

BECOMING WHAT THE BOOK MAKES POSSIBLE:
ASPECTS OF METAPHORISATION OF IDENTITY
AND PRACTICE THROUGH ARTISTS' BOOKS

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Aspects of Metaphorisation of Identity and Practice through Artists' Books*

Abstract

A practice-centred view of artists' books, coupled with a descriptive vocabulary/structure from formal criticism helps us to engage with some of the most insoluble problems of artists' books criticism. Our history does not necessarily point towards a centring definition or identity for artists' books, but towards a practice that always engages with other forms and identities. This engagement, rather than a solid identity from which to speak offers a way out of the artists' books 'ghetto'. This is already prevalent in practice, but requires additional narration and reflection to become part of our critical apparatus.

Thus, a dialogue of formal and practice-centred critical engagement with artists' books is proposed. But this is prey to deconstructive reverses in the interpenetration and co-dependency of its valent terms. Similarly, I present dichotomies of strategic and tactical forms of practice. The tensions held thus in play I evoke as metaphorical, and a hermeneutics of 'metaphorical practice' narrates the artist's relationship to these terms. Metaphor is employed as a means to model the creative tension of terms thus held in proximity .

Thirteen interviews are used to examine uses of metaphor as a way of artists pursuing practice in books, including 'the book-as-space/time', 'the analogue self enacted through books, the 'promise of reading, etc. These are shown to exhibit a metaphorical consistency of practice that opens up some of the tensions a more formalist view of artists' books indicates, but *cannot explain*. The research makes explicit certain tacit practices of artists' books' practice, in doing so offering a model for its interpretation through the extended significance of metaphor in artistic practice. This is offered in the hopes of suggesting new approaches to some of the tensions proving insoluble to the critical functions of the field as it stood at the time of research.

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Appendix A: Edited transcripts from interviews with book artists.

Thirteen separate interviews were conducted and are partially transcribed below.

Where necessary, participants (including myself) are identified by their initials. Where a time index is given *without* initials, the participant alone is speaking. I have occasionally condensed long lead-in passages, provided short contextual notes or filled in obvious grammatical lacunae in the participant's response. These are enclosed in square brackets, [thus].

Artist/ Imprints appear below in alphabetical order. Where more than one audio recording was made, they appear in sequence under the heading of the artist/imprint concerned, with individual time indices. Headings for individual recordings correspond to those cited in the thesis text, and to the filenames of the recordings concerned.

Note that these are edited excerpts from the recordings themselves, which are given in full on the accompanying CD-Rom. (I.e. Appendix B), affixed to the inside back cover of this volume.

The inclusion of these appendices is for the convenience of the reader as ancillary material. They are not intended as part of the thesis and their inclusion should not be inferred as such.

John Bently

Interviewed Monday, 23rd June, 2008.

John Bently 1

3.45

I spend quite a bit of time in there just sort of [looking] through structures and thinking “that would work.”

5.10

AE- ... The way that you’ve got the text and the images working together is something that you really do work on quite a lot...

JB- That’s probably why I make books... I wanted to be a writer. Before I went to art school...

7.50

...I still wanted to be a poet and... at art school I was struggling all the time to keep the text integrated with the imagery, so I started making work which was visual that... included words...

8.22

The book thing... in a way is... living two different lives... you’ve got like literary/visual and it was given to me at school, and also on foundation...

that these things were separate, but... I tried to find ways to disprove that, that's all really.

9.42

I had this idea that I would make a book, and I'd made fanzines before that...

10.03

AE- ...It sounds a little bit like those two worlds coming together... [so that there are] other ways to be creative that you can bring together with books.

JB- I think so... If I was writing this now, I'd exaggerate and say it was a great epiphany... But I suppose it was much more gradual, really.

13.39

...in that period, sort of late '70s, what people were doing with fanzines was... really innovative... I really got into that and had that in my mind.

13.47

AE- Why do you think people started making these things? Was it just because the technologies for reproduction were there?

JB- Yeah – suddenly. Photocopier, not Gestetner, but proper photocopier.

19.09

AE- ... books can sometimes take on their own...unique character, they feel quite separate from you. It can be quite deceiving that way, because you think 'Oh, I just don't understand it yet'

JB- But that's absolutely true. The same point being that 5 or 6 years down the line you realize that "you made a mistake there".

22.13

[*Yellow Moon In Brockwell Park*] ...you can go to a bookfair and no one will pick it up, and I still think that it's one of the best things I've ever made...

22.47

People find this very uncomfortable, they've said to me "there's something vaguely racist about it"... hang on a minute- just fucking read it! ... When I perform it, it's read from the point of view of [a racist character]... So you become that character. People feel uncomfortable.

24.56

AE- ...I think [books] allow you to take on different characters...

JB- I agree with you there, absolutely... I think so. I think I become different people in the books. I think that's... observant of you.

...

AE-... it's something that became possible through books for me...

JB- Well I think it's possibly the best way of doing it...

A great inspiration is the [Chatterton] story which takes place in Bristol... the recreation of these perfect medieval poems which fooled the entire antiquarian establishment...

27.38

[Chatterton's poems] are *real*, they're just beautiful, they're just extraordinary things... There's a great literary tradition of... adopting personas... authors do it all the time... And that's through books. That's only achievable through books.

29.16

It's very difficult to say what you are. I still have enormous difficulty with that... I don't want to say that I'm a poet... and I don't particularly like performance art... so I would never like to be considered in that bag... I think that my whole life has been a struggle to kind of integrate all these things into the one thing, and in a way that's what books are.

29.40

...twenty years ago I started trying to say that I was "an artist of the book, I'm a book artist, that is what I'm doing"... I don't find that comfortable now... I wouldn't say that now... because it sounds like a bit of a ghetto. It's like "I'm a textile artist"... so I find it very difficult... when people say to me "what do you do?" I would generally say "I'm an artist"... rather than a poet or writer... I would say I'm a visual artist.

32.04

There's always a starting point, but I don't write without thinking "How does this become visual? How does this become music?" All those things are absolutely integrated. I quite often don't know where it starts. It starts with a sort of silly idea usually, and bits of dialogue or something will start and an image will kind of be generated, and a persona will... possibly grow out of it, and the book structure will get involved.

32.40

...I teach graphics... it's entirely to do with ideas and how you communicate them - ...probably more so than any other subject, there isn't really any kind of medium. You're not teaching medium: you're teaching ideas; how an idea is communicated and how you select text, image, media... to do it...

44.03

AE- [in reference to the book-drops that occur in the Tate Modern book shop]... I don't know how anybody gets paid in the end, apart from the Tate.

JB- But you don't care- that goes back to the other thing about books, about books being distributed... if it's out there, I'm not that bothered about getting money for it.

AE-...it's always a bit of a gift when you sell a book, because one seldom makes money on them.

JB- ...Even if you sell quite a lot... I've got one I've sold over 1000 copies of, over the ten years... it comes in at £5. When I pay the cheque in, my bank charges me 70p... I don't think that there is a way of earning.

50.00

Distribution was the big bugbear for small publishers... we discovered that there's no point going round all the bookshops in England and trying to get your books into them... If you're selling...a few hundred copies of a book, you need one good shop; you don't need 100 shops...

John Bently 2

6.49

[re. 'no more heroes'] ...I said "how much is it?" and he said "No, it's free- it's got to be free- 'zines have got to be free" He was passionate about that, it's *got* to be free.

[I asked]"How many copies do you make?",

"I make 5000" copies"

...[that's] a lot of money. You should ask *him* why he does it... I don't think he even knows why. He just loves the music and he wants to have an influence...

8.30

I make them and I know that I like them and I know that I would like to have them and to read them, and I think that they take... quite a few looks. I think that you need to spend a bit of time. And I expect people to do that.

9.41

They're not good in that respect, for me... it is the instant hit, and I think that's a problem with that fair [LAB] in particular...I think there's a lot more books which are about... kind of... instant hit...

10.58

...when I pick up a book... I don't expect it to be finished in a few minutes... I expect it to take a long time... that's what I expect, and I expect people to kind of... plod their way through it.

11.33

I did this book... and I made it so that the text... got bigger in the book until it became illegible... there are various points in the book where it becomes totally illegible, unless you... spend hours... working it out...

[Replying to subscriber]

..."wherever you get to when you can't read it, I don't want you to read any more than that" The story disappears.

13.35

That's another one of those books, where I still think it's one of the best things I've ever made... and it's [an] extremely slow... seller.

14.04

...it takes time. You can look at it, and it might look quite attractive. But I do expect that people will try and read them.

16.20

[On the Lindisfarne gospels]

... the way the word's broken up and there's no gaps. I'm quite influenced by that, because I think that slows down the rate at which you read... I think at the moment that's what I'm most interested in.

17.45

What I think books do is I think they leak information over quite a long period in history, and I think, if you make something that is possibly still going to be there in 100 years' time, it will have leaked an idea. That's what I'm interested in with books, not instant mass communication, 'cause we've got the internet now... that's been removed...

19.00

[At an artists' books conference some years ago, arguing with Liliane Lijn]

I was arguing with her, "it's all about mass communication"... and she was saying "...we want to make beautiful things", and of course... it wasn't an argument anybody could win... But I wouldn't say that [mass

communication was the main point] now.. I've changed my mind quite a lot about this... if they're slightly precious... you might pass it down, through your family, and the ideas in them will leak very slowly, they'll seep out over a period of... history.

22.48

...there's nothing actually more wonderful than the moment you get the first finished book in your hand

23.05

When I look at other people's books, the ones that I might buy, I have the same kind of feeling.

24.27

...again, how do you take that in at a fair?

26.00

I think in the things that I make there always is [the reading that books imply]... it's important that you do have a sense of an audience... because otherwise, it wouldn't matter.

35.40

AE- ...You're trying to have a fast or slow tempo when you're reading... sometimes trying to drive home particular points, sometimes trying to let it be something that people can cogitate on...

JB- I think you're right, I think that's what we were talking about earlier with the slowing down of the text. I think you can control it to a certain degree...

I do it by making the text slightly more obscure or difficult to read or what have you...

38.50

You came to that thing in Winchester? ... That character at the end, Hank, I've been doing him for 20 years, the character that wears all the weird clothes.

44.00

It's all just acting... it's not really me.

Tracey Bush

Interviewed Wednesday 30th April, 2008.

Tracey Bush 1

6.00

I think I was quite heavily *making* and I think that's an aspect of books sometimes. That's why I liked your questions, because it was more focusing on practice and the content, which is something that I've found a little bit frustrating with the book- it can be so much about 'what structure', " how you've printed it."

7.00

[The latest project includes] the book as an *element* of the ... multimedia project, because I think just making books... it is quite a comfy sort of world...

...maybe some people go round the bookfair and it's very difficult for them to engage the ideas.

8.21

AE- Do books make it easier to think and work on the stuff that you're interested in?

TB- I would definitely agree with that, even though I almost sound like the book is becoming less and less important [to me], it's still... like the

starting of things and the thread that holds it together... everything else stems off from it.

9.25

...if I know there's going to be a book element, I almost don't worry how diverse the other things are, because I think, well, the book's going to bring it together"

11.30

..it makes you feel... [for example] "I want to make felt", and if you make felt, there's a niche in your book you could use it for.

12.00

The formal link was Elaine Kowalski came to Camberwell... I'd been thinking about making a book... but hadn't really known that there was this thing called artists' books... that was almost like the seal of approval...

15.45

...the idea of The Book... I tend to use quite bog-standard structures... because I... quite like the fact that they already function & people don't have to work out how to look at them...

17.00

I was... studying for a PGCE and we had to do a project that was based on our own work with students, and I devised something called the Collection Book, so instead of them doing a sketchbook, they had to make a collection in the form of a book... That triggered off... thinking of books as collections, which I hadn't really thought of before then.

19.30

What is nice about books is you've got the fairs and the exhibitions and there's quite a lot... going on that makes you feel that you're actually part of something, whereas working as an artist, it's quite tough... it's very isolated...

The fixed point every year... is doing the London Artists' Books fair... you see everybody... it gives continuity, whereas the majority of what I do varies from month to month, depending on what exhibitions I'm in and the work's changing all the time – everything else is in flux really... The whole book fair – it's not necessarily a financial necessity to do it... more having that feeling that you're part of something.

22.45

Definitely the book element of any project is going to be the least financially viable, I've found – unfortunately some books that I've been the most pleased with have been the ones which I've lost the most money on making.

23.05

...I am making prints and I am definitely thinking of those as a way of financially shoring things up, but it's not creatively ... the exciting bit, necessarily...

23.50

I don't particularly like artwork on walls... I think that's the fantastic thing with the book... is that it's not always there, and it's something temporary and intimate and smaller...

26.20

I've become much more interested in anything digital over the last year or two... I think that's the thing with the book... it's almost getting away from the physical nature of the book so that many more people can engage with it – it doesn't necessarily have to exist as a printed thing.

26.50

[AE- Gift of the process?]

I don't see myself as having that sort of relationship with whatever medium I'm working in.

30.15

[AE- very planned?]

Yeah... I don't think I've ever really let things [inaudible], everything's been planned and worked out... might seem inhibited, because a lot of the things I do are quite meticulous.

34.05

...investigating within a framework, I think I totally would say, yes, that is how I think about it, and I think sometimes it is very frustrating when you... see books on artists' books and sort of there's an art historical ownership of art which I feel has precious little to do with how artists actually come up with things and work... It's so... packaged afterwards... it's not like that...

34.45

[there are] all sorts of left-field things about books as an art medium, and I don't think that they are – in terms of art fairs - ...commercially viable things... I have a... gut feeling that they're always going to be sort of an odd thing...

36.00

...it's strange how it does that really, how it's important that you've got a book as part of it... it was also equally important to me to have a book which then dealt a lot more with people's interaction through email

when I was starting the project... that felt really important, that it wasn't just pictures.

39.10

The book is almost a... distillation of quite a lot of work and thought and different people's ideas... it would be different if you were presenting just... everything.

39.50

It's very difficult- all of it is so arbitrary as well... number of pages... there's absolutely no reason, really, why you'd have a certain number of pages... size, whatever you like. Somehow, you get this structure, It's a bit like process art or something. You get this 'rule book' for yourself of how it's going to be and then everything has to fit to that, somehow maybe it creates order...

AE- do you work for/against this sense of order at different stages?

Yes... with every book that I've done... [for instance, with] *River Stairs* it really bothered me for ages, which particular stairs I was choosing, because there are... a couple of hundred through London... why was I deciding on these particular ones? ... a lot of the time it was ones I happened to be able to get to... So all those little...rules that you think for yourself – and I think that's quite nice.

