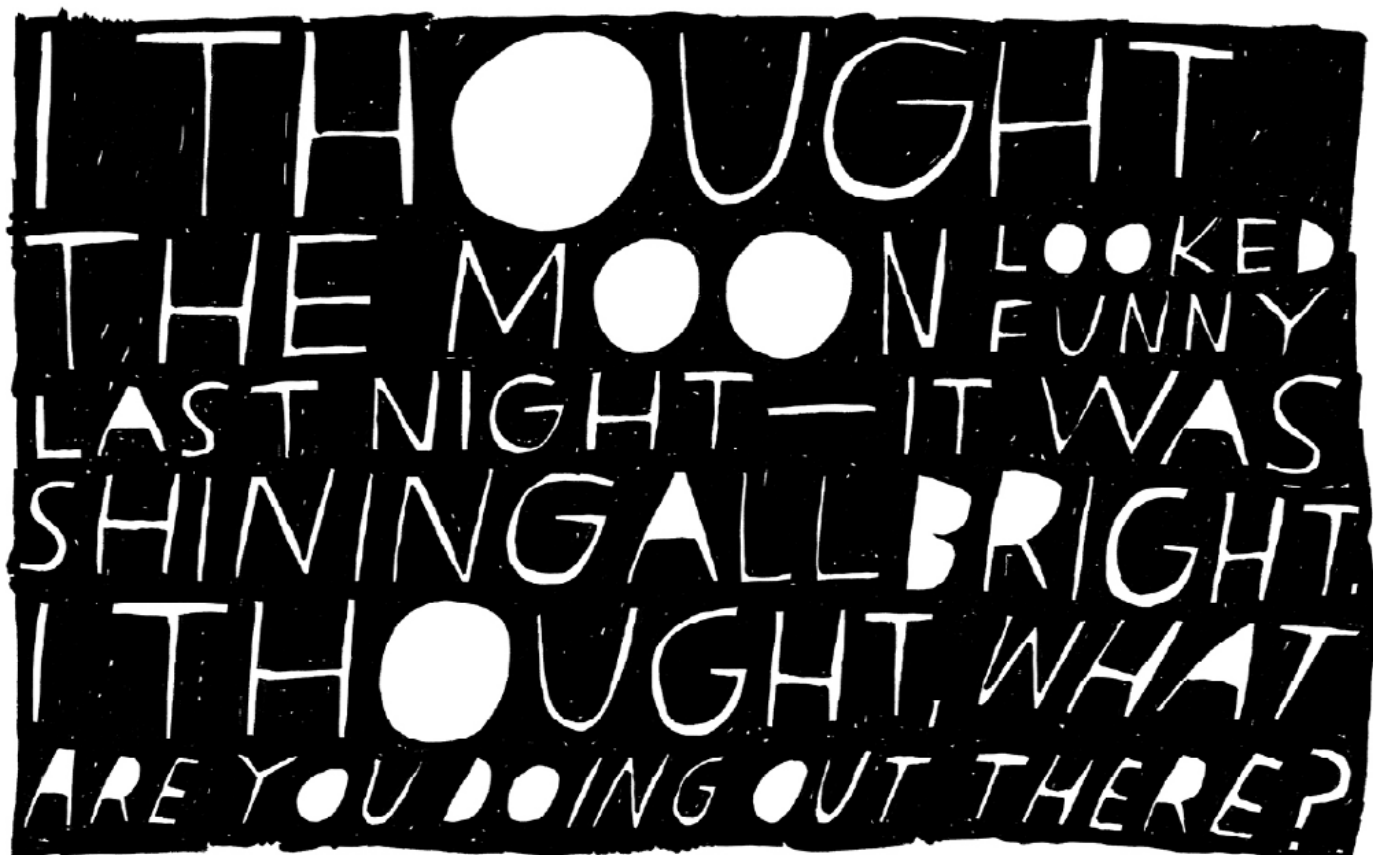


The Blue Notebook

Volume 17 No.2
Spring - Summer 2023



I THOUGHT
THE MOON LOOKED
FUNNY
LAST NIGHT - IT WAS
SHINING ALL BRIGHT.
I THOUGHT, WHAT
ARE YOU DOING OUT THERE?

The Blue Notebook is as a free PDF journal, downloadable at: <https://www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/blue-notebook/>

We welcome submissions of writing on contemporary artists' books and related issues for *The Blue Notebook*. Please email Sarah.Bodman@uwe.ac.uk for guidelines or see: <https://www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/blue-notebook/>

Artists' contributions are by invitation from the Art Editor, Tom Sowden.

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I think our normal
summer is
going to be n-ormal
already.



I already
have that
feeling.

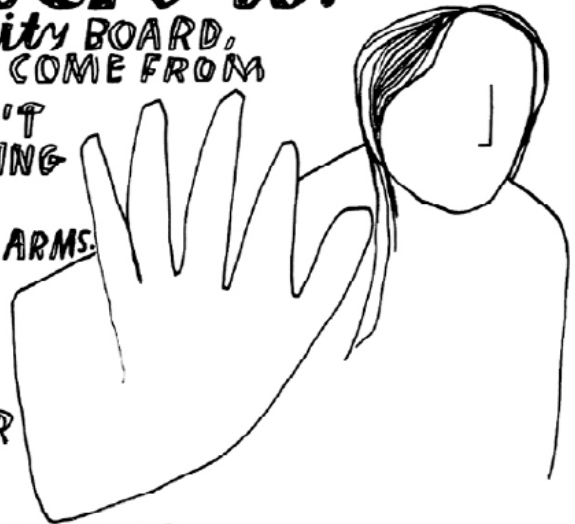
Course, you know
how Facebook is.

we HAVE A COMMUNITY BOARD,
AND SUPPOSEDLY A MAN HAD COME FROM
Florida AND HE WASN'T
SELF-QUARANTINING AND DOING
THE 14 DAYS HE REQUIRED.

and a woman was up in ARMS.
AND I WAS, LIKE, are you
gonna get the LYNCHES
out? **STOP.**

THINK. This is YOUR
NEIGHBOR THAT YOU SAY
HELLO
TO EVERY DAY.

THAT WAS WHAT I THOUGHT.



Welcome to issue *Thirty-four of The Blue Notebook*

Volume 17 No.2 Spring - Summer 2023 includes:

Amador Perez -art... books... art books... artists' books... As a child I had access to the world of art through printed reproductions on postcards and books. As a teenager I collected facsimile publications sold at newspaper stands. I liked to read about the life of artists, but I was transported by the printed images of their works, which I examined as intensely as I did the originals I found in the museums I could visit during that time, with a sharp and passionate regard, trying to understand how they were made in order to satisfy the great curiosity they awakened in my spirit. Then, back at home, I would take my drawing board and try to reproduce the works I admired most. To copy the reproductions employing graphite, watercolour or oil on canvas was the manner I found to become even closer to the original works and to enter into the author's creative process.

Noriko Suzuki-Bosco, a UK based Japanese artist and researcher, reports on the *Otaru Book Art Week*, a book art event that has been taking place for the last 12 years in the small port town of Otaru in Hokkaido, Japan. She recounts her visits to the different venues and the artworks seen.

Jess Richards *Un/tellable Stories - An Essay in Images and Lists*. These images and process lists are part of an ongoing hybrid art/creative writing project. This essay demonstrates part of the project which explores storytelling and layered texts. When text is visually layered the reading process becomes inventive. "Where there is writing – or something that looks like writing – there is always something to read. Resistance in one layer might re-route reading to another." (Hall 2013, 88) This essay in images and lists shows new and old stories being written and hidden. Untellable stories are printed repeatedly on vintage book pages, printed text is removed on coils of masking tape to make blank pages for new stories. An essay about ghosts is layered on tracing paper pages. A short story called 'The Three Dresses' transforms into a 'Drawn Story' when each letter is linked to another with ink threads. The story disappears in the threads when all the story pages are overprinted onto one page. The images reveal untellable and tellable stories, the materiality of text, altered books and pages. The organisation and detritus of the writing process are also explored during this part of this project. The process lists are an invitation to participate in storytelling and untelling.

Making places, making poems: process and performance in landscape book arts by **Anna Reckin** - Artists' books that feature a single poem, or a themed sequence, are very familiar and widely appreciated. I'm interested in those that go a stage further: where the artist's book form is more than a decorative vehicle for poems that could (and often do) appear subsequently or in parallel in mass-produced formats. Just as a standard print or performed poem will not work in prose paraphrase, so these artist's book poems are only fully realised when seen as text-art objects where linguistic and material invention are inextricably intertwined. The examples discussed here, a surreal re-enactment of suburban territory, and an ecopoetic reconfiguration of Welsh coalfields, push hard at Charles Olson's contention that 'Form [in poetry] is never more than an extension of content.' Here the content – landscape and its construction through natural and human forces – both extends and is intimately bound up with the form.

Camilla Nelson and Steven Hitchins' *Translating the Coal Forests* 'translates' pages from F.J. North's *Coal and the Coalfields in South Wales* into a micro-poetry publication whose text and materials are literally de- and re-formed through a lengthy process of immersion and petrification, reinscribing organic breakdown and decay. Paeony Lewis's *A Practical Guide to Gardening behind the Post-War Fence* reconstructs a fragile 1950s reprint of a 1947 gardening manual (*Practical Gardening and Food Production in Pictures*, by Richard Sudell) to stage a picket-fenced paper garden where found poems are also lawns, cascaded pages incorporate illustrations showing how to scatter fertiliser, and the presence of wild birds and animals is signalled through diagrams and tables for their control and destruction. Both projects exemplify the materials-based practice of artists' books as powerful interventions in ecocriticism.

Composing in Colour and Line: An Interview with Artist and Bookbinder Timothy C. Ely by **Jennie Hinchcliff**, Exhibitions Manager at the San Francisco Center for the Book, USA. In the forty-plus years he has created codexes, Ely estimates that he has completed hundreds of works. The elaborate use of composition, sweeping colour palettes, cribriform writing, and dense, diagrammatic drawings are hallmarks of his work.

It's art and it's a book – but no art book. How artists' books are testing the limits of libraries by **Lilian Landes**, curator of the collection of artists' books at the Bavarian State Library, Germany.

We are always on the lookout for submissions for future issues. Please visit the website for details: <https://www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/blue-notebook/> or contact Sarah at: Sarah.Bodman@uwe.ac.uk



Amador Perez, *Vaslav Nijinski*, book, 1976, exhibit at MAM Rio, 1977



Amador Perez, *Vaslav Nijinski*, book, 1976, exhibit at MAM Rio, 1977

art... books... art books... artists' books...

Amador Perez

I love books... art books... artists' books... portals that made it possible for me to enter as a child, and then a teenager, into the world of the arts...

As a child I had access to the world of art through printed reproductions on postcards and books. As a teenager I collected facsimile publications sold at newspaper stands. I liked to read about the life of artists, but I was transported by the printed images of their works, which I examined as intensely as I did the originals I found in the museums I could visit during that time, with a sharp and passionate regard, trying to understand how they were made in order to satisfy the great curiosity they awakened in my spirit. Then, at home in my room, I would take my drawing board and try to reproduce the works I admired most. To copy the reproductions employing graphite, watercolour or oil on canvas was the manner I found to become even closer to the original works and to enter into the author's creative process, "a way of bringing to the surface of paper a certain intimacy that often slips into the confessional, favoring autobiographical narratives; in this transposition there is a shift between the image trivialized by technical reproducibility and the addition of a coefficient of strangeness brought by art, resulting in a diverted familiarity." (Frederico Morais, *To love the drawing* - book *Artist's Collection* - Amador Perez, Fraiha Editor, 1999, Rio de Janeiro) and to discover the relationship of a cheap offset reproduction with the original painting "well preserved and illuminated in a museum... bridge the distance that separates that dark and flat reproduction from the luminous and deep surface of the painting" (Rafael Cardoso, *Image alchemy*, exhibition *The art of printing* - Amador Perez, 2003, State University of Rio de Janeiro).

On the pages of these books, through reproductions of famous artworks, printed images – true windows to my fantasies – I started to relate to the works and their creators, to the museums and collections that housed them, until I was able, as an adult and artist, to visit some of these museums, to see these works up close and to get involved definitively with them...

Reproductions of works of art continue to have an intense impact on me, one of enchantment and curiosity, and for some decades now these factors have guided and defined my own artistic productions. Currently and simultaneously I am developing a new artist's book project, *Os Mundos (The Worlds)*: a digital book based on *O Mundo da Criança (The Child's World)*, from a fundamental collection of my childhood and adolescence), and a one-off book based on *O Mundo dos*

Museus (The World of Museums), from a collection that is very important to me).

In the early 1970s, working from photo images found in newspapers and magazines, focusing on sport competitions and all the drama we can find in such situations, I concentrated on using graphite. In parallel, by the mid-Seventies I was already experimenting with xerography, manipulating the same type of image. Such manipulation included previously retouches to the originals, in order to optimise the sparse xerographic resources available at that time: to darken, lighten, reduce or enlarge. After reproduction, the images were sequentially organised to form booklets.

In 1976 I graduated in Graphic Design from the School of Fine Arts of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, with the artist's book *Vaslav Nijinski*, about the legendary dancer and choreographer born in Kiev at the end of the 19th Century, the great star of Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes*. The project consists of a series of collages where I used some xerox resources, not only to copy but also to recreate the dancer's photographic images, adding to and changing them with them with ink drawings and other graphic techniques. A version of the graphic project was developed as a performance, or "conference-spectacle" (a concept created by the scenographer Helio Eichbauer when I was his student and assistant at the Escola de Artes Visuais do Parque Lage / School of Visual Arts of Lage Park, Rio de Janeiro) - the collages and drawings were photographed to be made into 35mm slides and projected onto a large screen and onto my own body as I interacted with the images. In 1977 I was invited by the Museum of Modern Art of Rio de Janeiro (where I had previously studied and worked as a gallery attendant) to produce my first solo exhibition, for which I showed the graphic project about Nijinsky and presented a new version of the performance.

The first contact I had with dance was in my childhood, taken by my mother to watch the ballet *Les sylphides*, and I was totally delighted with what I saw... years later I read *My life*, the autobiography of Isadora Duncan where the American dancer quotes Nijinsky, and I became very curious to know more about his life. I read *The diary of Vaslav Nijinsky*, that touched me deeply, a life marked by beauty, ecstasy and tragedy.

In 1976, Helio Eichbauer, realising my passion for the visual arts and dance, encouraged me to develop a piece on the Russian dancer, and from there I also started to take dance classes, which absorbed me to the point of thinking about becoming a professional dancer, and yet more interested I started to study the history and other aspects of the art of dance. I later got to know the work of Joseph Cornell, an American artist



Amador Perez, *Nijinski images*, drawing 1982, book 1983-85

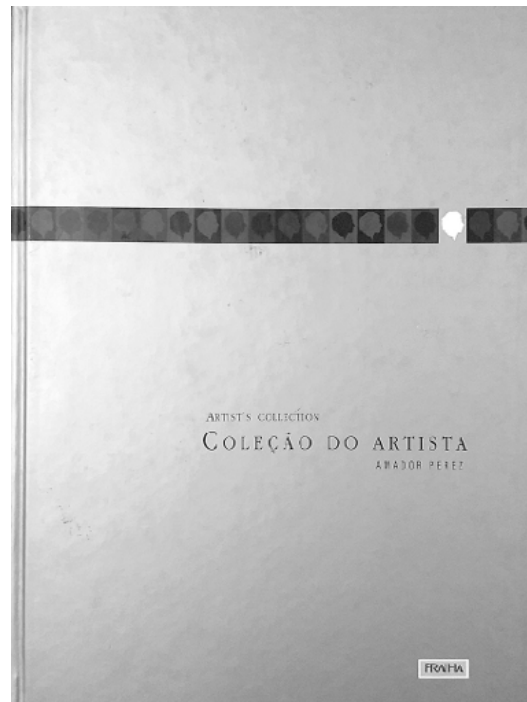
passionate about the world of ballet, and, stimulated by his work I further deepened my research on Nijinsky. Lincoln Kirstein comments in the photo book *Nijinsky Dancing*: "...his movements and gestures, both those within the tradition and those that strayed from it, speak ardently to generations who have never seen him. As the illustrations in this collection attest, it is Nijinsky's pervasive impersonality, his all-encompassing ability to personify rather than represent, that continues to mesmerise wider audiences than he had in his lifetime. (...) Endowed with the magnetism of a mesmeric presenter, he depersonalized himself to the maximum to adopt a multiform capacity. As the photographs here demonstrate, he carried a particular physical brilliance to a higher significance, both generalized and intense, clarified by the grace of art." (Kirstein, Lincoln. *Nijinsky Dancing*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1975, pp. 16-18).

Continuously moved by Nijinsky's images and history, in 1982 I developed a series of ten graphite drawings from a selection of photographs of the dancer, and in 1983 I published the artist's book *Nijinsky: images*, with a text by the writer Julio Castañon Guimarães. The edition sold out and the book had its second print run in 1985. The dissemination of the imagery became even wider as the drawings were published again in 1988 as a series of 5 posters. Despite the emotion I felt when making the series *Nijinsky: images*, its self-projective dimension, it meant for me, above all, the possibility of exploring, shall I say, a working method.

In my drawings from the Eighties, based on works of art, paintings, I deeply explored the technique of graphite which I used earlier in the series *Nijinsky: images*. In those drawings I displace the works from their original objective bodies, the paintings of "old colleagues" - artists that I learned to admire from a very early age, just like, later, modern and contemporary artists - so that, as in a dream, I managed to recreate a "silent impression". In the choice and appropriation of images of paintings, few belong to artists or works that constitute the great official history of art, enshrined as a norm - I choose images that have always marked or affected me, works of my individual preference. The sequence is essential in the series and, although each work is autonomous, the passage from one to the other emphasises the question of time as a fundamental factor. The images are reworked, but even transformed they are still recognised, and form a succession of images committed to contemporary perception; and just like in the past, I continue to work on these issues today, now in the digital field. Reviewing and also using images of my own drawings from the Seventies and Eighties, when I still did not base my work on pre-conceived art images or reproductions of works created by other artists from the past or modernity, putting all these images in a "blender" to then "sieve" or

extract a new meaning for them. I have been working for years against the grain of the mechanical reproduction, trying to restore in the image vulgarised by reproduction the Benjaminian aura of the original work of art, creating instead the single and authentic image, restricted to a few, a multiplicity of images, all original... what after all is being more real for us, the original object or its image?... a discussion about authorship and memory.

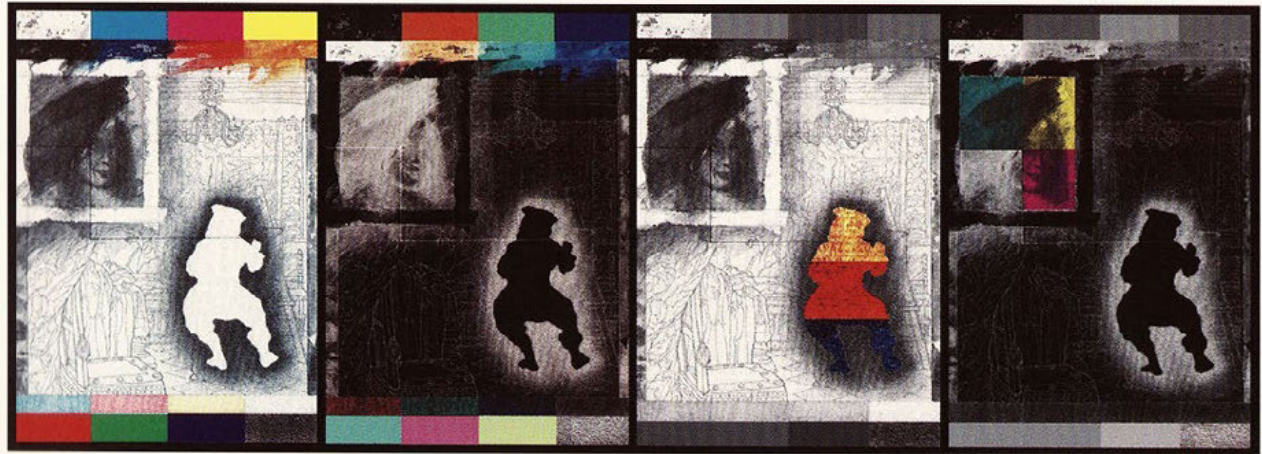
In the past and in the present, I highlight figurative works and avoid abstraction, an indication of humanism, my particular attachment to things, beings and the world, I am interested in the works themselves and in their modes of dissemination. I am now working not only in printed media but also digital, on reproduction of images to which I added my own imagery - "At a time when the only possible outlets for art seem to be discussing its status or brooding over its past... he has been operating with reproductions... dealing with works of art as images, as cultural facts... he is not so interested in the representation of the world, but above all in the world of representation." (Roberto Conduru, *Critical imagination*, exhibition *Art impressions - Amador Perez*, 2005, Cultural Center Cândido Mendes, Rio de Janeiro). Currently, I select images from the history of art and not from the world or the media, as I did initially in my trajectory, and I criticise the trivialisation of the contemporary imaginary, configuring my own, singular, history of art in relation to the History of Art.



