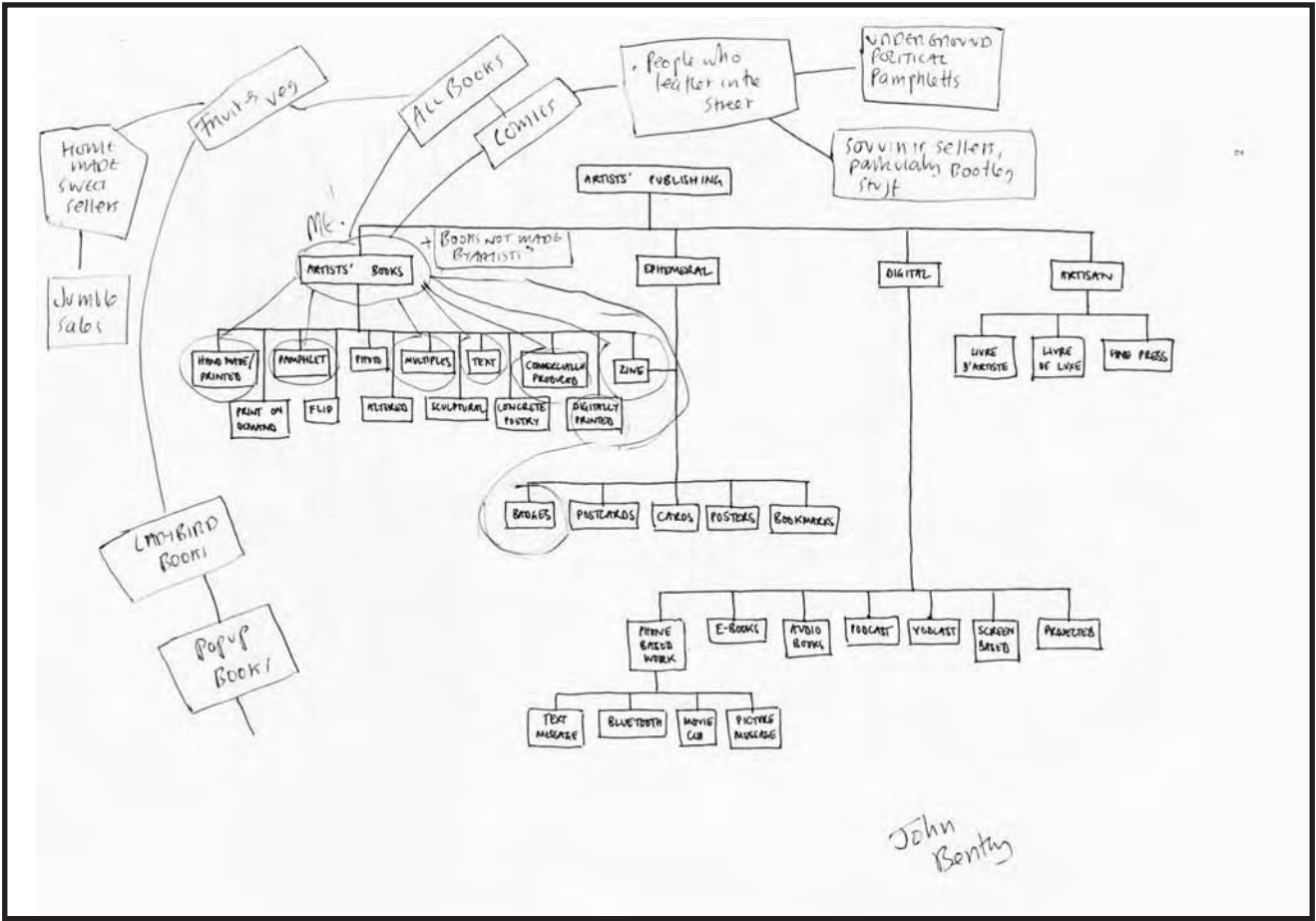
Fernanda Fedi - Yes, I do think that the artist's book has a limit. I think the artist's book is a book: thought, conceived and realised by the artist, sometimes in co-operation with a printer, or an editor. Not everything is an artist's book. The artist's book has its own physiognomy. The artist's book is the result of an artists' research. I think that the artists who are most suitable to create books are those whose research is in visual poetry (in the different areas) and in the conceptual field.

I don't believe in strict rules. Everything may survive: traditional and technological methods. The most important thing is the quality of the work.

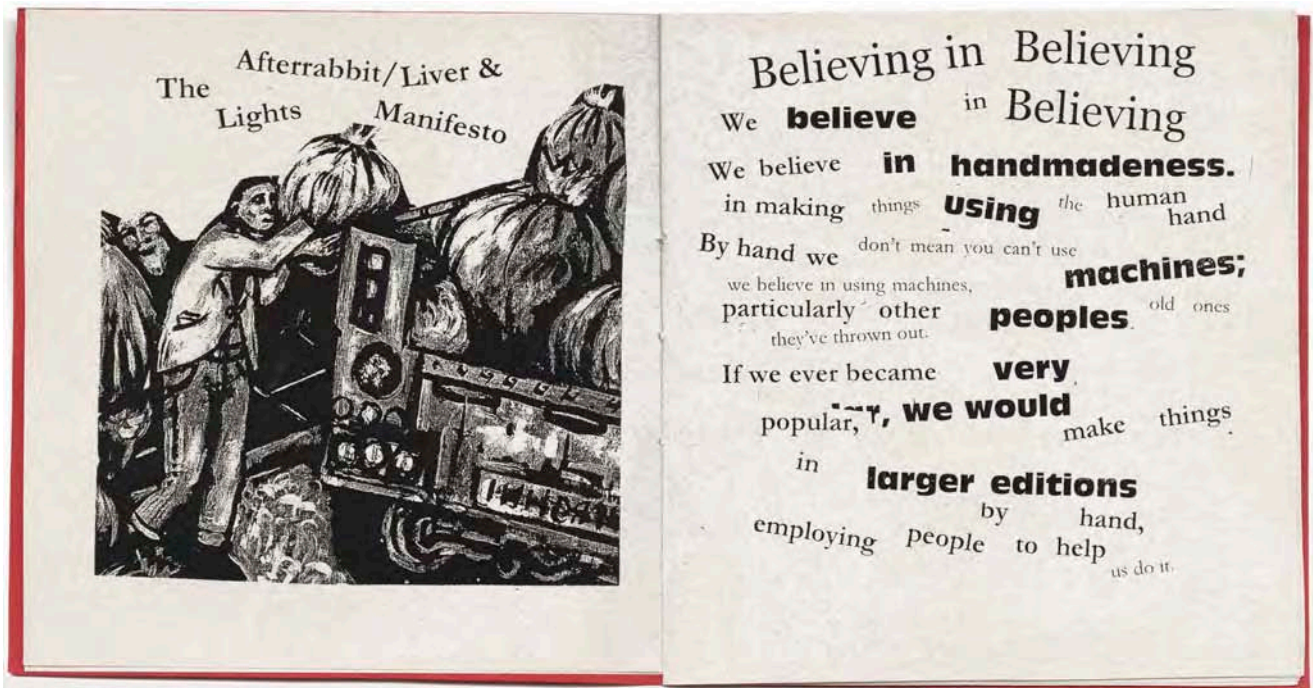
Do you think there is any limit to the definition of an artist's book?

Gino Gini - The artist's book doesn't pose the question of its own definition, but it must preserve the relationship with the book. The book has to remain steady in its structure. The artist's book was born as a transgression, all contemporary art is a transgression. The artist's book must preserve this view of transgression in art.

It is difficult to think about the future of the book. It is clear it is a witness of its time and has therefore changed in practical and conceptual ways to reflect the different periods of its existence. I can only suppose that the artist's book will change in the future according to the different situations and new advancement of technologies. But in any case it will always be a testimony of its time.



John Bently's ABTREE diagram



Liver & Lights No.38 Manifesto Zine, John Bently & Afterrabbit
A free book - 'When it comes to Jam, Shoes and Music - Hand Made is Best!'

Case Study - John Bently, Artist, United Kingdom
www.liverandlights.co.uk
bentlyboy@supanet.com

Creative Practice

Production processes for artists' books include: Laser Printed, screen based/Internet, Podcast/audio, Letterpress, linocut, woodcut, screen print, photocopy, hand-drawn/Letraset, print Gocco, rubber stamps.

ABTREE

With reference to the ABTREE, I would add: books not made by artists, Pop up books, ladybird books, jumble sales, homemade sweet sellers, fruits and veg, all books, comics, people who leaflet in the street, underground political pamphlets, souvenir sellers particularly bootleg stuff.

Technology and Tradition

Over time my methods have not changed much at all. It was offset litho and photocopy 20 years ago – and now laser printed and other methods on top – I like to use low-tech production methods.

These are used because a certain quality, or texture, or feeling is important. I mix and match any production methods with relish! I have made gloriously unsuccessful books, but this is my fault, not the production method.

Believing in Believing
 We **believe** in Believing
 We believe **in handmadeness.**
 in making things **using** the human hand
 By hand we don't mean you can't use **machines;**
 we believe in using machines,
 particularly other **peoples** old ones
 they've thrown out.
 If we ever became **very**
 popular, **we would** make things
 in **larger editions**
 by hand,
 employing people to help **us** do it.

I like to make low budget books because I am a low budget person. Charity shops are where I live. I would like to make a very high budget book before I die though.