44.01

I think people expect text in a book... I couldn't actually conceive of a book without starting with what's going to be on the title, that's always the starting thing, somehow

44.15

There's definitely more processes [than simple documentation] go on, when you're thinking about it in terms of the book, because it's not... just a document – that would be what I would think about as my sketchbook or my notebook... that would just be my *own* material, and maybe part of that might make it into the book.

48.39

[Tate Britain sound and books collaboration] We had four big books and ... the sound piece that went with it... that was a successful way... of devising a project... I'd like to work like that again, whether it was in collaboration with someone else or... because I do think with books that sound with books is *really* nice to combine.

Tracey Bush 2

4.51

[Working children's material up into books was transformative, and also a useful strategy for transporting it into content.]

They were really excited when they came and saw it, because it... was recognizably their work... but what was quite exciting was that... it kind of transformed it... from how they'd seen it when they were making it, into something that was in the Tate and was... an artwork.

AE- You were able to plan it this way partly because it was going to appear in book form?

TB- Yes.

10.25

[working on a giant paper theatre]

What we did was to... go to the Museum of London... get loads of the elements... using cutting, piercing, tearing, different ways of working with paper, but on this big scale... about 8' by 6' each layer... So although it's not "a book", it is definitely from things that started...

AE- It's really just scaling-up?

TB- Yes.

... A lot of [the students] started making up their own narratives using their tunnel books as a starting point

16.47

[AE- Books allow strategies to fit stuff in – portmanteau/intermedia?]

Yes... also because they are all individual artworks... very much all the work being brought together into larger pieces, or it's everyone can make their own individual piece... that's a great thing with the book, isn't it?

17.25

it was sort of art being put to work basically... to explore... projects like numeracy or literacy goals through using book art... It's not something I particularly like... I think art should be a valid part of the curriculum in itself, but if needs must, then I think the good thing with the book is it can sneak things in.

[AE- do books help you "sneak things in" in your own practice?]

Yes!

Tracey Bush 3

0.56

[You're using the interiors of existing stamp albums?]

Yeah, because... why would you want to make that when you can buy it?

...There's a bindery ...5 minutes up the road... I *have* thought I'd like to ...just take in the pages and get them to bind them up for me...

1.55

The only thing is the cost, I'm a little bit... stingy... if I'm paying them £50 to make it, and then I'm selling it for... too narrow a margin... that's why I end up doing it myself... This part, the casing –in... is my absolute least favourite thing... because there's so much invested in [the book] ... and then when you actually stick it in something can go pear-shaped, you end up binning it...

2.59

But then, it's my own fault, because I make things that have to be...
[perfect].

6.30

AE- Choosing to make books means choosing not to do other stuff?

Yeah, exactly... I think that sometimes- you're almost deciding "should I be making stuff for a gallery"? ...You've almost got to choose... how you're using your time, all the time.

Peter Chasseaud

Interviewed Friday, 4th July 2008.

Peter Chasseaud 1

0.43

I don't just make artists' books, I started off as a painter and printmaker and sculptor as well.

1.18

... A lot of the concerns overlap. I started off ... in landscape and figurative painting...

1.38

A painting like that is what I did while I was working on the *King's Cross* project, so I was doing paintings and I made a film and I did an artist's book which included a poetic text and photographs, including photos I'd taken over a forty-year period...

I think a lot of the stuff I've been working on I've been working on for a long, long time, in other words the concerns with which I'm working now are things with which I've always been interested... adding to those concerns, sort of memory and reflections, so I'm looking back at them as well as using images that I took at the time.

2.42

PC -- Quite a lot of the books I've produced recently are books which reflect concerns that I've had for a long, long time. A book I did in 2005 *Afghanistan: A Journey*, was in fact based on a journey I made back in 1972... and all the images in the book were from 1972, on that journey. The text that I wrote for that, was ... there were two texts... one was the travel journal I wrote at the time, and another one was one I wrote in 2005 while I was actually working on the book. So that was very much informed by what was going on at the time... and a lot of other stuff... that I'd been picking up in the meantime; more knowledge, more information, as well as looking back at the journey.

AE – [Is it increasingly a reflective process?]

PC – You build things up ... so things get more deeply informed, the more time there is to think about them and reflect on them and relate them to other things that are going on...

8.47

AE – When you set about creating a book about [Isaac Rosenberg] and about his poems... what's your structure for that? Are you going to present both him and his work or...?

PC—Well, as far as I've worked out at the moment, I'm going to have a fairly traditional book structure there, where I'm presenting poems and images relating to those poems together, whether I introduce some of my own text as well, which is what I usually do in my books – they're just my texts, not other people's texts, so this one's a bit of an unknown quantity.

AE – You’ve just got to work it out.

PC – That’s right – a lot of my work is experimental. I usually don’t have a preconceived idea right from the beginning, and know in advance what it’s going to look like, particularly with these more hand-made books.

17.30

AE – The way that you use sources is quite distinctive... the fact that you’re using historical sources or relationships to historical sources... is making books helping you to kind of ... bring that part of it forward ... [where] you’re presenting research as it were ... [has that] presentational aspect helped you?

PC – I think it does. A lot of the projects I work on are projects which I approach in several media simultaneously. And one of the great things about the book form is that you can actually combine several of those media into one object, which it sort of encapsulates the whole thing as it were, you can hang a lot on there. So in the book you’ve got, obviously, physicality of paper and binding materials and anything else that you’ve incorporated into the book. But you can also incorporate text, which is important to me, because I write quite a lot of text –

AE – Or in this case ‘texts’.

PC – Texts, plural, right. Photographic images, because I take a lot of photographs, and I have done all my life. I can use printmaking techniques in there as well. I can do painting, hand painting on them as well ... So there’s something about the book form that is actually very enabling. And at the same time it contains -- like this sort of canister that you can pour all this stuff into and it hangs together within that, like a

matrix if you will. You've got a lot of different things packed into that matrix. And you can unfold it. I like the way it opens and it unfolds and it exposes and it conceals.

25.20

I'm always using maps of various dates, because they tell me about that process of change... But I'm going on the ground as well... trying to locate things. A lot of what's in my texts is about the physical aspects of landscape – like reference points... waymarkers... things you can see: a block of granite that is significant in that place, it was the corner of an old dock or something like that... it begins in my mind to recreate that landscape. But I'm also in what I write making ... personal value judgements about that process of change and saying some of this change is destructive, and whole ways of life disappear, like deindustrialisation. Communities lose out from it... inevitably in my texts, there's a certain amount of evaluation...

I'm aware that there's a danger here in ... quite a lot of what I'm saying there may be rose-tinted spectacle stuff... it's not the same thing as being part of that life.

28.00

PC -- There's a lot of reflection going on, and I hope that some of that reflection which is appearing in the text is going somewhere. But people respond to it. One of the things I like about showing these books at artists' book fairs is the way I get terrific response very often from the people who lived in those areas. And some of them will sit down and

read through the whole text of the book and they'll be there for an hour or two just reading, and then you have a conversation with them.

AE – There must be people at the fairs who really envy you that. Because a lot of the people I spoken to ... get so sad that people won't stop and take the time it takes to understand something – you're onto something.

PC – Well I think there's a strong attraction to some of the subject areas... people love the Afghanistan book... on different levels it means different things to people, that they like the photographs, they like reading the text, they like the whole idea of making that journey in 1972...

29.40

AE – [Do books help you approach these subjects without making 'political artwork'?:]

PC – I don't want to be making political artwork or heavy statements, so I'd rather do these things in a subtle way...

AE – [For me, I'd rather construct some sort of 'parable' and I think the book allows me the poetic structure to do that.]

PC – I think that's what I'm doing... If I want[ed] to make direct political statements in visual imagery, I'd probably do what Banks does and stencil them on walls... That's not kind of the way I am... You can either be high visibility, high impact, or you can work in other ways. I think one of the advantages of the book form is – we were talking about parables and texts and so on: you can do it in a poetic way.

AE – [We're talking about political subjects, but this holds just as true for anything complex that you want to address from perhaps more than one

angle... or in quite a light way. Rather than writing a book about it you get to make a book.]

PC – ... You can make it complex, you can approach it within a text on lots of different levels as well, and of course the structure of a book and the images you use and how you incorporate them also help to create the message... like this Marshall McLuhan idea... the medium is the message... obviously the book itself and the way it's constructed and what it looks like and how it feels and handles tells you something about the message.

AE – There's a lot of information in it.

PC – A lot embedded within that matrix. ... Some artists' books are ... almost throwaway, very ephemeral and flimsy... I like a lot of work by other people who do artists' books for different reasons. I would never do a book like that, but I still like that book.

33.26

Some people can put together an artist's book, just in a few hours... and it may have no words in at all... a lot of artists' books are quite whimsical or humourous... just in the imagery they use or what they do – they open in surprising ways. They all have different impacts on people, and I can appreciate all those, but that's not the kind of book I want to produce. I have no control over that really, I'm just not that sort of person... but I'm still experimenting.

38.19

AE – Are the texts a way to ... explore the subject for you? As much as making little maquettes like this [paper model in the studio] are experimental, are the texts, too... experimental... you can construct different thoughts about things?

PC – Yes, I think they are. I suppose these are similar problems to those facing poets... other people who use words... must be encountering those, if you like, formal problems... I like the way you can play around. I just use a sort of free verse technique, but I like the look of the words and the sound of the words and the way you can rearrange them and import things and export things, and play with words. I like the shape of the text on the page as well.

39.40

AE -- ... there are ways in which you... have different roles... there's that writer/poet role, there's the going-out-and-researching role, the taking photographs and travelling role, researching your memories role, all these different ways.

PC – You're looking at it in a very formal, structured way.

AE—That's just the language.

PC – Yeah, okay, but this is how it may seem to you. It doesn't seem like that to me. I suppose because over the years I've just developed intuitive ways of working... I don't deliberately work in certain ways. Some of those things are experimental and I may discard them, but at least I want to do them. So the whole thing is a big laboratory, really, I can pour things in and see what happens. It might explode, or it might actually gel into something workable.

AE – Let me pick up that metaphor that you used... I didn't have a laboratory until I discovered that it was alright to make books. ... I just couldn't figure out how I was going to make a picture that was going to say all these things that I wanted to say.

PC – Absolutely, no, I agree with you. ... But I think that the book form is a ... very good way, or an efficient way of... saying a lot of things. I like the idea that a work of art has something to say. Quite often I don't like what I would consider... ephemeral works of art, because they're not actually saying anything. Well, not to me anyway.

Peter Chasseaud 2

5.08

[Walking is a] way of physically experiencing the landscape, you get a feel for hardness and texture and colour and distance and gradient and all these things I like... this is how my work relates to maps I suppose as well. The maps are encountering an area spatially, they're delineating it spatially. A map is a sort of matrix, like I was saying earlier, the book is like a matrix, a map is ... codifying and encapsulating a lot of information within [a] two-dimensional sheet of paper, so it's very clever, and the book does a similar sort of thing, it's coding, either in words or images, information in a tight little physical form.

7.00

AE-- [The poetics of juxtaposing imagery creates an effect that's more than the sum of its parts.]

PC – That’s the idea... There’s a sort of... angular cubistical sort of thing going on here, which is to do with... different ideas of fracture... change and development...

8.06

I like the idea that the images and the text are working and playing with each other.

... A lot of this is like the laboratory I was talking about earlier. You pour different chemicals in and you see what happens... sometimes the fact that it goes ‘bang’ is quite interesting and you can use that. And you get shock juxtapositions, things that perhaps you didn’t intend, but you realise in some way [are] working against each other or could be working with each other.

17.33

AE– It’s interesting that they have these ... different characters, these books... One of them is quite rooted to a place... and this of course is in the world, but it seems to be much more about one’s reflection... of recollections of events...

PC – That occurs in other books as well, these recollections of places ... In the Euston book I’ve got a passage when I’m remembering my first encounter with Euston... in the war, and then my childhood, the 1950s, and then I went to Euston in 56 when I went to Liverpool, and then again in the early 60s, when I was looking at the Euston Arch being demolished and so on. So there’s quite a lot of memory and encounter with my past in there.

Helen Douglas

Interviewed Friday, 11th May, 2007.

Helen Douglas 1

6.14

[Re. *Wildwood*]

I had no sense of how it would be viewed by the public... it has meant something to other people, but I wondered if it wasn't just too personal...

6.25

It is a real place... it is much more than an imaginative place, well, it's supernatural if you want - kind of mythical space as well. And I wanted that to happen.

8.50

You work *across* a fabric, whereas that book is very much about going in, and it really is using the paper almost... as a door... It doesn't work across the page.

9.54

...it doesn't link from one page necessarily to another. Really the cut edge was very important... I could shift it. That's the beauty of a guillotined edge- you *can* shift it. Whereas *Between the two*, literally the

image worked across the foredge and round the corner onto the next double spread, and in a way it did that with *Unravelling the Ripple*, too. But [with *Wildwood*] I didn't want to... there are jumps, you're right... not huge jumps...

...

Mock-ups... there's nothing like having a mock up, and then you see – oh, that's an awful big jump there, got to smooth that off...

11.45

If everything's too smooth, then it becomes rather boring...

11.50

Why do I get into this thing of 'on, on & on'? And why can't I do shorter, sharper little things? I suppose that's why I did the smaller *Ephemera* books... [AE – i.e. the *Flit* series]

12.37

...you saw the work that goes into this making... continuous narratives, sometimes I don't *think* like that, I don't feel like *doing* that.

13.05

...[*Ephemera* is composed of snippets] to give you just a little insight, and that's it. It doesn't have to be a huge narrative... They're little stories...

AE- Like haiku rather than grand epics?

HD- Absolutely... here I am, struggling again with a narrative, and then I thought, actually really what I quite like at the moment *is* these small, little [stories].

17.41

[on *Swan Songs*] I thought I could do *Leda and the Swan*. I've got this wonderful picture and I thought, "that's great, the book's there" ... but, you know, it's completely different to normally how I go about a book, because that is a story that's already set, and none of my narratives are actually stories, so... here I've suddenly found myself illustrating something, rather than creating the story yourself, and it's really... different. Something like *Wildwood*, the story's evolved through the collecting of the material, where it's impossible to *collect* a swan and a woman... for me to construe that and make it- it's like *really* forcing something, and it made me realize how much my books are based on just what I see.

19.00

AE- Are you going to leave the original story behind and work with the material you *did* gather?

HD- That's actually what I thought I would do... I thought, there's something in this...perhaps I could just let myself free flow from this, with the things I've got. But because it's a story and because that was my title, I know that people would look for the story... I would have to ditch the title for a start... to then be able to feel free to work with it.

AE- In a kind of similar way wasn't this a problem with Proust [when you worked on *Illiers Combray* with Zoë Irvine?]

HD- No... we just said, right, we were going to Illiers Combray and see what was there for us... in terms of our own thoughts and reveries and sense of place...

21.38

...so we went *totally* blank in that way as to what we were going to find...