In 1999 Editora Fraiha (Rio de Janeiro) published the art book *Coleção do Artista / Artist's Collection - Amador Perez*, with essays by art critics Frederico Moraes and Fernando Cocchiarale, a synthesis of 25 years of my work that brought together 70 facsimile reproductions



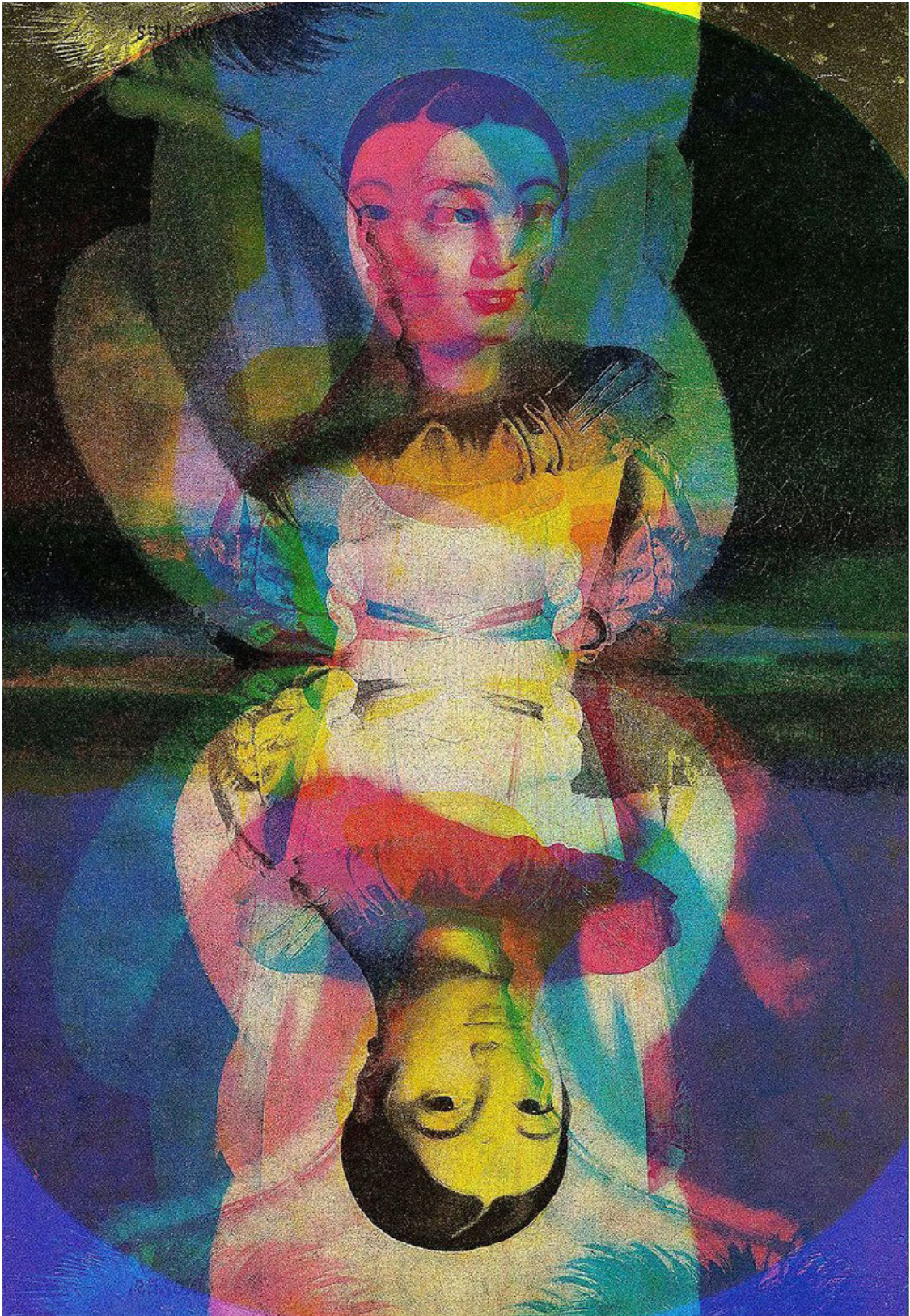
Amador Perez, *Nijinski images*, drawing 1982, book 1983-85



Amador Perez, *Impressões da Arte / Art Impressions-Art Prints*, 2002-2006



Amador Perez, *Gabinete de Leitura / Reading Cabinet*, 2008-2009



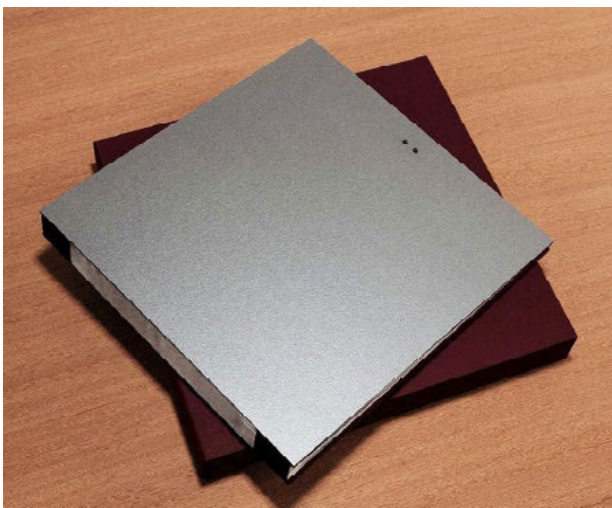
Amador Perez, *Gabinete de Leitura / Reading Cabinet*, 2008-2009

of selected drawings from series developed from 1974 to 1999, and through *Artist's Collection* I rethought the role of art books as instruments for the transmission of artistic knowledge and the amplification of culture.

In the series *Speculatio* (2004) I developed a series of 30 drawings on graphite based on self-portraits by 30 artists, including old masters and modern artists. From 2000 onwards, as I became increasingly interested in the technical possibilities of the reproduction of artworks, I experimented with metal engraving techniques through a partnership with the master engraver Agostinho Coradello at his print studio in Rio de Janeiro. Simultaneously I began to research digital art and its properties, relying on the full technical support of my brother Lula Perez to do this. Digital art and reproduction proved to be a fundamental and defining moment of my work when I developed the series, *Gabinete de Estampas* (*Print Cabinet* - 1999/2001), *Impressões da Arte* (*Art Impressions/ Art Prints* - 2002/2006), *Gabinete de Leitura* (*Reading Cabinet* - 2008/2009), *Um, Dois, (One, Two, - 2010/2011)*, *Quantos Quadros* (*How Many Frames* - 2006/2013) and *Memorabilia* (2012/2014).



Amador Perez, *Vaslav Nijinski SOU / Vaslav Nijinski AM*, artist's book, 2014



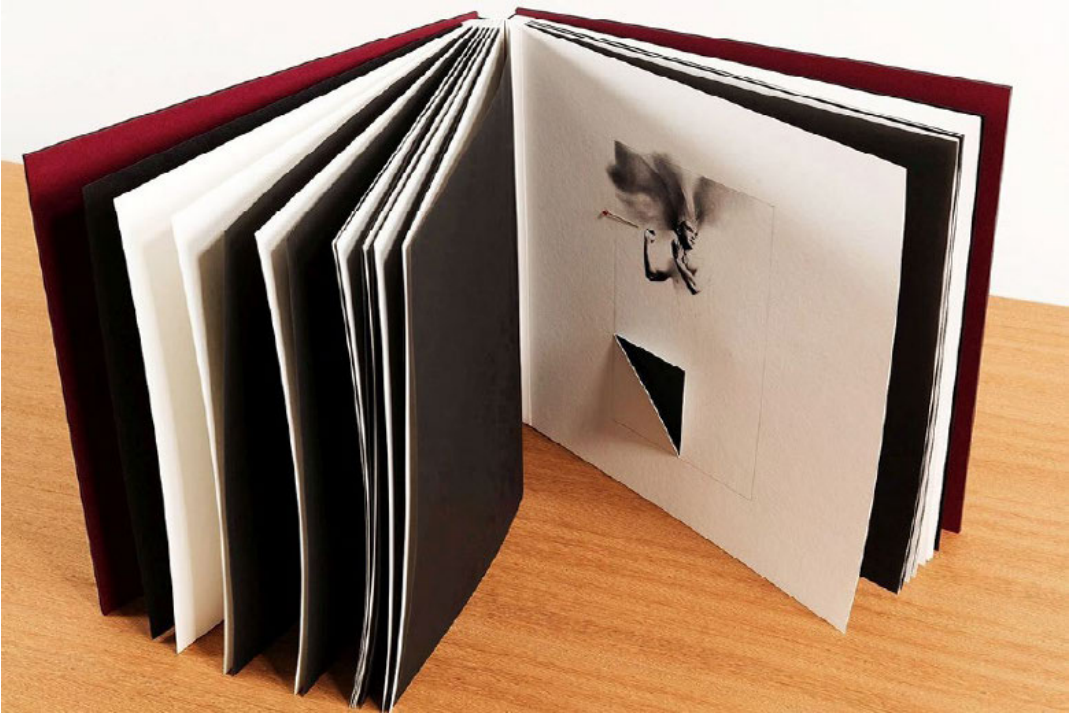
Amador Perez, *Nijinski Images*, artist's book, 2014

At the two design schools where I taught - Superior School of Industrial Design / Rio de Janeiro State University and Department of Arts and Design / Pontifical Catholic University Rio -, increasingly fascinated by artists' books, in 2012 I started some experimental work with my students. From ongoing book-based explorations, simultaneously designing my exhibition *Memorabilia* where I used images of my work from the past, I rescued the two books on Nijinski, *Vaslav Nijinski* (1976) and *Nijinski: images* (1982) and redesigned them as artists' books - *Vaslav Nijinski: SOU / Vaslav Nijinski: AM* and *Nijinski: Imagens / Nijinski: Images*. I did this in partnership with Cristina Viana, a specialist designer in fine bindings who created projects totally integrated to my original conceptions, both books being published in 2014 by Christina Penna, editor of *Hólos Arte*. In the book *Vaslav Nijinski: AM*, I worked with the marks created by mould on the original slides I had projected in the 1970s performances, obtaining very expressive graphic images, and interacted with these through screenprinting or using dry pastel colours applied with stencils. In the book *Nijinski: Images* I reproduced the 10 graphite drawings of the original project using printmaking to accentuate the density and contrast of the images, and then intervened with cuts, folds, drawing and collage elements, highlighting particular aspects of the book that refer to theatrical stage sets, and these results definitely spurred me on to create new artist's book projects. Through my experience in dance and performance, the movement was absorbed by my body, which naturally created a memory that, in a way, was transported into other activities of the graphic arts for example.

I always thought of my classes at the university as an extension of my work in the studio, and exchanging my own experience in the field of art I always got very creative and positive responses, made possible through systematic, interdisciplinary, collaborative and dedicated work with the students and teachers. As a professor of disciplines that supported the development of projects in the field of design - Product and Graphic Design, Illustration and Fashion - I created courses with the aim of stimulating and promoting reflection and dialogue among students and their project teachers: in Product Design, the basis was the recycling of industrial waste through interference with everyday objects based on the criticism proposed by Pop Art; in Graphic Design, I developed the course "Book and experimentation" about artists' books to discuss questions about books as unique, artisanal, objects, and as industrial products, serialised objects, proposing an opening for the design project of the high circulation book; in Illustration, we worked with techniques such as stamping, stencilling and monotype for the students to experiment and develop their ability to draw, simultaneously relating these principles of



Amador Perez, *Vaslav Nijinski SOU / Vaslav Nijinski AM*, artist's book, 2014



Amador Perez, *Nijinski Images*, artist's book, 2014



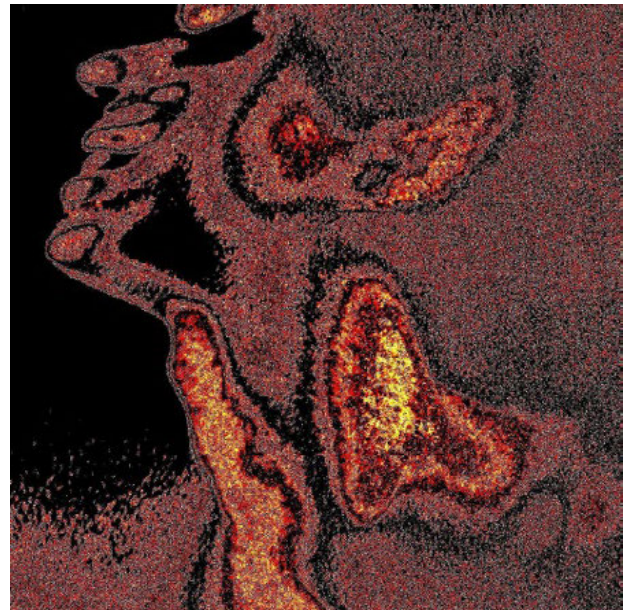
image reproduction with the evolution of processes and printing methods, researching the history of printing and actual techniques; and in Fashion we used photography and image projection resources on the bodies of students who became models of their own projects, breaking certain standards established in the world of fashion.

From 2015 I started to photograph using my phone as an instrument to react to very spontaneous experiences and this developed into my first photographic series, *DVWC Fotos e Variações / DVWC Photos and Variations*, 64 black and white photos, from my observations when manipulating books about Dürer, Vermeer, Watteau and Courbet, and 64 graphic variations, interferences and overlays using graphite, dry and oil pastels on the 64 original photos as a visual discourse based on the colours of the CMYK and RGB processes. In 2019 I celebrated 45 years of work showing the two *DVWC* series at Paço Imperial, Rio de Janeiro - from this experience, as I became increasingly passionate about photography, digital processes and their properties. I developed a small series, *Leonardo Da Vinci* (2019), and then the still unpublished series, *Fundição Piranesi* (*Foundry Piranesi*, 2015/2022), *Matriz* (*Matrix*, 2017/2020), *Galeria dos Moldes* (*Gallery of Molds*, 2017/2022), *Goyesca: Taurografia* (2018/2022), *Jan* (2020/2022) and *Diego* (2021/2022).

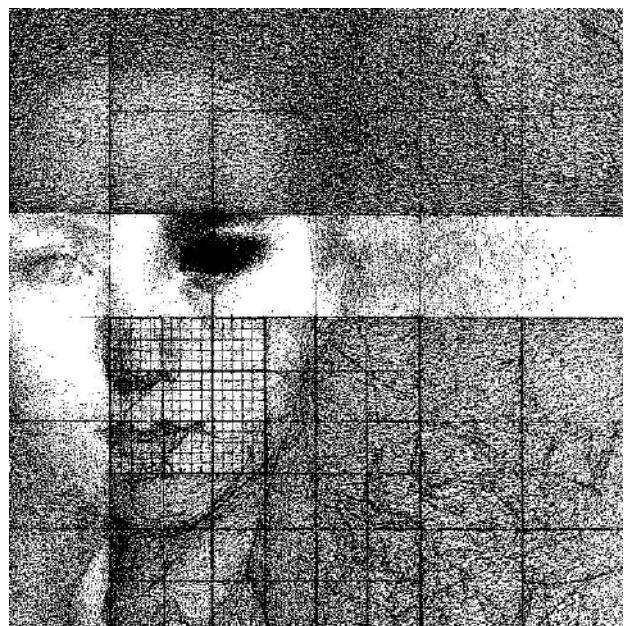
In the specific case of the series *DVWC* series (2015/2019), photos and graphic variations based on works by Dürer, Vermeer, Watteau and Courbet, the starting points were images of four books from a collection that I used recurrently in my classes, and at a certain point I realised the repetition of my gestures when I pointed out one or another reproduction to the students, and from that experience I started a series photographing these gestural situations. Many kinds of resonances make me wish to work with different artists, reflections that definitely marked me, echo in me for subjective or emotional factors, or objective reasons such as, for example, techniques and ways of building images in both analogue and digital fields, a world of possibilities that I'm beginning to experiment with in order to more fully understand the consequences of this current research... art in process!

But then in 2020 came the Covid pandemic. Isolated in my home studio, I thought about other possibilities to create, realise and show my work. With the support of Laura Klemz, a designer and librarian who also loves the book and its history, responsible for creating the digital project of my work, a determining factor for me to start developing digital artists' books, I am organising a retrospective memory of my production; gathering and cataloguing the images of the integral series, proposing a prospective memory of the body of work.

As part of this process I have developed a series of digital artists' books that I am presenting on the ISSUU platform (<https://issuu.com/amador.perez>), which has fulfilled my wish to expand the work outside the confines of galleries, collections, shelves, and the art market itself, allowing unlimited access to my work. When designing digital books, if on the one hand I lose a certain pleasure in the lack of manual construction of the printed artist's book, on the other hand, digital art allows great agility of thinking and doing, stimulating my experimentation and the creation of new visual languages, expanding my technical repertoire and graphic vocabulary.



Amador Perez, *Nijinski A Tarde de Um Fauno / The Afternoon of a Faun*, digital artist's book, 2022



Amador Perez, *Gioventù series A*, digital artist's book, 2022



Above and below: Amador Perez, *DVWC Fotos e Variações / DVWC Photos and Variations*, 2015-2019



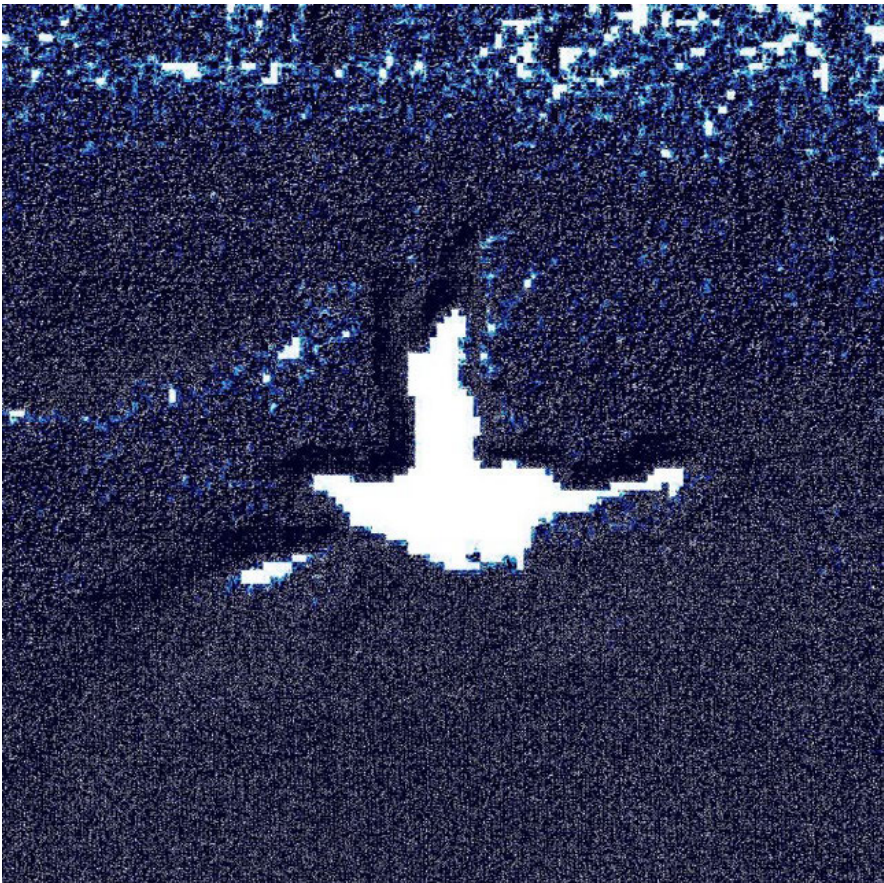


Above and below: Amador Perez, *DVWC Fotos e Variações / DVWC Photos and Variations*, 2015-2019





Amador Perez, *Escuros Espelhos / Dark Mirrors*, digital artist's book, 2022



Amador Perez, *Os Lagos do Cisne / Swan Lakes*, digital artist's book, 2022

Soon I will develop printed versions of the digital artists' books with new formats and singularities, therefore proposing another graphic iteration; 2022 digital releases were: *Amador Perez - Fortuna Crítica 1974/2019* (*Amador Perez - Critical Fortune 1974/2019*, 33 critical essays and 94 illustrations); *Nijinski: A Tarde de Um Fauno* (*Nijinski: The Afternoon of a Faun*, on a poem by Stéphane Mallarmé, drawings and collages from 1976/2019); *Le Spectre de la Rose* (on a poem by Théophile Gautier, drawings and photos from 1980/2022); *Anima* (on a sonnet by William Shakespeare and drawings from the 1980s); *Escuros Espelhos* (*Dark Mirrors*, on a poem by Rainer Maria Rilke, drawings and photos from 1980); *Dual* (on a poem by Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen and photos from 2015/2019); and *Os Lagos do Cisne* (*Swan Lakes*, on a poem by Rainer Maria Rilke and photos from 2015/2022).