Yes, the computer has helped enormously in the production of my books, in too many ways to list. As for any new technologies, everything is there to try – I will have a go at everything and sometimes a method will influence what I do creatively.

I think hand made, in look and feel, is best – I want to reflect that in my books – I don't want things to look homogenised and slick. It's like the old fashioned shoe repair shop nestling in a high street full of Pret a Manger, Starbucks, WHSmiths, estate agents and the like.

Marketing and Distribution

The majority of my books are sold at gigs and to subscribers (a loyal few who collect my books...). I have also sold through my own website. I think books produced as solely digital media will be collected, stored, ignored, discarded.

The Future of the Book

No, I don't think there is or will be any limit to the definition of an artist's book. I have no concerns about the future of the book – there will be books for a while yet – there will be less of them and they will be more beautiful and more meaningful and more nostalgic and rarer and more precious.

Case Study - Andrew Eason
Artist, United Kingdom
www.andreweason.com

Creative Practice

Methods of Production for artists' books include: Inkjet, Laser printed, Print-on-demand, Screen based/Internet, Linocut, Woodcut, Lithography, Photocopy, Rubber stamp, Hand-drawn, iPod App.

ABTREE

With reference to the ABTREE, I've set out a proposal for an immaterial/material axis that uses the diagram as a "graph space". I've tried to indicate the place I think I usually occupy in my simplified version (in the bottom left of the [above] altered diagram I have attached).

Do you think anything should be added or removed from this diagram? If so, why?

I've suggested a rearrangement of the order of the main branches so that a continuum is implied between work that is more materially based and work where the material aspect is less important. The juxtaposition of branches important, I think, because a great contrast between branches side-by-side unduly emphasises their difference rather than the overarching similarities they share. I also think that if one wishes to form a web of relationships between different nodes it's probably better to have some sort of likely axis as an organising principle: it's probable that most links will be closer to their neighbours this way.

Technology and Tradition

My work has become more digitally-based. Partly this is through preference (I don't much enjoy the repetitive aspects of printmaking) & partly through reduced access to workshop technology as I make a living elsewhere.

The computer has helped in the production of my artists' books as it renders my 'studio' virtual; offers a vast range of tools for my use & abuse; allows me to easily incorporate materials and work on my books without necessarily getting too involved with printmaking. It's become germane to my practice. It (the computer) is the primary 'place' of production for me. There's a translation going on, since I'm working *for* print, *for* book, but *in* digital. Compare this statement to Helen Douglas' assertion of the book as the 'place of her making'. I'm still working 'in-book', but I'm able to

model and manipulate the space digitally rather than through paper. That said, there are too many times when I've made mistakes because I didn't make a good enough mock up, or didn't really get to see the pages side by side in reality, rather than on-screen!

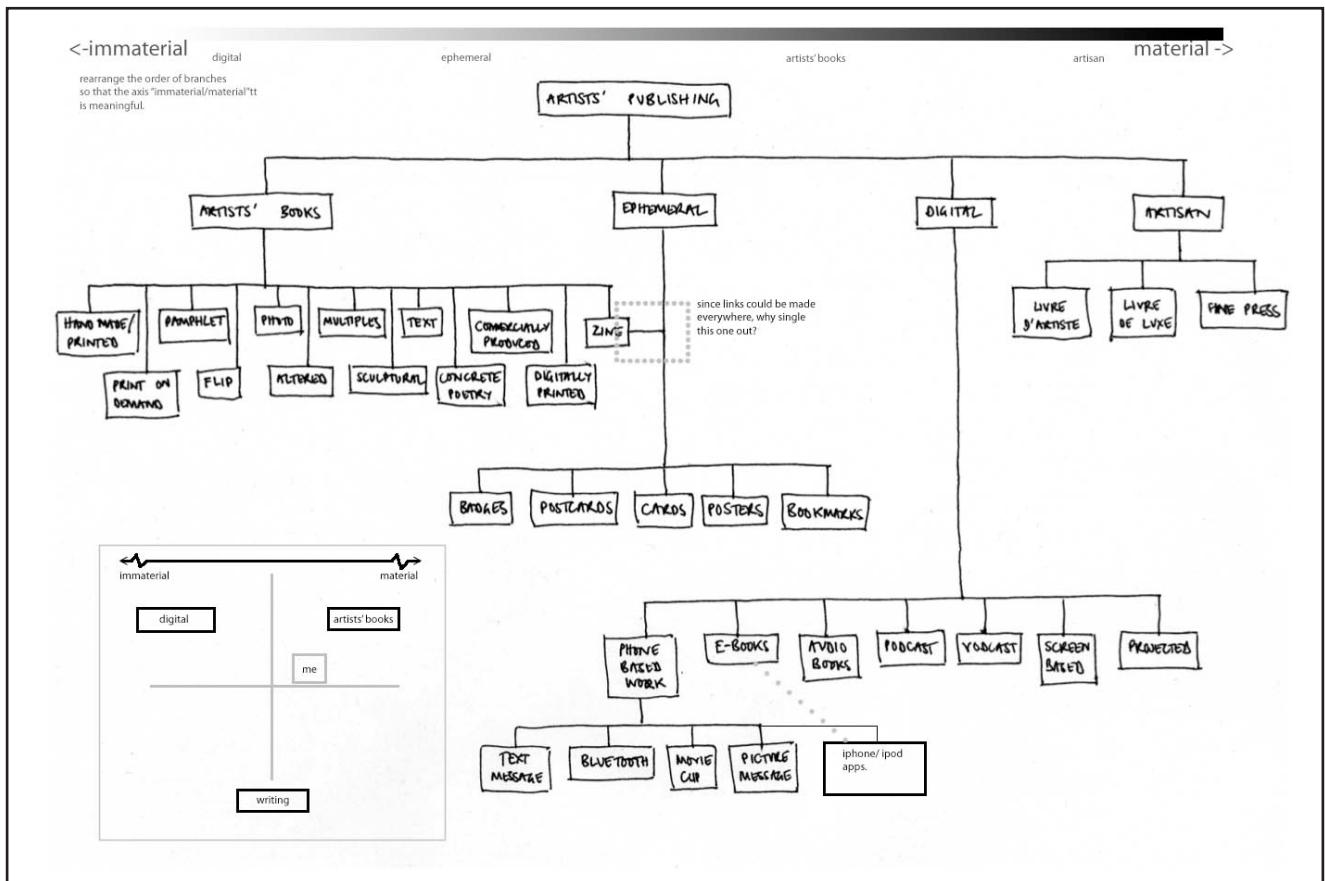
There are difficulties to be surmounted in 'seeing' the book in the computer, but as I say, there are many offsetting pluses in the form of tools, possibilities of combining/ translating media in digital form, etc.

I think self-produced digital print (ie inkjet) has so far been most successful means for me in most ways. I've used Blurb, the print-on-demand service, but I'm still finding out how best to use it. There's an extra layer of translation involved in 'outside' services like Blurb, which I would have had more opportunity to work out in the 'inside' context of my own production.

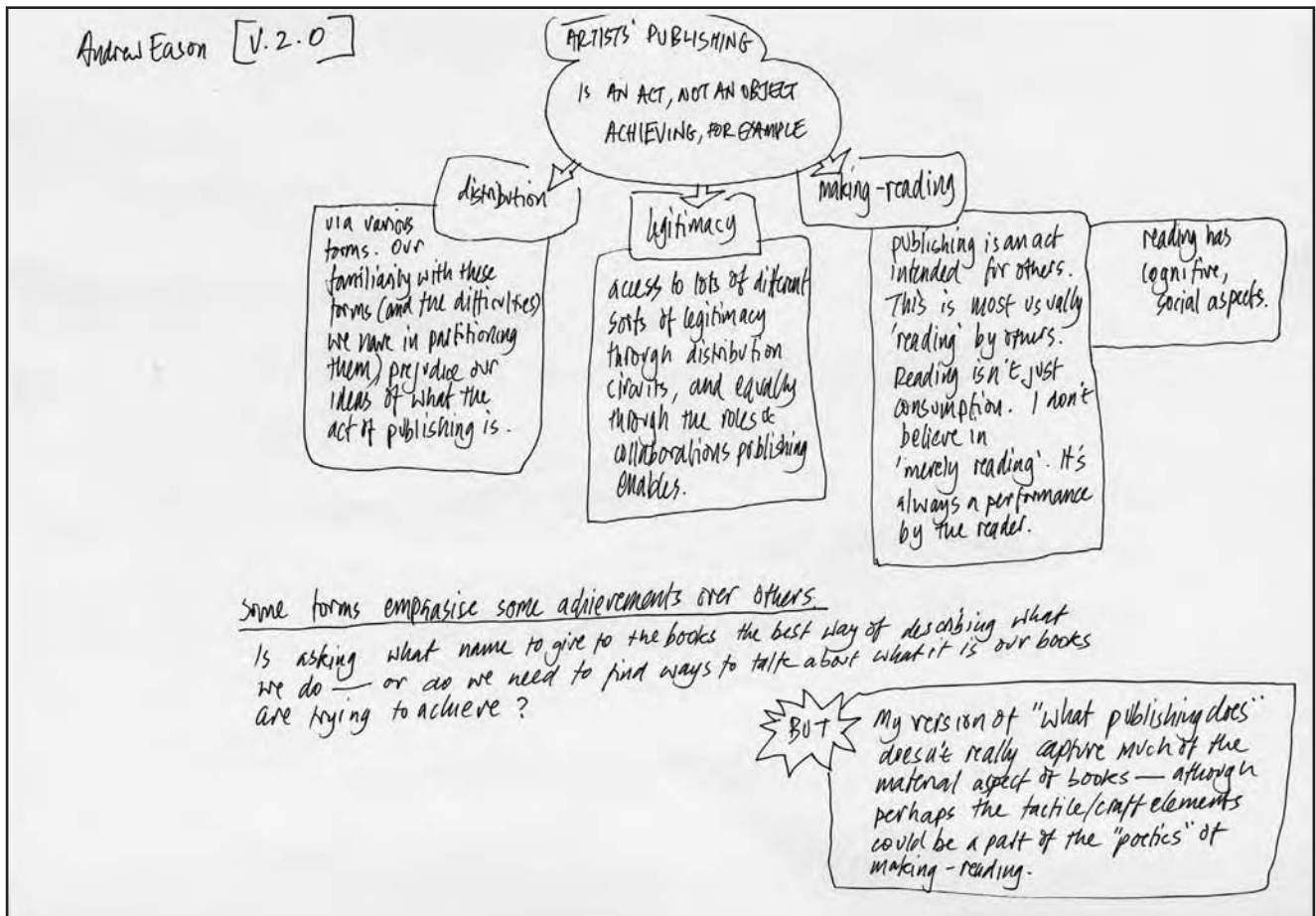
Yes, new technologies influence my creative process. Computers' powers of collage and repetition have profoundly helped me establish my narrative language. They allow expressive work to be used iconographically: I can repeat certain signs in changing contexts so that they emerge as a language, not a picture. Of course this has always been a possibility in print, or through skilful repetition of drawing, but computers make this very easy and encourage me to further visual poetics. I'm sure others with a good grasp of their *own* preferred technologies feel similarly, and I would be surprised if there weren't good and bad points to all our preferred methods and tools.

