Clive Phillpot

Booktrek

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Clive Phillpot

Booktrek

Selected Essays on Artists' Books (1972–2010)

JRP | RINGIER & LES PRESSES DU RÉEL

To my daughters Melanie & Belinda

ART Documentation

Bulletin of the Art Libraries Society of North America

book Collection of blank and/or image-bearing sheets usually fastened together along one edge and trimmed at the other edges to form a single series of uniform leaves.

art book Book of which art or an artist is the subject.

artist's book Book of which an artist is the author.

book art Art which employs the book form.

bookwork Artwork dependent upon the structure of a book.

book object Art object which alludes to the form of a book.

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A Conversation between Clive Phillpot, Lionel Bovier and Christophe Cherix

LB Clive, you are one of the few figures who could be said to have shaped the discourse about artists' books at the beginning, and institutionalised it through your work, notably as MoMA Chief Librarian. I was struck by the limited extension of the corpus during its early phase in the 1960s and 1970s. There were Ed Ruscha's first ten books, the early Sol LeWitts and Lawrence Weiners, as well as some British examples, then Fluxus, followed by a wave of small presses from all over Europe, but always in a quite limited number of titles and by a limited number of artists. That limitation of the corpus shaped the first books and surveys dedicated to the medium. Looking at the explosion of the genre since the 1990s and the re-discovery of significant bodies of work produced in both Eastern Europe and South America, how do you think we can evaluate now these early readings and attempts to categorize and curate the history of artists' books?

CP You mention 'the history of artists' books', Lionel. I was about to give a talk in Geneva some months ago when I heard myself introduced as a 'historian of artists' books'. This gave me a jolt. I thought I was telling it how it is, but to my youthful audience I was telling it how it was! But I still haven't let go of those works by artists who pioneered books as art, since, even after four or five decades, their example still seems fresh. And maybe it's not just me? Witness the burgeoning parodies and homages to the books of Ruscha. I think that 'the limitation of the corpus' has a lot to do with distribution, or more specifically, the lack of it. A related factor in cementing a select number of producers was the close interchange between a number of progressive Euro-American galleries in the 1970s and 1980s, and also the fact that the artists themselves were becoming more peripatetic, often leaving books in their wake as they travelled.

CC I think that 'travel', and the new networks formed by artists and galleries in the 1960s, have a lot to do with the new role that artists' books took on during that period. Was it Ed Ruscha or Lawrence Weiner who once defined an artist's book, and I quote here from memory, 'as something that you would ideally be able to buy at a train station for little cost, read in the train, and leave behind on your seat with no regrets'? To me, many artists' books succeeded, at least temporarily, in bypassing the art market or the institutionalisation of art practices. Of course, museums and art historians caught up with this practice, and what was an active strategy very much oriented towards the dematerialisation of the art object has been reintegrated into a historical narrative over the years. However, I believe that this is more a testimony to their importance in relation to a larger discourse than an admission of failure. The danger has always been to think about artists' books as a medium in and of itself that should be understood in isolation from other modes of expression.

LB What were the main sources for looking at these publications then, and how would you contrast that with today? Who were the main actors (writers, dealers, collectors) in this field when you worked at MoMA?

CP I agree with you, Christophe, about not isolating artists' books from their other modes of expression. Similarly, I would also suggest that one should not regard artists' books as separate from other books. So to respond to your question about sources, Lionel, I used to check out the avant-garde literary/political New York Book Fair in the 1970s and 1980s, just as today I visit the London Anarchist Book Fair and other non-art book fairs, to keep an eye open for verbi-visual works. But at MoMA my principal source for acquisition – and for looking – was Printed Matter. In addition I established an 'open door' policy for visiting artists and publishers who came regularly from North America, Europe, and even further afield, and I would frequently buy books and other publications from them on the spot. I also patronised local booksellers whether they had premises or whether they were itinerant. Then again quite a lot of retrospective buying was done through the mail with American and European specialist booksellers. I would imagine that all these possibilities would still be pertinent today, though use of the Internet would also loom large?

LB Well, there is still no such thing on the Internet as a really good and specialized bookshop … but it has definitely made the research process a lot easier and a lot more global. I'm pretty sure web-based practices in distribution will soon develop a much more specific approach to customers and one can already see electronic forms of artists' books, though I must confess that I haven't been entirely convinced so far. You?

CP Electronic artists' books are another kettle of fish. I have seen glimmers of interesting phenomena, but I don't see that such works can still be books. Although they might, for example, mimic page-turning, this would not be intrinsic to the new medium. Another development is exemplified by Helen Douglas who recently turned from the codex to the scroll – which still seems to be within the realm of artists' books. But now Tate has digitized one of her scrolls, and even though this is a very interesting move, I don't see it as a book, rather as a pioneering work in another field.

LB During the five decades that saw its emergence, identification, categorisation, institutionalisation, and spread, the artist's book has regularly transformed itself, shifting its shape(s), modifying its declared origins, and altering its modes of distribution. How would you characterise the current production and reception of artists' books?

CP My ideas of the current state of artists' books are, I think, affected by my location in London. Artists' books are still poorly distributed, so my experience of new books is circumscribed, even though I get injections of the new when I visit other countries. My impression of the field is that the category of artists' books is less distinct than it was; there would seem to be a tendency to coalesce with mainstream art publishing, leading to a certain hybridisation, except for the determinedly retro 'artistic' works. One might even suggest that the epithet 'literary' is now not seen to be as negative as it once was? Personally, I miss the formal experimentation in the books of an artist like Sol LeWitt.

LB Part of your work as a writer as much as a librarian was to provide definitions of artists' books. Could you sum them up, and how do they stand today against this hybridisation of genres that you remark on?

CP I almost flinch from trying to define an 'artist's book' today, because current usage of this term is so indiscriminate. I once had high hopes for the word 'bookwork', but this too is used without any precision. In this book – *Booktrek* – readers will see that the meaning I myself give to terms slips and slides over the years. However, the 'fruit salad' diagram (see p. 148) that I came up with is still, I think, useful, even if the terms that I have used to describe its components may change. Thus, it is clear that mute 'book objects' are art and not books, they only allude to books, while there are plenty of books that are scooped up with artists' books that are purely literary and not art. As for the rest, one can, I think, still distinguish between books that simply support or contain content, and those in which the form structures the content; either of these may be artworks.

LB When I initiated the Artists' Books section of the Basel art fair in 2004, which I have ended up co-curating with AA Bronson over the last few years, I started with the thought that the goal would be somehow pedagogical, like helping an audience to identify the book as one artistic medium among others; it has become clearer every year to me that this audience not only understood it, but even that a market exists today for these objects. When do you think this market emerged?

CP I think a market for artists' books came out of the 1980s. A detail in this narrative, that I witnessed myself, might be the move of the Printed Matter bookstore in New York from marginal Lispenard Street in TriBeCa to trendy Wooster Street in SoHo in the late 1980s. Although the economics were always fragile, this demonstrated the movement of an alternative closer to the mainstream. And very soon artists' book fairs also began to gather momentum as a surprisingly well-supported phenomenon.

CC It is almost ironic that as the function of artists' books has become more and more difficult to pinpoint, artists' book fairs have never been so popular. Printed Matter's art book fair, which moved to MoMA PS1 in 2009, attracted about 20,000 people last year. During the 2012 edition of the fair, Lucy Lippard gave a keynote address, entitled 'Artists' Books, Then and Now', to over 170 people. Even if the discourse hasn't changed much, its reception seems to have become more mainstream. Is this a form of nostalgia for a lost era or do people actually think that books still have a future in our computer age?

CP I would simply say that if books, booklets, pamphlets have a future, then artists will continue to have a use for these structures. But the signs are not good. Looking at books about purported 'artists' books' published over the last year or so, there are countless examples of lurid fetishistic growths on the body bibliographic, while unassuming booklets that are going about their business of informing, celebrating, inspiring and quietly subverting, are completely overlooked.

LB It is true one could say that artists' books today are more defined negatively, i.e. by what they are not (a standard exhibition catalogue or monograph, for instance), than by what they are. Nevertheless, this shift to a more hybrid product of artists' will and context of production (such as an exhibition), has also provided us with many great books; one could name for instance *The Uncanny* by Mike Kelley, as an example of an exhibition catalogue turned into an artist's project, or some of Richard Prince's books, produced on the occasion of exhibitions but retaining their quality of 'artist's books'. Christophe, you took over the position of Curator of Prints and Illustrated Books at MoMA in 2007; in what state did you find this collection of artists' books that Clive built and how did you plan to develop it?

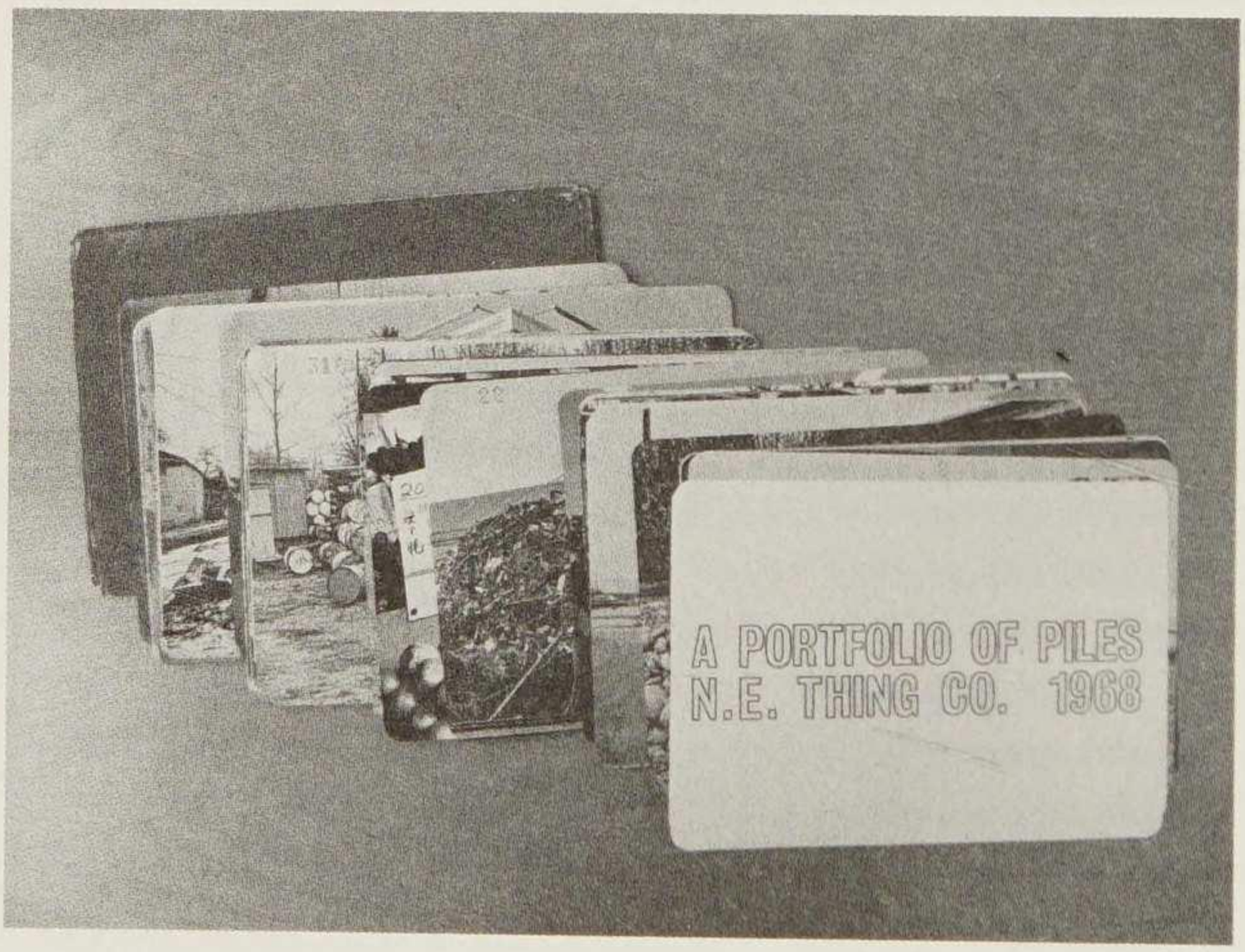
CC As Clive well knows, the collection of artists' books at MoMA is housed both in the Department of Prints and Illustrated Books, which I have led since October 2010, and the Library. These departments work closely together in order to make sure that no book of interest falls between the cracks. Usually, books published in larger editions are acquired by the Library and rarer materials come to Prints and Illustrated Books. Among the major developments of the last few years is the 2007 gift of the Art & Project/Depot VBVR collection, which, among other things, gave our Gilbert & George collection of ephemera and artists' books a preeminent position. Another major acquisition was the 2008 gift of the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, which holds about 8,000 works, including numerous important projects, such as *Grapefruit* by Yoko Ono, and various copies of the *Fluxkit*. Two other collections acquired in 2011 have also added significantly to Clive's pioneering work at the Museum: the Herman and Nicole Daled Collection, which contains an almost complete set of Marcel Broodthaers' editioned work, and the Seth Siegelaub Collection and Archives, which includes all of the preparatory documents related to Siegelaub's influential 'exhibitions in catalogues'.

LB You recently organised a large printed matter survey at MoMA, the third of its kind (*Printed Art* in 1980 was organised by Riva Castleman and *Thinking Print: Books to Billboards* was curated by Deborah Wye in 1996), under the

title of *Print/Out* (2012). Here you examined the evolution of artistic practices related to the print medium and emphasised both the emergence of digital technologies and the proliferation of self-published projects. How would you summarise this recent evolution and its implication with regard to the production, distribution and reception of artists' books?

CC *Print/Out*, together with its companion exhibition *Printin'*, curated by Ellen Gallagher and Sarah Suzuki, attempted to map the evolution of the printed field from the late 1980s to 2012. While few new print publishers emerged during this period, highly developed printing technologies have become increasingly available, enabling artists and commercial galleries to publish independently. Previous experience in design or printing seems to no longer be required in order to publish ambitious books and printed projects. The result is a much more diverse field, in which artists and publishers, but also photographers, can suddenly cross traditional boundaries with great fluidity. With this expansion of the printmaking and publishing arenas, prints and books remain an essential part of art making today.

From N.E. Thing Co. to Anything Goes?



N.E. Thing Co., *A Portfolio of Piles* (Vancouver: N.E. Thing Co., 1968)

1. London. An Art School: Odd Pamphlets

My trek through the fields of artists' books began with my arrival at Chelsea School of Art Library in 1970, after a period spent in public libraries, latterly in the south of England. I was dropped into the art scene in London at a time when the influence of American art was evident and when *Artforum* was required reading. Back in the metropolis again, I received a very rapid supplementary education, which was augmented by my involvement with the faculty and with the students, and I quickly absorbed some fresh ideas – in particular a belated appreciation of conceptual art.

I also began to assess my professional role in this new academic environment, in particular how I might make the library more relevant to art students, especially because I was hearing the gripes of those who were forced, as some of

them said, to spend 15% of their time on art history and complementary studies. This requirement of the English educational system meant that the library was sometimes viewed as part of a coercive apparatus, and therefore acquired negative vibes for some students. Although this problem of perception concerned me some of the time, it was balanced against my belief that students who were motivated would always find a way to satisfy their bibliographic and informational needs.

Coincidentally I was gradually becoming aware of certain unusual publications that were coming regularly through the mail from a 'standing order' system that the art school library had set up with an American company called Worldwide Art Books, then based in Boston. Each month Worldwide would simply select and send us 20 to 30 exhibition catalogues that dealt with contemporary North American art in accordance with the library's 'profile'. Among these publications were what I would then have called 'odd pamphlets', but which might now be called 'artists' books'.

These odd pamphlets coming regularly to the library from America fascinated me, including one by the group whose name I have placed in the title of this introduction. It was called *A Portfolio of Piles* (1968), and was by N.E. Thing Co. The company N.E. Thing Co. was the invention of a husband and wife team, Iain and Ingrid Baxter, who used it and its fictitious corporate identity to structure their ideas and artworks. Their activities might for convenience be bracketed under the term 'Conceptual art'. Anyway, as with any new publication, I, as librarian, had to consider: 'Where does this fit, where does it go?' It seemed obvious to me that it was not exactly an exhibition catalogue, but neither was it a book. It was literally a small portfolio with about 60 loose sheets in a stack, each sheet bearing a photograph of a pile. These were piles of tyres, or a pile of sand by the side of a road, or a pile of cartons, or a pile of lumber, and so on. The artists, N.E. Thing Co., had simply taken photographs of miscellaneous piles that added up to an inventory of similar things, which was a fairly common form of Conceptual artwork. (As it happened, I found that two copies of pile no. 39 had been included, and therefore had to assess whether this was some kind of conceptual game, or just a mistake.) All this stuck in my gullet and I needed to mull over what it was

that I had before me. But this very puzzlement was part of my fascination with these early artists' publications; they were very different from previous interactions between the artist and the book. For me Conceptual art was even more of a radical break in the 20th century than Cubism had been, and these slight publications were manifestations of this break. What can be so beautiful, at a time when things are changing, is that one cannot fully understand what one has in one's hands, or what indeed is happening more generally. To lose that confusion later is almost sad.

In addition, other occurrences in London supplemented my own discoveries. For instance, the dealer Nigel Greenwood had a gallery very close to Chelsea School of Art at that time, and it became common to see people disappearing from the art school to go across the road to see, for example in 1970, a duo called Gilbert & George standing on a table apparently miming to a tape recording. Nigel Greenwood also became interested in books by artists, which, at that time, did not really have a collective name. He used to display and sell a lot of books by American artists, and exhibited most of Ed Ruscha's books in 1971. He was also open to publications by British artists, such as John Stezaker for example, who showed at the gallery and produced little pamphlets; I also saw my first Telfer Stokes book in his gallery. Greenwood had connections with dealers in mainland Europe, so he also showed a lot of publications from German and French galleries that were exhibiting and working with artists such as Richard Long and Mario Merz. I regularly browsed Nigel Greenwood's bookshelves, as well as those of the Lisson Gallery, Robert Self's gallery Situation, the alternative bookshop Compendium, and several other resources.

Over a period of time, since I was often talking about this phenomenon that I defined then as 'book art', people began to bring in curious publications to show me – *FILE* magazine for example – while other works simply arrived in the mail. Then it suddenly struck me that students might come and visit the library to see and handle *art*, not just reproductions of art in conventional publications via secondary images or presented through words: they could come for art. Here is a book that is an artwork! This revelation presented me with a way to foreground the college

library by presenting future practising artists with unmediated access to art, albeit in book form, and to sidestep the library's role in compulsory education.

In 1972, as these factors were coming together in my mind, I was asked to write a monthly column that I called 'Feedback' for the London-based art magazine *Studio International*, which was to discuss normally un-reviewed publications. (In retrospect, I think that my editor may have asked me partly because he had observed the 'Rumbles' column in the fairly new magazine *Avalanche*.) My first idea was to write about my perception that artists were re-valuing the book form, but my editor said that he would like the first column to be about the information needs of artists. Naturally, I followed his recommendation, and in this initial column cited references to ideas from my newfound enthusiasm, N.E. Thing Co. Then in my second column I went ahead and broached the subject of books by artists. These columns of short notes and information may now seem slight, but at the time 'Feedback' was one of the first places to draw attention to this new phenomenon: what we would now call book art or artists' books. In a later column I recorded the appearance of two catalogues of exhibitions that had recently occurred, the first in London, the second a few months later in Philadelphia. The one in Philadelphia in March 1973 was simply called *Artists Books* (sic), and is probably the first occasion that this phrase was used as a generic label for the kind of publications that these essays are about. I would think it was probably the origin of the (seemingly indestructible) phrase 'artists' books'. Just before this, in the autumn of 1972, Nigel Greenwood put on the exhibition, *Book as Artwork*, the content and idea for which was derived from a 1971 article by Germano Celant in the Italian magazine *Data*, and which was the ancestor of the term 'bookwork'. Thus my enthusiasm for this new topic of artists' books was fuelled by both local and international straws in the wind.

But there was one other component to be included in my personal understanding of the phenomenon. There was an exhibition at the Hayward Gallery in London in early 1973, titled *Dieter Rot* (sic)*: Graphics and Books*. In this show the curators hung Roth's *Collected Works* on chains from the ceiling. This dramatic presentation, but even more the

impact of the works themselves, helped all the pieces of my then understanding of artists' books to come together. I began to describe Roth and Ruscha as the hot and cool poles of contemporary artists' books. Soon after, other people parroted this use of hot and cool in their essays and reviews, but I had created this opposition solely on account of a fluke of timing and juxtaposition in London in the early 1970s. (Celant's terms 'arte informale caldo' and 'arte informale freddo' were probably also rolling around my head.) It is clear that these two artists were, indeed, pioneers, though I have still found resistance, even in America, to the fact that in 1963 Ed Ruscha made a revolutionary statement with his book *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*. One last step in my personal pre-history happened after I had aired the topic of artists' books in my column, for I was asked by the British Council to work on an exhibition of contemporary artists' books, titled *Artists' Bookworks*, to tour Germany. Thus my ideas gained a form of official recognition, though, as ever, such recognition depends crucially on people, friendships, and so on, as well as whatever inherent merit there may be in the ideas.

When I left the Chelsea School of Art there were a lot more artists' books in the library than when I arrived, but they were not segregated as a special collection. They were integrated with other pamphlets, with exhibition catalogues and the like, unless they happened to be fragile or odd; if they were chunky they were shelved with regular books. This exemplified my concern that an artists' book collection should be integrated into a library rather than turned into an 'archive' or precious entity. A library exists for people to take hold of the books and use them. If you are going to have a collection that is publicly accessible, then these books, sometimes referred to as a 'democratic art form', really should *be* accessible, and have an equal status with other publications, instead of requiring that users go to a special area devoted to 'the art of the book', for example. People using any part of the library could then become mystified or be given surprises by coming across puzzling artists' books that have been dispersed or secreted through the collection. I would like to encourage this: the creation of opportunities for people to get that wonderful moment of not understanding.

2. New York. A Museum: An Abecedarian

When I first went to New York and The Museum of Modern Art for my interview for Director of the Library in Easter 1977, the Museum had just opened an exhibition titled *Bookworks* curated by Barbara London, the video curator. The content of the exhibition was mostly very familiar to me, fitted my developing definition of what artists' books might be, and turned out to be an augury of what I could be involved in for the institution. The Museum staff had seen my resumé with its listing of the various essays and exhibitions about artists' books that I had done in England when I was first interviewed, so when I arrived permanently in the autumn of 1977, it seemed to me as if I was expected to get on with putting together a collection of artists' books; I felt I had a sort of unspoken license to proceed with this mission. Thus in late 1977, within about a month of arriving, I set out the parameters of what I called the Artist Book Collection, transferred across to this new entity a few other titles that had over time been located in the main collection, and began to purchase artists' books from the Printed Matter bookstore.

Even though the MoMA Library was a closed-access library, I decided to house the new artists' book collection with the rare and fragile items in the library's Special Collections to ensure that these slight innovative publications received above average care and housing, and because they were published in relatively small editions. There was, of necessity at this time, a card catalogue to assist users in locating items in the library's collection, but I decided to suppress any sort of subject headings for 'artists' books' in the card catalogue. I did this for two reasons: one, it seemed to me that there was a degree of subjectivity involved in my designating a publication an artist's book, so I did not want users to have to negotiate my categorisation; and, two, I did not want users to prejudge whether designated artists' books might or might not be useful to them when they were researching a particular artist. I did, however, devise a discreet prefix to the call number that would act as a location indicator for the library staff. In addition, since all the artists' books were thus brought together behind the scenes, it also made it possible for specialist researchers to browse the items selected for the collection in one place.

What was included in the A.B.C. – the Artist Book Collection – and what was excluded? Briefly, the core components were books – codex books – usually offset-printed, integrated visual/verbal paperback books, but not magazines, or packs of cards, or exhibition catalogues, or book objects, or signed and numbered fine press editions. In addition the books would exist in 'open' editions, or – relatively –large editions of 100 copies or more. Producing over 100 copies of a work demonstrated to me that the artist was committed to the multiplication and potentially wide distribution of their work, was committed to the Gutenberg revolution, and not to artificial scarcity. This criterion of editions of 100 or more was also shared by Printed Matter Inc., from whom I was buying many of the books. One of the advantages of administering a large library was that if I bought publications from Printed Matter or other sources that I did not think were actual artists' books but had an informational or documentary value, these items could be deposited in the main collection among the regular books, the magazines, the ephemera, and still be made accessible to users.

As time passed, and the Artist Book Collection had clearly become quite comprehensive and of some size, little collections of artists' books that had accumulated in other corners of the museum were largely passed on to the library so that it became the main centre for the genre. Significantly, some artists' books were retained, particularly in the Photography and Print Departments. Though by the time these various aggregations of books were transferred to the library, most of the titles had already been purchased or obtained for the library collection.

America is a very welcoming and receptive country, and within six months of my arrival I was speaking about MoMA and artists' books on a panel in New York with representatives of Franklin Furnace, Printed Matter and Backworks, and before a year had elapsed I was one of two keynote speakers at an artists-as-publishers' conference in Chicago, in 1978. Thus began my oral proselytizing for artists' books in the USA. People also began to ask me to write about artists' books in American magazines.

In a remarkably short time the Artist Book Collection at MoMA was being widely acknowledged as a useful resource. The artist community in New York was listening in as well,

and artists and publishers came to see me at MoMA from near and far. Furthermore, the perception seemed to be that if the flagship Museum of Modern Art was taking an interest in artists' books, then perhaps they were significant. I was lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time, so that there was tangible support and an audience for what I was developing at MoMA. All sorts of book-related events were also happening in New York and across America at this time, and Printed Matter and Franklin Furnace, both barely two years old, were having a burgeoning influence of their own. This period became part of the history of acceptance and institutionalisation of artists' books, and the beginning of the proliferation of new collections.

I should add, perhaps, that the time I spent with artists' books at the Museum hardly added up to 3 or 4% of my week, probably less than that, for I was also engaged not only in enhancing the existing well-known collection on Dada and Surrealism, which was already very strong, but also making sure that Conceptual art and other more recent manifestations were well documented, not to mention all the other administrative activities in which a chief librarian engages. My leisure time, by contrast, was frequently occupied with art events and activities, and encounters with artists' and their books. By the time I left the Museum in 1994 to return to England, it was dawning on people that the Museum Library was a valuable resource, not just for the classic Modernist period, but also for contemporary art, and that the collection of artists' books was an important component of this resource. To give just one example, the Museum was asked, in an external survey, what works it had by certain key American artists. Curators surveyed the art collection and discovered that for Allan Kaprow, in particular, they had either nothing or virtually nothing. But when they came to the artists' books collection and the library they found that we had nearly every printed piece he had published.

3. New York. Alternative Agencies: Printed Matter and Franklin Furnace

In building the MoMA Artist Book Collection I had invaluable assistance from Printed Matter, the organisation founded in 1976 by Lucy Lippard and Sol LeWitt. Sol had been making

books, Lucy was fascinated by the genre, so they decided there was a need for a place for people to see and buy these publications. In the beginning they also published some new artists' books, but after perhaps a dozen had appeared, the Board of Printed Matter re-examined this activity and realised that a great many artists were coming to them with their own publications for sale, and that the principal problem to be addressed then was not publishing, but distribution. When they first opened in 1976 they shared a space with Franklin Furnace, but soon after set up shop on Lispenard Street.

As far as MoMA and I were concerned, what evolved (aside from my eventual personal involvement with the bookstore) was that I would go down every few weeks and select publications for the Museum Library from new items that the Printed Matter staff had put aside. In a strange way The Museum of Modern Art collection could be thought of as an archive of the changing inventory of Printed Matter, since a high proportion of their stock ended up either in the Artist Book Collection or in the larger library. Not that I bought everything: if an artist walked into Printed Matter with a few folded Xerox sheets and said that they were books, the staff at Printed Matter would often accept the artist's point of view, and that was fine, but I had different criteria for the Museum's collection.

The other artists' books organisation in New York, Franklin Furnace Archive, was also founded in 1976. Again this was evidence that some energies were reaching critical mass at about that time, and as part of a bigger picture it is also another illustration of the beginning of the institution-alisation of alternative arts. The Furnace was founded by the artist Martha Wilson, who had already made one or two books of her own. She saw the need to preserve – to 'archive' – these apparently ephemeral new publications, but what she really did was to build up a collection. And her scope was very similar to that of Printed Matter and MoMA, a position underlined by the presence of Lawrence Weiner on the Board. She asked artists to donate books to the Furnace, since there was initially no budget for acquisitions. In fact they were asked if they could donate three copies of each book, one for a handling collection, one for a reserve 'archival' collection, and one to be sent on the road for

exhibitions. And an enormous number of artists did this. Many of the artists lived in New York, others were artists who passed through New York City, others still heard about the Furnace from far away. It was the right idea, again, at the right time.

I was personally involved, on and off, with the Furnace, and saw a lot of Martha Wilson. Once, in a magazine interview or article, she suggested that her collection might one day end up at The Museum of Modern Art. After a number of years of our ongoing dialogue Martha actually asked if MoMA might be interested in purchasing the book collection. And we did indeed eventually buy the Franklin Furnace collection for The Museum of Modern Art for 'an undisclosed sum'. This made a lot of artists very happy. The then substantial MoMA collection and the Furnace collection were, however, not only complementary, but were also somewhat similar. Maybe now one might have second thoughts about this? It seems rather capitalistic: 'acquisition', 'takeover', 'merger'. Furthermore, two places for artists to place their books were reduced to one! However, it could be said that, in a sense, Franklin Furnace needed to be rescued, for its resources were severely stretched in administering their collection.

4. Other Collections. Other Readers: Proliferation

One of the products of the burst of enthusiasm, creation of new agencies, proliferating activities and proselytising about artists' books in the 1970s and after, was that the idea of establishing specific collections of artists' books in libraries, particularly art libraries, became well established in the USA, the UK and the rest of Europe. Collections of books-as-art were set up in many institutions with differing criteria, or in diverse environments, which led to differences in the scope of these artists' books collections. It almost became fashionable, and, perhaps as significant, a source of pleasure for art librarians and others, who effectively became curators. However, an unexpected result of this proliferation, to me, was that a number of libraries became much more involved with the unique object and the legacy of the 'limited edition', whereas for me the whole point of the artists' books of the 1960s and 1970s was to get away from

the unique object and the artificially limited edition: to make art in book form widely available. A library always seemed the most appropriate repository for art in book form, rather than archival or museological environments. So the original impulse has been somewhat subverted over the years. The field has gone from the example of N.E. Thing Co. to 'anything goes', hence my title.

The influence that the kind of collections and agencies that I have described had on artists' book production was positive, I believe, but small. The fact that Printed Matter Inc. and the MoMA Library both specified that they were not collecting books published in editions of less than 100 probably encouraged some artists to make larger editions, but by the mid-1980s there were plenty of other artists' book collections that saw no need for a specific edition size as a criterion for purchase. Indeed, many collections, particularly in art schools, but also elsewhere (at the Musée national d'Art moderne at the Centre Pompidou and the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, for example) were building collections of unique books, often sculptural books and book objects. It was, however, also a fact that very similar collections to that at MoMA were being built in other museum libraries such as the Tate Gallery in London and the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. However, the example of an artist such as Ed Ruscha in dropping the practice of signing and numbering his books, and showing that reprinting did not denature an artwork in book form, was probably as significant in reducing this practice among book makers as any library acquisitions policy.

I have drawn attention to the fact that multiple artists' books were very often published in editions of one hundred. Although it is true that artists often had to sweat to afford to make an edition of a hundred, in a sense it was still not big enough, for, with so many libraries establishing 'archives' of artists' books, the hundred books that constituted these editions quite quickly disappeared into the proliferating institutional collections and began to live a cloistered life. Which brings me to the individual purchaser and reader. Aside from the activities of Printed Matter, Art Metropole, Florence Loewy, Boekie Woekie and bookartbookshop, for example, where now can anyone see what remains of these small editions outside of New York,

Toronto, Paris, Amsterdam, London? They will either have to go to a library to see the works that have been secured, archived, and held there for posterity; or, if the books in these tiny editions have escaped the library net, they are likely to end up with dealers who can then charge much more for such 'rare' items than their original cover price.

I wonder if librarians and perhaps other collectors established this protective custody because they felt guilty that all the old Dada, Surrealist, Constructivist pamphlets, for example, were rarely captured when they were much more available, and had to be bought retrospectively at great expense. Therefore, when they considered the small-edition artists' books, they thought that they must be quickly captured, documented and saved. And after these books have all been saved and wrapped up in acid-free containers and protected from sticky fingers, I wonder how many other people have really experienced the pleasure of possessing, reading and re-reading well-loved personal copies of artists' books? How many individuals have a few artists' books on the shelves in their homes when such a high proportion of the editions end up either institutionalised or commodified? Whatever happened to potential encounters between these 'democratic' artworks' and supermarket shoppers or book-store browsers? Who really is the audience?

5. Picking up the Trail: Disparate Documents

The following selected essays represent markers and milestones in my trek to understand the phenomenon of artists' books. My early writings tried to sketch a previously undefined landscape; then, as my ideas evolved, I attempted to more fully evaluate the nature and constituents of the territory and to develop the terminology in longer essays. Ultimately my ideas about artists' books have been published in around 70 publications. After re-reading all of these, I came up with a shorter list of essays that might be considered for re-publication or first publication. The final selection of writings presented here incorporates some minor revisions and restorations, and some essays have been shortened. On reflection it is curious to me that, apart from the initial impulse to write about artists' books in my column in *Studio International*, every other essay in the book, except for one,

is the result of an outside invitation to speak or to write, which causes me to wonder if this resulting book might represent something curiously shaped by the needs of its times and by its environment?

I am very grateful to my editor and publisher, Lionel Bovier, for his understanding and his perceptive reading of my writings, also for the clarity of his proposal for what we might put into one volume. He has helped me to obtain a more coherent perspective on the development of my ideas and observations. He may also, incidentally, have helped many more people in a different manner, like the writer and lecturer from Brazil who told me that he had been carrying around a bundle of dog-eared Xeroxes of my writings from a multitude of disparate sources to lend to his students, for much too long. I hope he and others will enjoy trekking with this book.

Feedback, 1972

First published in 'Feedback', Monthly Column #2, *Studio International*, September 1972, p. 64.

In the Spring of 1972 I got a call from Peter Townsend, the editor of *Studio International*, who had read something I had written about art magazines in the library press, to ask me if I would be interested in compiling a monthly column about publications that were 'not normally discussed or reviewed widely' elsewhere. I immediately agreed, and wanted to commence by writing about my recent perception that artists were rediscovering the book as a medium. However, he said that he would prefer the first column in July/August 1972 to be about 'information'. So it was in my second column, for September 1972, that I first discussed the topic.

TWENTYSIX

GASOLINE

STATIONS

CONOCO, SAYRE, OKLAHOMA





APCO, OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA

Edward Ruscha, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* (2nd ed. Alhambra, CA: Cunningham Press, 1967)

The use of the book by the artist has taken many forms, from Arcimboldo's *Il Bibliotecario* to Enrico Baj's book-as-box-of-bricks. The latter will probably be seized upon by a fair number of artists as an example of the irrelevance of the book in the evolution of art today. That this is a superficial attitude, and contrary to a tradition of involvement with the book by visual artists, is quickly born out on one level by a consideration of the significance of the book as a vehicle for artistic theory in this century; such series as the *Bauhausbücher* and the Wittenborn *Documents of Modern Art* immediately conjure up an impression of the wealth of published texts by artists. The letters, diaries and notebooks of artists also have a continuing importance, and one can extend this short list of the varieties of verbal activity by highlighting a recent publication: Wols' *Aphorisms and Pictures* published by Arc (Gillingham, 1971, 45p); the translation of Braque's *Illustrated*

Notebooks 1917–1955 into English is also now available (Dover, 1971, $3.00).

More commonly in the recent past artists have extended their oeuvre in the direction of book illustration. Picasso, Matisse, Dufy, Léger, Grosz, Kirchner, have all made important contributions in this field. But the example of the artist/typographer or designer such as Rodchenko, Lissitzky, van Doesburg, Schwitters, Moholy-Nagy, Bill, is of more significance for the book as a complete entity; there is a tremendous visual resonance in their publications.

However there seems to be a growing preoccupation with the book as a physical object: witness the inexorable progression from the incorporation of printed paper into collage to the incorporation of the book into assemblage. Enter John Latham – who has conducted a semi-public love-hate relationship with the book, the latter emotion apparently predominating in, for example, the affair of the book and the salivary juices, and the gesturally significant but disturbing burning of the skoob. Another attitude has been evident in the work of R. B. Kitaj, from the time of his first exhibition at Marlborough Fine Art, when he appended a bibliography, not to the catalogue text, but to the pictures themselves, to his most recent prints in which he has followed the suite *In Our Time* (1969), which consisted of almost straight reproductions of book covers, with others in the same vein; in particular *Hours With Men and Books* (1972), in which he has presented two views of the gutted case of a book, inside and outside, lovingly reproducing both the disintegrating newsprint backing of the spine, and every frayed thread of the covering.

In the last few years it would seem that visual artists have literally discovered the book as a medium, or as a vehicle for their visual ideas. Warhol exploited some of the devices peculiar to books, such as that delight of childhood, the pop-up picture, in *Andy Warhol's Index (Book)* (New York: Random House, 1967). If you ever wondered how often the sanctity of the National Art Library in London was disturbed by the activation of the squeaker concealed between two of the leaves of this book, you need wonder no more, it is not in stock.

Claes Oldenburg gave the term 'softback' new meaning with the appearance of his friendly floppy monograph by Barbara Rose (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1970,

$25.00). The covers may be soft (and not designed for regular handling) but in other respects this example of the exhibition catalogue as book is well up to MoMA's high standards. While referring to Oldenburg it is worth mentioning also the miniatures of his notebook pages *Notes in Hand* (Professional Prints/Petersburg Press, 1971, £1.75) that he supervised from start to finish.

Eduardo Paolozzi is an artist who has been more consistently involved with book production, from Lawrence Alloway's book about his work: *Metallization of a Dream* (Lion & Unicorn Press, 1963), which he helped to compile, and *Metafisikal Translations* (1962), which he published with the Kelpra Studio, to *Kex* edited by Richard Hamilton (Lund Humphries for the Copley Foundation, 1966) and *Abba Zaba* edited and printed by Hansjörg Mayer and the students of Watford School of Art (1970). The latter books consist of found images and found texts and are really examples of the book as multiple, if one didn't already think of books in this way.

Mayer is also in the process of publishing the complete works of Dieter Roth – more play with printed matter – and has also published Tom Phillips' *trailer* (1971, £1.50). This paperback is literally a trailer to *A Humument* (which is still in progress), in that it consists of 'fragmentary glimpses of the longer work', which must by now be familiar to many from the extracts which have appeared quite widely. Briefly, *A Humument* is a treated version of a Victorian novel, *A Human Document*; page by page Tom Phillips has obliterated words and letters so that the remaining words and parts of words regroup to form new meanings. The obliteration is often accomplished in such a way as to provide a visual equivalent or accompaniment to the new verbal image.

Several artists are now producing slim volumes as an extension of their work and many of these are being published by their dealers. For example, Situation have just published *Hollow Lane* by Hamish Fulton (£1.50), landscape photographs which relate to recent journeys made by the artist, and *Retrospective, King for a Day and 999 Other Pieces/Works/Things, etc. 1969* by Bruce McLean (1972, £1.50), a somewhat gimmicky production but one which includes original and multiple artworks, a couple of which make handy bookmarks.

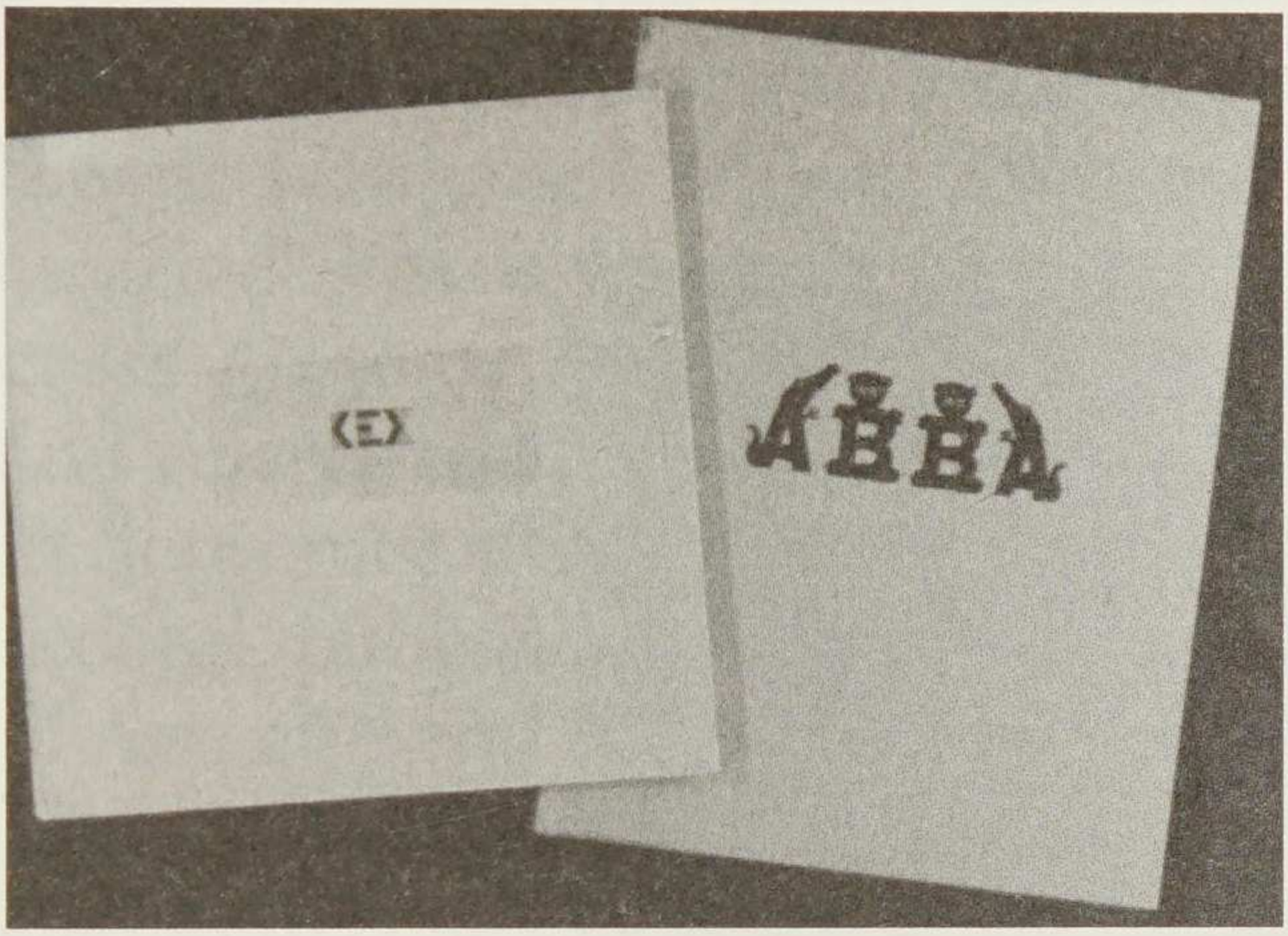
The Lisson Gallery publications are generally related to exhibitions, but are not necessarily exhibition catalogues;

they can be enjoyed in their own right. The booklet *Wall Show* (1971, 75p) includes pieces by Keith Arnatt, Tom Edmonds, Barry Flanagan, Klaus Rinke, David Tremlett and many others; pages have often been acted upon directly. John Latham's *Least event/one second drawings/blind work/24 second painting* (1970, 45p) is a crisply produced booklet with some pleasantly scruffy page layouts. Anyone who has seen Bob Law's recent work will know what to expect of *16 Drawings* (1971, 60p). Sol LeWitt's *Four Basic Colours and Their Combinations* (1971, £1.25) is very satisfying, a model publication of its kind. Finally Richard Long's *Two sheepdogs cross in and out/of the passing shadows The clouds/drift over the hill with a storm* (1971, 75p) includes photographs of places and works with running captions.

Nigel Greenwood Inc. Ltd. has published David Lamelas' *Publication: Responses to 3 Statements* (1971, £1.00) – no pictures – but some characteristic pieces from Victor Burgin, John Latham, Barbara Reise and several others, including Gilbert & George whose response is a suitably mechanical replay of a multipurpose statement: 'Oh Art, what are you? You are so strong and ... ' Nigel Greenwood also distributes an example of the flicker book as exhibition catalogue, entitled *Oh, the Grand Old Duke of York*. This was published to coincide with the Gilbert & George exhibition at the Kunstmuseum, Lucerne (1972, £1.50); it is a full-size booklet with successive stills of G&G sculpting it up on The Duke of York Steps, the text is in German, the captions in English. Gerard Hemsworth's *13.7.70 19.7.70 South West Coast of England* is a series of landscape photos (£1.50).

Finally Ed Ruscha is another artist who has used the book/pamphlet format consistently over a period of years. While his *Book of Stains* (1969) is a very limited edition, only 70 copies, from *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* (1962/1963, $4.00) on, his publications have been in editions of several hundreds, even thousands.

From these last few examples one can conclude that artists are using the book format not only because it has acquired a new status as a convenient record of events as a result of the advent of performance art and evanescent artworks, but also as a specific visual medium with its own possibilities and limitations, which also happens to be activated by the 'reader'.



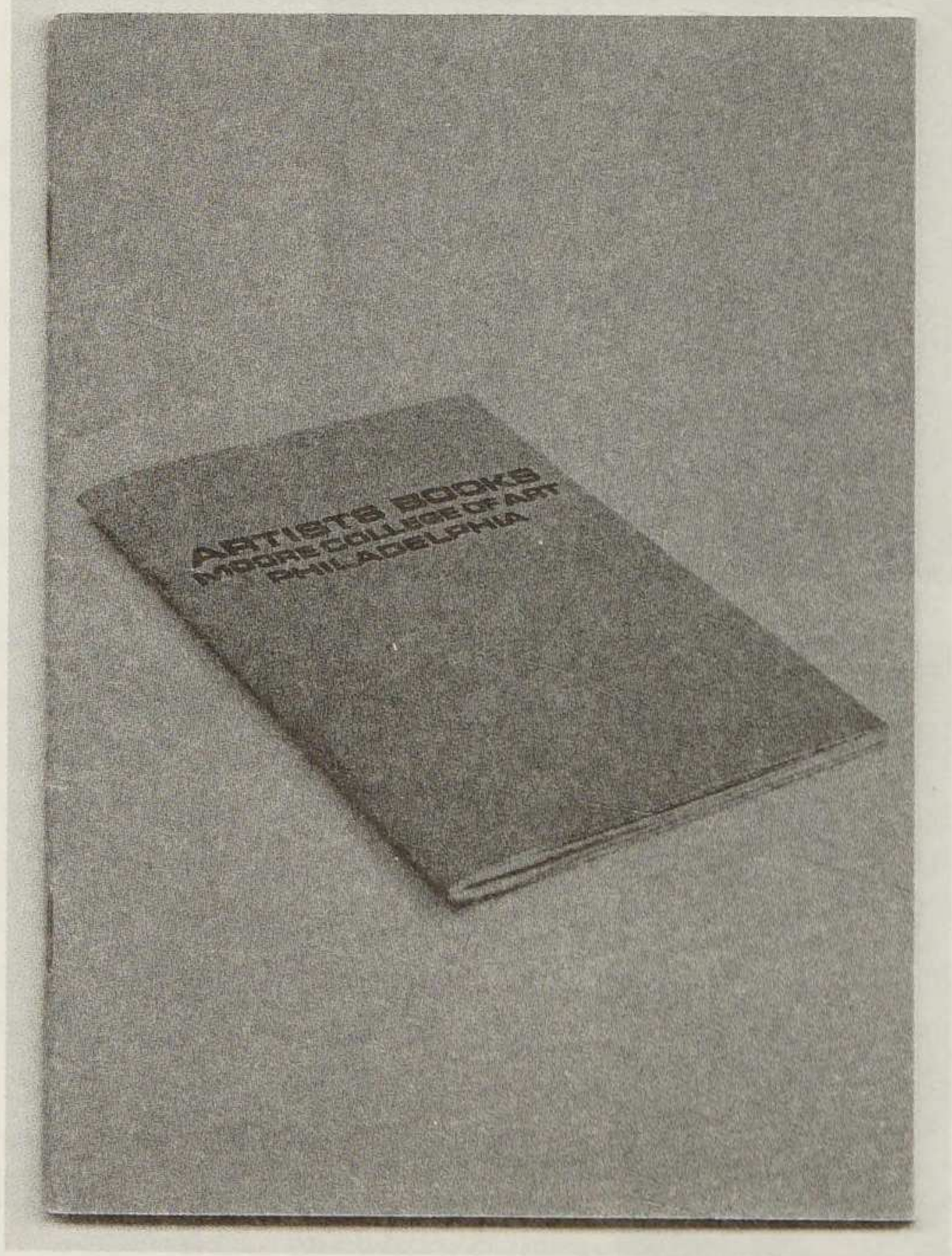


Eduardo Paolozzi, *Kex* (Chicago: William & Noma Copley Foundation, 1966) and *Abba Zaba* (London: Edition Hansjörg Mayer, 1970)

Feedback, 1973

First published in 'Feedback', Monthly Column #12, *Studio International*, July/August 1973, p. 38.