For now, my main focus is planning for a retrospective exhibition in 2024 which will consolidate 50 years of my artistic production (1974-2024). I will present original works (drawings and printed works) in addition to printed and digital artists' books, continuing the discussion and reflection proposed by my work on the singularity and multiplicity of the work of art. Peering back through the portals that so enchanted me as a child with happy eyes.

Rio, October 2022

Amador Perez was born in 1952 in Rio de Janeiro, where he lives and works.

He began exhibiting his work in 1974 in *Jovem Arte Contemporânea / Young Contemporary Art* at the Museum of Contemporary Art, University of São Paulo, and graduated in 1976 in Graphic Design at the School of Fine Arts of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. In 1977 he held his first solo exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art of Rio de Janeiro and has since participated in group exhibitions in Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, Mexico, France, UK, Germany, Japan and China.

Amador Perez showed his work in 1991 at the 21st São Paulo Biennial; had solo shows at Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil (Rio de Janeiro, 1992), Instituto Moreira Salles (Minas Gerais, 1993, and São Paulo, 1997/98), Scuola Internazionale di Grafica (Venice, 1996), National Museum of Fine Arts (Rio de Janeiro, 1998) and Paço Imperial (Rio de Janeiro, 2005 and 2019). In 2012 he took part in the exhibition *Da Margem ao Limiar: Arte e Design Brasileiros no Século XXI / From the Margin to the Edge: Brazilian Art and Design in the 21st Century* at Somerset House, London.

He celebrated in 2014 and 2019 respectively 40 and 45 years of artistic activities by holding exhibitions in Rio de Janeiro: in 2014, *Quantos Quadros* (Centro Cultural Cândido Mendes) and *Memorabilia* (Centro Cultural Correios), and in 2019, *DVWC Photos and Variations* (Paço Imperial).

His works belong to collections of institutions such as National Museum of Fine Arts, Museum of Modern Art, Museum of Art of Rio and National Library Foundation (Rio de Janeiro); Pinacoteca do Estado, Museum of Modern Art and Museum of Contemporary Art (São Paulo); Latin American Art Collection/University of Essex (UK).

He published the art books - *Nijinski: images* (Amador Perez/Imprinta Gráfica e Editora, Rio de Janeiro, 1983/85) and *Artist's Collection* (Editora Fraiha, Rio de Janeiro, 1999); artists' books - *Vaslav Nijinski: AM* and *Nijinski: Images* (Editora Hólos Arte, Rio de Janeiro, 2014). A video of Amador Perez discussing *Endless Variations of Nijinsky* can be viewed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6NUJCKEG4Q0>

He has taught as a university professor at the Superior School of Industrial Design / State University of Rio de Janeiro (1984-2011) and at the Department of Arts and Design / Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (1991-2016).

<https://issuu.com/amador.perez>



Mika Takayama's 'chimachima' dolls and illustrated anecdotes of famous Japanese writers at the Otaru Literary Museum.

Otaru Book Art Week: 10 – 23 October 2022
A report from Otaru, Hokkaido, Japan

Noriko Suzuki-Bosco

UK based Japanese artist and researcher Noriko Suzuki-Bosco reports on the Otaru Book Art Week, a book art event that has been taking place for the last 12 years in the small port town of Otaru in Hokkaido, Japan. She recounts her visits to the different venues and the artworks seen.

Otaru is a small port town situated 40km northwest of Sapporo in Hokkaido, the northern most island in Japan. A modest book art event has been taking place there for the last 12 years. This autumn, I had a chance to visit the event for the very first time.

Located on the coast of the Sea of Japan, Otaru is a popular tourist destination for people visiting Hokkaido, famed for their fresh seafood, local beer, picturesque old buildings, and the canal. Otaru glassware is also much admired. In 2010, three book art enthusiasts who had various connections with Otaru decided to launch a book art event to bring a different form of art activity to the sleepy little port town. They invited local artists and creatives to produce artworks in the form of a book. They also contacted local public venues to offer space to showcase the works. The involvement of the local venues was an important factor for making the event a social affair, allowing art and everyday life to be brought together. The Otaru Book Art Week takes place between 10 and 23 October every year. Although the event is relatively unknown outside Otaru, the local interest towards the event has been growing steadily and this year there were a total of 23 artists and 14 venues taking part.

I travelled from Tokyo to Sapporo by plane and spent the night in a hotel before making my way to Otaru. A little over 30 minutes on the train from Sapporo, Otaru is considered a 'commuter town' but as I got closer and saw the huge expanse of the Sea of Japan spread before my eyes, it felt as if I had come very far from the tall glass buildings and wide streets of Sapporo city. I used the time on the train to study the Otaru Book Art Week Map, the event map showing the locations of each venue taking part. The map had been designed by the local illustrator Saru1. I was given a map before I left Tokyo, but it was also available as a PDF on the internet. I noted that most of the venues were dotted around the vicinity of the train station and decided that they should all be accessible by foot (little did I know then that Otaru was also famous for its hilly landscape). The map also served as a stamp sheet (or stamp rally, as it is called in Japan) for visitors to collect a stamp from each venue as they went around. If you were able to collect all 14 stamps, you were promised a 'secret' gift. I thought this to be a very good incentive.

I decided to start the tour from the Otaru Literary Museum, which I estimated to be a short downhill walk from the train station. Sapporo-based illustrator and doll maker Mika Takayama was showing her artworks in the museum. I had seen her published book in a bookshop and was curious to see her 'chimachima' (tiny and neat) dolls of Japanese literary masters. Takayama researches extensively around each of the writers to make tiny dolls that uncannily capture their personalities. In the book, photographs of the dolls are accompanied by humorous illustrated anecdotes of the writers and together provide quirky glimpse into the life of famous literary masters. In the museum, I found the dolls and illustrated anecdotes displayed in the area that is sometimes used as the museum café. It was comical to see tiny doll versions of famous writers who were larger than life in many ways.

In the opposite corner to the doll display there were books laid out on dinner plates. This work, also by Takayama, was inspired by a book called 'Hon no Furu Cōsu' (Full Course of Books). The book is a collection of interviews conducted by freelance writer Yuko Sato who has been interviewing various people since 2015, asking for their 'full course' book title suggestions. Each interviewee was asked to come up with a theme for the menu and a book title for a 'starter', 'soup', 'fish dish', 'meat dish', and 'dessert'. Sato has interviewed over 200 people to date. Taking this 'full course' idea, Takayama created an installation of books that invited a 'reading' of the life of the famous writer and poet Takuboku Ishikawa. Although not a local, Ishikawa is known to have had special connections with Hokkaido, and in particular, Otaru. The 'starter dish' for Ishikawa was a comic book illustrating the life of the writer. The 'soup dish' was a photobook detailing Ishikawa's life in photographs. The 'fish dish' was an academic publication put together by researchers, which was followed by the 'meat dish' written by people who knew Ishikawa personally. The meal concluded with 'dessert', a collection of anecdotes of famous Japanese writers, which included Ishikawa. There was also, in the middle of the display, a small 'chimachima' doll of Ishikawa casually lying down. The 'full course' offered an extended biography of Ishikawa, cleverly suggesting different ways to 'read' the man and the doll adding a comical touch to the somewhat text heavy display.

The installation at the Literary Museum made me rethink the nature of the Otaru Book Art event. I had expected seeing different kinds of art publications and artists' books, much like at a normal book fair. I looked at the event map carefully to inspect the tiny images of the artworks and concluded that although there were works in book form, overall, I was likely to come across artworks and displays enthused by books and literature.



'Full course' menu of Takuboku Ishikawa by Mika Takayama at the Otaru Literary Museum.



'Hon no Furu Cōsu' display at the Otaru Public Library.

The next venue to visit was the Otaru Public Library, although this meant retracing my steps and going up the hill. They were also showing a display inspired by the book 'Hon no Furu Cōsu'. Taking the 'full course' idea, the librarians had asked various local people such as teachers, writers, artists, and a children's book illustrator for their 'full course' book titles. Their suggestions, some accompanied with actual books from the library, were displayed on the first floor landing of the library. Although the presentation was a little ordinary, reminding me of school displays, taking the time to read the reasons behind each person's 'full course' menu choice was intriguing. I felt I was being allowed a glimpse of their bookshelf, which can often be a very personal space. As I came across a suggestion of one of my own favourite books, 'Inei Raisan' (In Praise of Shadows) by Junichiro Tanizaki, I couldn't help but feel a certain connection with that person.

With the map in one hand, my meandering tour around Otaru continued, up and down many hills. The beautiful Tomioka Catholic Church had on display old bibles, wall hangings depicting biblical images, hymn music sheets, and icons. The Sakanomachi Café (Hillytown Café), a converted house perched on top of a steep hill, was showcasing an installation of waka (Japanese poem) written on thin strips of Japanese paper. The café also operates as an afterschool space for older children who want (or need) a space outside their own home to study or just to relax. In the tatami mat room, adjacent to the café space where the children would normally gather, the poems were suspended across the window frame and from the ceiling. The colourful strips swayed gently as people moved around them.

Slightly away from the town centre, also perched on top of a hill was Tomo's Carving, a woodwork studio. As I took my shoes off to go inside (which was a recurring thing I had to do as I entered different venues) I saw in the middle of the sunny studio a long table surrounded by low shelves with intricately carved birds and small animals. Books and stationery objects lay scattered across the surface of the table. I thought perhaps there had been a workshop until I realised that all the objects were in fact carved out of wood. Similar to the 'chimachima' dolls in the Literary Museum, the attention to detail was amazing. Tomo said that it was fine to touch the display, so I took a book in my hand to take a closer look. It was without doubt a beautiful object, but I felt after a while the silence and lightness of weight to be a little unsettling. The book I was holding in my hand was so different to a real book and yet it looked so real. I wanted to open it and see what was inside, but I couldn't. I put it down gently amongst all the other real-looking wooden objects sitting quietly in the sun.



One of the wooden books on display in Tomo's Carving woodwork studio

It was a long walk back into town centre but thankfully it was all downhill. Near the famed Otaru canal was the local craft beer bar, Otaru Tap Room, which had an interesting display of travel journals, photo essay books, scrap books, and post cards. The theme of the display was about journey and foreign places. Some of the books were suspended from the ceiling by the large front window creating a curtain like effect. Customers in the bar could look through the books as they drank their beer.

Near the bar was the Otaru City Museum where I found a small display titled 'The Universe Through Text'. A collection of texts extracted from well-known Japanese classics were showcased on the wall near the entrance along with images of planets and constellations. All the texts included mention of planets, stars, constellations, or galaxies and I found it very interesting to read excerpts that were familiar yet realising for the first time their cosmic references. I also noticed my eyes darting across the text display seeking out constellation names that I could recognise (like Cygnus and Orion), but then also discovering ones that I had never heard of before (like Octans and Telescopium). The small display offered me a way of interacting with text through the planetary lens and this made me wonder about the many other possibilities of engaging with texts in slightly unconventional ways.

Between the canal and the train station there were a few more shops also taking part in the book event. The works on display ranged from miniature books, zines, book related installations, photographs, paintings, drawings, accessories, and other small craft works.



Waka poems on display in the Sakanomachi Café.



Wooden books and stationery objects in Tomo's Carving woodwork studio.



Drawings and paintings inspired by Natsuo Giniro by Nana in Petit Jardin.

In the florist, Petit Jardin, I saw nestled amongst the dried flowers a small display of drawings and paintings made by the owner of the shop, Nana. She told me that the works were inspired by her favourite poet Natsuo Giniro. Jean's Shop Lokki was displaying small sculpture works by Saru1, the local illustrator who had also designed the Otaru Book Art Week Map. There was a tiny bookstore in the corner of the shop where I found an installation of black flowers and black books made by the owner of Kuchil Hana, a local florist based in the Otaru Central Market.

My feet were aching, but I still had three more venues to visit before my book event tour was completed. The venues were all in the west side of town. I decided to visit the furthest one first, the Katagiri Buddhist Altar shop. I had understood that there would be paper boats and airplanes made using techniques for building an altar. However, when I finally reached the shop, I was shown a very large bookshelf filled with books. I wondered if it was a book installation of some kind, but it was simply an eclectic mix of books collected by the owner. There were books on Buddhism, philosophy, anthropology, history, politics, travel, garden design, art, etc. I noticed a book by the anthropologist Tim Ingold, who I like

very much, which made me warm towards the book collection a little. The Buddhist altar shop was followed by Hakushindo bookshop, which I had been told had a wonderful collection of second hand books. However, when I got there, I found to my dismay the shutters down and the door locked. The shop was closed. This meant that not only did I miss out on seeing a selection of LGBTQ+ books, a topic that needs to be much more openly discussed in Japan, but I also failed to collect a stamp, which was bad news for my secret gift.

The final stop was the local eatery Namaraya, which was a suitable place to end my tour as they were showcasing works by 10 different artists. The restaurant is owned by two of the three people that originally started the book event. 'Namara' is a Hokkaido dialect meaning 'very' or 'much' and 'ya' means 'shop', so Namaraya means 'very shop' or 'much shop', which I thought was a very auspicious name for a restaurant. A small quirky place, the front area functioning as the bar and eating space with the back room used for live events, like music gigs and poetry reading. For the book event, the room had been transformed into a gallery space with other areas of the restaurant also displaying works that ranged from miniature books, zines, photo book, sculpture works,



Collaged scrap books on display in the Otaru Tap Room.



'The Universe Through Text' display at the Otaru City Museum.



Black flowers and black books display by Kuchil Hana in Jean's Shop Lokki.

soft sculpture, installation, pottery, paintings, and wall hanging. Some artists taking part in the book event were in the restaurant and I spoke to Masae Yoshikura who had made the book 'Watashi ga Usagi ni Narumade' (*Until I Became a Rabbit*). The book documents Yoshikura turning into a rabbit to overcome the sadness of losing her beloved pet rabbit. Yoshikura told me that the real artist in the making of the work was her friend who had created the rabbit costume and took the photographs of Yoshikura turning into a rabbit. 'I just put it all together into a book,' Yoshikura said. When I asked her why a book, she replied, 'Well, why not? It's the simplest way to share a story.'

The Otaru Book Art Week was not the kind of book fair that I initially imagined it to be. It was much more than just books, but the 'idea' of the book being interpreted in many ways to open up space for creativity and the social nature of the event offering ways for people to come together, connect, and share different stories through the medium of the book. My feet ached from all the walking, but I felt genuinely uplifted from the conversations I had with the people I encountered and the artworks I saw throughout the day. There was a generosity that made the entire experience truly pleasurable, and I was happy

to have been able to be part of the Otaru Book Art Week story. I was also proud of myself for visiting every single venue on the map, although I failed to collect all 14 stamps. However, as an acknowledgement of my efforts, the owner of Namaraya gave me a roll of masking tape specially made for the 2019 Otaru Book Art Week, which pleased me very much.

The Sea of Japan was an expanse of black when the train left Otaru station. I pulled out the now slightly tatty event map from my bag and retraced the events of the day in my head. In no time at all, I was back in Sapporo, the bustling city full of people, cars, and neon lights.

As I walked back to my hotel, weaving through throngs of people out for the night, I wondered how many people here knew about the book art event that was happening in Otaru. In contrast to the numerous book fairs that take place all over the world, the Otaru Book Art Week offered an eclectic mix of book-inspired artworks that were both personal and unique. The grassroots feel added to the charm and appeal, and it was inspiring to see people, place, and creativity brought together through an interest in the idea of the book.



Detail: 'Watashi ga Usagi ni Narumade' (Until I Became a Rabbit) by Masae Yoshikura at Namaraya.



'Watashi ga Usagi ni Narumade' by Masae Yoshikura at Namaraya.

The Otaru Book Art Week was a real treasure and although it would be nice to see it grow, secretly I hope that it will remain to be a hidden gem. It is a wonderful little magic that takes place for two weeks in October every year. Besides if it became too big, I would struggle to visit all the venues on foot... unless I hired a bike at the train station, which I did notice when I first arrived in Otaru. Would they have electric bikes to contend with all the hills, I wondered.

Participating venues:

Otaru Literary Museum
Otaru Public Library
Tomioka Catholic Church
Sakanomachi Café
Tomo's Carving Woodwork Studio
Otaru Tap Room
Otaru City Museum
Petit Jardin Funamizaka
Jeans Shop Lokki
Tsuchi no Ne
BASE C-96
Katagiri Buddhist Altar Shop
Hakushindo Bookshop
Namaraya

Noriko Suzuki-Bosco is a UK based Japanese artist and researcher with artists' books central to both her practice and research. She explores the artist's book as a social medium with relational and social capacities for creating situations of cooperative art making. She is always trying to find ways to keep the book 'open' and moving, to make space for people to connect and share. Noriko is currently working on a funding bid for an artist's book digitisation project that aims to find new ways of digitising the artworks to better present the complex nature of the practice.

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An Untellable Story (detail)

Un/tellable Stories

An Essay in Images and Lists

*All artwork/writing by Jess Richards
Photo credits: Jessica Chubb*

FAIRY TALES: A LIST OF VIOLENCE

Memories of fairy stories, a rumpled bed, book pages, a voice.
The violence of desire transformed into violently sexual stories.
This violent and sexual world.
Personal experiences of violence and sex.
Silent stories which can't or won't be told.
The unspoken rules which tell us what we are and are not allowed to speak about.
Stories that end immediately after the suspicious event of marriage.
Fear: of the knives of huntsmen and kings; of the guts and teeth of wolves,
of hunger and mirrors, apples and poisons, of the path away from home, of the homes of
strangers,
of needles which have no haystack to be lost in.
The disruption to language, to familiar phrases and the shape of stories.
Traumatic memories, nightmares: the horror stories of the mind.
The violation of innocence, magic, nostalgia.
The distortions of language and story-threads and reversible magic.
The violence of any story that is impossible to forget.



An Untellable Story (printer ink on vintage book pages)

HOW TO GHOSTWRITE:

Invite no witnesses.

Write the one story that haunts you so much you can't tell it.

Replace the ink cartridge of a photocopier.

Place your untellable story face down on the glass.

Place paper that shouldn't go through a photocopier into the paper tray.

Press copy. Wait. Move the story. Stop.

Place the copy in the paper tray. Layer the story on one page.

Repeat the last two stages until the layered story becomes invisible; a ghost, in ink.

