

Everything we do begins with a conversation

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At the Centre for Fine Print Research at the University of the West of England in Bristol, UK, book arts forms a small part of a research centre based on the production and investigation of the physical artefact, primarily predicated in print. Areas of the Centre's interest include 3D rapid prototyping and colour science - supported by artists' books, wide format printing, laser cutting and collaboration with artists.

→ The book arts area includes Tom Sowden and myself as researchers exploring many aspects of contemporary artists' publishing from creative processes such as laser cutting, to critical assessments of the subject. We also publish reference materials on artists' books and a free book arts newsletter online.

→ The research projects that we run investigating the artist's book at our university have one thing in common that is particularly important to us as artists and researchers - that all of our findings are disseminated freely and are accessible to a wide audience.

→ All of our artists' books projects, news, events, lectures, conferences, essays, published papers, symposia and exhibitions are archived online.

→ Our website was created in 2002 with the purpose of dissemination of our research to a far-reaching audience. I'm amazed and delighted to be able to say that we now have over one million visitors to our website each year from all points of the globe, and that areas of our research at the university have fed into projects at other institutions and organisations.

→ All of the projects we undertake with artists' books are inspired by the conversations we have with other artists in the field. This can be from casual observations at artist's book fairs when someone wished for a journal in which they could publish non-traditional essays, to artists wondering if their work 'fits' into the field of book arts. Everything we do is from an intention of giving a voice to book artists so they can test their ideas, and begin a discussion with their peers. What I would like to talk about today is a selection of some of the research into artists' books that we undertake at our university, and some examples of current research being undertaken by other artists in this area.

→ Artists' Books Creative Production and Marketing

This small project, one of our first, was initially an AHRC supported survey that ran from 2004-2005. Since then the project's findings have been updated twice, with the latest version published in May 2010. There will be future updates on the project in the coming years.

→ It was inspired by the many artists who regularly contacted us to ask how they could price their editions and where could they sell them? As much of our time was being spent answering individual questions, we thought it would be a good idea to

scope the field and establish some basic rules, advice and information for artists that we could publish as a guide to help them market their work.

→ For book artists it is often difficult to assume the multiple roles of producer, publisher and distributor that are needed to create and sell their work. They are not often represented by galleries or dealers and have to do everything themselves, from working out prices, to marketing and interacting with potential purchasers at book fairs, and approaching collections. Our project discussed some of the practical issues arising from this.

→ When we began, we sifted through all of the questions we had been asked previously, and tailored a series of individual questionnaires that we could use for artists, librarians & collectors, educators, dealers and bookshops. These were used as a base to start our quantitative research, with more detailed questions posed via targeted interviews for the qualitative part of our study.

→ We handed out the questionnaires at book fairs, and posted to our mailing list, asking artists to tell us about their own making and marketing problems. We also launched our 'artist's book surgeries' at book fairs, inviting anyone who wanted to come and ask for advice about making or selling their books. These surgeries have carried on since the project and we often run them when we are visiting venues around the world.

→ We then selected a range of artists with 2 - 30+ years experience of making and marketing artists' books, zines, multiples and unique books to interviews for a series of 24 case studies exploring their experiences of making and marketing their books in Europe, Japan, Argentina, Australia and the USA. These were published as a resource for those wanting to find out more about producing and marketing artists' books. We asked them to share their working practice and experiences of book fairs, their interactions with purchasers for collections, and discuss any problems or offer advice, and we did the same ourselves.

→ We also asked private and institutional collectors to tell us about the ways in which they would prefer to be contacted by artists selling their books and any issues they had from their own collecting. Whilst travelling to book fairs, we interviewed some established figures for some in-depth accounts of selling, purchasing and collecting artists' books, and published responses from these, including for example; Max Schumann (Printed Matter) and Maria White (Tate Britain).

→ Our findings were published as a free download guide covering subjects including: How to price your work; how to prepare for artist's book fairs, and which ones to go to; understanding collection acquisition policies; how to approach institutional collections; what information to supply to collections for cataloguing your books; utilising the Internet; places to see, buy and sell artists' books. Our aim for the project was to give artists confidence in the making and selling of their work, and we hope that we have helped them in this through the publication of our guidebook.

→ **Paper Models: investigating laser-cutting technology to develop new artists' books and paper-based creative practice for arts, crafts and design**
This was Tom's AHRC funded research project into using laser-cutting technology as a creative tool for artists' books (2010-2011).

→ Before embarking on this project Tom had assumed that the laser cutter's strength lay in the fact that it could replace intensive hand cutting and scoring to assist in the

production of book and paper based artworks, but as it progressed he realised that it can offer much more to the artist and designer.

→ The approach to the research was that of practical investigation, Tom invited two artists to undertake a residency at our centre as case studies, and also used the laser cutter himself as an artist's case study.

→ The Danish artist Mette-Sofie D. Ambeck used her residency to recreate an earlier intensively hand cut and burnt book *Steam, Salt, Milk*,

→ and the British artist Su Blackwell used her time to create large-scale pieces for an installation at the Brontë Museum in the UK.