It was just under a year before I returned in print to the topic of books by artists. This twelfth 'Feedback' column was occasioned by coming across two catalogues of exhibitions of artists' books. Other people had noticed the emerging phenomenon too.



Harry Anderson, *Artists Books* (Philadelphia: Moore College of Art, 1973), front cover

There have recently been two publications about the use of the book as a medium by the visual artist. The first, published this year by Nigel Greenwood Inc. Ltd., 41 Sloane Gardens, London, SW1, and entitled *Book as Artwork 1960/1972*, costs £0.50 or £1.75 plus postage, and relates to an exhibition held in September/October 1972; the second, published by Moore College of Art, 20th and Race Streets, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103, also in 1973, is entitled *Artists Books* (sic) and costs $1.00.

Book as Artwork is poorly produced, as is acknowledged by the publishers, hence the fairly low price; however, it does make Germano Celant's text available to an English-speaking audience (it first appeared in Italian in substantially the same form, but covering the period 1960/1970, in *Data* number 1, September 1971, and has also appeared in French in *VH 101* number 9, Autumn 1972.) The chronological list of books that followed the *Data*

article has been extended and expanded so that there are now about 250 books recorded. The text is disappointing; although it is one of the first pieces about book art as an adjunct of Conceptual art, it really amounts to a cobbling together of a series of annotations to the works, without any real analysis of the use of the book as a medium. Its value lies in Celant's references to the significance of the book-form to certain artists, in its attention to Italian examples, and to the fact that he (and Lynda Morris) have attempted to produce a first list of examples of book art. Had the publication in fact been presented as an annotated bibliography it would have proved even more useful for reference. Nigel Greenwood's gallery is becoming one of the prime sources for information about, and examples of, the kinds of books listed in *Book as Artwork*; lists of new booklets and catalogues are issued regularly. (Another useful source in London is Compendium Bookshop, 240 Camden High Street, London NW1.)

Artists Books is the neat catalogue of an exhibition organized at Moore College by Dianne Perry Vanderlip. On the front cover there is a photo of another similar booklet, but the actual title of the catalogue only appears on the photographed catalogue – so what is one holding? Inside, after a foreword by the organizer, there is short piece, 'Slices of Silence, Parcels of Time: the Book as a Portable Sculpture' by Lynn Lester Hershman, followed by 'Some Thoughts on Books as Art' by John Perreault, 13 illustrations of some rather conspicuous books, and then a detailed alphabetical list of nearly 250 books (and a few magazines). A comparison of this list with the one mentioned above suggests an overlap of less than a quarter, an indication of the diversity of material now available. John Perreault's 'thoughts' include the best attempt yet to evince characteristics and suggest a definition of book art; he states that: 'Books as art are not books about art or books of reproductions of art or books of visual material illustrating literary texts, but are books that make art statements in their own right, within the context of art rather than of literature.' This is obviously the kind of working definition that has informed both of the exhibitions, but one could make it tighter by laying emphasis on works that exploit the given physical form of the mass-produced book without

over-concentration on its objectness. In fact Perreault sees book art as the utilisation of a 'found structure ... not weighed down by history', and says that for the artist and the viewer this medium is practical, democratic, cheap, portable, personal and potentially disposable, and states the obvious when he writes that 'books as art will never replace painting and sculpture'.

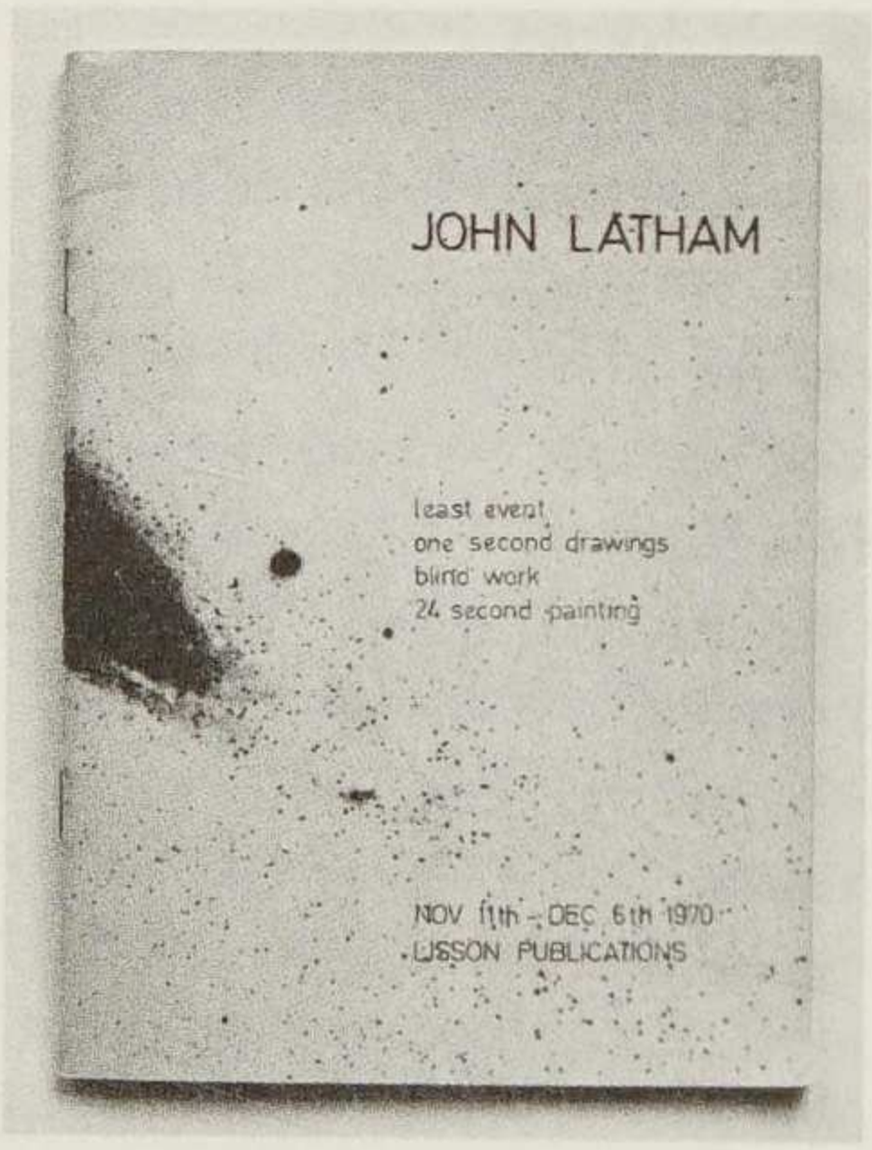
The book is a vehicle suitable for certain kinds of idea, as is film; book art is not a movement, although its emergence at this particular time is significant, and, just as books themselves exist on most subjects, so book art occurs at the point of overlap of many different activities. Similarly, some of the virtues claimed for the book as a visual medium will also be seen to be the virtues of the book *per se*.

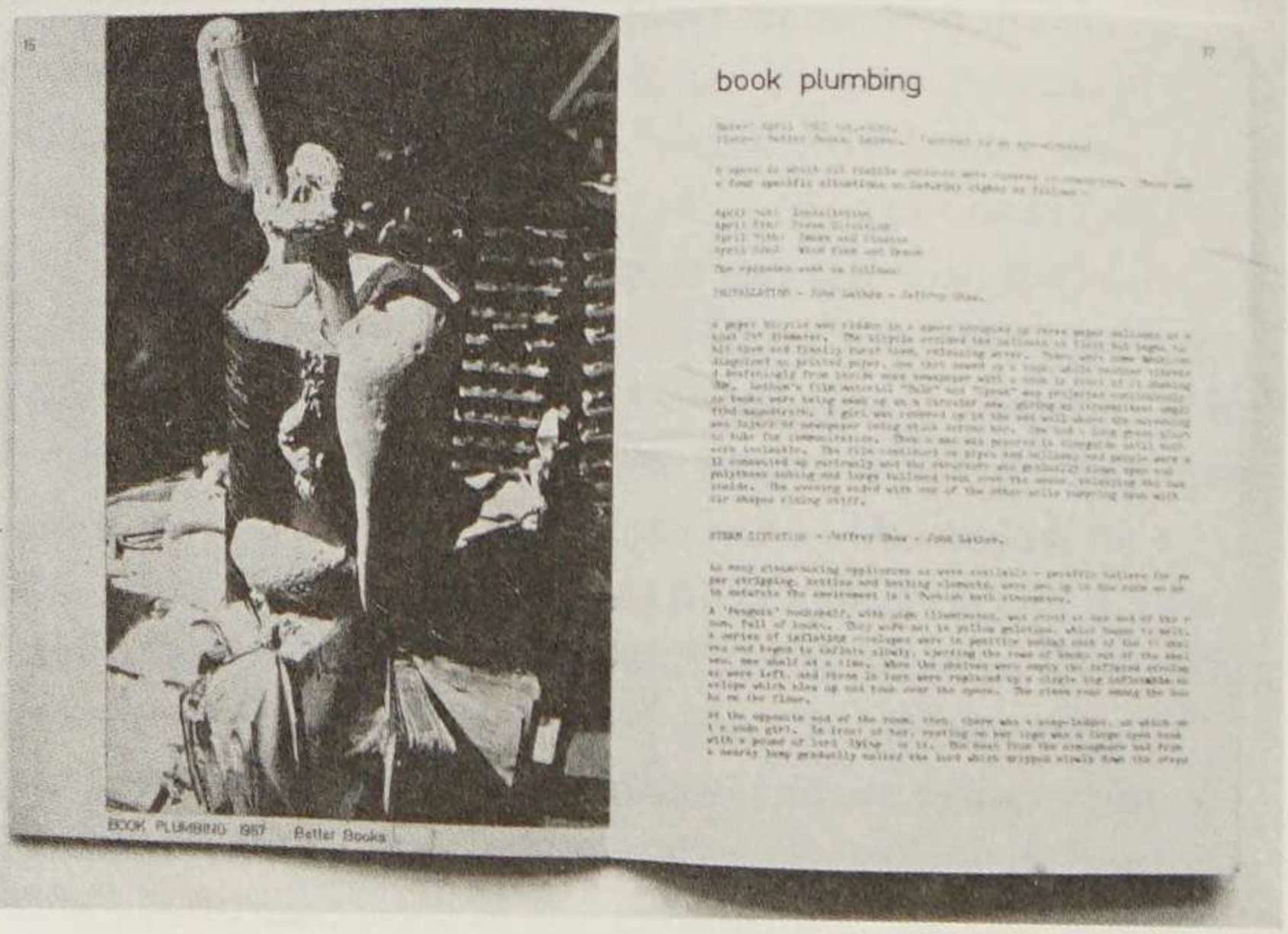
The term 'book art' may suggest an echo of the phrase 'the art of the book' which has been the traditional arena for artists and books to come together; while this is reasonable in that the present heterogeneous situation includes something from this tradition, it also includes elements from cinema, sculpture, graphics, music, poetry and pure documentation; very often the conventional attributes of 'the art of the book' are such as to be opposed by exponents of book art.

Book Art: Object & Image

First published in *Artists' Bookworks*, London: British Council, 1975.

I continued to report on artists' books in my 'Feedback' columns, 32 of which ultimately appeared in *Studio International* from 1972 to 1975. These writings came to the notice of Martin Attwood at the British Council when he was planning an exhibition of artists' books to tour in West Germany. In 1973 he asked me if I would contribute an essay to the catalogue; I agreed, and sent him this text in summer 1974. The essay documents the shift in focus from books-in-art to books-as-art. It has been truncated here to foreground general ideas, thus discussion of specific books has been largely omitted. This was the first exhibition with which I was involved, but in 1976 I was asked to write a second essay when it was reshaped to tour Britain as *Artists' Books, Booklets, Pamphlets, Catalogues* … , with a new catalogue published by the Arts Council of Great Britain.





John Latham, *Least Event* … (London: Lisson Gallery, 1970)

The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman by Lawrence Sterne (1760–1767) is a convenient example of an older book that carries two different systems of visual signs (three, if one includes words as visual entities). Of these, William Hogarth's illustrations belong to the traditional 'art of the book', a term which generally refers to the embellishment of the author's text (though its more basic meaning concerns the hidden art of presenting a text to the eye in an unobtrusive way, in the manner which most facilitates reading); while Sterne's own visual insertions into the text are a new departure and indicate both the occasional inadequacy of words, as well as a desire to experiment with the conventions of the book. In contrast to illustration, such experiments as the placing of a marbled leaf some way into the text may be linked with 'book art', which has more to do with the use of the book form by the visual artist.

The term 'book art' can be used broadly to describe an area at the intersection of several different disciplines within contemporary art. It includes elements from painting, sculpture, music, cinema, photography, graphics, poetry and pure documentation. Book art is also largely concerned with mass-production techniques and (relatively) unlimited low cost editions, in contrast to the limited edition, hand-made, high cost productions which exemplify the art of the book.

This exhibition should begin to demonstrate the numerous ways in which the artist can make use of the book, but to consider first its recent use as a physical object in Britain, one immediately lights upon the example of John Latham. He first used books as elements in reliefs or combine paintings in 1958, and while their three-dimensionality and physicality were the most immediately apparent aspects of their use, Latham's 'conception derived from painting – as a *surface* operation. The book was a *volume* of whiteness carrying a thread of black – two distinct *temporal* functions in effect which correspond to the "timeless" existence and the sequential time of the succession of instants as the thread goes past.'[1] He subsequently employed books in the various Skoob Towers which were burnt in public places, and intended as negative sculpture, sculpture that disintegrated; then in 1967 he ventured into 'book plumbing', as well as the trans-substantiation of a book of criticism into a distillate, arrived at after part of the book was part-digested, not mentally, but physically. (This work is now titled *Still & Chew/Art & Culture*, 1966–1967.) All these somewhat miso-bibliotic activities, and others, are documented in *John Latham*, London: Lisson Publications, 1970.

It was R. B. Kitaj who first said, 'Some books have pictures and some pictures have books' in 1964.[2] The wheel has since turned half circle, we are back to books with pictures, but with a difference, the wheel has had to travel to turn. Kitaj, meanwhile, has incorporated book jackets, pages, plates, etc., directly into collages which formed the basis of silk-screen prints, and more recently he executed a suite of prints, *In Our Time*, which were all derived from blown-up photographs of the covers of books, sometimes reproduced as found, but sometimes altered inconspicuously so that they have become inventions.

However, Latham's use of the object and Kitaj's use of the image are peripheral to book art proper. What is more relevant in this context is the artist's use of the book, either conventionally or as a form. Neither avenue has been much explored by artists until recently, for they have tended to be involved either actively in the 'art of the book' area, or in the total design of the book, or with such literary forms as autobiography, essays, etc., or passively in the art book, of course, and then only when they were successful or dead. However, with the advent of the multiple, of performance art, of Conceptual and 'theoretical' art, and other developments, the significance of the book to the artist has increased. The multiple idea lies behind many of the books in this exhibition. Literature has long been distinguished from large reaches of the visual arts in its capacity to survive multiplication, while, outside print-making, the attachment to the unique art object has begun to slacken only comparatively recently, as the aims of artists and the economics of the art world have changed. Many artists have been keen to circumvent the commercial dealer circuit and have recently exploited such 'democratic' media as the postal services, television, film and books.

The living artist engaged in performance art or happenings, for example, or other art forms which are of their nature transient and unrepeatable, has turned to the book (or to video) as a medium of documentation. This situation has meant that artists themselves have not only to grapple with the problem of the most suitable medium to document their activity, but also with the form which the presentation of their work, say in the book medium, should take; hence the difficulty, sometimes, in deciding whether a book is an artwork or documentation or just a marketable memento.

With the increase in the direct use of photography by artists, by Ed Ruscha and Hamish Fulton, for example, it has also become possible to present photographs both as an installation in a gallery and in book form, either possibility being equally valid. Artists' drawings, particularly those that are diagrammatic, also lend themselves to presentation in book form, since large numbers of accurate facsimiles, as valid as the originals, can be produced cheaply for a potentially wider audience; Herman de Vries' *Random Objectivations* of 1972 is a useful example of this kind of work.

Conceptual art, in that much of it involves verbal matter, or is consciously a dematerialisation of the artist's work down to print manifestations, is often better suited for presentation in book form than on the walls of a gallery, simply by virtue of the intrinsic superiority of the book as a vehicle for this kind of information. Such Conceptual art has the same advantage as literary work in that the content is not altered by the multiplication process, indeed it is possible to exhibit works inexpensively and (particularly in the case of pieces conceived for magazines) simultaneously around the globe, without affecting the way in which the piece is received, unless context becomes significant.

More needs to be said about the book as a 'democratic' medium. There is a certain satisfaction in the idea that because the artist's work is not unique it becomes more accessible, while still existing in its primary state, since it was conceived as a mass-produced object, rather than being published in a secondary and denatured state via some form of reproduction. However, play with the word 'democratic' suggests not only accessibility, but wider communication, and this does not yet seem to be happening. There is another parallel here with multiples, which at one time appeared to be a breakthrough to a wider audience, but in fact seem simply to have lodged more widely in crevices in the existing fabric of the art world. But if communication outside the art world is just as difficult, it still seems worthwhile to attempt to make the works of artists in their primary state more widely available. The fact that to date most of the cheaper, and therefore most accessible, multiples have tended to be slight statements need not condemn the idea. Books do have an advantage in this respect in that they can carry complex information and still be susceptible to mass-production, so that a low cost book of diagrams or photos expressing directly what an artist wishes to say can be easily acquired by someone wishing to participate in the communication, while at the same time freeing them of the responsibility of ownership of an unique object, so that if the work ceases to arrest them, it can be passed on.

It is to be hoped that this exhibition will be a factor in accelerating the present impetus behind book art, and consequently expanding the penetration of the artists' ideas and achievements.

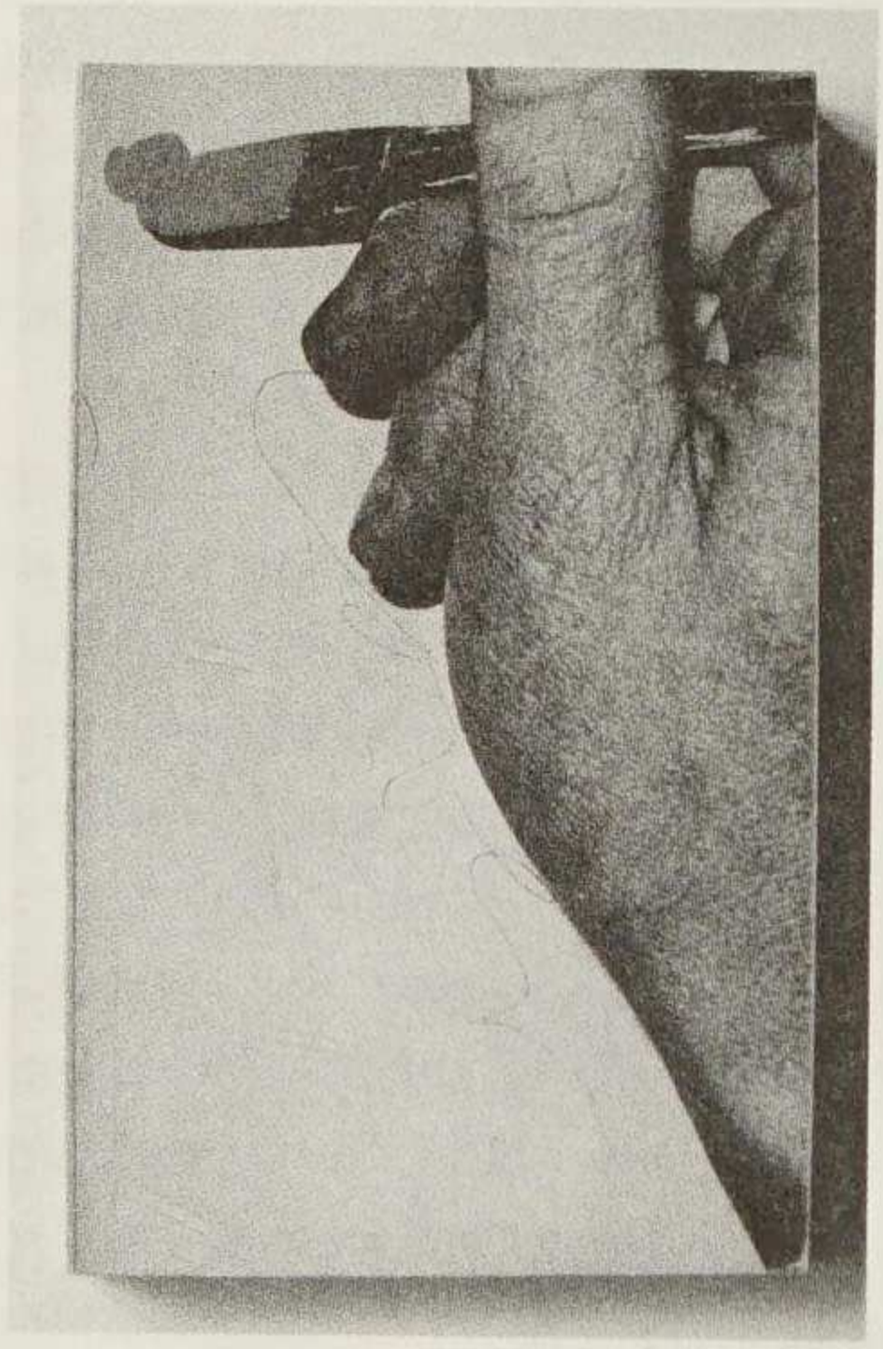
[1] Letter dated 1 December, 1973, from John Latham to the author.
[2] R. B. Kitaj, 'On Associating Texts with Paintings', *Cambridge Opinion*, 37 (January 1964), p. 53.

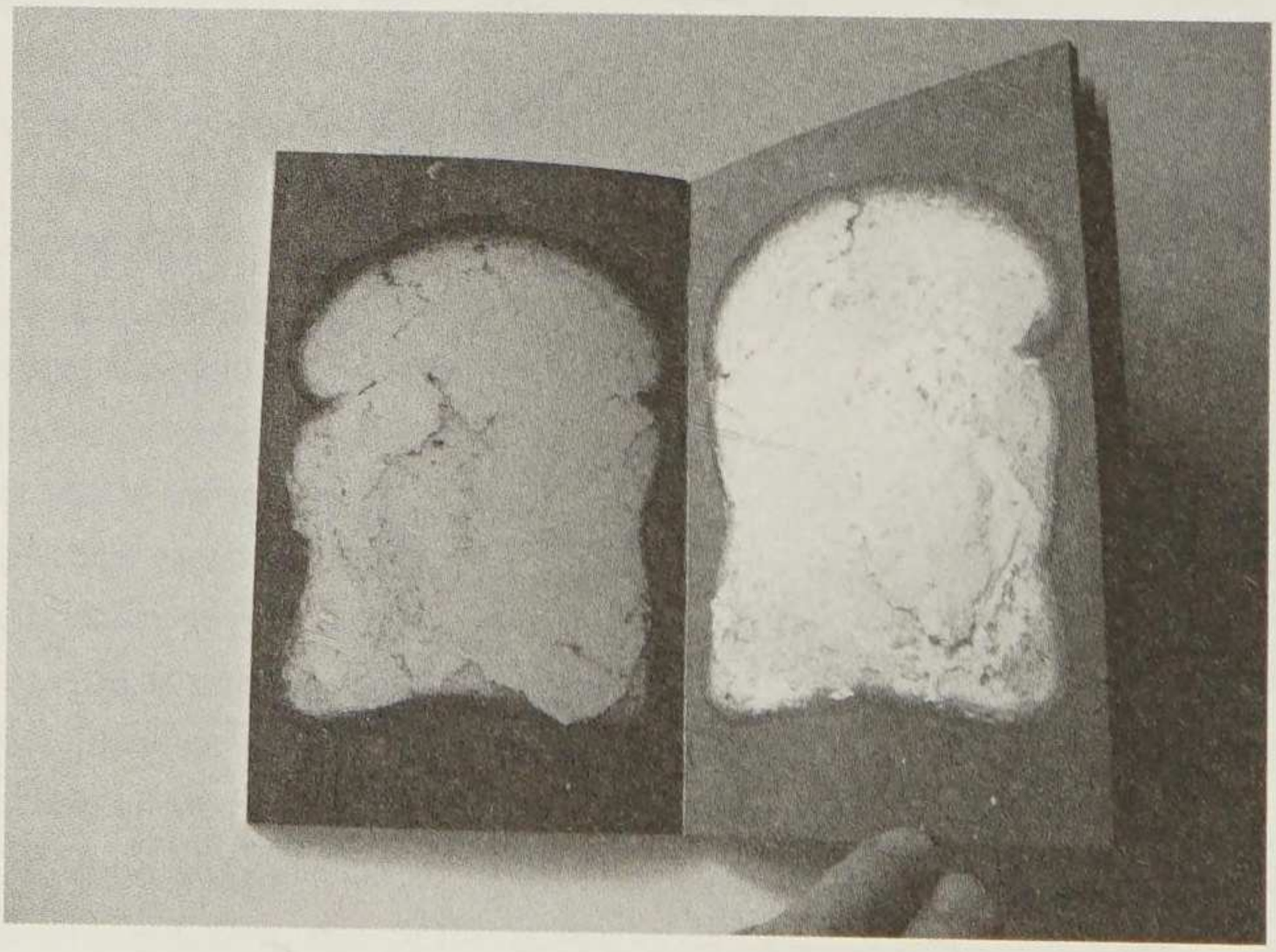
Hamish Fulton, *Hollow Lane* (London: Situation Publications, 1971)

Leaves of Art: Book Art in Britain

First published in *British Book News*, April 1977, p. 271–273.

My essay in the catalogue of the *Artists' Bookworks* … exhibition, organised by the Fine Arts Department of the British Council in 1975, brought my work on the subject of books by artists to the attention of another of their departments. I was asked if I would write something similar for the Council's *British Book News*, specifically on British artists' books, for the magazine's international audience.





Telfer Stokes, *Passage* (London: Weproductions, 1972)

British artists who are the subject of art books are generally dead. The minute proportion of living artists who actually appear in hard-back are usually household names, and their work widely known, before they ever rub boards with the ranks of dead artists on book-shelves. I am thinking of Henry Moore, Graham Sutherland, Francis Bacon, Bridget Riley, David Hockney and so on. In other words, art books confirm reputations.

Anyone building up a collection of publications on living British artists will find that their principal sources are the catalogues of exhi-bitions, such as those held at the Tate Gallery, the Hayward Gallery and increasingly at places outside London. These are often better researched and documented, and sometimes better written than the few comparable books. However, not all artists are happy to have their work docketed, processed and packaged into book form. The 'museum without walls' is a

powerful idea, but the contents of this particular museum are very dubious. A photograph of a piece of sculpture reduces an infinite number of viewpoints of a three-dimensional object to a single viewpoint, and represents the piece two-dimensionally; such a photograph is a patently inadequate representation of a sculptural experience. Where paintings are concerned, however, a two-dimensional coloured reproduction often functions as a surrogate for a two-dimensional coloured plane of vastly different proportions, losing all sense of surface and probably the real colour relationships as well.

Dissatisfaction with such treatment was probably only a minor factor in propelling artists to consider the book as a form; a stronger reason for artists' involvement was the realisation in the 1960s that painting, sculpture and print-making represented only a segment of the spectrum of means for visual expression, and that such visual media as video, photography and performance could be extensions of painting and sculpture, or developed in their own right. Books, too, were susceptible to the visual artist's attentions. The interest of Conceptual and Fluxus artists, in particular, in the media of communication, from television to the postal services, and the increased mobility of artists, ensured that the 'new' art of the 1960s was not a narrowly nationalist phenomenon. Though British artists were not initially over-conspicuous in these developments.

Books have certain attributes that appeal to artists seeking to communicate more widely. They can be mass-produced and yet each reader can experience the artist's work in its primary state, in the original, owing to the fact that it was conceived as a book. Mass-production leads to multiple copies at low prices, the books therefore become more accessible, geographically and economically. The production of unique precious objects – such as the *Mona Lisa*, known by many, but seen by few – is augmented by the production of the potentially semi-expendable object, which, when reproduced, remains itself. Artists' books, therefore, are mass-produced books or booklets, published in numbers limited only by demand, in which the artist documents or realises ideas or artworks. Within the broad range of artists' books there are some works that can be designated as book art: those in which the book form

is intrinsic to the work, and which might, therefore, be considered as artworks.

During the 1960s the two artists most consistently interested in the book form were Dieter Roth and Ed Ruscha, from Germany and the United States respectively. Roth's books have often been published in Britain, and the first 20 volumes of his *Collected Works* have just been completed. *Volume 20* of 1972 (Hansjörg Mayer, DM30) includes a complete illustrated catalogue of all his books and prints to that date.

Among British artists, Eduardo Paolozzi produced a few books that displayed affinities with his printmaking activities, including *Kex* (Copley Foundation, 1966) and *Abba Zaba* (Hansjörg Mayer, 1970). Allen Jones, another artist associated with British Pop art also produced books, including *Figures* (Galerie Mikro/Edizioni O, 1969) and *Projects* (Mathews, Miller, Dunbar, 1971, £4.95). These two books are not intended as artworks, but exemplify the artist's use of the book form to document his sources, and their subsequent transformation.

The books referred to so far are predominantly visual. The other major component of book art is language – even though, as written language in books, it requires reading, another visual process. It was in 1969 that the then journal *Art-Language* first appeared, by which time much of the output of the Art & Language group was verbal. Latterly the activity of the group was viewed not just as the vestigial smile of the Cheshire cat of object art, but also as a product of a shift in the nature of art. Art & Language's preoccupation with verbalisation led inevitably to the use of printed matter, and ultimately to *Art-Language*. The first number was undecided about its status as, or relationship to, art; it appeared to be as much artwork as magazine as the group probed the conventions of art. While the use of language exclusively or partially in artworks was an international phenomenon, inside and outside Britain, Art & Language and allied groups, such as those associated with the magazines *Statements* and *Analytical Art*, created a climate in which verbal artworks could flourish, as well as an intensive concern over theory for art. In retrospect it can be seen that the magazines and related publications generally presented work by artists, rather than artworks, but at the time this distinction was

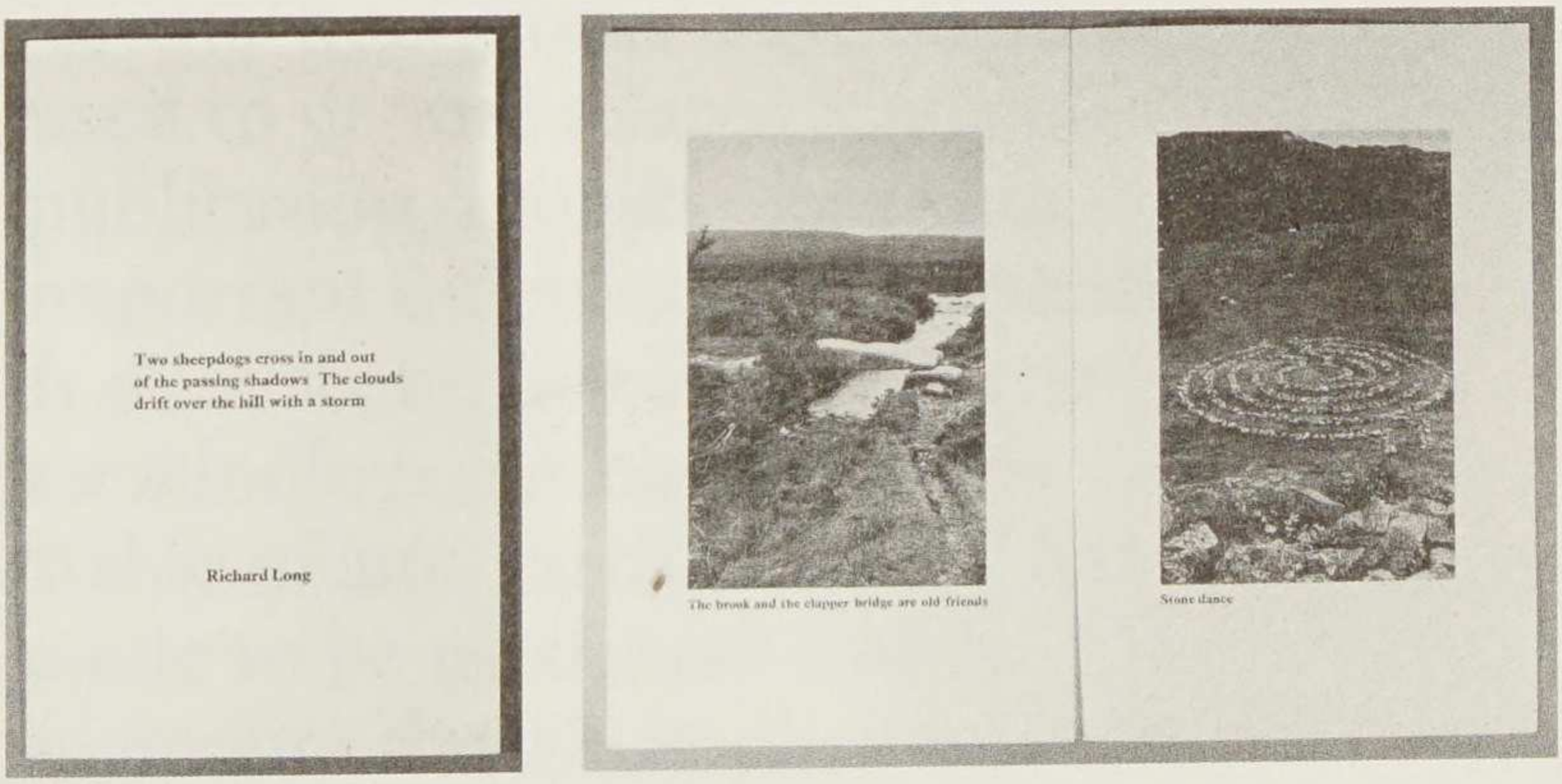
not at all clear. But if the contributions to *Art-Language* were not artworks, neither were they simply the theoretical groundwork for a revised practice. Because of this lingering and provocative ambivalence *Art-Language* cannot be left out of a discussion of artists' books – it is still being published (Art & Language Press, 126 Broughton Road, Banbury, Oxfordshire).

Artists independent of these groups have also employed solely textual matter in books. One such is Tony Rickaby as in his *Art Delinquency Notes* (the artist, 1974), although in the subsequent *An Unknown Art History* (Art Net, 1975, £1) he has also introduced summary visual images to augment the texts. Other artists who have been engaged in verbal exposition include Victor Burgin, Joseph Kosuth, Stephen Willats (*Art and Social Function*, Latimer, 1976, £6.50) and John Stezaker (*Beyond Art for Art's Sake*, Nigel Greenwood, 1973, £2). But arguably the most fertile area for investigation at this time is that which brings images (particularly photographs) and words together. Victor Burgin's *Work and Commentary* (Latimer, 1973, £6) operates in this area, although a substantial part of the book relies on a conventional verbal exposition; while Ian Breakwell's *Six Phototext Sequences* (Tetrad Press, 1973) are disturbing juxtapositions of deadpan photo-strips and quirky captions. Artists from America and Europe such as John Baldessari (*Ingres and Other Parables*, Studio International, 1972, £1.25), Dan Graham (*1966 Schema* ... , Lisson, 1972, £2) and Daniel Buren, have made important contributions in this area.

The beginning of the 1970s saw younger British artists publishing visual art in book form including such land artists as Richard Long with his *Two Sheepdogs* ... (Lisson, 1971, o/p) and Hamish Fulton with *Hollow Lane* (Situation Publications, 1972, £2.50) and *10 Views of Brockmans Mount* (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1973). In these three publications both artists use photographs and occasional short captions, on the one hand simply to document work, on the other to assemble a new work, the book. The British artist who has achieved most with the book form is Telfer Stokes. He has made five books to date: *Passage* (1972), *Foolscrap* (1973), *Spaces* (1974), *Loophole* (1975) and *Chinese Whispers* (1975) – the last two with Helen Douglas. All the books are published in London by Weproductions. Although pervaded by – and challenging –

certain cultural conventions, these books use an international language, the purely visual, as well as exploring the potential of the book form through sequentiality, diptychal images, the relationship of one page to another, front to back, and so on. The means employed is photography, but there is a certain amount of visual punning that relies on internal verbalisation; the later books also begin to develop poetic visual narratives. Other artists who have made visual books include Roy Grayson (*Painting Book*, the artist, 1972, £1.50), Tim Head (*Reconstruction*, Idea Books, 1973, £1.50), John Hilliard (*Elemental Conditioning*, Oxford: Museum of Modern Art, 1974, o/p), Sol LeWitt (*The Location of Lines*, Lisson, 1974, £2), Bill Mitchell (*120f*, the artist, 1975), David Tremlett (*Some Places To Visit*, Nigel Greenwood, 1974/75, £1.50), and the numerous artists associated with David Mayor's Beau Geste Press at Cullompton and latterly at Barhatch Farm, Cranleigh, Surrey.

Art conceived for replication lends itself to antholo-gising. A number of periodicals have mounted exhibitions of such work within their covers, for example, the issues of *Studio International* for July/August 1970 and of *TriQuarterly* for Winter 1975.



Richard Long, *Two Sheepdogs* … (London: Lisson Publications, 1971)

Artists' Books and Book Art

First published in *Art Library Manual: a Guide to Resources & Practice*, Philip Pacey ed.
(London & New York: Bowker, 1977), p. 355–363.

In 1976 the energetic and committed British art librarian, Philip Pacey, planned the first volume to be published on the relatively new discipline of art librarianship. His view of the field was very enlightened so that even then he saw the need for some guidance to art librarians on the subject of artists' books. He asked me if I would write the chapter for the manual, and proposed a structure for the piece.

The following definition of artists' books is proposed for the purposes of this chapter: artists' books are understood to be books or booklets produced by the artist using mass-production methods and in (theoretically) unlimited numbers, in which the artist documents or realizes art ideas or artworks. Auto-biography, letters or collections of writings – as well as the 'art book' format – are disregarded insofar as they perpetuate conventional literary forms.

There are still some problems concerning terminology in this area. The terms 'artists' books', 'book art', 'book as artwork' and 'artists' bookworks' have all been used to denote related kinds of publication, though often with important differences of emphasis. It does seem, however, that the terminology has become fairly stable of late. 'Artists' books' has come to be used most widely to denote the whole phenomenon of books in which the artist has

assumed the role of author, either in the traditional literary sense, or in the sense that the artist is the author of the book as a work of art. Whereas the term 'book art' has been advanced as denoting those 'books in which the book form is intrinsic to the work',[1] and therefore focuses upon those artists' books which might be considered artworks.

It may be observed that the definition of artists' books given above also excludes the handmade book as craft object, the limited edition or unique – and often expensive – *livre d'artiste*, indeed most of the area previously denoted by 'the art of the book'. One motive lying behind the production of many artists' books is opposition by the artist to the whole tradition of the precious-object status of individual works of art, and to the limited-edition restrictions on the production of books – and the experience of art – whether due to financial or practical considerations. Another motive is to focus attention on the book rather than the text; as Ulises Carrión writes:

> In order to read the old art, knowing the alphabet is enough … In order to read the new art one must apprehend the book as a structure, identifying its elements and understanding their function.[2]

It would seem that this area is one in which art librarians can, exceptionally, participate in the dissemination of art, rather than art documentation, with a clear conscience. One is handling art literature which is – at least in the book art area – also art, and which is normally no more expensive than an exhibition catalogue. Thus instead of purchasing publications in which experience of the artwork is mediated through printing and/or photography, one is purchasing and making available the artwork in its primary state, for it was conceived for the form in which it is made available.

Artists' books that contain theoretical or other texts may sometimes be presented as artworks, but they may also be interpreted as artworks against their authors' intention.[3] The choice of typeface or the details of layout of such pieces, whether claimed as art or not, are normally of no more consequence than the way in which a particular piece of conventional poetry, say, has been presented on the page, though occasionally significance may be attributed to such

factors.[4] Artists have even felt it necessary in the present climate, whereby any publication by an artist may be uncritically nominated as an artwork, to print disclaimers in their publications.[5] Normally there is no necessity for the art librarian to be over-concerned with such a distinction, since a publication may well earn its place in a library regardless of its status as a work of art. Although one might reasonably assume that examples of book art are purchased principally because of their excellence, there are likely to be secondary reasons for their acquisition. The interest of the art librarian in artists' books with a verbal content lies in presenting one's readers with texts which may not be available in any other form, and in assisting the artist in the dissemination of his or her ideas when they are first enunciated rather than waiting for them to be respectably anthologized. There may also be a small element of patronage in a librarian's support for the work of particular artists, whether it is verbal or visual.

The buying of artists' books has its archival aspect. However, because of the ideology behind their production, and because of unlimited editions, the usual arguments for restricting their use and housing them specially, do not apply so strongly. That they apply at all is due to the fact that the public, and particularly the art trade and the book trade, will easily subvert an artist's intention, particularly in the case of an edition made relatively small in the first place because of the cost of production and the likely interest in the book, and which is not scheduled for reprinting. (The reprinting of artists' books to specifications identical with those operating in the original edition is the only weapon available to artists who wish to counter the subsequent cashing-in on the scarcity of copies of publications and the concomitant limitation of access to their content.)

Inevitably many artists' books will not be reprinted, therefore the art librarian may in time be in possession of a book bought cheaply, but subsequently of some financial and/or rarity value. How one interprets the maxim that 'books are for use' in the light of such considerations depends upon the kind of art library in which one is working, whether its role tends more towards the museum or the laboratory. A national library will have different ideas of 'use' and different demands upon its stock, as compared with a small college

library. In any particular context one has to decide whether one's duty is primarily to present readers or to future readers, and if the latter then who, hypothetical persons or real people? Of course the existence of other institutions with different terms of reference may condition one's policy.

In exactly the same way that an artist's or student's experience of a particular art object in a gallery, or similar context, may serve as a stimulus to the development of their work, so the experience of artists' books in a library may lead to artists developing their ideas, and possibly the form as well. But the general public also has the right to be able to experience the work of artists in the original, and to be informed of new developments. When, as here, it is work that is as appropriate to a library as to a gallery, the public library's role in promoting the experience of new art becomes significant. (It should be remembered that artists are also among the users of every kind of art library, even if they are inevitably more in evidence, as readers, in college libraries.) The historian, whether of art, design, culture or society, the critic and the biographer – similarly potential users of any of the various kinds of art library – may well have other reasons for finding artists' books interesting. Aside from the ostensible content of the books, such matters as choice of process, typeface, layout, printer, publisher, etc., may also prove to be of interest. There is no reason why the books of visual artists might not eventually become a recognizable element of any general library collection.

Selection and Acquisition

In just the same way that any other medium is employed by practitioners of varying ability, and varying commitment, so artists' books include much second and third rate material, or occasional works, which may be good or indifferent, by artists with only a passing interest in the area, or, at the present time, by those jumping aboard what they deduce to be a bandwagon. The problem for the librarian is to decide whether a possible acquisition has any intrinsic merit.

Without wishing to introduce a particular mystique into the selection of artists' books, it should be said that it may take a while to get a feel for what artists using the book form are trying to convey. Certain more objective criteria

can be employed in the assessment of a book's worth. For instance, the artist may be of such standing, or of such interest to readers, that one needs to buy practically everything published by or about him or her. The particular work may be controversial, newsworthy, or the subject of critical discussion, to the point where it is necessary to provide readers with access to it so that they can make up their own minds about the issue. Artists' books are infrequently reviewed, but such reviews or surveys as there are, principally in contemporary art magazines, may help one reach decisions. If one can disentangle merit from promotion, one can also place a degree of reliance on the judgement of others; the fact that books have been selected for exhibition in public or (quasi-) commercial galleries, for example, or even selected as suitable for sale in bookstalls in the galleries, may be significant and helpful.

The exercise of subjectivity in the assessment of any publication is one of the more satisfying – and risky – activities of the art librarian (and, one suspects, of other specialist librarians). Such a librarian buys a book or publication, or subscribes to a new periodical, because he or she feels that it will be a valuable constituent of the library. One may simply be backing a hunch. While no assessment will be entirely subjective, with an unknown artist and unfamiliar content, the art librarian may be in exactly the same situation as the individual looking at a new artwork and having to decide the significance for oneself; that is, obliged to draw upon one's own experience of art and life in order to assess it. Hence the words of caution above concerning the need for a 'feel' for the subject. One's hunches may be totally misguided and wide of the mark, particularly when one's experience of a specific area is limited. However, if one has a strong conviction about a particular publication, and no other guidance as to its short- or long-term significance, it is worth the occasional gamble in order to be able to test one's judgement over a period of time. If the librarian can establish confidence in their own judgement in the light of the effect of previous purchases upon readers, and subsequent confirmation or evaluation by others, he or she will enrich the library with material that is later unobtainable.

Artists' books, as defined here, have only comparatively recently become sufficiently numerous to pose problems

of selection. However, there are always problems of detection, identification, contemplation or assimilation, and acquisition.

The expansion of artists' activities into new media over the last decade or two, the apparent increase in the artist's and the public's need for information about art, the desire to produce exhibition catalogues whose value outlasts the duration of the exhibition that occasioned them, the decline of interest in living art by large publishers, the scarcity of specialist bookshops and the unwillingness of general bookshops to be bothered with such troublesome publications, have all contributed to the establishment of bookstalls as integral parts of public and commercial galleries. Many galleries have also taken the logical next step of issuing periodic booklists. The librarian needs only to write to the galleries to be included on their mailing lists.

Apart from such relatively haphazard lists there is practically no bibliographical control over artists' books. Since many of the books are published by the artists themselves, usually on a shoestring, or by little presses on the same principle, they are effectively non-booktrade publications and appear infrequently and almost at random in both general and specialist bibliographies. Fortunately, as well as gallery bookstalls, there are also a few specialist art bookshops which may deal with 'non-booktrade' publications such as exhibition catalogues and artists' books, and, rarer still, though often best of all, there are those bookshops or centres which deal with the publications of the political, literary and artistic avant-gardes, for which, in cultural capitals, there seems to be only enough support for one or two. Many bookshops also issue periodic booklists and will be pleased to add libraries to their mailing lists.[6]

The catalogues of exhibitions devoted to artists' books provide the most comprehensive listings of these publications to date,[7] but periodicals from around the world, perhaps more effectively than booksellers' lists, update these listings. Scanning and close reading of appropriate sections of periodicals, including the advertisements and the occasional review, will alert the librarian both to new titles and new sources.

Reliance upon periodicals, lists and exhibition catalogues is inevitable because of temporal and geographical

restrictions upon the art librarian's activity; however, this passive acquisition of information and publications should ideally be augmented by the active foraging of the librarian. This will entail periodic visits to the centres of art information, whether galleries, bookshops or other places, and to exhibitions. The advantages of this course of action are that one is not solely dependent upon reporters, advertisers and producers of booklists, but can sniff out likely publications for oneself, and more importantly can contemplate and assess the actual publications instead of buying blind, or relying solely upon a blurb, or buying second-hand by recommendation.