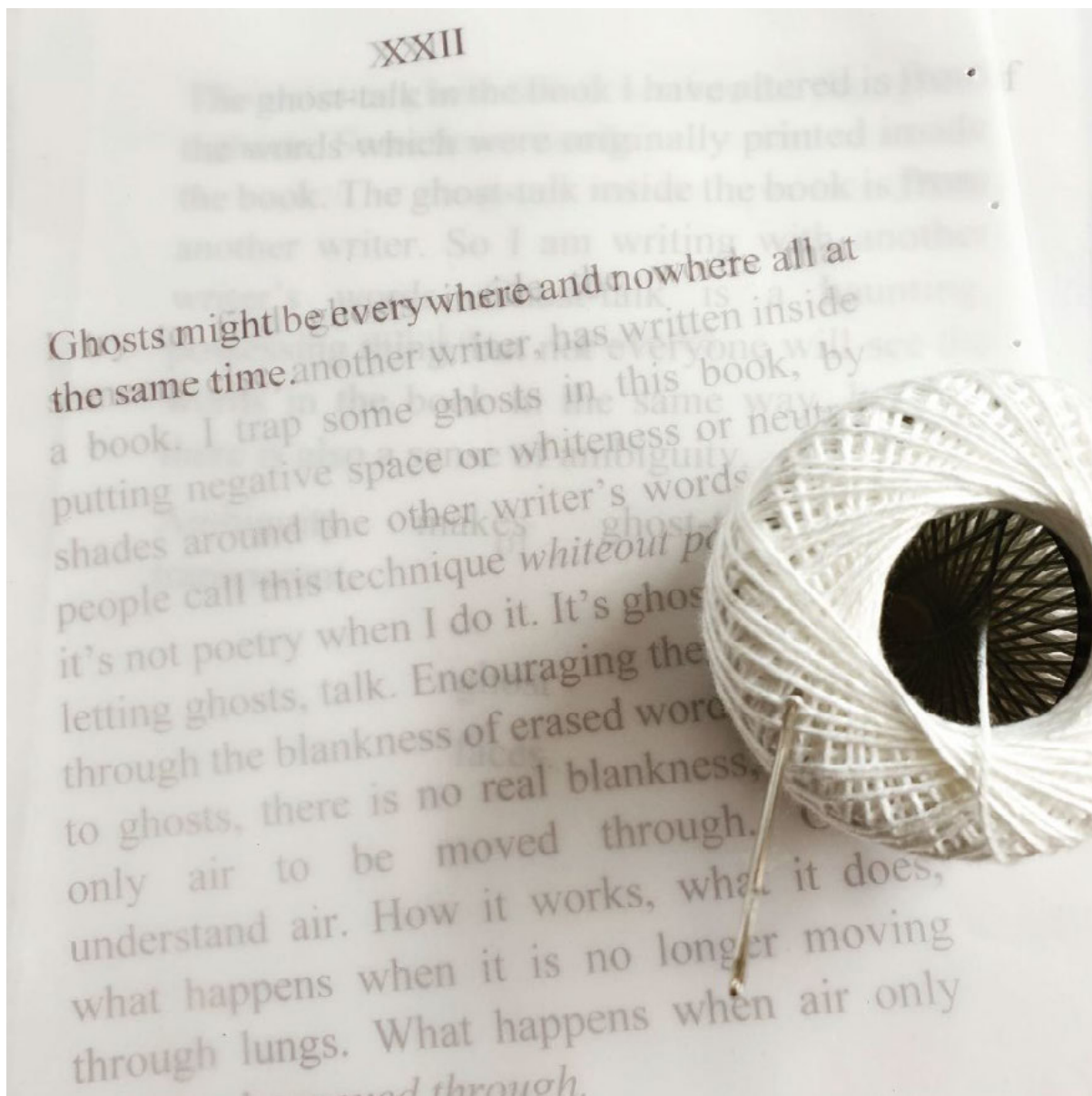
When the story is illegible, burn it, drown it, hang it or bury it.

Take a breath.

Look elsewhere.

Write a story that you desperately want to tell.

Find the ghost in the story and ask it, 'what do you want to be next?'



Ghosts in the Stories (essay on tracing paper, printer ink and thread)

THE GHOSTS IN THE STORIES:

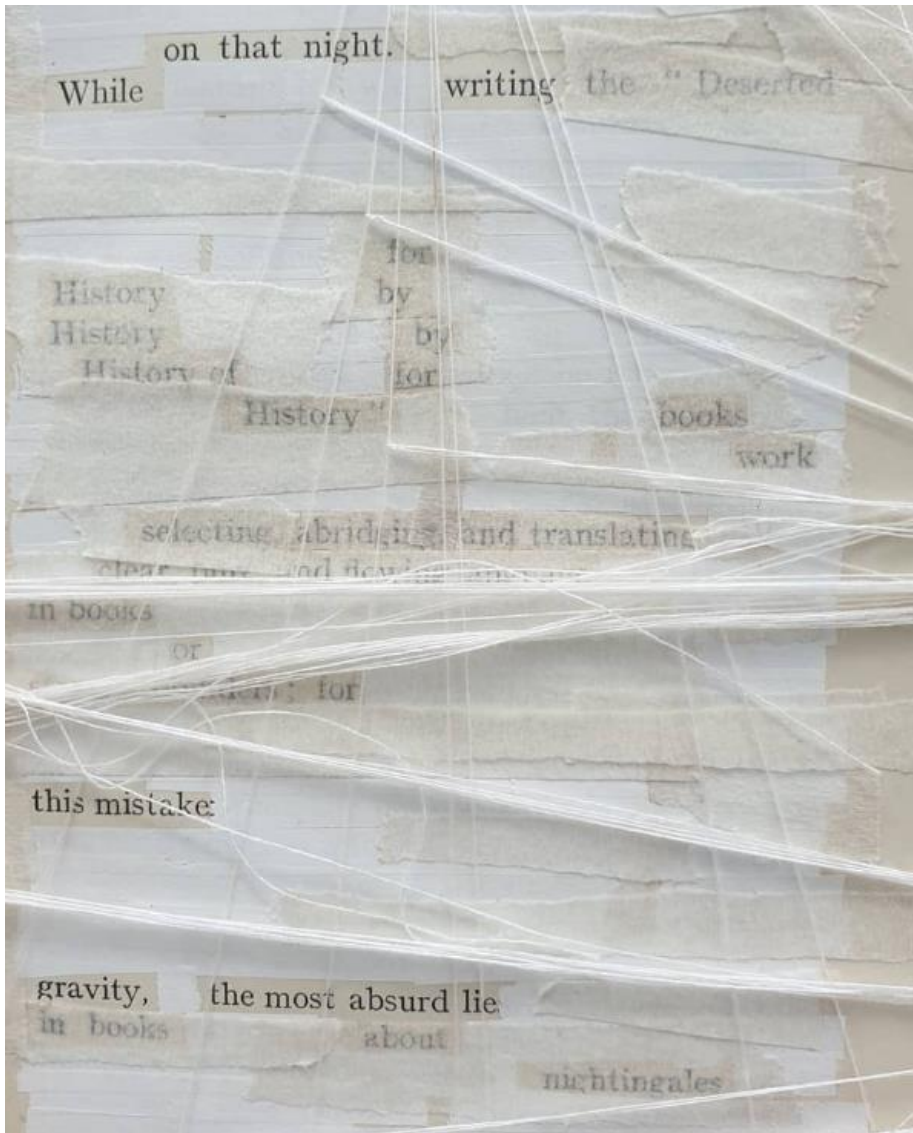
don't want to believe anything is dying.

(Perhaps what is dying is the book. Perhaps it is storytelling. Perhaps it is both.)

Many people have written about the death of storytelling, the death of the novel, the death of the author, the death of literacy.

But if a storyteller believes in ghosts, they can continue to tell stories.

To tell them, and untell them, and retell them over and over again.



Altered Book: Birds/Ghosts (detail) (masking tape, correction fluid, threads)

HOW TO UNTELL:

Ignore vast things, and examine small things.

Detailed things.

Precise things.

A book web.

A page web.

A paragraph web.

A sentence web.

A clause web.

A word web.

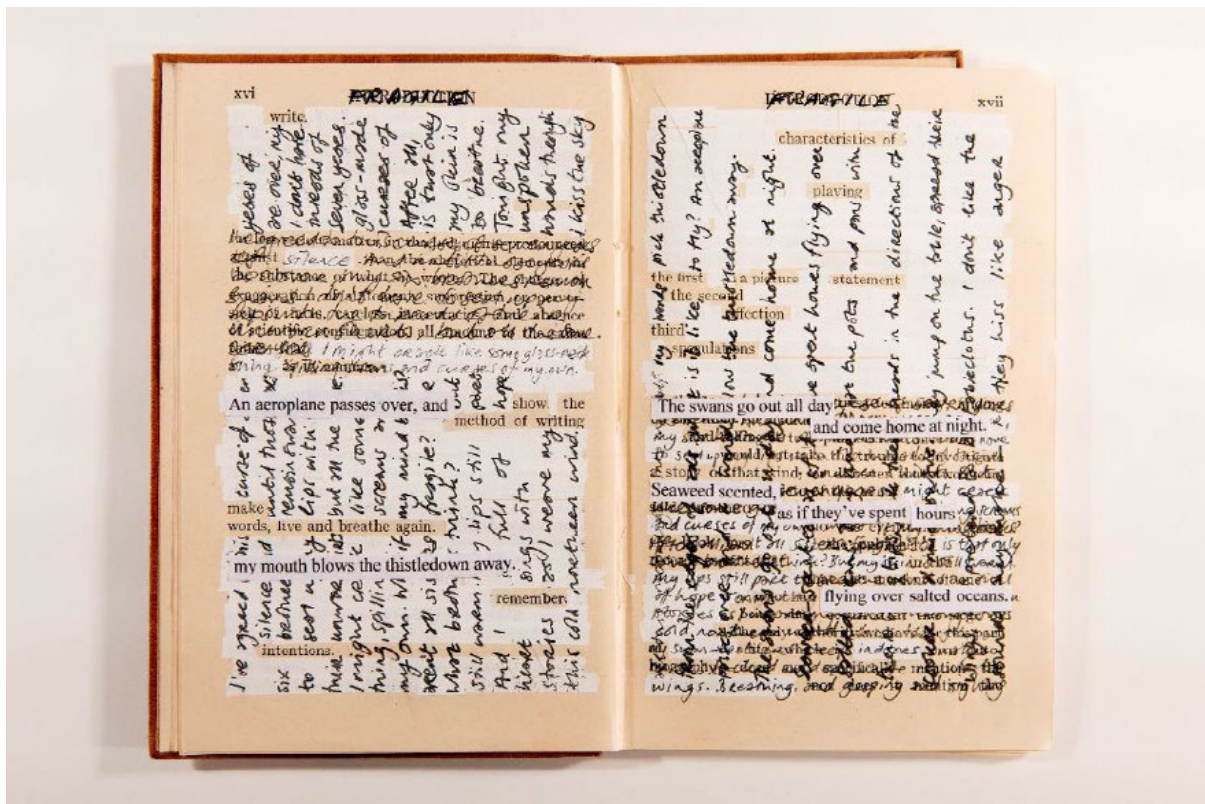
An image web.



A Dance without Bodies (vintage book page, correction tape)



A Bowl of Deletions (masking tape with removed ink layers from vintage fairytale book, glass bowl)



Altered book: Fragile (detail) (book, masking tape, correction tape, photocopies, ink)

HOW TO RETELL:

Move away from the screen, find a book of fairy tales and open it.

Sit down at a table and lean closer.

Smell the paper.

Examine individual letters as the light from a dusty window falls on a page,
and there is the image of a letter, a shape made of dark ink printed on pale paper.

Read the word 'silk' and notice it makes you think about the thread-like substance cobwebs
are made from.

Silk begins with S.

A soft sound, a silver sound.

Strength. Synesthesia. Story.

THE THREE DRESSES

THE FIRST DRESS

I am snow on a mountain, catching the thoughts and dreams of people as they rise through the air from the valleys below. Whiter than anything else, I am almost silver when the light changes. But when it's night, all the light on this mountain comes from the moon. It glints on the dreams and thoughts as they arrive here, before they rise away further, into the night sky.

One young woman in the valley below has a sharp clarity to her dreams, and they show me she is discontented and neglected. While a full moon moves over me, I glisten and examine her dreams. This young woman sleeps in warm ashes. She dreams of a phoenix and a golden egg. She dreams of a peacock and hen. She dreams of having a mother who loves her. She dreams of dancing and flying and singing. She dreams of leaving her stepmother. She dreams of swimming and painting and reading. She dreams of other families she's seen in her town. She dreams of siblings who never deliberately hurt each other. She dreams of feeling something more than numbness. She dreams of ice cubes and frozen peas and vanilla cream in cones. She dreams of a dress made of snow. She dreams the same dress again.

She wakes, wishing for it.

A Drawn Story, page 1 of 20. A retelling of Cinderella from the point of view of the three dresses. (Ink on paper)



A Drawn Story (detail) in Ink Threads (Ink overprinting on paper)

BIOGRAPHY

Jess Richards is the author of three literary fiction novels: *Snake Ropes*, *Cooking with Bones* and *City of Circles*, all published by Sceptre. She also writes short fiction, creative nonfiction, vispo and poetry – many examples of these have been published in various anthologies. In 2020, Jess completed her PhD, ‘Illusions, Transformations and Iterations: storytelling as fiction, image, artefact’ at Massey University, Aotearoa New Zealand. This hybrid art and creative writing project culminated in a set of visually and textually transformed books. Originally from Scotland, Jess now lives with her wife in Yorkshire and works as a Creative Writing Lecturer at the University of Leeds. In 2023 her creative nonfiction book titled *Birds and Ghosts* was published by Linen Press.

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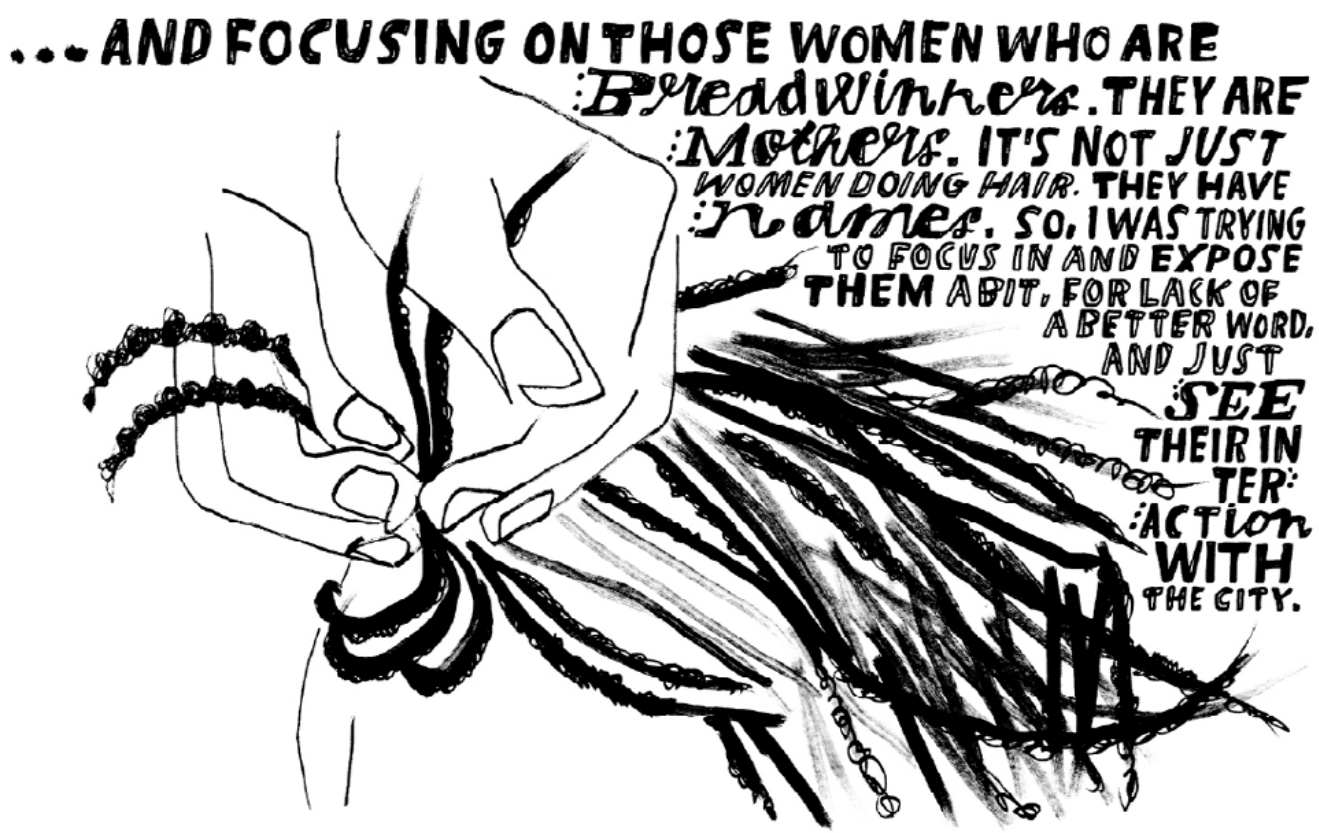


Ever
IN ~~the~~
town

you KNOWS THEM
AS THE ~~one~~ *woza Sisi*
WOMEN.

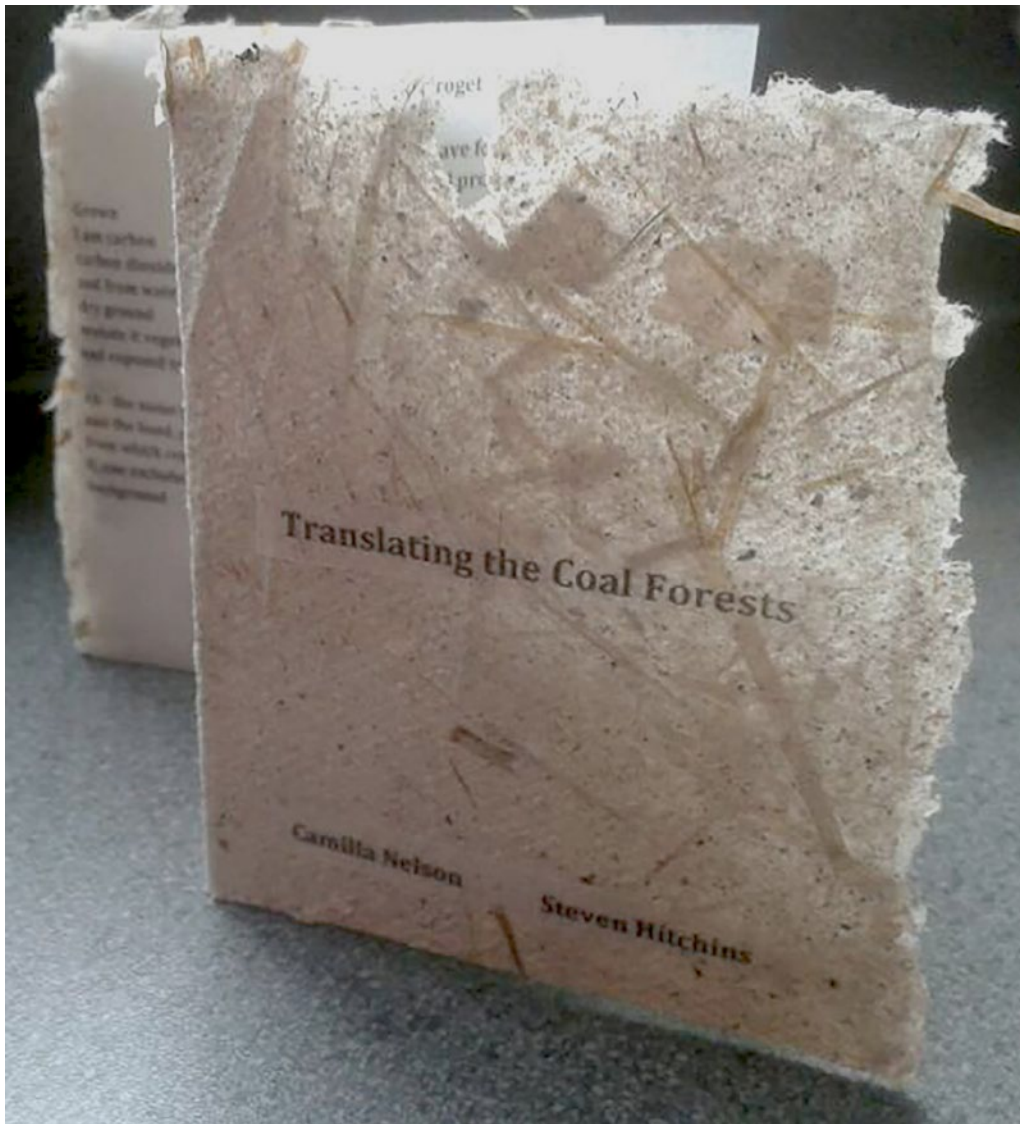
People KNOW
THEM.