→ Their case studies with step-by-step process methodologies can be downloaded from our website. The project also included a one-day symposium and exhibition of artworks, workshops and practical demonstrations in the UK and The Netherlands.

→ All of the talks, along with cutting guides and links to artworks can also be downloaded from our website. Tom's project has fed directly into the development of new book works using the laser-cutter, particularly in the case of Mette-Sofie D. Ambeck who has since created three more editions of laser cut artists' books to date.

→ The project also showed how the laser cutter could be used to translate digital files such as video into physical output for artists' books.

→ **A Manifesto for the Book**

This university research project was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council from March 2008 - February 2010. It was a major project for us, in which we investigated and discussed issues concerning the context and future of the artist's book, in an attempt to extend and sustain critical debate of what actually constitutes an artist's book in the 21st Century. All of the outcomes from this project are available as free downloads on our website.

The project was an inclusive investigation that involved extensive dialogue with its intended audience of artists, writers, curators, educators and librarians. We discussed artists' books with an international audience and invited participation from anyone who was interested in contributing. Some components of the research project included:

→ Conversational topics and a diagram were posted online; asking respondents to make their own version of our ABTREE, a family tree of book arts, and discuss questions such as: "Do you have any proposals for what can and cannot be included in the description 'book'?" and, "Do we use the term Artists' Books or Artists' Publications?"

→ We also targeted individual artists, professionals, curators, academics and collectors in Brazil, Europe, Australia, Asia, and the USA for interviews to discuss their definitions of artists' books and their current practice.

→ 45 of our case studies and interviews from the project can be downloaded from our website along with our free publication 'A Manifesto for the Book' which contains an edited selection of the interviews and our proposals for the artist's book in the 21st Century.

→ For the project we also curated an exhibition 'New Wave' showing 133 examples of contemporary artists' books, the ABTREE diagrams and a reference reading room, to demonstrate some of the possibilities for contemporary book arts production

→ (these are also all archived online).

→ We also ran 'artist's book surgeries' at fairs and events to assist artists in the production and dissemination of their work, and to give them confidence in what they were presenting to the public arena.

→ Our findings were debated at a conference at our university in 2009, which introduced new publishing by artists and writers from Europe, the USA and Australia to delegates in order to explore and extend current understanding of artists' books. This included presentations from traditional printmaking to the book as performance, video, and the 'liberature' movement.

→ We also investigated how a contemporary book arts centre might work, and nominated the Minnesota Center for Book Arts (MCBA) as an exemplar. This small seed contributed in turn to the model for the first artists' books centre in the UK, established last year by the artist Simon Goode as the London Centre for Book Arts.

→ One of the key points of our research was to try and include all the book related activity that artists engage with. To include work that was being produced on, and exclusively for, digital technologies within the book arts field, and not leave it floundering uncomfortably on the edge, or subjected to a different terminology altogether - if the artist considered what they were producing to be a book, then we felt it should be included.

→ We also looked at the continued practice of traditional production processes for artists' books such as letterpress, etching, lithography, screenprint and woodcut, and interviewed a range of artists and publishers who work with these in the production of livres d'artistes, fine press books and design bindings.

→ Our project had no intention of solving any puzzles, or establishing any rules, in fact, it was just the opposite; we wanted to kick the international field into discussion and reflection on the books they make, how they describe them and what they might look like in the future. Our intention for the project's outcomes was that the manifesto would ask people to state their position and begin talking from there, which I think we managed to achieve. Some particular discussions and discoveries included:

→ Developing discussions towards an agreement on a more inclusive terminology: Artists' books, artists' publications or book arts?

Personally I dislike the term book arts even though I need to use it on a daily basis (and it is the address of our website!), and it was, eventually, the one term that worked for the purposes of our manifesto. After two years of discussions, predominantly with artists (and, artists are the people who should be defining the terminologies with which their works are discussed and defined), respondents circled through our questions of defining artists' books and book arts, and almost landed on 'artists' publishing' (my personal favourite as it refers to the more democratic nature of the book, and can include all those ephemeral multiples and e-books) until it was dashed by just one response on the forum from the artist Sara Bowen in Australia.

→ She didn't want to use the term "artist's publication" to describe her practice for two reasons: it made her small, hand printed editions of artists' books sound trivial, and it in no way described her unique bookworks. And then more voices confirming that they didn't "publish" one-off books.

“Artists’ books” is the term we are all probably most familiar with, and at ease with when describing the works that we make. But it also has the problem of being so brutally singular in definition, an artist + a book; it cut out all the other emerging platforms and associated works that could be embraced with “publishing”. And that leaves the term “book arts” which allows everything to be possible from traditional, finely printed books to e-publications. It is the term we ended up with to propose in our manifesto, and as I said, the one I like using the least because it implies only the ‘craft’ of the book and not the content (stay with me here, I will come back to this and quantify this statement!)

→ And then there are also the complications that come with the multiple permutations in translations into other languages, and how each of them these terms can be interpreted nationally. For example, for this project we spent an intense week in Poland, interviewing the writer and artist Radoslaw Nowakowski, Pawel and Jadwiga Tryzno, founders of the Book Art Museum in Łódź, Alicja Slowikowska in Warsaw, founder of the Book Art Festival programmes, and Tomasz Wilmanski and Joanna Adamczewska founder and artist at Galeria AT, in Poznan.