Organisation

Artists' books present few cataloguing problems. They are most frequently works of single authorship in which decisions as to the identity of the author are rarely complex. They do tend to be a bit short on details regarding the publisher, however, since the publishers are often the artists themselves; date and place of publication are often lacking too. Practically the only other problem confronting the cataloguer is occasioned by books that are published by galleries to coincide with exhibitions, and that could therefore be catalogued as exhibition catalogues. Where a gallery, such as the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, includes such an artists' book as a numbered item in its list of exhibition catalogues, and publishes it instead of a catalogue, the librarian can simply make an added entry under the name of the gallery.

Classification should present few problems, since it is the work of the individual artist rather than his or her subject matter that is normally the principal concern of readers. This has not prevented Ed Ruscha's *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* (1963) from being classified as an aspect of architecture in certain large libraries (this would be an acceptable added entry). The problem exemplified here is that because the artist has employed photographic images in the construction of his book, the main concern of the reader would clearly seem to be gasoline stations to the uninformed classifier. Had the book contained painted images of gasoline stations, then the subject-matter of the book would almost

certainly have been overlooked and it would have been classified under painting. Another possible placing of this book could have been under photography (and one could not blame the uninformed classifier for this placing either). In art libraries that use an inflexible classification scheme, or apply a flexible scheme inflexibly, photography is possibly the area in which an artist's book such as this one will end up, though this will not be so appropriate for others. However, such books tell one less about photography than about the artist's ideas, and one would hope that in dealing with 20th-century artists who are involved with a variety of non-traditional media, such as photography, language, video, sound, light, etc., that documentation or artists' books will be classified first under artist, and that classification schemes based on traditional media can be manipulated to allow this. If one wished to keep all artists' books or book art together, a position near other art forms designed for multiplication, such as prints, or multiples themselves, might be appropriate, or alternatively a place adjacent to 'the art of the book'. The kinds of classification problem to which individual artists' books give rise obviously require the oversight of a subject specialist.

Accommodation and Conservation

Most artists' books have a greater physical affinity with exhibition catalogues and pamphlets than with the hardback art book; thus the librarian can simply accommodate them in the same way as the former. Depending upon local custom and the nature of the library this would normally mean putting them on the shelves, as they are, with the general book stock; sending them away to be bound in hard covers and then shelving them; or housing them in pamphlet boxes shelved either separately or distributed through the book stock.

The rebinding of publications that might be considered to be examples of book art may violate them to a significant extent. Sewing through the spine will reduce the inner edge of bled off photographs, and guillotining will reduce the outer edges – as well as the total page area. An alternative solution, which may occasionally be appropriate, would be to request a binder to make a slipcase for a book. Since

many artists' books are paperbacks they tend to suffer from so-called 'perfect' binding, which means that after a few months or years the spinal glue may lose its flexibility and grip, and the pages may start to fall out. When one also considers that newsprint is sometimes deliberately used for the pages it will be evident that one is likely to come across several basic conservation problems in connection with these books. There is one problem, though, that may be unique to artists' books: how does one deal with publications in which the artist directs the reader to burn the book after reading it?[8]

Exploitation

Aside from the problems connected with the physical make-up of the books, there is also the problem of size. There are now a number of micro-books or mini-books circulating, some of which are only a few cubic centimetres in volume,[9] while others are no bigger than pocket diaries. The likelihood of these books becoming mislaid or possibly purloined requires that they be separately housed, but if it is thought necessary to secrete artists' books in various corners of the library then there is a consequent need to bring them together at some time, in order to display the whole phenomenon to readers. If some, or most, of the artists' books in the library's collection are available on open access or for loan, then the need for displays will not be quite so marked, though they will still be useful in revealing the diversity of artists' books.

As well as fulfilling this function, a display will, of course, assist in communicating the ideas that artists have expressed in book form. What an exhibition or display could also usefully do is provide the stimulus for the creation of more books. If this was one of the considered aims of the display then it would be advantageous to have a typewriter, a photocopying machine, a small offset machine, and whatever other equipment might be useful – or could be accommodated – near the display. And there is no reason why these items should not be permanently accessible in an area of the library, so that it could extend its role beyond acquisition into facilitating the production of publications of all kinds – not only artists' books as defined here. While one might

expect this situation to develop in an art college library, there is no special reason why other kinds of library should not consider it.

The problems of displaying artists' books are not substantially different from those associated with any other kinds of book. Depending upon the context, of course, it would be most appropriate if the books could be handled and looked at or read while on display, and further, perhaps, that they might be lent out overnight or over a weekend when the institution was not open to readers, and then restored to the display when the library reopened.

The interests of artists in the book as 'a found structure that is outside traditional art formats and therefore not weighed down by history',[10] and the consequent production of artists' books, gives art libraries a new relevance by relieving them of the stigma of being repositories of largely degraded images, and (less truly) of secondary texts. The reader can peruse an artist's book with the almost certain assurance that he or she is responding to the work in a state which completely corresponds with the intention of the artist.

[1] Clive Phillpot, 'Book art digressions', in *Artists' Books* (London: Arts Council, 1976), p. 40–41.

[2] Ulises Carrión, 'The new art of making books', *Kontexts*, no. 6/7 (1975).

[3] David Rushton, review of 'Artists' Bookworks', *ARLIS Newsletter*, no. 23 (June 1975), p. 35–36.

[4] Brandon Taylor, 'Textual art', in *Artists' Books*, p. 47–60.

[5] Daniel Buren, *Sail/Canvas: Canvas/Sail* (Berlin: Berliner Künstlerprogramm, 1975), p. 4: 'Note to the reader. All the photographs reproduced in this book are souvenirs, documents of a work. They cannot replace it. They only show how the work was carried out, and the reader is asked to remember that they can falsify it ... '

[6] There is a short list of galleries and bookshops in Britain, Europe and America in *Artists' Books*, p. 95–96.

[7] Germano Celant, 'Book as Artwork 1960/1970', illustrated Italian text, *Data*, vol. 1, no. 1 (September 1971), p. 35–49. Translations: English (London: Nigel Greenwood, 1972) (list expanded and extended to 1972); French *VH 101*, no. 9 (Autumn 1972), p. 5–28; German *Interfunktionen*, no. 11 (1974), p. 80–105.
Artists Books (Philadelphia: Moore College of Art, 1973).
Artists' Bookworks (London: British Council, 1975), British publications – parallel English/German texts.
Artists' Books (London: Arts Council, 1976).

[8] David Mayor, 'Bookart hermetics', in *Artists' Bookworks*, p. 78–82.

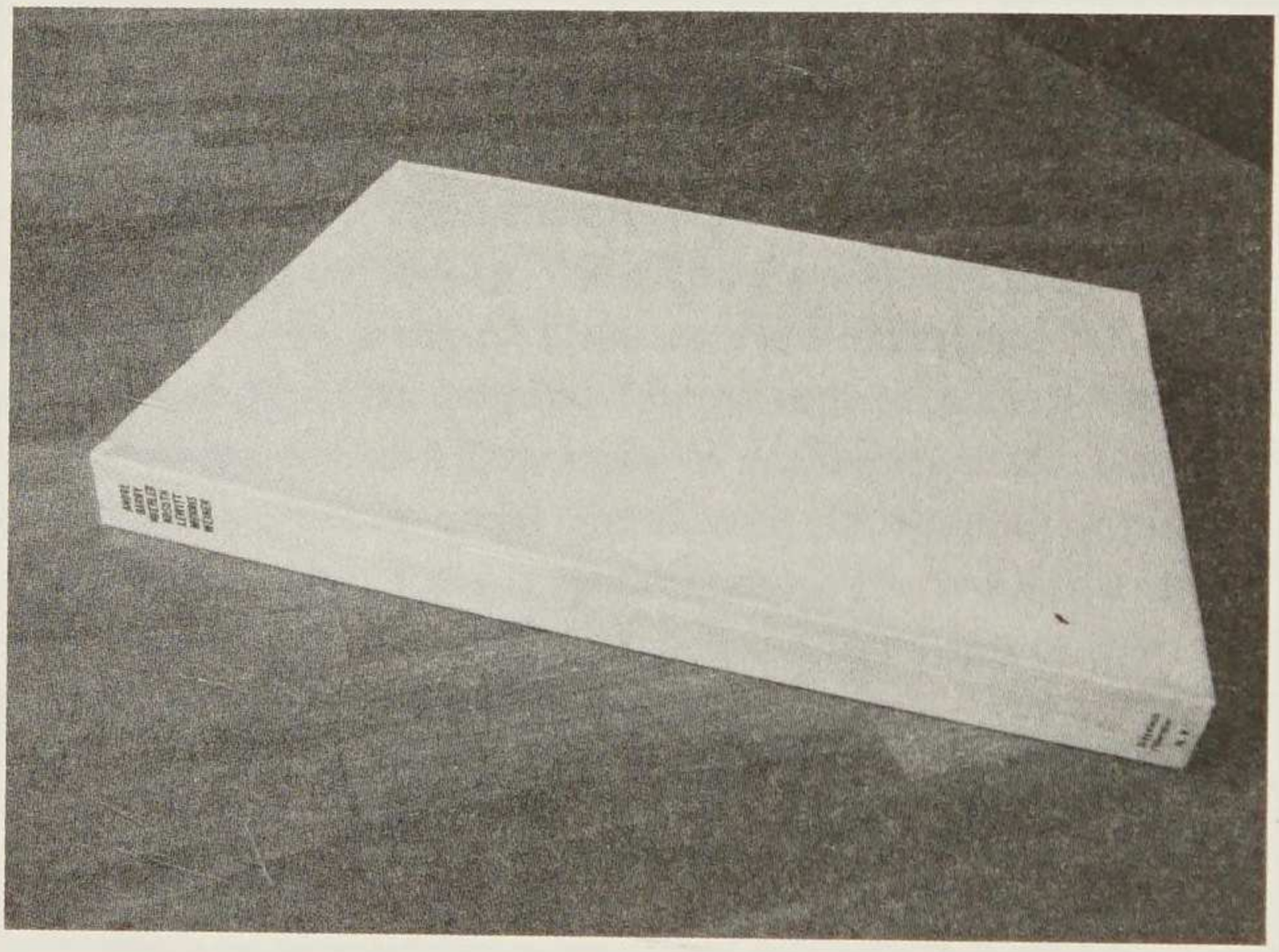
[9] *Artists' Books*, illustration p. 23.

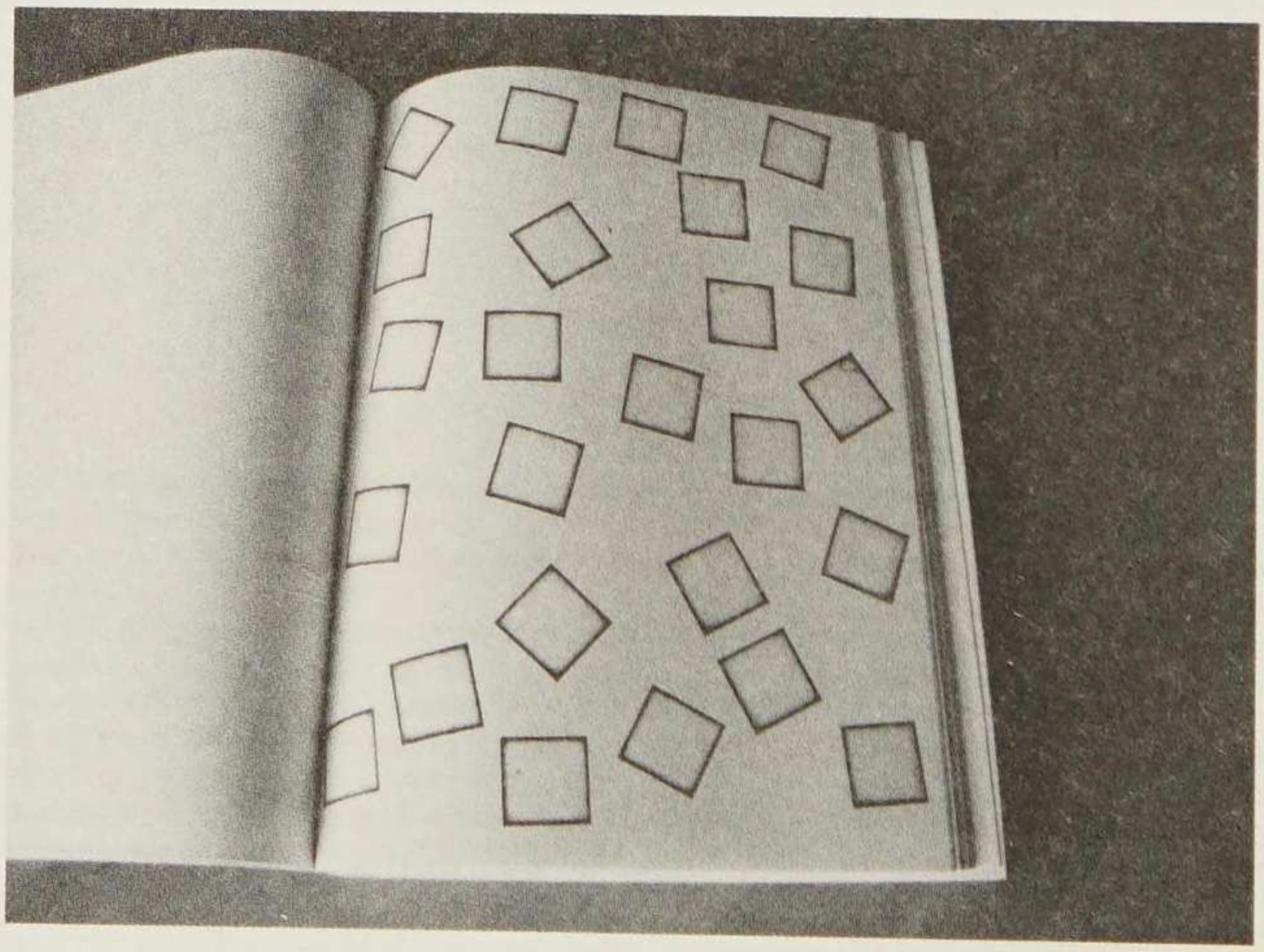
[10] John Perreault, 'Some thoughts on books as art', in *Artists Books* (Philadelphia: Moore College of Art, 1973), p. 17.

Some Questions About Book Art

Previously unpublished lecture, 'Associated Art Publishers Conference' at School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 13 October, 1978.

I arrived in America to take up the position of Director of the Library of The Museum of Modern Art in New York in November 1977. The following summer I was invited by Conrad Gleber of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago to give a keynote address to the second conference of the group Associated Art Publishers at the Art Institute of Chicago on 13 October, 1978. The other keynote speaker was Lucy Lippard, whom I met there for the first time, beginning a long friendship. Apart from participating on a panel on artists' books at Franklin Furnace Archive earlier in the year, this was my first public appearance in the USA.





Seth Siegelaub ed., [*The Xerox Book*] *Carl Andre, Robert Barry, Douglas Huebler, Joseph Kosuth, Sol LeWitt, Robert Morris, Lawrence Weiner* (New York: Seth Siegelaub & John W. Wendler, 1968), Carl Andre page

I had better begin by making it plain that I will be expressing my personal opinions today, and not necessarily those of The Museum of Modern Art. And while the fact that I am a librarian is not irrelevant to what I will have to say, I will be talking largely from the position of one who has been trying to promote the idea of artists' publications for some years, and one who is excited by the *idea* – and sometimes the actuality – of multiple artworks in book form.

I guess I ought also to say that I came from Europe less than a year ago – so that my experience has been coloured by my previous geographical position. Not that I have been ignorant of the general shape of publishing activity here, but my detailed knowledge has been of well-publicized or well-*distributed* North American publications, and only in the last few months have I begun to lay my hands upon a real diversity of American publications, thanks particularly to the presence

of two institutions in New York City – Franklin Furnace and Printed Matter.

This conference is preoccupied with organisation and distribution for small art publishers. I don't think that I have any formal role to play with regard to the way you see fit to organise yourselves, however, your second topic – distribution – ties in with much of what I want to say, since one hundred copies of a book are no more effective than a unique copy if they do not see the light of day. However, as first speaker, I see myself simply as the first to cross a meadow and therefore the one who starts some of the hares running.

I have decided to confine my remarks to those publications which I prefer to describe as 'book art', though some of my comments will apply equally to 'magazine art', 'mail art' and other aspects of the publishing of artworks. Now 'artists' books' is a more commonly accepted term than 'book art', however I prefer the latter, since 'artists' books', as Richard Kostelanetz has pointed out, defines these artworks by the profession (or education) of their authors, rather than by the qualities of the works themselves. It therefore tends to segregate them off from the works of concrete or visual poets, of photographers, of typographers, and so on, whose works in book form are parts of the continuum of book art.

I have been committed to the idea of the multiple artwork in book form (or magazine form) for a long time, and all my writing – and the exhibitions with which I have been associated – have been about publications of this kind, for I am utterly convinced of the value of the form, and moreover, of the value of reaching out to a wider audience. However, I must confess that, since coming to America, I have become less dismissive of the unique book. The reason for this is due partly to the fact that I have come across more contemporary examples here, but also because it has slowly dawned upon me that when I have a book in my hands I am relating to that *particular* book or artwork, and that my response to it depends largely upon the experience that this one book offers, and not whether it is unique, or one of a thousand identical versions – other things being equal.

A number of questions about book art were floating about in my head when I first considered my topic for this

paper. Suddenly I realised that there was a sequence to these questions – and here my profession shows through for a moment. When I was at library school, we students were made aware of a sequence of questions that we could ask when assessing reference books. The questions were: *Who? What? How? For Whom?*

If you ask these questions of a dictionary, such as *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, say, the *Who* question highlights the qualifications of the authors, or editors, or editorial board, and the merit of the publisher; and one can assess them as hacks or scholars, cheapjacks or painstakers. The *What* question reveals that the dictionary records the 'vocabulary of present-day English', but upon further investigation this turns out to be American English. It also makes one aware that the pronunciation, etymology and definition of these words are included. The *How* question informs one that the information is presented on the page in an alphabetical sequence, and physically in a hardback binding. The *For Whom* question would seem to be answered by the title: for college students; however, the fact that one asks the question and looks carefully for answers, leads one to discover that not only has the dictionary been prepared 'for use in school or college' but also for the office, the house and, to quote, 'wherever information about English words is likely to be sought'. One therefore learns that the word 'collegiate' in the title doesn't count for much, just as one has discovered that the work is intended for readers in the USA in particular, rather than for all English-speaking countries.

These discoveries are the benefits of having a systematic method for assessing reference books. And I hope that if these same questions are asked of a genre of books, rather than single titles, the answers will be just as useful or revealing.

So let us ask *Who* is responsible for book art? In terms of authorship, we find that the author is generally a visual artist who may have emerged from a painterly tradition or a sculptural tradition, often via photo works or Conceptual art. But the authors (if I can use that word) are often closer to a graphic tradition – draughtsmen and women, printmakers or illustrators. Some are designers or typographers who wish to present their own work, rather than the work of others.

Others again work out of a photographic tradition, still others from a preoccupation with 'the art of the book' – the craft aspect – a concern with paper, cloth, leather, etc. But book art has also brought literary traditions into juxtaposition with the visual arts, and even music and books have come together.

One can also look at the *Who* of book art in terms of nationality, race, gender, sexuality, or similar viewpoints. Regarding nationality, the origins of artists who have been herded together in exhibitions, bibliographies, surveys, etc., are generally unsurprising. For the Western and Western-influenced nations have been as conspicuous as ever: Western European countries and North America, in particular, dominate. But Latin America and Japan, for example, have also produced artists working with the book form. So, too, has Eastern Europe, where the forms of book art, magazine art and mail art lend themselves very appropriately to exhibitions abroad, and do not run into the same problems as do, say, paintings and sculpture.

It follows from what I have suggested about the national origins of the bulk of book art that such publications as are generally given exposure here and in Europe, are generally produced by white people. Whether this means that blacks and Hispanics, for example, in this country, are not making such works or that they are not being exhibited and publicized outside their communities, I do not know. As for the *Who* of book art in terms of gender and sexuality, it seems to me that this is one area where women artists or gay artists are well represented, and as far as I can see, do not suffer discrimination, rather a kind of affirmative action.

I have been talking largely about artists and designers; however, the other half of the *Who* of book art are the publishers. Now the publishers, as you are well aware, are often the artists themselves. Artists frequently publish their own work at their own cost, not only financial costs but also personal costs; or alternatively scratch around for grants to help them defray some or all of the costs of a publication. Grant-awarding bodies are slowly becoming aware of the phenomenon of book art, and perhaps you would be interested, in a few words, about the art publishing committee of the Arts Council of Great Britain, with which I have been associated. This particular committee deals with three areas

of activity: support for commercial ventures, support for art magazines, and support for artists' publications. This support has been offered in the form of guarantees against loss, returnable grants, defraying research costs, help with distribution, open subsidy, or, in the case of book art, of outright non-returnable grants to artists who present specific projects.

As well as the artist as self-publisher, there are also groups of artists engaged in publishing, or groups of specialists including artists – but I hardly need to go into this area, since the Associated Art Publishers represents precisely this kind of publisher, along with a few individuals who, while not artists or publishers, care passionately about the publishing of multiple art works in the various forms to which I have referred.

I suppose that the other major group of publishers of book art are dealers, and museums and galleries, since the familiar large art book publishers have been terribly wary of handling book art. Museums and galleries tend to publish the work of artists already well known, often in the wake of the publishing activities of dealers. But there are some interesting exceptions to this tendency, often on account of the artists themselves, who ask that instead of having a catalogue printed for their exhibition they be allowed to conceive a publication which amounts to a bookwork, to coincide with the event.

Dealers come in all shapes and sizes, and while it is plain that a few publish book art as a high class form of publicity (or the proverbial 'cheap line'), there are others who work so closely with the artists whom they represent that they are catalysts in *re*fining or *de*fining the possibilities inherent in a particular situation; Seth Siegelaub and Art & Project come to mind as good examples.

One of the reasons for asking the question: 'who is responsible for this work?' of a dictionary or an encyclopaedia, or whatever, is to alert oneself to the record of the publisher, and thereby to be able to take on trust, because of this past record, that the imprint guarantees reliability and quality in new publications – though this cannot be foolproof. Book art publishing has yet to arrive at this position since there are no monopolistic publishers, and because few publishers have been at the game long enough. However, when one

sees that a book's imprint includes the name Hansjörg Mayer or Printed Matter, to take just a couple of examples, then one pays extra attention to the publication.

After *Who* comes *What*! *What* is the content, what is the scope of book art? There is an English newspaper, which 'has the highest circulation of any single newspaper in the world' (on account of its lurid contents), which claims in its advertisements that 'all human life is there'. One might make the same claim for book art (and indeed for art itself). But while, theoretically, there is no reason why all human life should not be there, even in one book, in fact a great many examples of book art are either trivial or inconsequential or downright bad. In addition, many examples of artists' publications are solely concerned with specific characteristics of the medium, such as the page, the paper, the word, the letter, punctuation, page turning, etc., thus paralleling formalism in other areas of art. Much book art also has *art* as its content.

The *What* of book art is potentially the most interesting question, but also the most difficult to answer. While the book has been with us a long time, and is also a familiar part of the life of most people, right from their earliest years – whether in the form of comics, magazines, school books, cook books, car manuals, or whatever – it is still a fact that among the visual arts, the book as a receptacle for experience is the most *unnatural*.

Now although other forms of sequential art, such as film and video, for example, are heavily dependent upon technology, the actual experience that they offer the spectators is a total one, which is as much out of the control of the spectators as is their exposure to a picture on a wall. This is not to deny that the intellect can still select, switch off, etc., however, the spectator is placed in a physically passive role. Participatory visual art is the exception rather than the rule.

The unnaturalness of the book lies in the fact that spectators *have* to engage physically with the book, can control their rate of intake of information, and can choose what to see and when to see it. Spectators also have the power to subvert the intentions of some artists by starting the book at the end, by looking at it upside down, by reading passages out of sequence, and so on. However, most book

artists are well aware of the different ways in which the content of books is apprehended. The possibility open to the spectator of going back over a passage from which they have not extracted the essence, of instant action replay, is not normally possible with other sequential forms of visual art – except when they can be hung on the wall. Also, while I am mentioning the advantages of the book form, I must remind you of the handiness (literally) of the book, and its portability, as well as the fact that it requires no equipment to make its content accessible to the spectator, other than a pair of hands.

But I am drifting away from the content of book art. What kinds of content are *appropriate* for this somewhat unnatural form? It would be silly of me to be prescriptive about this – the future is just around the corner. I can only remind you of certain kinds of book which already exist. For example: documentation as book art. Ephemeral art of various kinds, or artworks that may not be perceived at all by anyone other than the artist, lend themselves, via photographs, texts, diagrams, etc., to the book form. Some such books, because of the involvement of the artist in the form of presentation, or because the artist conceived the piece as raw material for a book, enter the realm of book art. Jan Dibbets' *Robin Redbreast's Territory/Sculpture* (1969) is a book of this kind, whereby a complete notion of the piece of sculpture can be most fully conveyed only through the book.

I would suggest, though, that the most successful examples of book art have been those books that really cohere only when published in book form – those whose content is one with the form – works that do not work so well in sequence on the wall, for example, but which *need* their elements to be stacked back to back in a book. It also seems to me that the combination of words and pictures leads to an entity that is greater than the sum of its parts, and that the verbi-visual is likely to be a particularly rewarding area. This combination of media parallels the work of filmmakers and video artists, in which words and pictures frequently become inter-dependent parts of a new entity.

Now although I have gone on about the dynamic union of words and pictures, the *visible* content of book art ranges all the way from entirely verbal works to entirely visual works. But also from visible to invisible: Manzoni's

book with transparent pages, for example. There are also those books that are more than a sequence of pages, with or without visual images, and which tend to emphasize the book as object, by means of fold-outs, pop-ups, objects between the pages, threads running through the pages, thick and thin pages, noisy and silent pages, and so on. At this end of the spectrum the books tend to become more sculptural, and to veer towards the unique object.

Although I have mentioned some artists' preoccupations with formal devices at the expense of content, there are also artists who never stop experimenting, and who, having taken an aspect of book form to an extreme, use these devices to better express a book's content. But much of the content of book art still seems to me to be self-indulgent, and to deal with essentially private concerns, or to be dependent on the art world. Now I realize that this same criticism might appear to apply to many of the publications that sprouted from the Dada vegetable patch, and therefore go against our experience of their historical sanctification. But all I am really suggesting is that the relative flood of publications needs critical examination and assessment, and that as a result of such assessment much chaff will be winnowed away. Also that informed criticism would provide feedback for artists, which may be of some value.

While there are many frivolous examples of book art, there are also many genuinely humorous works. Indeed book art seems to provide a better format for visual art with a humorous intent than the other static visual media.

Book art also provides an appropriate medium for theoretical and for political art, often in the form of words and pictures brought into a relationship, but also because of the narrative possibilities inherent in the book form. Video and film are also powerful media for political art, but while they have their own advantages, the book's capacity to pack in a great deal of argument and facts, in the conventional literary sense – as well as its easier dissemination – has not been overlooked.

There is much more that could be said, and done, about the content of book art, but for the moment I will just reiterate the need for some serious detailed criticism of specific examples, and of groups of publications. Besides I must move on to my next question, the *How* of book art.

I have already said some things in passing about *How* book art presents itself, particularly the physicality of some examples. Since the kinds of publication that I have been discussing are, by definition, mass-produced, or produced in substantial numbers, they are, of necessity, presented in forms that are compatible with such mass-production. Thus a typical example of book art – and magazine art for that matter – will consist of printed sheets, stitched, stapled, or 'perfect' bound, most frequently in soft covers. This format is itself advantageous in the book artist's search for a wider audience, for the paperback book and the pamphlet are so ubiquitous that book art can easily be assimilated into this familiar aspect of most people's lives.

I am still surprised, however, that so few artists employ the standard paperback formats. There are, of course, several reasons for this: inevitably a certain kind of content will dictate a certain kind of form; not everything can be packaged in the same way. There are also books conceived and designed as toys, and which thereby go overboard for odd formats and sizes. But the fact of working within the physical limits of conventional paperbacks should help the book artist to slip less obtrusively and awkwardly into the bookshop and the library, *and* to have real advantages in overcoming the problems of wear and tear which unusual formats are subjected to when used, or are on display.

There is one other conventional attribute of the book that perhaps I ought to mention, and not just because I am a librarian, and that is the presence of a title page. Now I'm not asking for any particular layout or position for a title page, only that the information which conventional publishers put together at the front of a book is available somewhere in a book work: information such as author, title, publisher, address, etc. It seems to me that just as familiar formats might help book art to reach audiences beyond the art world, and to perform its creative, subversive, or enlightening role through its *content* rather than its external form, so too will basic bibliographical information in the book itself. The discovery of one book can lead to further discoveries: more books by the same artist, more books by the same publisher, if this information can be obtained from the original source.

I don't think that I really need to complain at length about the bindings of books – you must have heard it all

before – but I speak as much as an individual buyer of books, as an institutional purchaser, when I decry the spiral binding, or the criminally misnamed 'perfect' binding. The use of the perfect binding, with its built-in obsolescence, seems to deny the multiple-copy advantage of book art. But I'll say no more.

My remarks have generally been directed at the kind of book that is printed and bound by machine or which involves some relatively sophisticated mechanisation in its production. However, considering the ease with which photocopying machines can be employed to multiply images – as well as small offset machines – it seems strange to me that there isn't a real underground press in the art world. Most examples of cheaply produced book art that actually appear to embrace ephemerality seem to be so self-consciously arty that they only serve to chase their own tails, and that hardly any perform the leavening or critical role of an underground press. Maybe this preoccupation with *art* as subject matter, or with in-group references, is part of a tendency as evinced by the Whitney Museum's recent show *Art About Art* (1978), which I believe is touring America. Perhaps it is also a function of the over-indulgence of individuality, as against acceptance of anonymity, or involvement in cooperative endeavours. (It is, of course, quite possible that I have not seen any underground art publications, because they *are* underground!) Perhaps, as with printed ephemera, art status will only be bestowed upon such publications as do exist – unrecognised as art – after much more time has elapsed, rather in the way that Fluxus documents are being taken increasingly seriously now.

Finally I arrive at my fourth question: *For Whom?* I apologise if this seems merely a fashionable question to ask, but to my mind it is one that is always relevant, whether swings of fashion cause attention to be paid to it or for it to be neglected. It is also, I think, the question that begins to connect most closely with one of the topics to which this conference is devoted: the problem of distribution. Might you not be able to distribute artists' publications more effectively if you can decide for whom they are intended?

For example, it might appear that, in general, many artists' publications are for the illiterate! After all, many of them are entirely visual – words do not enter the picture. This

seems an incredible advantage: one can communicate with practically anyone, regardless of age, culture or nationality; readers, or rather, *viewers*, do not need to read foreign languages, do not need to grapple with abstract concepts …

Well, there is an element of truth in that statement. However, just as a photograph is a meaningless flat pattern to the proverbial 'savage', so a sequence of purely visual images can be equally baffling to persons who are visually illiterate. I don't like the phrase 'visual literacy', but it exists because there is a phenomenon requiring such a label. The fact is that a hell of a lot of people would be out of work if there were no such thing as visual literacy. Art critics would be standing on the corner asking for a quarter, even some semiologists and iconographers would be walking the streets and sleeping in the parks. I could go on …

But even though visual communication is often far from simple, it seems to me to be worth keeping the potency of the picture ever in mind. The results of placing two or three visual images in sequence can be so stimulating, upsetting or reverberative, and can communicate so directly and on so many levels, that the potential audience for book art seems unlimited.

If one asks *For Whom* most of what I would call 'book art' is specifically – even unconsciously – intended, I think that one answer has to be: *the art world*. This means that the content of book art is often art itself. While this can be enlightening, it can also be fun, just as the Whitney's *Art About Art* was fun, but book art *about art* frequently delimits the potential audience for a book. I may be over-idealistic in assuming that the readership of book art is potentially very wide indeed, but I don't think so. And I do know artists who actively desire to communicate beyond the art world, and to see their books among books on quite different topics, whether in general bookshops or libraries, or what.

I do not question the artist's need to be faithful to his or her own perceptions in making a book, but I am suggesting that if an artist desires to make something that will be realised in an edition, whether of 50 or 500 copies, then he or she must have some conception of an audience. Artists may be making books for six friends, for seven collectors, for three critics, or whatever, other than themselves. Presumably artists are also sending copies of books out into the void,

in the hope that unknown readers will feel as strongly about the content of the book as they themselves do.

As well as observing that many artists' books are consciously, or unconsciously, intended for the art world, I think that a second observation that may be valid is that many artists' books reflect white middle-class values. One reason for this goes back to my first question: *Who* is responsible for book art? Predominantly white middle-class artists, or so I would assume. Mention of race seems to further limit the audience for books that exist now. But I don't believe that: if a book is good enough it will transcend cultural barriers. What I *am* suggesting is that those books that exist do not reflect the composition of our society. This may be something for publishers to ponder.

Are artists' books for mature adults? I ask this question because I am increasingly beginning to think that uncritical adults, who have seen so many books that each new one may only be noteworthy for its novelty, or for its similarity to a previous book, may not be the most responsive audience for book art. The visual, literary and other personal experiences which one undergoes in one's teens and early 20s are often not only vivid but also formative, and perhaps more intensely felt than later layers of experience. I would like to see children and college students made aware of visual books and book art in general, of books that are not necessarily made with them in mind, but books to which they might respond, be stimulated by, and derive pleasure from.

How do you get book art to this age group? In part it is a distribution problem. But exhibitions, preferably exhibitions that enable kids and students to handle and read books, are a very direct way of reaching them. And book art is one of the easiest art forms to transport and display. Exhibitions could tour schools, colleges, public libraries and similar places, outside the art context; and books could be for sale. Which brings me to the next possibility, the encouragement of booksellers on main street to include visual books or book art among their general stock, not segregated amongst art books, and not effectively segregated on the shelves of specialist art bookshops.

Similarly it would be good to see book art on the shelves of public libraries with other paperbacks, or with visual books where this is appropriate, and not necessarily

kept together. I think that anyone who has heard about the fate of book art in public libraries, and academic libraries, whereby Ed Ruscha's *Thirtyfour Parking Lots* (1967) or *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* are shelved with books on architecture or urban planning, for example, and had a good laugh – and this includes myself – should stop for a minute to consider whether such books might not first be puzzling, then perhaps stimulating, to people who might otherwise never see them had they not been placed in this context.

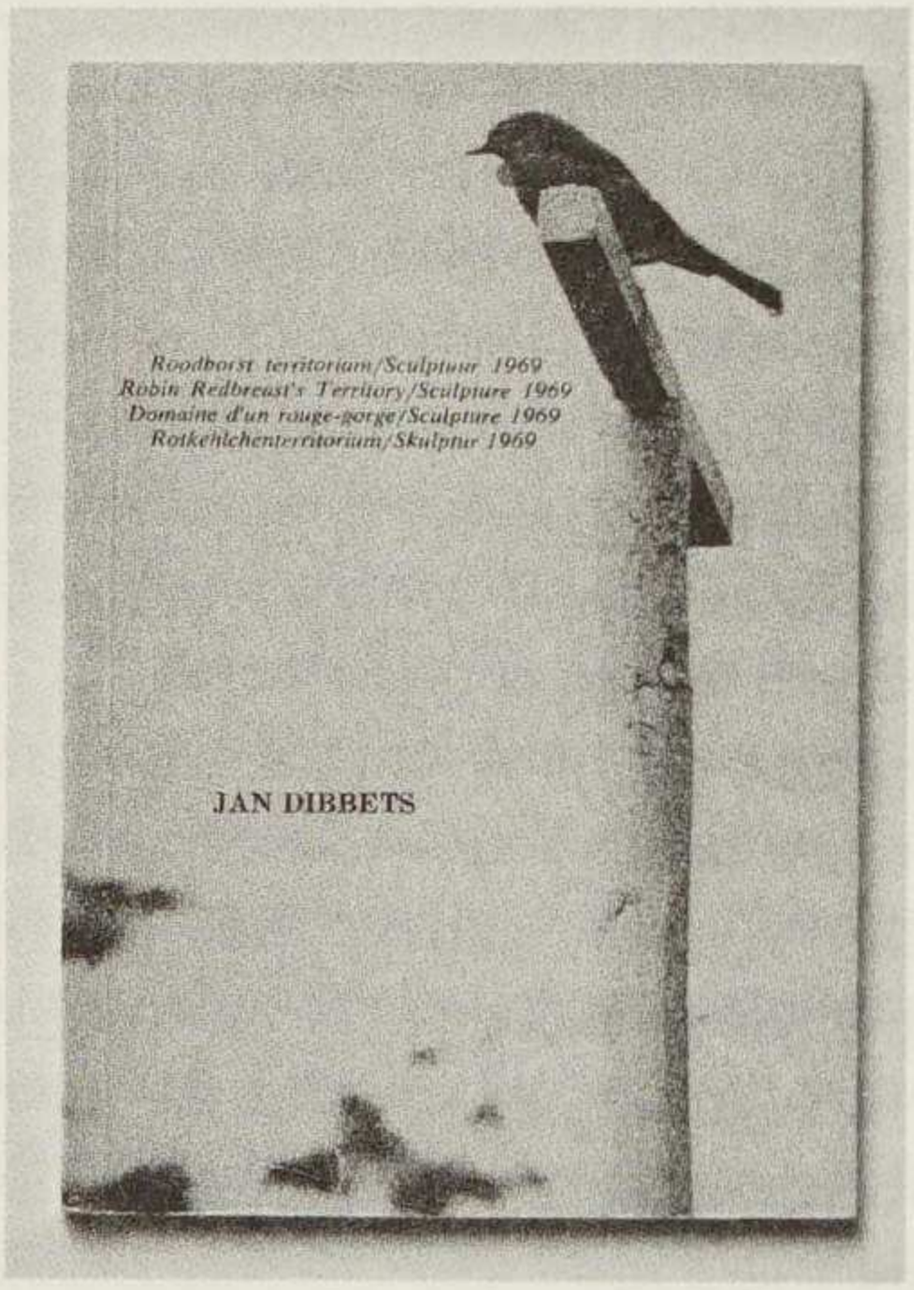
While the phenomenon of book art is increasingly being isolated, through exhibitions and magazine articles, it also seems advantageous to me to reverse this process so that book art simply dissolves in general contexts; this seems an entirely reasonable proposition given the diverse nature of the content and presentation of book art. Perhaps the more one focuses on book art as a phenomenon, the more one does a disservice to the artists who make books and wish to reach a wide spectrum of the public.

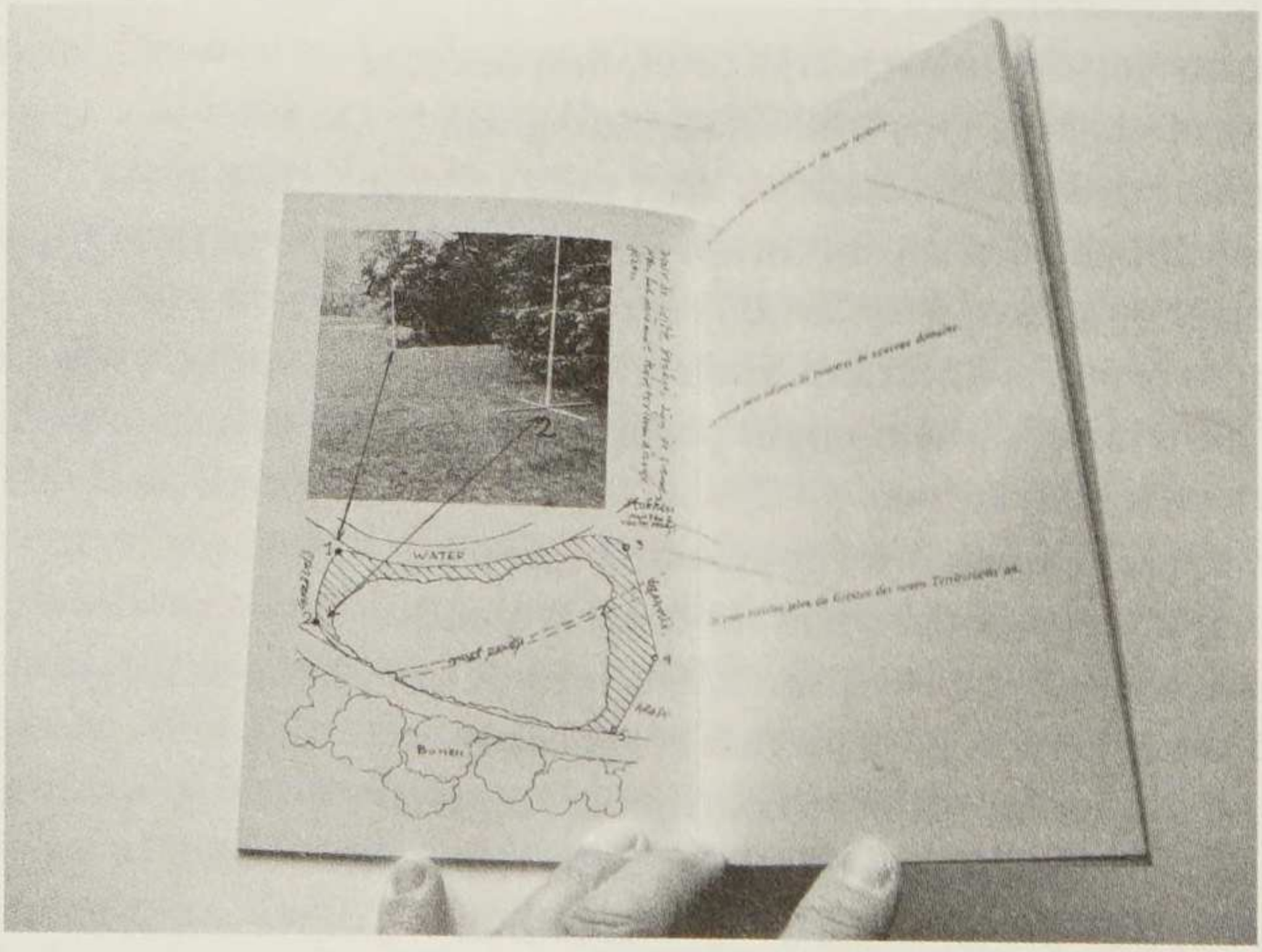
When one has applied the four questions: *Who*? *What*? *How*? and *For Whom*? to a reference book, and highlighted, in a relatively systematic way, good, bad or indifferent aspects of the book, one then arrives at the point where one can make some kind of assessment.

I will make my concluding remarks brief, first because I have made plenty of observations while responding to individual questions, but second because I *don't want* to wrap up what I have said. It has been my intention from the start to touch upon a *range* of issues; to *deliberately* leave loose ends, and, I hope, to provoke questions and answers other than those that I have raised, which might profitably be considered over the next day or two.

But if I am to make some brief concluding remarks, they are based upon my own enthusiasm for book art, and my belief in the potential of the book form. Much work has been produced in the last 15 to 20 years that is excellent on any level, but I believe that with the continuing support of those individuals and institutions who have nurtured book art through difficult times, and with an increase in critical attention to the subject, great achievements lie ahead. We are still at the beginning. I also believe that what visual artists have achieved with the book in the last few years will feed back into publishing in general; also that

cheap technologies will ensure an increasing output of book art. And, finally, I think that it is possible that book art will diversify so much, and expand so much more, that it will eventually cease to exist as something separate.



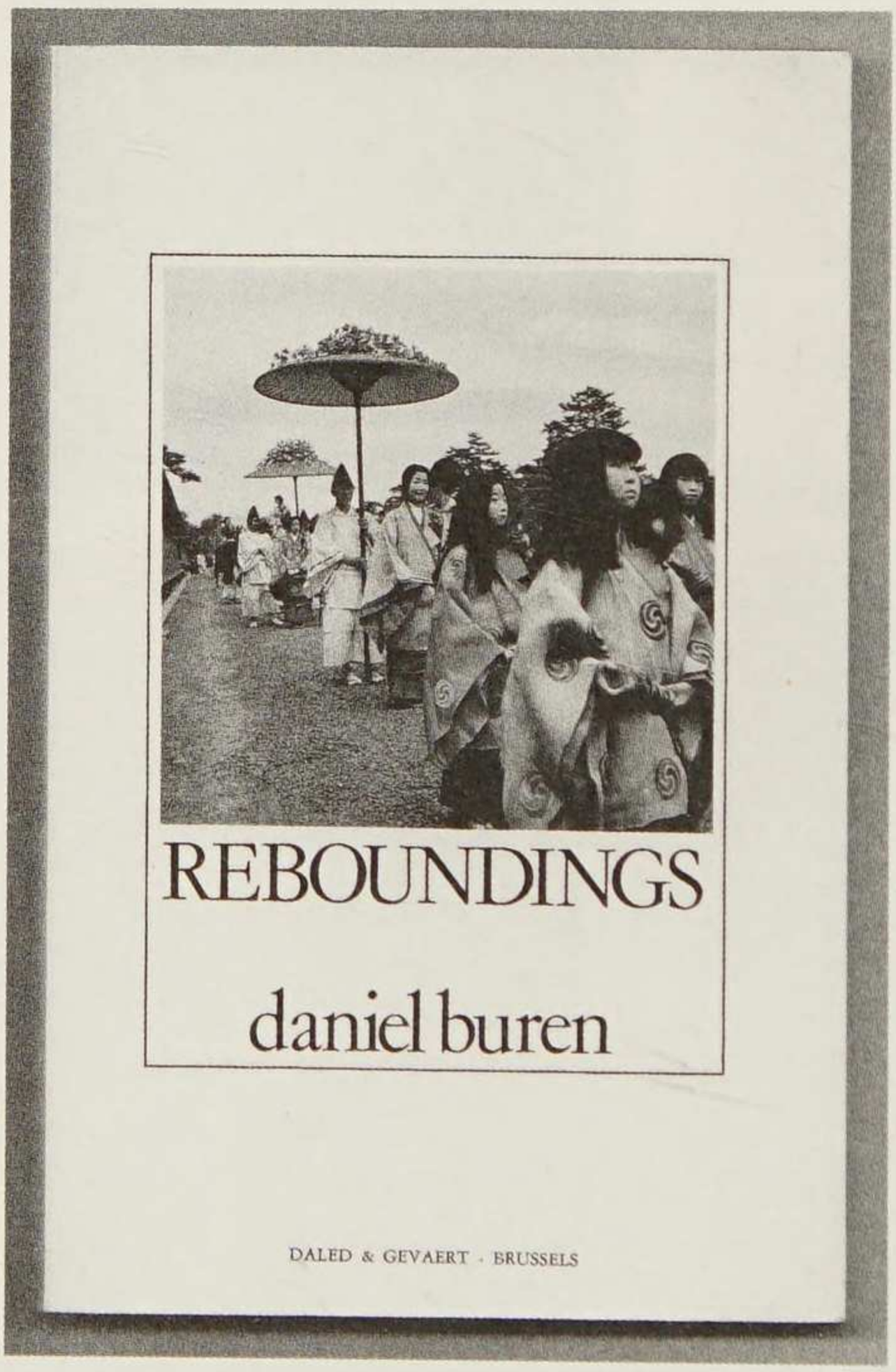


Jan Dibbets, *Robin Redbreast's Territory/Sculpture 1969* (Cologne, New York: Seth Siegelaub, Verlag Gebr. König, 1970)

Artists' Books

First published by the College Art Association in the Spring 1980 issue of *Art Journal*, p. 213–217.

Jennifer Licht, the reviews editor of the College Art Association's *Art Journal*, told me that she thought that it was about time the *Journal* addressed the question of artists' books, and asked me if I would review several titles. I willingly agreed, and she wrote to me to say that Sol LeWitt would make a selection of publications from Printed Matter Inc. – the bookstore for artists' books. So I met with Ingrid Sischy, then Director of Printed Matter Inc., and together we gathered some titles from their current stock. Thus my writing was a response to choices made largely by others. (This review was quickly reprinted in the first issue of the Franklin Furnace newsletter *Flue* in September 1980.)



Daniel Buren, *Reboundings* (Brussels: Daled & Gevaert, 1977)

I had it all worked out. In the first section of this review I would comment upon the recent involvement of a large publisher with artists and their books; the second section I would devote to small-scale publishing of books by artists. I had even written the first section. Then I read Daniel Buren's *Reboundings* (1977)!