I don't really enjoy the strictly-defined *production* process. I'm much more interested in the 'creative bit' that precedes it. I draw a line between creating/discovering/ assembling the book that will be produced, and the production itself. It's a chore to me. That's why I'm interested in print-on-demand services. But I would still like to have more control than is currently available with print-on-demand, so I am still largely self-producing work.

The possibility of producing books is circumscribed by how much I can afford to lose on them. This isn't a production-plan, though. It isn't necessarily the case for me that the cost to me is necessarily reflected in the price to the reader. I try to make books that are 'right' without costing me too much, but I do have some concern about how much my books realistically cost me. There is a sense in which I am happy for them to be, to an extent, a gift to my readers. It's important to understand that books are, for me, where I feel I have most to give. I understand that they are not the best way to make money, but they *are* the best way for me to give whatever it is I have to give through my artwork.



Andrew Eason's ABTREE diagrams



If your work falls mainly into the digital category, how do you think your work will adapt as technology develops? For example, if software or hardware become obsolete.

So far, so good. I'm hoping that I haven't used particularly exotic programmes to create and archive material (which is anyway largely destined for print). It should be possible to transcribe to new platforms when necessary. Some echoes here of scribes copying information?

In my library work I've become aware that standards for digital information are being more scrupulously attended to in the last decade or so. This means a greater chance of recovering information using 'outside' systems. Most imaging formats now allow at least basic interoperability with other platforms. There's no single solution.

I would consider publishing an artist's book on electronic paper, if I could expect results that approached the quality of an 80's photocopy. I don't think we're quite there yet. I think that we need to be able to reproduce drawings reasonably well in order for e-paper to work for me. It's too coarse a medium for me as yet, but I have no dogmatic reasons for not wanting to use it. There would be challenges involved in producing work that played to its strengths: my own might do alright, since I emphasise visual narrative in a codex form. While the tactile aspects of my own work aren't completely negligible, there are many other more 'material' practitioners for whom the losses might prove too great to countenance translation into a different for.

Let's see what happens. Maybe a mature version of e-paper will provide facets of interest for the reader as yet undreamt of!

Marketing and Distribution

I have used the Internet to sell my work via my own website and Print-on-demand websites.

I sell the majority of my artists' books through appointments made with collecting institutions. Who are readers? I'm not targeting an audience in a businesslike way- rather I am 'making-reading'. I am making books for others, like me, who are moved by reading, who experience contact with a shred world of reading through books. My audience isn't, in my mind, a 'target' audience, but one that shares with me the defining characteristic of connecting with society through books. It is an audience of empathy.

Is this disingenuous? Who are they? People who enjoy books, certainly, but if I see them in my minds' eye, they are also people for whom books matter in a way that is

to do with how we see and feel about others. This isn't the hardest-headed business-model, clearly, but if I think of the person who buys a book, I think this is the part of them that impels them to do so.

The Future of the Book

I would see producing books using purely digital media as a chance to distribute more widely for free. This is partly because of similar desires to share that one feels with 'real' books, and partly because so much of the web is free. The web currently represents a vast common resource, many parts of which are free. It's good, one feels, to contribute to this as well as benefit from it.

I've not given books away as such, but it would be possible to construct a reasonable facsimile of most of my work from the files in my galleries. Some of these are also available through Flickr under creative commons licenses. I have also made most of my teaching materials freely available.

There are desires to share and disseminate at play in publishing and in the web. Digital media make it possible to give the gift at little material outlay to oneself. Is a physical book a more valuable gift? Probably. But there are other factors: one might be more reluctant to part with it, and it can only be given away until the edition runs out or one prints more. Bandwidth allowing, digital material is more easily given to a bigger audience.

How do you think bookshops/galleries/specialist shops will adapt to distribute books produced using just digital media?

I assume that this will become quite an important question in years to come. Record stores already feel some of the bite of it, since their medium is very widely available digitally. How will bookshops survive?

I've had several goes at answering this question, and none of my ideas really pan out. I don't know. The common thread seems to be that catering to social networks will become more important than just providing a basic level of product. I see the success of future venues being based more, not less around *communities*, and less around the products they sell. I can't see how this would work financially though.

As we source more and more of our materials online, I think we'll look to the physical experience to provide us with something that the online shop or gallery can't. Clearly the physical materials being provided are really there: there's that relationship with books again and what we lose if we lose the tactile, etc. This extends to the social entity of galleries and bookshops too. Although there are wonderful new ways to interact and create

social networks, I think we'll hunger for something that isn't in a virtual gallery or bookshop. Perhaps they will become places we go to share experiences and not simply purchase them?

I think collecting digital media will follow the same pattern as with music. The ubiquity and portability of digital music far outweighs its downside for most listeners. Audiophiles are correct when they say it's not as good in the sense they mean; but that sense isn't the only basis on which the mass of people base their choices. As with music, so with books. For most people, (and most books), there will be a technology that makes digital reading quite acceptable. Perhaps with books we may lose somewhat more than with music, but who is to say that digital media will not become pretty much indistinguishable (at a passing glance, at least) from their analogue counterparts? (Digital cameras do a pretty good job these days, though we miss the alchemy of processing film, which is a creative loss.)

Will libraries and museums be interested in collecting digital artworks? I think they have to be, if they are to fulfill their remit, and if they not to ignore a growing corpus of work. There are problems involved in storing and accessing digital media, yes, but storage for print isn't cheap either. I think that to ignore such work because of its medium would be as absurd as to ignore it based on the type of paper used to print it on. If it's good, collect it. If it's not, smile and say "no".

Case Study - Horst Weierstall, Artist, Cyprus
THEARTSPACE, Nicosia-Cyprus
art.wh@fit.ac.cy

Creative practice

Production processes for artists' books include: Laser printed, Print-on-demand, Screen based/Internet, Sculptural books, Altered books, Photocopy, Hand-drawn/Letraset.

ABTREE

With reference to the ABTREE, my work sits in Altered books, one of a kind, some multiples. I would also add one of a kind, multiples and installation as bookart concepts and practices extending the printed book artform, to the diagram.

Technology and Tradition

My first books were archival, encyclopaedic in nature including mostly found material. The second phase was a one of a kind book series based on texts de-and re-constructed. Text and image became then explored in a newsprint-based series of works involving methods of erasure overdrawing, presented in form of installation and performance. My recent method was the undoing (altering) of a book restating its contents, installed on a wall. I am also interested in a book form with a collective participation excepting all forms of production methods, provided the content allows for an unlimited response with handmade or digital contributions.