→ Apart from Alicja who concentrates on curating rather than making, not one of them would admit that they made artists’ books. We found this incredibly confusing as all the examples of the books they were showing us were artists’ books as far as we could see. We kept saying to them that these were artists’ books in our eyes but Tomasz Wilmanski in particular was quite adamant that they were not, and seemed to be more and more offended each time that we suggested that they were.

→ After a much longer conversation with him the reason became clear. In Poland, Alicja Slowikowska curates a huge programme of artists’ books exhibitions, so much so that these are the main events at which the art gallery-going public form their opinions of the subject.

→ Many of the books in these exhibitions are – and this is where I return to my dislike of the term ‘book art’ – very sculptural, one-off books, altered books and book objects. Rarely are they the kind of books I would describe as artists’ publications. So, in Poland, the term ‘artist’s book’ instantly implies a huge, sculptural object, which is the absolute opposite of the performance-based, multiples and artists’ books that the artists we had met with were making and exhibiting.

→ Wilmanski has curated exhibitions of artists’ books since 1982, and in 1990 started a series called ‘Book and What Next’, containing artists’ books, concrete, experimental and visual poetry by national and international artists.

→ Joanna Adamczewska is a multi-media artist who is concerned with how music, sound and vision can come together within the artist’s book.

→ Since the late 1970’s Adamczewska has been working on ‘Acoustic Books’, a series of unique books produced to create different sounds as they are opened and performed in front of an audience.

→ Although Wilmanski appreciated the work that Slowikowska has done with books, he was not interested in being classified under that area of books.

→ But he has since curated some of his ‘Book and What Next’ programme of exhibitions to include sculptural book objects by some Polish artists.

- ➔ To complicate things further, Radoslaw Nowakowski describes his works as author's books and
- ➔ Katarzyna Baraznik and Zenon Fajfer of the Liberature movement only agreed to come and speak at our conference if we promised to clearly state on all conference material that they definitely did not produce artists' books.
- ➔ For Nowakowski, who we interviewed over many wonderful hours for our project, hypertext is a way of working he says he had dreamt of in the 1970s, but which didn't exist as an accessible means for him to work with.
- ➔ Over the last 40 years he has moved from smuggling paper into his native Poland, up to the late 80s, to using the Internet and digital design to publish books that he writes, designs, illustrates and assembles himself. Hypertext has allowed him to design and publish visual works for free viewing by anyone with access to the Internet.
- ➔ His work *EMERYK* cannot be printed out on paper, which is really important to him; it has to be engaged with on-screen, exactly in the manner that he wants. For *EMERYK*, he explains: "I used only three font designs, but used them in a range of sizes and colours to convey meaning. Whilst you are reading and clicking, you might think you are ahead of the story, but if you click in the wrong place you might go back to the very beginning.
- ➔ That is the beauty of using hypertext, it involves an element of chance; it may happen that you will never find some parts of the story, and every person's reading will be different to another's."
- ➔ Nowakowski is still unsure of whether a hypertext book can actually be 'a book'; he prefers to call it hypertext reading. "Because hypertext reading looks really like walking through an unknown city, or shopping in a huge mall, or like digging through a library, bookshop or second-hand bookstore. Yes, that's it – reading.
- ➔ Which means that although the 'bookness' of hypertext is really doubtful, its 'literatureness' is really doubtless. A text, either hyper or hypo, must be read. And if, due to any reason, the author of a hypertext story told this story with pictures only, eliminating the text entirely, then it would be much more convenient to call it a hyperfilm.
- ➔ This might indicate that the physicality of a hypertext story is closer to the physicality of a film than the one of a book... Maybe the artisticness of a hypertext should be measured with the level of its filmness?"
- ➔ In another example of terminology, when we attended the International Book Arts Fair in Seoul, which is organised as part of a commercial international book fair we were incredibly surprised to see what constituted an artist's book in South Korea. In many parts of Asia, 'artists' books' is an all-encompassing term, so any form of book from a beautifully bound blank sketchbook to a designer binding is discussed and exhibited as an artist's book. This entailed many strange conversations with other exhibitors and visitors about the lack of quality in our European and American examples of artists' books on our stand (content driven but cheaply produced) and the lack of content (beautifully presented empty books) in the regional examples on display, which was not perceived as any issue at all.

→ Some of these discussions in Poland and South Korea can be read in the case studies and interviews presented online on our project's homepage, for example, our interview with the Korean artist Antic Ham who explained: "Many people are still making blank books and fine bindings and calling themselves book artists. It is just because they don't know the definition of artists' books (many people don't even know the words). This is also because under the term 'book art' in Korea, people include artists' books, paper crafts, fine binding, book workshops for children, portfolios etc. There are no clear distinctions between any kinds of book works, even though all bookworks are slightly or totally different. It needs to be better defined in Korea." After these interviews, we really did know that terminology does definitely get lost in translation and that these things do need to be discussed from an international perspective with consideration for the variations of language as well as perception.