I had begun by writing about the first three books published by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., in their Art Books by Artists series: *The Mechanism of Meaning* by Arakawa, assisted by Madeline H. Gins (1971, $20, paper $12.50); *Christo: Wrapped Walk Ways*, essay by Ellen R. Goheen (1977–1978, $20, paper $12.50); and *Geometric Figures and Color* by Sol LeWitt (1979, $12, paper $6). I had used some relatively complimentary, but perhaps slightly condescending adjectives in discussing the Arakawa and Christo books before hurrying on to LeWitt's real bookwork. There were reasons for concentrating on LeWitt: a big

publisher had backed the publication of an artwork in book form without the artist having to compromise his conception; and besides, I had enjoyed LeWitt's bookworks for a long time.

LeWitt was also the hinge that connected with my second section, since it was he and some friends who founded Printed Matter, Inc., in New York City in 1976, and Printed Matter was the source of all the remaining titles that I would review.

Printed Matter was established as both a publisher of books by artists and a distribution agency. Since it soon became apparent, however, that there was no lack of publishers, but a complete lack of distributors, the former role was virtually phased out. I intended to comment on the pioneering, and still pre-eminent, role of Printed Matter in actually getting these small-scale or self-publishing ventures to a wider audience, largely through the mail, and in helping thereby to realize the idealistic aims of many of the artists making books.

I took a trip to Printed Matter and gathered a well-rounded selection of about 50 titles, most of which had been unfamiliar to me. I spread out my selection and made a rough sort into categories, for this seemed the best way to discuss them. There were the historic books of the 1960s, then the diagrammatic/numerical, the verbal, the visual, and finally the verbi-visual. I planned to use these categories as a means of defining 'artist's book', 'book art' and 'bookwork', terminology that is still volatile.

I began to read my way through the books, putting aside until the end most of those with more substantial texts. My preconceptions regarding which of the ragged army of artists' publications really warranted the rank of book art or bookwork were being strengthened. Along the road I also became aware of common themes connecting several of the books. One such was the exploration of womanhood: I was moved by *Trunk Pieces* (1978) by Jacki Apple ($10) in particular.

Eventually I began to plough my way through the more substantial, predominantly verbal, books – slightly resentfully, because I have always preferred books with pictures. I was gradually caught up, however, in another, slowly emerging theme: subversion.

Talking To Myself by Adrian Piper (1974, $5) was one of the first of these books really to engage me. The coupling of autobiography with theory and the clarity of her writing sustained me; meanwhile I was trying to pigeonhole the publication as a mere artist's book rather than as an exalted example of book art. I proceeded to read some more books and then picked up the last but one of my 50-odd titles: *Reboundings* by Daniel Buren ($10).

Buren's writings and strategies had interested me in the past. (The Haacke incident is memorable; see *Framing and Being Framed* by Hans Haacke, 1975, p. 140, $9.95.) I also recalled his cautionary note in a previous book *Sail/Canvas: Canvas/Sail* (Berlin: Kunstlerprogramm, 1975): 'All the photographs reproduced in this book are souvenirs, documents of a work. They cannot replace it. They only show how the work was carried out, and the reader is asked to remember that they can falsify it ... ' That book is not, therefore, to be regarded as an artwork. On opening *Reboundings* I soon found that the colour photograph of Japanese adults and children in traditional dress, which was on the front cover, had no direct connection with the subject of the book, but was simply a souvenir snapshot. Intrigued, I read on.

Buren's book is a discussion, five years after the event, of his participation in the 1972 documenta 5 exhibition in Kassel, West Germany. He suggests that Carl Andre, Robert Smithson, and others who rejected the invitation to participate, were at least partly aware of the way in which their work would have been co-opted by the organizers. Buren's principal targets are indeed museums and exhibition organizers. He refers to the latter as 'artists/makers of exhibitions' and suggests that such persons merely use art works as touches of colour in their painting, i.e. the exhibition, thereby castrating the individual works. Buren himself would not have participated had he not foreseen this 'trap' and been able to devise a means of subverting the premises of the exhibition.

Using the striped paper that is characteristic of his work, on this occasion white on white, Buren had it pasted on the wall, not only in the section where he 'belonged' but also in six other sections of the large exhibition. Subsequently, the latter art works were partially covered by the paintings

and posters of the other artists that constituted the separate sections. Buren thus created a contradiction whereby his striped paper was a 'painting' in one room but only 'painted wallpaper' in another.

Buren informs us in his foreword that this work was surrounded by 'universal silence', and that, in one sense, this silence 'preserved it from any neutralisation'. While aware, however, that 'the new light shed on the work by the publication of this book generates a contradiction which … impairs the beautiful integrity which this work had upheld', he concludes that publication 'is preferable to a haughty silence … of which the sole beneficiary is the system'.

I do not wish to misrepresent Buren. Suffice it to say that his indictment of the 'micro-system of the art world' and by extension 'the bourgeois ideology' is controlled but deadly. He also has much to say of a more general nature. Read the book.

Having read *Reboundings*, I realized that I could not maintain my quasi-objective stance in writing about these books by artists; hence my decision to abandon what I had written, to introduce the first person singular, and to recommence with an autobiographical account. I cannot pretend thereby to have escaped Buren's general castigation. I simply offer this way of proceeding as a testimony to the cumulative effect of reading, in almost random order, certain books by artists and *Reboundings* in particular.

What this exercise has done for me is to reaffirm the power of the book as a weapon; it seems immaterial at this moment whether the book is 'art' or not. Just as great art can subvert our comfortable perceptual, intellectual, and emotional habits, so too can books serve this end. When I was reading Adrian Piper's remark in *Talking To Myself* that the art world continues 'more and more feebly each year', I thought that she was being over-optimistic. Now I'm not so sure. Books by artists have been, are being, and will be co-opted; but they can still, by virtue of their numbers and semi-random dissemination, escape the clutches of the 'artists/makers of exhibitions' and, I hope, the artist/book reviewer.

I therefore propose to maintain my subjective stance, and to enlarge upon the experience of reading particular books, in a particular sequence, at a particular time.

As far as I can recall, the first book that caused me to reconsider what I meant by a bookwork was *GAAG* by the Guerrilla Art Action Group (1978, $12.50). This book is pure documentation, with notes, and comprises a selection of works enacted between 1969 and 1976. During this period GAAG, basically Jon Hendricks and Jean Toche, demonstrated against various policies of the principal art museums in New York City, as well as against local and national government policies and activities. The Group's means ranged from letter writing to actions in the streets and inside buildings. The substance of these events and their results are documented by statements, letters, photographs of actions, and interviews. Although it is evident that one is reading history, it is also apparent that many of the issues raised by GAAG are not dead.

The second book was *Talking To Myself* by Adrian Piper, already referred to, which is subtitled *The Ongoing Autobiography of an Art Object*. In a series of texts Piper describes her education in art, from figurative painting and sculpture to Conceptual art and ultimately to a form of body art or performance. Her musings on the role of the artist and the artwork in the 1970s are highly provocative, and her criticisms of the art establishment are very telling. By the close of the book, however, Piper seems to have arrived at a position that embodies a contradiction. On the one hand, she states that after performing in front of a mirror with no audience, she has 'increasingly come to substitute [her] own self-consciousness of [herself] as object for that same reflective consciousness formerly supplied by the audience'. On the other hand, she says that 'art making *activity* has a necessary and pragmatic value because it … reveals society to itself because [artists] are social beings'. The book cannot be summarized, it needs to be read.

The third book has an altogether different outlook. It is anonymous and in the current Printed Matter catalogue is referred to as the *Black Book* (1979, $3), 'a collection of inflammatory essays'. This is indeed true: most of the essays are morally offensive and highly subversive, the more so because of their occasionally reasonable tone. They appear to have been produced not only in association with predictable reactionary themes, but also in relation to some progressive causes. While it is possible that these 'essays'

are anthologised approvingly, it seems more likely that the anonymous artist collected these irrational expressions as an indictment of their authors' political or religious practice.[1]

The fourth book, *Service: A Trilogy on Colonization* (1978, $3.50) by Martha Rosler, describes episodes in the lives of three women: an affluent housewife, a fast-food employee and a domestic. Each 'novel' contains implied criticism of existing conditions – the second exemplifying creative subversion – yet it is through juxtaposition that these criticisms reverberate and expand. The three 'novels' were originally sent through the mail as postcard series.

The fifth book, *Think/Leap/Re-Think/Fall* by Vito Acconci (1976, $3.50), documents the gestation and realisation of Acconci's installation *The Middle of the World: An Installation Piece for Wright State University* in Dayton, Ohio (1976). The artist bares his thoughts and emotions as he prepares to utilise the space offered him. We then proceed with him as he proposes various ideas, and we listen to his reasons for rejecting them, until fragments of the various proposals cohere into an acceptable form. Having participated vicariously in the evolution of the artwork, we then witness the refining of the ultimate proposal. The book concludes with a transcription of the four soundtracks used in the space, photographs of the installation, and an afterword by Acconci. Even from the book it is possible to feel how charged the space must have become, both as a result of Acconci's structure and of the relentless questioning of the participants by disembodied voices, the latter adding psychological discomfort to physiological discomfort.

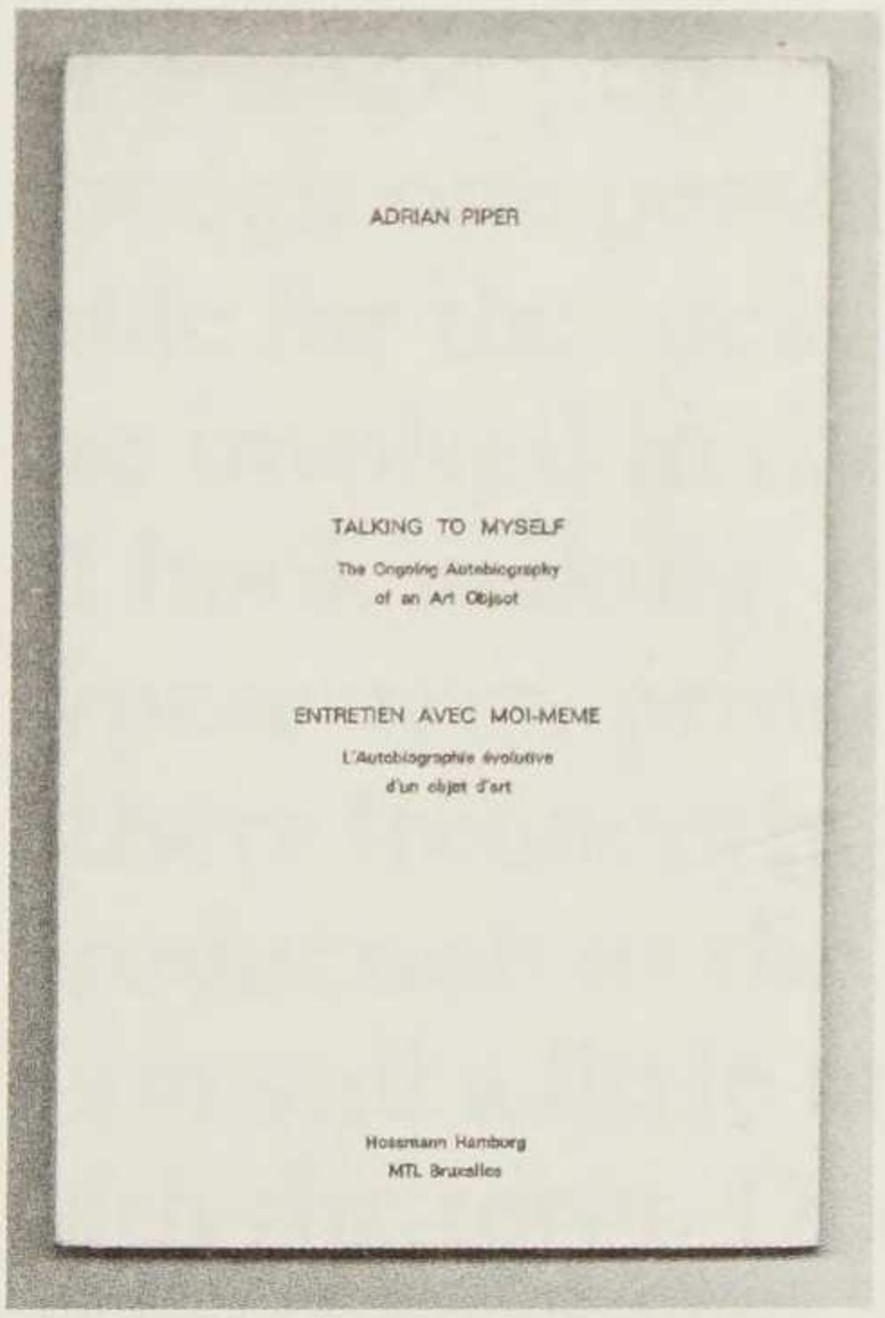
The sixth book was Buren's *Reboundings*, and the last was *Photoanalysis: A Structuralist Play* by Michael Kirby (1978, $3.50). Kirby's play involves a male lecturer centre stage and two women, one left, one right. The lecturer tells us about the new science of the analysis of photographs and illustrates his talk with slides. After he has commented upon three slides, the woman on the left reminisces about an episode in her life while three slides are projected behind her. Next, the woman on the right tells us about herself, also to the accompaniment of three slides. The lecturer takes his turn again and the cycle recommences. At the beginning the lecture and the reminiscences are apparently distinct; the three monologues and sets of slides slowly begin to adhere

and overlap, however, until they converge upon a shared conclusion. In the book each page is occupied by one image and its commentary. Just as Acconci subverts our mental and physical well-being, so Kirby subverts our understanding of what we are seeing.

I will not force the idea of subversion any further, since I would then be merely using the books I have described to paint a picture of my own. Nevertheless, I will reiterate that reading these books in succession and experiencing their powerful content led me to perceive this theme, and incidentally dirtied up my purist ideas regarding the nature of a bookwork.

I would have excluded several of these books from a serious discussion of book art because they were not inextricably dependent upon the book form. Some are self-declared pieces of documentation, others are more literary, one already existed as mail art, others depend upon prior artworks. It became overwhelmingly evident, however, that adherence to whatever criteria might be laid down for a bookwork is no guarantee that the work will galvanise the reader intellectually and/or emotionally.

[1] The anonymous *Black Book* was subsequently revealed to be a collection of 'Truisms' by the artist Jenny Holzer.



Adrian Piper, *Talking to Myself: The Ongoing Autobiography of an Art Object* (Hamburg: Hossman; Brussels: MTL, 1974)

Books, Bookworks, Book Objects, Artists' Books

First published in *Artforum* (May 1982), p. 77–79.

At the end of 1981, the artist Kevin Osborn came to see me with his new book *Real Lush*. I was immediately impressed by this unusual rhomboidal book and picked up the phone to suggest to Ingrid Sischy, who had recently become the editor of *Artforum* magazine, that I might review it. She went along with my idea and I wrote the review but prefaced it with a discussion of what might be meant by an 'artist's book'. It is this preliminary section that is reproduced here. Ingrid and I met subsequently and the two of us shook up what I had written, as well as working together to merge the three diagrams that I had drawn to accompany my essay to make just one. This diagram has proved very popular and has been reproduced in several contexts. It was originally horizontal but was reproduced vertically to fit the page layout of *Artforum*.

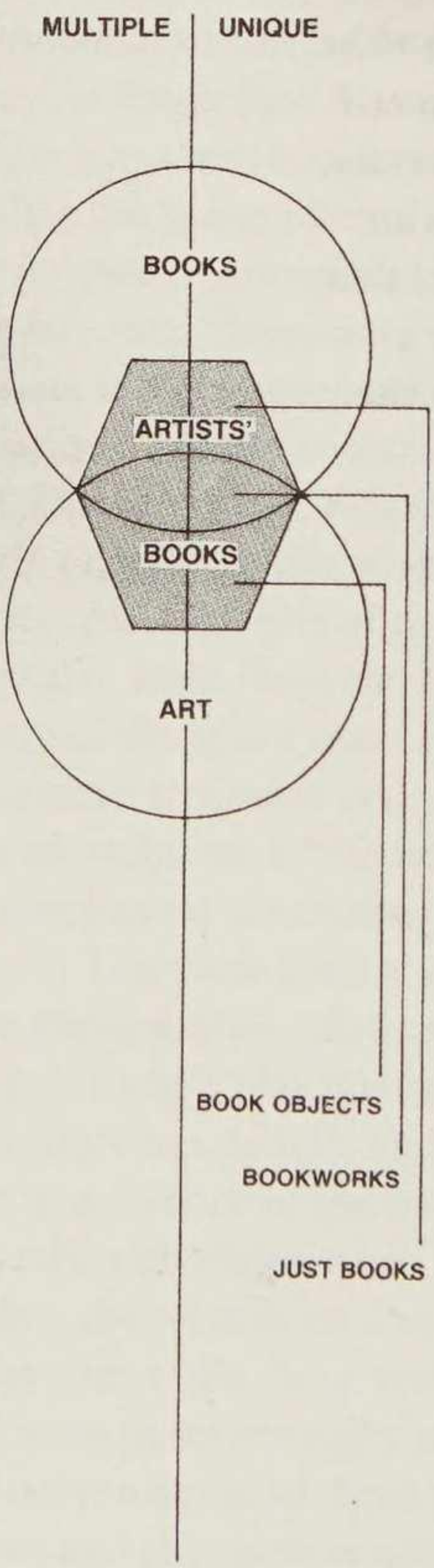


Diagram: *Artforum* vol. 20 no. 9 (May 1982), p. 77

The term 'artists' books' seems to be applied more and more confusingly to anything in an art context that resembles a book. I would like to attempt to define this and some related terms. On one of the first occasions that the phrase 'artists' books' was used, it was implied that it referred to 'books made by artists'.[1] I have no quarrel with this definition, but would like to expand it so that artists' books are defined as those books made or conceived by artists. The reason for this addition is that few so-called artists' books are actually the result of a single person's labour, even though one person may be responsible for the idea. Not many artists are involved in the entire process of book making; photographers, typesetters, printers, binders, and others frequently play a part in the production of the book. However, I am still a little uncomfortable with the term. One does not talk of 'artists' video', or 'artists' photography'—so why 'artists' books'?

Genres of art are not normally prefaced by their maker's professions. If, for example, a general practitioner writes poetry the poetry is not labelled 'general practitioner's poetry'; it is just 'poetry'. So why not just 'books' or 'book art'? After all, there is a strong tendency for the visual arts to be categorized by medium; hence video art, fibre art, body art, computer art, performance art, mail art and so on.

I think there were two reasons for the arrival and acceptance of the term 'artists' books'. There was a definite need to stake out territory that excluded the moribund 'art-of-the-book' tradition, as well as the art-book industry. Secondly, there was the implicit suggestion that artists' books were just a sideline for artists whose principal activity was, say, painting or sculpture. But the specificity of the term was undermined by the fact that most collections or exhibitions of artists' books almost routinely included works by musicians, poets and designers, even choreographers and philosophers.

Within this territory of books made or conceived by artists there are also artworks in book form, which is not the same thing at all. If we can leave the term 'artists' books' alone – since it seems, for all its faults, to be here to stay – we can at least make a distinction between artists' books and artists' bookworks. On an earlier occasion I defined 'book art' as a subdivision of artists' books, so that 'works falling into the category of book art can be defined as books in which the book form is intrinsic to the work'.[2] Subsequently Ulises Carrión refined this definition so that it read: 'bookworks are books in which the book form, a coherent sequence of pages, determines conditions of reading that are intrinsic to the work'.[3] OK. It should be noted that Carrión's definition implicitly proposes that 'bookworks' include books not made by visual artists at all. It also becomes possible to speak of 'book artists', as one would speak of video artists, performance artists and mail artists, and not mean, by using this term, craftspeople who are concerned with binding, paper and type, to the exclusion of content.

The term 'artists' books' has also been used to describe unique, or one-of-a-kind books, or book objects. These books tend to exhibit more painterly or sculptural qualities than those conceived for mass replication. Unique books are closer to the painting and sculpture traditions in

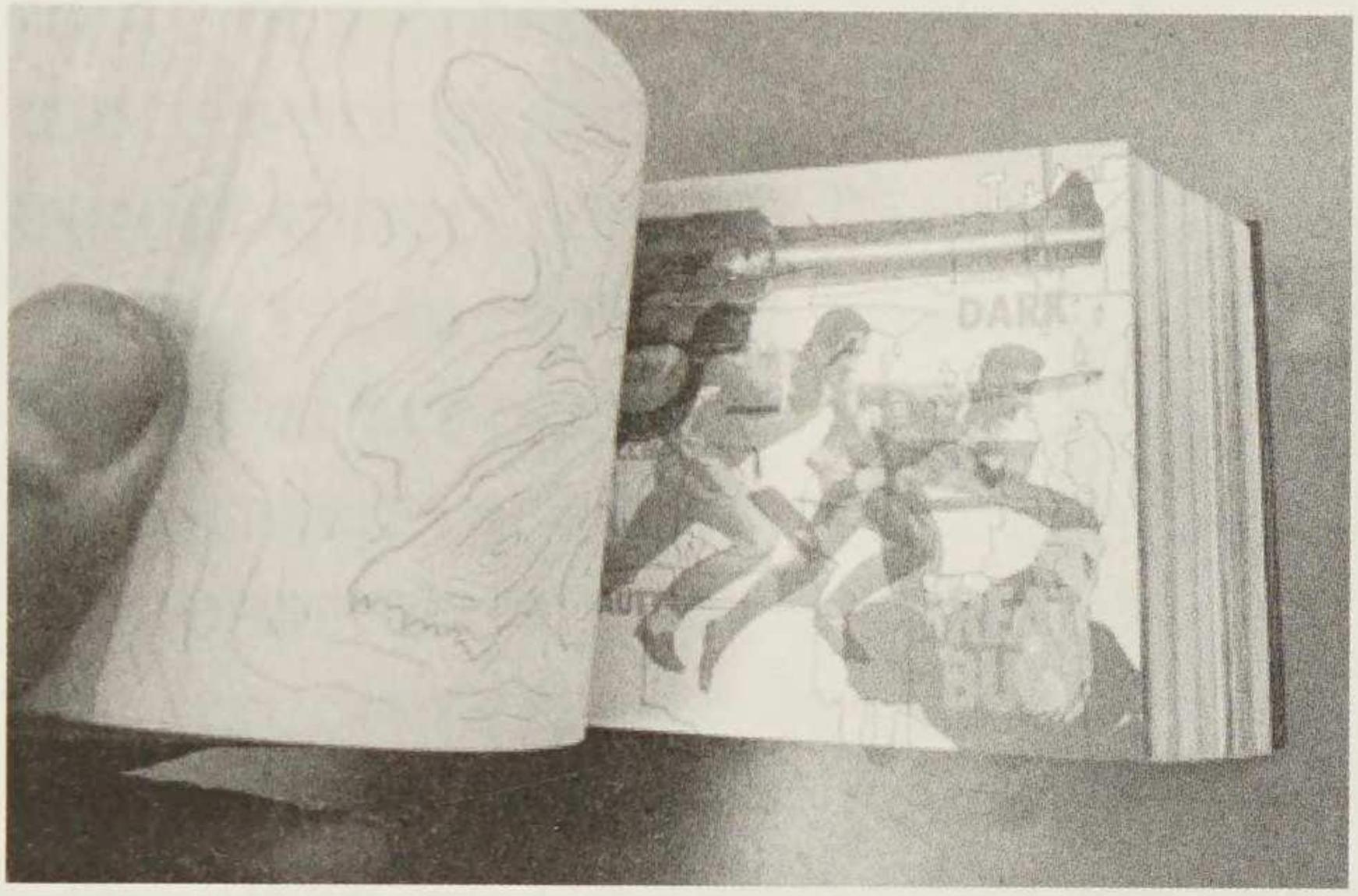
that they generally emphasise the physicality of the book. They often amount to a series of paintings or collages bound into a volume; they are frequently solid objects constructed from a single substance, or a variety of substances. Multiple books might be said to be closer to the printmaking and photographic traditions, in that the question of the artists' attitude to replication is more significant. Some multiple books do not come into existence until the presses begin to run, since there are artists who actually make decisions regarding composition after the commencement of the printing process. While multiple and unique books can often be distinguished by their look, it is primarily a difference of philosophy that separates their makers. Certain unique books stay within the craft tradition, while other unique books share the precious-object status of paintings and sculpture. Unique books reject the Gutenberg revolution; they deny the potential of proliferation. One of the thrusts behind the creation of multiple artists' books, on the other hand, was the desire to make art more accessible through multiplication. Few art forms are geographically and physically more accessible than the book, which can fit in the pocket and can travel through the mail almost anywhere in the world. Books can be individually worn out; the whole idea is that there is always another one. There is no *one* original and the book can be reprinted; furthermore, each copy of a bookwork *is* the artwork.

Book objects very often only look like books – they may be solid objects that cannot be opened, let alone read; they become sculpture. Unique books can, however, still be bookworks when, for example, the unique maquette for a multiple book is virtually identical to one of the multiple copies that it generates, and therefore shares those properties of the multiple, excepting only its expendability. Multiple bookworks, as opposed to multiple artists' books, are not as common as one might suppose. Few book makers produce works that are really dependent upon the book form. Many people gather pages together, but few conceive their work in terms of the medium.

[1] 'Foreword', *Artists Books* (Philadelphia: Moore College of Art, 1973), p. 5.
[2] 'Book Art Digressions', *Artists' Books* (London: The Arts Council of Great Britain, 1976), p. 40–41.
[3] Ulises Carrión, 'Bookworks Revisited', *The Print Collector's Newsletter*, vol. 11, no. 1 (March–April 1980), p. 8.



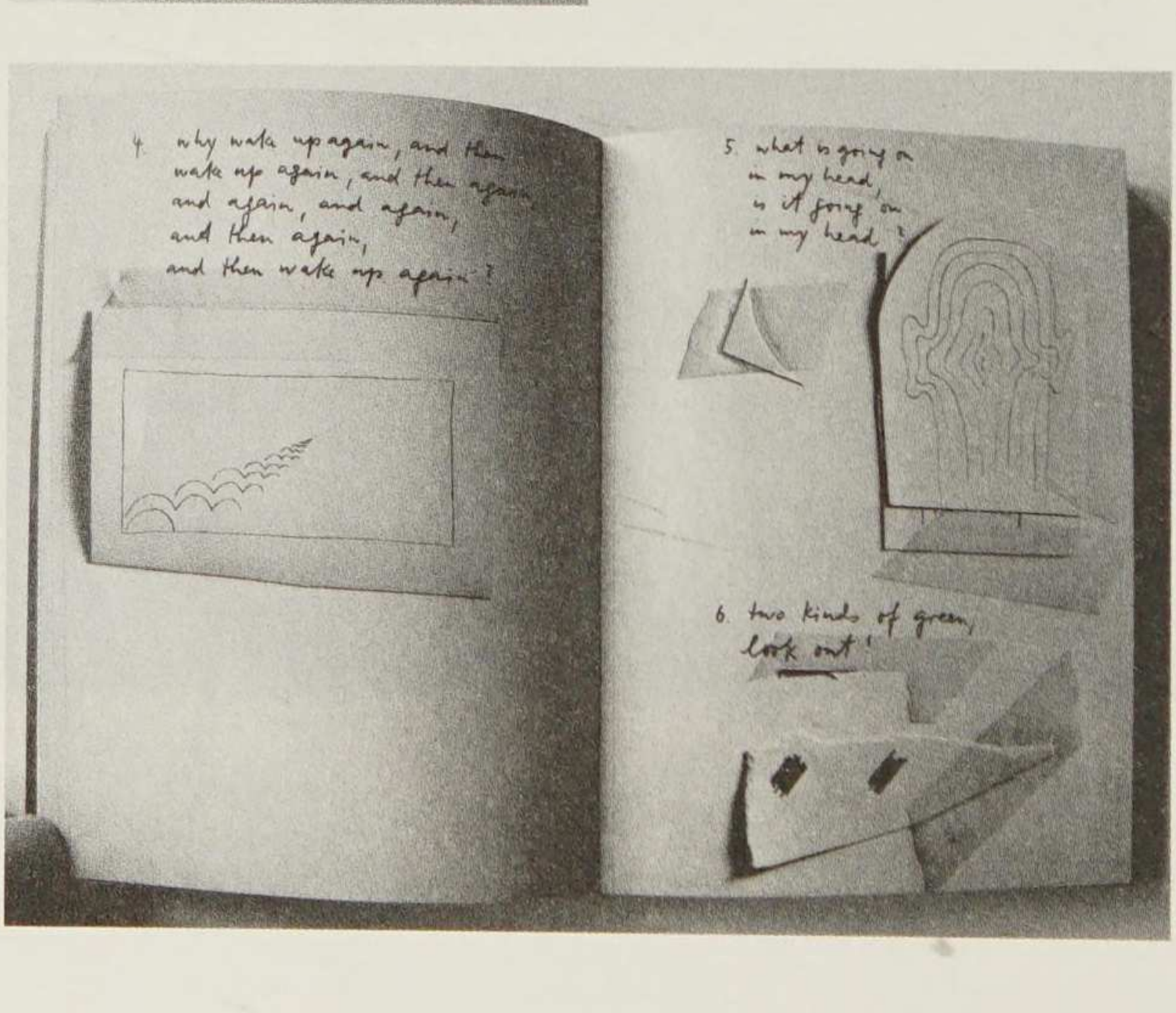
Kevin Osborn, *Real Lush* (Arlington, VA: Osborn, 1981)


DARK
OVER

Two Decades of Book Art

First published in *Arts in Virginia*, vol. 23, no. 1/2 (1982–1983), p. 44–55, reprinted here with permission from Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

In the spring of 1982, George Cruger, Editor of the Virginia Museum's magazine, *Arts in Virginia*, invited me to write about book art – almost certainly in cahoots with the artist Davi Det Hompson – and specifically because I had made a visit to Richmond in 1980 to give a lecture on 'Books Unlimited' at Virginia Commonwealth University. This article was subsequently reprinted in *Views: The Journal of Photography in New England*, Fall 1983, p. 13–15.



Dieter Roth, *Collected Works, volume 17, 246 Little Clouds* (Stuttgart, London, Reykjavik: Edition Hansjörg Mayer, 1976)

By the middle of this century, the 'art of the book' – the use of the book as a medium of artistic expression – had become something of a creative backwater. While there were skilled illustrators, typographers, designers and bookbinders, examples of books as works of art ceased to represent an integrated vision, nor did they demonstrate an engagement with the structure of the book. When such books were opened one would very often find a fine etching, say, on the left-hand page and a good piece of writing on the right, without any real interplay between the two art forms – beyond the artist's visualisation of elements of a pre-existing text.

Eventually, what had been regarded as the 'art of the book' began to be less and less relevant in an age in which there had been an explosion of photographically illustrated (and imaginatively designed) commercial publications, art books, and, just as significantly,

paperbacks. The artificially limited editions of books incorporating works of art spent their time isolated under glass, or locked up in closets, while bookstores were jumping with mass-produced books of all sorts that were brightly coloured, lavishly illustrated and relatively inexpensive.

It was about this time, towards the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, that Pop art began to bubble up. Pop artists were, as their collective name suggests, not only into popular culture, but also into the various media through which aspects of this culture were disseminated: newspapers, comics, television, movies. It was not surprising, therefore, that some of them should have eventually turned their attention to the medium of the book. Allan Kaprow, Claes Oldenburg, Eduardo Paolozzi and Andy Warhol all used the book as a vehicle for their own ideas, even if, with the exception of Warhol, they did not actually exploit the form very much.

Oddly enough, it was some years before Pop artists began to publish anything very substantial. They became more conspicuous towards the end of the 1960s, which was precisely the time that Minimal and Conceptual artists such as Sol LeWitt, Carl Andre, Art & Language, Lawrence Weiner, Jan Dibbets and N.E. Thing Co. began to publish. Often the publications of the Conceptual and earth artists comprised some form of documentation of works of art which could not be easily seen, or which were ephemeral; or they involved the dissemination of ideas about art, or art as ideas – which brings us to the topic of books as artworks. The latter part of the 1960s was, for some reason, a particularly encouraging time for the making of books, as well as for the publishing of small-circulation magazines.

Dieter Roth and Ed Ruscha are two artists who have not stayed still long enough to be closely identified with particular movements. But both are especially significant in this context because they have been making books consistently since the beginning of the 1960s, longer than most other artists associated with book art.

Roth actually began making books as early as 1954. However, it was in 1961 that his first large-edition book, *Bok 3a*, was published. Ruscha's first book, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, was published in 1963. In spite of the marked differences between their books, the careers of these two

artists have some similarities. Both have been involved with graphics, principally prints, but also typography. And both have used organic substances in their prints. Roth's favourite additives would seem to be chocolate and cheese, while Ruscha has employed everything from cherry pie filling to caviar.

Roth has frequently reprinted, or more accurately, reconstituted, his books, principally in the process of publishing his *Collected Works.* This uniform series of books, now numbering over 20 volumes, was commenced in 1969. Works from the 1960s were made anew to match the specifications of the series, and each volume was published in a large edition, unlike the earlier versions. The *Collected Works* includes very different kinds of books. Some are comprised of newsprint, others of sheets of coloured transparent plastic. Some are purely typographic, others photographic. Some have written words and others printed words; some drawn images and others photographed images. All of them contribute to a rumbustious, anarchic oeuvre.

Ruscha has relied upon the camera almost exclusively. From the start he would record related phenomena in snapshot form, producing books such as *Twentysix Gasoline Stations, Various Small Fires* (1964), and *Thirtyfour Parking Lots* (1967). His books possess a quiet wit, but that does not fully explain their significance. It might be argued that both Ruscha and Roth are notable figures in book art not only because they have been making intrinsically interesting books over a long period of time, but also because they made books in large numbers.

The question of multiple replication of books leads me now to venture an explanation as to the nature of book art. What has been said thus far has hinted at the shape of the terrain without being explicit. Book art refers to artworks that employ the form of the book. Such works are of two broad types: those that look like books ('book objects' that simply mimic the form and are actually a kind of sculpture); and those that *behave* like books ('bookworks' that actively employ the essential characteristic of the book form – a sequence of pages). I should add that many books authored and/or designed by artists were never intended to be artworks, for example theoretical texts, pure documentation, or other common literary forms. Many so-called

'artists' books' are merely writings or photographs by artists and not bookworks at all.

The book art pie can be divided up in yet another way. Instead of just bookworks and book objects, we can also talk about *multiple* bookworks and book objects, and *unique* bookworks and book objects. What I have been discussing are examples of book art that are produced in large editions. The other type, unique works, is generally closer to craft traditions and have an emphasis (sometimes an overemphasis) on the physical qualities of the book. Textures, colours, materials, processes and form frequently amount to the actual content of these books.

It is my contention that multiple bookworks are the most significant element in this conjunction of art with books. Books that are multiplied do not have the preciousness that is inherent in unique books. They are comparatively inexpensive, and they can easily be given as presents or exchanged with friends. If they are lost they can be replaced, since more copies are available. They can be stuck in one's pocket or in the glove compartment of a car. They can be *used.*

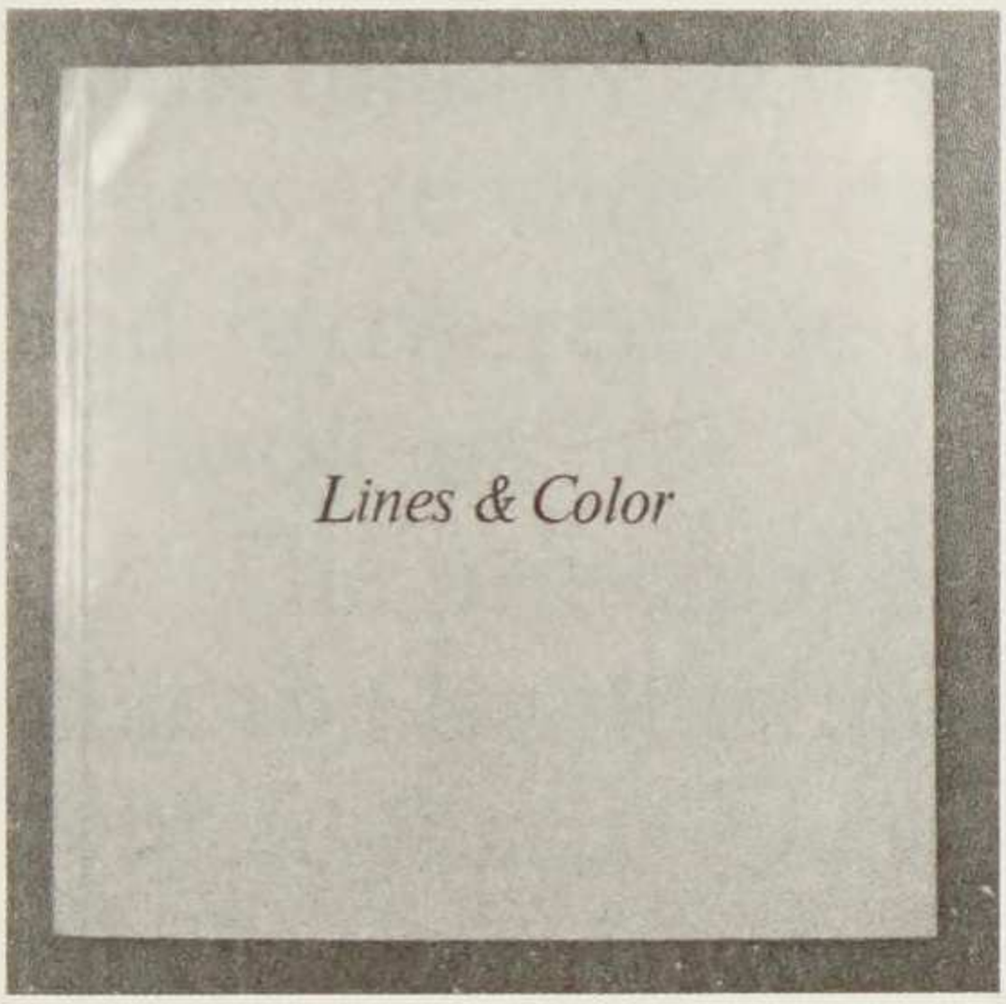
More significantly, each multiple bookwork is by definition an artwork. And each of those works of art has the same capacity to convey the artists' ideas and their vision, and – like each print of a movie or each book of verse – to generate a direct response from each viewer/reader.

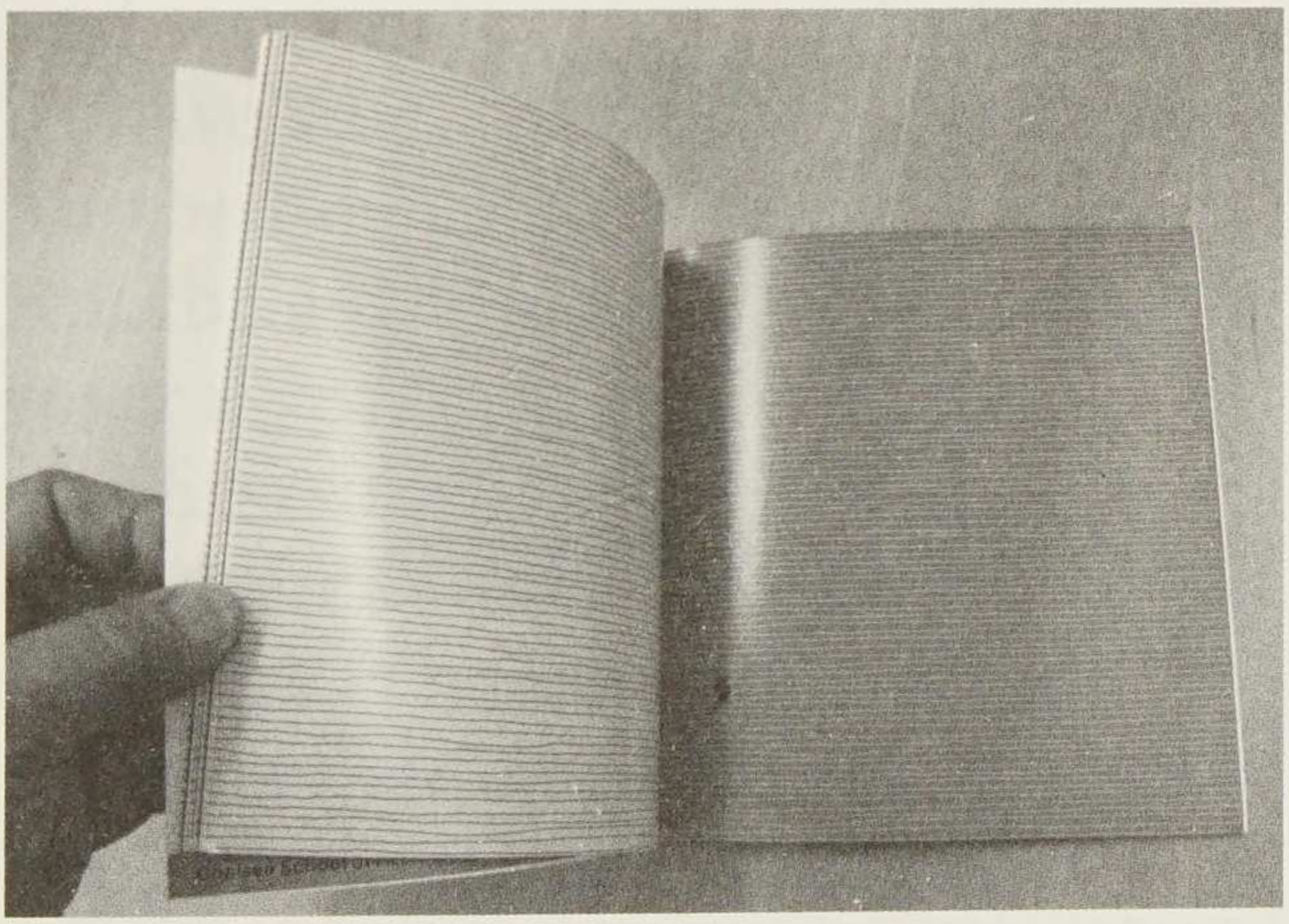
Many of the artists who have been making multiple bookworks since the 1960s now have a number of titles to their credit. Among the more prolific, whose published works repay re-reading, are Roth, Ruscha, LeWitt, Davi Det Hompson, Telfer Stokes and Lawrence Weiner. There are many more around the world.

These artists, most of whom also work in other media, have helped to establish book art, not as a movement, but as a viable medium for those who wish to harness the book form. Recently, some who have been involved with printing for a long time have begun to produce bookworks of special significance. Indeed, we have arrived at a time when the experiments of the 1960s and 1970s, and the growing acceptance of book art, have opened up great possibilities for artists who are inclined toward the book.

Books are one of the most efficient ways of disseminating and displaying information, whether in the form

of variations upon lists, or as syntheses of the creative imagination. But just as in the remote past when the written manuscript was replaced by the printed page, so may many of the book's functions be taken over by other media. At this point in time, the computer and the videodisc appear to be likely candidates. One might therefore expect that some of those who are presently referred to as book artists will take an interest in these fast-developing technologies. However, the book is likely to be in use for a considerable time, since its convenience will not be quickly superseded. This being the case, there is every reason to think that visual artists will continue to use the book as a medium of expression, and that most of the history of the bookwork is still to come.





Sol LeWitt, *Lines & Color* (Zurich: Verna; Basel: Preisig; Bari: Bonomo, 1975)

Some Contemporary Artists and their Books

This essay was first published in *Artists' Books: a Critical Anthology & Sourcebook*, ed. Joan Lyons (Layton UT: Gibbs M. Smith, Inc., Peregrine Smith Books, in association with Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester, New York, 1985) p. 96–132. Reprinted here with the permission of Afterimage/ Visual Studies Workshop. See www.vsw.org/ai

In 1984 the artist Joan Lyons, founder and coordinator of the Visual Studies Workshop Press, asked me if I would contribute 'a survey of artists' books since 1970' to her anthology of new and older material on the subject. I treated this invitation as an opportunity to record a more historical account of the development of the contemporary artist's book, concentrating on the more prolific exponents, and beginning earlier, in the 1960s. (I was delighted later when the Artpool Art Research Centre in Budapest republished the essay in Hungarian as: as 'Könyvek Kortárs Müvészektöl,' *Idegen AzAjtóban*, Budapest: Artpool, 1999. This was also published on the Internet.)



Edward Ruscha, *Various Small Fires and Milk* (Los Angeles: Ruscha, 1964)

In order to illustrate the rise of multiple books and bookworks since the early 1960s, this survey examines and reflects upon the publications of 12 artists who have been making books for at least ten years, who have demonstrated a commitment to the medium, and who have either been prolific book makers or have made books that were widely distributed and furthered the development of book art.

The principal credit for showing that the book could be a primary vehicle for art goes to Ed Ruscha. While one can identify publications and tendencies that might be said to have some historical significance for the development of book art, Ruscha's distinction is that for several years he produced books as a first-order activity and published them in comparatively large numbers. The consequence of this was that not only did Ruscha's books become highly visible in galleries and bookstores – even

boutiques – but the idea that an artist might use the book form to make artworks was also promoted and validated. Ruscha's books did not simply appear in many places, they also appeared in bunches of five or ten copies at a time. Their multiplicity was apparent. His books were unsigned, unnumbered (after the very first printing of the first title), and the editions were unlimited. This was a radical break with the nature of previous interactions between artists and books. The customary aura of artworks was instantly dispelled. These were not precious objects to be locked away and protected from inquisitive viewers. They were obviously for use, and intended to be handled and enjoyed. Thus, Ruscha created the paradigm for artists' books.

Ruscha's first book, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* (1963), set the pattern and the tone for many of his subsequent books. Its cover was carefully designed, but not ostentatious, the typography was distinctive, and the title was a precise description of what was to be found inside. A good many of Ruscha's books are simply collections of depictions of related objects, though not without certain surreal touches. For instance, the cover titles of two of his books are *Various Small Fires* (1964) and *Nine Swimming Pools* (1968), but the full titles of these books, which are to be found inside, are *Various Small Fires and Milk* and *Nine Swimming Pools and a Broken Glass.* Sure enough, the pages depict fires and pools, except for the last image in each book, which is a glass of milk and a broken glass respectively.

If there are concerns that unify the various books they would seem to be photography, words and signs in the landscape, and motion. With regard to this last, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* relates to driving, *Dutch Details* (1971) to walking, and *Thirtyfour Parking Lots in Los Angeles* (1967) to flying. Ruscha's books might therefore be compared with those of Hamish Fulton, for example, since walking is central to his art and to his books.

Royal Road Test (1967) made in collaboration with Mason Williams and Patrick Blackwell, which documents the road test given to an old Royal typewriter by hurling it out of the window of a moving car, parodies road test reports and resembles a slim manual sold with a mechanical device. It also demonstrates an ironic affinity with books that Land artists and Conceptual artists have produced in order

to record their activities in remote locations. A book by Ruscha was also the subject of perhaps the first in-joke in contemporary book art. In 1967 Bruce Nauman produced a foldout book entitled *Burning Small Fires.* The subject of this book was simply the documenting of the burning of an actual copy of Ruscha's *Various Small Fires.*

Ruscha's books embody primarily visual content, multiplicity, cheapness, ubiquitousness, portability, non-preciousness – even expendability – features inherent in his first book in 1962/63, and thus predating most of the related book art activity of the late 1960s and early 1970s. His early books also predate the ascent and apogee of Conceptual art at the end of the 1960s.

For many Conceptual artists the book was the most appropriate means to record and disseminate their ideas, theories, diagrams or drawings, or to embody their artworks. At this time many artists were also concerned with writing – as art or about art – thus, they too were led naturally to use the book form. The interest of several Pop artists in book production also peaked in the late 1960s. Indeed, this moment seems to have been a particularly fruitful time for publishing.

The social unrest of the period was accompanied by an efflorescence of leaflets, posters, pamphlets and magazines. At the same time those who had opted out of mainstream urban society were also active in publishing, both for self-help and for communal exchange. Music had also taken on a new social character, and many magazines were spawned by rock culture. A climate existed in which many people were hungry for news and information, which the general media did not provide, and consumed a great deal of more pertinent printed communication. Underground publishing, political publishing, minority publishing of all kinds thrived as more and more groups catered to their own needs and those of others like themselves. More vivid graphics than had been seen for a very long time, and perhaps never before on such a public scale, became rampant.