They are
Street
hair stylists.



... AND FOCUSING ON THOSE WOMEN WHO ARE
Breadwinners. THEY ARE
MOTHERS. IT'S NOT JUST
WOMEN DOING HAIR. THEY HAVE
names. SO, I WAS TRYING
TO FOCUS IN AND EXPOSE
THEM A BIT, FOR LACK OF
A BETTER WORD,
AND JUST
SEE
THEIR IN
TER-
ACTION
WITH
THE CITY.

Mark Addison Smith, from *The Streets Are Very Quiet*
India ink on Bristol board
featuring words spoken by Dahlia Maubane, photographer
Zoom to Johannesburg, South Africa
July 6, 2020



Translating the Coal Forests, Camilla Nelson and Steven Hitchens, 2015



Birdseye view of page edges, *Translating the Coal Forests*, Camilla Nelson and Steven Hitchens, 2015

Making places, making poems: process and performance in landscape book arts

Anna Reckin

UTILISE ALL YOUR SPACE

– Paeony Lewis, *A Practical Guide to Gardening behind the Post-War Fence* (2019)

and so we are permeated or replaced
by the detailed structure of another
in connection with
owing to
or

– Camilla Nelson and Steven Hitchins, *Translating the Coal Forests* (2015)

I propose that some book arts projects bring together text and the material object in a way that might be considered poetry, regardless of how the practitioner identifies her- or himself. I am interested in what happens when book arts projects (specifically, here, altered books) are read as poetry, bringing to them the close reading and analysis that would be applied to poems.

I define ‘poem’ as a selection of units of language – syllables, words, phrases, sentences, activated by patterning – patterning that is visual and/or sonic. The patterning may be very regular and obvious, as in the case of the sound of rhymed verse, or the look of a concrete poem, but not necessarily. What makes it cohere as a poem, rather than as a novel, say, or a play, is its intrinsic dependence on the inter-relationships between word and image, sometimes at the minutest level, and the way these are worked into an object in its own right that cannot be paraphrased without considerable diminution.

What is to be gained from seeing the work of a book artist under this rubric? First, it provides an increased sense of possibility for book arts, going beyond ‘the beautiful edition’, by which I mean the exquisite object whose form – fine materials very finely handled – enhances the experience of the text it carries (the content). By contrast, the focus here is on textual work that cannot be extracted / extricated from its material form without considerable loss, and which, in the absence of its material form needs to be described, explained, annotated, shown in illustration and / or transcribed.¹

The possibilities are of two kinds. Firstly, creative possibilities: possibilities for practice, particularly something that is pushed to the max, firing on all cylinders, and on many platforms, in print, digitally

and in performance, as well as its material presence as a tactile visual artefact. Secondly, possibilities for interpretation. The two book arts projects that are the subject of this essay concern themselves with place and landscape; through looking at them closely as poems as much as artworks, I hope to show how very rich their engagement is with these themes.

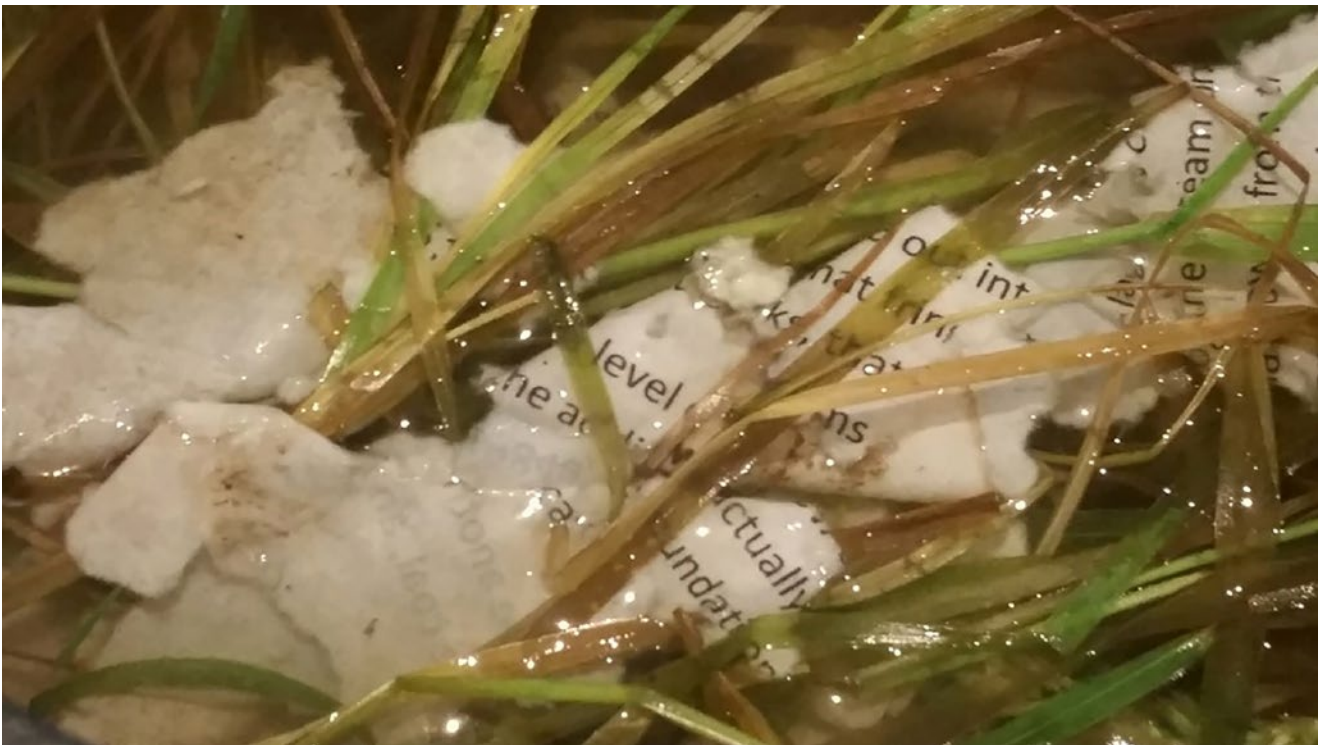
My two examples are Camilla Nelson and Steven Hitchins’ *Translating the Coal Forests*, published by Singing Apple Press as a microbook collaboration with the Literary Pocket Book, produced as a limited edition,² and Paeony Lewis’s *A Practical Guide to Gardening behind the Post-War Fence*, a unique work.³

Both these projects are altered books, based on reprints of influential reference books, from the middle of the twentieth century. Both are concerned with the transformation of landscape through natural processes and human activities. The relationships between the transformations performed in the production of artists’ books and the landscape transformations described in the original reference books are layered and complex, through speaking back to each other palimpsestically.

Translating the Coal Forests alters a 1931 reprint of F J North’s 1926 book, *Coal and the Coalfields of Wales*.⁴ North’s book deals with natural history – the origins of coal, the formation of the ‘coal measures’ (a wonderfully suggestive term for poetry-writing), the plants and animals found in the forests whose decay formed coal, as well as industrial history: the history of mining in north and south Wales

The process of transforming this fairly substantial volume (just over 250 pages) into a microbook (just 8 x 10 cm, and 10 pages long) is as much a part of the project as the poems contained within it. As described in the note that accompanies the book, the transformations were material and digital. First, pages from North’s book were buried in a coalfield swamp, with subsequent visits to the site to ensure that the print was covered with mud and silt, so that it was no longer legible. Some ‘partially retrieved’ materials were then processed through an optical character recognition program, which produced a kind of fossilised hard copy. This copy preserved the erasures in the text produced by decay, while also introducing subtle transformations in the wording. The poets then used the found text as the basis for their own work, interspersing it with interruptions from other voices.

For example (see transcriptions shown in the Appendix), one set of overlays starts with a first-person declaration: ‘I am altered finally / by this one-on-one plant substantiation gig’, followed by what looks like a quotation of part of a sentence from North’s original



Remnants of the treated pages from North's *Coal and the Coalfields of Wales* being boiled and soaked with soil and grass from the coalfield swamp site within which the pages had been buried, in preparation for pulping and re-formation into the hand-made pages of *Translating the Coal Forests*, Camilla Nelson and Steven Hitchins, 2015



Translating the Coal Forests, Camilla Nelson and Steven Hitchins, 2015

book that is coherent and well preserved, relating to the process of plant fossilisation, and then, in the middle of the page, by a brief anecdote introducing a domestic note. The last two sections / stanzas go back to found matter, in both cases resisting closure:

a fossil preserved in this way portrays the external form of the original but not

in petri factor: and so we are permeated or replaced by the detailed structure of another in connection with owing to or

The ragged right-hand margin can be read as the physical tear in the original page. At the same time, the digital process introduces another kind of decay, seen here in the rendering of what we guess was 'petrification' as 'petri factor', suggesting something much more active, a Petri dish, perhaps – and something made in it? (And maybe also a connection with petrichor, the distinctive earthy smell that comes just after fallen rain, the scent of molecules released in the process of dampening dry plant material.)

Underlying the material poetics of a project like *Translating the Coal Forests* are various modernist / radical modernist tropes. The idea of literature as compost, as explored by Jed Rasula in his book *This Compost* (the title of a poem by Walt Whitman) is one;⁵ another is the idea of Composition by Field, as proposed by the American Black Mountain poets of the 1950s and 60s. This is a way of thinking of poems spatially: the words of the poem are seen to emerge organically, scattered across the space of the page. Their relationship is dynamic, up, down and across white space. The Coal Forests project connects with this thinking in various ways: through allusion - the title of the original source-text is *Coal and the Coalfields of Wales*, and, literally, through material process – that the poems were produced and shaped through their actual immersion in coalfield swamps. The paper on which they were printed was also produced out of the coalfields – made from retrieved pulp. The field is, quite literally, one of the generators of the book and, through the process, is one of its constituents.

There's a kind of circularity here: the place makes the poem which in turn makes the place. And the voices of the speakers in the poems are likewise generated and altered through the processes of material production and collaboration. As described by Hitchins,⁶ the two poets wrote independently from the same deteriorated text. In assembling the poetry, on the page and in performance, a basic formal issue – the length of the poem – determined

which was ground text (my term) i.e., printed on the reconstituted paper, and which overlay. In practice, this meant that in the print version, the longer poem appeared below, to ensure that its presence was apparent and not completely obscured by the poem printed on the overlay, which gains a kind of prominence through its positioning. In performance,⁷ however, with both collaborators reading simultaneously, one page at a time, the longer poem tends to be given precedence through timing, with 'the reader of the longer poem text most often starting first, with the other coming in when the corresponding line occurs'.⁸

The effect is to perform the layers of the book, with one or another voice appearing solo where the other has a blank space, and occasional chorus where the same wording coincides on both layers, in effect a sonic parallel to the palimpsest of the physical book. Particularly striking are the echoes, as individual words and phrases are repeated between the layers, evocative of the architecture of the primeval forests. As Nelson describes it, this reading aloud brings into being a kind of haunting: not only of the vanished forests and their inhabitants, but also those who mined the fossilised remains.

For Hitchins, the material basis of the work is also persistent in all its realisations; not only do the echoes connect with 'places where the external shape of the original is preserved', but 'the performance and the booklet are both structured almost as if laying a transparency or 'carbonaceous film' over the deteriorated F J North text, taking a cast, impression or petrification of the text'.⁹ In other words, the stages of the material history of the production of the book (including its transformations through digital technology) are not left behind, invisible in some final 'product', but insist on interrupting and dialoguing with the present and calling attention to the processes of breakdown, reconstitution and transformation.

My second example, Paeony Lewis's *A Practical Guide to Gardening behind the Post-War Fence*, is already a staging – in the way that an architectural model might be described that way. This too is an altered book, a collaged book-sculpture constructed from a 1947 gardening manual (*Practical Gardening and Food Production in Pictures*, by Richard Sudell). Whereas North's original was descriptive, Sudell's is prescriptive and extremely practical, covering '[E]very aspect of the art and science of gardening... through the medium of pictures and diagrams, so as to enable [the] veriest novice to undertake with confidence the cultivation of fruit, flowers and vegetables, the care of poultry, bees and rabbits'.¹⁰



A Practical Guide to Gardening behind the Post-War Fence, Paony Lewis, 2019



A Practical Guide to Gardening behind the Post-War Fence, Paony Lewis, 2019

Here the book artist has illustrations to work with, as well as text, and Lewis cuts into the open book, making a garden literally spring out of it. As shown in the image opposite (top), it has fences, flat areas that look like lawns and flowerbeds, and plants growing upright. The plants are surreal assemblages. For example, a Brussels sprout plant-tree that resembles a pineapple becomes a brick wall when seen from outside the fence, as does an oversized chrysanthemum - see image opposite (bottom).

There are humans here, but unlike the fence and the plants, they are not permanently upright cut-outs, but instead are presented flat on the surface of the book, or within the pages of a set of flaps. The exceptions are metonymic: the pole with the sprayer is a pop-up (the man holding it is 'in the centrefold!') and on the outside of the gates are images clipped from a section on pruning: a hand with secateurs, and a gloved one holding onto a prickly-looking rose. Is it too much here to think too of the 'flaming sword' that guards the way to the tree of life in the Garden of Eden?

In terms of cutting, collage, recombination and erasure, there are similarities with the *Coal Forests* project. But whereas that emphasises decay and dissolution, the imperatives of organic process and resistance to closure,¹¹ *Practical Gardening* reinscribes construction and control, which carries through into its presentation as a finished object, on a specially made plinth that doubles as a carrier (see illustration on page 50). The one melts edges, resists recto-linearity, the other reinstates them: within the rectangular shape of the open book are numerous other rectangles: the fence, the flowerbeds, the lawns, the paths, reinforcing the numerous references in the text to 'rows', 'lines', and measurement (see, for example, the scale on the far right in the top illustration opposite).

Ornamentals are included – but in a subversive role, reminiscent of Hannah Höch's photomontages: the irruptive oversized sprouts / pineapple already mentioned, the daisies that peek through the fence. There is a delight in literal presentation here, including visual puns; for example, the words A SMALL CASCADE can be seen near a cascade of pages (yet another interruption to the usual format of a book) and a photograph 'of a man scattering fertiliser'. And the self-regard of a caption like 'Admiring a fine row of paper-blanchéd celery' is pointed up by its placement next to a photograph of children peering through a fence. Play (and the future?) undermine control.

The book is presented on the slant. This is more interesting visually, but it also undermines the almost stately progression of right angles, a structure where the rules of book design are rewritten as rules for making

the most of your plot. Lewis has taken to heart the injunction to UTILISE ALL YOUR SPACE: this book garden is extremely tightly packed: not only has she followed a rule that 'everything on the book is from the book',¹² but so far as possible, found words and images by cutting into the book, preserving the integrity of the original bound structure. For example, the double-page spread that provides the ground for all the construction was chosen from a chapter that would give the running heads *ROCK GARDENS* and *ALPINES ON DRY WALLS*, which Lewis explains as 'fit [ting] the sterile, hyper-controlled, territorial theme of barriers when taken out of context'.¹³ Similarly, the fences are 'cut directly from the pages surrounding the double page spread and then bent upward . . . [In this way these are] constructed of text and images as they appeared in the book'.¹⁴ In the same spirit, she puts to good use the capitalisation of the original, as found in chapter titles and headings, to convey the book's fiercely prescriptive tone.

The fence that rises from the flatness of the book's open surface is a paper realisation of privatised space. As Lewis points out, this is framed in the original as part of a wider discourse of control over nature:

Beneath the gladioli and potatoes, a post-war fervour permeates, emphasising control of the garden territory and environment, defending it from outsiders and nature. Weeds, weather, insects, birds and small animals are enemies and must be controlled. Chemical warfare combines with controlled nurture. Within the territorial fenced and brick boundaries of the garden, every square yard is subdivided into smaller, measured territories.¹⁵

Nor is the critique entirely historical; research for the book included a visual analysis of territory and boundary-marking along a street well known locally for its large and beautiful front gardens (views of which are shown in the hand-drawn images on the book's stand).¹⁶

Just outside the fence, in the margins of the book, in a white space that seems like yet another layer of defence, Lewis collages found text that calls attention to spatial control and privacy, such as advice on different kinds of fencing and measurements for grass or clinker paths (see the Appendix for more examples). As an aside, we can see how, in a key position on the top margin of the right-hand page, the author mischievously inserts her own presence: 'PEONIES RESENT DISTURBANCE'.

How is this a poem? I would argue that it is so by virtue of exploiting the space of the page (here a double-page spread) as in the poetics of Composition by Field – and then going beyond it: above and below its surface. Text and image make connections up, down and across,



Facing outwards, brick walls,
*A Practical Guide to Gardening
 behind the Post-War Fence,*
 Paeony Lewis, 2019



Sprinkling pesticide, *A
 Practical Guide to Gardening
 behind the Post-War Fence,*
 Paeony Lewis, 2019

in three dimensions, as described in the preceding paragraphs. Even simply looking across the pages – for example on the right-hand side, where I see the words, ‘GARDEN’ then ‘soil’ then ‘double-digging’ working together with the rhythm of the spacing around them – I am reading the text in the same way as I would an open-form poem. There’s sonic rhythm here, too, with the clipped terseness of ‘TRAPS FOR MICE’, with its closed / mouth-closing consonants, a counterpart to ‘GREASE BANDS TRAP PESTS’.

If, as American poet Charles Olson famously claimed, in his own characteristic capitalisation, ‘FORM IS NEVER MORE THAN AN EXTENSION OF CONTENT’,¹⁷ artists’ books of this kind are particularly expansive. The two projects discussed here are simultaneously poems, books, visual art objects and constructed / deconstructed landscapes. They are also a particular kind of material metaphor. In a recent environmental glossary, Nelson points out that ‘metaphor is . . . a linguistic expression of a very real material process,’ and introduces the term ‘metaform’, defined as ‘the process of becoming, of physically incorporating and transforming the human and other-than-human world by way of material, embodied, and conceptual intra-action.’¹⁸ Seeing these ‘re-imagined books’¹⁹ as representing a hybrid poetic form expands the ways in which they can be viewed as interventions in the increasingly urgent, ongoing debate over humans’ relationship with non-humans and our common environment.

Anna Reckin is a poet and writer based in Norwich. Her first book publication, *Broder*, an artist’s book collaboration with Paulette Myers-Rich, won a Minnesota Book Award for fine press work; her most recent collection, *Line to Curve*, appeared from Shearsman in 2018. She has a PhD from the Poetics Programme at SUNY Buffalo and writes reviews and essays alongside her own creative work. Current projects include book-length sequences on material objects: perfume and Chinese jades. <http://www.annareckin.com>

Acknowledgements

My particular thanks to the book artists here – Steven Hitchins, Paeony Lewis and Camilla Nelson – who were patient with my questions and supplied photos; and also to Jon McLean, the photographer for the top illustration on page 42.