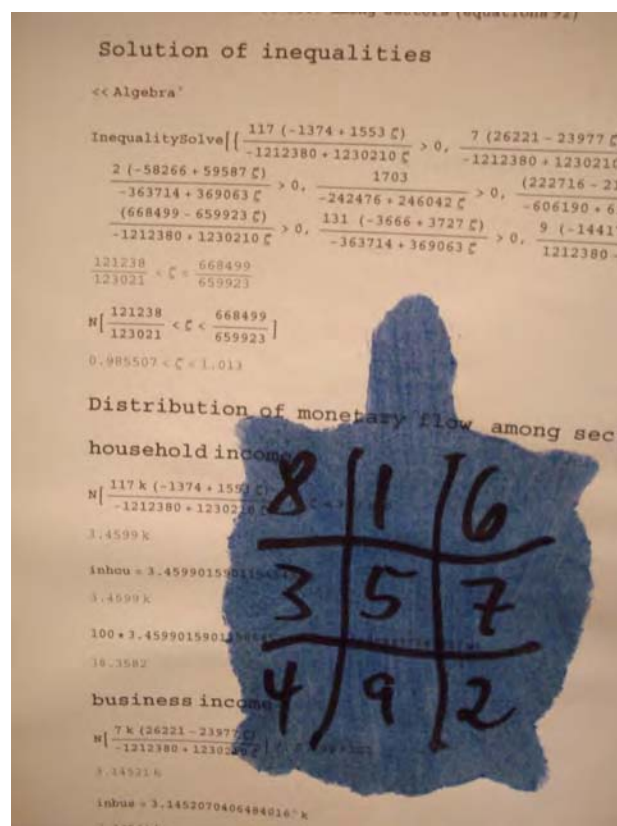
Text, Book, Printed Media are linked by the method of print on paper. This fact of "printed matter" matters a lot in the making of the book. The other phenomenon within a conventional method is the possibility to alter, re- and deconstruct text and context by manual intervention, a form particularly challenging for the spectator. The quality of production triggers the quality of reception (perception).

Yes, new technologies have influenced my creative process, but not directly - more on a synthetic level when the concept requires media messages, contents, references or media-critical data. The computer has helped in the production of my books through involving digital pages in multimedia book projects.

No, I wouldn't consider publishing an artist's book on electronic paper but I use digital and computer means

when the book requires a more international response to communicate more global issues.

My use of primary source material and text associations have proved to be successful layers in the making of my books. Within my altered book practices I was successful when the choice of subject and methods of intervention complemented each other. The results were less successful when the idea of alteration was imposed or not authentically connected with the form and essence of the text. I like my books to incorporate varied textual and textural techniques and to be accessible for a wide range of audiences. In most cases they are structured to encourage handling in order to create a kind of sensory participatory experience.



Flow (Can Achilles ever reach the Turtle), detail.

Artist's book-installation by Horst Weierstall created in 2008 for the Exhibition PHAROS = 10 at the Municipal Art-centre, Nicosia, Cyprus. 300 book pages overdrawn with ink and marker installed on a wall with a fan.

This altered book project developed as direct response to the publication "Euclidian Economics", on algebraic formulae and theories of the global economy by Dr. Sophocles Michaelides. The book incorporates two major metaphoric associations, first the numerical code adding up to 15 whichever way you read it, symbolising the Chinese reading of the River = LO. The second one relates to the Paradox-theory by the ancient Greek philosopher Zenon "Achilles and the Turtle": "The turtle shall always be ahead of Achilles an approximately finite and small space-time distance. That which pursues the slowest will not reach its goal." Zenon



Marketing and Distribution

I sell my work at dedicated a bookshop, to private and public collectors. I haven't used the Internet to sell my work. I think in countries like Cyprus where the artist's book is a newcomer to the scene, writing about different methods and approaches in the production of them in newspapers is vital.

How do you think bookshops/galleries/specialist shops will adapt to distribute books produced using just digital media?

Digital media is a reality in our ways of researching and producing visual and contextual information. The institutions are part of a system which can adapt to the needs of education involving these new forms, but selectively. Collecting digital media seems common practice now, not limited to age groups.

The Future of the Book

No, I don't think that there is any limit to the definition of an artist's book, I am in agreement with Duchamp - as long as it comes from an authentic source and communicates issues of our current life conditions restating our need to unite all senses with our cognitive thinking.

I would say that an artist's book is a source for interactive reading of images and visualising text within tactile layers of artist's book presentations.

Do you have any concerns about the future of the book, for example the loss of traditional artisan skills? If so, how do you think this can be remedied?

The new development of artist's book practices is the remedy.

For further information on *Flow (Can Achilles ever reach the Turtle)* and other book projects and events organised by Horst Weierstall see: www.horstweierstall.com.cy

Case Study - Nancy Campbell, Dealer, UK*
<http://nancycampbelle.blogspot.com>

* I worked until recently for the London antiquarian book dealer Bertram Rota Ltd, managing a department of fine press and artists' books. The department encompassed artists' books and fine press books, from traditional letterpress-printed volumes illustrated with wood engravings or wood cuts to contemporary work, such as unique hand-drawn books and photocopied multiples. I loved dealing with different books, artists and collectors, but in 2008 I left in order to focus on my own work. [Nancy is currently writer-in-residence at Upernavik Museum, Greenland.]

ABTREE

I would suggest reconsidering the use of 'artisan' as a category in opposition to 'artists'. The term 'artisan' suggests a purely craft-based practice. Although the emphasis of fine press/*de luxe* books is often on traditional production methods they are not always purely 'artisanal' - i.e. only interesting because of their hand-crafted methods. There is frequently a higher 'artistic' purpose (while artisan and artist are next to each other in the Concise OED there is certainly a great gulf of meaning) and other variation within the field. Of course the *livre d'artiste* is by definition the product of an artist, although it employs fine printing techniques.

The classic *livre d'artiste* shouldn't be confused with the fine press books which are influenced by them – even though they may be using the same production methods, the one was often at the forefront of technology and the others are often self-consciously archaic. I think it would be advisable to introduce the term 'fine art' or perhaps 'visual arts' to distinguish works which are produced as part of an artist's body of work from those made in a more crafts-based/traditional ideology. Perhaps one of the hidden categories here is the book that is absolutely controlled/published by an artist themselves, and work that is mediated through another agent or publisher e.g. Teriad, or among our contemporaries, Enitharmon Editions.

I would suggest putting the 'artisan' category nearer 'artists' books' too – perhaps to the far left suggesting a temporal development? Some fine printers and presses have close interaction with the world of artists' books and might be hard put to say which category their work came under (I believe Claire Bolton at Alembic Press, and The Old Stile Press, use both terms about their work).

Since the impact of many fine press books (and indeed artists' books) rests on a binding rather than textual

content, how about a category for bindings? (N.B. The subdivision of the 'artists' books' category is technical/media/production based but 'fine press' rests on a genre category – it could also be subdivided into different production methods – I'd like us to extend the logic here!).

Technology

Artists' production methods have changed. There is a growing interest in new media and certainly more recourse to digital printing methods even by artists/publishers who have a long history of working with letterpress such as Ken Campbell. Overall, there's also more willingness to explore non-paper bookworks and digital material.

The choice of works stocked at Rota's is partly to do with the history of the organisation – which has traditionally sold fine press work, though not exclusively so [the company has returned to selling predominantly fine press work since 2009]. It is certainly the case that a number of our private clients have formed collections of fine press books and would see artists' books as outside the scope of their collections. Many of our institutional clients have a broader concept of collections exploring 'the history of the book' and are keen to develop their collections with contemporary work which interrogates the book form. As well as the issue of production standards, issues of permanence/archival quality and storage of artists' books are also pertinent in this context.

Computer graphics and digital printing have moved artists' books production forward immeasurably. These sophisticated technologies replace non-archival forms of reproduction such as Xerox as an effective means of large-scale cost-efficient production. They also make the presentation of information and image much easier and more time-efficient than letterpress production was, so that artists are no longer so disciplined or restricted by their materials.

If you have stocked books that have used a variety of production methods, which do you feel have been successful/unsuccessful and why?

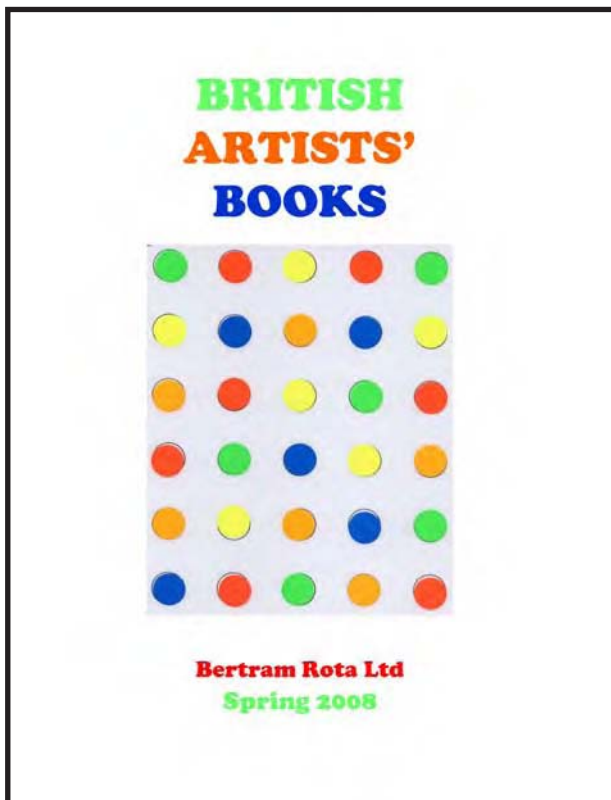
The greatest sales successes have been artists' books which have a broad understanding of traditional book production methods – even when deviating widely from these methods, or deliberately subverting them. So these could be printed letterpress, offset or inkjet ... The factor which sells a book tends to be quality of production and depth of concept rather than the materials used. I am more impressed by, and more likely to promote, books in which the artist has taken trouble with the

work – if there is a binding it is executed to professional standards, and only falls to pieces if that is the intention. In broader terms, successful works are those which show an informed awareness of the historical context of book production, books which engage with their form, rather than just fetishise the book object – so that, for example, if the artist uses a *de luxe* binding with gilt and morocco, this contributes to voicing the subject matter of the book, rather than just subscribing to the artist's idea of what a hand-bound book should be. Individual productions don't have to be ambitious to be successful, but it is important that the artist has succeeded in a professional manner in what they have set out to do.