Another influence upon artists was the fact that art books had become plentiful. Colour illustrations had also become commonplace, not only in art books, but also in illustrated histories and biographies. Photography books also multiplied. Most people, including artists, experienced

more art through books, magazines, and reproductions than in the original. Perhaps it is not so surprising that artists should take over the art book, so long the domain of the critic, use it for their own ends, and make a secondary medium suddenly primary. The advent of the artist's book now made it possible for people to experience art in a form for which it was conceived; artists' books were not books of reproductions but books which contained exactly repeatable art, or statements. By working with the medium – printing – artists were able to ensure that their art reached the public in exactly the manner in which they intended.

The street politics of the late 1960s were conspicuously democratic, even socialist, and these tendencies coloured the intellectual and cultural climate of the time, as well as generating much talk, much writing, and much printing. It is not surprising, therefore, that artists working in this climate should also absorb or manifest such democratic tendencies. Of all the relatively inexpensive media available to the artist, printing is the one that most facilitates wide communication of ideas. After posters, books are the most effective agents in this process. Books, almost uniquely, can filter into every nook and cranny of every level of society. Thus the comparative ease of printing plenty of copies of a book and the ease with which books are assimilated into the culture made them ready vehicles for the democratic gestures of artists. There is a certain irony in the fact that our exemplar, Ed Ruscha, does not seem to have been responding to an over-articulated democratic impulse in making large, relatively cheap editions, and in reprinting them frequently.

One other factor in the emergence and expansion of book art should be noted. By the time the 1960s were in full swing, the fine art media hierarchy, for so long dominated by painting and sculpture, had been torpedoed by the rise in the awareness and use of photography, not only by artists themselves, but also, to an overwhelming extent, in the whole wrap-around world of the advertising, communications and media continuum. The affluence of the period also made it possible for some artists to dabble in film and television. At the same time, the boundaries between art and theatre, literature, dance and music, became very ragged. Many artists began to experiment in areas adjacent to the visual

arts, and in this way the book structure was rediscovered by painters, sculptors, printmakers and others. This decade was also a time when more artists felt compelled to discuss their intentions in print than ever before. The artist's statement, the facts from the horse's mouth, became an essential component of exhibition catalogues. Writing and books had for too long been the products of the hands and minds of critics and art historians. There were a great many articulate artists who wished to communicate without intermediaries, as well as many opportunities for them to contribute in many more publications.

The book art which sprung out of the 1960s differed radically from the products of previous associations between artists and books. Earlier in the century Futurist artists, Dada artists and Constructivist artists had all been print-oriented. There exist large numbers of manifestoes, leaflets, pamphlets, magazines and books that were edited, written or designed by artists associated with these movements. But the artists functioned within conventional, largely literary, norms – if not typographic norms. This was hardly surprising given the importance of the writers Marinetti, Tzara and Mayakovsky in the publishing activities of these movements. The artists, who worked also as writers, typographers, illustrators or graphic designers, did not conceive of their work in these specialities as anything other than contributions to the effectiveness of a literary form. Their art was something separate. It is only in recent times that Dada magazines, for example, have retrospectively been accorded the status of art: virtually none of the artists of that time consciously employed the structure of the book as a primary vehicle for art. They were often exceptionally good designers or illustrators. It was the social and artistic revolutions of the 1950s and 1960s that made possible the conception of the book as an integrated reproducible artwork.

In the 1950s and 1960s artists who were just as diverse in their interests and practices as certain of the Dada, Futurist and Constructivist artists helped to bring about the phenomenon of book art. Many artists who were active in printmaking, graphic design, photography, typography and particularly in concrete poetry – activities geared closely to the idea of multiple results – began to make books that grew out of their preoccupations. Dieter Roth personifies this trajectory.

Before discussing Roth's work, a comment upon the phenomenon of multiples may be appropriate. The idea of the multiple and its eventual realisation paralleled the development of book art. The term 'multiple' generally signified three-dimensional objects, rather than two-dimensional multiple printed art, and the objects were generally conceived of as inexpensive editions of sculptural works, which could be replicated with contemporary materials, such as plastics. The appearance of multiples in the 1960s can perhaps be associated with the same democratic impulse that has been identified in connection with book art, but their appearance may also be related to the wave of conspicuous consumption evident at that time. Multiples enjoyed only a brief popularity before fading away in the 1970s. It now appears that books are the most efficient and effective form of multiple art.

Dieter Roth (a.k.a. Diter Rot) has made multiple objects as well as various kinds of printed multiples. Some of his experiments with the book form have also led him towards book objects; for example, his *Literaturwurst* or *Literature Sausage* (1961), a sausage skin filled with cut up newspapers mixed with water and gelatine, or lard and spices, was later produced as a multiple.

His earliest books, executed in the 1950s, are related to the prints he made at the time. His preoccupation with geometric imagery led him to make several printed sheets with hand-cut and die-cut holes and slots. Inevitably, Roth bound certain of these sheets and thus confirmed the need to turn them as pages in order to experience the whole work and the interaction of its parts. The first book of this kind, known, significantly, as *Children's Book*, was begun in 1954 and published in 1957 (*Collected Works*, volume 1, 1976).

Most of Roth's early books were made in signed and numbered limited editions, a reflection of their printmaking origins. Thus Roth and Ruscha must be taken together to demonstrate the full potential of the new book art: Roth creating art dependent upon the book form; Ruscha creating books in open editions. Ruscha has generally produced books that have affinities with photography and documentation, while Roth has often demonstrated affinities with printmaking and object making.

At the end of the 1960s Roth collaborated with Hansjörg Mayer, who began to republish the earlier work in

a standard format and in editions of at least 1,000 copies, thus bringing them out of the limited edition framework and into the multiple book art arena. Some of the volumes in the *Collected Works* recreated unique bookworks as multiples: others effectively transmuted earlier works into new bookworks; others again reproduced literature or functioned as documentation. In some cases the subject matter of the book went through several metamorphoses before publication in the *Collected Works*.

In 1961 Roth broke away from his geometric style and began to work with found printed material, as in *Bok 3a*, *Bok 3b*, *Bok 3c* and *Bok 3d*. These books are made respectively of pages from newspapers, comics, printers' run-up sheets and children's colouring books, which were simply cut into uniform-sized blocks and given an adhesive binding. Two of them also had holes cut in their pages. After making these books, which were all approximately 20 × 20 cm, Roth made the *Daily Mirror Book* from pages of the London tabloid newspaper, the *Daily Mirror*. This time, however, the book's pages measured only 2 × 2 cm; in every other respect it was similar to the *Bok 3* series.

One of Roth's most effective books is also a reconstituted earlier one, *246 Little Clouds* (*Collected Works*, volume 17, 1976), first published in a rather murky version by Something Else Press in 1968. The 1976 reconstruction is technically superb – every page gives the term 'photorealism' a new dimension, since the illusion of torn pieces of paper taped to the original pages is strong enough to fool the eye into thinking that the hand can actually feel these scraps. In addition every crease and scruffy mark on each sheet is reproduced with the greatest fidelity, thereby enhancing the illusion further.

246 Little Clouds comes complete with the original instructions for turning the sheets and their contents into a book. 246 phrases, questions, sentences, paragraphs or single words are spread over 180 pages. At the behest of Emmett Williams, these phrases were subsequently illustrated by Roth. The resulting drawings on scraps of paper were then taped onto the pages in the space below the phrase to which they referred. When these 'little clouds' were photographed, they were illuminated first from the right, as if by the rising sun. The light source was then moved one degree

at a time until it lit them from above, as if at noon. Finally they were lit from the left, as if at sunset. The taped scraps of paper therefore cast shadows much as clouds might do.

The result of this process is a complex verbi-visual book in which the so-called 'illustrations' sometimes accompany the verbal imagery in a predictable and passive way, but may also interpret or restate the words in a totally unexpected way, juxtaposing an apparently unrelated visual image with the verbal image or phrase to create an electric dialectic between them. Because *246 Little Clouds* is dependent for its effect upon a fixed sequence of pages, it has the hallmark of a classic bookwork.

It is possible to take a purist view of the books authored or designed by artists, and, out of the welter of so-called 'artists' books', to separate out such bookworks (artworks dependent upon the structure of the book) from book objects (art objects which allude to the form of the book) and those books which just happen to be by artists and do not differ fundamentally from books by writers, scientists, gardeners or philosophers. These distinctions will be useful if borne in mind, since many artists' books are far from being artworks. It is also the case that artists' books tend to mimic other types of publications, such as trade catalogues, magazines, exhibition catalogues, comics, photography books and literary texts. In the hands of a thoughtful artist, a publication that does not seem to be dependent upon the inherent structure of the book has, in fact, become dependent upon a particular book form by just such mimicry. In these cases one is not looking at yet another book of photographs or another exhibition catalogue: instead, the genre has been appropriated by the artist for other purposes.

If one is concerned with the book as artwork, then bookworks are generally the most significant of the subdivisions of book art. Multiple bookworks, as opposed to unique bookworks, are also more expressive of the nature, and indeed the purpose of the book. Unique bookworks are often only one step away from mute sculptural book objects that at best simply provoke reflections on the history and role of the book as a cultural phenomenon. Furthermore, art conceived for mechanical replication, and which therefore incorporates exactly repeatable verbal, visual or verbi-visual narratives, is not only realised through the agency of the

printing press, but as a result, is also disseminated more widely. Compared with the unique artwork, the multiple artwork has an enormously expanded potential audience simply because of the multiplication of its locations, for the original artwork can reside at each location simultaneously. Art presented almost surreptitiously in the familiar form of the book also achieves the potential to reach many people who would not cross a threshold framed with classical columns in order to see books or art behind glass.

Few artists who worked with the book form in the 1960s have continued to publish in the 1970s, apart from Roth. Ruscha, for example, has published very little since 1971. However, two artists whose books were published mainly in the 1960s should be acknowledged here, since these works were quite well distributed and, therefore, affected the viability of the idea that art could exist in book form. They are Eduardo Paolozzi and Andy Warhol.

Eduardo Paolozzi's book *Metafisikal Translations* was published in 1962, the same year that Ruscha's first book was conceived. Like his sculpture and two-dimensional work, it is constructed on the collage principle, but it also grows specifically out of his collage movie, *The History of Nothing* (1962). The text, which is derived from altered, collaged, found texts, reprinted with a child's printing set, leads one further and further away from anything resembling logical exposition, and is accompanied by a miscellany of found images, including old engravings, magazine illustrations and diagrams, which are positioned and enlarged so that they give off strange new reverberations.

In 1966 Paolozzi's second book, *Kex,* was published by the Copley Foundation. On this occasion his collaged texts were typeset and given a formal coherence, which initially tends to disguise their inner randomness. The illustrations are integrated with the text and appear to be recycled from a wide range of magazines. Many of the illustrations are inherently odd, but other more inert images appear odd only in their new context.

Abba-Zaba, Paolozzi's next book, published by Hansjörg Mayer in 1970, is similar in conception to *Kex* but loses the possibility of either typographic vitality or pseudo-slickness by employing fairly uniform typewritten texts throughout. Once again, slightly odd illustrations culled from a wide

range of sources are juxtaposed with collaged texts, but the association of a random caption and text with each image gives each page more focus than does the continuous text in *Kex*. While Paolozzi's books were never as vivid as his print series *Moonstrips Empire News* (1967) and *General Dynamic FUN* (1965–1970), their very existence made them markers in the progress of book art through the 1960s.

In addition to such English Pop artists as Paolozzi and Allen Jones, several American Pop artists were also drawn to publishing, though not until they were well established did they produce publications that entered the mainstream. Claes Oldenburg, for example, did not have *Store Days* published until 1967. Although Andy Warhol had made conventional books in his early illustrational style, it was not until 1967 that he, too, had a substantial book published in a large edition.

Andy Warhol's Index (Book) was published by Random House, which meant that the book was positioned to take advantage of trade distribution channels. Both on account of Warhol's notoriety and the novelty of the work, awareness of its existence and knowledge of the book itself was widespread. Warhol's inventive appropriation of the children's book pop-up picture format, his use of brightly coloured images and his occasional games with the page asserted that enjoyable encounters with the book, and paper engineering in particular, need not be consigned solely to the period of childhood. Although *Andy Warhol's Index (Book)* is a mixture of the conventional and the experimental, or playful, it helped to open up possibilities for artists who were interested in the form of the book. Given his audience and resources, as well as the subsequent development of book art, it would be interesting to see what Warhol might accomplish in this area today.

Practically the only artist to have had a book published by a major publisher is Sol LeWitt; in 1979 Abrams published his *Geometric Figures and Color*, the only bookwork in their series of 'Books by Artists'. Since this was distributed via mainstream book trade outlets, it was, therefore, made much more accessible to the general public than most book art. LeWitt is probably the most prolific multiple-book artist. His first book, *Serial Project #1 1966*, was published as one of a collection of items in 'the magazine in a box' in *Aspen*

Magazine, in 1966. His first autonomous book, *Four Basic Kinds of Straight Lines*, was published in 1969. By 1983 he had at least 30 titles to his name.

The principal attribute of LeWitt's books is one common to all books: a dependence upon sequence, whether of families of marks or objects, or of single or permuted series which have clear beginnings and endings. While books are a convenient form in which to present such sequences, the content of LeWitt's work is rarely intrinsically dependent upon the structure of the book; in fact, many of his books amount to documentation of work in other media.

Four Basic Kinds of Straight Lines (1969) is a square book that displays four kinds of lines singly and in all their combinations. It is a book of perfect clarity of idea, execution, and production. Subsequent books generally follow this pattern of setting down a vocabulary of forms and then permuting or combining them in logical sequences, either directly on the page or indirectly through photographs of sculptural forms undergoing similar processes.

Around 1977 LeWitt began to publish photographic books, which contained progressions or variations that were not limited. For example, *Brick Wall* (1977), contains 30 almost identical black and white photographs of an exposed, unpainted brick wall, while *Photogrids* (1977) uses colour photography to document found grids, such as gratings in the street or on buildings. Although the latter are grouped in families, as are the objects in *Autobiography* (1980), they do not, cannot, demonstrate closed progressions.

Although his books generally only exploit the sequential properties of the book, LeWitt has on many occasions made works specifically for this medium, and the results have been highly accomplished. Furthermore, his own commitment to the book form has been a factor in keeping other artists aware of the option of working in this way – not just in America, for he has had books published in many countries and has encouraged their exhibition alongside his works in other media.

Lawrence Weiner is also a prolific book artist, and his involvement with the book also began in the late 1960s. 1968 saw the publication of his first book, *Statements*, as well as the offset publication known familiarly as 'The Xerox Book', but which has no more and no less of a title than *Carl Andre*,

Robert Barry, Douglas Huebler, Joseph Kosuth, Sol LeWitt, Robert Morris, Lawrence Weiner. Seth Siegelaub was involved in the publication of both these books, and in the following year he published important catalogues of exhibitions, including one entitled *July, August, September 1969*, which practically amounted to a self-contained exhibition since many of the featured exhibits were scattered around the world while others required only that the catalogue entry be read.

Statements contains phrases which, while general in character, such as 'One standard dye marker thrown into the sea,' actually conjure up specific pictures in the mind's eye of the reader. Thus the connection between Weiner's previous artworks and the words in *Statements* remains close. In his second book, *Traces* (1970), however, the succession of single words are all verbs, for example: 'Thrown', 'Removed', 'Poured', etc. While these words are generally less specific in their meaning than those in *Statements*, the connection with Weiner's earlier art is still apparent, since the verbs refer to the active processes common to this work. Not until 1971 did Weiner begin to arrive at texts that are both self-referential and dependent upon the book form. In *10 Works* such phrases as 'under and over' and 'back and forth' – particularly when strung together – finally reach an effective level of generality.

In *Green as well as Blue as well as Red* (1972) the most concrete items in the book are the three colours referred to in the title. Concurrently with his arrival at this level of abstraction Weiner also introduced a degree of permutation of terms. He had selected families of terms in his earlier books such as *Flowed* (1971) and *10 Works* and had also displayed permutations in *10 Works* and *Causality: Affected and/or Effected* (1971), but *Green as well as Blue as well as Red* is the most abstract and systematic book up until this time. Practically every word is a building block to be added to others, rearranged and substituted. This book also epitomizes Weiner's developed use of typography and page layout.

The next development in Weiner's books was the incorporation of photographs with texts. In *Once Upon a Time* (1973) his texts accompany photographs by Giorgio Colombo. These photographs appear to be unconnected to each other and unconnected to the text; instead, they seem to provide a living context for Weiner's abstractions, and, indeed, for

his musings. *Once Upon a Time* is full of doubts and questions; apparent abstractions are coloured by the artist's feelings. Later books frequently incorporate photographs because they grow out of movie projects; examples include: *Towards a Reasonable End* (1975) and *Passage to the North* (1981).

It would seem that not only was language a fundamental aspect of Weiner's art from the beginning, but that it also provided a medium through which he could extricate himself from the specifics of sculpture and painting, and from their almost inescapable physicality and uniqueness, and ease himself into the insubstantial, repeatable and verbally hospitable medium of film. The book form has played an essential part in structuring his language works, but Weiner, as emphatically as anyone, has also made multiple books because of his opposition to the creation of unique objects, and to make his work accessible.

At the beginning of the 1970s many of the more ubiquitous books by artists were extremely unostentatious. In keeping with their origins in Conceptual, Mminimal and allied art forms, they frequently took the form of slim white pamphlets which evoked great seriousness, and they often contained only words. Books published in Holland and Italy, in particular, contributed to this fairly pervasive style. Weiner's early books conformed to this form of presentation. So, too, did some by Richard Long: *From Along a Riverbank* (1971), for example.

Since many of Long's works are executed in very remote locations and are subject to the ravages of time and the elements, their existence might never be known or shared by other people unless a record of their appearance is exhibited. Photographs are the principal means for making these inaccessible works known, and books of photographs further increase their potential audience. It might be thought that Long's books are just documentation, but in his first book he established that his work in the landscape may not be separable from its recorded image or from a book of such images. In this book, *Sculpture by Richard Long made for Martin and Mia Visser, Bergeijk* (1969), he clearly states that the collection of photographs does 'not have the function of documentation: it is the sculpture made for Martin and Mia Visser'. Other remarks amplify this statement; the work 'was conceived for the purpose of photographic reproduction'.

Long 'made a system of trenches, which was created according to special camera views'. The first statement, that the book – or the photographs – *were* the sculpture, perfectly exemplifies a charged situation in the recent history of art. In the same year, 1969, in the first issue of *Art-Language*, the then 'journal of conceptual art', there is a passage which also reflects the same attitude: 'Can this editorial, in itself an attempt to evince some outlines as to what "conceptual art" is, come up for the count as a work of conceptual art?' The very fact that such a question could be posed demonstrates the incredible elasticity and openness of art at the end of the 1960s. Siegelaub's exhibition *July, August, September 1969*, in which Long participated, and which was embodied in its catalogue, also took place in the same year.

In one sense the expansion and permeability of the parameters of art at this time made it possible for almost any object or phenomenon, or indeed any book, to be designated art. But this expanded understanding was almost coterminous with the more general meaning of art that embraces all human artefacts. While one might consider that Long's Visser book was subsumed by the first sense, his subsequent books might more appropriately be termed art, or book art, according to the second sense. For in the case of the subsequent books, whatever status the photographs alone might be said to have, the books themselves have been expressions of Long's art as a designer. Regardless of their origins in several different countries, these books generally bear a family resemblance, as manifested in the choice of type, the layout of the page, and the images, but the content is rarely dependent upon the book form.

In 1971 Art and Project published Long's *From Along a Riverbank*, which, with the exception of the similar *From Around a Lake* published by Art and Project two years later, is a more book-dependent work than any of his other books. Curiously, it also resembles Ruscha's *A Few Palm Trees*, published in the same year, not merely because of its botanical concerns but also because of the way that the photographs have been stripped so that their subjects are presented in isolation in the space of the page. The book known in brief as *Two Sheepdogs* … , also published in 1971, demonstrates yet another variety of content: short sentences in the form of captions are associated with photographs of

rocky moorland. However, these captions are by no means passive. When a phrase such as 'The stream says I can touch you as I pass by,' is placed below a picture, it gives an anthropomorphic cast to simple elements in the landscape.

Long has made at least one book, *Twelve Works* (1981), with solely verbal content, as well as another, *South America* (1972), that contains pictographic drawings and words, but his recent books generally conform to a similar prescription. Most contain photographs of his work, in remote locations and in galleries and museums, that are not connected to each other, but are simply strung together to make an album. The photographs are frequently astonishing, but the books are only picture books.

Daniel Buren takes a diametrically opposite attitude to Long, since he denies that his books are artworks. Those of his books that discuss pre-existing works can certainly be regarded as pure documentation. But Buren has also been a frequent contributor to many anthological publications, and his contributions to these take one of three forms: he presents writing illustrated by photo-documentation, writing accompanied by unrelated 'photo-souvenirs', or he presents his art directly. Since Buren's art, expressed through striped surfaces, relates to the experience of looking in a specific place and to the appreciation of context, his art contributions are striped pages. The July/August 1970 issue of *Studio International* contains eight pages of alternate yellow and white stripes of standard width; in the Winter 1975 issue of *TriQuarterly* he presents six pages of green and white stripes. Thus the reader or viewer examines the art in the context of the magazine space.

Buren has generally made pageworks rather than bookworks, but the books which collect his writings, present his theories, or record his works are quite numerous. He has, therefore, contributed to the visibility and viability of the book as a medium for visual artists. One could, in fact, argue against Buren's assertion that the books that document his art are not in themselves art by suggesting, as one could of Jan Dibbets' *Robin Redbreast's Territory Sculpture 1969* (1970), that without the existence of these books the artworks would not be perceived in their totality. Buren himself is well aware of this dilemma and refers to it in his provocative book *Reboundings* (1977). Until this book appeared, the work

that is discussed and documented was silent. The subtleties of the work were, perhaps inevitably, not appreciated, so Buren's dilemma was whether to leave the work pure but silent, or to compromise it somewhat through explanation in a printed medium and thus convey its nature to another audience. It will be apparent, therefore, that the distinction between a book and a bookwork can become somewhat blurred.

Photography, alongside drawing and writing, is one of the principal means that book artists employ in order to communicate their content and purpose. Even books that do not overtly communicate through photographs would not generally exist without photographic processes, such as plate-making, etc. In most cases photography is used expressively, not to produce the kind of souvenir that Buren juxtaposes with some of his texts. John Baldessari uses photography extensively, both to produce wall pieces and to make films. His books employ photographic imagery and conventions, but they also derive from work apparently not initially conceived with the book in mind; once again we are somewhere in the hinterland between the book and the bookwork. Baldessari has explained his attitude very clearly: ' ... since a lot of people can own the book, nobody owns it. Every artist should have a cheap line. It keeps art ordinary and away from being overblown' (*Art-Rite* # 14, Winter 1976–1977).

None of Baldessari's books are exhibition catalogues nor pure documentation, even when exhibitions occasioned their publication. Indeed, he is sensitive to different book formats; for example the wall calendar format of *Ingres, and Other Parables* (1971), the portfolio format of *Throwing Three Balls* ... (1973), and the concertina or accordion format of *Fable* (1977). One could say that the form of this last work successfully liberates it from its origins as a wall piece, and reinterprets its contents through an historical book structure.

Most of Baldessari's books are visual narratives. Only in *Ingres, and Other Parables* do the texts become more important than the images. In other works, such as *Choosing: Green Beans* (1972) and *Four Events and Reactions* (1975), the short prefaces are essential to an understanding of the images. In the case of *Throwing Three Balls in the Air to Get a Straight Line: (Best of Thirty-Six Attempts)* (1973) the title also takes

on the burden of a text. But unlike *Throwing Three Balls ...* , *Brutus Killed Caesar* (1976) is entirely dependent upon its title for its meaning; were it not for the title it would not be apparent that the paraphernalia of life depicted in the book might also be the instruments of death.

Of the artists whose work has been discussed so far, two have used the medium of the book principally as a vehicle for words. Weiner constructs verbal phrases and sequences which require the structure of the book to articulate them; Buren writes in order to explain, and therefore finds the book appropriate to his ends because of its traditional efficiency and convenience in presenting information. Davi Det Hompson (a.k.a. David E. Thompson) uses words in yet another way by stressing the visual qualities of both words and letters. Because written or printed words stand in for spoken language, it is easy not to see that reading is a visual activity.

Davi Det Hompson has been making books since the mid-1960s, though he did not begin to print his editions in hundreds of copies until the mid-1970s. The books of the 1960s, and in particular the books of 1966, have affinities with concrete poetry. Both Hompson and Roth exemplify this route into book art, and Hompson, like Roth, is not only a book artist; he is involved with media from posters to performance.

Although *Blue Light Containment* (1966), through its arrangement of words and images on the page, reveals a keen awareness of the reading process and of book structure, *Disassemblage* (1966) is a more radical work since, in theory at least, each copy should not survive its first reading. The book demands that the reader become physically involved with it. Apart from the title page, each page carries an instruction, for example, 'crumple this element into the smallest unit possible', and 'ignite it with entire disassemblage'. The destruction of the book is a theme that is echoed in several other books by artists.

In 1976 Hompson began another period of sustained involvement with the book, but the books of 1976 and 1977 do not display the tricks of the 1960s. Visually, the majority of them are almost ordinary. Most simply carry a single typed sentence, placed alone on a page but photographically enlarged to perhaps twice the normal size, thereby

accentuating the letter forms of which words are comprised. Although his works suggest an acute visual sensitivity to words and letters, Hompson's use of language also demonstrates an acute ear for spoken words. The sentences arranged on successive pages of the books do not seem at all contrived, but rather snipped out of a conversation still hanging in the air. Hompson has referred to his activity not as storytelling but as image-telling and it is true that most of his short pieces are absorbed whole like a Gestalt rather than read. The words and the books have a strange inevitability and authority: *Understand. This is only temporary* (1977). *May I have a glass of water with no ice, please?* (1976). *You know it has to be a hairpiece* (1977). These phrases, both titles and opening pages, exist as naturally as mountain ranges. The simplicity of these slim white pamphlets is refreshing; the art is unusually transparent.

In some extraordinary books from 1980, *II.*, *xp-ix*, *Bla.*", *Easy.* and *Eleanor.*, whole words and sentences become restless, enlarged and hover between images and signs. The activity of turning pages to follow the progress of a story becomes absolutely essential, and disruptive, as sentences flow across several pages or the verso and recto of a sheet. These books require that they be disassembled if they are to be read and understood. If one does try to read the books in the orthodox manner, the enlarged letters, the coloured inks and papers, and the framing function of the page help to slow down the reading process so that one can linger over the exquisite fragments that are normally looked at but not seen. Ultimately, the book form could not stand up to Hompson's relentless pressure. In *I (a, b) 18* (1980) the book becomes just a blip on the page; sentences snake off the poster/page in all directions; the traditional book form is turned inside out.

Hompson's works illustrate how the book artist may almost literally wrestle with words. Since words function as both images and signs, their combination with pictures can take several forms. When used as captions, words can manipulate the meanings of pictures, emphasise particular readings or create dissonance between the two elements. When words and images simply lie side by side, a so-called 'artist's book' very often turns out be just a cheap remnant of the illustrated book tradition. One characteristic of

artists' books and bookworks is indeed their fusion of word and image. Helen Douglas and Telfer Stokes, in their book *Chinese Whispers* (1976), solve the problem of integrating words and images by giving words object status. The phrases 'Turn over a new leaf' and 'Life is an open book' exist in the pictures themselves. The artists also play with the image of a bread bin labelled 'BREAD', so that as the camera closes in, the word fills up the page until only the exhortation 'READ' remains visible. In all these cases, however, the words are embedded in the image; they do not float on the surface of the page.

Chinese Whispers is Stokes' fifth book, the last two co-authored with Helen Douglas. These five books demonstrate a remarkable progression over four years. The first book, *Passage* (1972), is full of brilliant visual anecdotes which exist as separate entities in the volume, but which refer to, or depend upon, the book form time and again. Pages with images of two halves of a sandwich are constantly pried open and stuck shut again. A roller picks up paint from the left-hand page and transfers it to the right. Sequences of pages build up odd rhythms. *Foolscrap* (1973) uses sequences similarly but handles individual components so that they are moved across pages as the book is flipped by the reader; while in *Spaces* (1974) Stokes begins to interweave sequences of images together. There is a much greater sense of progression through this book, as well as movement into and out of the page as the camera pulls away or moves in. A staccato rhythm is set up by the gymnastics of a versatile piece of furniture.

The fourth book in the series, *Loophole* (1975), is a marvelous invention. The reader is led smoothly through a remarkable visual adventure that takes place in the shallow space of the book. By turning the pages one is continually peeling off layers of imagery until ruptured surfaces are successively overlaid again – but inexactly. Towards the end, movement in and out of the book is disrupted by a new rhythm of movement up and down the page, which appropriately related to images of an old sewing machine. What one witnesses and savours during the course of the book is an authentic visual fiction.

Chinese Whispers (1976), which succeeded *Loophole*, is another rich narrative incorporating quite different rural

imagery, except for some construction work, a recurring theme in four of the five books. Both the book and the photographs are very handsome and reveal a growing ease in working on an extended narrative and with the book structure.

Stokes and Douglas' next book, entitled *Clinkscale* (1977), is very different. This book photographically represents, and structurally mimics, an accordion. If the boards of the book are opened on one side the folded pages suggest the bellows of the accordion. If they are opened on the other side they expand into a continuous strip of lush green meadow, as if the accordion's music were equated with the lilt of the grasses, undulating like the sea.

Back to Back (1980) is the first of Stokes' books to contain a text. Both text and pictures describe an excursion from a stone house into hilly country. The images of the landscape are immensely powerful and are starkly printed. The short text is not such a tight fit as the pictures, but it does evoke movement through the book and a strange timelessness. In a curious way, *Back to Back,* though different in every detail, has a similar overall rhythm to *Loophole.* In both cases about three quarters of each book has a great deal of movement in and out of the space of the page; then, at the end, there is less agitation and a slow peaceful glide to a conclusion.

Stokes, particularly when working with Douglas, has amply demonstrated the capacity of the book to convey complex visual narratives. These sequences amount to a totally new form of visual poetry which has more affinities with an intricately cut and edited movie suddenly frozen on the page than with traditional book content.

Clinkscale is one of the few books discussed here that has an unconventional binding; Baldessari's *Fables* shares a similar format. Hompson's *1 (a,b) 18* is even more unusual, though it can be seen to have developed from more common forms. Other experiments with the structure of the book have not been featured because it seems to be generally the case that the more conspicuous the structure of the book, the less significant the content. Furthermore, the codex form, in which a uniform collection of leaves are fastened along one edge, is at least 2,000 years old, and its engineering has been confirmed as eminently practical to carry and

transmit the kinds of content entrusted to it. It is this form of the book which has been part of the lives of generations of artists and their audiences, and which was rediscovered, almost as a 'found structure', around 1960.

Nevertheless it seems that Kevin Osborn has rarely been willing to uncritically accept this structure that is so familiar as to be unconsidered by most of its users. It is as if Osborn wishes to jolt his readers out of their easy acceptance of the book form so that they will be more alert to its inherent properties.

While Osborn's handling of the imagery in *Salamander* (1976) is very assured, the form of the book is conventional, whereas *Repro Memento* (1980) has an unusual form, which is, however, inseparable from its content. Since the pages of this book are trapezoidal, with the shortest sides in the gutter, the pages open into an exaggerated perspective, thus emphasising the repeated motif of the book: a receding vista converging dead centre. The book is bound accordion-style, the paper is semi-transparent; and some pages have been printed on the back as well as on the front. Fragments of the total picture appear on different pages, so that one is obliged to look at the whole book in order to absorb the complete picture.

Parallel (1980) entails another unusual format. The sheets that make up the pages have not been folded conventionally, but from corner to corner, so that the book is a triangle, which opens up into a diamond-shaped double spread. *Parallel* is a very quiet book. On creamy-coloured paper the faintest pastel-coloured inks have been laid down, so that the abstract imagery only becomes visible as the book is angled into and out of the light. The centre pages appear to be completely blank at first sight, but actually bear one almost invisible word repeated right across the page from corner to corner. The imagery, though muted, appears very busy at the beginning and the end of the book when contrasted with the virtually empty pages at the still centre of the book.

It would have been very difficult to anticipate Osborn's *Real Lush* (1981) on the basis of his earlier work. The reader is first struck by the shape of the book: it is just over twice as wide as it is high, and appears almost as thick as it is high. Over three hundred sheets have been bolted together so as to

give the book a rhombic cross-section. This configuration facilitates the flipping of the pages, determines the principal direction for reading and signals a different reading experience.

While *Real Lush* can be seen to have some features in common with Osborn's earlier publications, the ambition, density, and complexity of this book represent a remarkable imaginative leap. Through many pages and many printings, Osborn creates a variety of modular sequences linked together to provide the reader with a roller-coaster ride through different visual experiences and states of mind. As many as a dozen layers of ink and images may coexist on a single page. When this happens the result is generally a visual cacophony, but other sections are as spacious and tranquil as in his earlier books, and act as keys with which to unlock the denser pages. The excavation of images and moods is accomplished through the reading of many pages, rather than by the intense scrutiny of a single page as if it were a painting.

In the past, book artists have frequently worked with printers, either on an impersonal or a collaborative basis, to achieve the results that they sought. However, there are some book artists, such as Hompson, Stokes and Osborn, who use the camera and the printing press as tools and who personally see their ideas through from their inception to their embodiment in a finished book. Indeed, because they understand and are involved in virtually every process, it is possible for them to compose or alter their books during the production process, rather than to create a finished maquette prior to photography and printing.

The emergence of the printer-artist in recent years and the related growth of artists' presses promises to move us into a new era of book art. In America alone the existence and accomplishments of yet more artists, such as Conrad Gleber, Michael Goodman, Janet Zweig, Philip Zimmermann, Miles DeCoster and Rebecca Michaels, highlight the expanding creative possibilities within the areas of book art, page art and magazine art. But most of these artists have not only created significant works of their own; they have also fostered the work of others through their additional roles as printers, publishers and teachers.

The burgeoning activity of artists' presses, and the growth in numbers of artists' books and book artists, has

been accompanied by developments in visual content, and awareness of still greater potential. It may be that even the best of the visual books that have so far been published are but the primitives of a new era.

Reading sequences of pages in bookworks sometimes has an affinity with the way in which one reads a painting or a photograph, rather than a novel, in that it is a non-linear, quasi-random process. Reading page by page might be likened to traversing the surface of a collage or montage in which the eye experiences disjunctions between discrete sections of the work. It can also be likened to one's experience of a movie, in that visual images are sometimes juxtaposed in time instead of in space and cumulatively create an experience. Another analogy might be with poetry, in which disparate images, conjured in words, are juxtaposed and then synthesized by the reading process into something other than the sum of the parts. The fact that certain bookworks combine words and pictures intimately, in a non-illustrative manner, complicates these analogies and makes for further richness. Book art also stands at the intersection of many disciplines and draws its strength from just this cross-fertilisation.

The book has been around for a long time, but the growth of new visual literatures and new visual languages, articulated by means of old and new book structures in the last 20 years, suggests that it will be around for much longer, especially when new technologies have relieved it of many of its more pedestrian functions.

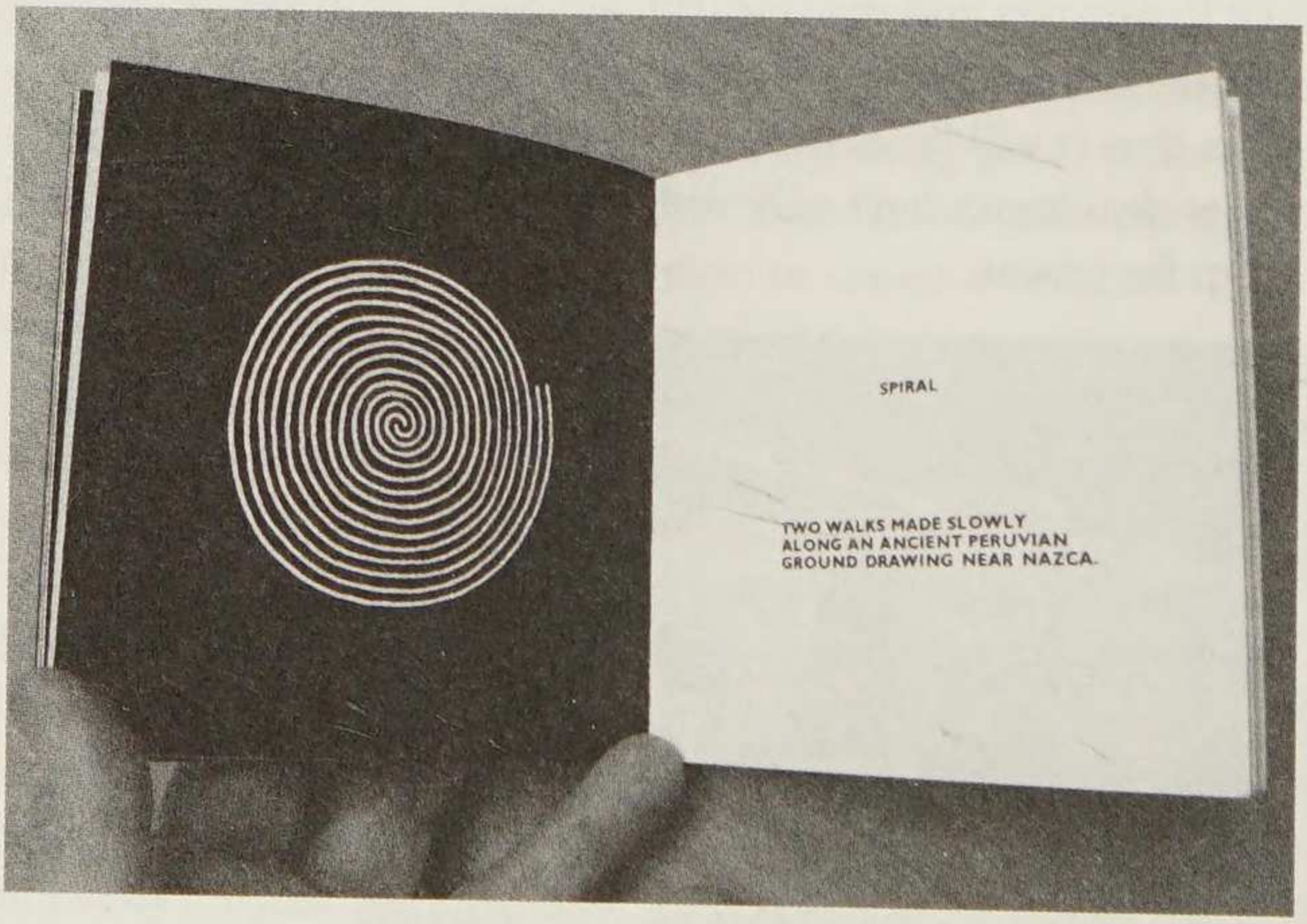


Andy Warhol, *Andy Warhol's Index (Book)* (New York & Toronto: Random House, 1967), pop-up opening

Richard Long's Books and the Transmission of Sculptural Images

First published in *The Print Collector's Newsletter*, vol. 18, no. 4 (September–October 1987), p. 125–128.

Jacqueline Brody, of *The Print Collector's Newsletter*, was the first American editor to invite me to write for publication, just a few months after I arrived in the USA. The subject she wanted addressed then, in 1978, was ephemera. But her sympathy for artists' publications was of long-standing, and later, in 1987, after conferring with her colleague, Nancy Princenthal, compiler of the column 'Artist's Book Beat', she asked me to write about artists' books, specifically those by Richard Long.



Richard Long, *South America* (Düsseldorf: Konrad Fischer, 1972)

Richard Long's sculpture falls into two categories: those works that are executed in the open air in non-urban locations, and those executed in museums and galleries. In order to tell us about the remote works, Long uses three means: photographs, texts and maps.

In his museum sculpture, Long attempts to relate imported materials, generally stones, to the architecture of the interior space. Yet, unlike his outdoor pieces, which clearly belong to the open countryside, the affinity of his indoor sculptures to their environment is more like that of stuffed animals to a natural history museum. The works look impressive, but dead and out of place.

But if the indoor works seem like specimens wrenched from their natural setting, the outdoor works can only be communicated to most of us by means of Long's photographs. We are in a double bind. Furthermore, when displayed in a museum, the framed

photographs do not really function as windows onto the remote sculpture, but more like graphic works with perspectivally distorted circles and lines as incidents in a flat pictorial composition. Nor do Long's texts work well on walls since even their typography is rarely very interesting. Only the marked maps look comfortable on the walls of a museum.

Yet Long has given us some of the most vivid visual inventions of the last 20 years. Most of us know them not so much through visiting exhibitions – and certainly not sites – as by seeing printed announcements for exhibitions, as well as postcards, magazine reproductions and books. Perhaps the page is the most appropriate means for conveying Long's sculpture to his audience, especially since photographs in publications tend to function much more as windows than do photographs on walls.

Long usually presents a single view of each work, a procedure that further complicates the relationship between sculpture and audience. This single view tends to deny the three-dimensional qualities of the sculpture – which are limited in any case – and suggests that Long is ultimately a picture maker as much as an object maker. This idea is supported by his use of elementary forms. It is the relationship of these repeated elementary forms to their locale that is the real subject of Long's art, and, given his choice of one viewpoint, such a concern is more pictorial than sculptural.

Long's preoccupations have been very consistent for about 20 years. The bringing of mud indoors, and its application to walls, is about the only new means that he has adopted in recent years. The early years were somewhat different. In the 1960s, when still seeking his now familiar means, he introduced alien elements into the landscape rather than simply moving existing elements into new configurations, which is now his practice. In addition, he actually altered the landscape on occasion, by cutting into turf or by removing the heads of daisies, for example.

If we look at the books of Richard Long, we see a similar pattern of early experimentation followed by consistent use of a few genres. But first it should be made clear just what the books are that we are discussing. Long's view seems to be that any publication designed or laid out by him is an artwork. There is a list of these in the volume by R. H.

Fuchs, *Richard Long* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1986), which, since no designer is credited and since Long seems to have had a hand in it, might well be one of his books too, but for the insertion of somebody else's text. This list includes what I would classify as documentation, texts, bookworks, photowalkworks, wordwalkworks and documentary compilations of several types of work.

The commonest genre is the book – or booklet, few are hardbound – which contains documentation of sculpture, increasingly outdoor and indoor together. These books appear to have been designed by Long, who seems to have chosen the characteristic typeface and laid out the images and words. They are often published to coincide with exhibitions, though they are not exhibition catalogues. Their internal sequences rarely seem to have any logic. Such books can be set aside at this point since they are of little interest in a discussion of books that might amount to artworks in their own right.

It is curious that the list of 'publications by the artist' in the volume by Fuchs does not include the earliest book with which Long was involved. (It is also ignored in a near-identical list in *The Critical Eye/1*, New Haven: Yale Center for British Art, 1984.) This booklet is *Sculpture by Richard Long Made for Martin & Mia Visser, Bergeijk*; it includes no direct reference to publisher or date and place of publication. While the piece also appears to be titled 'Sculpture for Martin & Mia Visser', it has yet another phrase associated with it: 'Dartmoor January 10 1969.' The book includes seven views of one sculpture – this is the only book to permit us more than a single viewpoint – and states that the Vissers acquired Long's work 'as a photographic reproduction for publication in an edition of 500 issues'. We are also told that 'according to Richard Long's idea the photographs in hand do not have the function of a documentation: it is [they are?] the "sculpture made for Martin and Mia Visser"'. Since the photographs are listed as being 'by Fernsehgalerie Gerry Schum', Long may not have been responsible for them, in which case the statement that they are the sculpture is even more interesting. (This may also explain why the book has been dropped from the canon?)[1]

The Visser sculpture booklet is fascinating for what it says about the aesthetic climate at the time it was made. This

was a precious moment in the history of art – the time of Judd's 'Dictum' and Art & Language's early musings – when art really was what the artist said it was. Thus, seven photographs could actually be sculpture. Whether or not Long now approves of the Visser sculpture booklet, it is clear that it explicitly embodies the attitude, only implicit in his subsequent books, that each is an artwork. That this is still his position was reaffirmed more recently in a letter to *Art Monthly* in 1983, in which he asserts that 'everything I show in a gallery or put out in other ways, is art in its own right'.[2]

After the Visser sculpture booklet, Long made two excursions into rather different territory when he published two booklets with Art & Project in Amsterdam. More convincing as independent artworks, their titles are *From Along a Riverbank* (1971) and *From Around a Lake* (1973). It would appear that these books might owe a debt to Ed Ruscha's 1971 book *A Few Palm Trees*, since *From Along a Riverbank* was published as late as August of 1971. (It also bears the Ruscha trademark of a blank page in the middle of a sequence.) But whether or not this is the case, the two booklets reflect Long's concerns and introduce the book genre that might be called 'photowalkworks'. Both *From Along a Riverbank* and *From Around a Lake* reproduce leaves or grasses (the first in black and white, the second in colour) as if they were lying on the open page – thereby creating almost a photo-illusion when they are printed green. These two booklets have affinities with such later books as *A Hundred Stones* ... (1977) and *A Walk Past Standing Stones* (1980) in which photographs have been taken of related objects encountered on a walk. Thus, the various leaves and grasses might, in the same way, even though isolated on the page, represent markers or moments on a walk. The resemblance that the two bookworks bear to children's nature notebooks containing gummed-in leaves also accentuates the bookish quality of the concept.

The other booklet to be published in 1971, this time by Lisson Publications in London, was *Two Sheepdogs Cross In and Out of the Passing Shadows* ... . In retrospect it can be seen to be a unique and curious hybrid, including a text, landscape photographs and a single photograph of a Long sculpture. The text is a brief narrative that also functions as linked captions

to the photographs. This narrative begins as description but veers into speaking for the elements in the landscape; thus, a stream, a hilltop, and a bridge are anthropomorphised into having thoughts, sensations, even feelings. This romantic or Whitmanesque reading of the photographs does not recur in Long's work, though the booklet published in 1973 by the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, *John Barleycorn*, has odd verbal additions, notably the entire lyrics of the folk song that gives the book its title. Subsequent textual books revert to bare descriptions or lists.

In 1973 Long's booklet *South America 1972* was published in English in Düsseldorf by Konrad Fischer (republished in 1978 in Swedish as *Sydamerika 1972* by Sune Nordgren's press Kalejdoskop in Lund). This is perhaps the most integrated of his bookworks. The square format, the bold simplified line drawings, the interplay of black and white or positive and negative pages, the hints of narrative and the vocabulary of forms add up to a striking and well-shaped bookwork– though it should be noted that even here there is an overtone of documentation, or perhaps of the diary. This is Long's only book in which drawings are the sole pictorial elements.

With few exceptions, Richard Long's books and booklets after 1973 are either albums of documentary photographs with occasional texts, or, less frequently, photowalkworks or wordwalkworks. In addition to the walk books already mentioned, one might also include: *A Straight Hundred Mile Walk in Australia* (1977), *Countless Stones* (1983), *Planes of Vision* (1983) and perhaps *Calendar* (1987). They operate in the same way as *From Along a Riverbank* except that the documentary photographs naturally reveal more of the context of the walk.

What are we to make of the books of documentation, which, according to Long's assertion, are just as much works of art as are his wall works and his sculpture? It is clear that Long has taken great pains over the publication of his photographs of both outdoor and indoor sculpture. Indeed, with all his publishers, Long appears to have retained complete control over both form and content. In addition, we should note his commitment to publishing – his list of publications indicates that he has been responsible for an average of more than two publications a year since 1970! Publishing is clearly important to Long.

In addition, none of these documentary books has been made into an artificially limited edition; none of them is signed and numbered. They cost about the same as an illustrated exhibition catalogue. Indeed it seems that Long still adheres to the thinking that gave rise to the 'artist's book' in the 1960s, as exemplified by the work of Ruscha and, later, LeWitt and Weiner. Which is, that art could be created specifically with the book form in mind, and, furthermore, that there was no reason to limit the audience for such a multiple artwork that only came into existence when replicated, and no reason to inflate the purchase price of each copy.