→ Post project developments:

In September 2010 the South African artist and academic David Paton took another step forward from our project with his research paper "The Book as a community of practice: Some thoughts on the research project A Manifesto for the Book, What will be the Canon for the Artist's Book in the 21st Century?" He presented this at a conference: *On Making. Integrating Approaches to Practice Led Research in Art and Design* at VIAD (the Research Centre for Visual Identities in Art and Design, University of Johannesburg). You can download his paper free on his extensive research site on South African artists' books.

→ In his paper, he stated that: "Perhaps the most conspicuous characteristic of international artists' books as a discourse and field of practice is its lack of definition. In fact, scholars, artists and publishers alike have gone out of their way to avoid defining the field. So the thorny question of 'what exactly is an artist's book' continues to take centre stage for the participants who work within the field.

→ Due to this lack of definition and indeed as a direct result of this avoidance, the field abounds with examples of work that challenge every aspect of the convention of the book as a codex form. Performance, sculpture and, of course, digital and screen-based forms of the book such as the Kindle and iBook application proliferate and, due to scholars', artists' and publishers' avoidance of defined characteristics, make bold claims to 'bookness' by slipping conveniently between modes of artistic practice, undefined fields and lack of categorical boundaries."

→ In his paper, he selected aspects of our research project as a means of contextualising the consequence of 'lack of definition' within the field of artist's book producers. "The focus, however, is placed upon the Artist's Book Tree (ABTREE) – an interactive classification diagram of the field of artist's book production and publishing which attempts to establish a basic starting point for the debate and which is designed to encourage additions, alterations, reconfigurations and new linkages to any other aspect of production or publication.

→ In this way, practitioners in the field of artist's book production can lead, guide and redirect attention to any element within the field which seems absent, incorrectly positioned or in need of linkages to any other aspect of production or publication." We were really pleased and honoured that David had done this, and that he had spurred on the conversation with a new audience, which is what we had always wished for the project to be, a beginning of conversations rather than a fixed ending.

→ Our project ended in March 2010, one month before the iPad was introduced to the consumer market, which was of course one of many new platforms to experience bookworks on that emerged after we had published our Manifesto. Amazon's Kindle and other e-reader platforms were still expensive, emerging technology during the lifespan of our project, and having witnessed the introduction of new e-readers at the Frankfurt Book fair in 2009, we weren't that impressed by their look or capabilities at that time. More interesting works were being created using hypertext like Nowakowski's works for example, than on e-readers. But, as time went on, the combination of developing technologies and the Internet as a publishing tool has resulted in some interesting projects and experiments by artists interacting with books. Some of these include projects by Nicolas Frespech, Sebastian Schmieg and Silvio Lorusso.

→ The French artist Nicolas Frespech has an ongoing investigative project producing book works that explore and reflect on digital publishing by artists. His work can be experienced freely through devices such as Calibre, and downloaded from his website 'LirEPUB', which is a platform for the free dissemination of artists' books created in native epub format, DRM free and available to view on tablets or mobile phones.

→ LirEPUB is a means of documenting and sharing Frespech's research and collaborations with other artists, and publishing others' works online. A selection of examples of digital bookworks by artists that can be downloaded from his website includes: *Mes fautes - My Faults*, Nicolas Frespech (2012) "Parce que dans la vie on fait tous des erreurs!";

→ and *Prendre du recul / Stand Back*, Florent Lagrange (2012), which plays with the perception of depth on a tablet screen,

→ and more recent experimental works such as *Pharrell Williams* (2013), a new venture in artists' books that Frespech is investigating. This free download book has external hypertext and links to the Internet, so Frespech must trust the reader to stay with the book in their travels within and without as it offers multiple navigations.

→ Frespech is a fascinating person to work with in his championing of democratic publishing by artists in the digital age. He was invited to present some of his work at one of three workshops at Tate Britain last year as part of the "Transforming Artists' Books" project, a research network exploring digital transformations in the creation and reception of artists' books. He and I presented our ideas of 'digital', and I talked about some of the artists' books that had been discussed in our project.

→ To create an ePub, Frespech advises that you "download Sigil, a multiplatform free, open source editing software; insert images, text, metadata etc... and it's ready. Test it on your iPhone, tablet or on your Mac or PC using the free download book viewer Calibre, and it is ready to share." The latest version of InDesign also allows you to export your publication in ePub format, and if you have an iPad with the Book Creator app, you can easily make a book and send it to contacts or make it available on your website.

→ Frespech's advice is from a recent essay 'Invent the digital artist's book!' he wrote for our journal *The Blue Notebook*. His article is published under a free licence, so if you would like a copy, please email me and I will send it to you.

→ I have also had fun helping him with translations for his visual mind map *Un livre d'artiste augmenté?*, which posits ideas of how digital artists' books could or should

perform,

→ and what our experiences of them might be today and in the future.

→ He is also generous in his sharing of new discoveries, regularly disseminating links to other artists' works through his own website and Twitter.