Notes

1. The extreme material fragility of both projects, for very different reasons (one, for example, is built of the particularly brittle paper used during post-war rationing) is worth noting here.
2. Nelson, C and Hitchins, S (2015) *Translating the Coal Forests*. Literary Pocket Books and Singing Apple Press; each copy accompanied by a Polaroid and an A5 sheet describing the production process. For more images, see <http://www.singingapplepress.com/new-products/translating-the-coal-forests> (Accessed 19 February 2023)
3. Lewis, P (2019) *A Practical Guide to Gardening behind the Post-War Fence*. For more images, including work in progress, see <https://artspaeony.blogspot.com/2019/06/the-art-of-deconstructing-book-paeony.html> (Accessed 19 February 2023)
4. 1931 reprint of F J North’s 1926 book, *Coal and the Coalfields of Wales*, published jointly by the Museum of Wales and the University of Wales Press.
5. Rasula, J (2012) *This Compost: Ecological Imperatives in American Poetry*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press. The Whitman poem can be read at <https://iwp.uiowa.edu/whitmanweb/en/writings/civil-war/week-3/this-compost> (Accessed 19 February 2023)
6. Hitchins, pers. comm., 1 June 2019
7. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k7IwGFNy2WA> (Accessed 19 February 2023)
8. Hitchins, pers. comm., 1 June 2019
9. Here Hitchins is referring to particular kinds of fossilisation: ‘I was inspired by North’s description of fossilisation processes “as impressions, as casts or moulds, or as petrifications. An impression, such as those commonly found in the shales above coal seams, preserves the external shape and ornamentation of the plant, generally as a thin black carbonaceous film: foliage is usually perceived in this way. A cast also preserves the external form of the plant, but none of the original plant substance remains. Casts are formed when a plant is covered by sediment, its soft parts removed by decomposition, and the resulting hollow cavity filled with mud or sand similar to that in which the specimen is buried. Casts produced in this way preserve the external form of the plant but not its internal structure. In petrifications, the plant tissues have been so permeated by, or replaced by mineral matter, that all the detail of their structure has been preserved.”’ Hitchins, pers. comm., 1 June 2019
10. So practical, in fact, that it was reissued as an e-book by Lulu in 2010. Available at: https://books.google.co.uk/books/about/Practical_



Deconstructed book on custom stand, *A Practical Guide to Gardening behind the Post-War Fence*, Paeony Lewis, 2019

Gardening_and_Food_Production.html?id=y_WLLM4VUUYYC&redir_esc=y (Accessed 19 February 2023)

11. The reformulation of organic materials into standard shapes for papermaking (and the erasures that are revealed through an aesthetics of decay) are explored in a short talk by Nelson on her *Yarn Er Narrative*: <https://www.singingapplepress.com/poetry-1> (Accessed 19 February 2023.)

12. Lewis, pers. comm., 11 May 2019

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. Lewis, pers. comm., 31 May 2020

16. Lewis, pers. comm., 11 May 2019

17. 'Projective Verse' in Creeley, R (ed.) *Charles Olson: Selected Writings*. New York: New Directions, 1951, Pg 16. (Although this is best known as a formulation of Olson's, Olson himself ascribes it to the poet Robert Creeley)

18. In Russo, L and Reed, M (eds.) (2018) *Counter-Desecration: a glossary for writing within the Anthropocene*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, Pgs. 45-6

19. Lewis uses this phrase to describe *A Practical Guide to Gardening* (pers. comm., 23 January 2019)

Appendix: transcriptions

1) From *Translating the Coal Forests*

On overlay:

I am altered finally

by this one-on-one plant substantiation gig

when a plant has its soft parts removed to reveal a hollow cavity filled with mud or sand similar to that in which the specimen was buried then we will find

he buried them in the garden. His mother found the muddy pages strewn beneath the washing line and brought them in.

a fossil portrayed in this way portrays the external form of the original but not

in petri factor: and so we are permeated or replaced by the detailed structure of another in connection with owing to or

On paper:

Poem
yet in an altered form
one where the original plant substance remains although jugged arranged reformed where the plant has been regurgitated
its soft parts removed by decomposition and festering hollow cavity filled by mud or sand similar to that in which the specimen was buried.

A basil preserved in this way portrays the external fork of the original, but not its tree trunks as we have already served as casts in petrifacture so permeated by or replicated in detail of their structure in connection with and owing to and of confused play

2) Phrases from the margins of *A Practical Guide to Gardening*

UTILISE ALL YOUR SPACE

Do you find birds troublesome?

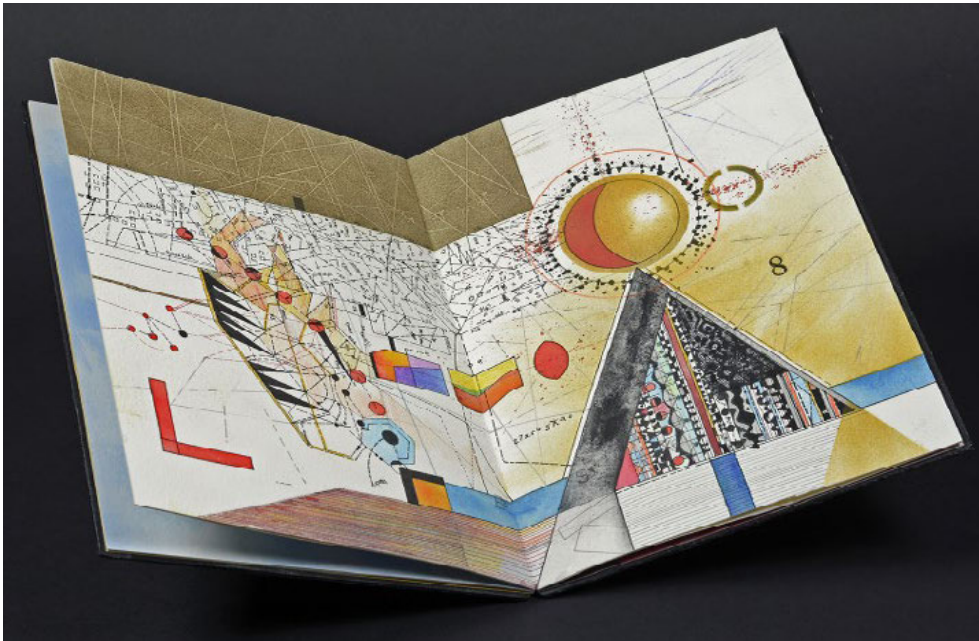
4. *Where animals are troublesome a chain link fence makes an effective barrier. It can, in time*

5. *A town garden calls for more privacy than a country garden. A close-boarded fence gives*

PROTECTING FRUIT FROM BIRDS

PROTECTION FROM WEATHER

PEONIES RESENT DISTURBANCE



Cognitive Distance,
Timothy C. Ely, 2022.
Photograph: Ann Marra



Above and below: *Cognitive Distance* (series of four manuscript books), Timothy C. Ely, 2022. Photographs: Ann Marra



Composing in Colour and Line: An Interview with Artist and Bookbinder Timothy C. Ely

Jennie Hinchcliff

As Director of Exhibitions and Artist Programs at the San Francisco Center for the Book, USA, I am always seeking ways to connect gallery visitors with the work on display. How to encourage those “aha!” moments that inspire, energise, or activate a viewer to consider the book form from a different perspective? Each exhibition meets this goal in its own way, but nowhere has this been more apparent than when exhibiting the work of Timothy C. Ely. It can be said that one viscerally experiences Ely’s work, while viewing it.

Drawing from traditional fine binding, printmaking, and manuscript books, artist Timothy C. Ely has developed his own hybrid ways of creating work, all the while remaining true to his artistic vision. The techniques and materials of fine bookbinding are immediately apparent when viewing his work; by pushing these traditional aspects in new directions, the resulting works inspire and astonish.

In the forty-plus years he has created codexes, Ely estimates that he has completed hundreds of works. The elaborate use of composition, sweeping colour palettes, cribriform writing, and dense, diagrammatic drawings are hallmarks of his work. During the final week of the exhibition *Cognitive Distance: the Bookworks and Thoughtforms of Timothy C. Ely* at the San Francisco Center for the Book, I sat down with Tim to ask him about his working process, his latest project, and his latest series of work, *Cognitive Distance*.

JH: It was an honour to exhibit your most recent series Cognitive Distance as part of SFCB’s recent exhibition Cognitive Distance: the Bookworks and Thoughtforms of Timothy C. Ely. The size of the books is a notable departure from the larger work you usually do... can you talk a bit about the initial inspiration for this series of works?

TE: Around the end of the first decade of this century, I was interested in the Royal Society, specifically in Robert Hooke and, of course (Isaac) Newton. For a while, under the arch of my work *LINE OF SIGHT*, I was focusing all the ideas I could gather on the effects of the reflecting telescope and the microscope, how I see out to Saturn or down into the life in a pond. The impact on 17th culture at the time was important. This led me through the labyrinthine path to thinking about walking and distance and our perception of space. And that got me thinking about how maybe, owing to cellular limitations, we have our ideas about space completely wrong.

Perhaps things are far more entangled than we know. The famous double-slit experiments of Thomas Young gave me a leg up on this; the covers of some of my recent books use the slit as a motif. [*KEY* and the *Cognitive Distance* series]. The alterations in particle status as it passes through the slit are one thing; I want to know what is going on IN the slit. My paintings for the covers of these books reflect this curiosity.

The scale of the *Cognitive Distance* series is more modest than the cinematic scale of my large books. Conventional concerns like time, energy, and deadlines had me reduce the scale to my second favorite size... large enough to project but intimate in a way that still launches the information. The slit is featured on the covers of these four books. I devised this abridged style long ago to deal with the problem of seeing both the inside and the outside. The binding matters, but it wraps the interior matter. A complex book shows one or two details or the binding. Books are unusual to show for this reason. One gets only a taste... so... *Cognitive Distance* grew out of thinking speculatively about how we perceive space. We get a lot of things wrong, so it keeps coming up for me that we might well be so entangled with 'thing ness' that we are already always there; this is a strange notion of how we might view or visit some of the fantastic and startling places/images provided by the Webb telescope. Our conventional view of distance and space totally denies me any chance, but perhaps some other means of non-physical transmission of self would/could be found.

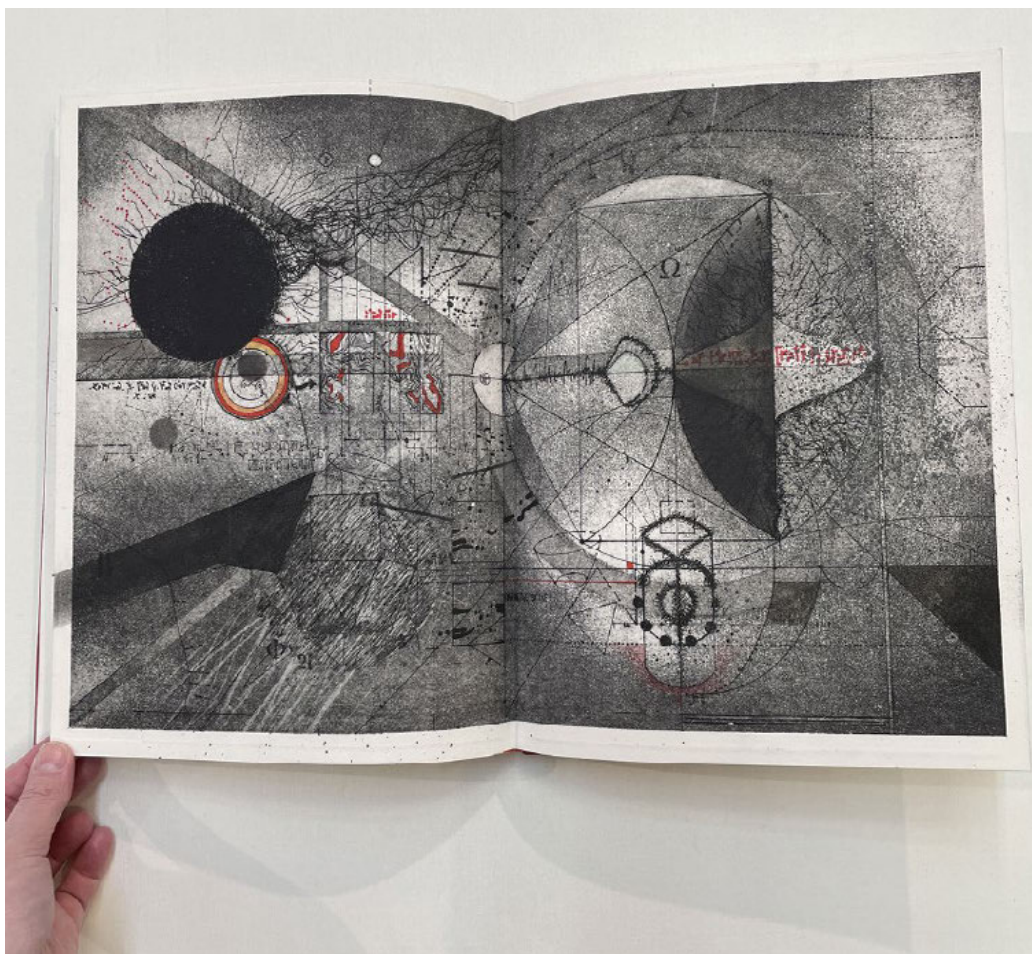
JH: Do you feel the Cognitive Distance drawings and books need to stay together as a series? This way of working – related drawings and prints (for example, your works Tables of Jupiter and Jupiter Effect) – is an interesting one and something that isn't often seen either in the printmaking or book arts scene. Could you write about working that way, the “why” and “how” of it?

TE: Everything connects as far as working together, but it is permitted for things to be separated. I work in series, and it's rotational as ideas are considered until they weaken and are replaced or amped by new information. Like a standing wave, in the trough, the weight is great, and so the notions are propelled by great excitement. As the wave elevates and inertia is drained, this is a time of change and speaks of the I-Ching. I am fond of the idea of being all over the map.

JH: SFCB is fortunate to exhibit some of your early manuscript books and drawings from the 1970s as part of Cognitive Distance. While researching for the show and looking through these works, I noticed studio techniques you seemed to be trying out at the time – I'm thinking of your use of collage in Sistine Chapel (1977) and UFO (1977). I'm interested in knowing more about



Cognitive Distance (drawing), Timothy C. Ely, 2022. Photograph: Ann Marra



City is Mind (interior page spread), Timothy C. Ely, 2016. Photograph: San Francisco Center for the Book

your experimentation process and the mental or personal boundaries you push up against (or through) when you're working on a project.

TE: Collage is, for me, a two-edged blade. Richey Kehl, my teacher in graduate school, is a master of collage and what I really learned from him was that you need a big inventory of stuff. For some reason, I just never had enough raw material, so my collage vocabulary was pretty limited. A look at a bunch of Kehl's work reveals a very articulate voice.

The other edge that defies me somewhat is the edge of the cut pieces. There is something just not right about collage until it gets photographed and reproduced and hence, flattened. All the relief is compressed. I did experiment with passing a collage through an etching press, and that unified the work somewhat, but it remained graphically awkward. The *UFO* and *Sistine Chapel* books used a glycerine adhesive, and after nearly 50 years, they show no signs of deterioration. I love the flatness of printed or [most] manuscript folios; collage work can affect the planar expression of the page and also keep the book block from full integrity. It seems a minor point and probably is, but it's like a small rock in my shoe.

JH: One of the works in the exhibition is your magnificent The Flight Into Egypt: The Third Magnitude, a book you created especially for renowned design bookbinder Philip Smith. We've talked a bit about Philip's importance to you as a bookbinder and the lifelong friendship the two of you shared. Can you share how the two of you initially met and what inspired you to create The Flight Into Egypt for him?

TE: I am so delighted that *The Flight into Egypt: The Third Magnitude* is in the collection of Letterform Archive. I had feared that it was lost to me. Better still is that we were able to show it (as part of the *Cognitive Distance* exhibition).

In 1978 someone [I've forgotten who] phoned me to say that some bookbinder was giving a talk at the University of Washington. This person saw a small bit in the Seattle paper and could not recall the name. I took a chance and drove to Seattle, found the lecture, and it was Philip Smith. He was visiting friends and headed toward San Francisco for the opening of *Hand Bookbinding Today: An International Art*. (organised by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in cooperation with the Hand Bookbinders of California). I knew of this show, but my plans were not solid. After the lecture, I left; Philip was swamped with admirers, and I felt like not intruding. This lecture on his methods was transformative. The care he lavished on bookbinding at all stages was inspiring.

A month later, I was in San Francisco to see this show. I was such an embryo binder at this time and, as such, had seen no contemporary work. This show was another thing that changed my thinking. I knew what I wanted to see but did not have the technology to achieve it. That same visit initially found me at San Francisco's Japan Center for some good food. I discovered a small gallery full of tea bowls. The most exquisite surfaces were seen that day; that gallery gave me a leg up as to what I felt was a surface design worth looking into. At the same time, I knew I needed something, bookbinding lessons, conversation, and time spent in a good collection.

A couple of years later, armed with an MFA in Design, an NEA grant under my belt, and a five-week trip to Japan and New York over, I went to England for almost a year. I came home with a new brain, bothered enough binders to figure out which end of the glue brush was up, and through David Sellars, met Philip (Smith). I was invited to lunch at his place [that was good] and saw a pile of his bindings and other things he had collected. I didn't sleep much that night. Over the next few years, while living in NYC, I made frequent trips to England and always saw Philip. We taught weird stuff together in Norway, Chicago, and other places, made field trips to Glastonbury and other esoteric sites in England, and mostly just talked and talked about the States and phases of everything. Letters were exchanged, and visits reciprocated. I so loved treating him to lunch at the Museum of Modern Art.

Philip asked me around 2010 if I would make him a book. He always loved my Aegyptian expeditions and asked if I would riff off the first one. I was, of course, delighted and had to regain my balance as I was making something for a master of the craft. It was a delight and a big challenge and took many months to complete.

JH: In other interviews, you've stated that you prefer to categorise your bookworks as "manuscript books" instead of "artists' books". You studied painting and printmaking in college but eventually landed on the codex as your chosen format. Was this a gradual evolution or something that happened overnight?

TE: It seems as if there were parallel rivers running. I was always enamored with books; at the same time, when I entered my formal education, the closest thing to bookmaking I'd seen was the creation of portfolios. This was good as it got me to think more in sequence or thematically and then link that to my reading. Then, in a flash of great insight, it occurred to me after a conversation about my sketchbooks that BOOKS could become some kind of means of expression. It made staggeringly good sense.



City is Mind (interior page spread), Timothy C. Ely, 2016. Photograph: San Francisco Center for the Book



Line of Sight, Timothy C. Ely, 2012. Installed at San Francisco Center for the Book as part of the *Cognitive Distance* exhibition, 2022. Photograph: San Francisco Center for the Book



Line of Sight, Timothy C. Ely, 2012. Photograph: Ann Marra



Root 9, Timothy C. Ely, 2001. Installed at San Francisco Center for the Book as part of the *Cognitive Distance* exhibition, 2022. Photograph: San Francisco Center for the Book



Antarktos: Magnitudes of Black, Timothy C. Ely, 2002. Installed at San Francisco Center for the Book as part of the *Cognitive Distance* exhibition, 2022. Photograph: San Francisco Center for the Book

Besides integrating my love of drawing and printmaking, here was a craft-based means of creating stunning portfolios, as it were. Now all of this was so so embryonic that there was nothing to reference it to except libraries themselves. My first expedition to special collections in the main library at the University of Washington ripped a hole in my world. So the rivers became entwined, and my life history with books and reading now had added quite instantly the idea of making books. I wasn't interested in creating multiples. However, I found the idea of a binder scribe to be fanciful and suited me.

I began to gather stuff, and a week or so after grad school made my first book. I prefer the accuracy of the term manuscript book or edition to the vague idea of "artist's book". Friends of mine suggest that artists' books are lightweight, easily achieved, or somewhat temporal and that a well-aggravated manuscript book is a thing to behold, a work that breaks through to radiance. It's a challenge to define or live with constructs anyway; the opposite side of this is that everyone contributes. So you see: another two-edged blade has made itself known as the world is made up of contrasts.

JH: What do you feel the codex offers that a print or painting cannot / does not?

TE: The codex form, when it showed up in my world, suddenly added to my arsenal of methods. I already had the means to draw and paint the manuscript page, but then I was sewing with weird thread, learning how to sharpen the ninja tools needed to thin leather, thinking about how to stick gold onto this leather, making silk end bands, and cutting wood for boards. It was crazy and all so natural to me; until a friend pointed out how many materials I was working with, I just sort of merged with it all. But the utility of the codex book, the compression of information, and the lovely modest scale all seemed so right! An entire gallery full of drawings could be contained in one lovely book. All this would prove awkward to conventional thinking (yes, even galleries are conventional), so getting these out into the world was a strange set of flux reactions. Unexpected meetings usually resulted in everything from commissions to exhibits. But it was hard to plot for things to happen.

JH: While showing visitors through SFCB's gallery, I'm often asked how long it takes to create a single work or whether there's a specific moment when you inherently know that a work is finished. (i.e., is a work ever really completed?)