For all these worthwhile characteristics, and for all the care lavished on their production, the problem with these documentary books by Long is that they are neither artworks nor bookworks. They display the most minimal interest in narrative and virtually no interest in using the book form to articulate images and texts. They are simply albums of photographs, with occasional texts and diagrams. However, given the difficulties of ever seeing Long's remote sculpture, given the problem of seeing into Long's photographs when they are framed and hung on the wall, and given Long's consistent and prolific publishing record, we cannot but acknowledge that it is in fact the page, and not the exhibition, that is the site of the most effective transmission of Long's best and most individual work to its audience.

For all the apparent romanticism of his travels to far-off lands and unpeopled vistas Long has, in common with other artists of his generation, seized upon William Ivins' (and Walter Benjamin's) idea of 'exactly repeatable visual or pictorial statements' made possible by photography and modern printing technology.[3] In the books, if not so easily in magazines, Long can control tonality, bleeding, cropping, framing, layout and typography, ensuring that when we look at the page we are seeing his work exactly as he intended. These books and booklets may not be integrated works of art; instead they are comprised of disparate, individual printed artworks, realized through photography. But, in the end, it is almost irrelevant whether Long, or we, give them the status of printed art, for they have already joined the repertory of arresting 20th-century images.

Furthermore, to quote Long on the subject of his remote sculpture, they 'are not subject to possession and ownership'.[4] These images belong to all of us. They have been multiplied thousands of times already and will be further multiplied in the future.

There remains one recent book that demands attention: *Mud Hand Prints* (1984) from Simon Cutts' Coracle Press in London. This book is clothbound and contains three folded sheets sewn into the binding. The outer sheet forms the endpapers, thereby leaving just eight pages. The first page encountered is the title page, while the last bears brief details of the edition. The remaining pages are blank except for the centre spread, which bears two mud handprints. On the left is the splashy, milky-brown imprint of a left hand, on the right a right-hand print, the two prints separated by tissue. The impact of the book is as immediate as the original slap of each muddy hand. This is one of the simplest and yet most effective page openings in a book by an artist.

With the exception of the *River Avon Book* (1979) – a small book of mud-stained pages and no other content whatsoever, published in an edition of 106 copies – *Mud Hand Prints* represents the one occasion that Long has approached the attitude of the publishers of the 'livre de luxe'. The size of the edition, 100 copies, is printed in the book, and the price is much greater than usual. Even so, Long has not illustrated someone else's text, nor has he signed and numbered the books that comprise the edition. Perhaps we can attribute the uncharacteristic treatment of this edition simply to the vicissitudes of switching to hand-printing?

It is to be hoped that Long will continue to work with the inexpensive and democratic medium of the artist's book, thereby ensuring the widest audience for his replicable artworks, and that he will once again consider making bookworks as well as albums of remarkable images.

[1] When I asked Richard Long about this booklet during his exhibition at the New York Public Library in 1994, he replied that it was a "bootlegged" work. This was helpful, but still leaves much unexplained.

[2] 'Richard Long replies to a Critic', *Art Monthly* (July/August 1983), p. 20.

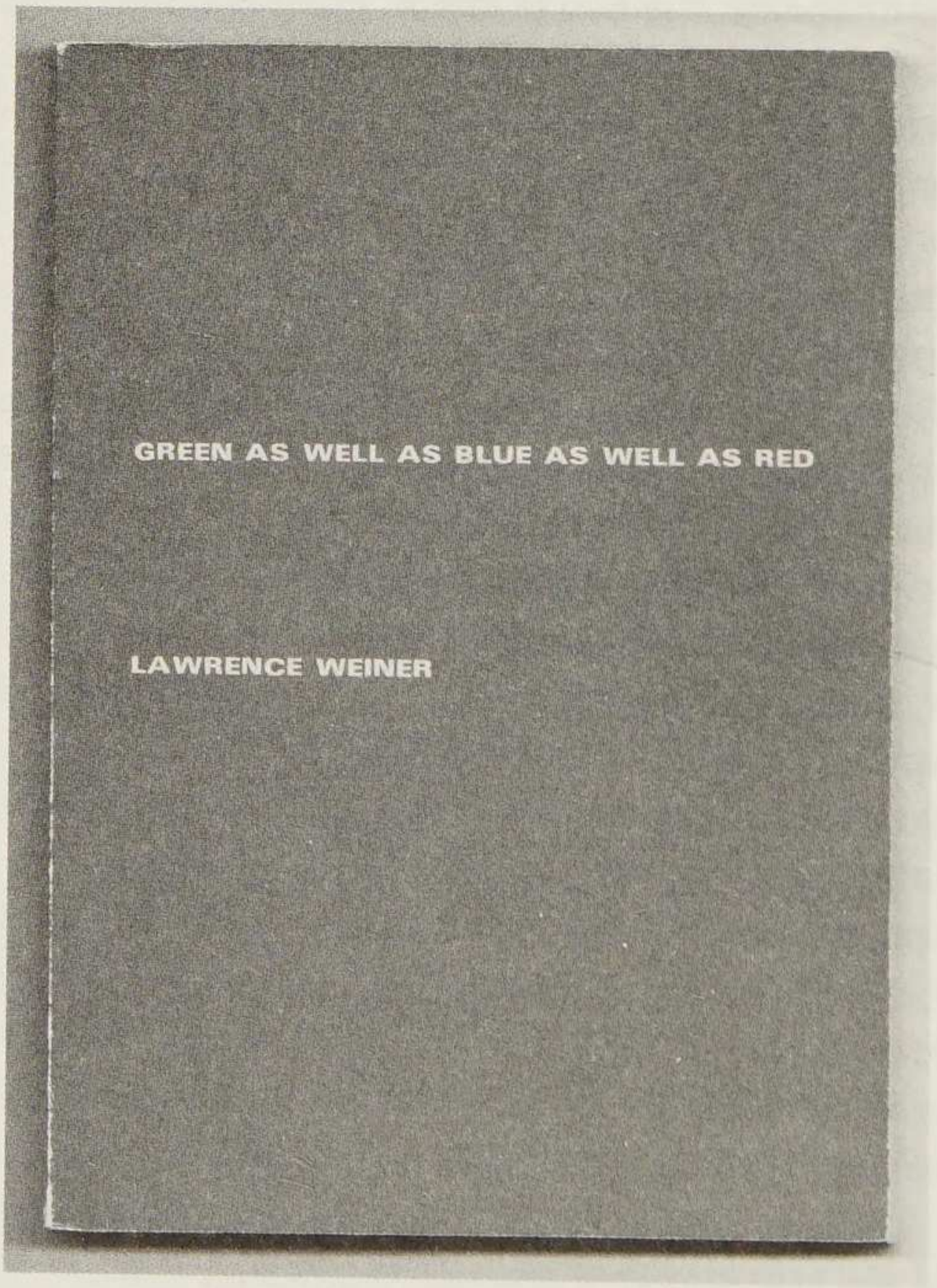
[3] William M. Ivins, Jr., *Prints and Visual Communication* (Cambridge MA & London: M.I.T. Press, 1969), p. 3.

[4] Richard Long, *Five, six, pick up sticks/Seven, eight, lay them straight* (London: Anthony d'Offay Gallery, 1980), p. 3.

Artists' Book Beat
Interview with Nancy Princenthal

First published in *The Print Collector's Newsletter*, vol. 20, no. 6 (January–February 1990), p. 225–227.

Nancy Princenthal's regular column 'Artist's Book Beat' in *The Print Collector's Newsletter* was for many years one of the best sources in America for information, appraisal and commentary on artists' books. In this issue she summarized the symposium of 18 November, 1989, which celebrated the move of Printed Matter, the bookstore for artists' books, from its old New York City location in Tribeca, to SoHo, courtesy of the Dia Art Foundation. Gary Garrels of Dia, John Goodwin and myself, director and board member of Printed Matter respectively, planned the symposium, which included Lawrence Weiner, A.A. Bronson, Edgar Heap of Birds, Dan Graham, Adrian Piper, Mike Kelley, Jo Anne Paschall, Felipe Ehrenberg and several others. I moderated the day's events.



Lawrence Weiner, *Green as well as Blue as well as Red* (London: Jack Wendler, 1972)

NP Could you expand on your opening remarks at the symposium? You expressed some concern about the trend toward glitziness in artists' books, but also said you feel there's cause for optimism.

CP Well, the new profile of Printed Matter, the interest of such organisations as Dia, the concentration, to some extent, on the panels of people who are rather well known, all make me worry about the traditional role of Printed Matter, which has always been a very receptive place for practically everything. Not high-profile stuff, but very cheap items that kept open avenues of communication, and also what I characterise as a kind of underground literature. One of the panellists criticised that term, but I would hold to it. There is a kind of underground literature that doesn't have a home, and if it's verbal and visual, or just visual, Printed Matter was the place for it to reside. If we're just going to be

very concerned with conspicuous books and fast turnover, we might lose some of that. The glitz is quite nice to draw attention to the fact that we're there, but not if we change our mission drastically. And some of the attention is the result of artists' books having suddenly become fashionable, rather than because they've suddenly been understood by everybody.

NP The question of fashionableness is one that crept up now and then at the symposium, and it surprised me, because I think that outside of the artists' book world, that would raise a few eyebrows. In the art world at large, there's a sense that artists' books have kept a very steady profile.

CP I know what you mean, but the involvement of artists who can afford to do expensive books, and of galleries who subsidise them, is beginning to change the nature of the medium. Suddenly there are some quite expensive artists' books, some of which I would keep within my definition and some I wouldn't. And while this is all part of the spectrum, it shouldn't begin to wag the dog, to mix a lot of metaphors.

NP And is there still the same level of production of cheaper, more guerrilla-style literature?

CP I'm not sure there is. Or it's not making its way to Printed Matter for other reasons. It may be that artists' perceptions of the place have changed. Or maybe the underground material – if one can use that phrase – has become more political, and will find other outlets.

NP Do you know of any such?

CP Not specifically for visual books, but when I poke around in more politically oriented bookstores, there are some things there that give a clue to a visual literacy – political comics, and things like that.

NP At one point in the symposium you called for a general discussion of censorship, and I was wondering what you had in mind when you asked that.

CP It seems to me that in the current climate in which people are getting nervous about putting art on the walls of galleries and museums, we might have to be ready for some inroads into the freedom of expression in books. And since artists' books – maybe no more nor less than any others, but at least as much as other literature – could raise some eyebrows in certain circumstances, I wanted to hear if there was any problem out there now, that the group could address.

NP Do you have in mind censorship by funding agencies or publishers?

CP Both. And what is obviously coming into play these days is self-censorship – that's where it's going to be very tricky. Already, one hears rumblings from some quarters, in the NEA and in state arts councils, about nervousness and sensitivity. But then I would pick up on Lawrence Weiner's remark about using state money – if you accept funding, you're framing yourself in a certain way; 'subsidy equals control' is the way he put it. So on the one hand, artists might be freer when they ignore the funding agencies – and I think on the whole the most vital stuff has not been coming from public funding. On the other hand, artists seeking funding might themselves be more cautious now. But we also might see members of the public coming into bookstores and causing problems as they do in galleries now.

NP Do you know of specific examples of that happening?

CP Not yet, but it's a danger. At the back of my mind were the problems of school textbooks, things like that, which are not so far away.

NP No. Artists' books are a perfect vehicle for protesting and mobilising against censorship, but at the same time they're very sensitive to it, very vulnerable.

CP I was disappointed afterwards that I wasn't able to point out that Janet Zweig, who was in the audience, has just done a little book – I think she said she did it in 24 hours – which fits the bill perfectly: it reproduces all the pieces that

are commonly taken out of school textbooks of *Romeo and Juliet*. Here's an example of an artist using a book as a weapon to fight censorship. She even suggests that readers Xerox the pages, cut the pieces out, and stick them into school textbooks.

NP To get back to what Lawrence Weiner was saying, I was surprised that there wasn't more of a response to his suggestion that people go hungry to support their own books.

CP Well, he's speaking from experience. His work has not been a great source of revenue for him, as far as I understand; it isn't saleable in the usual way, and the books have never been expensive. If you're uncompromising – and in a sense he's suggesting you do compromise if you work with the state – you can achieve what you want, and you can be modest about it. His kind of books, and his attitude to the book, are exemplary.

NP Although of course he's generally got some kind of private support – usually gallery support – for his books. And they're good-looking, they're not staple-bound Xeroxes.

CP But they're relatively humble – he doesn't get pretentious about it.

NP There was another interesting exchange that took place later in the day, between Paul Zelevansky and Mike Kelley, about the use of found texts and the priority of the author. Paul Zelevansky was defending books that are more traditional in that sense, and I was wondering how you felt about the place of that debate within the field at present.

CP I was very intrigued by Mike Kelley's description of the book as authoritarian, and I think that is perhaps what Paul Zelevansky responds to in some ways. While most of my working life has been involved with books in one way or another, I don't give them some special status – I'm not someone who can't live without books, in one sense – so it was very refreshing to hear what Mike Kelley was saying. On the other hand, I can't but pay some attention to what Paul

Zelevansky says, because of the incredible tradition of the book as a carrier of information and thought and even art. So it was a beautifully posed opposition.

NP One other thing that I found curious is that from the beginning of the day to the end, there was really never once a big push to define what the artist's book is. Was that deliberate?

CP No, it wasn't really, though before we actually got up there, some panelists said they didn't particularly want to get into hard definitions. But as I said at some point in reference to Ulises Carrión and myself, at the end of the 1970s and in the early 1980s we were taking turns to try to push the definition a bit more, and clarify it, drawing off each other's writings. And it didn't match what was happening – it didn't match the usage, it didn't match the performance. Then he went into other areas – video and things like that – and I stopped bothering with the attempt to define the field, because it didn't seem to be very productive. The trend at the time was this craft-oriented backlash, and all the magazine coverage and exhibitions were to do with the limited editions, the unique objects. I didn't feel at all comfortable with that, and I didn't want to fight it – there didn't seem to be any point. The edge that multiple books had had in the late 1960s and early 1970s seemed to have been lost. I'm hopeful that it's coming back again now. There are some straws in the wind, though I'm not sure yet. That was one reason why I didn't push a hard definition at the symposium – I was not satisfied in giving a shape to something, when the shape didn't match what was out there.

NP In your daily work, do you apply a definition, and would you venture one now?

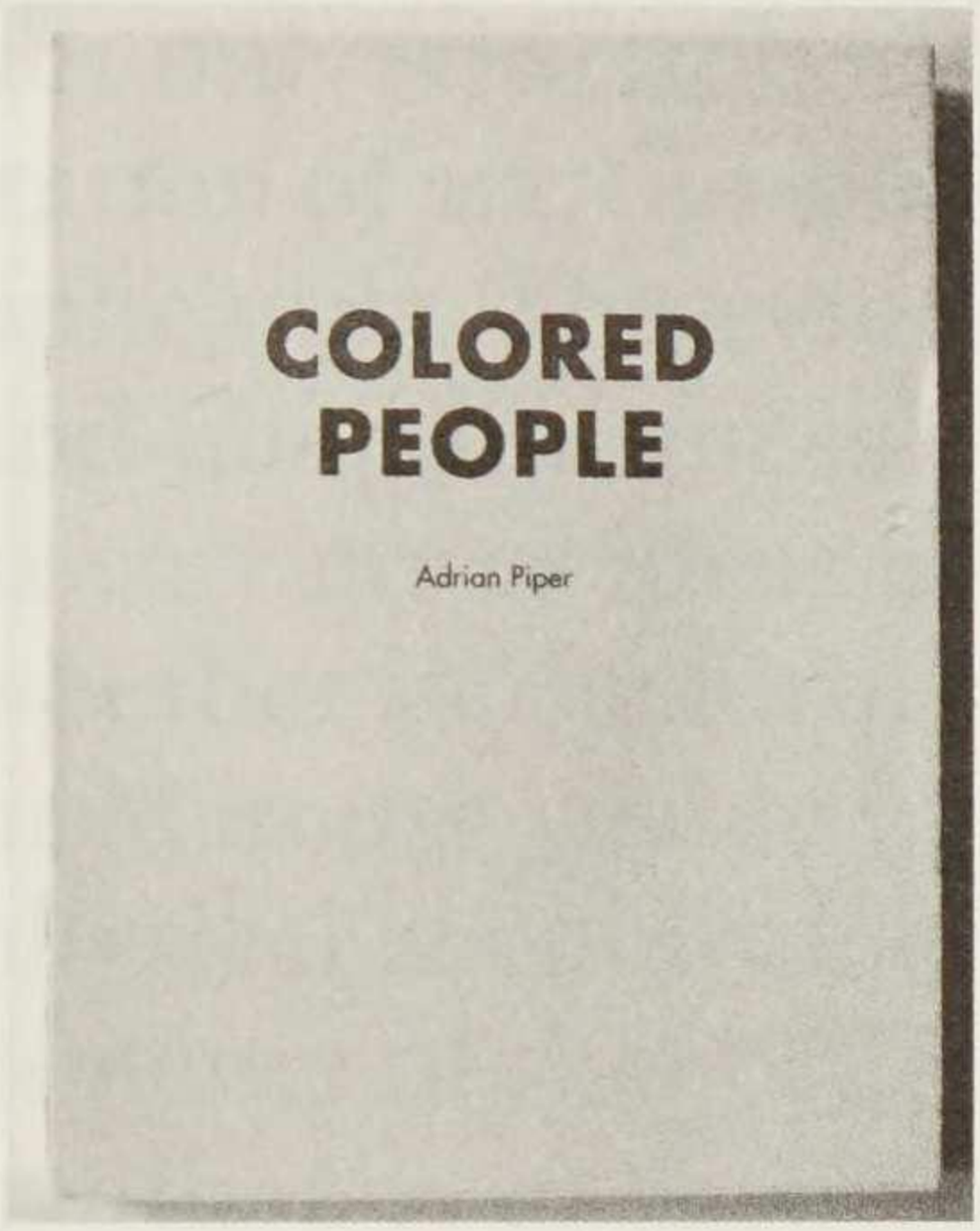
CP Yes I do, but I don't impose it, in the sense that the artist's book collection at MoMA, while accessible through the card catalogue, is not labelled as such. But as it happens, if you wanted to browse, they are all shelved together – the things that fit my parameters.

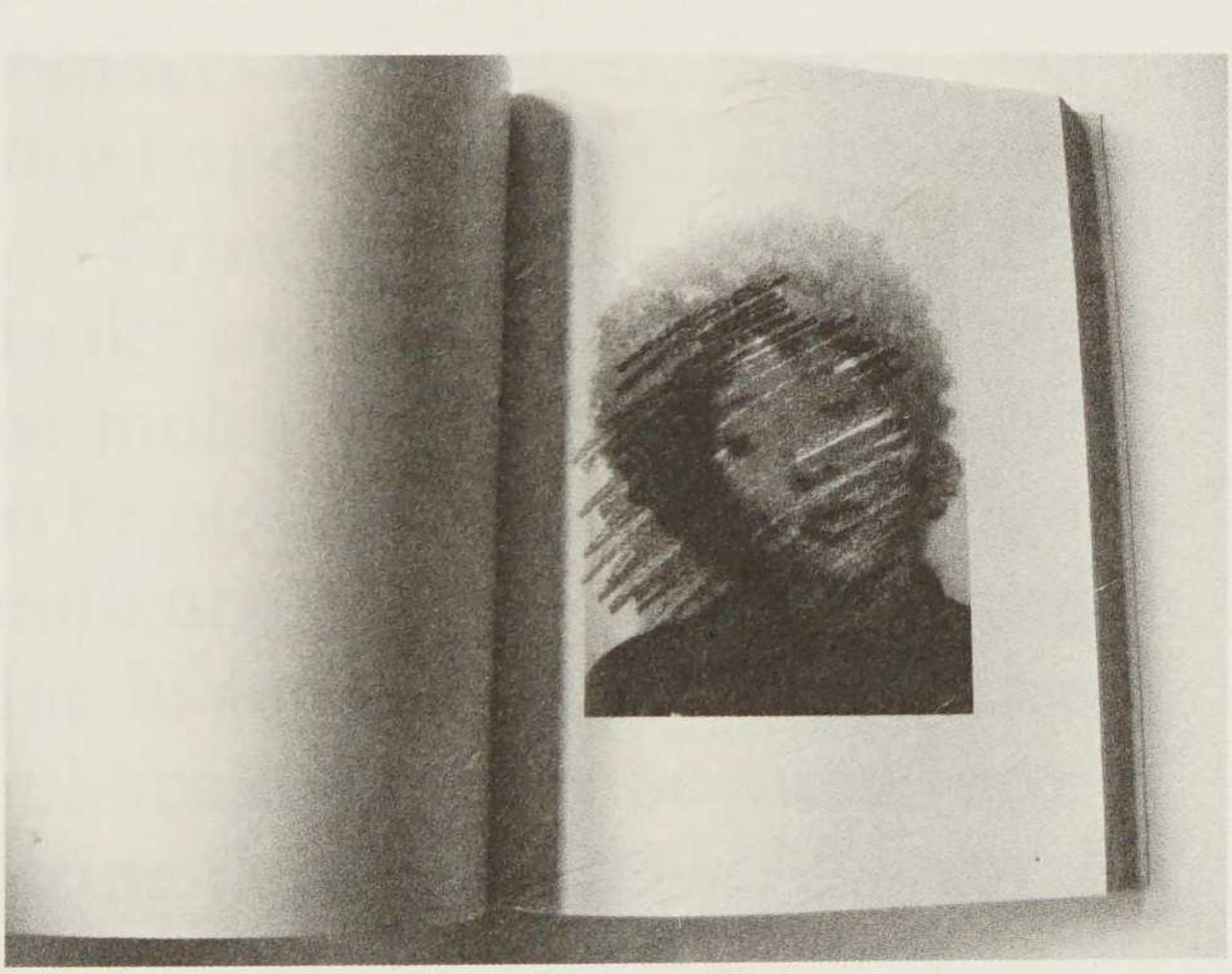
NP And what are those parameters?

CP In a nutshell, they're books that are in 'unlimited' editions. They're conceived as multiples, they're inexpensive, and they use – though not exclusively – contemporary duplicating technology like offset. And there's an aesthetic that's tied in with large numbers, low prices, and accessibility, which to my mind is evident in the books themselves. It seems to me that in the context I'm in – a library, which provides information, primarily – that aesthetic is particularly relevant. Whereas the books that go right across the other end of the spectrum, the printmakers' 'livres de luxe', or whatever, fit into another curatorial department.

NP Were there any other surprises for you in terms of how the symposium went? In general, do you feel it was a success?

CP I was disappointed there wasn't more debate. I kept saying, in my mind, I'd like to tie up this symposium in some way toward the end, but then I decided it wasn't appropriate, because so many strands were there that it would have been impossible, or far too over-simplified, to do that. So I think what happened was a whole lot of hares ran out of the cornfield, and later on they'll be caught and analysed. They're still out there, running around.



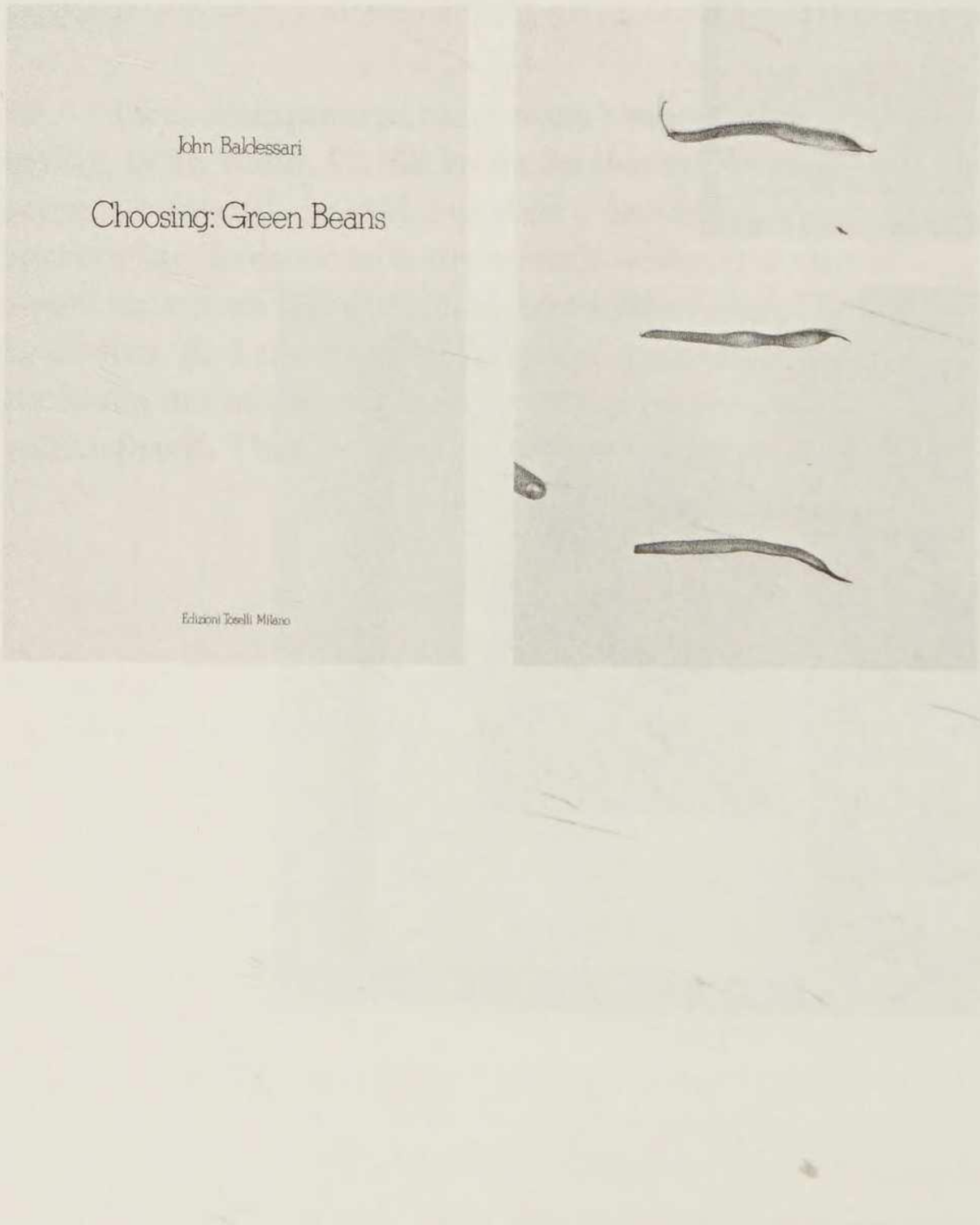


Adrian Piper, *Colored People* (London: Book Works, 1991)
In collaboration with Houston Conwill, Kinshasha Conwill, Jane Farver, David Frankel, Sam Gilliam, Kellie Jones, Lucy Lippard, Rosemary Mayer, John Moore, John Morita, Clive Phillpot, Howardena Pindell, Lowery Sims, Kaylynn Sullivan, Judith Wilson, Josephine Withers

Booktrek: The Next Frontier

First published in *Books by Artists: Spring Catalogue* (New York: Printed Matter, 1990), p. 2–4.

This short essay originally began with remarks about the bookstore Printed Matter and was succeeded by the text below, which expanded on my ideas about artists' books, where they had been, and where they might be heading. This second section, republished here, was reprinted in the catalogue for the *1st ArtistBook International* held in Paris in 1994, and later translated into French and published in *Nouvelle Revue d'Esthétique*, no. 2 (2008) as 'Booktrek: La Prochaine Frontière'. (How the TV series *Star Trek* inserted itself into the title I do not now recall.)



John Baldessari, *Choosing (A Game for Two Players): Green Beans* (Milan: Toselli, 1972)

The rediscovery of the book, and particularly the paperback, as a vehicle for art in the 1960s coincided not only with upheavals in the definition of art, but also socio-political upheavals. The evident importance and ubiquitousness of paperbacks as carriers of ideas at this time, whether in the form of texts by Mao or Marcuse visible in the street as physical accoutrements, or as components of domestic do-it-yourself pantheons of past and present thinkers and writers, flowed over into hopes for artists' publications.

Critics suggested that artists' books and pamphlets, and other art multiples, would be the means to bring art to a newly expanded audience, even to people waiting in line in supermarkets. (Could these publications really be more interesting than the *National Enquirer*?) There was also the assertion, chanted like a litany during this last decade by uncritical commentators, that artists' books would circumvent the gallery system. What seems to

have escaped the notice of such writers was that many of the pamphlets of the 1960s and early 1970s were published by galleries. Were the galleries trying to circumvent themselves? John Baldessari's observation that artists' books were a kind of cheap line from the dealers was only too true of many of these publications. But if they were relatively cheap to purchase, they were not so cheap to publish.

The prices of artists' publications did not often reflect their true unit costs, for the expenses of publishing were often subsidised, not only by dealers, but also by art publishers, art magazines, even foundations. Other pamphlets, perhaps the majority, were subsidised by the artists themselves, and the books that were sold were often sold at a loss. It must have seemed at the time as if large editions would in themselves automatically generate large audiences, but the bulk of the edition frequently remained in boxes in lofts or basements.

The fact that these pamphlets were generally sold in galleries and in art bookstores meant that the most likely audiences for artists' books were other artists and the regular art world groupies. So much for expanding the audience for art! (But it must be said that later on, especially after the establishment of Printed Matter as a distributor in New York in 1976, artists' books began to reach college libraries and public libraries, for example, more effectively.)

Why have artists' books not fulfilled their potential as a 'democratic' art form? If this term has meaning, then perhaps the answer is to be found in the filling in the sandwich, or what lies between the boards. In many artists' books the content requires that readers be acquainted with, if not who's who in the art world, then what's what in the gyrations of this system. Not so many books reach out to the concerns of people not involved with art.

Perhaps the idea that artists' books can be art has been part of the problem. Outside of straightforward artists' texts, the number of artists' books that can effectively transcend the status of documentation or of reproduction of pre-existing work is quite small. Of this small number only a few are something other than designers' books. What is left after this winnowing are a few items, some of which just might have achieved a synthesis of art with the form of the book.

It is possible that the search for art in artists' books – and the consequent slim pickings – while essential, misses the point about most artists' publications. Many sit much more comfortably in the genre 'book' than in the genre 'art', and can be evaluated simply as carriers of information rather than embodiments of art.

Perhaps the expectation of an expanded, new, audience was misplaced. Why should artists' books be any different from writers' books? Where can you find enough self-published poetry books to actually browse through, but in specialized literary bookstores, many of which are struggling to keep their lights burning?

More and more I am inclined to the view that artists' books are still a component of what scientists have designated as grey literature – pamphlets and reports that are difficult to identify, circulate on the periphery of the publishing world, contain arcane information, and are of interest to a limited number of people.

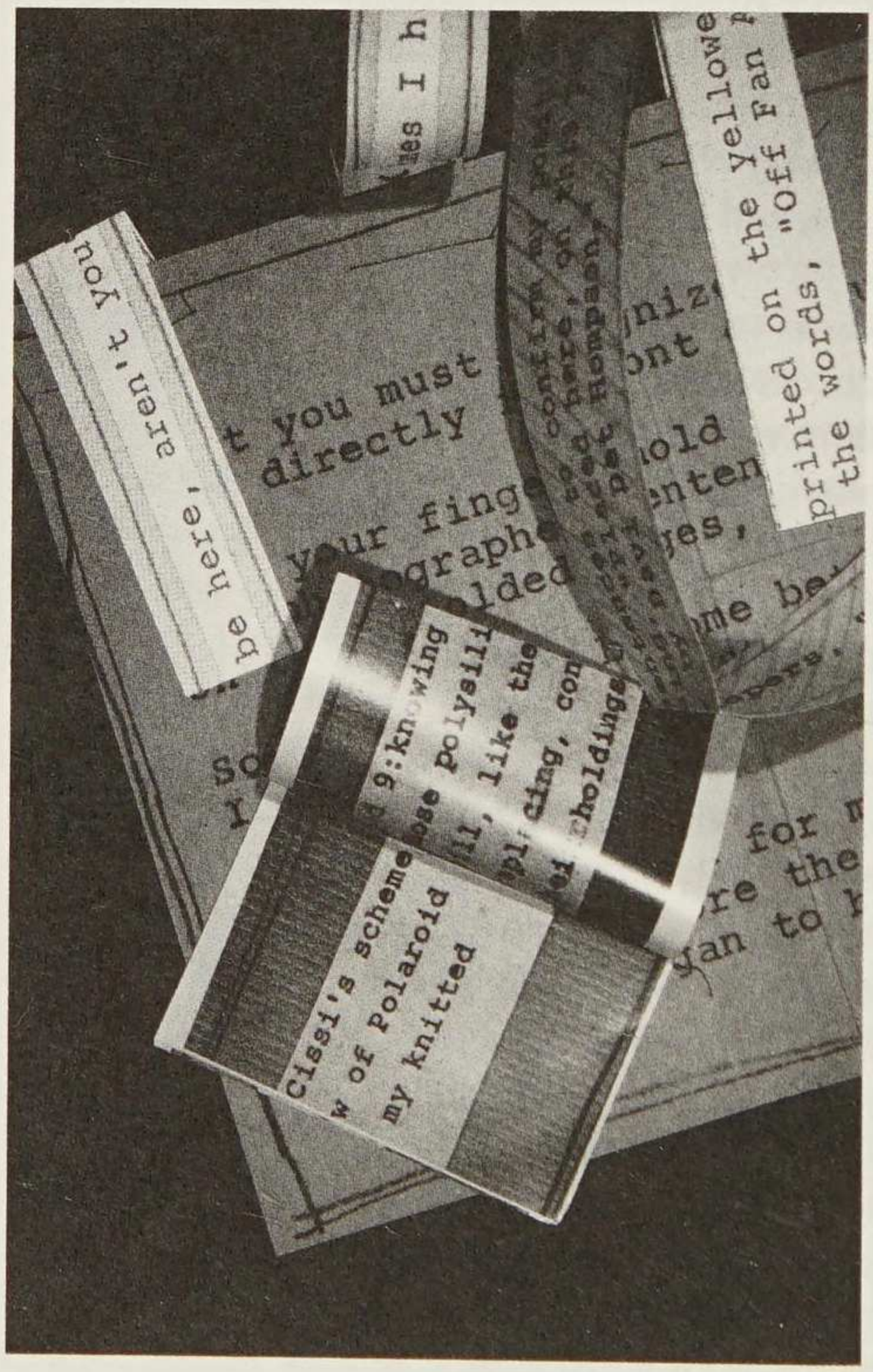
So if we throw out notions of art and outreach, what are we left with? An intriguing accumulation of ephemeral publications containing ideas, both verbal and visual, that make public in a limited way unhomogenized, idiosyncratic, even unpopular ideas that often serve to critique or leaven society, and challenge ways of thinking.

Thus one might, more usefully, merge artists' books with alternative, small press or underground literature, play down their art world connections or origins, and try to expose them more to students and other individuals with open minds, who are not concerned with collectability, but rather with the efficacy of ideas. Tempered in the heat of scrutiny by this group of readers, artists' books may finally emerge as tougher and more effective tools for change; open perceptual doors; and seriously engage new audiences.

Davi Det Hompson in Print

First published in *Davi Det Hompson* (New York: Bound & Unbound, 1991). Courtesy Barbara Moore.

I first met Davi Det Hompson through Martha Wilson at the Franklin Furnace Archive in March 1978, where he was exhibiting his books. I was immediately taken by his work, and we subsequently saw each other often. Whenever we met he always seemed to be hatching a new project and his enthusiasm for these new ventures was infectious. He also seemed to reflect continuously on the potential of the book form. I remember him telling me that he would sometimes sit with an open book in front of him and turn a page backwards and forwards for ages while he considered how to exploit the potential of this apparently straightforward act in his work. This essay was published in the catalogue for Barbara Moore's exhibition of Davi Det Hompson's work at Bound & Unbound in New York in 1991, five years before his untimely death.



Davi Det Hompson, *1(a,b)18* (Kansas City: Hompson, 1980)

Growing up in England at the time of Indian Independence I was more than usually aware of Indian and Pakistani names and places; in addition a British politician of Indian descent named R. Palme Dutt often had his name in the papers when I was a kid. Perhaps it is not so surprising, therefore, that, later on, when I first saw the name Davi Det Hompson – probably in the Ace Space Company anthologies of the early 1970s – I imagined its possessor to be Anglo-Indian. When I saw his piece in the 1972 *Fluxshoe* catalogue, which incorporated photos of him putting on his socks, this assumption seemed less likely. Even then it did not occur to me to play with this odd name, to cause the "D" and "t" of Det to migrate. Had I done so I would have discovered: DaviD e. tHompson – a much less Indian name.

What's in a name game? In this instance the oddity of the name exemplifies some of t/Hompson's concerns, notably visual language

and the transfiguration of the commonplace. These preoccupations are also evident, together with his addiction to printing, in the unassuming but memorable white booklets that he produced in Richmond, Virginia, in 1976 and 1977, and which were my own first introduction to works other than pageworks. (I eventually discovered that these deceptively plain pamphlets had been preceded by other books and by visual poetry, and was later to encounter subsequent publications and printings.)

It is curious that many visual artists in the Americas, Europe and further afield, who once made concrete and visual poetry – Dieter Roth is a good example – later expanded their practice to include multi-media activities and inter-media activities such as performance. It would appear that concrete poetry was one of the wedges into the world of the visual arts that assisted verbally-gifted visual artists in breaking open the mould of the artist as a producer of pictures, and in freeing themselves of the damning epithet 'literary'. The results are still with us; visual art is a more open or mongrel category now that the linguistic elements are more overt.

While Davi Det Hompson continues to explore many different media, including painting, installation and performance, his interest in printed art has never waned. Indeed, strategies for the placing of printed art in public spaces, from magazines to hoardings, are an on-going preoccupation. He has published broadsides, posters, postcards and pageworks, as well as numerous bookworks.

First impressions leave indelible traces, and I often come back to t/Hompson's curious white booklets. Their spare presentation and lack of typographic pyrotechnics are in tune with the paper products of Euro-American Conceptual art, and they also manifest a poor-art aesthetic. But these booklets also seem to me to be very (North) American in their plainness, a quality that is also apparent in their content. The phrases and sentences that are exhibited on each page are direct, as many Americans are direct in their speech and manner:

> 'Take as many pieces as you want.'
> 'May I have a glass of water with no ice, please?'
> 'Hey Sam!'

'I'm willing to stay here the night.'

Yet, isolated in the whiteness of the page, they sometimes appear bizarre:

'Eight is the most obvious answer.'

'Some of the bruises are covered by my collar.'

'First there was a hiss, then a sound like paper tearing.'

'Mine's wet.'

It may also be an American skill to interweave oddity and conformity.

These Richmond pamphlets can be seen in retrospect to have developed out of t/Hompson's earlier involvement with concrete and visual poetry. But the jump from artful visual poetry to life-like 'image-tellings' is considerable, and a singular achievement. In spite of their well-wrought language, these verbifacts sit very comfortably with artefacts. This has something to do with their simple presentation, whereby each sentence or paragraph becomes an isolated form, but also because each quotation embodies a dynamism that provokes mental pictures.

As novelists and other tale tellers have found, the book form is a peculiarly efficient and flexible vehicle for the recounting of durational occurrences, whether territorial travels or the motions of the mind. But it is often overlooked that novelists basically write one long line – with periods and pauses – that is chopped into sausage-like segments to fit the successive pages of a book. Davi Det Hompson's Richmond booklets, by confining each verbal event to a single frame, tend instead to mimic the art book, which presents a painting per page. In both cases, each time a page is turned, a new world is revealed for the eye and mind to explore. One could say that t/Hompson's works demonstrate a more acute awareness of the properties of the book form than most writers.

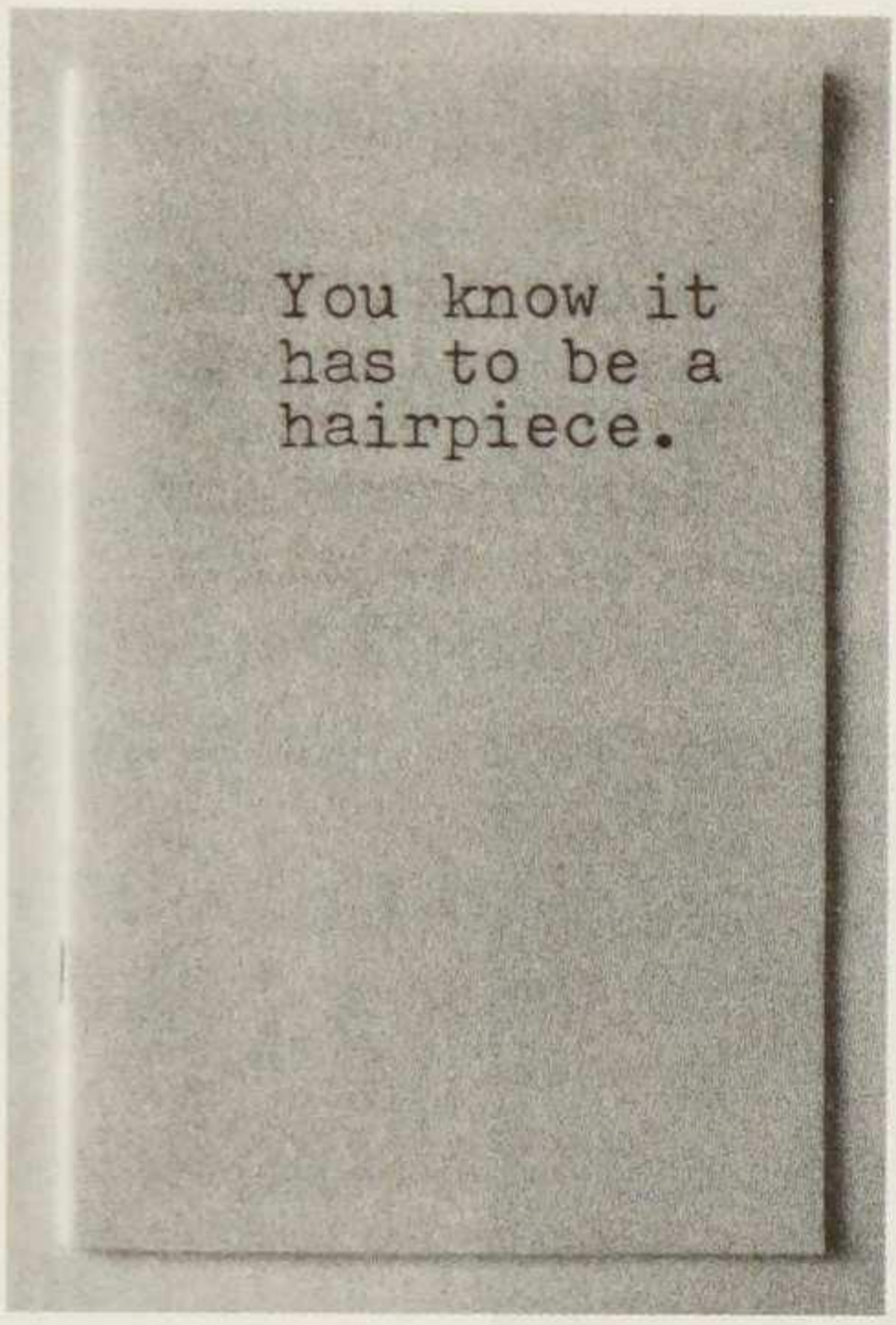
In 1980 t/Hompson published several more booklets, this time in Kansas City, Missouri. These books accelerate away from the presentation of the Richmond books while retaining a similar content. Although they are largely comprised of typewritten sentences, the camera has renounced its anonymity and interposed itself conspicuously between the typing and the printing, with the result that

sentences have been blown up until they can no longer fit on either a page or a double spread. t/Hompson at first seems to be adopting the novelist's approach to the page, but instead of allowing his words to shuffle their spacing and break in conventional places, as well-behaved literary texts are wont to do, he simply cuts these phrases into page widths without respect for meaning or elementary reading etiquette. Furthermore, the segments that comprise the booklet appear to have been collated randomly.

One of the results of t/Hompson's new procedure is to radically subvert the passive literary use of the book form, since in order to read the text one is obliged to take the book apart. Another result is to leave fragments of words strewn across pages, their legibility diminished further by photographic enlargement, so that they veer towards becoming purely visual entities, and thereby demonstrate a ragged affinity with his earlier concrete poetry. But if the spectator, or rather, the engaged reader, persists, they will find that the content is still both plain and strange:

> 'Yes. They'll have a color television.'
> 'Perhaps the window glass should hum.'

Davi Det Hompson holds up a mirror to America, and makes us aware of the bumps under the blanket of the ordinary.