→ Other areas of new research in the field of traditional and digital artists' books include: Silvio Lorusso, a PhD Candidate in Design Sciences at IUAV University of Venice, is currently investigating the intersections between publishing and digital technology from the perspective of art and design. Sebastian Schmieg is an artist based in Berlin who has exhibited widely in Europe and the USA, and between them they have collaborated on two Kindle-based bookworks in the last two years.

→ *56 Broken Kindle Screens* (2012), a Ruscha-esque titled edition, is a book of page after page of images created from photographs posted on the Internet of broken e-reader screens. They explain that: "The book takes as its starting point the peculiar aesthetic of broken E-ink displays and serves as an examination into the reading device's materiality. As the screens break, they become collages composed of different pages, cover illustrations and interface elements." The images are actually quite beautiful.

→ For those who would like to, you can purchase a physical print-on-demand book, or download a Kindle version from Schmieg's website (although if you download and view the Kindle version and your screen breaks whilst viewing, perhaps you would be creating another version of the book?).

→ The most recent collaboration between the artists is *Networked Optimization*, a series of three bookworks by Silvio Lorusso, Sebastian Schmieg and Amazon Kindle Users, (2013).

→ *Networked Optimization* is a series of three crowdsourced versions of popular self-help books: *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*; *The 5 Love Languages: The Secret to Love That Lasts*, and *How to Win Friends and Influence People*.

→ Each book contains the full text, which is however invisible because it is set in white on a white background. The only text that remains readable consists of the so-called "popular highlights" – the passages that were underlined by many Kindle users – together with the amount of highlighters. Each time a passage is underlined, it is automatically stored in Amazon's data centres.

→ As they note: "Among the books with the most popular highlights, there is a striking number of self-help books. This points to a multi-layered, algorithmic optimization: from readers and authors to Amazon itself. Harvesting its customers micro-labour, the act of reading becomes a data-mining process."

→ Another project I have been watching with interest is the American artist Paul Soulellis's Library of the Printed Web, founded earlier this year. This brilliant resource is an online showcase of artists' books that utilise the Internet to provide the source material for the content of their books.

➔ Using “screen capture, image grab, site scrape and search query” from an online platform and converting it into physical printed matter “around the casual concept of “search, compile and publish.”

As Soullelis states: Artists featured in LotPW drive through vast landscapes of data to collect and transform digital information, visual and otherwise, into analogue experience; every work in the collection is a printed expression of search engine pattern discovery. Many of the works in LotPW share common production and publishing techniques (e.g., print-on-demand), even as the content itself varies widely. Rather than draw boundaries or define a new aesthetic, the LotPW is presented as a reference tool for studying shifting relationships between the web (as culture), the artist (as archivist) and print publishing (as a new/old self-serve schema for expressing the archive).”

➔ The website currently has examples of books by more than 40 international artists, including: the American artist Heidi Neilson’s *Details from the Least Popular* (2013) an affectionate ode to indifference. The book is series of images gathered by the artist of the duller detail areas taken from the 100 least popular images in the Hubble Space Telescope image gallery, presented in order of unpopularity.

➔ Another example is of Fraser Clark’s *Mona Lisa* (2012), a flipbook containing 240 versions of Leonardo da Vinci’s ‘Mona Lisa’ found online. According to the original file name, the images are sorted into alphabetical order and combine to form an archetypal hybrid of the Mona Lisa along the fore-edge.

➔ Paul Soullelis’s own books include *Apparition of a distance, however near it may be* (2013) a collection of found images portraying Google Books employees physically interacting with books inside the digital space of the book scanner, gathered into a 42-page print-on-demand publication. As accidental recordings, the images mistakenly add human physicality, movement and distortion to the experience of consuming the static book in a browser window.

➔ These anomalies are usually corrected or removed by bots, but sometimes the errors remain, becoming spectral additions to the Google Books library and permanently altering the viewer’s perception of the content. As a printed book work, *Apparition of a distance, however near it may be* proposes value in the extended translation of print to digital, and then back to print: a wider view of the book as an object that exists simultaneously in digital and physical realities.

➔ **The Book as a tool for Performative and Collaborative Investigation**

In Australia, there is a healthy amount of research activity within the field of artists’ books, particularly in PhD scholarship programmes at universities including Griffith (Brisbane) and Monash (Melbourne).

Tim Mosely of Silverwattle Press has almost completed his doctoral research at Queensland College of Art (part of Griffith University), where he has been investigating touch, the haptic and Deleuze and Guattari’s theories of smooth and striated space in relation to artists’ books.

➔ As he states: With an identity formed within the confluence of three disparate cultures, this practice holds together in tension insoluble parts from each.

Papermaking, printmaking, bookbinding and collaborative practice complement these concerns. Artists' books in particular offer a way to combine conceptual and material content that invites our touch. Adjacent to making books, my writing specifically seeks to contribute to the emerging critical discourse on artists' books.

➔ At the Impact 8 Multidisciplinary printmaking Conference in Scotland this September, Mosely presented his paper "A Definitive Haptic Practice and a methodological model for an artists book practice." The following is from his presentation:

In 1999 Jacques Derrida observed that, "there is no reception or evaluation of a work of art through touching. ... It is a strange situation: ... the reception and the experience (of artworks) are never haptic as such."