TE: This is one of those good questions involving time as we perceive it. My favorite question in a workshop is, "how long does it take to dry?" Right up there is "how



long does it take?" Everything, of course, depends on a lot of variables. *The Book of Mullings* took me 15 years and some of the others, like the first Egyptian book, took about three years - but never are these linear timings for life interrupts. It is very hard to be fast. Each book has a critical mass; when that is met, the piece is finished. My manuscripts are internally supported; that is, folio 1 and folio 2 visually connect, so those connections in all folios need to keep being recommitted to...in other words, as a work develops and becomes close to completion, the others then reveal a weakness or emptiness which needs to be addressed. I also really love dense, complex imagery, so part of the work is to pack energy into most of the available space. Eventually, the equipoise is reached, and the work of assembly and further integration can begin.

Cognitive Distance: the Bookworks and Thoughtforms of Timothy C. Ely took place at San Francisco Center for the Book from 28th October 2022 - 8th January 2023. Featuring nearly sixty manuscript books, prints, and drawings by Timothy C. Ely, this career-spanning exhibition gave gallery visitors an in-depth look at Ely's version of world-building and book structures. More about Timothy C. Ely can be found at his blog: <https://aplanetarycollage.com>


Jennie Hinchcliff is Director of Exhibitions and Artist Programs at San Francisco Center for the Book. She lives in San Francisco, CA., focusing on curatorial pursuits, arts writing, and creating studio work. Her recent curatorial projects include "Cognitive Distance: the Bookworks and Thoughtforms of Timothy C. Ely" and "Positively Charged: Copier Art in the Bay Area Since the 1960s". <https://sfc.org>

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Arbeitskreis Künstlerbücher

Arbeitskreis Künstlerbücher und Sehnsucht „Öffentlichkeit“

Der Arbeitskreis ist ein offener Zusammenschluss von Sammlungen und Bibliotheken im Bereich „Künstlerbücher“. Aufgrund unterschiedlicher institutioneller und ideeller Sammlungsansätze in Bezug auf die Frage, was Künstlerbücher sein können und was ihre Rezeption zwischen Kunstsammlungen und Bibliotheken bedingt, bildet der „Arbeitskreis Künstlerbücher“ vor allem die Plattform für einen notwendigen fachlichen Austausch untereinander. Um einer breiten Öffentlichkeit die Sammlungsvielfalt des Künstlerbuches im deutschsprachigen Raum vorzustellen und einen Überblick über die Sammlungsinstitutionen zu geben, ist die Idee einer gemeinsamen Website entstanden. Diese begreift sich in erster Linie als ein Informationsmedium. Darüber hinaus bietet sie zugleich einen Überblick über die unterschiedlichen Interpretationsansätze zum Thema „Künstlerbuch“ und strebt selbst an ein Diskussionsportal zu sein. Dazu dient auch das Blog [„Kunst zwischen Deckeln“](#).  Assoziierte Mitglieder sind Personen, die sich in diesem Bereich mit der Sammlung wissenschaftlich auseinandersetzen.

// Arbeitskreis Künstlerbücher

- Aktuelles
- Mitglieder
- Assoziierte Mitglieder
- Arbeitskreistreffen
- Kontakt

// Kunst zwischen Deckeln

Propagandaalben der Sowjetunion
30.11.2022 15:59 AK Künstlerbücher



Mondmanifesto. Jonathan Meese bloggt Radikalstoff
05.07.2022 09:59 AK Künstlerbücher


Eine Künstlerbuchmesse für München: Super BOOKS 2022
03.06.2022 15:02 AK Künstlerbücher

Konzeptuelle Fotobücher: Joachim Schmid
23.05.2022 16:19 AK Künstlerbücher

Screenshot: *Arbeitskreis Künstlerbücher* at arthistoricum.net [08.12.2022].

Hypotheses

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Propagandaalben der Sowjetunion

Vor einiger Zeit hat Viola Hildebrand-Schat bereits diesen vielgelesenen Blogbeitrag über Sergej Jakunin (Das Tagebuch des Azamat. Wie Sergej Jakunin das russische Künstlerbuch konzipiert) hier im Blog publiziert. Umso schöner, dass nun ein zweiter...

Screenshot of the blog *Kunst zwischen Deckeln* (Art between Covers) on the blog portal de.hypotheses [08.12.2022].

It's art and it's a book – but no art book. How artists' books are testing the limits of libraries

Lilian Landes

Lilian Landes is curator of the collection of artists' books at the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (Bavarian State Library), München, Germany. The Bavarian State Library is a collecting institution - custodian of one of the largest artist's book collections in Germany. In this article, Landes presents an overview of the special challenges that their acquisition, cataloguing and mediation entail.

This article is a *slightly modified version* of: 'Es ist Kunst, es ist Buch - aber kein Kunstbuch: warum Künstlerbücher Bibliotheken Grenzen aufzeigen', published in *Bibliotheksdienst* 54 (2020) 9, pp 622-635 <https://doi.org/10.1515/bd-2020-0081>

*

The title of this article is perhaps too pointed, because it conceals the fact that the artist's book probably shows the limits of everyone who has to deal with it. Libraries as well as museums and other collecting institutions. In the following, I will mainly deal with these institutional boundaries, not ignoring the fact that the artist's book also highlights boundaries on a personal level: curators of larger collections can tell you a thing or two about this, as it is almost impossible for them to gain an overview of their collection field, neither from a historical nor a contemporary point of view.

This may be further complicated by the fact that it is not at all clear what exactly would be included in such an overview. So far, no broad consensus could be reached regarding the definition what an artist book is; there is still no "gold standard" in this respect. At least not without immediately evoking harsh criticism: from artists themselves, from museums, from collectors or – and it is their point of view that will be the focus of the following – from librarians.

In April 2018, the special working group on Artists' Books was constituted at the German National Library in Frankfurt am Main. It is still ongoing and is working on the RDA (Resource Description and Access) topic:

"Artists' books are collected in libraries and museums alike and have so far been catalogued according to different standards. The aim of the Working Group on Artists' Books is to develop special guidelines for this area within the framework of the RDA cataloguing system."¹

Where does the artist's book, which is extremely diverse form and in many areas difficult to grasp and describe with the general set of rules, need its own rules and

categories – that is the core question of the special working group. At the beginning, however, was the definition of the term "artist's book", with the aim of delineating the field as broadly as possible. After all, it should be possible to make it findable in the practical library work as well as museums and other collecting institutions. The working group's preliminary proposal for a definition was developed jointly by library and museum staff.

"Artists' books are those specially designed works in which the artistic intention takes precedence over other functions of the book. Artists' books are conceived and usually also designed, produced and distributed by artists. The artist's book is a work of art in its own right.

The artist's book, as it developed in the 20th century, encompasses a variety of phenomena. In the context of the "AG Künstlerbücher", the concept of the artist's book functions as an overarching genre including press prints and classic painter's books as well as concept books, artists' magazines, book objects, multiples and ephemeral forms of artist publications that transcend the conventional book form. Understood in such a broad sense, the artist's book also participates in the diverse developments of the concept of art in modernity" (ibid.).

Defining a border crosser

So a start has been made, you could say. Finally a definition that helps us to understand the artist's book. To catalogue it. Regardless of where it is shelved. Shelved? Discussions could ignite on almost any terminology, because a border crosser remains a border crosser, even if we are on its trail.

In libraries, an artist's book is "shelved". Often in the midst of the "regular collection", or also in special collections, which are given their own designations and/or shelfmarks. At the Bavarian State Library these are the "Libri Selecti", subdivided once again into those that can (largely) be consulted in the reading room without restrictions (L.sel.I) and those particularly valuable or rare items for which users require special permission, based on demonstrable academic interest, for example (L.sel. III). The book is "shelved" in order to make it accessible and to make it available for use. This goes for artists' books as well, unless there is a compelling reason not to.

In museums, the focus often is different. Here, artists' books are works of art – and only that. Once they are in the museum, they become part of the art collection, usually part of the depot, and in most cases only brought to light or specifically included in an exhibition by the curators themselves under strict conditions.

It is easy to guess that this portrayal is exaggerated and that fierce cries of protest will come from both camps, and rightly so. It may be done the other way round here and there, that's the way it is with border crossings.

Nevertheless, the play of contrasts should be taken a little further here. The museum collects differently than a library. Often, artists' books are acquired in the context of exhibitions, which are rarely specially dedicated to artists' books. Artists' books there often expand the repertoire of expressive forms used by the presented artist. Collection strategies in libraries vary, or different approaches to collecting overlap within a single institution. Collections often highlight objects that exemplify geographical and artistic breadth across (art) historical epochs. Depending on the available budget or market situation, collections may transcend the "exemplary" to close gaps or to strengthen historically developed focal points.

In an exchange about their different perspectives on the artist's book, an artist's book working group had already formed before the above-mentioned RDA special working group (whose focus is on the library aspects described), which meets annually and has founded its own network on arthistoricum.net. It unites institutional and personally associated members.²

What most collections have in common, whether they are anchored to a museum or a library, is that they commit themselves, sometimes more, sometimes less bindingly, to collecting on that scale with which the huge spectrum of how an artist's book can be described (at least roughly): a "concept book" that is cheap to produce and distribute, whose artistic approach consists in a creative-subversive questioning of the medium "book" and which, in extreme cases, can be a simply bound print-on-demand booklet, on the one hand. On the other hand, there are those bibliophilic, often unique works of book art that cannot be separated from their materiality in their self-understanding, which ultimately stand in the tradition of the book art movement in England of the late 19th century, while the first-named developed primarily from the 1960s onwards and in the process first gave birth to the current term "artist's book". Symbolically, Ed Ruscha with his *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* (1962) is regarded as the initiator. As is well known, art history loves linear narratives.

Another thing that artists' books have in common in both memorial institutions is that they are rarely exhibited, with the exception of those (rare) institutions that have dedicated themselves entirely to the genre of artists' books, in Germany for example the Klingspor Museum or the Centre for Artists' Publications in the Weserburg. In large institutions – here we report on the Libri Selecti of the Bavarian State Library – this is often

due to the fact that numerous other culturally significant in-house special collections compete for exhibition capacities that are limited in terms of space and time. At the Bavarian State Library (BSB), this has led to very rare, very large exhibition projects, each offering a retrospective spanning many acquisition years, namely *Papiergesänge* (1992)³ and *Showcase* (2017)⁴. Forming a distillate of the acquisitions of such long periods can be challenging, as the available fund is impressively large in terms of quality and quantity – in our case undoubtedly one of the most extensive and one of the most significant collections in Germany.⁵

Exhibiting artists' books... analogue?

This is certainly aggravated by the fact that the artist's book – sometimes even more clearly than any other – presents itself as an uncomfortable and unruly exhibition piece. In its self-image, it is designed to function as a "book", i.e. as a sequence of pages – it is even sometimes defined by orthodox critics as being able to express its message only in bound form and not in the arbitrary sum of its individual pages. It therefore plans to invite the reader to discover it piece by piece by turning the pages and burdens him/her with the fact that the work of art just discovered will disappear again with the next page, which means that the joy of discovery and taking leave belong inseparably together. So where much of how an artist's book "speaks" is necessarily switched off by the selection of a single double-page spread and its presentation in a display case, one may rightly ask what alternatives there are to bringing an artist's book collection to the public. Now and then, courageous collectors, often private ones, lay out the originals for the public to see and touch, and stand next to them for hours explaining them – surely an ideal way, especially to bring to life what at first sight appear to be a hermetic concept book. Public collections, on the other hand, tend to refrain from exposing the actual state of conservation of their holdings to incalculable risk. If the value of the book does not prohibit this anyway, its difficult replaceability in view of the often extremely small edition sizes does.

...prefer digital?

Exhibiting an artist's book that belongs to a library collection in a classical way has its own pitfalls. We have not yet mentioned the extremely special target audience to which such exhibition projects are addressed. Artists' books are true hermaphrodites, half belonging to the library world, half to the art world, and those who know how to perceive the very special beauty of this twilight are in part bibliophiles, in part committed to contemporary art and in part driven by a spirit of discovery. On the international art market, artists' books

are steadily emerging from their shadowy existence – here in Germany a bit more slowly than elsewhere. In any case, another hurdle of classical artist's book exhibitions is the mobilisation of their audience, who must live locally or at least within a day's travel distance. The digital is an obvious alternative. Not only that it bridges spatial distances. High-resolution images of different pages and details are possible, in contrast to the presentation of exactly one double page in a classical showcase exhibition. But especially when it comes to the complete digitisation of an artist's book and/or only the reproduction of individual pages of such artists' books that are not copyright-free and originate from artists who can no longer be contacted, digitisation can cause enormous problems and high costs, as "fair use" does not exist in the EU. A large part of today's collections fall into this category. However, it is much easier – and it is worth differentiating here – with works by artists who are still alive today, who generally have no objections and are happy to cooperate, after all, the idea of disseminating art as widely as possible at low cost underlies the genre.

Accordingly, a blog is a useful bridge. It can explain, contextualise, illustrate within the framework of what is legally possible – far beyond what a library catalogue can do. In May 2019, the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek launched a blog dedicated entirely to artists' books. It does so in its function as a collecting institution and in its aforementioned role as custodian of one of the largest artist's book collections in Germany. It is not doing this to develop an in-house communication channel to the public. With the blog *Kunst zwischen Deckeln (Art Between Covers)*, an instrument is provided that is open to all interested parties as a communication tool, i.e. a community blog. Contributors can be academics as well as collecting institutions, students, artists, museums and private collectors. Contributions can take the form of comments on existing articles, but of course also your own blogposts. If you are not familiar with the medium, you can send a text to the editorial team as a file attachment, but we will also be happy to provide you with your own access if you wish. Scholarly contributions are welcome, but not a prerequisite. The blog can also include ajournments and new findings on already published writings. Articles can be short or long, elaborate or just outlining an idea. Care will be taken not to include promotional posts. The blog contributions will be mirrored on the page of the Arbeitskreis Künstlerbücher on arthistoricum.net, many of them will be recorded in the SWB online catalogue. In addition, the blog will soon receive an ISSN number, and its contributions will be stable for academic citation.

The subject area of artists' books is a bountiful one for a blog in that it spreads in two directions: on the one hand, to the so-called specialist community, the

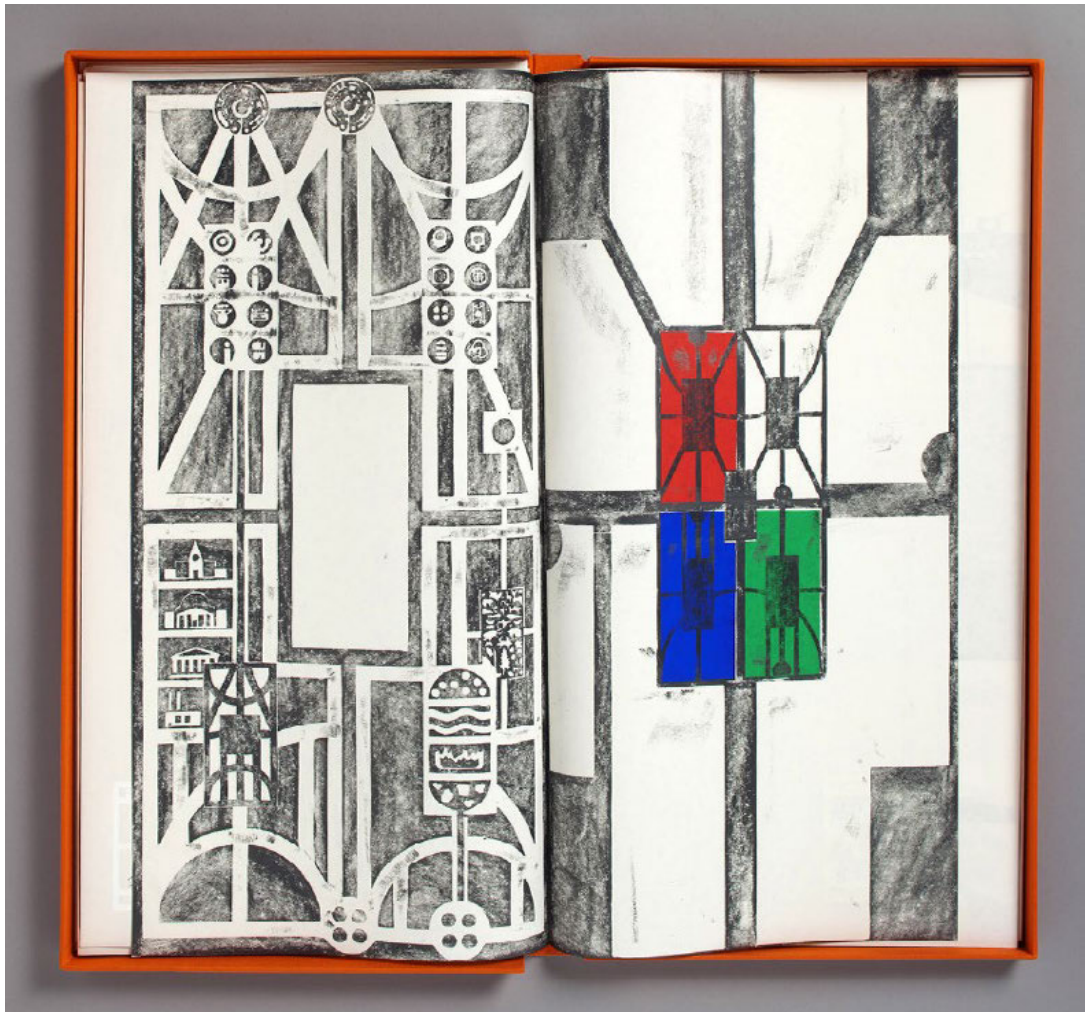
already named growing group of specialists, very internationally positioned and therefore dependent on digital communication; here, such a tool can have a supplementary and relieving effect in the increasingly dense network of smaller and larger artist's book fairs. A blog can be an open, flexible instrument for mutual information about acquisitions, bizarre finds, out-of-the-way publishers, hand presses and projects. No one, experts included, can register or reflect on their own what is happening in the field of artists' books: not internationally anyway, but even on a national level it is difficult.

On the other hand, in contrast to many other highly specialised academic blogs, the subject area of artists' books also reaches out to a very broad interested public, i.e. it appeals to users and readers beyond art history, the publishing industry, galleries, museums and private collectors. It is simply visually attractive, which can be mirrored pleasingly well in the medium of the blog – in compliance with the aforementioned legal requirements – especially in our time, which is massively characterised by a generally increasingly easy visual responsiveness of any audience. People interested in contemporary art will enjoy reading about a field that cannot be grasped in terms of content, form or artistic technique and can therefore essentially be made tangible by making its constant flow of production visible. It is impossible to speak of "documenting" in this context, since completeness is unthinkable and even any system of documentation is tantamount to an illusion: we are not only talking about the market of new publications, and even this is not in itself comprehensible. We are also talking about events, i.e. exhibitions, fairs, presentations, performances, artists' workshops – and about publications: by museums, academics, collectors, by artists themselves.

Between the target groups of "experts" and "the public", let us not forget the students of art (history) who often (can) complete an entire degree without ever having heard the term "artist's book". They are also attractive as a target group for the blog because they can set an example with corresponding topics in qualification theses and anchor the medium more firmly than before in art historical perception.

Tracking down cross-border commuters

In the large, orderly, partly standardised acquisition process of a supra-regional academic library, curators of artist's book collections are unquestionably exotic. At least for the Libri Selecti of the BSB, it can be reported that very few acquisitions are stimulated by publishers' catalogues. Dealer systems or quotas are not part of everyday work. Yes, specialist dealers or publishers make



88 MAPS, Matt Mullican, Courtesy Three Star Books, Paris. © Matt Mullican / Photo: Florian Kleinfenn



Moon Parsifal, Jonathan Meese, Harpune, Vienna, 2017. © Jonathan Meese / Harpune Publishers

targeted offers, sometimes leading to a purchase decision. Several of last year's major acquisitions were made in this way: *88 Maps* by Matt Mullican (Three Star Books, Paris), *Berliner Reise* by Max Beckmann (Antiquariat Daniela Kromp), and last but not least the impressive *Mondparsifal* by Jonathan Meese (harpune Verlag, Vienna).⁶ The vast majority of acquisitions, however, are the result of snowball-like research or intricate recommendations. Sometimes also the consultation of social media, whose international character benefits the cause. The cost-reach effect is very attractive for both sides, i.e. for the side of the artists, who target a globally dispersed special audience with their work, and for the curators, for whom a cleverly compiled Twitter timeline can save a lot of search work and provide satisfying finds, among which the most beautiful are probably those that no other national or even European collection had previously tracked down.