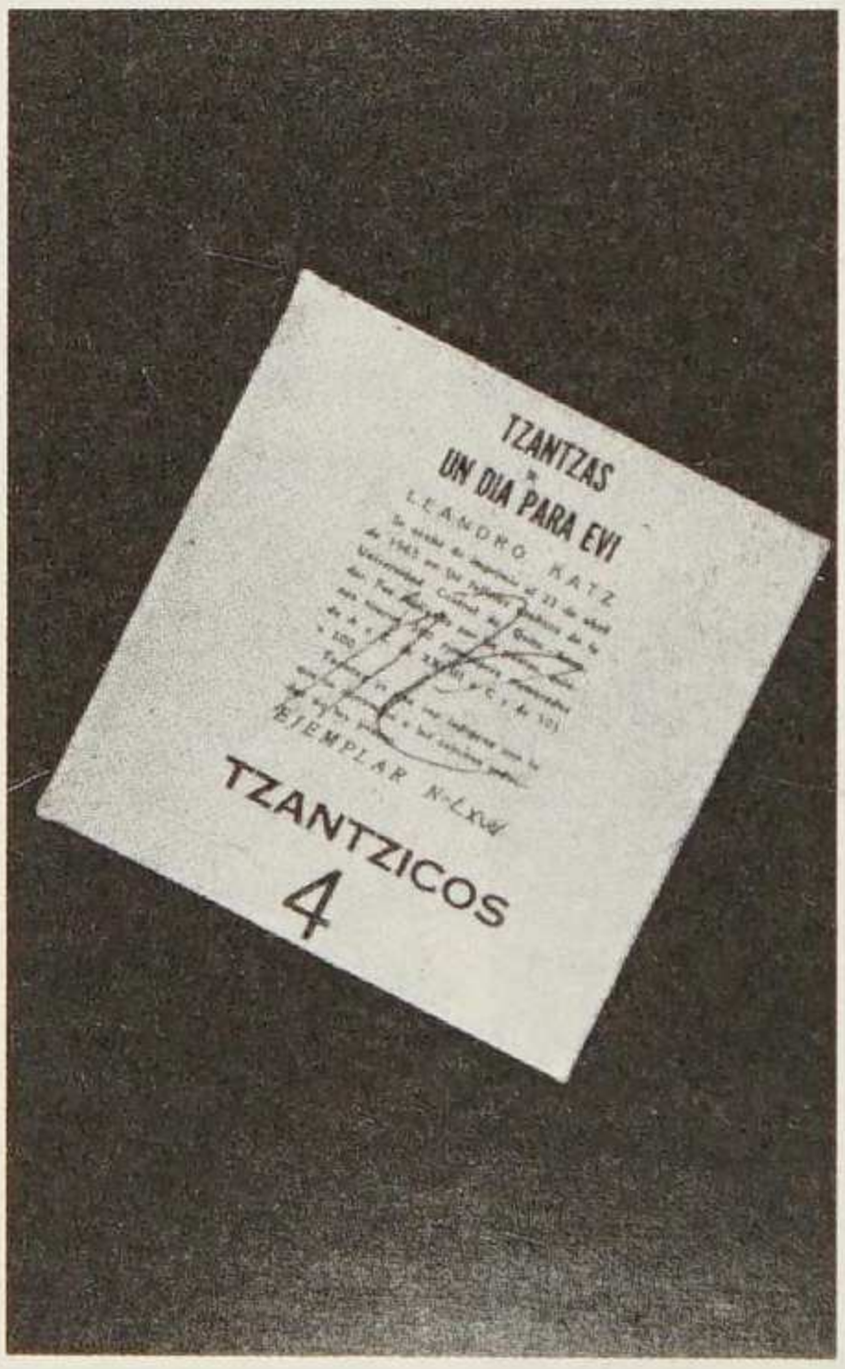


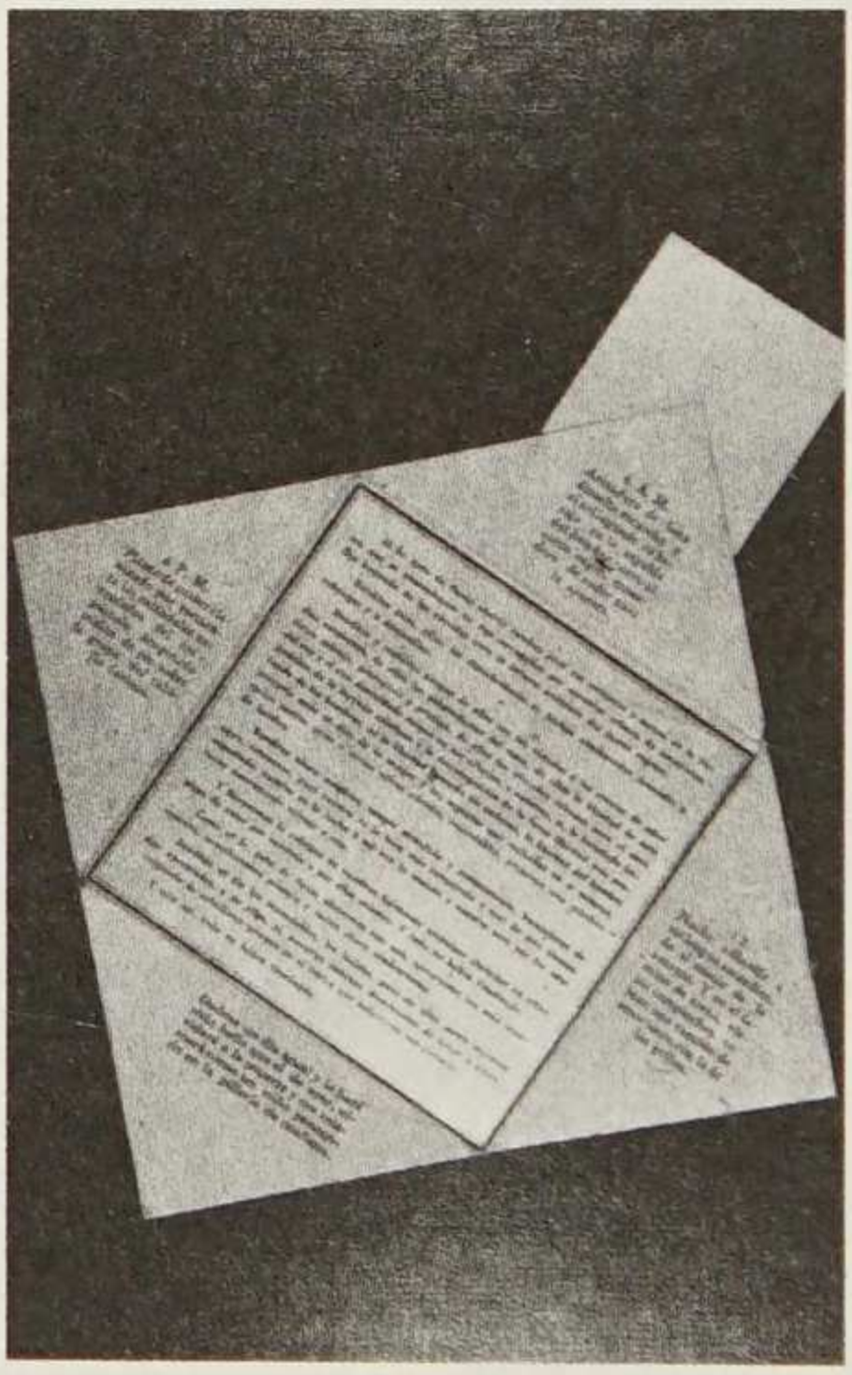
Davi Det Hompson, *You Know it Has to be a Hairpiece* (Richmond, VA: Hompson, 1977)

Twentysix Gasoline Stations that Shook the World: The Rise and Fall of Cheap Booklets as Art

First published in 1993 as 'Twentysix gasoline stations that shook the world: the rise and fall of cheap booklets as art', in *Art Libraries Journal*, vol. 18, no. 1, p. 4–13.

The title of this essay requires explication. In August 1991 I was in Moscow for the first time, attending an international library conference. Three days after I arrived I witnessed the three-day coup against Mikhail Gorbachev. This experience was moving and unforgettable. Subsequently I was asked to discuss artists' books in April 1992 in Oxford at an international gathering of art librarians, several of whom had been in Moscow. In seeking a title, Ed Ruscha's revolutionary book became conflated with John Reed's book about the 1917 Russian Revolution *Ten Days That Shook the World*.





Leandro Katz, *Tzantzas: un dia para evi* (Quito: Talleres Gráficos, 1962)

Artists' Books, Booklets and Bookworks

The booklet *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* by Edward Ruscha, dated 1962, which was published in 1963, marks a shift in the attitude of artists towards the book. But while Ed Ruscha's booklet fully embodied the characteristics of what would later be called 'artists' books', and later still 'bookworks', he was not the only artist moving in this direction.

But before I look harder at this period, let me attempt to clarify the language pertaining to this topic. Until about 1970 the term 'artists' books' was used as a synonym for, or a translation of, the phrase 'livres d'artistes', or more precisely 'livres de luxe', luxury editions. It was frequently understood to mean books containing pre-existing literary texts that had been illustrated or embellished by artists. These expensive books were published in signed and numbered limited

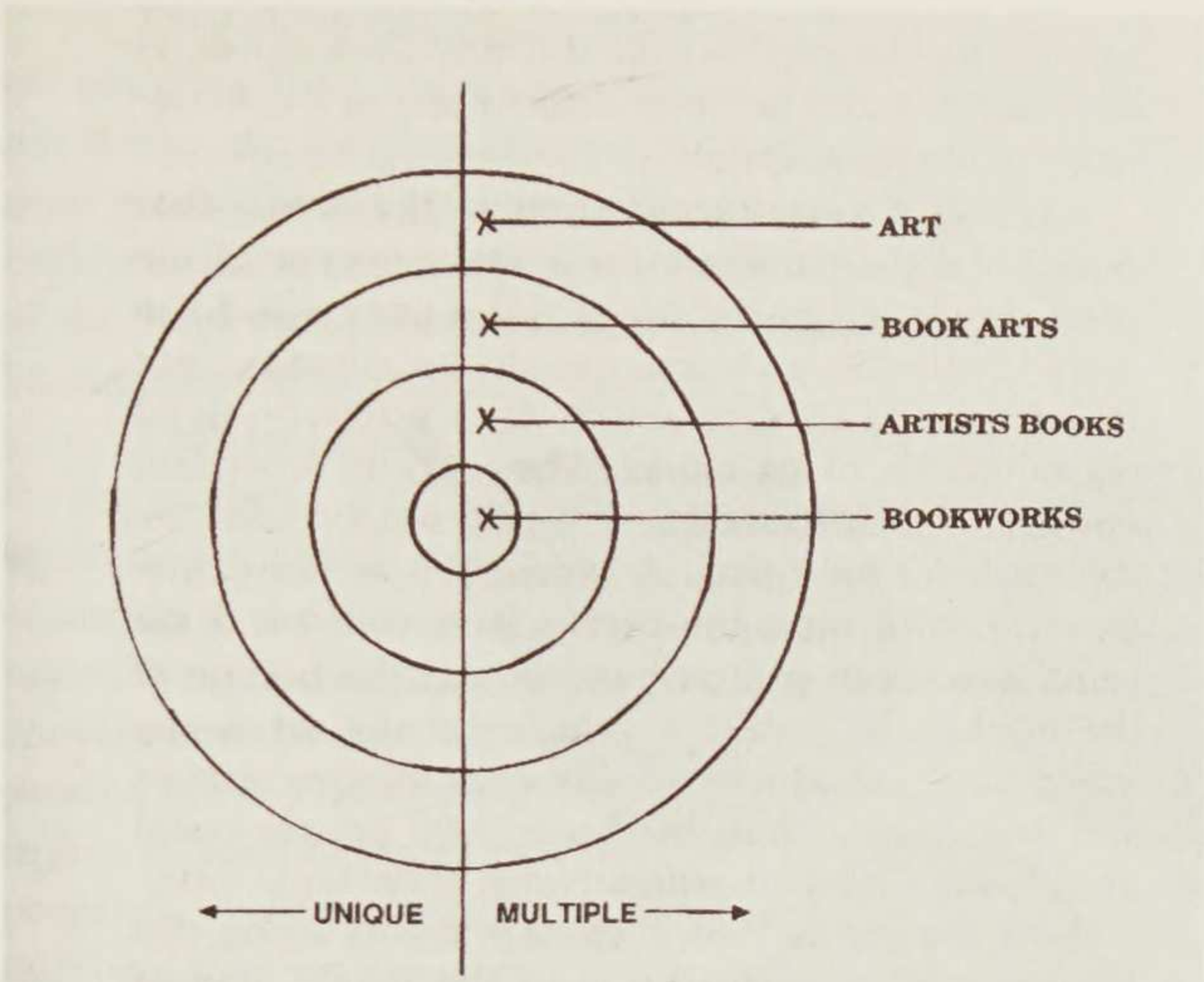
editions. The first time the term 'artists' books' was used to include modest, cheap, unlimited, booklets conceived by artists, was probably on the occasion of the exhibition *Artists Books* at Moore College of Art in Philadelphia in 1973. A catalogue, with a witty cover by Harry Anderson, and with the same title as the exhibition, was published to accompany it. This catalogue included a text by John Perrault, in which he discussed 'books as art', by which he meant books that 'are practical and democratic' and which 'do not cost as much as prints'. Books that 'are portable, personal, and, if need be, disposable'.[1]

Although the exhibition and the catalogue included many other types of books with which artists had been involved, including luxury editions, the phrase 'artists' books' took hold – for about 15 years – as a description of those booklets by artists that were published cheaply in 'unlimited' or 'open' editions.

There was another exhibition, held a few months earlier, in 1972, that indirectly affected the terminology of this subject; it was entitled *Book as Artwork 1960/1972*. The exhibition largely comprised inexpensive booklets and was held at the Nigel Greenwood gallery in London. The concept, the title and virtually the whole exhibit, was conceived by the Italian art critic Germano Celant, who had published his ideas earlier as 'Book as Artwork 1960/1970' in the Italian magazine *Data* in 1971.[2]

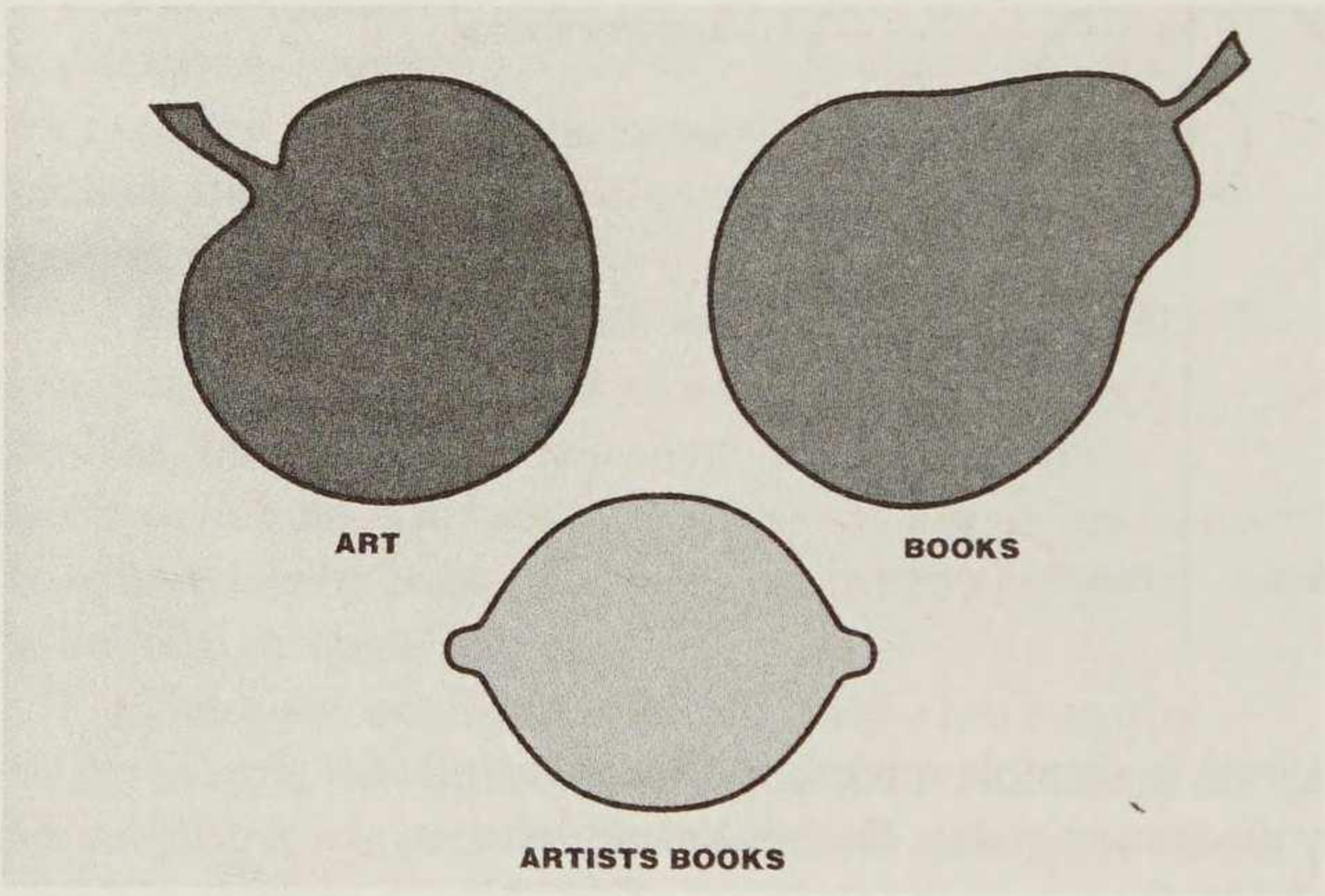
This exhibition was one of the triggers for another exhibition, which was designed to be toured in West Germany by the British Council. Although in 1973 it was initially titled *Artist's Book Art Exhibition*, by the time it opened in 1975, Martin Attwood, the organizer, had named it *Artists' Bookworks*. Thus was the word 'bookwork' born – a product of the period that also gave us 'earthworks'.[3]

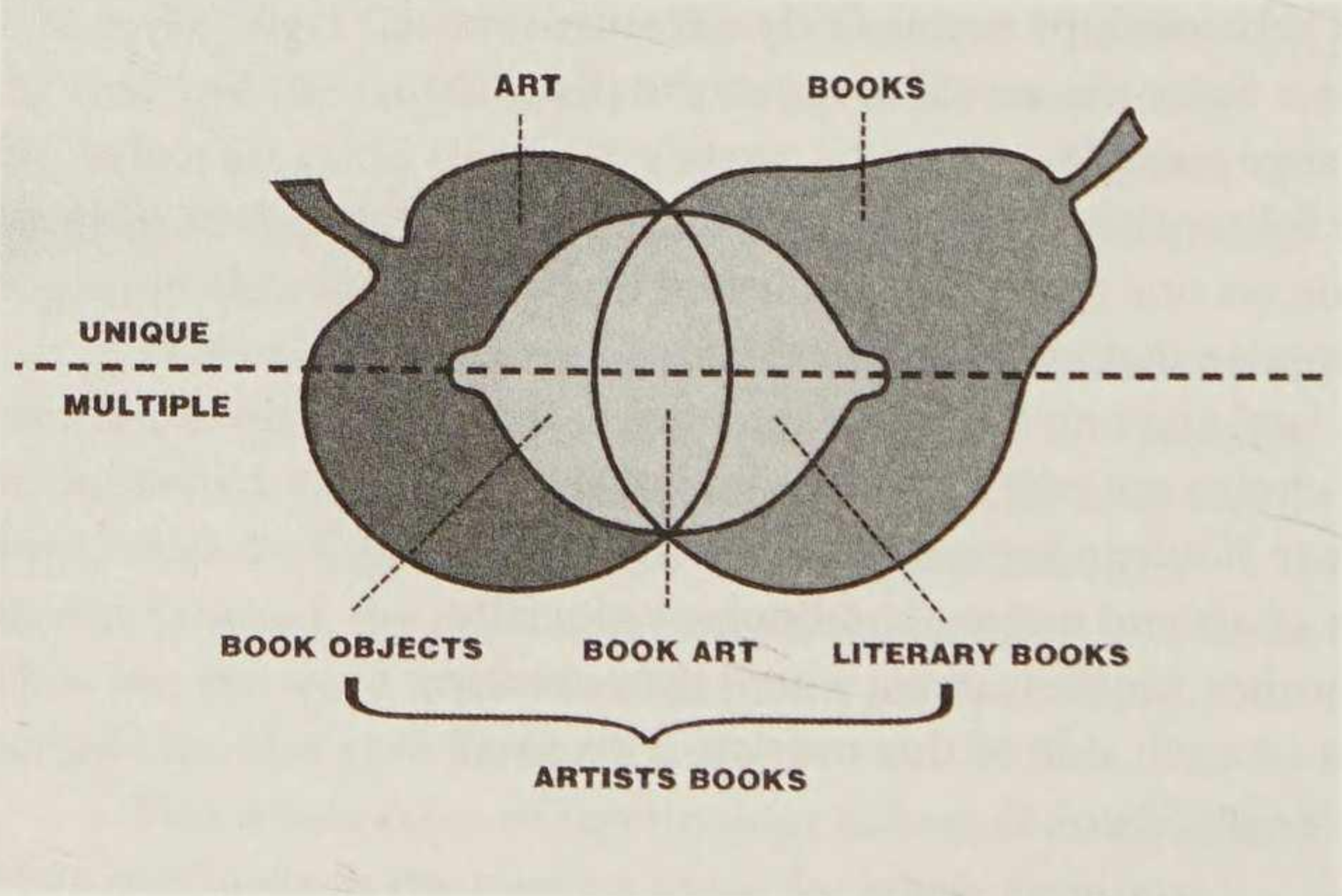
This whole topic of terminology is further complicated when one looks at the choices made for labels denoting this phenomenon in French, German and other languages. However, let me present you with some diagrams using English terminology, which will, I hope, serve to clarify what I mean, and what others might agree about, in this field.



My first diagram is a simple representation of the place of the focus of my discussion today, the bookwork –that is, the work of art in book form – in the universe of art:this representation of relationships seems fairly uncontroversial to me, and does not force the actual usage of the (English) language into strange moulds.

But let me follow this simple diagram with another, which is a variation on one that I first published in *Artforum* in 1982. Let us suppose that we have two overlapping circles, one representing 'art' and one representing 'books'. If the outlines of these circles are taken as delimiters of their subjects, we can use Boolean logic to clarify many aspects of the interrelations of art and artists, and books, especially if we also draw another, smaller, circle where they overlap, to include an area on each side of this overlap. This small circle represents 'artists' books'.


ART
BOOKS
ARTISTS BOOKS


ART
BOOKS
UNIQUE
MULTIPLE
BOOK OBJECTS
BOOK ART
LITERARY BOOKS
ARTISTS BOOKS

Everything falls into place. For example: works that are not (visual) art, are simply 'literary books'. Works that are not books, are simply sculptural 'book objects'; for example, mute marble books on tombstones. So 'artists' books' embraces these two categories, as well as the core concept of the 'bookwork', the artwork that is dependent upon the book structure to articulate its content.[4]

I will make only one other comment on this diagram for the moment. It is divided horizontally into 'unique' works and 'multiple' works. I will be directing most of my attention to the multiple bookwork, since unique works normally embody a denial of the potential replicability of content and the inherent communicative value of the printed book. The whole point of the Gutenberg revolution in this millennium was that the book, and therefore its contents, could be multiplied more exactly and in far greater numbers than was possible by manual repetition. Consequently, the contents of books can be shared as widely as the printing press can produce duplicates of the original. There is thus far less excuse for illiteracy in our age when inexpensive books are widely available. (Similarly the meaning and purpose of libraries was totally changed as a result of Gutenberg's advance.)

As you have heard, multiple or open-edition artists' books have been called a 'democratic' medium; there is some truth in this. Infinitely replicable books by artists need no longer be imprisoned under glass or in vaults in libraries and museums, and suffer from restricted access; they can be bought for a song, and be so ubiquitous that single copies can be worn out with pleasurable use and then replaced with another copy. By comparison with bookworks, books as art in limited editions can be seen for what they sometimes are: intentionally scarce commodities that deny the potential of the printing process, and serve to elicit high prices from individual and institutional collectors.

Ed Ruscha

Back to Ed Ruscha. Edward Ruscha was born in Omaha, Nebraska, in America, in 1937, and has lived in California since 1956.[5] His first booklet, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, was published in April 1963.[6] I am still surprised that it leapt

into the public domain as an almost fully formed multiple bookwork, with, as far as I can see, no obvious precedents in the art world. The book was the embodiment of a particular idea. In fact, as the artist says: 'When I was in Oklahoma I got a brainstorm in the middle of the night to do this little book called *Twentysix Gasoline Stations.* I knew the title, I knew that it would be photographs of twenty-six gasoline stations.'[7]

Although Ed Ruscha has discussed *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* several times in print, he has still not sufficiently illuminated its origins or meaning for me. For example, in one interview he said that 'this book had an inexplicable thing I was looking for, and that was a kind of a "Huh?" That's what I've always worked around.'[8] It is still very puzzling. At first glance it seems to be a collection of images of stopping places on a drive along the old Route 66 (now largely subsumed by Route 40), West to East, from Los Angeles halfway across the USA to Oklahoma City, where Ruscha grew up. But five of the twenty-six photographs are not in sequential order! Perhaps this is explained by Ruscha's statement that 'the pictures have to be in the correct sequence, one without a mood taking over'.[9] But he also says that he 'changed the format about 50 times at the printer's'.[10] These are just two possible explanations for the jumps in the locations. The images also seem to be laid out arbitrarily: one to a page or two to a page, large or small. There seems to be no system to their placement – or to their sequencing: left, right, blank, left *and* right, etc. The photographs are, as Ruscha said, deliberately 'not "arty" in any sense of the word … they are technical data like industrial photography. To me they are nothing more than snapshots.'[11] One might see such photos illustrating a real-estate brochure, in which their artlessness and their layout would be of little consequence, and, indeed, Ruscha's 12th such booklet, published in 1970, was entitled *Real Estate Opportunities*.

Twentysix Gasoline Stations is one of a number of artists' books that simply bring together related phenomena or things. Such catalogues or lists virtually became a subgenre of Conceptual art, and books were eminently suited to recording them, as evidenced also by the work of Sol LeWitt, Christian Boltanski, and Maurizio Nannucci. Another minor aspect of this booklet is its rendering of words in space – not

exactly the Futurists' 'words at liberty', but words on the page that also lie beyond this plane in the fictive space of the photograph.[12]

Twentysix Gasoline Stations is the work that established the paradigm for a new concept of the cheap multiple booklet as art. (The price was $3 in 1964.[13]) It is an artwork, not documentation, not theory, not a literary work. It is not a book of reproductions of artworks. The work is dependent upon the book structure; it would not be effective flattened out on a wall. A work such as this comes into existence once the presses have rolled and the pages have been gathered and bound. Each copy of the booklet is as valid a vehicle for the art as any other. The first printing of *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* was 400 copies, thus, in theory, 400 people could possess and experience this artwork at the same time.

Even as early as 1965 Ruscha was also saying that he was 'not in sympathy with the whole area of hand-printed publications ... ' And that he was 'not trying to create a precious limited edition book, but a mass-produced product of high order. All my books are identical. They have none of the nuances of the handmade and crafted limited edition book.'[14]

I said earlier that *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* appeared 'as an almost fully formed multiple bookwork'. One thing had yet to click into place. Ed Ruscha *numbered* each of the 400 copies of the first printing! Here was the last hangover of the tradition of the luxury edition. (He did, in fact, also sign the first 50 copies of his second book, *Various Small Fires and Milk*.) But by 1965 he had come to realise that numbering books was, in his words, a 'mistake'.[15] The second printings of the first two books were neither numbered, nor signed, nor were any copies of any of his multiple publications after 1964. Indeed the fact that there were second and third printings of these and other of his books validates the idea that such artworks can exist in open editions and that they can be reprinted as long as there is a demand for them. The second printing of *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* amounted to 500 copies, the third printing to 3,000 copies. Each of the total of 3,900 copies functions as an equally valid transmitter of the art experience.[16] Except for that special relationship that exists between a reader/viewer and the particular book that is in their hands at a specific moment – regardless of its

lack of singularity – one could say that the aura of the artwork has in this instance been dissolved. If the book is dropped in the soup, the reader can go down to the book-store and buy an exact replacement.

Although the pictorial narrative of *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* is uninflected, and the page layouts almost arbitrary, Ruscha's next book, *Various Small Fires and Milk* of 1964, is rather different while looking similar in general appearance. For a start, each image is the same size and is always on the right. And the full title of the book, found only on the title page, alerts one to the fact that although all the images would seem to be of small fires, the last one (not tinted yellow like the others) is of a glass of milk. Ruscha has discovered a surreal way to conclude a book – change the subject. He also does this with *Nine Swimming Pools and a Broken Glass.* (This trick or trait did not go unnoticed by his audience, for there is a fake 'Ruscha' of 1971 entitled *Six Hands and a Cheese Sandwich*! Once again the title accurately described the sequence of images.) The next year, 1965, Ruscha published his third book, *Some Los Angeles Apartments,* and reverted to a layout as complicated as the first.

Ruscha published one or two booklets each year from 1963 to 1972, the later titles in first printings of 2,000 to 4,000 copies. A total of 17 books appeared in this decade. (And only two since, in 1978 and 1980.)

Three of the most prolific book artists to work with multiple, open editions, have been Sol LeWitt, Lawrence Weiner, and Peter Downsbrough. But for several years, the most conspicuous body of work in this new medium of paperback art was by Ed Ruscha. By the end of 1966, for example, when Ruscha had already published four books, Sol LeWitt had produced only one 16-page booklet *Serial Project #1 1966,* as part of the magazine *Aspen;* Lawrence Weiner's first book *Statements* (1968) was nearly two years away; and Peter Downsbrough's first book, *Notes on Location* (1972) was five or more years away. But although Ruscha's achievement is exceptional – creating with his first booklet an exemplary model of multiple art in bookform, and following this up with a succession of equally fully formed bookworks – it is not quite as isolated as it might appear. As with any apparent breakthrough the reality is usually less clear and precise.

The 1950s

Artists' books grew out of a fertile mulch of publishing activity that was both extensive and international. Rather than digress and try to survey the state of artists' publications – both distinct from, and including, artists' books – in the 1950s and 1960s, and on up until the 1980s, I will, instead, recommend an excellent illustrated source entitled *'Fröhliche Wissenschaft': Das Archiv Sohm* which was published in 1986 by the Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart. It is a beautifully produced book with many illustrations in black and white and colour, and represents the extent of the Archiv Sohm, the superb collection of artists' publications put together by the perspicacious dentist from Markgroningen, Germany, Hanns Sohm. There are many themes that could be pursued through this volume, but it can, for our purposes, be used to document the printed environment from which many bookworks by artists would subsequently emerge.[17]

One artist, in particular, left his mark in the 1950s, and that is Bruno Munari, who was born in Milan, Italy, in 1907, and who is also a designer. He was an early contributor both to the exploitation of the formal properties of the book, and indirectly to the advancement of the cheap bookwork. He made inventive children's books in the 1940s, which often involved the opening of flaps, or even small booklets fixed to the page, as in *Mai Contenti* of 1945, the first of the series 'I Libri Munari'. He then began in 1949 to experiment with unique books and small editions that were self-contained artworks in book form. He paid particular attention to the activity of page turning by leading threads through several pages of a book, by cutting pages, by die-cutting or tearing holes in pages, and by changing the material and colour of pages. These works embodied abstract, kinetic events dependent upon the book form. Munari called them 'libri illeggibili', unreadable books. (He is reported to 'distrust … the written word'!)[18]

Munari's involvement with the multiple bookwork seems to have begun much later, in the 1960s, as a result of the enterprising support of experiments by artists and designers with ink and paper by Pieter Brattinga of the Dutch company Steendrukkerij de Jong. From 1954 until the mid-1970s de Jong published interesting work by designers

and by artists, including Dieter Roth and Les Levine, in their Quadrat Prints series. Munari was also invited to participate, and in 1964 produced a book in the square format characteristic of the series, but made up of variations of red and white pages cut in different ways. The Quadrat Prints were produced as a kind of promotion by de Jong; they were available in editions of 2,000, 'free of charge from the publisher while supplies last[ed]', and they circulated internationally. The next book by Munari to appear in a substantial edition, *Libro Illeggibile N.Y.I*, was published by The Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1967, as one of an occasional series of visual books.

Even though most of Munari's bookworks were unique or in very small editions, his work was widely known through exhibitions and magazines, and was influential. Ray Johnson's books of the 1950s drew upon Munari's example, as, I would guess, did Di(e)ter Rot(h)'s books from 1954 onwards, the first of which was the significantly titled *Children's Book*. The 1950s books by Ray Johnson and Dieter Roth were also either unique or published in fairly small editions.

Another archaeological fragment of the prehistory of bookworks is *Image par Images*, an isolated example of a multiple artist's flipbook that would have melted inconspicuously into the books of the 1970s or 1980s. It appeared in 1955 and was the work of Robert Breer, a kinetic artist and a filmmaker.

The 1960s

In 1985, an essay of mine entitled 'Some Contemporary Artists and their Books' was published in *Artists' Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook*, edited by Joan Lyons. In this essay I tried to show a development of the idea of the multiple artwork in book form by tracing the books of artists who had 'demonstrated a commitment to the medium', or who had 'been prolific book makers', or who had 'made books which were widely distributed and furthered the development of book art'.[19] My aim was to write a fairly traditional linear history of significant artists passing the torch of progress or achievement from one to another, in order to give the artists' book or bookwork a solid respectable ancestry, in parallel with accounts of recent art history. My

criteria, noted above, actually served to produce a history in which the principal players were 12 white men, of whom ten came from either America or from Britain. The 12 were: Ed Ruscha, Dieter Roth, Eduardo Paolozzi, Andy Warhol, Sol LeWitt, Lawrence Weiner, Richard Long, Daniel Buren, John Baldessari, Davi Det Hompson, Telfer Stokes and Kevin Osborn. Despite my best efforts I was not able to find women artists whose work fitted my criteria.

At this distance I can see that if your criteria render results that do not match up with your intentions, then you re-examine your criteria. For example, there is a prolific woman book artist, Warja (Honegger-)Lavater, who made a couple of children's books in 1949 and 1951, before embarking in 1962 on a series of 'folded stories', accordion books, that now number over 20. While these folded stories were also, to my mind, children's books, it is arguable that as her work has developed it is no longer just for children. Perhaps Warja Lavater's work should be considered in a history of the bookwork?[20]

My essay about the books of 12 white men also began with *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* as the earliest example of an artist's multiple bookwork. Subsequently, finding it difficult to believe that Ruscha's booklet was an isolated achievement, I began to look hard to find other artists working around the time it appeared. My preliminary investigations have begun to bear fruit, since I have already discovered two more artists who published several books in the early 1960s, whose example will serve to broaden the origins of the multiple bookwork. There is a certain irony, however, in the fact that they are both men and that, had I been fully aware of their work, they could have been included in my 1985 essay. One is Latin American, the other is Nordic. While neither artist demonstrates the same unity of performance or direction as Ruscha, each is a very interesting practitioner, and each serves to illustrate a different route into this new territory of bookworks, as well as throwing a light on the metamorphosis of the relationship between the artist and the book.

Leandro Katz was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1938. He was later self-exiled and travelled extensively in Latin America with a backpack before coming to stay in New York. He began his career as a writer and poet, but has since become a visual artist and filmmaker.[21] His first book, *Puerto*

Verano was published in 1960 in Buenos Aires, as was his second book *Urnas/Metal* of 1961. Both of these books are, to my mind, still literary. With *Uampungo*, the second of four books produced in 1961, which was published by a collective in the mining town of Tupiza in the Bolivian Andes, I think that we can see the beginnings of a more visual aesthetic. The cover is very consciously designed, the first opening convincingly unites the visual and verbal, and the texts in the booklet are set in different faces and arranged unconventionally. The third booklet, *Las esdrújulas*, a more conventionally illustrated work, was published in Lima, Peru, in an edition of 500; the text involves a kind of theatrical construction. But *oooo*, his fourth 1961 book, of haiku-like moon poems, which was published in Iquitos, Peru, in the Amazon jungle, in an edition of 1,000, is more nearly an example of an integrated visual/verbal booklet.
Its form is also rather unusual: a tiny accordion book about four centimetres high, and 18 centimetres long, with what appears to be a piece of a newspaper about a peace demonstration in London pasted on one page.

In 1962 Leandro Katz published *Tzantzas* in Quito, Ecuador, in an edition of 300. This book, if we can call it such, is an even greater departure from his early books. It is a single square sheet of red card, with the corners folded in to make a smaller square. Another small square seal bearing the image of a shrunken head is fixed over the folded corners. The inner form articulates the text, a love poem – rather like a children's folded paper game.

After publishing seven books in three years Leandro Katz did not publish another until 1968. Today he has at least 15 titles to his credit, including *Self Hipnosis* (sic) of 1975, which includes an almost mesmerizing repeated image that changes subtly, together with a text and quotations relating to Situationism. But for the purposes of this discussion I wanted to focus on and document his shift from a literary conception of the book to a visual one between the years 1960 and 1962, the year before *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* was published.

Åke Hodell was born in Stockholm in 1919 and his book odyssey illustrates a route into multiple bookworks that differs from that of Leandro Katz, which came more out of literature. Hodell was involved with concrete poetry,

visual poetry, sound poetry and electronic music, as well as graphic art.[22] These origins typify those of several other eventual book makers, for example: Dieter Roth, Davi Det Hompson, Ian Hamilton Finlay, Maurizio Nannucci and Emmett Williams.

Hodell spent two years in hospital after a wartime plane crash, and his first published books, of poetry – *Flyende Pilot* (Escaping Pilot) of 1953, and *Ikaros Död* (Dead Icarus) of 1962 – allude to this crucial experience. Then in the same year that *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* appeared – 1963 – Hodell published *igevär,* a visual book of 52 pages, in an edition of 500 copies. This work is a good example of concrete poetry dependent on the book form. The first 12 pages of text carry the repeated first vowel of 'igevär', the last 34 pages carry the repeated last vowel of 'igevär', while one page near the middle records the rapid shift from first vowel to last. This is a work that was also performed as sound poetry, the reason being that the Swedish word 'igevär', meaning 'to arms', is rather like the English parade-ground word 'attention', i.e. aaaaaaateeeeeenshun! Hodell released a record of the text of *igevär* and of another book, *General Bussig* (General Kind!), in 1965.

In 1965 Åke Hodell published his fifth and sixth works: *Bruksanvisning för Symaskinen Singer Victoria* and *Orderbuch*. The former is a kind of readymade, in that it is a facsimile of a Singer sewing machine manual, while the latter has clear affinities with concrete and visual poetry and prefigures some of the books of lists or inventories published by artists close to Conceptual art that appeared in the next few years. The following year, 1966, Hodell published a book titled *CA 36715 (J)*, which is a number straight out of the previous book. However, this one consists of line after line of hand-writing without apparent meaning.

So here is another artist, this time from Sweden, who published seven books during the period 1962 to 1966, at least three of which fit the prescription for a bookwork, while Ed Ruscha published four bookworks. Hodell's next book, *Verner von Heidenstam, Nya Dikter*, from 1967, comes even closer to the bookwork – and packs a visual punch. It is another exact facsimile, this time of a slim book of verse by the earlier, jingoistic poet, Verner von Heidenstam, which the anti-militarist artist has defaced by splattering black ink

over each page – to good effect. In the same year he also published another bookwork, *Självbiografi*, which refers to his aerial exploits. At the present time Hodell has had at least 15 books published. Thus Åke Hodell and Leandro Katz are just two examples of other artists whose achievement can be woven into a more comprehensive account of the diverse origins of the cheap multiple bookwork.

As you might expect, there are artists who produced single books during this period, 1960–1966, who did not follow up with a body of subsequent works. For example, in New York, there was a brief flurry of publishing around Claes Oldenburg's Ray Gun activities in 1960, when several Ray Gun 'comics' and broadsides appeared by Oldenburg, Jim Dine, Red Grooms, and others, but this was not sustained. In the same year Bern Porter published Dick Higgins' *What Are Legends?*, a kind of remnant of the illustrated book tradition. (Dick Higgins went on to publish the Something Else Press books, but these were mostly artists' writings or literary works. One or two titles in his other series, Great Bear Pamphlets, approached the idea of the bookwork.) In 1962, in Flensburg-Glucksburg in Germany (near the border with Denmark), Jes Petersen published his witty, semi-transparent version of Manzoni's white book, *Piero Manzoni: Life and Work* (which also appeared in a second 'issue' in 1969). In the same year in London, Eduardo Paolozzi published *Metafisikal Translations,* a book somewhat in the illustrated book tradition, but which was followed in 1966 by *Kex*, a bookwork. In 1963 La Monte Young's booklet *Compositions 1961* was published by Fluxus, as was Daniel Spoerri and François Dufrêne's book *L'Optique moderne;* these were virtually the only bookworks to come out of Fluxus, in spite of the significance of printed art for this group. Then in 1964 Yoko Ono's first edition of *Grapefruit* was published simultaneously in Tokyo and New York. The following year, 1965, Ian Hamilton Finlay, while engaged with concrete poetry, began to use the bookform to articulate content, notably in *Ocean Stripe Series 3.* And in 1966 Fernanda Pivano and Ettore Sottsass published 800 copies of *East 128 Milano 1965 (14)* or *Sbaang,* a vivid publication, in colour, which seems to have originated as an unusual New Year's greeting.

While only some of these books possess all the features of a bookwork, together they illustrate and document the

growth and development of the new relationship between artist and book in the early 1960s, which led to the efflorescence of paperback art in the late 1960s, and in the 1970s.

The 1970s and 1980s

One of my reasons for being so concerned with establishing the origins of the bookwork, and with reiterating Ed Ruscha's intentions in publishing *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* – however obscure aspects of this work remain – is to re-emphasise the emergence of this movement towards the multiplication and distribution of art in the form of the cheap booklet. I find it difficult to underestimate the significance of the hijacking of the book form for the dissemination of primary art to a wide audience, or the move towards utilising existing systems, such as the postal service and bookshops, to distribute art in this form.

Furthermore, a clarification of the origins, intentions, and potential of the cheap bookwork may serve to counter what I see as the erosion of the gains of this movement, especially in the 1980s, as a market developed for new kinds of precious limited editions and anti-literate unique books.

I have tried to suggest that comparatively few bookworks, or artists' books, originated in the 1960s. The rapid growth of the cheap multiple was in the 1970s. Peter Downsbrough, for instance, produced 18 booklets in the 1970s; Sol LeWitt produced over 20 cheap books and booklets. Richard Long produced 14 artist's books; Lawrence Weiner produced 25 booklets. And these are just some of the more prolific artists who followed down the trail blazed by Ed Ruscha and others.[23]

The 1970s also brought forth the first exhibitions of 'artists' books', three of which I have already mentioned. Institutional collections were established, such as those at Art Metropole in Canada, and Franklin Furnace in the USA. Specialised distribution agencies were established, such as Printed Matter in the USA, Art Metropole again, and Other Books & So in the Netherlands (this subsequently became a collection). Catalogue essays and articles about the phenomenon – conspicuous by their absence in the 1960s – began to proliferate. The establishment of publishers and presses concerned with artists' books continued into the next decade,

as did the expansion of the double-edged phenomenon of public funding and subsidy for artists' books in Europe and North America.

But in the 1980s – in tandem with the rise of Reaganism and Thatcherism, and the interest in a microwaved expressionism in painting – exhibitions of artists' books, and catalogues and review articles, slowly began to give prominence to the strictly limited, numbered and signed editions of handcrafted books, and to unique book objects, which were priced up in the range of the collectable luxury edition. The term 'artists' book' which, despite all its inadequacies, had become virtually synonymous with cheap multiple open-edition books and bookworks for more than a decade, once more became elastic enough to include both luxury editions and fine press books.

There had, inevitably, always been a wide range of achievement in the area of multiple artists' books; while many offered inspiration, instruction or delight, there were many more that evidenced poor ideas poorly executed. The field also supported its own share of visual equivalents of vanity press publications. The lack of ostentation of most of these titles had allowed them to find their own inconspicuous level. However, with the rise of the hand-crafted book, and the over-indulgence of the cult of materials and eccentricity of form in the 1980s, more and more exhibitions revealed how much pretentious junk was being produced in the name of the sprawling 'book arts'. Similarly, a concern with the democratisation of art, and an implicit belief in literacy, had been sideswiped by the cult of the anti-literate, unopenable, fetishistic book object. The work of hundreds of artists without talent became hideously visible.

The dreams of many for accessible art were rudely shattered. But some ingredients of this dream had never been very realistic. The dream that artists' books could be sold cheaply at supermarket checkout points, for example, disregarded the arcane content of most existing artists' books. The dream that artists' books would circumvent the gallery system disregarded the fact that many of the most visible booklets had been published by dealers and art magazines – they were often totally dependent on the art world. And the dream that such books could be cheap may have had its reflection in the cover price, but was hardly

true of the initial outlay for offset printing and binding. Furthermore the sales of artists' books were usually modest and/or slow. The potential of reprinting a bookwork was only really invoked in the case of Ed Ruscha – or with Xerox books that were only ever produced on demand. Today, ironically, some of those originally cheap artists' books that did eventually sell out (or which appear to be scarce) are offered for sale on the second-hand market at inflated prices as rarities, since no reprints are forthcoming.

The 1990s

Where does this leave us in the 1990s? Books by artists are still conspicuous, but only tiny Xerox books are as cheap as a ticket to the movies, which is how Sol LeWitt characterised the cost of artists' books in the 1970s. This is due partly to a more accurate pricing of the costs of producing each book, and to a much greater use of colour printing with its inevitably higher costs, and partly due to artists' increased concern for the durability of their art in book form, and their attention to such things as paper quality and binding. Editions of artists' books are often smaller while still exceeding 100 copies, that modest rule-of-thumb criterion of serious commitment and the desire to communicate. Artists try such impure strategies as producing an edition of a bookwork in the hundreds, while individualising a small number of these, so that they can exploit the market for preciousness to help underwrite the virtually identical cheap versions.

Lurid and ostentatious unique and limited-edition hand-crafted books and fine press books, as well as mute book objects, are still very much in evidence today, but many artists have come through the 1970s and 1980s still adhering to the aesthetic of the multiple bookwork. A number of artists still produce very cheap, often small, booklets using photocopiers or the offset press, and frequently address particular concerns or causes. Other artists spend their time producing magazines rather than books. Indeed, if we were presently concerned with page art rather than book art, there are many inexpensive artists' magazines – *Photostatic* for example – that host this kind of work. And *Schism* is an unusual quasi-magazine that is, in effect, a series

of bookworks by the artist Janet Janet, formerly of San Francisco, now of Iowa City, USA. Many such artists use the presses to question the status quo – whether the state of the art world or the state itself – thereby participating in the long and honourable tradition of subversive publishing. Although only some of these artists make bookworks, the matrix of publications in which their works circulate could well provide the right environment to foster the production of a new body of cheap art in book form.[24]

British Coda

I would like to close with a consideration of the work of a British artist, Telfer Stokes, who, sometimes with Helen Douglas, has published over a dozen books, and who has been printing inexpensive bookworks for 20 years. His work seems to me to illustrate the potential of the book in the hands of the artist, as well as exemplifying the achievements and some of the changes that have occurred in the field during the last two decades.

Telfer Stokes was born in Cornwall, England, in 1940. His first paperback book *Passage* appeared in April 1972. He subsequently produced four more visual books in this format, then another five dealing with image and text in a slightly larger format. He now has two further titles in print, in a squarer format, that are concerned with the fusion of image and text, and with colour. Stokes' books take us all the way from the anti-photographic aesthetics of Ed Ruscha to a new amalgam of words and graphic and photographic images that may suggest what artists who produce luxury editions could do if they renounced the inherent elitism of the latter form of publication. Telfer Stokes' three principal formats and formal preoccupations fall almost exactly into decades.

Foolscrap, of 1973, is Stokes' second book. It is primarily a photographic book which presents us with short photographic sequences most of which operate on the page surface or play with the shallow space of the open book. The book is both puzzling and amusing. The illusion of seeds rooting and shooting through pages is achieved photographically. One watches a television in negative by looking at a page printed to represent a strip of negative film. Another strip,

this time of positive film, reveals an image within an image within an image. All these episodes are dependent on the page and the camera. *Foolscrap* is something like a book of visual short stories. (It was not until his fourth book, *Loophole*, of 1975, that Stokes successfully took on the task of articulating a book-length narrative, or what we might call a visual novel, dependent on the book form.) *Foolscrap* was printed at a local all-purpose printing company.

In his second series of five books Stokes wrestles with the problem of relating text to image. Three of the five books deal with the problem by keeping the two apart, images in one opening, text in another. But in the second of the series, *Young Masters and Misses*, of 1984, he brings them together in an apparently conventional manner – except that the text does not connect with the images. What is more, parts of the text do not connect with each other. Then, suddenly, one becomes aware of life-size everyday objects intruding on the page. Their effect is to transform the images already on the page into flat snapshots instead of surrogate windows, and to disrupt the text. (The illusionism of these same-size items parallels the illusions of live insects and flowers in the borders of medieval books of hours; thus *Young Masters and Misses* represents a new engagement with the history of the book.) The book was printed by museum-quality printers, and was run through the press a second time to add the interloping common objects.

In his latest book *Ajar*, which is the second of what may or may not be another series of books of similar format, and which was published in 1991, Telfer Stokes comes as close as he ever has to the 'livre d'artiste', since, for the first time, he utilises a literary text. But it seems to me that the work of his Russian poet collaborator, Vsevolod Nekrasov, is only incidental to the success of this book. In *Ajar*, a ravishing series of visual dishes, no less puzzling and beguiling than before, have been served up for our delectation, the verse providing the cutlery at this feast. This book is hardly subservient to the text, for the latter plays a role more like the guy ropes and pegs that keep a tent erect and fixed in one place. The book was printed by the artist on his own offset press, and required several passes through the press.

When they first appeared, *Foolscrap* sold for £1.50 ($6.00 in 1976), *Young Masters and Misses* was subsidised and

cost $10.00, and *Ajar* cost $30.00. While the economics have changed somewhat, the latest book is still more affordable than most other forms of art. Moreover, true to its origins in the concept of the book introduced by *Twentysix Gasoline Stations,* there is currently the possibility of a less expensive second printing in Russia, using cheaper materials. These three books, and the nine other titles that belong with them, represent just one of the possible evolutions of the multiple book as artwork in the hands of a committed artist. Although such books are now not quite so cheap, perhaps this exemplary trajectory demonstrates that there is still hope for the artists' bookwork as a democratic medium.

[1] John Perrault, 'Some thoughts on books as art', in *Artists Books* (Philadelphia: Moore College of Art, 1973, exhibition catalogue).

[2] Germano Celant, *Book as Artwork 1960/1972* (London: Nigel Greenwood Inc., Ltd., 1972). First published as 'Book as Artwork 1960/1970', in *Data*, vol. 1, no. 1 (September 1971), p. 35–49. Subsequently published in *VH 101*, no. 9 (Autumn 1972), and *Interfunktionen*, no. 11 (1974).

[3] *Artists' Bookworks* (London: British Council, 1975, exhibition catalogue). I mention the working title of this exhibition not only for historical detail, but also to make the dinosaurial point, that in 1973, dissatisfied by the term 'artists' books', I tried to foster the term 'book art', along the lines of body art, fibre art, mail art, performance art, video art, etc. 'Book art' seemed a less restrictive description, but 'artists' books' has proved very resilient, despite meaning many different things to many different people. In some contexts 'book art' can be overshadowed by the increasingly popular catch-all 'book arts'.

[4] Clive Phillpot, 'Books, Bookworks, Book Objects, Artists' Books', *Artforum*, vol. 20, no. 9 (May 1982), p. 77. This diagram has been reprinted in French and German publications: Anne Moeglin-Delcroix, *Livres d'Artistes* (Paris: Centre Pompidou/B.P.I. & Editions Herscher, 1985); Artur Brall, *Künstlerbücher, Artists' Books, Book as Art: Ausstellungen, Dokumentationen, Kataloge, Kritiken* (Frankfurt am Main: Kretschmer & Grossman, 1986).