The Haptic refers to intimate, immediate and close experience; touch being a primary means of haptic perception. The general absence of touch within the reception of artworks stands in contrast to the necessity of touch to read books.

For those of us who read artists' books and who support the development of artists' books into a critical field Derrida's observation raises a question.

Is it reasonable to consider that we could evaluate and then attribute meaning to an artist's book, that is 'make sense' of it, through haptic perception?

If there was a medium well placed to investigate Derrida's "strange situation" the book would be it. This engagement with the haptic is part of a long discourse, one that Deleuze and Guattari draw from for their 'smooth space'.

Smooth space is realised through haptic perception and provides a framework within which haptic reception and evaluation can be investigated.

An example of smooth space can be found in David Lewis's book *We, the Navigators*. Lewis documents a navigation technique that emerged within the Polynesians who settled the Pacific Ocean.

It relies on the haptic perception of signs in the ocean generated by islands beyond the horizon. Once the signs are perceived they are used to literally feel the way to unseen/unknown islands. When all other Polynesian navigation methods fail this technique can be relied on to navigate the Pacific Ocean."

➔ Tim has been making practical works that demonstrate his theories of haptic navigation through artists' books. These will be launched next year but he brought some examples to the conference for the audience to explore. Each of the books in the series is presented to the viewer for them to engage with through touch, narratives are formed within the pages through the viewer's very personal interaction with the book, in ripping open sections and tearing elements away from the multi-layered pages to reveal visual clues and to respond to the touch of the papers' textures.

➔ With these books, Mosely is asking the viewer to navigate through the pages using their own instinctive senses, to acquire the skills of the Polynesian navigators, and begin to learn how to read our own horizons through experiencing artists' books through our own sensory perception of touch as well as sight. It was quite an experience watching people nervously approach the pages, not wanting to tear the paper as if it might be seen as disrespectful to the artwork. Tim had to encourage

each viewer, including myself, that it was actually all right to rip apart any piece of the interior, and to feel our way through the pages.

➔ I was lucky enough to work with Tim on one of his collaborative artist's book events in 2011, after attending the Impact 7 Printmaking conference in Melbourne, Australia. Tim invited us to join him at Queensland School of Art in Brisbane for the eighth iteration of his Codex Event.

➔ *Codex Event 8* was an Australian and British collaboration of pulp-printing, installation and artists' books with myself, Paul Laidler, Tim Mosely, Monica Oppen and Tom Sowden. The project was a small part of Tim's practical research based on Deleuze and Guattari's exploration of smooth and striated space in their publication *A Thousand Plateaus*. *Codex 8* in particular, focused on interpreting these ideas through the notion of the urban jungle. The striated was the instructional signs we assimilate and obey each day in any city.

➔ The smooth was the removal of control; thinking of space in the way that the Inuit navigate through an even, unbroken white horizon of snow, or nomads through the desert's vast landscape. The group collated found texts from city signs that described control in the striation of the city landscape, for example: "No entry, go back, authorised personnel only, no turning, use other door, keep left, stay right, warning, this area has electronic and video surveillance at all times, keep out, authorised parking only, beware of opening door, for your safety you are being monitored by CCTV, do not obstruct, do not enter room, do not cross, walk, don't walk, no cars, no cycling, no drinking, no skateboarding, assemble here, no eating, stop, obey signs, no posters, no stopping", etc.

➔ These instructional texts were pulp-printed through alphabet stencils for an installation at the POP Gallery, Brisbane, which, at the opening event were scraped off the wall by visitors, and re-pulped to create sheets of black and white papers. These were then distributed within the group to be used in the production of a series of five unique books for the project subsequently exhibited in the UK and Australia. The exhibition was accompanied by a quote on non-space by Marc Augé: "Words and images in transit through non-places can take root in the still-diverse-places where people still try to construct part of their daily life".

➔ Tim's idea of using Deleuze and Guattari's theories as a starting point worked well for this collaboration. Their argument for the nomad's affinity with, and reading of the natural environment offers a theoretical framework that allows him to acknowledge this way of seeing and working when he is creating artists' books.

When he thinks of the Inuit in particular, and their approach to reading their surroundings in the landscape, it is as a skill that is acquired over time through an intimate understanding of negotiating through a given space.

➔ It is this understanding of smooth theory that he is using in relation to the description of art practice, particularly for artists' books. And for Tim, a successful collaborative endeavour for the Codex Events is also framed within smooth theory.

➔ Each group undertaking of the creative process of papermaking straddles both smooth and striated through manipulation of fibres and shapes, and nothing is shaped solely by an individual, the artwork is always negotiated as a collective.

Our future research plans

→ Through some of the collaborative projects we have undertaken with other artists, writers and researchers, Tom and I have become very interested in conducting future research into the book as a performative tool, and we are currently writing a funding application to propose an investigation into this subject. Our interest has grown from collaborative projects where we have invited others to work with us in the production of artists' books, each of which has included an element of participation.