Inkjet and laser-printed works have a higher turnover because costs can remain low.

I've found that private collectors have a greater interest in illustration. I stock the work of several artists who use line-drawings and screen-printed images to develop a narrative and I find that these appeal more to individuals.

New technologies are making it much easier to find out about artists' publications. I think also the rise of the internet etc. is making the general public more interested in the possibilities of the book as a collectible object, with its redolent and romantic associations sharpened by its perceived demise.



Bertram Rota catalogue cover image: *GenericNamedshirti*, Francis Elliott, Foundry (2003)

Do you stock, or would you consider stocking books that are to be viewed or listened to exclusively on digital equipment?

Yes. I think the information revolution is one in which artists and designers are playing a part, and this makes experimental digital productions particularly interesting. One claim to justify fine press books has been that the independent printers and designers can influence mainstream publishing and design for the better through their exemplary typographic and design sensitivities. Similarly, I think book artists will influence contemporary discussions on ideas of text, narrative, media, and they should be given a seat at any summit exploring such ideas!

Marketing and Distribution

The majority of books are sold through the shop's London premises, or by travelling to international book fairs and visiting specific institutions. Our main target audience is private collectors and institutional collections – particularly those dedicated to the history of the book or book arts.

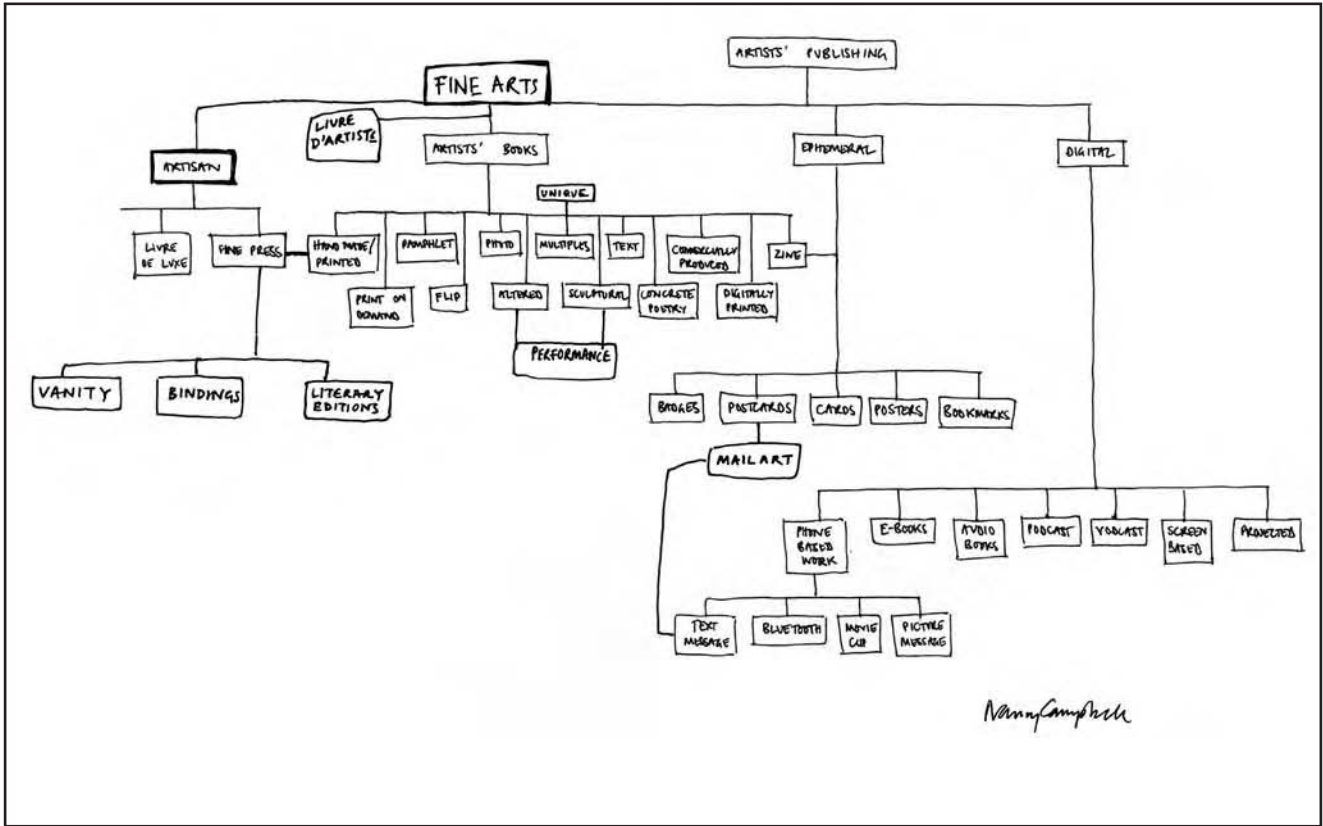
The Future of the Book

I think the future bookshop will be virtual. I know publishers – particularly charities – who are very concerned about the issue of how to cover editorial and production costs in the case of digital media. As booksellers have overheads too, if books go digital I think they will find it very hard to finance their businesses. Certainly digital technology has made it easier to market books to a wide audience, but I don't yet find it as productive as seeing clients in person.

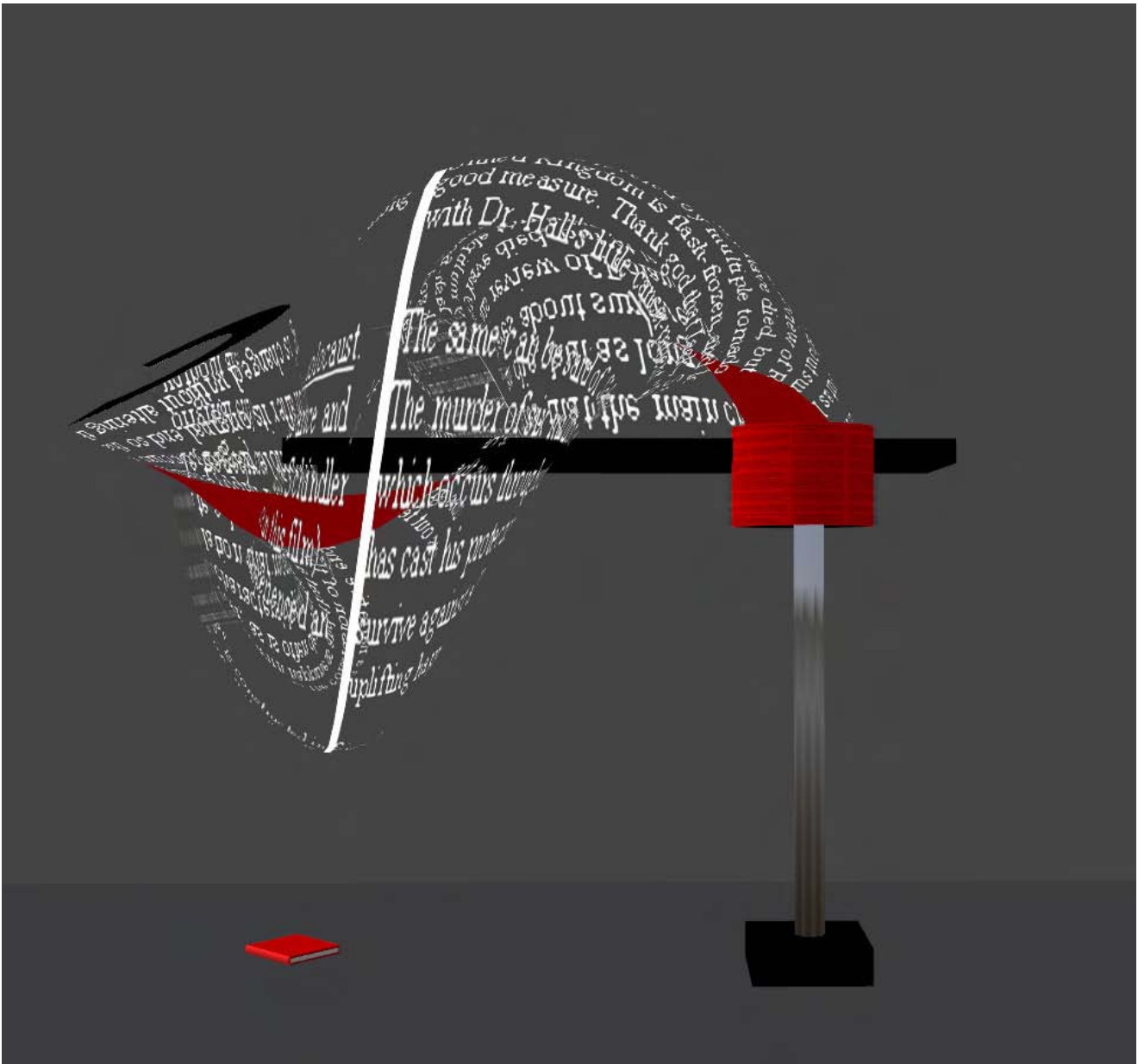
I don't think there is a limit to the definition of an artist's book. However I do notice a distinct division among the books that I handle, between books reflecting on the nature of the book form, and books as a vessel for the artist's work. I prefer to keep an open mind what an artist's book can be – more or less any sculptural object or printed multiple which an artist defines as an artist's book. I think the artist plays an important role in deciding the definition.