23.15

...and then we arrived in Illiers Combray, and started *looking*, just going round and round and gathering materials...Literally I did that in about a week...

24.27

I was photographing and that – I had *no* idea how this book was going to evolve, *absolutely none*, until the material started to... I began to see... Pissaro-like allotments... I began to see it very much in that late-nineteenth-century... with that eye.

AE- You've ...had two chances to see it... [Being alert in the source location, then again in the studio, working with it]

HD- Yes that's right... and... all I did was I made contact strips of everything and then I began to print out the images that I liked... and began to make... little phrases, little sections... and... began to see how they would fit together.

27.40

What I used to be was out with my camera... a really manual camera, with the macro lens and just allowing one image to lead me to the next. I think it was really being in the camera, or somehow the camera being part of me. I found with the digital camera, it is rather different, because one holds it *out there*... I don't feel physically as part... I have just bought a Nikon... I can make it manual, because I wanted to get back some of that quality that I was losing. That thing of letting the camera lead me...

29.20

AE- and you would say there's a link between the camera before and... Authentic Movement?

HD- That came through in *Water on the Border*; but also in *Between the Two*, and in *Unravelling the Ripple*."

[On Authentic Movement

Douglas describes how she integrates authentic movement/5 rhythms with books. Literally following through movement becomes narrative.

Trusting the form, trusting witness, trusting the body to hold together, and find a kind of truthfulness.]

30.06

It's really an idea of active imagination, developing Jung's idea of active imagination, but rather than... creative painting or whatever it's through movement... You follow the movement... it can bring up extraordinary

emotions and images...Letting your dreamworld come through, through movement... the theory that in your body is trapped...memory.

[--on Five Rhythms]

...suddenly it takes you over. Suddenly you feel an energy coming through which is completely different from just doing the movement... it's about hitting that flow, that creative flow, coming from the inside to the outside.

32.40

AE- It's not an intentional poetics? It's something that happens because you've got that structure and you trust it?

HD- Yes, you trust it... [Authentic Movement] is not directed, but is incredibly contained by the witness or the circle of witnesses... When you come out of the movement, you talk about [it] and the witness will mirror back to you, perhaps a movement, or say what *they* saw... It was very important for me, dance, at that time, and I think that it made me realize that what I was doing with the book... I'd always made these narratives, but I didn't see... quite how central it was to my being, to the need to do that, and I think dance made me – normally you think of narrative as something that can be put into words, or I did – now of course we all talk about visual narrative and everything – narrative always suggested to me in the 70s something that could be put into words, a story... It was only through dance that I realized that *this is* narrative; that's exactly what we're doing...

It leads... one thing leads to another...

37.09

...it's really different if you make a scroll – that is completely different, because you've got no edge... I found myself needing a kind of edge... I found myself needing that structure and edge.

37.50

I would've loved to make [Swan Songs] a scroll... I tussle with every book to find the right shape and form for it...

38.08

I have to be able to distance myself from the actual story and just *let* something happen.

38.48

I *do* trust the book form...I'm sure it's the thing that it's *held* ... And it's something that you put things into, so you're putting it into the book, so it's quite a safe place... I trust that, I trust its relationship to the hands. ... Upstairs in that little room [where Douglas composes book layouts] I really trust that little room, being able to work in it and put things on the floor... it's something about that room is contained...and... there's not an awful lot on display – because I don't think books are like that, they're not things that are out on display... you open them, or else you close them... I don't put things up on the wall, I lay them out on a sheet of paper, and then I put them all away again...So something in me... doesn't want it out all the time, either. And that – for me – the book works really well, because it's there, or it can be put away.

41.40

I'll have the things out, sometimes I can get a feeling from it, and I think it's right...[sometimes] the actual story as yet hasn't really evolved – worked itself out. So I've put it away.

42.55

[The book] is the right place, I mean, I wouldn't paint a painting, and I don't think I'd make prints to go on a wall, either... ultimately I want things to be between covers.

AE- And to be encountered that way, and touched that way?

HD- Yes, and it involves the eye, the hand and the movement... the aesthetic kind of movement I think is really...important.

44.01

Certainly with *Wildwood* I felt, there's no way I can embrace the wood through scale... actually the way to do it was through the miniaturization... of bringing it all into the book. *Unravelling the Ripple*, it's different... the size of the images in relation to the page compared to *Wildwood*... completely different... everything is page scale...

AE- Almost 1:1 really?

HD- Yes.. *Wildwood*... it's a completely different scale.

47.26

[At the end of *Unravelling the Ripple*] I let the splashes come right up to the lens... I found myself in rather perilous places... I got so involved... “letting the camera take [me]”... so involved in what I was photographing ...I had lost my own physical space – I was out there with what I was photographing.

49.50

AE [In the studio] are you being led by material?

HD- Yes... that’s exactly... I’ll look at my photographs, and suddenly there’s one that really gives me something. It’s very like the movement, where you can be doing the movement, and then *suddenly* there’s a flow of energy in it, and it’s the same, looking at a photograph... suddenly there’s one that you think – there’s a quality in there, that’s what I want to put out and into this book, and I want to draw that out. And you really can draw it out, from the photograph... they’re just snaps, really, until you make them work, and that’s the beauty of the framing, the page, finding the scale, how you crop and everything.

55.14

Photographs that make you feel, there’s something there... something I can work with...I can work with this, I’ve got the material...

55.01

...is there something about print that gives you ideas... and in the book, and obviously the book itself does, but the actual medium of print on paper is very important to me, so I'm always thinking about that...

55.50

It's almost like a loop, like it's got a crescendo... and it comes back, ... particularly with [*Unravelling the Ripple*], because of this idea of the ripples and the waves... I conceived it as a sort of [whooshing], and then [whooshing] ... it starts, the dry, and then the ... rippling coming in, quietly... and then more, building up...

AE- It really has a sort of musical quality to it.

HD- ... and then back to dry... from that fine little grain... building up to the shell ones which were sort of bigger, and then eventually that comes to the big stones...

57.08

This wasn't actually getting closer, it was just that, these were not broken down as much as the sand...

AE- So you're following what really happened?

HD- Absolutely... like you get bigger grades of pebbles.. you get the really little ones... then bigger...

AE- In a funny sort of way, that's a story that's already there.

HD- It is, but that's actually what I'm saying – I'm just an eye, in that way... I think the best of my books are about, just about looking, and allowing what's there to lead me, and trusting in that...

1.00.22

...everything I do is based on something I see...that's why I bought this new camera... very heavy... it's harder using it... there is a sense of pacing and slowness about it, which is really different from this quick little thing that I had... So, yes, following what's there...

...when Simon Cutts wrote... it's really just a natural, *National Geographic*... I felt it was a lot more than that... to me It was about movement & flow & dance & poetry & rhythm.

AE- [commenting that perhaps the clarity of light made it more difficult to apprehend the encounter]

HD- ... I wanted the immediacy of these, because you know the excitement, when you're a child, at these rock pools.

1.02.56

What I realized with *Unravelling the Ripple* was that it really is about going over the surface... this is, in a way, like mapping... moving across... the world *is* surfaces. That's actually what I find quite hard about photographing nature is that there's no edges... where do you find the edge, and where do you find the space... plain, clear white surfaces... it's very hard to find them in nature

1.06.20

AE- Does working with the camera give you an edge to work with?

HD- Yes, it gives me an edge, but that's no good if I'm making books, because I want to connect one thing with another, and if I don't have an edge of whiteness or darkness, it's very difficult to connect one thing with another... I would like there to be more plain areas of whiteness or darkness so that I could link things and move them, bigger jumps.

HD- I think if I was living in the city and photographing there, there would be more freedom, actually.

Helen Douglas 2

2.27

I suppose at the moment I am doing very different things, because I just wanted to get away from that "on, on & on" ... like *Unravelling the Ripple* or something which is constantly – epics...

I've collected these photographs, little images of insects... over a number of years, just sometimes when I was out photographing other things...

6.16

... there definitely are different roles, there's first of all the "out with the camera" gathering, and being in a way the "dreamer" as well, that's really... important, just allowing that unconscious... world to well up with the photography and everything...

you know a book's going well, because you start dreaming somehow relevant things to it... and then you know you're into some kind of deep world, gathering.

And then there's the thing of putting it together, and in a way that's going on – but obviously the practicality comes in...

and then you start having to become much more of a designer, once you've really... worked out your story of what it *is*... you have to become very precise... which is a *completely* different quality to, say, being out with the camera, or dreaming up things, where... one needs to go quite loose and scruffy... and then there's this kind of really coming in and homing in and becoming like a designer, and I *hate* being called a designer, but there's an aspect of that that one is using one's design skills.

AE- [other stages can still have input?]

Absolutely... that is still very much a making stage, but then once you've got that dummy book... then you *really* become- if you're working with... industry.. you really are like an industrial designer, you're suddenly working in a completely different way... and land up absolutely in a role, like a designer, because if you don't, they'll walk over you.

9.24

[on undertaking parts of the preparation for printout of the studio]

...it's important for me to let it go, for me to have this slightly distant view from it... and I might see something I wouldn't have seen if I was closer to it...

10.12

[I'll work with the printer] and I'll agree to the printing of a sheet... I absolutely *stand*, because you can really pull a book one way or another at the press, because a printer's not going to know if you want to go a little bit more magenta... more cyan... That was absolutely me working as a designer.

Helen Douglas 3

2.55

[Re. Swan song with Damselflies] When I was first making this it was like a long strip, like a Chinese scroll, but that felt, just by breaking it into pages, it gave something to frame different things... for instance – that makes a page – where as if it were n a scroll, something of the... clarity of that image to the rest of the page is lost in a scroll.

AE- you lose some of the intention in a scroll?

HD- it's just a continuum in a way, [rather than a page] I realized I needed the edges to push up against.

David Faithfull

Interviewed Thursday, 22nd May, 2008.

David Faithfull 1

2.51

[On 'East and West Coast approaches'...]

...certainly I did that after I did this... very expressive series...
palindromically on the West coast of Scotland, and then this was a
chance to kind of take a step back, not to be so personal, to be
completely objective and look at something from a much more... clinical
viewpoint... for me artists' books are an extension, if I'm honest
probably of sketchbooks really, because... your ideas formulated... your
visual and conceptual plans are developed in the sketchbooks... but you
lose... contact with all that body of work that you had, whether it's
aesthetic or conceptual or expressive... and the thing with the artists'
book, is it gives me a chance to kind of siphon and be my own editor...

4.21

...a sketchbook is a kind of portable studio.

6.16

In a gallery you see the finished piece, and it never really has... the
authentication of the artist's voice... it's up to the viewer to interpret it...

6.33

AE-...If you're speaking through a book... is your voice *still there*, then?

DF- Definitely... I don't think it's an insecurity... I think it just gives you more options... [say] you've got a room full of 20 paintings... in one artists' book you've got... it could be hundreds of... images... More like a video, but a video that the viewer can... pace themselves through... pause... and choose the tempo themselves... so it does give you incredible flexibility to project ideas in a much more dense way... I'm definitely not a minimalist – I don't particularly like that sort of Sol LeWitt... kind of minimalist artists' book... much more cerebral.

8.07

...you can't rely on an audience... in art you can only ever have the potential and your audience is neither here nor there, but if there is one, then they've got more chance of getting [a] denser picture with something like an artists' book I think... the thing, I suppose, about the artists' book, is it does give you the opportunity to... come at it from a printmaking, photography [angle]... every kind of thing you can throw at it... experimentally and text[ually] as well...

9.30

you can't guarantee your audience, you do try your damndest to ...catch them somehow...

I had that exhibition *Inkubator*... you don't know what to do with artists' books, do you put them in a glass case? Do you let people handle them... give them white gloves? Do you trot around book fairs...

eyeballing buyers, trying to sell them an 80 quid book? It doesn't really – there's no comfortable way to sell them... this exhibition was to give the audience the opportunity to handle books... in an atmosphere that was welcoming... very limited security, so the trust was on them, and they could also curate them and rearrange the books on these shelves so that every time somebody else approached it'd be... they were slightly influenced by the previous reader...

12.27

[Using books as a way of construing viewpoints from different 'locations']

AE- ...it harks back to your own work... there's... not so much different kinds of books, but informed by slightly different things... coming from a slightly different point of view or looking at different things, anyway.

DF- Definitely... giving two arguments, and then trying to create a synopsis somewhere in the middle...

17.25

[I was at college, doing] a mixture of ... visual communications, graphics degree... it's bookbinding, it's letterpress, it's mixed typewriter and...weird things, and it's pretty crude, but there was a kind of scientific hypothesis, different experiments... I was asking questions about things...

18.21

...it was the idea of asking these hypotheses...questioning values... and playfulness as well... but an idea of enquiring...

20.40

There's... is there a narrative there?.. It's not really that clear — certainly it's a narrative of a certain period of my sketchbooks... edited out and decided that this was the period I was going to look at, so it's a kind of synopsis of that period.

22.33

In your sketchbooks there's a lot of crap and dross on there as well so you want to kind of – edit it out... I was going to do one of these [sorts of books, every year] for the rest of my life, and of course, I never got past the first one... at the end it was looking at the year's sketchbooks... [starting] with the letter 'A'... I had plans with that... it was like an encyclopaedia... I got to the end of it and thought "Well, that's enough. I'll do that for one year, and then it doesn't really have any... relevance".

24.30

[Regarding the 'encyclopaedia]I think there was 2 of these, and I liked the idea, it's more like a medieval monk... I did an exact copy of the first one as the second one...

25.10

[I'm] mixing inks using kind of medieval recipes like in the Book of Kells, and using sticks that I've gathered...all these things are connected... but in a way you could never imagine, which I think is the interesting thing about any kind of creative process..

25.32

AE- It sounds like that 'mixing ink' and 'gathering sticks' is more of a West Coast thing in a way?

DF- Well, there's obviously different facets to any individual, but I think there's maybe two, or at least two people trying to fight with each other.

...

It's an interesting reflection on the way contemporary art goes... if you calculate it you know that you've got to be objective and impersonal and do things that have some kind of resonance... [and] part of you wants to be that kind of Blake... kind of visionary.

AE- "I want to have it all"?

DF- ... I'm never quite sure exactly, where I'm going or what I want to do with it – at one stage I'll play with one and kind of develop the other.

27.20

AE- Is there a way [books] allow you to compartmentalize your process... Or just simplify things?

DF- You come up with books that are a 'neat idea' and have that life span in that particular location and then after that you are never going to go back there again... the Book of Matches is a good example of that,,,

an idea I was just playing around with and then it's... 'finished'. 'There's nothing else I can really say about that'...