Our inspiration in Bristol has come from many areas, Tim Mosely's Codex Events, our work with Arnolfini Bristol on our biennial Bristol Artist's Book Event, Tom's work with the Performance Re-enactment Society and our annual World Book Night events. They have all been undertaken as unfunded side projects from our positions as artists rather than researchers but have fed into where we are now, in order to think about our future research plans:

→ **Cover-Ed and Salad Dressing at Arnolfini, Bristol (2011)**

This was a collaborative project involving the Performance Re-enactment Society Tom Sowden & Michalis Pichler, and Arnolfini Archive.

→ Inspired by Ed Ruscha and Mason Williams' photo bookwork *Crackers* (1969) a purpose built hotel room set was installed at Arnolfini for a photo shoot to create a new version of the book over two months. The installation also included an exhibition of artists' books produced in tribute to Ed Ruscha from the collection of Tom Sowden and Michalis Pichler's *Follow-ed (After Hokusai)* exhibition.

These were shown alongside original copies of Ruscha's books held in Arnolfini's archive, and Jonathan Monk's collection of original copies of Ed Ruscha and Mason Williams' *Crackers*.

→ The resulting artist's book *Salad Dressing*, published by Arnolfini, was made by the Performance Re-enactment Society and Tom Sowden from their photo-shoot in tribute to Ed Ruscha and Mason Williams' book *Crackers*.

→ This involved a new story line developed by the artists, and an alternative ending filmed live at Arnolfini with public participation in 2011.

→ **Book Art Object**

In 2010 I made the artist's book *An Exercise for Kurt Johannessen*, which somehow led to my being the very delighted and honoured recipient of 100 artists' books based on that book three years later.

→ This wonderful turn of events began in 2002, when Tanya Peixoto introduced me to Kurt Johannessen's work at bookartbookshop in London. I was instantly hooked and have followed his work ever since, buying new books for my collection as soon as they come out.

→ Johannessen is a Norwegian artist whose books are based on elements of his performances. My absolute favourite is his little pocket book *Exercises* (2001) - a small book of performative texts such as 'Kiss the wind' or 'Follow a snail for a day'. The book has been reprinted in several editions since 2001, and a new related book → *Other Other Exercises* was released in December 2012. These instructional books ask the reader to perform various exercises, which Johannessen says most people never try.

→ One of those exercises is 'Write 100 stories and bury them in the forest', which I decided I really wanted to do. I wrote to Kurt Johannessen explaining my intentions and he gave his permission for me to do this. So I did.

→ As I was going to Denmark for the Doverodde Book Art Festival in May 2010, it seemed the perfect opportunity to write my 100 short stories in an exercise book beforehand, and bury the book in the beautiful forest surrounding the Limfjordscentret in Doverodde where the festival is held each year.

→ This was duly done, with the book being buried in a secret woodland location by two volunteers so I wasn't tempted to revisit and dig it up again. From the writing of the stories to the journey of the book to its burial I made a documentary style artist's book, sending one copy to Kurt Johannessen, and released it as an unlimited edition, free download, print and assemble yourself book.

→ After this I thought nothing more of it, until I talked about Johannessen's books at the Impact Printmaking conference at Monash University, in Melbourne and mentioned my obsession with his work, and doing the exercise of the 100 stories I had written and buried. Sara Bowen, founder of the Book Art Object international artists' books collective was in the audience, and to my delight, she asked me if Book Art Object could use the 100 titles of my stories to interpret into 100 artists' books for their Edition 4.

→ Book Art Object has evolved from a close-knit group of 8, to more than 50 international artists over their four editions. Edition Three (2011) took as its starting point *Art and Lies* by Jeanette Winterson, Edition Two (2011) used the poem *Paper Wrestling* by New Zealand poet Claire Beynon, and the first edition (2010) was in response to the poem *Learning Absence* by Rosemary Dobson.

→ Artists were invited to sign up, and were each allocated a title; some signed up for more than one, with all 100 titles allocated by 2012. Artists were then divided into groups, each making an edition of books large enough to send one to other artists in their group, a set for the Book Art Object archives and a set for myself as the lucky recipient of all 100!

→ I would never have dreamed when making my book tribute to Kurt Johannessen, that it could spiral into 100 other books being made, and that I would be lucky enough to be given a copy of each of them. I now have a copy of each of the books in my collection and have exhibited them twice already.

→ I thought that as the artists had been kind enough to give me a copy of their books, I should also make something for them. As the project coincided with the 10th anniversary of bookartbookshop in February 2012, and the celebrations were based on making books on the theme of 10, I asked Kurt Johannessen if I could select a further 10 exercises from his artist's book to carry out.

→ I then published '10 Exercises for Kurt Johannessen' as an image-based, free download, self-assembly book of exercises that can only be identified through reading the texts in Kurt's original. I printed out 100 of these and sent one to each of the Book Art Object contributors as a small thank you. I realised in this whole turn of events that no-one should ever underestimate the power of a book!

→ **World Book Night events**

Dinner and a Rose was a one-off, collaborative artist's book project that has evolved into an annual artist's book and video event. In 2010 I was commissioned by the University of Dundee's to create an artist's book for their AHRC funded project: *Poetry Beyond Text: Vision, Text and Cognition*, investigating how readers respond to visual aspects of poetry. I was allowed to choose who I would like to work with so I asked the poet and artist Nancy Campbell to be my collaborator on the project.