Perhaps I'm a little concerned about the diminishing use of traditional print skills, although there are still good opportunities available for those who want to learn them. But I am intrigued and excited by the ways in which our reading and research processes are changing as a result of new technologies, and how contemporary experiments with texts and books reflect this.

You can follow Nancy Campbell's Greenland residency at: <http://nancycampbelle.blogspot.com>



Nancy Campbell's ABTREE diagram



Modern Warfare - the Storybook Machine, Juanita Deharo (Judy Barrass)

virtual book. A comment on modern attitudes to warfare and how they are fed by the press. The moving text revolves around the red drum and spews comments on our desire for happy endings out of the 'machine' in the swirling mass of white text. The little red book on the floor is titled 'Happily Ever After'.

Case Study - Judy Barrass, Artist, Australia

bjudyjim@bigpond.com

www.art-paintings.info/judy/judyhome.html

<http://www.juanitadeharo.com>

<http://juanitadeharo.blogspot.com/>

www.flickr.com/photos/2ndedition_virtual_books/

Creative Practice

Methods of Production for artists' books include: Inkjet, Screen based/Internet, Linocut, Etching, Altered book, Sculptural book, Photocopy, Hand-drawn, Installation, books from found and natural materials, book-like objects.

Any method is valid and the right 'quality' if it meets the desired end. I use traditional methods like making my own paper from plants because it can add significance to the materials or because it adds to the meaning in the work or because I can't find what I want from any other source. Similar reasons are behind almost any method I use- it is to meet an end (or it's just what I felt like doing that day perhaps). The production method is not what makes a thing 'art'. Remember in the not too distant past a painting was not 'art' unless it was an oil painting?

ABTREE

With reference to the ABTREE, I can see that I fit within a few places or that I don't fit – whichever way you want to look at it. I don't see how this diagram can be useful as a classification system. The items on the second level of such a diagram need to have a relationship to the main class (Artists' Publishing) and to each other. They need to be either/or (i.e. artist publishing is either this or that, and this and that belong to the same class of things) In your diagram the second level is a mish-mash of product (artist book) means of production (digital) qualitative description (ephemeral) and producer (artisan). It is like comparing apples and oranges. It seems clear it is not an either/or situation (unless you are suggesting that anything digitally produced or fine press can't fit under artists' books or anything ephemeral can't be classed as an artist's book).

The second level should be a set of alternatives that indicate artists' publishing is either this one thing or that one thing. What is the alternative to being an artist book? I don't think it is being digital or ephemeral. If you use a term as broad as "publishing" then where are prints, catalogues, invitations, newspapers and magazines, commercially printed books etc? So maybe the second level could look something like:

1. Artists' books (sculptural, ephemeral, digital, photographic etc etc)
2. Promotional material (catalogues, websites, invitations, blogs, posters, magazine etc)
3. Prints (Intaglio, relief, litho, digital, photographic)
4. Art objects/multiples (bookmarks, posters, cards, badges, zines etc)
5. Fine Art Books (livres d'artiste, fine press etc)

Maybe it's as confusing as the existing diagram but it's all I have off the top of my head.

Technology and Tradition

Like everyone, over time I have added new methods, modified old ones, discarded some, embraced new technology, fallen back in love with old technology. Basically the production method is just a means to an end and I use what is appropriate and takes my fancy at the time.

I like to embrace any new technology – either a newly learned traditional technology or a new way of approaching an old one or something completely new. So when they come along, and I embrace them, they then become part of my creative toolkit.

I used to draw on paper while I listened to the radio or waited for the bus etc Now I draw on the inside of milk cartons instead. I used to draw on paper when I wanted an image – now I am just as likely to draw on a tablet straight onto my computer screen.

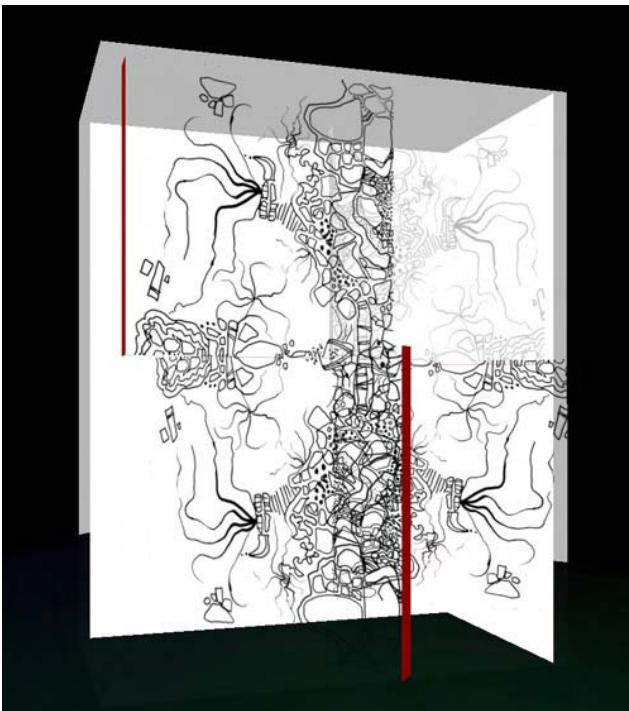
Using a computer has added another exciting method of production to my repertoire. It allows me to spend endless hours experimenting, being creative and enthralled by the possibilities and I can then just turn it off and go to bed and there is no mess in my studio. It has put me in touch with a very broad cross section of people across the world – allowed me to find out things, share knowledge, swap ideas, feed off the creativity of others – etc etc. My laptop is a mobile studio that I can carry into many situations.

I started making books on a Commodore 32 computer back in the early 80's. That software and hardware is obsolete and almost all of what I did back then and since has been lost. But it's part of the thrill – working at the new frontier and one can be too precious about retaining everything.

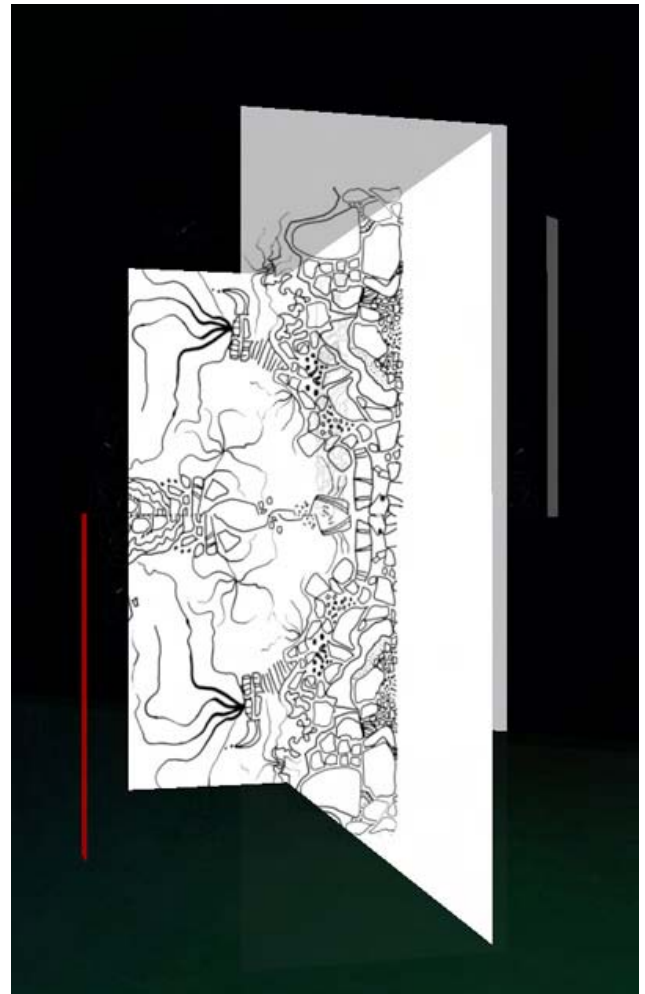
However, if you are wondering about longevity of digital work in general and how we can store significant work for posterity then that's another issue. We simply



Juanita Deharo (Judy Barrass). I have included this image of my library in *Second Life* with a big collection of all sorts of virtual books, publishing systems and templates for making virtual books.



Above and right: *Squiggles*, Juanita Deharo (Judy Barrass) virtual book. This is hard to represent here as the pages and cover are in constant motion, sometimes making a sort of sense when they all come together and sometimes operating as randomly organised parts. You stand in one place and the contents of the book 'perform' for you.



don't know enough about appropriate storage of digital content yet, but things will change. In the meantime much is being lost, stored inappropriately etc.

The whole issue of cataloguing, storing, recording, and keeping records of what is being done digitally is a vexed one. It is not just an issue for individual artists, but one that librarians and others interested in classifying and storing information and artworks have been slow to recognise and address. In many cases libraries have been more interested in looking backwards – in digitising existing collections rather than paying attention to the new media as an entity that requires attention itself.

I have seen many significant artworks disappear. Significant because they broke new ground, others have built on them, they said and did something new – but there was simply not a way to keep them. History is being lost.

Yes, new technologies influence my creative process. I think your brain changes when you learn new things and become absorbed in new ways of doing or being creative. I can see that my sense of aesthetics changes and my evaluation of other's work and the way I look at the world changes whenever I become absorbed in a particular technology, new or old.