That's a good example of... well, not compartmentalizing an idea I suppose, it's just a one off thing... I had this [one off idea]... and books are really good for that... they have a longevity that I don't think a painting or a sculpture has in a way. Books seem to have – people stick them on their shelves in a very different way from sticking it on the wall in a frame, which dates much [more quickly].

...sketchbooks, your own sketchbooks... it has a longer life... it might never be seen, it might be tucked away somewhere... but it's going to appear and reappear again and again...

30.27

One of the things about the artists' book fairs... they're very unsatisfactory unless you sell a lot of high-volume... kind of sellable [books]...I find them particularly unsatisfactory, actually, book fairs – I'm never quite sure why I'm doing it, because I'm not making any money... people are buying them and collections are buying, but it doesn't seem the best way of doing it

31.35

If you think of... a themed exhibition... a series of paintings and then it moves on to another theme and another theme – and what's the connection between it apart from some...there must be... but the thing with books [is] you create this sort of library almost which is just much more a... continuous object in a way...

32.30

AE- Because of the uniformity...of the form?

DF - Yeah, the fact that you can stick it all together on a shelf does help, for example [in a] library... I does appeal to me that, you know that you're contributing each next piece or whatever... in its development, is, to this slowly-extending shelf of your work...

34.50

...I always thought it would be nice to work with Ken [Cockburn], but not having instigated it myself, but through some third person was quite interesting. So he basically did the research on the archives and I went around Edinburgh drawing.

40.35

I ... like the idea of artists' books going towards somewhere else, where you maybe lose slight control... it's nice if somebody pays the bill, and [you] don't have to worry about distribution – they distribute it themselves to their own networks.

41.05

AE- [publishing?]

DF- I don't want to do David Shrigley... any success in one project supplements the birth of another one.

42.10

AE- [Publishers doing it to have their books available] to be in the world.

That's one of the great things about books as well – because who sees an exhibition? You know, one picture, etc, on a wall. But you send these things out, disseminate them outwards and you don't make money off them, but there's a hundred of them out there with their own life...

[DF tells story about book encounters- burned book of his in Verona, etc]...

45.50

There are weird connections with books... You send them out into the world, sometimes they come back.

49.15

AE- Like Blake, did you say?

DF- Yeah, out of sync with what's going on, but nobody understands you. You're compelled to do it at whatever cost.

50.01

AE [... are books a way of making rules?]

In the sense that there's a narrative which has a predetermined sequence that you are expecting the viewer to move through... but beyond that, they've got a tempo of their own. They can move backwards, forwards...

52.43

...you have some material, whether it's an aeroplane crash or contemporary religion or whatever your play-doh is for that particular 6-month period & you just kind of work it, knead it into some kind of form or other, and that's the playfulness of it & you create your own rules and hopefully make it interesting for yourself.

55.00

I think it just happens to fit the long, panoramic aspect of a lot of landscapes I draw – seems to fit a concertina... unfolded book, and I think it's this... it's as basic as that, actually. I started taking lots of photographs and they ended up being narrative, I didn't really know what to do with them. I thought – shit – book seems like a good idea, you know? String them all together, and 'bingo', you've got your narrative there in a final format that solves the problem of splitting it and... dispensing it, whatever.

56.20

...I think it's the material, I think it's just the fitness for purpose, it just happens to be the right thing to do.

58.44

... you can never get inside the head of your viewer... I don't really want to go there actually... I think you just have to... trust your instincts in a way... if you thought too much about it...

59.00

Probably what I'm trying to create, it's almost like a guided tour of my responses to landscape.. pieces in an exhibition, redrawn again...

1.00.00

...there's a kind of link there, and anybody who wants to can go into it and find that strand of growth backwards into it.

1.01.00

What one of the problems was... I didn't like the way landscape was depicted, you go to galleries and you see one person's view of a landscape, and that's it. The idea of this palindrome in the landscape was to get this opposing views on the landscape so that you would see it from your view, and then you would walk into that landscape and draw, with your back to where you were drawing from initially [I'm sure DF means facing the spot you were drawing from initially] and you get a much more kind of objective overview of it.

AE- That's a wee bit like the kind of scientific thing as well

DF- Yeah

AE- [It's] reveal[ing] your methodology a little bit...?

DF- Yeah... there are definite... connections ... that was very dense, you know, looking at tides... and then the second one was *East looking West, West Looking East*, so that you encapsulate a hill in the middle, and so the hill is structurally in the book. Is on one side looking East... and then you can switch the book over and it's looking West on the other.

AE- The same place.

DF- Exactly the same place... On one side is the personal, subjective text, and on the other side is the objective rational text

1.03.02

What I suppose I'm trying to do is to try and get an honest view of this landscape... it's a more detailed or more objective overview of the essence of the landscape – how do you express it? How do you comment on it? And that was what I was trying to do with that.

1.03.30

...the next book was even more complicated, where instead of me trusting myself in going to that landscape and seeing it objectively/subjectively... [I'd] commission someone else to visit it for me and respond to it completely subjectively, so I had no control over it.

1.10.00

I was trying to envisage the book going into the landscape, rather than me taking the landscape in to the studio.

...

That's the perfect thing, to do that exhibition in the landscape... you just have a shelf of books in the landscape.

Jane Hyslop

Interviewed Wednesday, 16th May, 2007.

Jane Hyslop 1

0.26

Faced with a first year course... books seemed quite a logical way... to draw things together

1.15

The physicality of it and the whole process of making [the book] became important.

3.06

[Organising a planned book (letter press, etc) is useful for the students], because rather than being able to be so free and open – in a way that's frightening & it's too difficult. They actually have to face up to "Right, I need a certain number of pages" or "How many pages can I have" or "How am I going to put this together"... "Where's the beginning and where's the end"? It does help them [students] discover, "Ah- that's what I'm trying to do. That's what I'm all about."

4.13

I've really enjoyed and been interested in the landscape [of Midlothian] and the sort of industrial heritage as well...the mining industry... disused railways... these amazing structures which have been left... Things like coal bings... for years I documented that...little books ... about how towns grew up and then changed... [the *Lothianbridge viaduct* book] ...has the industrial thing with the railway, but then also the interesting thing about the viaduct was the fact that on the top you can see all the little trees are growing...

I was interested in ... looking at all the plants that were growing [on the viaduct]... lots of the other work is to do with collecting these plants.

8.15

AE – [How does investigating the landscape in book form relate to how you relate to the landscape?]

JH- I suppose I got the urge to contain the landscape in a certain way... one of the major ones was the *Wild Plants Collected in Midlothian*, it was done across a year... It was a series of 12 drawings... [I thought] "Wouldn't it be wonderful to make a companion piece that went with this?"... a book that did this as well. The book does it better because instead of having January as one drawing and February as another drawing, you have a concertina so that January and February meld together... Plants are bleeding into [adjacent months]... it's more of a continuum, much truer. [The concertina form] means that you can actually open it up and see it.

11.04

[Books do] add a different strand... you attend the artists' book fair, you are a member of another 'club' as it were...It's a necessity rather than a means to an end ... I couldn't not make books.

15.50

AE- Are book artists using the book as a ... conceptual boundary?

JH- For me, yes, it does help. I could've just done ten drawings... there's something about having confines for me, helps me...

16.49

It's a completely different relationship – whether you put it on the wall or you put it in a book.

Susan Johanknecht

Interviewed Thursday, 3rd May, 2007

Susan Johanknecht 1

1.51

I've been dealing with it more as 'book as poem'... seeing the book as a poem in itself.

2.47

It's almost – not so much the ideas as metaphors, sitting there waiting for... the right time in my life to connect all the different elements together, and they become the metaphor that's appropriate to go with.

3.40

It's difficult for me to separate out 'why book', because... I did my first degree in English Literature, then in printmaking and I did an apprenticeship with the Janus Press... the book just became the place where all my different interests, all my thoughts, all my ways of working would come together, so I don't ever think of what I'm doing as not being book.

5.48

Yes, I suppose I've talked about that in the past sometimes – of fragments, different fragments that become the whole of books – could be visual material, textual material, the structure of the book materials, again, they're very important. They're all of those different elements, different fragments coming together and having to be the book and not existing in any other form.

6.59

The dingbats embed the text and you read across pages and you can read in different ways and you can read the blind-embossed text first or last, or with the inked text, but these possibilities of reading are prompted by the materiality of the book.

AE- By the structure itself

SJ- Being trained as a printmaker as well as working as an apprentice... with books and with type... that difficulty of text and image and whether they're separate or they're merging... what the tensions are between text and image was something I was very interested in...

8.36

...different book projects are solved in different ways...

...that kind of unfolding and flowing, which happens through the reading, but then is echoed through the time and motion studies of the repetitive movement of women feeding the calendaring machine, so you get a rhythm on one side that's slightly different from the rhythm of reading rhythm, but there's a tension that's equally important between

the two – as well as you, the reader, doing this flipping motion as you unfold the book.

10.06

Your hand will touch them and then you'll look through to where that text is and that indicates... the contemporary text... so it's like a new reading is possible, prompted by the physical touching of the staples...

12.00

AE-... you wrote about the symbolic book... is a book using books always a book about books? Can you make a book work without making a work about books?

SJ- Probably not now... in this century... that self-awareness of – 'why is this a book?' Why are you not just putting this up on the internet? Making the decision to make it physical is now something that you can't ignore.

13.30

I was going to bring Visions in the Monitor [to the book fair in Bristol] and I put the CD in to have a look at it...and of course it doesn't play on System 10... Is it right to be selling that? Because people can't access the [digital] material, so the book is fine, [but] the book is fine, people can read the book, hold it, look at it...

15.00

The fact that you can't access that [digital] material has made me rethink, and I think that's also prompted the starting of this Cuning Chapters project, which is taking materiality, loss and ephemerality as its starting point.

16.30

Clare Van Vliet was teaching...she then said "Where's this strange imagery come from?" and I told her I'd written text to go in, she went "Well, let's make a book", and I didn't know those kind of books existed, the... books were really important to me in my childhood, visual books, but I didn't know they existed for adults.

AE- There was a point for me when someone came out with artists' books. It's a revelation!

SJ- It's allowed!

17.50

AE- I'm interested in how people see... get permission to have different roles – are they conscious of it? Are you a poet, designer, etc? Are you aware of this?

SJ- Yeah – the first time I set something I'd written in type and saw it printed, it's the most extraordinary thing, because – that sense of authority that happens by seeing that printed, and rules, rules are a preoccupation in my work...

19.00

...books are what I do, it's become so integrated with me and my thought and my making and who I am, that I would never make something that's not a book. Even if it was a print on the wall I would see it as a part of the series that was the book.

19.50

... because you find things and explore things on the way and discover things same as if you're reading someone else's book...

especially if you're making artists' books and you're not just having a text or an image that's been plunked into a book – you're actually seeing it as an ongoing, changing thing, where the technologies you're using affect how it comes out... Limitations change it... it's an exploration, it's a revelation.

20.50

... there's a containedness about the book which again makes it different that material that might be up on the internet, and... once you choose a metaphor that you're going to be working with and that starts to gather different things around it you start to spend more and more time on it... puzzling it out. The book has a timescale... you know when it's ready to... be put into production and then it has an end, it has a finish, and I think that's what someone like Lyotard in his philosophy might be critical of the book because it's... it has finish, it's not open... that containedness is different from a lot of postmodern thought.

23.26

AE- [books can be closed, allowing me to see them in relation to the rest of my practice]

SJ- In a sense you're talking about publishing as an art activity... rather than the individual book, and I think you're right...as you look back over the things you've published, what you've made...

...maybe it's more helpful to speak of publishing as an art activity than just individual books.

25.28

AE- I bring this up often – very few of us make any money out of the books... it's costly for me... certainly vanity publishing for me.

SJ- But if the work has to exist in that form it's a primary art medium... this text could not just be printed on a laser printer, or it could not just be stuck on the internet in the form [it is here]... it would be different, it would be changed... it's not vanity, it's the primary medium that the work needs to be in.

Susan Johanknecht 2

0.10

AE [can you provide a metaphorical character for what you're doing? Are your books essays, travels on a magic carpet, are they places?]

SJ- I suppose as I said earlier – poem as book – that it becomes a visual physical textual entity...

AE- [You're bringing poetic/rhetorical considerations to the book? Using the language of poetry – poetics?]

SJ- It would be a poetics of the book which would encompass the physical structure, the materials, the way it's made, the placing on the page, and this relationship of reading...

2.17

SJ- Reading is the key I think, reading in the broadest sense. How do we read?

AE- [There are different opportunities for reading over the life of the book: your reading of materials, the readings of the audience, also the published/historical reading. Do you mean reading in all three senses?]

SJ- Definitely, and I think that's what's fascinating with artists' books is they fall into all these different places of reading, whether it's gallery, library, bookshop... where it's found, where you come across it, are you standing up in the gallery and uncomfortably reading while trying to unfold it, are you sitting down in your room reading it really privately, and all of that – so artists' books are even more interesting in terms of reading than regular books.

Julie Johnstone

Interviewed Tuesday, 27th May, 2008.

Julie Johnstone 1

0.10

AE- Can you describe a little bit about how your practice works...?

JJ- ...primarily I will... start with a phrase or a word that I'm interested in exploring, and at the back of my mind always will be the ... potential to use a book or a card to express it in some way... I might think whether there's any potential there to create something to *hold* the word.... But the first thing I would normally think about is 'could it be on paper'?... I have done things on badges [etc] ... there are different ways...

2.26

AE- [Containing ideas separately?]

JJ- ...it's placing them in a space where they can be interacted with or responded to. It's not to take them away from the world and put them in a box – and that's particularly why I like creating cards and things that can actually rest in a place where a person lives, so that they can be a part of everyday life... Encountered again and again and lived with... cards... allow that interaction and response to continue over a period of time.

5.51

There's a whole different experience if you're holding it and you open it... that whole side of books is important, that whole, how you can slow down the experience of the words by how you create the book...

7.22

I've always been interested in the reading process, particularly in slowing down the reading process so each individual word becomes more resonant and I think I'm coming at it more as a poet than an artist, really... I wouldn't particularly describe myself as a poet... I'm working visually with words, but the reading process is important... but this... a lot of the works it's a broader thing to do with perception, but perception for me is a really important thing in the reading proves so that... I've got a phrase down there in the cabinet "the way we travel the distance between word and meaning"... how you can make *quick* judgements about a phrase and then later you might think of it in a different way

8.40

...when you read it should... hopefully change your perception of the world when you stop reading... in essence it should change you...

Seeing the vinyl things on the walls or the smaller things, it makes you more aware of your own perceiving.

12.55

...that's a brand new cabinet, and initially I thought I would put lots of things in it... and then in a sense it has become the 'cover' for the book... so that they are pages within... You *could* say that... I'm not sure I thought that, but because I didn't put anything else in there... it is a whole, rather than it being a display.