→ We decided to make an artist's book in homage to the novel *The Talented Mr Ripley* by Patricia Highsmith. In the book, Highsmith charts her murderous hero Tom Ripley's greed for the good life using culinary themes. Ripley's character is defined by what he chooses to eat and drink, from devil-may-care martinis in Mongibello to penitential hot milk in Rome. We decided to focus on Highsmith's menus in the commissioned work. Inspired by Poetry Beyond Text's interest in experiment, we recreated Ripley's meals in a live performance.

→ In order to provide material for the book, I decided to cook dinner for twelve guests, with a thirteenth place set for the absent Tom Ripley. Every food mentioned by Highsmith was served, from cold chicken in aspic to sole veronique, and every drink mixed. The dinner lasted over twelve hours.

→ All the night's conversations were recorded and Nancy used the transcriptions as collage material, to write a series of 18 poems. I photographed Ripley's setting for each course, and for the book, images and poems partner each other.

→ We also used the photographs to produce a very basic video documenting the preparation, the event, and the clear up. This idea has since led to more adventurous attempts in video each year.

→ We enjoyed ourselves so much in the making of this book that we decided we would carry on our 'novel dinner' as an annual event where we would produce an artist's book and a video for each outing. From initially inviting 12 guests to dinner, our most recent version of the project this year invited contributions from anywhere in the world. The events have also involved an ever-growing list of contributors from artists, cooks, librarians, musicians, obscure food and drink finders, photographers, poets, postcard writers, printers, prop lenders, sound editors, students, typists, walkers, whistlers and writers, to a web editor who is happy to upload movies at two o'clock in the morning!

→ In 2011 we worked with *The Gum Thief* by Douglas Coupland, inviting guests for a deliberately inhospitable Chinese takeaway meal eaten off of paper plates, in keeping with the novel's characters.

→ Our video entailed recording the event from the initial visit to Staples to buy materials for the book, to the evening itself, and this time was accompanied by a specially written Dubstep style soundtrack.

→ Our book *TOAST: A Night on Weevil Lake* gathered images and texts written for the project by 17 artists from Europe and the USA, published by print on demand.

→ In 2012 we headed off to Oxford for the night to produce *The Secrets of Metahemeralism* in tribute to Donna Tartt's novel *The Secret History*. This resulted in an artist's book, letterpress print and video for World Book Night.

→ On the evening, whilst working our way through all of the food and drink mentioned in the novel, everyone in the group used a manual typewriter each, to write a collaborative essay in the style of Bunny Corcoran.

→ This was incorporated into the artist's book, along with photocopies of postcards, notes, and scraps of paper sent in for the project. The video moves from the initial walk in the words and of the book in production over the evening in Oxford with a soundtrack of music made from typewriters and a whistled version of the song *A Hunting We Will Go*.

→ This year's event was more ambitious in that we put out a call for contributions, asking people to send in their work for the book and video. Having been told by our web editor to up the game from our amateur looking videos, he told us to film live rather than compile from still images so we undertook the challenge with our limited capabilities and decide to make a low-fi video, filming the action with musicians playing live.

(This may all sound very glamorous but the reality of the events hosted in Bristol is that they all take place in my very small house and are put together with no budget or specialist expertise, just a willingness to make the work!).

This year's World Book Night fell on Tuesday 23rd April 2013, which was just two days after our Bristol Artist's Book Event (BABE) at Arnolfini with over 100 exhibiting artists and 7000 visitors, so we planned on keeping it simple.

→ Our tribute this year was to Raymond Carver's collection of stories *Cathedral* (1983), some of which were used as the basis for Robert Altman's film *Short Cuts* (1993). In particular we chose the story *A Small, Good Thing* as the starting point for this year's collaboration.

→ An open call on our website and in the Book Arts Newsletter invited people to do a small, good thing, write it out and send it to us by midnight on 22nd April.

→ On World Book Night we made our video in a very homemade style inspired by the original film clip for Bob Dylan's *Subterranean Homesick Blues*, with an original soundtrack played live by Simon Butler and Simon Smith. The book 'Some Small, Good Things' was made as a free download DIY print and assemble zine, and was uploaded at 2am that night along with the video.

→ **So where does that leave us now?**

Tom and I are currently working towards submitting our application to bring a research element into these side projects that have inspired us to make books as artists ourselves and with others. In an ideal world we would use the project to commission and investigate works by artists such as Kurt Johannessen, Book Art Object, Tim Mosely, Paul Soullelis, Nicolas Frespech, Sebastian Schmiege & Silvio Lorusso, and others.

→ We would also like to look at how the artist's book can be used to create collaborative work. This would involve utilising the Internet as an interactive tool, to

invite participation and live collaboration with other artists around the world. We would like to look at the book from the perspective of an instructional manual that might lead to many actions being carried out simultaneously.

We are also thinking ahead to next year's World Book Night and what we might do to take it one step further. I have no idea yet of where these ideas might take us, but our plans will involve conversations with, and contributions from many other artists around the world. What I do know though, is that I really hope that some of those conversations we will be having - will be with you.

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