The acquisition itself is correspondingly different; in most cases directly from the artist. Depending on the country, rapid postal routes follow or those that take weeks, months – or years, as in a recent case of constantly changing export conditions for a unique book located in Moscow. The administrative apparatus of the destination library also has to perform some contortions from time to time. Clean solutions in terms of tax and customs law for invoicing small businesses in other EU countries – a very common acquisition constellation – are not a matter of course...

Limits of cataloguing

Once in the house, the borderline nature of the artist's book reveals itself with all its power. Librarians, who usually catalogue academic titles or fiction, are likely to be left at a loss without a colleague who has experience with artists' books.

There are books that are not even meant to be opened, because the mere loosening of the outer packaging already changes the work.⁷ Or that book that doesn't even exist, but whose first edition was quickly sold out.⁸ Artists' books without a title, colophon or author's name are almost regular phenomena, hardly worth mentioning. But what to do when the book leaves its classical form? There are, for example, book objects with a more sculptural character, which would have to be recorded and described accordingly with partly different categories. There are object magazines.⁹ There are record covers, posters and other things that libraries often keep under "ephemera" as part of their artist's book collection – in this case it would be more accurate to speak of artists' publications – and do not try to reconcile with the existing description guidelines (RDA, see above) without difficulty.

Last but not least, the question very often arises when a book, even if it has classic book form, is even assigned "artist's book" in the "type of content" field – which is an enormously helpful filter and search criterion, especially in large collections. The grey areas sometimes seem infinitely wide and varied, the boundaries fluid. There are photo books, which we all know. Photo books, on the other hand, i.e. those whose design stands out, whose book form is intrinsic and thus indispensable (often in contrast to a coffee-table book), and to which a number of other criteria that can often only be grasped with a good gut feeling apply – but do not have to – are more likely to be artists' books here, where we have the choice between a regular shelfmark and the Libri Selecti. This is nevertheless a case that the above-mentioned special working group on artists' books is discussing.¹⁰ It is also apparent that different cataloguing systems in libraries and museums each have their own specific priorities and limitations. Against this background, standardisation goals in this area are undoubtedly even more difficult to work out and implement in practice than is the case in such areas that primarily concern libraries alone.

Artist's book meets everyday library life

The reader may rightly get the impression that the following paragraphs drift into the anecdotal. But it is done with the best of intentions, namely to show by means of entertaining examples how artists' books sometimes manage to evade library treatment. It is in their nature. Since the 1960s, there have been an enormous number of artists' books that tend to be subversive, especially in the field of conceptual artists' books. Many of them question everything that a "book" was, wants to be, can be, pretends to be as a "book". How it is received. They sometimes resist classification and categorisation. Against categorisation? So the fact that things described below happen to people who try to categorise artists' books, is in a way structurally inherent. The fact that artists' books and libraries wrestle benevolently with each other simply cannot be changed. Ed Ruscha's *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, cited at the beginning of this article, owes its legendary status as the first artist's book largely to the fact that its location within a large library, none other than the Library of Congress, failed grandly: the library was ultimately overwhelmed by the task of assigning the booklet a suitable system location, a suitable place on the shelf: purely documentary-looking photographs of petrol stations, no descriptive texts, that broke the existing grid.¹¹

Almost twenty years later, the publishing house Hubert Kretschmer published a concept book¹², whose binding – conceptually, of course – was designed in such a way that the book had to be turned from the middle.¹³ It can happen that a dutiful librarian, worried about the

undisturbed reading pleasure, gives the work to the bookbindery and after the supposed repair puts it up regularly. For a few weeks now, there has been a second copy in the original condition in the Libri Selecti, and the OPAC receives references between the two copies received forty years apart.

Especially in academic libraries, deliveries that are not addressed precisely enough can have a hard time. Their subjects are often unusual, as mentioned subversive, sometimes raunchy. Only recently did a corresponding parcel, ordered directly from the artist during a trade fair, seem to have been lost. It had been sent, but never arrived at the Libri Selecti. In fact, the Italian books¹⁴, which were dedicated to gender and sexuality issues with photography and text in a pointed manner, had passed through many hands, caused outrage and were almost disposed of if one of the colleagues had not realised the idea of asking the artists' books curator before taking this step, just to be on the safe side.

Anyone who would like to infer at this point that the existence of artists' books is endangered by libraries can be assured that the opposite is the case and that what has been reported is to be regarded as an exception. There are structural, organisational and probably also quantitative reasons why something similar happens much less often in museums. In this country at least, the most extensive collections of artists' books are affiliated with large libraries, where they are necessarily part of the usual business processes. So let us rejoice in the diversity of the artist's book: in terms of its form and character, its places of collection, its visualisation.

Lilian Landes studied art history, classical archaeology and Romance languages and literature at Philipps-Universität Marburg and LMU Munich. 2007 doctorate on socially critical genre painting before the revolution of 1848: "Carl Wilhelm Hübner (1814-1879). Genre und Zeitgeschichte im deutschen Vormärz". Munich/Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag 2008. From 2008 to 2017 staff member (from 2013 deputy head) at the BSB's Centre for Electronic Publishing (ZEP). Since 2018 Landes is curator of the collection of artists' books at the Bavarian State Library. landes@bsb-muenchen.de

Notes

1. [https://wiki.dnb.de/display/RDAINFO/Arbeitshilfen?preview=/106042227/146604903/AH-KB-001_28012019.pdf#Arbeitshilfen-Arbeitshilfenfür "Künstlerbücher](https://wiki.dnb.de/display/RDAINFO/Arbeitshilfen?preview=/106042227/146604903/AH-KB-001_28012019.pdf#Arbeitshilfen-Arbeitshilfenfür+Künstlerbuecher) [08.12.2022].

2. <https://www.arthistoricum.net/netzwerke/arbeitskreis-kuenstlerbuecher/> [08.12.2022].

3. Béatrice HERNAD, Karin v. MAUR: *Papiergesänge. Buchkunst im zwanzigsten Jahrhundert. Künstlerbücher, Malerbücher und Pressendrucke aus den Sammlungen der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek München*. Munich: Prestel, 1992.

4. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (ed.): *Showcase - Künstlerbücher aus der Sammlung der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek*. Munich, 2017.

5. On the occasion of the exhibition *Showcase*, a symposium dedicated to artists' books took place at the Bavarian State Library in October 2017 (*SHOWTIME - das Künstlerbuch heute*), which – enriched with further contributions – was published in the series *Bibliothek und Wissenschaft* as volume 52/2019: *Künstlerbuch im Schaufenster*. It illuminates in much greater detail than this article the three major questions of collecting – exhibiting – mediating that the subject of artists' books naturally raises.

6. On M. Mullican and M. Beckmann, see also: Landes, Lilian: "Edle Mappe, bunte Schachtel: Beckmann's *Reise nach Berlin* und Matt Mullican's *88 Maps - zwei museale Künstlerbücher neu an der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek*", in: *Bibliotheksmagazin* 2/20, pp. 73–75. On J. Meese, a blog article enriched with original material by the artist can be found on the blog *Kunst zwischen Deckeln*: <https://bookarts.hypotheses.org/1082>.

7. Pratchaya Phinthong: *Disasters*, Paris, Onestar Press, 2015. "Note that flipping of the pages of this book will pulverize and disperse the gold leaf into dust."

8. Elisabeth Tonnard: *The invisible Book*, Leerdam, April 2012. A second edition of the never materialised but an immediately out of print book was published three months later.

9. *ObjektMagazineObject – Object Magazines from the Archive Artist Publications*. Catalogue for the exhibition at kunsTTempel Kassel, 04.05.–10.06.2018, Munich: icon Verlag, 2018.

10. Furthermore, reference should be made to Hans Dickel's contribution to the anthology mentioned in note 5: "Fotobücher und Künstlerbücher", *ibid*, pp. 31–38.

11. The book's cult status manifests itself in its own Wikipedia entry, including the legendary citation of the reason for rejection there, "unorthodox form and supposed lack of information": https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twenty-six_Gasoline_Stations [accessed: 29.06.2020].

12. Laurer, Berengar et al: *cis fis e – eine Melodie geht um die Welt, 's Libretto dazu: der Polyismus oder alle Stile sind falsch*. Munich/Frankfurt a.M.: Verlag Hubert Kretschmer, 1981.

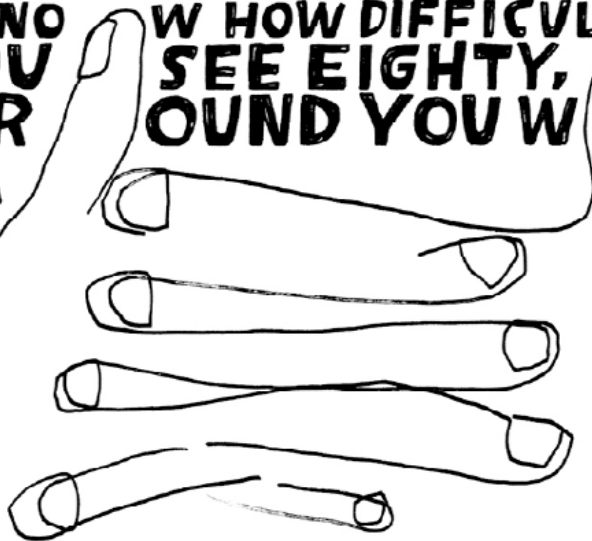
13. There are now a number of similar works, such as Jason Dodge: *Homing pigeons*, Onestar Press, Paris 2008.

14. E.g. Nicotra, Marco: *Vagine*, [Milan]: Bolo Paper, [2019].

WE SPEND A LOT OF TIME SAYING CIVILIZATION IS FALLING APART, BUT WHAT ARE WE DOING TO STOP IT? I THINK WE CAN DO THINGS—WHETHER IT'S GETTING OUT TO VOTE IN OUR COMMUNITY OR WRITING LETTERS TO OUR LEADERS... ALTHOUGH, THAT FEELS FUTILE WHEN THE WORLD IS FALLING APART. BUT, WE DON'T HAVE TO STAND IDLY BY IT D OES.









I DON'T THINK WE HAVE TO SEE PEOPLE DYING TO KNOW HOW DIFFICULT COVID IS. WHEN YOU SEE EIGHTY, NINETY PEOPLE ARE FOUND YOU WOULD YOU WEARING MASKS AND WEARING MASKS A YEAR IN LOS ANGELES. THINGS ARE REALLY BAD, AND MAYBE YOU SHOULD START TO TAKE IT SERIOUSLY.



Mark Addison Smith, from *The Streets Are Very Quiet*
 India ink on Bristol board
 featuring words spoken by Roxane Gay, author
 Zoom to Los Angeles, California, United States
 May 26, 2020

I REALLY THINK THERE'S
TWO POINTS WHEN WE WANT
TO PROTECT OURSELVES AND
OTHERS IN THIS SITUATION.

ONE IS,  INDEED, TRY
TO DO  WHAT WE CAN
SO THE VIRUS DON'T SPREAD.
THIS IS BY THE CONTACT. THIS IS
THE MOST IMPORTANT SITUATION.
THE VIRUS NEED A BODY TO
SURVIVE A LONG TIME.

BUT THE OTHER THING, FROM
AN IMMUNOLOGICAL SIDE, ~~WHEN~~
THERE IS ~~THE~~ ~~THE~~ ~~STRESS~~
COMPONENT,   TOO. IF WE
GET TOO   STRESSED,
~~WE~~ WE HAVE MORE CHANCE; WE
ARE ~~WE~~ MORE SUSCEPTIBLE
TO ~~WE~~ GET ~~THE~~ THE DISEASE.

REFEREES' BIOGRAPHIES

Dr Anne Bécharde-Léauté is a Lecturer at the University of Saint-Etienne, France, where she teaches design and translation for the Department of English and the Visual Arts Department. She co-heads the MPhil in Artists' Books and Art Book Publishing (Master 2 Professionnel Edition d'art / Livre d'artiste) with Dr Laurence Tuot. It is the first course of its kind in France. In 1999 Anne obtained a PhD in Art History from the University of Cambridge and has since developed a special interest in intercultural studies and the relationship between languages and design, including editorial design. She has translated a number of design and art history books, mainly for Phaidon and Thames & Hudson. She is currently preparing the proceedings of the 2021 symposium she organised on "La Médiatisation du livre d'artiste en bibliothèque" / The Mediatization of artists' books in the library.

Dr Caren Florance is an Adjunct Assistant Professor in the Centre for Creative & Cultural Research at University of Canberra (UC CCCR), Australia. Her teaching career has been broad: Typography, Creative Writing and Cultural Heritage at UC; Text in Art and The Book as Art at the Australian National University Printmedia & Drawing Workshop and the National Art School in Sydney. Research interests include creative materiality, contemporary bibliography and Australian artist's book history. Her creative practice, sometimes under the imprint Ampersand Duck, is text-based and poetic, rooted in handset letterpress, and spans the spectrum of book publishing and design. It is held in national and international library collections. Her latest commercial publication is *Lost in Case* (Cordite Books, 2019). <https://carenflorance.com>

Maria Fusco is a Belfast-born writer based in Glasgow, working across the registers of fiction, performance and theoretical writing, her texts are published internationally and translated into ten languages. She is Professor of Interdisciplinary Writing at the University of Dundee, a Robert Louis Stevenson Fellow, and an Hawthornden Fellow. Recent works include *Mollspeak* (2020), an eleven-channel sound installation in the Museum of Home; *ECZEMA!* (2018) a touring performance commissioned by National Theatre Wales to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the NHS, *Give Up Art* (2018) a book of collected critical writings and *Legend of the Necessary Dreamer* (2017) an ambient novella described by Chris Kraus as "a new classic of female philosophical writing", and *Master Rock* (2015) commissioned by Artangel and BBC Radio 4. <http://mariafusco.net>

Jeff Rathermel is an artist, educator, curator and independent scholar who lives and works in the United States. In the past he served as the Director and Curator of the Perlman Teaching Museum at Carleton College, one of the nation's leading liberal arts institutions. Prior to that he held the joint position of Executive and Artistic Director at Minnesota Center for Book Arts. Current areas of research include modern collage/ assemblage practices and contemporary Fluxus-inspired publications.

Rathermel holds Bachelors and Masters of Fine Arts degrees from the University of Minnesota where he studied printmaking, hand papermaking, digital arts and traditional binding. He has curated and organised countless book art exhibitions and his personal artwork is shown and collected internationally.

Dr Paulo Silveira lives 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). Paulo is Professor for Art History of the Instituto de Artes at UFRGS, and also a member of the Comitê Brasileiro de História da Arte, CBHA (Brazilian Committee for the History of Art). He is the author of *A página violada* (the violated page) 2001, and regularly writes articles on contemporary art and artists' books. He is a member (heading the artists' books section) of the research group Veículos da Arte - Vehicles of Art, and coordinates the Fundar, research group on the establishers of contemporary art (UFRGS-CNPq).

Ulrike Stoltz is an artist who lives and works in Germany and Italy. Her focus is on books, typography, texts, drawings, and installations. Former Professor for Typography and Book Art and Design at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste Braunschweig, Germany.

Co-founder and member of Unica T ("a fictitious person making real books") for 15 years, until the group split in 2001. She has continued in artistic collaboration for more than 35 years with Uta Schneider as <usus>. She received the Artist's Book Prize 2020 of the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel for her book *Caro Giordano*. <http://www.boatbook.de>

Featured cover and interior pages artist:

Mark Addison Smith is a queer artist whose design specialisation is typographic storytelling: allowing illustrative text to convey a visual narrative through printed matter, artists' books, and site installations.

This issue of *The Blue Notebook* features artworks from his new book *THE STREETS ARE VERY QUIET*

In a daily practice called *You Look Like The Right Type*, I've been listening in on other people's conversations and drawing their words - every single day since November 23, 2008 - to create an ongoing archive of over 5,000 drawings. *You Look Like The Right Type* is powered by my love of typography, language, and line, and sourced in stolen moments of overheard, verbatim dialogue. The works on paper are hand-drawn, using India ink pen on Bristol board, and generated on the same day in which I capture the quote. I've never missed a day.

When the lockdown began at the start of the 2020 pandemic and my ability to overhear quotes - out in the wild and on the streets - ended, I invited people to have conversations with me remotely. Most of the conversations were held on Zoom with strangers and friends who inspired me (and continue to do so). 365 of those drawings are featured within this book.

BOOK SPECIFICATIONS:

9 x 6 x 2 inches, 448 pages, linen cloth on hardback case-binding, matte silver foil-stamping with debossed cover, digitally printed interior pages on Cougar 90# text with Smyth-sewn signatures, featuring 365 drawings sourced from conversations with 40 people during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic. Appendix includes follow-up interviews with subjects and artist interview with Steven Heller (reprinted from *The Daily Heller*, *PRINT Magazine*). Signed edition of 150 copies. Printed at Fort Orange Press through a grant from the Research Foundation of The City University of New York (RF-CUNY).

THE STREETS ARE VERY QUIET INCLUDES DRAWN CONVERSATIONS WITH:

Jaime Nuñez del Arco (artist, editor, publisher) / Jamie Booth (hairstylist, salon owner) / Lady Bunny (drag artist) / Margaret Casey (grocery store manager) / Eric Cervini (writer, historian) / David Clarke (communications manager-turned-nutrition coach) / Michael Cook (fashion stylist) / Andrew Corzo (UPS driver) / BenDeLaCreme (drag artist) / Lydia Daum (designer, small-business owner) / Ashley Hairston Doughty (designer, professor) / Coral Gable (doula, hairstylist) / Jane Gagliardi (medical doctor) / Roxane Gay (writer, social commentator) / Erik Gernand

(writer, filmmaker, professor) / Julia Gernand (nursing home patient) / Noah Ghasan (art director) / Shanna Gordon (former Wisconsinite) / Mark S. King (HIV/AIDS activist, writer) / John Turner Lane (art student) / McKenzie Lee (college graduate) / Harrison Lowe (high school student) / Ian Martin (second grader) / Dahlia Maubane (photographer) / Daniel Meza (linguist, waiter) / Debbie Millman (writer, designer, *Design Matters* host) / Dawn Okamoto (antique store owner) / Doro Otterman (author, illustrator) / Smarty Pants (balloon twister) / Henry Parham (nonprofit director) / Rhona Sawatsky (elementary school teacher) / Elaine Serrão-Twisterling (immunologist-turned-artist) / Elizabeth Stanley (Broadway lead) / Juraj Straka (cartoonist, textile designer) / Ricardo Useche (illustrator, parking attendant) / Michael Walters (stylist, interior designer) / Holly White (photography teacher)

For more information, visit:

<https://www.markaddisonsmith.com/the-streets-are-very-quiet>

<https://www.markaddisonsmith.com>

I'm not gonna
COMPETE WITH *unemployment*. THAT'S NOT A
PAID VACATION. UNEMPLOY
MENT IS A BENEFIT THAT YOU
gain, IF YOU'RE OUT OF WORK.
So, IF YOU ARE OFFERED A JOB,
YOU HAVE TO TAKE IT.

I get it, I don't
BE *GRUDGE* IT, IT IS A *Great*
THING THAT YOU'RE GETTING SIX
HUNDRED DOLLARS, BUT, I HAVE TO HAVE
YOU BACK ON PAYROLL IN ORDER TO GET THIS
LOAN FORGIVEN.



I know everybody's
SITUATION IS DIFFER - ENT.
I CAN COLLECT SOCIAL SEC
URITY NEXT YEAR. I CAN
EVEN DO IT THIS YEAR - *So*.
I HAVE OPTIONS AVAILABLE.
So, I THINK THAT GIVES ME
A *little piece* OF MIND.

So, if something
GOES WRONG AND COVID
LASTS LONG, I'VE HAD A GREAT
27 YEARS.

When I listen
TO SOME OF THESE YOUNG STORE OWNERS - THEY'VE
BEEN THERE FOR TWO YEARS, THEY'VE *sunk* THEIR *life*
INTO IT - AND THEY'RE WAITING FOR THEIR BUSINESS
TO GO DOWN THE TUBE... I WAS THERE 27 YEARS AGO.





Mark Addison Smith, from *The Streets Are Very Quiet*
India ink on Bristol board
featuring words spoken by Ian Martin, second-grade student
Zoom to Clyde, North Carolina, United States
May 15, 2020