15.14

I think initially I was coming at it purely from a... perspective of creating books. Now, as I've progressed, I'm now coming at it with a perspective of ideas and then choosing books as the form for it.

16.00

Initially I started mostly as an editor... I started responding to one or two other people's poems... I used to call them 'poem objects', that's what I used to call them.

19.39

Yeah, I'm not really interested in narrative – I don't think that's what I'm doing at all... You could see it linked between all of the works... some of the works... are quite slight on their own, they might encapsulate a particular facet of an idea and I would hope that they hold up on their own... in a sense they're also part of a larger exploration... so if you put two or three in combination... they might...

21.50

AE- Are they moving away from books? Is your understanding of them as books becoming slighter?

JJ- I wonder actually – my most recent work... there's a lot of cards and not as many books... I would have to have the right idea for a book.

22.35

I do wonder what people do with them when they take them away....they take them home

...

It's still a thing to be read, definitely. I would hope that it gets put on a desk or something, doesn't get put in a box...

Opening a book is a step into something, and you don't know what is going to happen... it is a space, a single page is a space...

26.03

Yeah, I don't think my approach is that [books] are a space to make things within, that doesn't resonate for me, but they are a space to explore things – I think there's a difference there...

When I said 'a space to explore' actually I meant myself... Sometimes the very act of taking an idea and just trying out a few layouts or whatever will actually prove that the idea isn't that interesting... because it doesn't find any dimensions once it's put into a form... maybe the form that you choose tests the idea in a sense, as well as the idea... dictating what the form might be as well.

29.00

... so it's always interesting to watch other people interact with [books] at these fairs and see which ones catch their eye and which ones they seem to ignore. So you test them that way too.

30.44

JJ- I'm not running a business...

AE- I have the idea that there is an exchange ... [of gifts]

JJ- It's a very interesting word 'gift'. I think in a sense the pieces are... yeah. They're not gifts, it's not quite the right word...

33.45

I am a publisher in the sense that I have published one proper book by somebody else, so I do have an identity as a publisher and editor... it's not a huge part of what I do now, but it's sort of how I started off. I'm now much more interested in publishing myself or exploring my own works, so I do have an identity as a publisher and an editor... When I'm working with someone else... there's that interaction, so I am an editor in that sense when I'm taking somebody else's work and finding a form for it which is different. When I'm working with my own works... then I'm not sure what I am...

I think I normally say that I work with words in a visual way.

38.00

I do think of them as moments in time, or moments out of time, almost.

40.26

I really like producing works that don't have any context. So I don't tell anyone that that's about in a sense. You have to provide your own context. So therefore...you can come back again and again...so there is that – coming back to the phrase or the phrase coming back to you.

44.29

It's what you're actually capable of and for me working with elements of design and format and not all this technical side, because I haven't got an artist's background at all.

47.57

JJ-... the one you talked about, within the folds, I did several versions of that; some are a bit deeper, some are a little narrower...

AE- ...and you were saying that sometimes you have surprises from that.

JJ- You just have an idea of what something's going to be in your head... then you actually print something out and it... really needs a lot of work... this is why I work with such a small amount of text, because the more minimal you become... the bigger difference any little change makes so you... can make tiny changes to something, and it can really alter how it occupies the space.

55.50

You've got to remember that it's ultimately a joyful activity...

56.41

Well books are such an important thing in our lives. It's hard to eradicate them from your mind, so perhaps that whole experience of watching people – people interact with books much more that they interact with prints, so maybe it's something... almost as obvious as that, that it's a different way of reaching different people.

...

I'm creating a sort of visual reading process, perhaps. And if you work in the book form it's much more portable really. If you've got a print on the wall what can you do with that, really?

AE- There's a specialness about [books'] experience.

JJ- It's very intimate.

Reassemble – John Say and Sheena Vallely

Interviewed Monday 23rd June 2008

Reassemble 1

2.50

SV-and sort of using intuition to develop ideas very intuitively... the key thing for the Brighton idea was to... combine with sound pieces

4.30

AE- Does this fit in with... habits of practice...going back to things?

JS- I was going to say, yeah, we reassemble stuff... that's really part of our practice is to –

SV- Reinvent –

JS- Put it aside...bring it out again

5.50

JS- ...even with our small books, we've always incorporated sound pieces within them...

6.50

JS ...that's always something [that] has been [there]... using other media so that the book contains this... material that expands out. Sound fills a

space, so if someone is looking at one of our books and playing the sound, then it enlarges the piece.

7.09

JS- We also played around with interactive using *Shockwave* and *Director*... I suppose that's our kind of high technology. We haven't got any presses, we don't work with serious printing machinery, so therefore, maybe, it's a way of us, with our kind of 'cardboard computers' to... raise the bar a bit technically...

8.02

AE- ...can you imagine yourselves making a book, where you would be content for it just to be a print book...?

SV- Maybe not...

8.52

SV- We didn't want that restriction, basically... the whole idea of using the...monoprint process and printing by hand just gives us enormous freedom, so the one-off became our signature, I suppose.

AE- ...rather than ...getting involved in... questions about distribution and publishing?

JS- That's not a concern.

11.04

AE- ...who are your audience? Who are the people... you're at fairs, so you have an idea of people...

JS- And that's through the sound work that we've tried to do as well... You're setting yourself up as a sort of electronic band or whatever, doing this stuff, but actually... we can engage people in the sound work, but then say, "But this is part of a bigger project," In the same way, when we're at book fairs, people initially see the printed material and realise that actually it comes with a sound piece, so it's kind of one bounces off each other... We're both musician, playing in different bands, different kinds of music, so we're aware of an audience and I think that's why we're not into editioned series of books –

SV- ...we're not trying to target anyone in particular, but I'd say that we've quite a wide range of people interested in it who collect... I'm quite surprised at how many people our work appeals to in a way.

13.07

JJS- It's interesting that you just interviewed... John Bently, and he said "nobody earns a living from artists' books". It's the work that you get *out of* that, whether it's teaching... So that's always stuck in my mind, that I'm not out to earn a living through purely selling books, but it's the work that comes from that... it has tentacles and it reaches out.

14.20

JS- But I think you're always... looking for an audience... Each new piece of work that you produce... will have repercussions for different

people... Gradually you are building up an audience. And hopefully we can attract people that like our sound work to actually look at the imagery that we work with and vice-versa: the people that just... want the print material will then go, "ooh, your stuff's really..." ...one thing feeds off the other.

15.50

AE- ...is there something about... the... world of artists' books in general that makes it possible for you to... bring those [varied] things into the fair...?

SV- Actually, you do get the feeling that, not so much *everything* goes, but that there is a freedom to express your idea in any way you feel you're capable of.

JS- Artists' books are fantastic containers for ideas.

17.32

JS-...it's going back to that thing of an audience... with book fairs you pay your money and that's your spot, and that's how you make your mark. It's not like you're invited because you've got a particular way of working... that's what I love... Is it democratic?

AE- It sort of is –

JS...I was getting ticked off with... people telling me when I could show my work or submitting to... a panel of judges or whatever....

20.02

AE- [Semantics: When is a 'zine an artist' book and vice versa? Isn't it just a semantic difference sometimes?]

JS- Do you not feel sometimes you can... fall into the trap of... trying to define it?

AE- I just have!

JS- But that's the thing that I kind of... have to keep reminding myself. ... I don't *have* to have this kind of definition, just do the work, and I'm able to get it out and get a certain amount of people interested...

21.30

SV- ...we're not trying to define a narrative... the whole excitement and expressing our ideas about how we want to deal with the materials...it's all about the process and the making of it and the outcome is just a big bonus when we get to the end...

22.16

AE- Is it a way that the materials are kind of telling the story?

JS/SV Yeah.

22.40

JS- It's not a narrative... people go on a journey, but we're not telling them how to get to the end.

SV- It's a response to the materials...

23.50

SV- You can be ...carried away into some other, whatever world you want to get into and... that's a really exciting thing for us... the whole idea of allowing colour and space and allowing composition to evolve... in a very pictorial way, but not trying to make sense of it, just reacting very intuitively to the images... the thing about folding pages is quite... great, how one page can relate to the other, it's quite.. random when we're actually making up the books

24.34

JS- Apart from the word 'Reassemble', I think ' randomness' would be ...[appropriate] purely in the terms of... from the starting point of finding an object that we think we can take back to the studio and work on, is a random event. And we follow that through to the print stage, and to the actual folding of the book – there is this play on randomness. And now in the sound work that we do... we sat down and we said ' let's try and produce sound pieces that reflect exactly the way we work in print', which, you know, it does, because we go out... record... find pieces of recording, which we then take back to the studio and process and then we will sit down –

SV- really start again –

JS- yeah, and just layer pieces, in the same way that we do with the books, we just layer the pages. So we don't work n that... telling stories [way] –

SV- Keeping it as open for people to interpret however they want.

AE- I was going to say, though, in a way, there is a story that you've just told me... which is, you take something, you perform some sort of operation on it, and then you to... another point.

JS- That's more of a strategy for getting the work done, rather than saying that we're telling a story about this object

AE- [agrees]

JS- ...it's a way of us actually just producing work. Having a starting point.

26.40

AE- [what's your relationship to...viewers, readers... what do you want to call them?]

JS- Audience

AE- Who's doing the performing, if there's an audience... are they? Are you? Is the work?

JS- I think it depends on the environment – if it's a book fair I think it's the work that's performing, whereas when we're doing our live piece series, which we are recording to then put in another piece – then of course we are performing that, and we're showing that work.

28.15

AE- ... I was just interested in your relationship to people reading, people making the work their own.

JS- It just struck me actually, that it feels at times that because we set up these strategies to get work going, that actually the work speaks for itself and it develops on its own in a way... sometimes I feel like I don't have... a handle on it, and I'll just let that thing go – that imagery work its way through... that process to inform however the imagery is going to turn out, so in some respects it's actually the work – is performing – it's got a life of its own.

29.20

AE- ... the material itself that's doing it –

JS- That's certainly – through working with the notion of artists' books, that's something that's informed me, whereas work that maybe I was producing before I started making books was very much me ... having to have this idea, and having to get that idea down as a finished piece of work, and not really letting either the process or the final piece speak for itself – it was very much I was dictating how the work would look.

AE- Why is that, do you think?

...

JS-...I think that's the sequential nature of books as well –

30.10

SV- It really is... even when you're... showing your work through the book at book fairs, you can often get some sort of bright sparks of ideas through people's reactions to your work. Not so much [that] they go 'ooh, I'd like that in red', but they would say, 'oh, that reminds me of blah, blah, blah' and so there are ways that people interpret your work [which] can be quite encouraging and inspiring.

JS- and informative.

SV- ...it really... excites you to get back to the studio and keep it going – rather than translate what they've said...

31.30

JS- ... when we are talking of narrative or whatever... it seems with a series of... imagery... or if you've got a series of pages that have text or whatever, then rather than just the one-off piece, then there is more space for interpretation.

32.20

SV- I just don't like that tied-down-ness of the word... I think it's more expressive to use... not to use text at all...

...

JS- It goes back to... the way that our strategies ... map out that... it doesn't allow for that *loaded* piece of information – which a statement in text is, like a punch...

SV- ...The dominance of just a couple of words can really... influence the whole book.

34.15

AE- ...I use text a lot in my own books... to pinch something that John [Bently] said this morning, it's like having two lives... two...processes... and it's kind of like playing tennis with yourself...

JS- It's interesting having these two... lives. 'Cause maybe that's – we use sound – and that's our 'text-based-work' in a way.

AE- [two sides of the 'process, rather than two media?]

35.33

JS- ... I have this fantasy that when people buy one of our books that they *do* take it home and they put the sound piece on, and then they sit there with the book and let the sound happen and the imagery unfold. And then there's some – they make their own connections in the same way that if you were reading a piece of text... the imagery ...created through that text is going to add to [the visual narrative]

38.59

JS- Is the strategy the story? That's the story we're trying to tell... with the book drops it's this whole story of us making this... tiny book in the

studio, which then will take on a life of its own when it's dropped in a place, photographed and put on the website. That's the story, that's the narrative.

41.00

SV- ...we have to allocate certain times for each process... there isn't enough space really. But also head space –... we have to be in one mode... for a couple of weeks.

JS- That's a good one, 'cause I do feel that, that I have to say 'I've got two weeks of print mode and then two weeks of sound mode' and it's like I have to tidy away the imagery, tidy away the printing stuff so I can get down to thinking or listening to the sound pieces.

SV- Also... they're natural progressions... we'll exhaust one process and... you really want to go on, making full use of the next process... as a result of getting so far with one, and then wanting to continue that expression and development...

AE- Isn't it great that you can?

JS- Yeah – which again goes back to why the artists' book format is such a fantastic way of allowing you to do that... if I was a painter, I just think I'd be nuts by now... because of just that day after day... working with the same medium.

43.50

JS- I think what I found with that... dealing with one process or with one image – it never allowed you time to – it never let you off the hook. You know like with book making,, and even with our quite loose reference to

books, there are times when it's basically just collating one page with another.... You can kind of ease up on the thinking... just do something mundane and physical... When I was working on one image it was just... constantly nagging, constantly... having to be that intense over such a long period of time. Whereas at least at times I feel that I can – even with sound work – there are certain processes... [when] it's just about being physically in a space... and not having –

AE- Not always having to be absolutely at the sharp edge of your brain–

JS- Exactly!

45.46

JS- I don't wish to sit on the edge [of a] precipice for 12 hours a day producing work... There's something liberating about the idea of producing a book; there's something that liberated me from that... way of working.

AE-That sounds very familiar to me

JS- Maybe a lot of book artists start with that one direction about what kind of medium, and what kind of imagery... or what kind of writing they're going to do, and then gradually... Maybe everyone sits on that edge for too long – “I need a break, I need to find another way of doing it”

47.10

AE- [sometimes I worry- have I got stuck in books? Should I do other things?]

JS- That's why I started making books, because I thought, "I *can* make films, I can make sound pieces" because that's... what you can put in your book.

AE- You can put it all in?

JS- Yeah... if you've got the bottle enough to have the idea then – you know?...

That's exactly why I chose to make books, because I wanted to make films, I'd wanted to... produce sound pieces, I wanted to play around in *Director* and make these little... interactive pieces and I thought, "Well, the book is a great... vehicle for doing that."

48.30

JS- in a way I always viewed the laptop It's the same thing but you just go at it in a different way, and that's what we started to do. The first... interactive pieces, we would take our laptop with us and it was part of our display of our book.

49.50

JS- You know, it's reversing – that people are coming to book fairs because they actually want to be able to pick up stuff and they want to be able to smell ink and play with paper.

52.02

JS- it is that thing... it's the generation that's brought up on having instant gratification from [the] screen or from movies... maybe we are all engaged in making books to actually slow things down a bit.