There's some interesting stuff in the process of being done on the cognitive changes that occur when artists slip over to being more digitally based in their work. It has certainly changed my brain a little.

We are now becoming multi-literate – able to read, understand and create in many more ways than just traditional print and language. I would consider publishing an artist's book on electronic paper.

Marketing and Distribution

I sell the majority of my artists' books at galleries. I don't have a target 'market' in mind when I make my work. 'Target audience' is something different. I generally make my books with an individual in mind as an audience. They are a sort of conversation, but that individual almost never knows they are my target. Most of my books are bought by institutions and private collectors – I know MANY people see and enjoy my work – they are my audience – they just don't/can't afford to buy.

I have used the Internet to sell my work via my own website, gallery website and the virtual world website Second Life. I am selling, showing, distributing work in virtual worlds. It doesn't see the light of day outside the

computer. I also make and sell work that is produced digitally but it is printed and sold as an object in galleries. At times I use the computer as a cheap, easy way to produce multiples – say as a gifts, for swaps, for catalogues etc.

The Future of the Book

Print on demand, e books, podcasts phone books etc are a reality – you can buy them now. More bookshops will adapt to on-line sales and more and better technology for downloading and reading digital books will become available. Digital books will become commonplace and the nature of reading will change.

Virtual worlds open up other possibilities – already many publishers and bookstores have presences in virtual worlds and sell books there. Virtual book readings, book launches etc are happening now and will become more common. Reading might become a more immersive experience, not so dependent on words.

Similarly galleries are moving to web based presences, websites, blogs, etc and into virtual worlds. I think at last count there were 600 or more art galleries in the virtual world Second Life. It's a way of reaching a very broad audience. Galleries like Jack the Pelican Presents in Brooklyn or the Australian National Portrait Gallery are already straddling the boundaries. There will be more of this.

I don't think any collecting/classifying organisation can keep up with collecting digital media at the moment. We are just starting to wake up to the fact that the internet has a vast store of ever changing information, art etc that is here today and gone tomorrow – almost impossible to get a handle on.

A lot has been/is being lost. And that is not to mention all the stuff that is on people's home or work computers.

A light at the end of the tunnel is that major galleries and institutions are now investing a lot in digitally based artworks. They are going to have to figure out how to maintain and store them.

There is a need for virtual libraries that go across national boundaries. How that can be funded/organised is difficult to see.

There's an amazing market for digital artworks in virtual worlds – some artists are making a career and a living in this already. It's an interesting idea, buying an artwork that doesn't exist in any traditional sense. There are already virtual collectors, virtual galleries, and real life galleries showing virtual works and the growth we see

happening in this area will make it a big part of the income opportunities available to artists.

Yes, there is a limit to the definition of an artist's book: An artwork that references or is based on the form or format of a book.

Do you have any concerns about the future of the book, for example the loss of traditional artisan skills? If so, how do you think this can be remedied?

No – artists are very good at keeping traditional skills alive long after they have ceased to be necessary as artisan skills in any other context. I see a bright future for old technologies – look at all the old letterpress or bookbinding equipment that is being lovingly retrieved and put back into use in people's backyard studios.

My concern is that if we persist with a rush to pin and capture the thing that is artists books we will, in the process, consign the whole movement and genre into the past.

Some further information:

Things are really moving in virtual worlds and publishing - I am (through University of Western Australia) sponsoring a monthly prize for virtual artists' books and getting some interesting works. I will be speaking on virtual books at the Forum in Mackay in April 2010. http://www.artspacemackay.com.au/artists_book_forum/focus_on_artists_books_v

I met Tom Layton in cyberspace - he is writing a course in virtual publishing for University of Oregon. www.tomlayton.net/Tom_Layton/Resume.html

Artists' Books or Artists' Publications?

An edited selection of responses from the online forum: 21st Century Book Discussions at Artist Books 3.0
You can read the whole texts online at <http://artistbooks.ning.com/group/21stcenturybook>

Sara Bowen on 24th September 2008

Is the question really about intent? "Publication" is the action of making something public. Do artists who make books (who may not be the same as 'book artists', as I picked up from Caren's comment) make them with the intention that they should be public? To me it doesn't seem quite the same thing as 'publishing' in a literary sense, where the existence of a 'readership' is implied by the act of publishing a book.

Caren Florance on 25th September 2008

Publication also implies readership and author-ity, and surely by the sheer act of making a 'book', that act brings those notions into play, whether it is part of the impulse of creation or not. Otherwise you are just making an object, are you not? And it is hard to make a booky object without these overtones.

Charles Brownson on 27th September 2008

I myself have concluded that there is no such thing as a digital artist's book (<http://ocotilloarts.com/NtABN.pdf>) in a paper "Now the Artists Book Now" -- leading to the paradox that if you publish it, it's not an artists book (it's a facsimile of one) and if it is an artists book it's unpublishable: the exact opposite of the situation with "real" books.

Sara Bowen on 28th September 2008

For me, digitally-produced work sits comfortably alongside the 'artists' books', 'artisan' and 'ephemera' branches of the CFPR book arts family tree, but the digitally-based work such as podcasts, vodcasts and text messaging don't sit comfortably alongside my definition of artists' books. For me, they are so completely different that I wouldn't classify them as part of the same family, but would probably classify them as part of the 'time-based media' family tree.

Caren Florance on 30th September 2008

I'm not sure if it's possible to create an umbrella over the whole oeuvre that everyone is happy with apart from 'artists' books', because anything else implies shades of hierarchy that will have practitioners embracing or shifting away from it according to their feelings of inclusion or dispossession... again, it boils down to identification.

Tim Mosely on 30th September 2008

Derrida used the term "an insoluble tension" when writing about books and I think that it is a tension that can't be dissolved that gives artists books their currency. If the term artists publishing could dissolve that tension that maybe the term artists books would lose currency.

Paul Salt on 2nd October 2008

I think broadening the understanding of the word book holds few problems. Embracing new technologies actually opens doors to new possibilities and new experiences. After all, it is broadening the range of work and its potential as a form and, as has been said, who knows where it will lead. It is the potential that is exciting,

Tim Mosely on 12th October 2008

That the term artists books has gained currency, despite the protests of significant figures in the field such as Clive Phillpot, would seem to imply that looking for a new term may prove an uphill battle. From what I can recall almost all the terms used for the field involve the word 'book', and it would be difficult to establish a new term without it.

Caren Florance on 14th October 2008

For me, the book implies a self-contained world. It's an entity that unravels something yet contains it. By containment I don't mean a physical structure, but a conceptual boundary. In that sense I accept digital notions of 'books' because they still work within some philosophical 'containing' boundary. It's like the notion of a portal -- it takes you somewhere, but there is still a thing you have to go through to get there.

Judy Barrass on 5th November 2008

It seems to me our language is unable to keep pace with change. 'Book' and 'Publish' or 'Publication' are 20th Century terminologies that sit comfortably (or not) with a generation of artists that grew up in an era when they meant something definite. A book was a recognisable object, and being literate meant being concerned with reading and writing books. To publish meant to put an object out there for others to read. 'Book artists' play on this familiarity with object and experience, but the audience that responds so readily to this play on familiarity may diminish in this century.

I prefer that there is no 'canon'. A looser arrangement allows us to shift and change and continue. Otherwise 'artist books' will be one of those defined art movements clearly located in the past. I am wondering if a consideration of the notion of 'reading' might be a more useful way to approach things.

Charles Brownson on 7th November 2008

Any artwork is 'read' -- examined and comprehended serially -- and this is an established, accepted notion. 'Reading' is not so divisive a term as 'book' and 'publish' have turned out to be, yet I suspect (I don't know this literature) that it will still support sorting of artists by mode, strategy, gap between perception and comprehension, etc.

Abigail Thomas on 7th November 2008

I call (most of) my art 'bookworks' rather than 'artists' books' because I tend to make 'one-offs' or small editions, and the word seems to fit better with sculptural

artists' books and other kind of one-offs. It also seems like a better word to encompass artists' e-books. Publication is a word I would never use to describe my work, and I would not consider using it for fear of someone not understanding (even more than now!) what I make.

Andrew Eason on 23rd January 2009

To draw the conversation back to publishing, I welcome its fulsome openness. I think the open door it proffers is not one we should fear, but rather one that we should try to send a message through. Publishing is a larger world than artists' books, and we need a larger world.

Charles Brownson on 21st February 2009

Publish-on-demand gets bigger all the time and it's very obvious that the print book is now a derivative product from the digital original.

Andrew Eason on 23rd February 2009

I wonder if, as the manufacturers of digital reading devices get better and better at what they do, and as we -like that monk- get more familiar with it as a reading environment, whether we will become more content just to call them books. Not e-books, or kindles, or anything else, but books, because that's what they do?

Andrew Eason on 24th February 2009

If we are discussing artists' publications, I tend to think of that as an intention, not an object. The verbal form- 'to publish', rather than the various physical forms that publishing takes. To me the discussion of intentions leading to practice is as interesting as discussions about the formal qualities of and definitions of books, and moreover, more likely to yield a consensus about our common intentions in publishing, across the spectrum from livres d'artistes to scatological 'zines.

Natalie d'Arbeloff on 2nd March 2009

It seems that there is a problem about naming a creative activity only if it remains outside the general public's experience and if the results of such activity are only seen in specialised settings - ie, books/multiples/videos exhibited in art galleries rather than in bookshops and video stores etc.