Lucy May Schofield

Interviewed Thursday, 12th June, 2008.

Lucy May Schofield 1

6.20

I always like people to go away with something. I think that's why I make books, because it enables people to have something affordable and instant, actually

7.21

I think that that's a control books give me as well, because I like... not being in a gallery setting. I find that quite an uncomfortable place to be a lot of times, as a viewer... or if I'm exhibiting, so creating these kind of spaces for people to read the work, or discuss the work, or spaces that people can ...happily talk... about anything...

By creating an ... installation or a room set, it's making people just stop that little bit longer and it's kind of in complete contrast to the kind of digital age where everything is so instant... I can get really frustrated if things aren't given to me on an internet site really quickly... I'm really aware that people have this very... short attention span.

9.09

AE- you've spoken...about how you like to have really nicely-made things...

LMS- I think it's commanding an attention from people or a comfort.... When someone picks up a book that's beautifully made, they're more careful with them that they are a paperback... that's why that process of making is quite important to me, and using... lovely materials...[it] makes people slow down and look at the world in a different way.

10.25

Sometimes they don't satisfy me enough... the times that they don't work, it's the places that you show them... book fairs I really struggle with, because it's a table, and people are stood up, and they're looking at your work *if* they've got the time and all these books are on the tabletop vying for attention and they can get lost and get neglected and...

11.15

Some stands are always busy... you don't have to look hard, or try hard to figure out what's going on there... and it's the quieter ones... the ones that take a little bit more viewing, more looking time that I fear get lost.

... a lot of the [books are] ... produced in production runs that make them very handle-able, not delicate at all... That's when it upsets me, the book, it dissatisfies me.

...

That's why an opportunity to show at... a bigger venue, like the Origin show, or in a window... that kind of makes more sense with what I'm doing because it's creating more of a space [so] that people can engage with the work.

14.18

I think they're really handy containers, aren't they? They're so succinct in their form... the idea of being able to publish something yourself; not just write it; illustrate it, tell it, articulating an idea, and then printing it and making it and distributing it was just perfect. It made such a lot of sense to me... I really feel strongly about having something, having a piece of artwork that is affordable and in an edition of, you know, a hundred or a thousand.

AE- Something that makes it accessible?

LMS- Yeah, so it's not just one person that's ever going to experience that. It's like... buying a postcard of the painting that you see in an exhibition, but being able to actually buy the painting, but knowing that... even though maybe 1000 people would have it, they'd all be slightly different.

16.02

I think they need to have a life of their own... when they're made I like the idea of where they'll go or where they might sit, what kind of bookshelves. The nicest compliment I think I've ever had about my work is a lady... she bought... maybe five books, all different ones, and gave them to different people in her life that meant something...

I just thought... that was a really lovely notion, that someone would've bought these books to articulate something to someone else, and they just go on and have these other lives...

17.52

AE- You like having these stories coming back to you, things having been part of people's lives...?

LMS- That exchange – I think it's just about impact... it's such a basic requirement that I have that it just needs to have had... you want to know in some way that what you've done might have had an impact on someone, you know, in relationships that you build and friendships that you have... It's that validation that you're here for a reason... you've done something good for somebody, so I think that's what the books try to do...

18.45

I don't think they're really alive without an audience... I don't think they exist unless...

19.00

I think the more I've made, the more hopeful I've been, of letting them have their own existence. I think in the beginning they were really so personal... and I didn't edit much at all so everything was really raw and I used to describe being at bookfairs as being... you're just exhausted afterwards because it had been like you'd exhibited your heart on a table.

19.56

I've tried to ... have less ownership of them when they go out there... when people read them, they instantly have... their own perceptions, they have new characters and... then they own it, and it's gone from me.

AE- They have a kind of participatory role to play, themselves?

LMS- Yeah, they do.

20.23

AE- [the audience] kind of make that other half of the reading?

LMS- I expect that from people to a degree... I think the thing that didn't satisfy me in the recent exhibition about the dolls' houses was that there was less... I expected more participation from the viewers because I wasn't giving them everything. I'd created this room which was... I thought very like a book, in the sense of it, it had a kind of clear narrative to it, and it was sequential and episodic, and so I felt like when people went in they had the experience that they would've had in one of my books and then... just on a scale where they're having someone next to them, or people in and out of the space. So that pleased me, but then it was less satisfying actually, because... you got the comments back and you get feedback, but it wasn't someone literally buying-into your idea, so it had less impact on me in a way.

27.21

AE- You've noticed that it's different... that you get a better response when it is enclosed in a book?

LMS- I think it's just more.... It may not be a better response. It's maybe just more satisfying to me ... It's this mobile object, it's so convenient and it can be taken away and then dipped into again. The only way that people will dip into that exhibition again is if they go on to my website...

But it's just less satisfying for me to have done that.

It's not a book transaction, there's no contact and no buying-in

23.30

AE- I think we're quite interested in... games... Games have a sort of boundary to them and they work because everybody respects the boundary... I think we like to set up conventions so that we can present little worlds...

LMS- It is absolutely that, yeah. I think it's about control of that as well, you know. I find it... interesting that the sort of people that make artists' books... it's a complete generalisation, but they are often softly-spoken, quiet, contained people... It's kind of a ... particular type of artist I think that... make books, and I really enjoy that kind of world where you're communicating... in quite a secret way... It's a whispering, isn't it? It's not kind of a loudspeaker...

25.12

...I think that's what appeals to me so much... You can really command someone's attention for a limited time and speak to them one to one. It's so cathartic to do, especially... with the themes that I sort of explore... it's like someone telling you a secret I suppose, and you're responsible for passing that on or keeping it to yourself.

27.43

It does feel like the way that I work and what I'm making does feel quite holistic... it does all fold in... I sometimes think "God, stop working on these themes"...

But with books I think it makes... it creates these subheadings – it's like a filing cabinet and... I think it's a way of compartmentalising certain elements of a theme so it's "Well, it's covered in that, that element's covered in that " so it's almost like a librarian's ... way of classification.

...

Probably... a way of ...guiding someone through a journey, I suppose.

29.30

I'm really interested in the timescale of different sets of works, so you know, things that I made five years ago, things that I made this year, and the books in-between... I just think I'm keeping making until I'm satisfied that something's being expressed clearly, or with enough intimacy... I like how the book can... allow you to... have this series... so it might become something, it might become something else.

31.55

They arrive from an absolute need to kind of articulate something, usually from a frustration of not being able to articulate something, so then they become the voice that I haven't had... every time that happens, another book's made... It's still a mystery to me... I'll keep making work until it kind of becomes less of a mystery.

35.51

[Re 42]

With this one it's [an] incredibly intimate diary of the time spent on the residency [at Deuchar Mill]... just having a routine and drinking well-water and looking at dead animals on the road... I wanted to make 100 copies of those... it's the biggest edition of any of the artist's books, but it's curiously probably the most intimate one. ... It's that feeling of wanting to... by having an edition of 100 it felt like... it's the most important book that I feel that I've made in a lot of ways... because I want to share that experience more than any of the others... That informs the edition size. So I want 100 people to share that with me, whereas I want 42 people to share that or ...10 people to share that... So that informs how many I make or how many are in a series, however much I've got to say about one particular timeframe. ... I always think of things in timeframes... rather than...

38.25

[Writing process in 42]

There was kind of no one else there to record it for me, so I had this ritual that every day I took a photograph... That one in particular is a ...photograph of a spider... out-of-focus and bad contrast, but each day I woke up and on waking or on sleeping or in the middle of the day I wrote probably an A4 page. A bit kind of stream-of-consciousness style free writing. ... For each page of the book there's a photograph taken on that day and so, woodshed images, and if I was in the studio, if I was in the workshop all day printing there'd be strip lights, or a batch of newly letterpressed books or a trip to Edinburgh or whatever it could be, and it

was important that I made those rules... and my rule was, a photograph a day and some text from the day, and then getting them offset litho printed and folded on the foredge, so it looks like a... paperback...

AE -- ... there's room for quite a lot to unfold from quite simple premises really.

LMS – What I wanted, I kept thinking about, after a weekend, you'd go back to school on a Monday, and you'd have to do your picture and your story, so it was a bit like that... of this whole time... Write up what you'd done... That was kind of what that was about...

AE—Were you thinking of yourself as a writer at that point...?

LMS – [Laughs] I don't even think of myself as an artist, Andrew! It doesn't sit well with me, 'artist', 'writer', not even 'bookbinder'... I don't really know what to call myself, you know... I do struggle with those descriptions.

41.16

AE – What do you think of my ... ideas about how ... people making books are... taking control of their roles? What do you make of that – it doesn't seem like it's terrifically you, that kind of, it doesn't seem like you're into that kind of exchanging of hats.

LMS – I am. I don't know if I enjoy it, but I think I am that. I always describe myself as wearing different hats... I've made things that I still stock to shops and feel like a product designer, and a distributor, and a printer ... my fear is that I don't excel in any area: I have loads of hats... sometimes several times throughout the day you're wearing different hats and being different things, but I do fear that I'm not... successfully one...

I wrote a note about feeling like a part-time writer, part-time artist, part time printer, part-time bookbinder, part-time product designer, part time... window-display installer.

43.18

I've sometimes dreamed of having an agent to do certain things, like an agent for the products I make, or an art agent... and I thought that'd be just great... but actually, I'm not sure that I would cope, because I absolutely need control of so many elements ... I feel really passionate about how the work ... becomes part of the world and ... who it goes to, and I really like the control of talking to my audience, and engaging with them and having an exchange, and I don't think I could allow someone else to do that, I wouldn't trust someone to... So I find it hard to send work to shops, because I think, 'ooh, you don't really know what it's about', so I often have... lengthy meetings... taking them through work and the ... the stories and the narratives ... and then they do a much better job and they sell the work more successfully, they talk to their audience about it. And then, I feel like I can sleep well at night, knowing that there's not a misrepresentation of something going on...

45.47

[On people taking her books away to have their own experiences with them.]

I feel like they need more, I'm really kind of aware that people – I don't ever want anyone to feel short changed, so I'll go above and beyond the call of duty, to sell something, or to talk... I'll spend 20 minutes talking to someone who's bought something for £5 ... It's really important to me,

for some stupid reason, to have engagement with people that are interested, and people that have taken the time. I mean, time is so valuable to people, that then if they give me their time, I feel like they need something more than a book, they need some more words, or they need a conversation, or they need ... for me to listen to their story, actually... When I've shown at *Origin*... I've been given recipes, and poems... really lovely exchanges, or stories that I've taken away and thought , 'oh'...

47.39

I think that's why I made that work, the *Ready Made Love Letter*, because ... I'm not just giving them ... [I want] to give them some heartfelt emotion, some real experience... they can have that exchange with someone else ... I don't want ownership of it, I want them to have it. And it's the same with the books, I want them to know where they've come from, but then I want them to have their own projections.

51.58

It's this installation of these nine rabbits, and they took an age to make, because, as well as the dolls' house work, I was really fascinated with... the idea of these... 1940s soft toy that I found at the museum, and I thought, '... Who's got time to sit around making soft toys now?' – not many people. And so I photocopied this great series of them and then used old calico I used to stretch on canvases when I used to paint. And then I ... just cut them all out, so they looked like these little... skinned rabbit-components. And then, over 3 months, made these rabbits ... and

then hand embroidered the eyes. But the eyes became ... all very unique...

53.41

They were called *Nine White Rabbits with Eighteen Black Eyes*. I said, 'The creation of these rabbits was a slow, meditative process. In contrast to the speed of modern life, they took an age to complete. The first ones were made with frantic haste, in fear of my inability to sew' – I really thought that being able to sew was the mark of a god woman ... you know, my grandmother was a gold embroiderer... 'to watch the production of these rabbits was excruciating, witnessing the obscure dogstooth stitching constant mistakes, and the prolonged nature of their creation.' People were watching me, having a really hard time seeing me sew... 'They seem to form the antithesis to the relaxed, cathartic pastime for which they'd been designed in the 1940s. The sewing skills inherent in past generations of women had somehow passed me by... Through perseverance, nine rabbits were born,' (Which is an average litter for a ... European ... white rabbit), ' ... with a little more enjoyment every time. I became addicted to the process of their production, sewing on trains, buses and by moonlight. By rabbit five I was hypnotised by the repetition which removed and excused me from everyday activities, transfixed and delighted with each new addition to my brood. My changing state of mind was depicted in each embroidered pair of black eyes, from kind of 'scared eyes', 'abandoned eyes', 'anxious eyes' ... and the forced productivity of the bereft rabbits, flattened, not filled.... represented my own fecundity and desire for improved domestic capabilities.' ... I felt almost – motherly towards them after they were made, and couldn't really put a price on them, didn't want to part with them ... They were

haunting me, the production of them, and yet they were saving me from engaging in all the... anxiety about the exhibition.

1.02.52

[On the book as a metaphorical space of making]

It can sometimes be restricting, which I really enjoy, that restriction – but a place to make things – It's a place to edit things, and it's a place to gain ownership on certain things. Even though a lot of the work's drawn from personal experience, I feel like I can rewrite the endings and have a voice in them. So it's really a place for me to – it's like a confessional. I've always sort of thought of books as kind of confessionals ... I suppose it's not changing the story, it's just putting your point of view on them ...

AE – Do you find out more about your point of view by doing them?

LMS – Yeah. I feel like I'm in a different head space when I write. I feel like I'm in a different place when I make them as well, so, sometimes, the day-to-day activities that you do... if I read an old sketchbook ... or ... I read some of these entries [from 42] ... reading some of the free writing I'd done, and sometimes it's sort of an out-of-body experience, and I can't recall writing it, I can't recall even the feelings I had when I wrote it. It's this instant response to the world ... and then it becomes a book, almost without any editing. There's no kind of transition ... from my head to the book. [In the sense that there is no intervention in the transition - AE] ... And it's always been like that, so they become my other self, I suppose. ... Without them being self-conscious.

AE – There's the structure of the book itself... that it's a linear sort of thing, that it forces—

LMS—That order

AE—Forces you to take a journey through it.

LMS—Really, I love the beginning, middle and the end. ... it's a natural way for me to construct a piece of work, but it's also about... what the book's about, so it's about the experience, which you could call the research, and then it's the execution of the idea, and then it's the presentation and the distribution. So there's this kind of three phase[s] to it, which ... that's why I like the form, it's the research ... the execution ... the presentation. And that's the beginning, middle and the end of the whole... narrative.

AE--[That sounds to me like what I would describe as three 'roles'] ... I think we get access to different aspects of our creativity through those things.

LMS – I think that's right ... It's also how I describe the making of things – you can be – I feel like someone else, different when I'm researching, experiencing and writing, coming up with the material. And then I'm someone else when I'm making. I'm almost like a baker ... I really enjoy that process of batch production. ... And then there's the face of it ... doing those shows and being – giving people their money's worth – and being the performer, and saying 'this is what the book is about', so there are these three, distinctly –

Lucy May Schofield 2

0.27

AE -- [Does it help you to work within the framework the book offers, rather than the whole wide world?]

LMS – I've put, 'not necessarily' ... I'd thought about it being... I don't know if I think about the books 'housing ideas' ... they're more of a container of something more intimate. They're these intimate vessels, which then ... putting them in that accessible vehicle of a book is ... why I use the book. Because ... it's the physicality of it... rather than trying to be quite concise about an idea. It's more about having an intimacy with the object.

AE – Nevertheless, though, in order to make a book you have to decide what the tale is that you're going to tell and what the limits of it are. You can't put everything in.

LMS – That's true... You're naturally editing... Like with *Roadkill* it's just one page, folded between two boards... it is giving the boundaries... I could be making something... the description of that book is quite wordy in my catalogue, commenting about... mortality and countryside and deterioration and decay and the fragility of creatures and of life, so I suppose the book is quite concisely housing one image. I think... maybe it is a way of putting boundaries on what could be a very open idea in that sense.

Tate Shaw

Interviewed Wednesday, 14th May, 2008.

Tate Shaw 1

0.30

very much formed my vision... trying [to] combine fictional narrative with multiple books

2.07

...music, fiction, those things are representative for sure.

5.00

...I spent a lot of time in garages with musicians as they were recording... that kind of fun, "don't know you're taking it seriously" ...as a creative outlet... kind of thing you're doing almost socially I suppose

6.24

...I kind of got tuned in to this multiple voice idea a little bit through documentaries, where you'd have... 2 channels... My friend Andrew [Sallee?] was a big influence too – he'd make music where the channels would change from ear to ear for the listener and there's ... 2 songs going on – one in your right ear, one in your left ear... you kind of performatively make up the piece a little bit on your own... and with the

readerly perspective, I'm constantly trying to build in a bit of deep complexity so that things can be read many times over... that's what guides the 'thickness' of my books and also the multiple stories within.

8.21

How I really got started with books, thinking I suppose it came from wanting to imagine... this kind of deconstructed view of reading and I... wanted to make books that were kind of like post-read... like a person's experience...

...I was much more interested in writing something and, you know, editing my own writing if you will.

...so there was definitely this kind of "post-read" (that's kind of a clunky term)... something that I'd made... editing down in a certain way to present it to the reader... I would imagine that the reader was...

...when I first started in wanting ...to touch, out to them, it's palpable through the pages. If you've got *Ordinary Curtains* there in front of you, there's this one section of greasy fingerprints... on the page... quite literally attempting to say 'you and I are touching in this... same way'

12.00

...I'd definitely say I don't like the term necessarily like 'perform the reading', because there is... this connection... there's this implied touching that goes through, but it's not a single thing.

12.44

...it's also collaborative, it's not necessarily like the single bout act of where you go... there's these finite boundaries to books and you can only go so far, you're not going to perform out everything.

13.40.

From the making perspective there's a lot of concerns that go into what the boundaries are going to be; sizes and depths and everything else. And it... does free up... what I can say and how I can say it... It's like the constraints of... Oulipo or any sort of writing that has constraints... and [you] make it work within that particular bound framework; it's that sort of thing that's kind of limiting for some... but... for me it's been quite liberating.

16.07

There is a considerable amount of collecting that does into it... like 6000 photographs over the course of a year... you can collect ad infinitum...

...but when it comes to actually going from page to page to page... I'm taking this very much directed... writerly perspective on how I'm linking from one picture to the next picture... that sometimes involves physical acts... "how can I make this bend over the foredge?" or connect with the reader in the sense of time and space that you have with the book.

17.25

AE- We've got... that aspect of visual poetics coming into it as well. You're using your stuff to tell stories... to make it understood in some way. Is that right?

TS- Absolutely, yeah... I'm getting away from storytelling as much, but I'm still... focused on this visual poem idea...

18.30

...because I've been [in Rochester] for a few years I've looked at a lot of Nathan Lyons' photograph work and it's very much about extending the frame of one image, to next, to another photograph and another... through these sequences. And he does it very straight... there's no 'twisting' of the image. He's very much the photographer working within the bound limits of that one frame. So I guess there's that aspect that's come into my understanding of how photographs... how to make pauses, and pauses like line breaks in poems... with the turning of pages. Although I don't really understand poetry that well - I read some - I don't have a background in it... I'm sure it relates more than I'm even aware to more writerly poems. There is a language base. I'm dealing with the physical structure of books - put one thing in front of another, and have it have a grammar, and have it have a direction implied...

20.28

I'm fascinated by sense studies... proprioception.... It's very much related to touching, and this relates... to how I think about...

understanding the poetry of reading a book where it's so much tied up with your body and the experience of it. There's extra perception too... whether you read in [light or dark surroundings]. It's hard in a way to talk about a lot of artists' books production in a readerly kind of way, because we don't just carry [artists'] books out and read them in the park... or on planes... I know it gets talked about, but I don't think it actually gets done that much... You just understand maybe a little bit of how it's going... what's happening when you're looking at a visual book... trying to articulate certain books, the complexity I find in different books... connecting those through different kinds of metaphors... reading as prowling, book as [cage?] ... walking through walls. How do I really understand this book, I don't always have the theoretical or critical background to do that... you just do it with your hands and your eyes, I guess.

25.00

With books like *Ordinary Curtains* I'm imagining at least that one section has its kind of affect pull to another section... which can hopefully live on its own and eventually... made these separate booklets where... they do live on their own. But... you compile them into the bigger collection of *Ordinary Curtains* and they affect one another

26.21

Other than the one section 'booking acts' where I kind of just poured that text in... it's hyper-composed. [I spent] a year and a half or so writing those very short... maybe a total of 5000 words... and [comping?] on the

pages' situation as well- you're trying to compose for the reader's interaction...

29.14

I don't find there to be a lot of deeply complicated, deeply personal stuff in a lot of the artists' books that I come across on a routine basis, although, if you talk to the people that've made these things they're... tellingly... they hold onto these things, and they're very much connected to what they've made.... I'm trying [to make a] commentary on daily life and trying to affect the daily life for the reader... it's coming just from physical, everyday experiences... it's just about super-simple things that can come through... I really do find that the book is about this sort of simplicity... and about [the] permanence of simplicity, if you will, when you're dealing with paper instead of digital poetics or performative kinds of work... even art installations or painting installs where the light is going to be different... Every time it gets read, I hope it connects in the same way, it gets made, if you will.

32.30

The stuff I'm trying to do is to give you a reason to go back to these books... more than once... For myself as well.

34.18

...When I've figured out all the pieces... and I get them all on the page... I think my first reaction is always "well, the reader's going to know there's puzzle pieces... the puzzle's going to be there in front of [the

reader] , and I'm doing all the hard work to figure out the puzzle and... the reader will get it at first glance" ... I know that's not true, but... I'm thinking "well, I know I'm making something that's complicated" ...but I don't consider this notion of taking... a little bit here and a little bit there, and every time you go back... you have a more refined sense of what is being said, or a different sense of what is being said...

...it's fixed storage... it's nice to be able to go back and know that you've changed when it has more or less stayed the same... there's books.. I look back and I've kind of figured them out... and I don't really have anything else to add to them or they're not going to affect me any more... whereas you take a big symphony and there's a lot more nuance and you can probably hear it the rest of your life before you could actually figure out what's really... experienced there.

38.07

I just love the work of making... the code... I've got all these bits and... there's such a love for figuring out how they're all going to work together... the idea that you can put them all [in] place and you're creating this complex, complete description of something... it almost comes across, I think, as parts that... then have to be put together...

39.16

...many people've said to me 'I just don't understand what's happening, but I'm trying to"...and I think that's... the goal. [There is] this constant awareness of that... of that sort of consciousness... I go back to... movement of books, and turning pages, and what it means to... turn pages and actually be an active participant in a work...

40.00

... this is a constant reaffirmation that you are alive in some way... you're the thing that's moving, you're the thing that has to turn the page, and you're the one that's acknowledging your own movement so often when you're turning a page that it becomes an affirmation of life in a way... If you're thinking about [it] as you're doing it, it becomes 'I'm making this happen' or not even 'making it happen', but just, 'I am moving', and it becomes just, kind of, meditative in that way.

44.25

AE- [it was liberating to me to find a way that it was 'alright to write'.]

TS- I couldn't agree more about the writing thing. It's just one of those forms where you can do a lot... it is incredibly liberating, just to say, 'oh, I... need to get this point across: I can just tell them in words, or I can tell them in this picture, or I can tell them with the turning of a page...' I guess the need to get the point across comes first... the idea of 'role' also plays a part with me in terms of publishing... I don't bind any of my own stuff- not that often anyway... that role... I just don't like it!... [I] outsource some printing [too,] sometimes.

AE- This all sounds very familiar... I like to make the things, but I don't want to *make* the things...

TS- Exactly!... So the funny role for me that's really kind of definitive- I really have come to enjoy... I work with Kris Merola, my publishing partner at *Preacher's Biscuit Books*, but... it really nails down sort of politics and definitions for the book when I started to help other people get their books out because I started to think about... I only have this much money... we can put out this much money for this book, & that

means it's going to have to be this... [size, etc.]. [You] really start to think about space and structure in a different way... You start to realize how – everybody's doing this, but nobody's talking about how influential it is on making.

47.41

I am interested in projects that take on at least a part of my own... something I would love to say better [but don't know] how to say it. I don't know how to articulate what this artist is articulating so well but I have an affinity for the idea... The affinity I have for this work is so strong [that I think' other people are going to recognize this as well – I think that that role plays a deeply creative part. Someone... said to me recently... we were trying very hard to publish this book that we... just did not love... we just... came to see you just cannot publish a ... book that you don't understand completely or you don't have that need to communicate in the same way you do your own work... It's just as hard to get the thing out as it is to get your own work out in a way.

49.01

Going back to the original thought though, the roles I play are multi-collector of imagery, mostly collecting, writing of texts and I remembered when I first started out I talked to Scott McKearney... I was saying something to the effect of "so much anxiety – I feel like I have to be an expert in graphic design, ... a great writer...great photographer, image maker... I don't know how to do all those things in one lifetimes _ you can't be a David Carson typographer and also be a book artist" ... he... looked at me with complete confusion [laughs] because he'd been

working with books for twenty years and I don't even know that he said much, he just said..." you don't have to... learn all these facets... you just... put it on the paper" and – that's a bad paraphrase – but he more or less just was kind of confused by the idea that you have to be expert... perfect all these different subsets...

None of those things is – it's just a gestalt problem – the weight of the book itself... we find more affinity for the typography or... the pictures...the text...how all those things get combined is the real problem I suppose.

51.23

Joan Lyons... was telling me... somebody from Europe had written her... back in the eighties and said... 'why are you historicizing, theorizing books?' 'This is like the only place where you can actually make work and have it not be put in this pigeonhole... not stuck in this sort of historical problem or a theoretical problem for academics.'" And [Lyons]... from my understanding, she really struggled with that question, because you do have such a freedom I suppose... it is permissible to whatever you want when you are publishing or making something on your own and there's really not that much attention for it – there's not... there's not the inertia of... dealers and all those others I guess that go into it, so it's not like job work...

53.00

... I've done some graphic design stuff for money and it is nothing like making a book! You think it's gonna be – you'd think that [training in] graphic design... is gonna help you...and it does in a technical sense but

not in the conceptual sense at all, your ideas are completely different, so it's quite permissible, you get to dabble in so many things... people like Clifton Meador who makes his own fonts and does pretty much everything ... he doesn't rely on any... outside [work]... he does all the printing... sometimes he does his bindings as well... it's just kind of astonishing.

55.00

[that] I [have] the permission to be creative with ... format and techniques and so on is profound, but it's funny...I always have this book in mind... if you're making a book there's a size and a shape and a density that you're after – and it's never that the subject comes second, but it's so intertwined with the subject that it seems it's [a] kind of mind/body connection, I guess.

57.00

TS- ...For instance, right now, I'm working on all these ideas about folding in general... it wasn't until I realised that I could actually ... fold the image [in a particular way]... so things get covered up... You apply a rule and it kind of unlocks all these other ideas that you can play with...It's a different way of thinking I suppose, than pure language play... dealing with these kind of material properties and you begin to... play with the materiality and you want to comment on that.

AE- I would say it wasn't a purely material thing either , really, was it? ...

TS- I agree... it's not purely... they go hand in hand... I've shown this particular project to some photographers and they absolutely... you

know, do not understand why I'd want to fold the picture in half...
Because they're kind of led to the idea within the frame of a... digital
photograph.

Christine Tacq

Interviewed Wednesday, 21st - Thursday 22nd February, 2007.

Christine Tacq 1

3.38

Sometimes it's how people react to what you've done if you give it an airing

4.18

Whatever I'm given to do, I'll 'cheat' in whatever way possible, so that it overlaps with what I'm doing anyway... that's quite good sometimes, because it's kind of being pulled in two directions

8.49

Books tend to be dreams, that seems to be a theme, that it's dreams in the sense of desires.

11.51

Putting a chapter with each name heading – it was just a way of giving that *space*.

12.19

It's really important, and we don't realise it in the rush to put things together... you can incorporate all the senses in a book... I think the boundaries are not less, I think they're more, because, for a start, it's something that you touch.

17.27

Anything that was already in the image you could completely get rid of... I haven't put myself through this [again]... not with that much emphasis on the text.

23.09

Postcards...because it's a form, a construction – you can't write much, so I used that as an excuse to start writing again... the more battered they were... the better.... I've laser printed the battered ones that I sent.

24.26

[the poems on the back of the postcards had] a certain number of syllables, very... restricted, you're also restricted by the size of the postcard – maybe that's why we chose to write on postcards... the restriction makes you – you've got to put down a nice little phrase... I don't know if it's good writing but it made me look for the essence

30.39

[On pairing and juxtaposition in book form]

You couldn't do that with one image on the wall, or even a series of prints... you can't look on the back and see that it's a postcard that represents a moment in time.

42.41

My ideal book would be one where you could look at it at a book fair and you could immediately get what it was going to be about – where it communicated straight away... it has to be at a bookfair, doesn't it, it has to be quite fast?... But in the way that a painting on the wall communicates – that you'd see it and you'd know there was something about it, to come back and get more deeply involved – a book at a bookfair needs to do that to be really successful, but if you took it home there'd be enough for a lifetime, so it would unfold.

45.00

That's the thing about books, you've actually got so much – when you talk about boundaries, they're not boundaries really, you're using space and time in a way that you could never do.

Christine Tacq 2

7.00

It's like William Blake... I've decided that having read very contradictory things in his... heaven & hell series... That's how I've decided to cope with the Blake book.