Zea Morvitz on 23rd April 2009

I would be in favor of disentangling these separate disciplines rather than trying to find one term to cover them all.

Andrew Eason on 23rd April 2009

I'd like to apply a term to cover all those practices as a base, not as an end to the conversation. I'd want to use that base to find other ways of exploring the similarities and differences between lots of books.

So, my question would be "what does working with books mean to you?", and not "what kind of books to you make?". That is, I treat 'publishing' as a verb, not as another category to divide things with. In my admittedly

personal reading it's an approach that asks about practice, not objects.

Natalie d'Arbeloff on 25th April 2009

The intention to publish, yes: but isn't that the same as the intention to exhibit a painting or sculpture or film, or any other medium an artist may use? The majority of artists want to 'publish' - ie show their work to others.

Jackie Wills on 3rd November 2009

Personally, I like the term book arts, but I'm relatively new to this area. I'm a poet looking for new ways of presenting work and I have always believed that poetry lends itself to this approach. So the term book arts doesn't preclude poets, while artists' books does and artists' publications does even more so.

“Defining the Book”

An edited selection of responses from the online forum:
21st Century Book Discussions at Artist Books 3.0
You can read the whole texts online at
<http://artistbooks.ning.com/group/21stcenturybook>

Charles Brownson on 9th October 2008

I've always been puzzled by the claim that it's a book if the artist says it is. We don't permit this sort of thing in other discourse -- you can call it a book if you want, but the notion of what a book is, is collectively determined.

Jackie Batey on 4th November 2008

I like to think that it's all in the aims of the artist. If the intention is to make a book - however unlikely - then it will be a book that is made. The problem may arise when it's somebody else that defines the artwork, "it's a bit like a book".

Charles Brownson on 7th November 2008

One of the consequences of my distinction just made is on the matter of whether an artist can call whatever they've just made a book -- or more carefully, what they have just intended to make. Certainly they can, as Jackie says. But that doesn't make it a book. Us chunkers and sorters [cataloguers and bibliographers] are likewise privileged to call it what we please.

Jackie Batey on 10th November 2008

Digital systems may really help, an archived artist's book could be listed by key words, phrases, images and meta tags - this would mean that the categories are flexible, depending on the searchers requirements, i.e. they could search for artifacts by medium, intention, place of creation, tone, page size, scale, theme, artist etc.

Andrew Eason on 23rd January 2009

If, as seems to be the case, we've got lots of competing ways to describe what's going on, it seems more useful to grasp something functional rather than something true. That's why I share your enthusiasm for more flexible cataloguing. It seems to me that the definition we seek ought to be something that helps us build up momentum towards linking to things in the outside world, rather than a wall to stop us doing so.

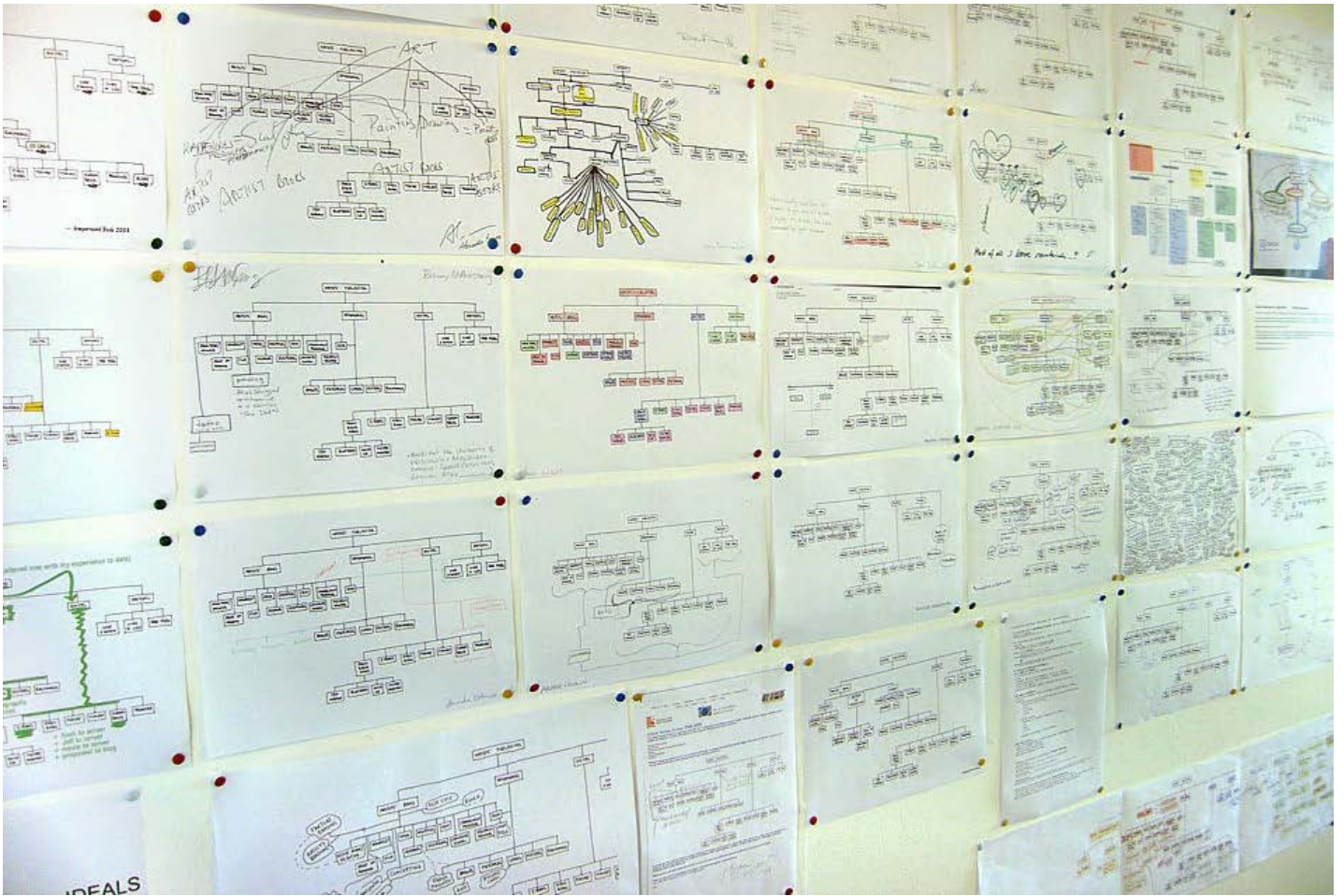
Andrew Eason on 23rd January 2009

I think we use 'book' as a short hand term because it's relatively irreducible. It's difficult to argue against someone who has their footing firmly planted in the book; even when their work looks like sausages, they don't have to budge.

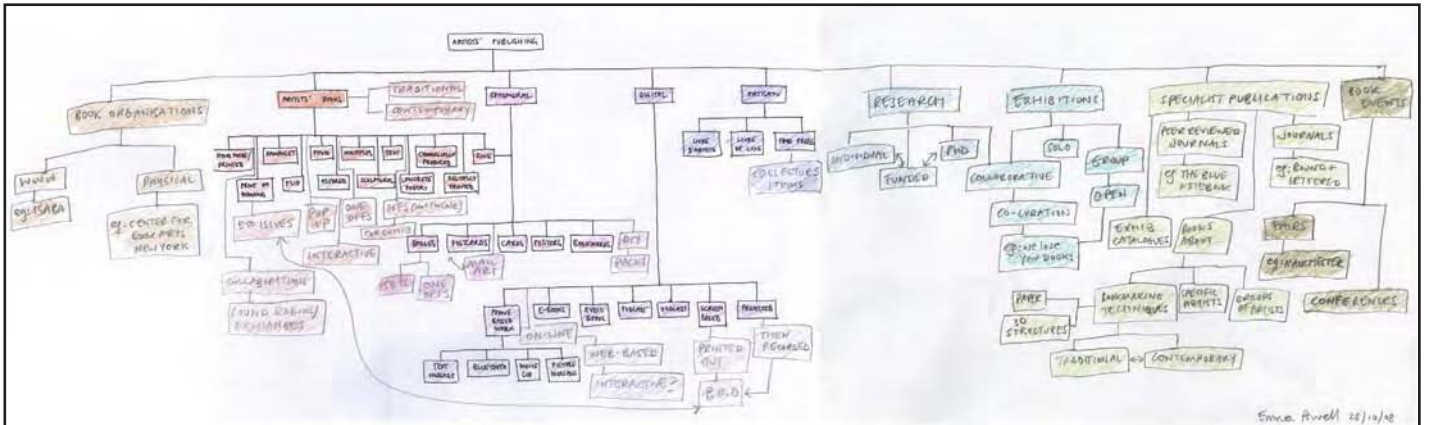
The side that 'wants to fiddle' with the book, takes issue with its status and position in society. Books are a powerful social phenomenon with meanings beyond their material description. Such works interrogate both the physical description AND the book-as-a-social-phenomenon: because they're nominally a book, they interact with our feelings about the socially-constructed idea of the book.

Charles Brownson on 21st February 2009

The artist may say he intended to make a book but that statement is unverifiable and makes no headway against the viewer/reader's insistence that it's not a book. This disagreement is fundamentally unresolvable.



ABTREE diagrams on display during the project



Emma Powell's ABTREE diagram

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