11.00

I'm very attracted to texts... that have been passed on, so that they have been refined through telling.

20.20

The idea was...from the point of view of the form of it... you could arrange them in any order, so although it's ... there was a history to it you could rearrange them, in the same way that these – you could get rid of the sequence because memory has these different layers and re-sequence them.

21.41

Having said that you can arrange it in any way – I often start on a book and don't know how it's going to end, I don't *really* know where it's going

28.00

AE- You've created a forest... for these things to happen in?

CT- Yes, it was also a bit of a joke really...for the first time I was wearing glasses, working 'til 4 in the morning... and I fell down the stairs... and I've never sleepwalked before... That sort of thing comes about... because your head is in one space – you're creating a book – you're living in one world, but you're having to function in the other one, so the sleepwalking is this thing of... living through... stories of what happened in the past.

34.00

I've never... thought it would be possible to reach a large number of people, I've kind of given up on that because it all seems too much. And then you have to deal with other things once things got that big... I've always said... if it was able to reach more than two people,,, that's enough.. to just communicate enough so that one person... will understand *something* of what I'm saying... the message is the most important thing, it's seeing all these little parallels that I really love, when someone gets what I'm trying to do...

[At fairs] I've had some of the best conversations, but that's the book fair setup, it's a one-to-one thing, so although I love the idea of the power of print, it's historical now...

39.13

CT- I've got to somehow arrange the dream within the book

AE- ...an armature for dreams... the paper structure of the book is giving you somewhere to do it?

CT- Yes, absolutely.

46.20

One of the things about making a book is making a virtue out of [material] necessity... as soon as you make one decision... it blocks out a lot of other decisions, but what you've got left you can still play with, and turn something that might be a disadvantage... I spent a whole summer making... tiny paper books... to get this pattern to work.

Christine Tacq 3

2.00

You must have time when you're not going to be interrupted, so you don't lose track of all these threads, because you're working on a lot of different ideas at the same time... I work best at night... I've got things up on the wall – but that's never a book, even if I put them one page after the other...I can't *read* it like a book... [even] if all the pages are up on the wall. The first time that the book is [bound]... it's an object now, it's not just a series of bits of paper and it's got its own life.

7.00

As I'm working, I'm understanding more of what... the process of making it... what does the process give back?

8.11

[On Blake's own techniques]

It gives incredible range of expression, and that's what [Blake] was after, he wasn't interested in mass production of any kind... he was interested in expanding the range of expression.

9.00

It's what I would most love to do. If someone was to offer me "What would you... want to have most"... it would be [inaudible- 'writing?']... with drawing I feel I'm kind of half way there, 'cause I've done enough of it that I know where to start and how to get at something, whereas with writing... it's quite a painful struggle... I'm sure it is for writers as well, but it's very hard to do both really well and so I tend to be like a magpie and I'll pick up bits of text – I found... that's Emily Dickinson... and they just open up other windows in the book... [inaudible]... don't use Liverpool in this book, it's too specific, but I have to...

23.00

I've always loved the idea of printing... it wasn't so much the general printing... I remember reading through these career books at school, and turning to printing... and it was 'no women allowed' in printing...

25.55

I used to do illustrations for *Spare Rib*... they were very encouraging, they weren't doing any publishing of that [artists' books] kind, but it was very inspiring to see how.. this enterprise...

AE- That it could *be*?

CT- Yes, that it could be.

31.01

[Showing work to an audience]

It has to be the real thing... it's no good showing something that's half-finished to your friends, because you're not putting yourself on the line... just to put the object there to speak for itself... to see if you get any – if you're going in the right direction...

...you actually have to interact with people somewhere.

34.09

Some books that I do are too long, I just get so carried away with the idea, and people just get scared off by it.

40.00

AE- [People bring their own stories to books]

CT- I know they do. Part of it is not to do things that jar too much with the magic of one image by putting something next to it which negates it too much...

41.00

One bad move within a book can... spoil the experience... It is this that takes you out of your dream, that takes you... one misplaced word or... that's the art of it, it's one of the boundaries isn't it? That consistency... with the binding, with the form, with the text and the images.

Carolyn Trant

Interviewed Monday, 26th – Tuesday 27th November, 2007.

Carolyn Trant 1

0.10

I'm interested in – always have been – in ,,how you present what you do for the people who're going to perceive it.

1.33

...if you take a book as something that holds a lot of things together which could be quite separate but are connected through, like chapters, words, sentence... various things like that...

...the ideas are bouncing of each other and come up to something that's a whole at the end – that was *one* idea that I sometimes deal with...

...by turning to book art, you are committed to have a narrative, in the same way that as a painter, I was always fighting against various people's preconceptions about whether they were narrative paintings, whether paintings should be saying stuff in paint and they shouldn't have any idea behind them at all... *definitely* shouldn't have any words... I did one big project which in the end, it was a physical pain to sell the bits off when I realized that I need a sequence, that these things have to hang together.

3.40

... the very fact that people have to slow down and turn the page, the fact that that has an effect on them physically, I think it does actually slow people down, [we] live in this frantic sort of age... this exhibition [*The Falcon Bride*] is sort of an antidote to our arts trail where people rush round... it's trying to say 'slow down, the idea is to take your time'. Ideas change you. It's quite a good idea making a comfortable space...

4.31

This permission idea goes back to me as a child... I was always told, "Ah, you'll have to choose, there are writers and there are painters in this world", so there's this sort of sense of permission, goes back a very long way for me... When I finally started doing the work I do 12-15 years ago, it's like "Why have I taken so long to actually... battle against distractions?"

6.20

...that sense of revelation which in a way you stage-manage... actually managing time as well as space in which you're actually controlling to a certain extent – you can't absolutely... I'm sitting here ...observing the way people look, where they go first, how they move around the room, what their eye's drawn to, how long they spend, and also the idea of not explaining much at the beginning, even when people ask me. Seeing how they can actually slow down. Having to use more of themselves to fathom out what's going on and then they always thank me afterwards, saying, "I'm glad you didn't tell me in the beginning, because now I'm

beginning to feel it", and then they're talking about *feeling* it, rather than *knowing* it, so it's this whole thing that you get with the book...

7.44

...With the book, there's this whole tactile thing as well. How much we don't pay tribute to how much we take on through all our senses – apart from our eyes –... you're taking things in through all your senses... primal things really, which often get denied in the ...commercial art experience.

23.50

[The detail in the photos in *The Falcon Bride*] ...was completely accidental, which we then seize on in the same way as the email conversation in that book was not contrived, but having *happened* – it's very much how I set this exhibition up... you give yourself a goal, but you allow yourself to deviate from it.

30.00

...what interests me is *stuff*, but also ideas, so... for me artists' books unites those two, in an inner world, you know, in our intellectual, imaginative world.

39.00

AE- Do readers of your work participate through rhythm?

C Tr- In a way that's linking them into my world... they're almost imitating me... I think that's why they say at the end of [*The Falcon*

Bride] that they do understand what I mean, whereas they didn't at the beginning. It's almost as if having 'danced the dance' that they understand more what it's about.

Carolyn Trant 2

0.10

This [Falcon Bride] grew out of the fact that I'd done a couple of books were based on fairy stories that were more like miniature installations... they opened out, and they actually had theatrical spaces almost like tableaux, so the pages were three-dimensional...

People have often boggled at things like saying a 'room-sized book'... it was actually growing out of the fact that I'd made this other book which was like a miniature installation if you like... very much [more] like a book because of the scale.

4.00

I'm happy to use it as a loose term, but I don't like this being a category & saying "You can therefore do this, but not [that]... 'cause we don't do that in installations"... I'm sort of saying [this] about books as well...

There are some rules I *do* believe in, which are to do with materials... and to do with respecting working with materials... that slightly craft element. Although we could also talk about the fact that the way I've made these books in this installation are deliberately not beautiful bookbinder-y ... they're designed to be user-friendly, they're designed to not make you feel "I've got to be really careful how I touch this"...

There's always the point, isn't there... the traditional... how the material *wants* to be used, and then you get to that point as an artist where you kind of give it a little bump... and you say "what can we make this material do that it *doesn't* actually want to do?"

Carolyn Trant 3

1.52

We were talking about rhythm... Rhythm and energy seem to me to be... things that are more important.

3.24

I've always taken a slightly culinary approach to art... I've always ended up sort of painting with one hand & nursing babies and cooking with the other, so my books have got imbued – they hang out in the kitchen, you know, on strings, over the stove, so all my life is in there...

Carolyn Trant 4

0.10

I don't know before I start how many... what's going to be in there, I just carry on 'til I've finished and then put the cover round, or in some cases I was saying – on the smaller installation book that I made I actually... did like a stream of consciousness... made the book, just kind of wrote it and painted it as I went along, so there was no time to change your mind.

1.34

I'm always changing what I'm doing, because it's kind of at the point at which you feel you might be getting there that it gets slightly boring – you do that... hopscotch-y thing...each thing leads to something else...

2.25

...the very first book I did was *Gawain and the Green Knight*, his story was a year and a day... and I said "I'm gonna do the book in a year and a day"... it's ... things like that that become more important... the whole situation *behind* the book sometimes is as important as what physically gets [made] at the end of it.

5.08

You can't make a fairy story... a fairy story is... a cumulation of tradition and story, but I've tried to ... tap into something. People keep saying that they've heard a story called *The Falcon Bride*. Everybody thinks it must exist.

10.43

To.. hire a stand at an artists' book fair and stand there... gleefully and delightfully commercial way with your wares on a table – kind of olden fishwife in a market, I just thought it was *great*...

...people even at an art book fair don't realize it's you, they're so *used* to this mediating thing... that somehow you're the agent or the publisher, they don't understand... so they say extraordinary things they'd never say

to you if they knew it was you, almost like these people who come to the exhibition – they think I'm sitting here 'cause I run the gallery so I can *hear* what they're *saying* about it... which is brilliant. I want to know what they really think.

12.00

...if you're interested in the experience people take away from...seeing something... it does take a lot of time... the ownership thing is very important... they live with it and it speaks to them...the point is with artists' books, that if you're talking about a *lot* of people seeing your work... getting that more general experience... rich experience.

15.15

I'm doing it partly for myself, my own understanding of my place in the world.. also if I am doing it as a communication as well... I want to know people are *understanding* it... it reinforces whether I'm on the right track, and then there's also the fact that they're giving me back stuff... like teaching... When you're teaching, you get back as much as you [put] in, so in a way I'm picking up... I feel I'm just a sort of cat's whisker antenna the whole time... getting stuff in out of the world. It's another way of getting stuff in... having this really rather precious relationship with people it offers...

Carolyn Trant 5

0.10

I was very cross when it was suggested that I was sort of wasting [my academic education] by becoming an artist... it's people not understanding this *mix* of ideas and working with your hands and being really critical... it's just a framework!

2.20

...we need structures all the time... to bounce off in a way.. you can't have unbounded non-structure – it's terribly boring. Structure is much more interesting. It's just always that interesting double-bounce-y thing one has to do all the time of bouncing off the structure, but criticising the structure the whole time, that push-pull thing, is really interesting.

3.00

[modern art education has lost the importance of] ..to know yourself when you're not ready to leave the structure ...you've got to know... be aware when you're at the stage when you'll be... successfully leaving the structure... you're asked to *write* what you're doing [in advance]... I can lead myself forward by saying that I'm going to do something, but I never fix it in writing... but you can still start yourself off in a direction which you can then allow to deviate."

5.40

Surely it's more important to have a real sense of connection with very few people who really.. if you're doing this sort of work it's got to be very personal really

7.25

AE- Books really have substance that persuades people to engage.

C Tr- ...It is a familiar domestic object... things can get so intellectually off the wall that people are alienated, so... this whole idea about accessibility, it's interesting looking at...what you have to do... you could think a book's quite [an] intellectual object, but it's actually just... quite user-friendly... That whole thing about losing yourself in a book – that again is in some sense a permission – to lose yourself.

Carolyn Trant 6

0.10

If you're an artist who hasn't sort of 'made it'... if you're not a book artist, your work is getting split up.. but also the ... overarching idea about your whole work is quite difficult to put over to people ... you're always being fragmented... galleries always asking for a statement or whatever, & you end up saying *bits* of things...people who saw your work don't necessarily know you if you're not famous enough. It's very difficult to put over a whole, so maybe this idea of moving into book art, there's more a feeling that you could ... make something [that] made more of a statement.

4.20.

I think as [an] artist you ... do spiral.. you look back in time to when you were starting to have these ideas and see how they've changed and how you... worked out... you begin to see... what you're trying to do.

5.15

AE- [I found books helpful in terms of development... they made it easier to just work and then look back later.]

C Tr- It's another sort of permission. I find the idea of working with books... working with other writers [you've got] permission – because we are in this postmodern age where everything more or less has been done before anyway...

6.35

...music is a slightly interpreted art in that each time it's performed it's bound to be different anyway... in a way I suppose it's the same with these books... it's like a sort of reinterpretation, it takes a lot of the pressure off... [kind of having to] smash a lot of new ground and come up with something totally new, which then gives you the freedom to just... just by being the way you make something it *is* new because every person is a new person... it enables you to do newer things in that way...

9.05

I have noticed this... obsession... with process... I often wonder whether that's because people... [using computers feel that they're] divorced

from process... computers work in ways we can't see... so people are... fascinated [by visible processes].

... the public has become slightly obsessed with that [and] in your mental processes as well actually... Which I think goes slightly to excess... interpreting and reinterpreting and they get obsessed by that rather than just the reaction to what they're looking at.

11.40

...you know when you write a poem, I think of this more – less as a novel actually – as a poem... when you write a poem, you would use words very carefully, in the same way I'm using... objects very carefully to give a flavour apart from the sense of what they mean, so juxtaposing things ... which resonated

13.20

The idea of this show [*The Falcon Bride*] has flown... lodged in people's consciousnesses... then all this can fade away.

14.50

I feel that people are alienated by too much minimalism and that people actually find it comforting to come here and find things that they can look at, and that draws them. But maybe in a sense what that's doing – the environment and the objects are drawing people in, and maybe the books are... a sort of culmination. By the time they've looked at all the rest they're in the right sort of – place – to look at the books.

Appendix B: Recordings

The 28 Mp3 recordings on the CD-Rom attached to the inside back cover of this volume constitute all the recordings of interviews undertaken with artists over 2007-8 for this project. Quality varies in these recordings depending on equipment and circumstance. My earliest recordings with Christine Tacq were done using a cassette Dictaphone at short notice, and the resulting files have been processed to remove hiss and amplify the relevant detail, but it suffers in comparison with the later digital recordings, where environmental circumstances of studio noise, outside noises, etc, sometimes impinge on the audibility of sections.

Filenames of the recordings correspond to those given in the edited transcripts in Appendix A.