[5] *The Works of Edward Ruscha* (New York: Hudson Hills Press & San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1987, exhibition catalogue).

[6] Although the title page includes the date '1962', the last page of the first edition states that the '400 copies were printed in April, 1963'.

[7] '" ... a kind of a Huh?" An Interview with Edward Ruscha by Willoughby Sharp', *Avalanche*, no. 7 (Winter/Spring 1973), p. 30.

[8] Ibid.

[9] 'Concerning Various Small Fires: Edward Ruscha Discusses his Perplexing Publications', *Artforum*, vol. 3, no. 5 (February 1965), p. 25.

[10] *Avalanche* (Winter/Spring 1973), p. 30.

[11] *Artforum* (February 1965), p. 25.

[12] I have explored this topic further in 'Letters in Space', in *Twenty Years of British Art from the Sackner Archive of Concrete and Visual Poetry* (Miami Beach: Bass Museum of Art, 1988, exhibition catalogue).

[13] See advertisement, 'Rejected ...' in *Artforum*, vol. 2, no. 9 (March 1964), p. 55.

[14] *Artforum* (February 1965), p. 25.

[15] Ibid.

[16] While this remark is true with respect to the content, it should be noted that there are small differences between the first and subsequent printings. For example, the second and third printings are bound differently from the first printing; their covers are not scored near the spine, and they are comprised of six signatures instead of three. In addition, publishing information is on the verso of the title page, whereas in the first printing it is on the last page of the book–together with the 'copy no.' handwritten in red.

[17] Thomas Kellein, *'Fröbliche Wissenschaft': Das Archiv Sohm* (Stuttgart: Staatsgalerie, 1986).

[18] *Bruno Munari* (Naples: Edizioni Morra, 1990), p. 72, footnote 15.

[19] Joan Lyons (ed.), *Artists' Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook* (Rochester, New York: Visual Studies Workshop, 1985), p. 96–132.

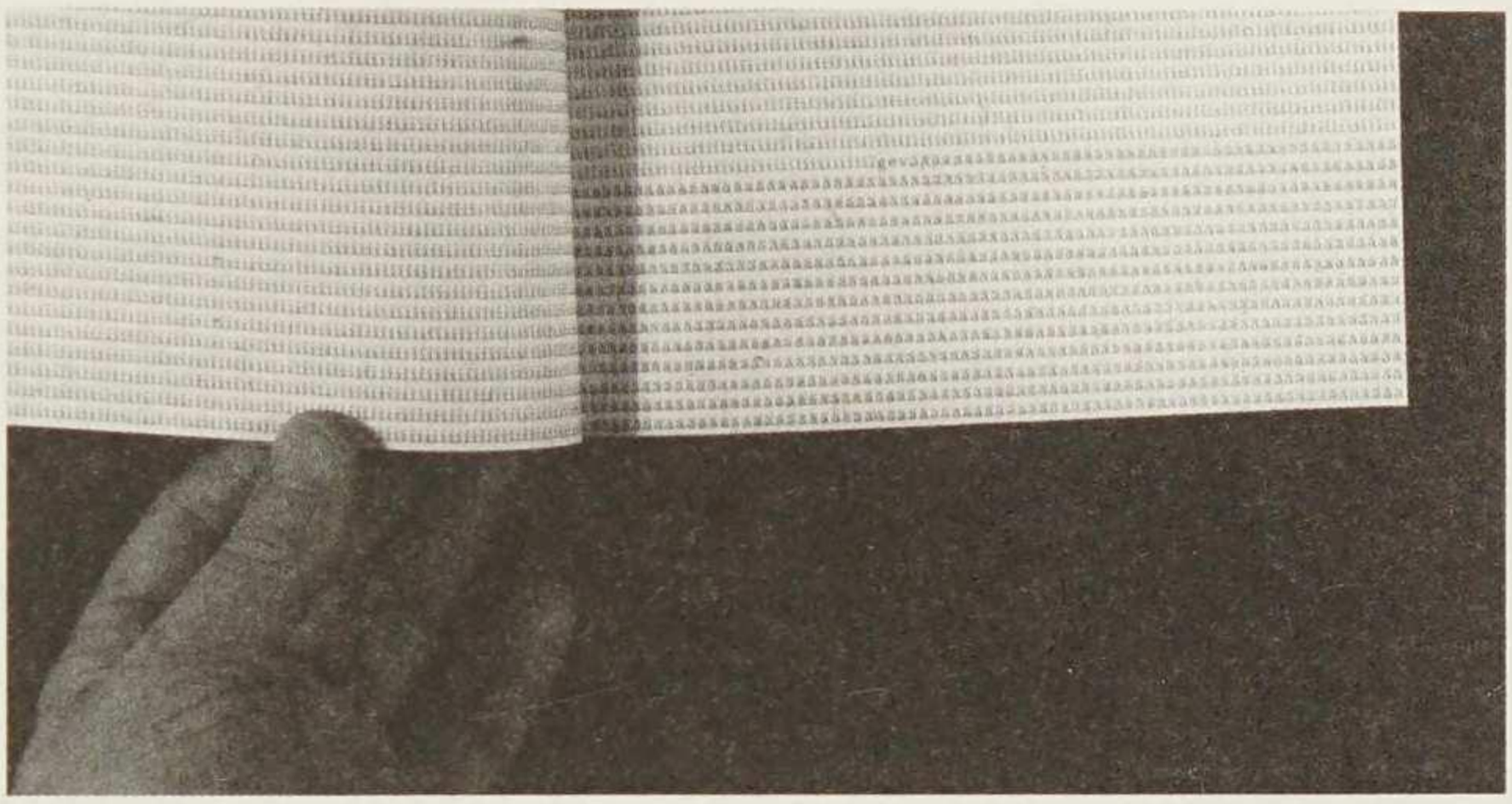
[20] At the end of my essay in *Artists' Books: A Critical Anthology*, I mentioned Janet Zweig as a committed book maker. At that time she had only two or three books published; now she has at least five. Other women whose work might feature in another survey, are Joan Lyons herself, Ida Applebroog, Adrian Piper and Athena Tacha. Clarissa Sligh is yet another artist whose bibliography is growing.

[21] *Leandro Katz: The Catherwood Project* (Syracuse: Robert B. Menschel Photography Gallery, Syracuse University, 1992, exhibition catalogue).

[22] *Åke Hodell: Resor I Inre Landskap, 1952–1987* (Stockholm: Moderna Museet, 1987, exhibition catalogue).

[23] *Sol LeWitt: Books 1966–1990* (Frankfurt: Portikus & Cologne: Walther König, 1990); *Richard Long* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum & Thames and Hudson, 1986); *Lawrence Weiner: Books 1968–1989, Catalogue Raisonné* (Cologne: Walther König, 1989).

[24] For more on a wider context for artists' publications see my essay 'Booktrek: The Next Frontier', in *Printed Matter Bookstore at Dia: Books by Artists, Spring Catalogue. 1990* (New York: Printed Matter, 1990).

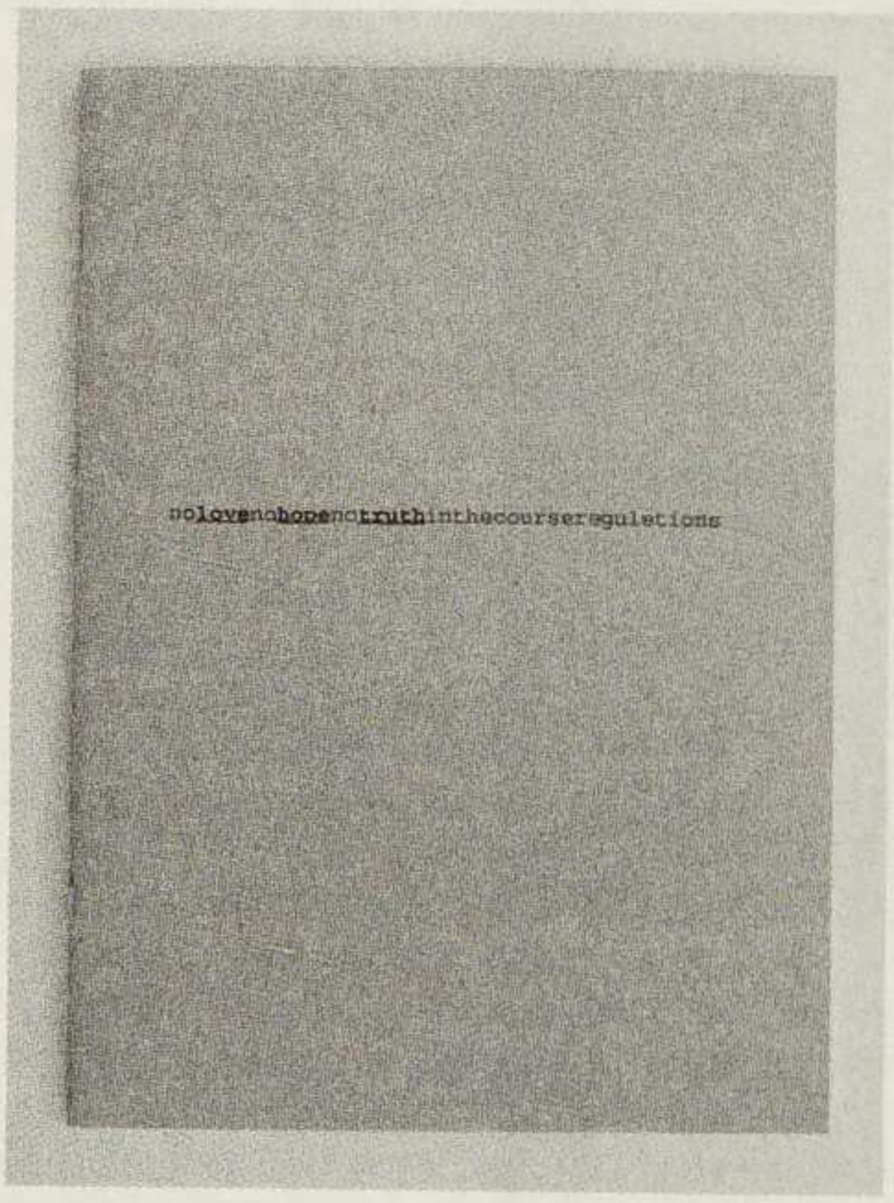


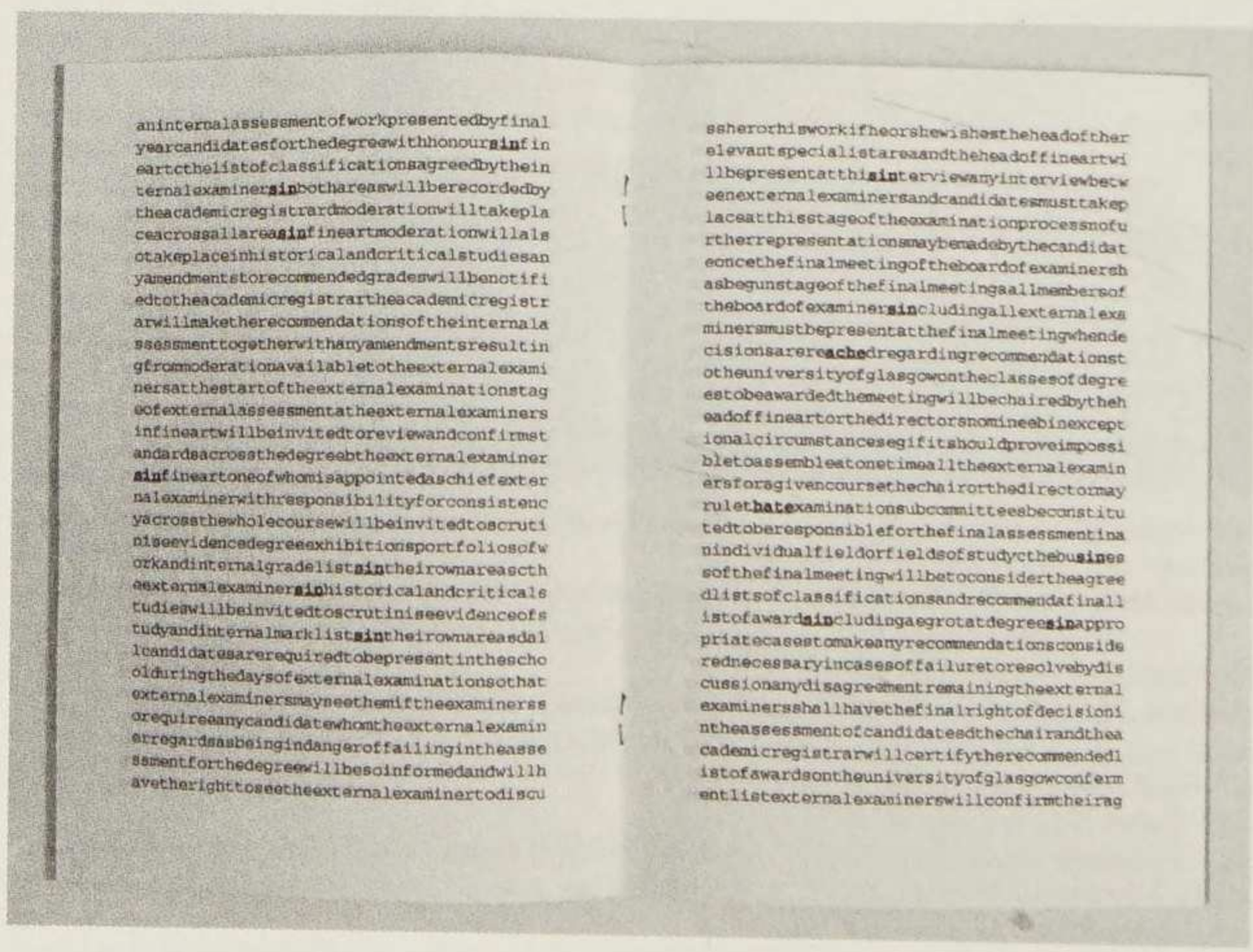
Åke Hodell, *igevär* (Stockholm: Kerberos, 1963)

Pavel Büchler: Kafka Comes to Glasgow

First published in *Modern Painters*, vol. 10, no. 3 (Autumn 1997), p. 125–126.

I was invited to give a talk on artists' books at the Glasgow School of Art on 28 April, 1995, and was welcomed publicly and profusely by Pavel Büchler in one of the most unusual venues I have spoken in – an old cinema. At that time Büchler's immediate future appeared unproblematic, but, as is recounted below, a dramatic change would occur not so many months into the future. (The title of this review was not coined by me.)





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Pavel Büchler, *nolovenohopenotruth* … (Derby: RGAP, 1996)

So what have we here? The package, *What the Cleaners Found*, looks like a miniature box file suitable for an office. When we open it we see that this brown box contains a similar brown slipcase with 11 slim booklets inside – these resemble the pamphlets that assiduous administrators collect on their desks. If we look further we discover, in addition to the booklets, two folded sheets,one an annotated Contents sheet, the other an introduction by the publisher, Martin Rogers of the Research Group for Artists Publications at the University of Derby.

Let us put aside these two sheets for now, and look at the 11 booklets. (I will call them books.) Generally they approximate to A5 size, though some are narrower and four are quite small. The covers range from orange and purple to white and black; the interior pages are generally white. The books apparently originated between summer 1995 and December 1996, so this 1997 publication is a collected re-edition.

Half of the books seem to refer to the generic documents required by administrators of fine art academies – curricula, rules, regulations and reports – while many of the others refer to the mechanisms of non-oral communication in an institution. And the title of the last book is enough to give us an idea of what it is about: *Gaps, Stops, Returns, Breaks and Foreign Characters in the Life and Work of Pavel Büchler (born 1952)*. (Quite a lot of 'foreign characters'.)

We might deduce from an initial inspection of these books that their maker had been dragged increasingly unwillingly into the paper mill of administrative processes endemic in a contemporary art academy. And that these books represent the sound of the pips squeaking as the mill grinds him down.

The first book listed in the Contents is titled *Tracing Paper: For Internal Use*; it seems likely that it is the earliest of the set. It is a very simple but handsome production, and is a new printing of the artist's original 1995 booklet. It recalls unassuming East European samizdat publications, as well as conceptualist pamphlets and bureaucratic ephemera. Furthermore, it could slip straight into an exhibition or collection of contemporary inexpensive 'artists' books', as could the other ten, without seeming out of place.

The cover of *Tracing Paper* derives from the image of a reusable inter-office envelope bearing a succession of deleted handwritten names in printed boxes. Inside, there are 15 pages of what appear to be quasi-constructivist drawings. But there are two captions in the book that alert us to the fact that these drawings are probably diagrams that refer to communications within the administration of the academy.

At this point it is useful to consult the Contents sheet, in which Pavel Büchler states that each diagram in *Tracing Paper* is, indeed, a representation of the travels of an inter-office envelope:

> The movements of every envelope received … were traced by a computer drawing program in which the employees of the art school were put in their place in a hierarchical grid. Each drawing was printed out on the unread memo, put back in its envelope, and left at that.

Unread! Here be subversion! Here be a critique of impersonal paper communication. Here be an indictment of the abuse of creative minds. And here be inter-office art!

Perhaps it is time to introduce extraneous, but highly relevant, information. Pavel Büchler, the author of these books, is an artist who was born in Prague, and studied and worked there until 1981. In Prague he dedicated himself to keeping art alive under a repressive regime. These oppositional activities frequently led to his expulsion from academic institutions on such grounds as engaging in activities incompatible with the conduct of a socialist student. He spent his professional life in Prague in the underground as a performance artist, also as a maker of artists' books propagated by samizdat methods – all the time insisting on spiritual and mental freedom. In 1981 he came to Britain.

After a number of years working as an artist, writer and curator in England, he was appointed Head of the School of Fine Art at Glasgow School of Art in 1992, and it would seem that he was instrumental in bringing late 20th-century art and ideas into the life of the School. However, by 1996, a rearguard movement seems to have developed at the School, with the intention of curtailing his activities, even removing him. The affair is veiled by legalistic fog, but it is clear that whatever the real subject of the dispute was, it was camouflaged and trivialised by accusations that Pavel Büchler had not respected a smoking ban, and that he had been heard swearing. Suffice it to say that he left the Glasgow School of Art in the autumn of 1996.

If we look at the third book in this collection, given awareness of the above information, it becomes clear that it is not just an aesthetic exercise. The title is: *Fart (and the other five thousand nine hundred and ninety one four-letter words in the Disciplinary Rules and Procedures)*. The Contents sheet explains further that Büchler's 'search for four-letter words in the text of the school's Disciplinary Rules and Procedures was undertaken when accused of using "profane language". I was at a loss to know what the fuck it meant.'

Like the first of these books, *Fart* … is well-realised and simple. It, too, resembles both early conceptualist booklets and bureaucratic pamphlets. The form of the text is reminiscent of Carl Andre's poetry, in that each page consists of 32 lines of four-letter words in eight columns.

But instead of arranging words on the basis of their normal letter count as Andre does, Büchler has taken the text of the 'Rules', and represented it in arbitrary four-letter lengths, as if extruded from a literary sausage-machine. Here is the beginning: 'Rule Sand Proc Edur Esre Lati Ngto Disc Ipli … ' 'Fart' was about the most 'offensive' word that he could determine through this process.

After his next book, in which he arranged all the words in the academy's 'Appeals Regulations' in alphabetical order, Büchler went on to make *Nolovenohopenotruthinthecourseregulations*. This book consists of the text of the course regulations formatted without spaces, capitals or punctuation, so as to make one continuous stream of letters. Following this process, chance juxtapositions of letters that have fortuitously made new words are presented in bold face. The words excavated from the regulations suggest Büchler's state of mind at this moment in his struggle: sin, hate, death, pain, lie, filth and ache. The paper mill has really engaged with its subject.

Those aware of the artists' book scene in Britain might have been reminded of the indispensible book space, book shop, book resource, *workfortheeyetodo*, when they saw the title of *Nolovenohope* … While similar language play may have brought the two enterprises together in the mind, there is a more substantial connection. Simon Cutts and Erica van Horn of workfortheeyetodo are visiting associates of the RGAP in Derby. They took the idea of publishing Pavel Büchler's 'inter-office samizdat' to Martin Rogers because they considered that Büchler's work was relevant to students working in an art academy, and because the process of re-publication would be more appropriate if it occurred in the context of another academic environment, rather than at their independent press, Coracle.

The RGAP is an adventurous entity within the art school at the University of Derby, that has many interesting publications to its credit – including editions of slices of Battenberg cake, and a small book as the kernel of a cast of a Guacca fruit, to mention only the most surprising. That the RGAP seems to thrive within an academy, without its printed and other productions apparently encountering bureaucratic resistance, is also cause for surprise – and reflects well on the prevalent ethos at Derby.

Pavel Büchler is a survivor. Although his spirit was dented, it was no more crushed by Scottish bureaucracy than it had been by Czechoslovak bureaucracy. And, in spite of what we can deduce about his state of mind when some of these books were first published, an irrepressible positive drive is evidenced both by his activity in making the samizdat pamphlets in the first place, and his resilient sense of humour – apparent, for instance, in the content of *A Top Ten in the Annual Report (in order of appearance)*.

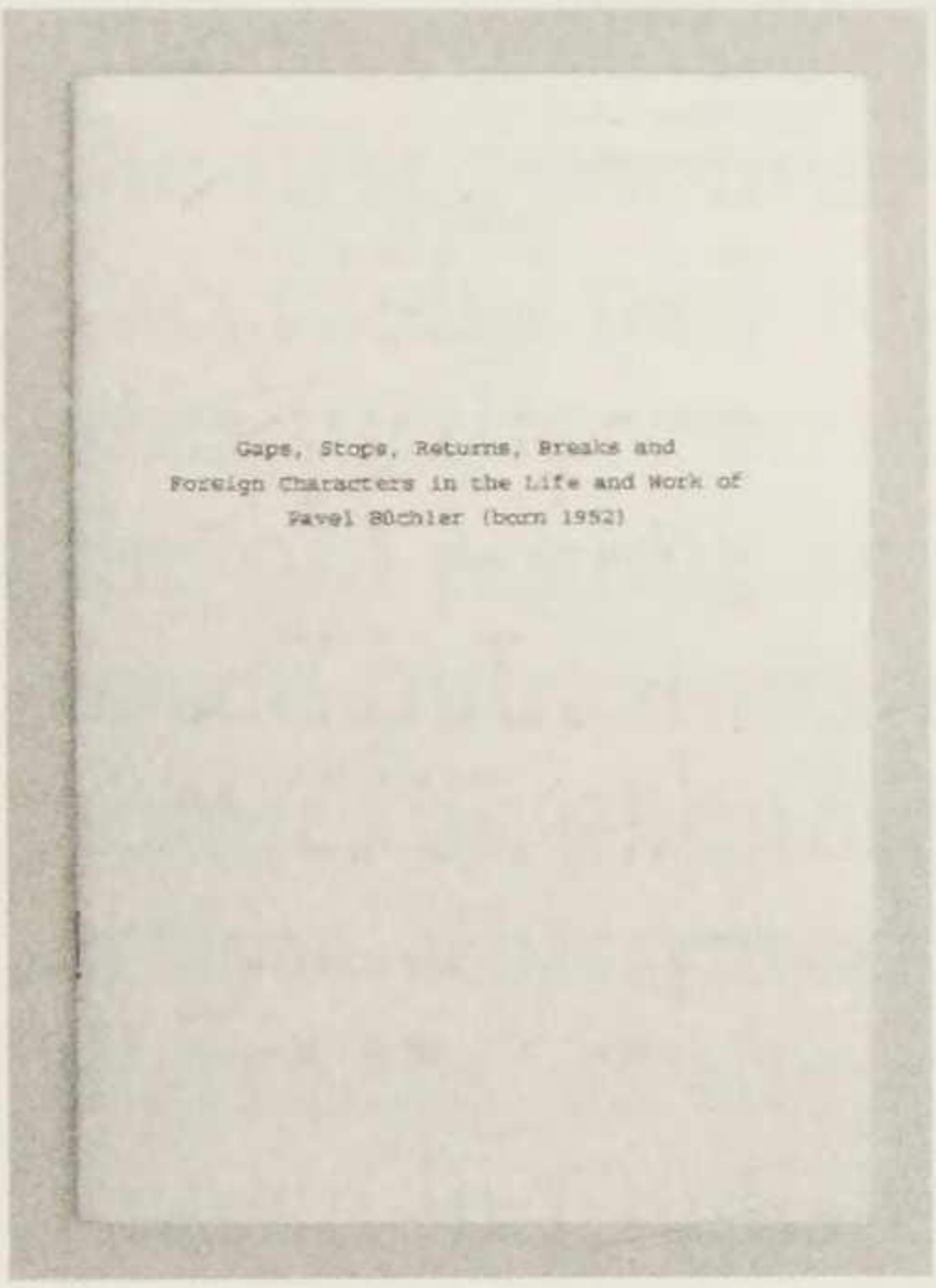
A Top Ten uses his by now familiar homogenisation technique this time on a text commenting on the art school's 1992/1993 Annual Report. But in this word-stream he has been able to find, remarkably, the titles of a series of 1960s pop songs! Would you expect to find the following in an academic annual report? 'It's All Over Now', 'House of the Rising Sun', 'All I Really Want to Do', 'A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall' and 'I Got You Babe'? Amazing! *A Top Ten* employs the same subversive technique that was used by Tom Phillips in *A Humument* – to mine a pre-existing text for another narrative by the selective obliteration or highlighting of its content. Phillips coupled this technique with book illumination, but Büchler stays with the conceptualist pamphlet format.

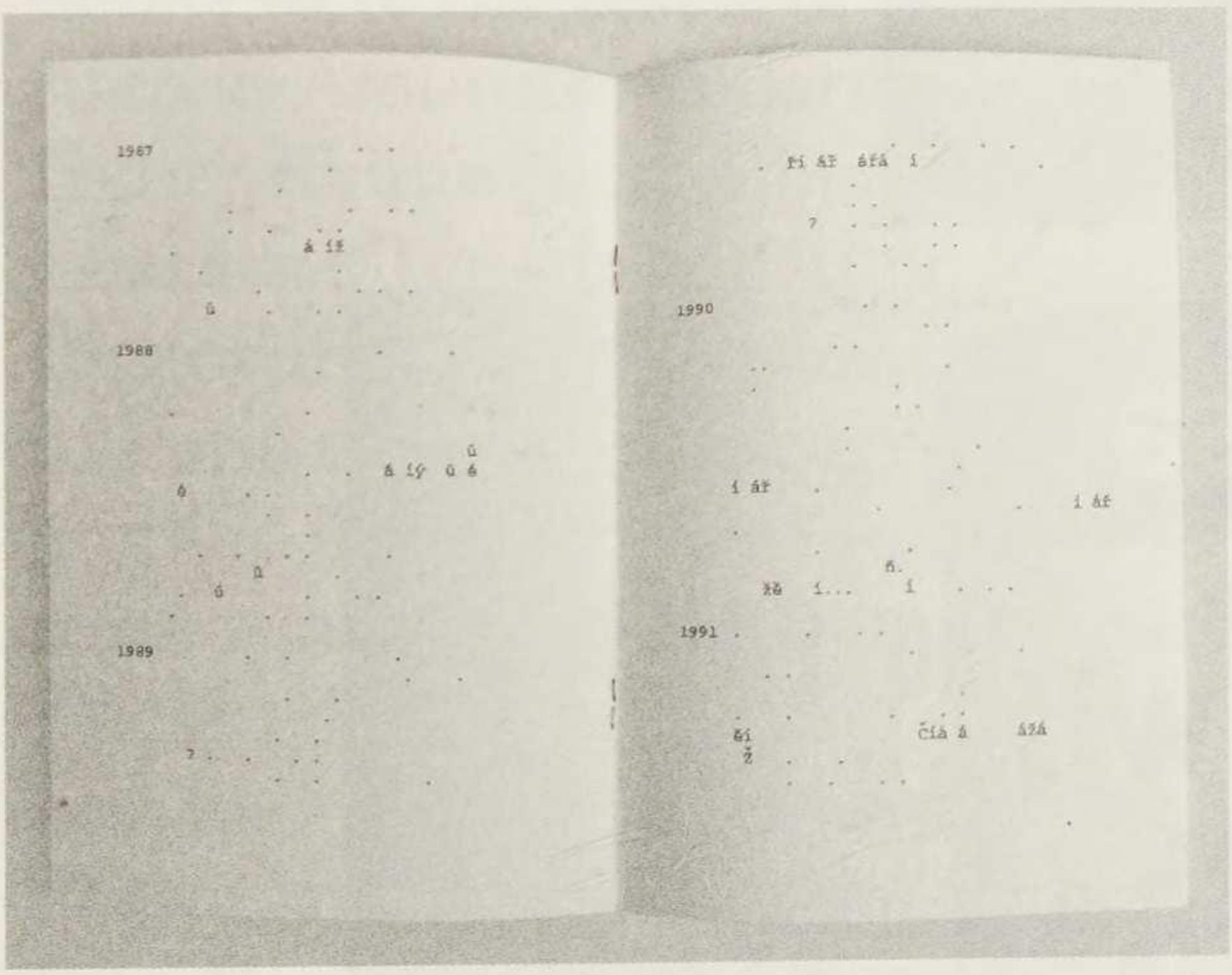
Two other amusing books derive from inter-office envelopes. They are playful, but knowledge of the context in which they were made casts a darker shadow across them. The first is *The Artist's Signature Faked by Officers*, which consists solely of the word 'Pavel' repeated in different handwriting throughout the book. In the Contents he says, 'My name on the envelopes for internal correspondence was often the only sign of humanity behind the thoroughly word-processed façade of institutional communication.' The second of this pair of books prints, not names, but the scribbles and slashes that were used to delete names on envelopes before they were addressed to the next recipients. It is entitled *Officers Deleted By Their Own Hand*. The humour becomes bleaker.

The last of the eleven books, produced specifically for this publishing event, *Gaps, Stops, Returns, Breaks and Foreign Characters in the Life and Work of Pavel Büchler (born 1952)* already mentioned, originally appeared as a single sheet that was disseminated by fax. In both the original and in this

book, Büchler has reversed his document-processing technique so that, unlike the books derived from academic pamphlets, it is no longer possible for the reader to extract, with whatever difficulty, the original text. For everything has been deleted save the items listed in the title. The formal beauty of the residue of the curriculum vitae, in which dots and white spaces play an active role in the architecture of the page, is a distant echo of Mallarmé's *Un Coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard*. But the book is a somewhat melancholy document suggesting how drained Büchler must have been by his ordeal, even after he – a 'Foreign Character' – had left the Glasgow School of Art.

In spite of this last testament to a grim ordeal, the appearance of these books gives cause for celebration. Their publication effectively preserves the original samizdat that the cleaners might have accelerated into oblivion as they emptied the wastebaskets of Glasgow School of Art. Furthermore, this edition enlarges the audience for Pavel Büchler's printed protests against the administrative apparatus of the academy and against the attempt to use this apparatus to grind down his resistance. If these booklets (or site-specific progeny) were slipped into the administrative paper chase of art schools, they might be catalysts for change.



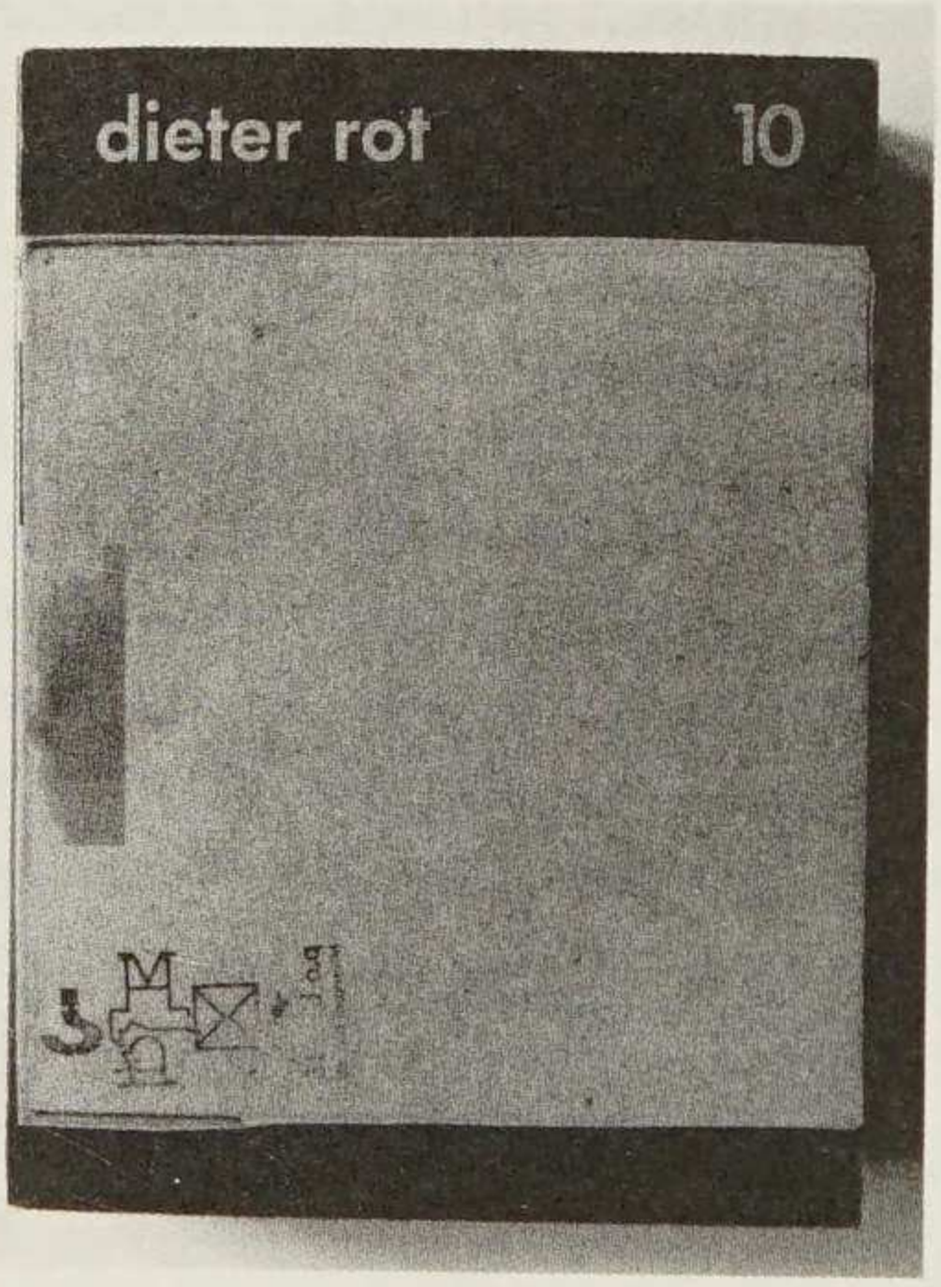


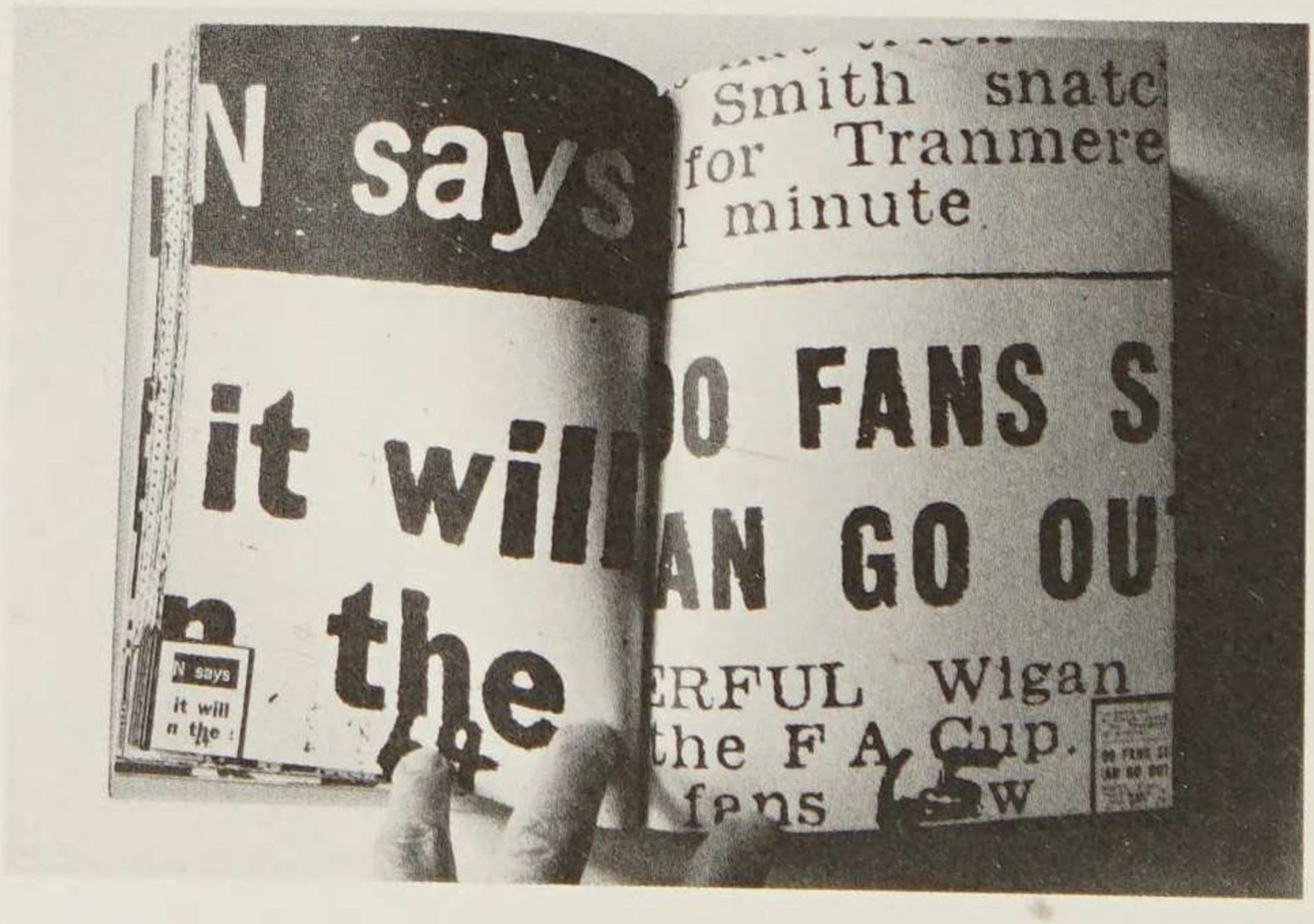
Pavel Büchler, *Gaps, Stops, Returns* … (Derby: RGAP, 1996)

1960–1980

First published in *Art Monthly*, no. 209 (September 1997), p. 48–49.

In the summer of 1997, Andrew Wilson, the recently appointed reviews editor of *Art Monthly*, asked me to review an artists' books exhibition *Livres d'artistes l'invention d'un genre 1960–1980* at the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris. I was pleased to do this because the exhibition was curated by Anne Moeglin-Delcroix, whom I had met for the first time only a couple of years before in December 1994, and whose views I greatly respected. It was on 11 July, 1977, while I was in Paris to see this exhibition, that I met her again and received a copy of her now indispensible book *Esthétique du livre d'artiste 1960-1980* hot off the press.





Dieter Rot(h), *Collected Works, volume 10, Daily Mirror* (Cologne, London, Reykjavik: Edition Hansjörg Mayer, 1970)

The faded grandeur and pockmarked walls of the Galerie Mansart at the Bibliothèque nationale provoke one to consider this exhibition as the first post-war statement of a successful new regime. Taking this idea further, we could characterise the old regime as the largely Paris-based publishers who brought about the phenomenon of modern artists' illustrated books, or 'livres d'artistes' as they fittingly became known in English. In general these books were the result of publishers such as Ambroise Vollard, Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, Albert Skira, Efstratios Tériade and Aimé Maeght, suggesting to artists of the School of Paris that they produce auto-graphic illustrations to various texts – often classics from the past. These editions flourished in the first half of this century, with one or two later achievements such as Joan Miró's *À toute épreuve* published by Gérald Cramer in 1958. These books were sometimes just collec-tions of leaves that included some

frameable prints, while the edition size was usually in the low hundreds both to ensure the print quality and to keep up the price – hence the expression 'livres de luxe'. So who constitutes the new regime that now occupies the Galerie Mansart? Just as the old regime was largely Paris-based, so the new regime could be said to have had strong New York connections, even though this succession did not parallel the rise of the original New York School in the 1940s. Instead it coincided with the rise of neo-Dada, Minimalism and Conceptualism in the 1960s, and the activities of New York-based publishers such as Dick Higgins, William Copley, Seth Siegelaub & John W. Wendler, Multiples Inc. or Phyllis Johnson of *Aspen* ('The Magazine in a Box') and, perhaps more importantly, the rise of the artist as self-publisher.

But there is a highly significant exception to this putative New York scenario, and that is the Nebraska-born California artist, Ed Ruscha. Appropriately, the first item in this exhibition is his book *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* of 1963. Additionally the two vitrines in the centre of the anteroom to the Galerie Mansart are entirely devoted to his books. The example of *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, and subsequent artists' books, triggered a defeat for the old regime for, as well as introducing photography, Ruscha discontinued the earlier practice of signing and numbering books and thereby individualising each one; he even went so far as to reprint them when there was a demand. (Admittedly this is simpler with commercial printing techniques.) After two reprintings of *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* there were nearly 4,000 copies in circulation. This was art for the paperback era. Ruscha knew quite clearly what his books were about: 'I am not trying to create a precious limited edition book, but a mass-produced product of high order. All my books are identical. They have none of the nuances of the handmade and crafted limited edition book.'[1] Although neither Ruscha's books nor his art are easily categorised, these volumes did provide a new paradigm for the relationship between artist and book that was soon taken up by other artists.

At the Bibliothèque nationale only five other artists have their publications displayed in two vitrines. Two of the five are the New Yorkers, Sol LeWitt and Lawrence Weiner, both of whom began to use the book as a vehicle for their art in the 1960s. Since 1978, when Ruscha effectively stopped

making inexpensive books, they have become the most prominent and prolific artists in the field. Building on Ruscha's model, LeWitt and Weiner adopted the book as a medium, and in Weiner's case, frequently published editions of 1,000 or more. Thus far the emphasis of the exhibition seems exactly right. However, the other artists accorded so much space are Ian Hamilton Finlay, Robert Filliou and Dieter Roth. With regard to his influence, and even his productivity, Filliou seems perhaps over-represented, especially when an artist such as Daniel Buren has only one, albeit large, work in the show. But it is the prominence of Finlay that raises questions.

After one has walked up a ramp from the anteroom, Finlay and Marcel Broodthaers effectively flank the entrance to the long gallery, thereby reminding us of other, European, routes into the phenomenon of the cheap artist's book. Although both artists began as poets, it may still seem flippant to ask whether these books are writers' books rather than artists' books, but in the case of Finlay the question seems necessary. While Finlay's books seem superficially similar to the majority of books in the exhibition in that they are generally small and unostentatious, they might actually be characterised negatively as the last gasp of the illustrated book tradition, or more positively as a new form of writer's book.

In the 48-page catalogue of the exhibition, the curator Anne Moeglin-Delcroix characterises the emergence of the contemporary artist's book as representing the moment when artists dumped their erstwhile writer-collaborators and became sole authors of more ordinary-looking books. While this is true for most of the artists in the exhibition, in Finlay's case *he* is the writer; moreover he employs illustrators and craftspeople to enhance the visual presentation of his texts, a practice not so different from the publishers of the illustrated 'livres de luxe' earlier in the century. It is more his self-publishing and the demeanour of his books that allies them with artists' books.

Besides these books and the many others in which, in various guises, images are subservient to texts, there are at least two opposed modes of use of the book that are evident in this diligently mapped survey of the first two decades of the redefined artist's book. The most extreme of these

derives from the idea of the dematerialised artwork in the 1960s – since such works still required a form in which they could be presented. In this case the book was appropriate both in its familiar guise as a container for documentation, as here for Jan Dibbets' *Robin Redbreast's Territory/Sculpture 1969* of 1970, but also in a new role that Moeglin-Delcroix refers to as a 'support' for the work, and which Dieter Schwartz has described as the plinth on which the artwork rests (in relation to Weiner's books).[2] The other new mode of use of the book is as a structure to articulate narrative, even cinematic, works. Dieter Roth is associated with this approach in the exhibition, but although some of his books are narrative, a better exemplar of the use of the book as cinematic device – though arguably more so in his incisive books of the 1980s and 1990s – is the Brussels-based American artist, Peter Downsbrough, whose work is also highlighted in the exhibition. He, together with Michael Snow, Helen Douglas and Telfer Stokes, in their different ways, have created art that is specifically articulated by the book form.

Roth's two vitrines are located at the furthest end of the long gallery, so that he and Ruscha bracket the exhibition, seemingly echoing the proposition of an English writer in the 1970s that Roth was the hot antithesis to the cool Ruscha. But it is arguable that this combo should now be broken up, so that the barely classifiable Roth can be placed in some parallel universe – or with the Fluxus tendency traced in the exhibition.

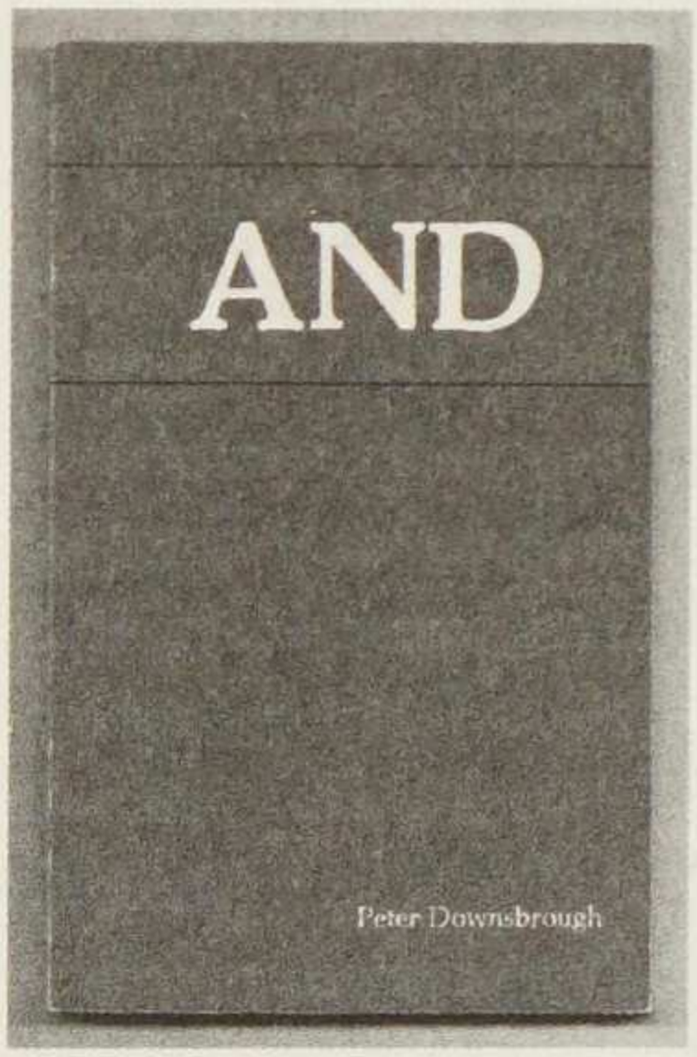
The full breadth of the exhibition may be evoked by listing the other artists who have been given prominence by the curator: Robert Barry, Wolf Vostell, Joseph Beuys, Art & Language, Hans-Peter Feldmann, Christian Boltanski, Annette Messager, the Schmidt-Heins sisters, John Baldessari, Hanne Darboven, Jean Le Gac and Jochen Gerz. The mini-retrospective displays of these well-chosen artists punctuate the thematic and historical waves that flow through the exhibition. For, after Ruscha's appearance, it progresses through concrete poetry, Fluxus and its allies, Conceptual art and Minimal art until it is overlaid with the themes of inventories, series, narratives and, lastly, the poetics of the book.

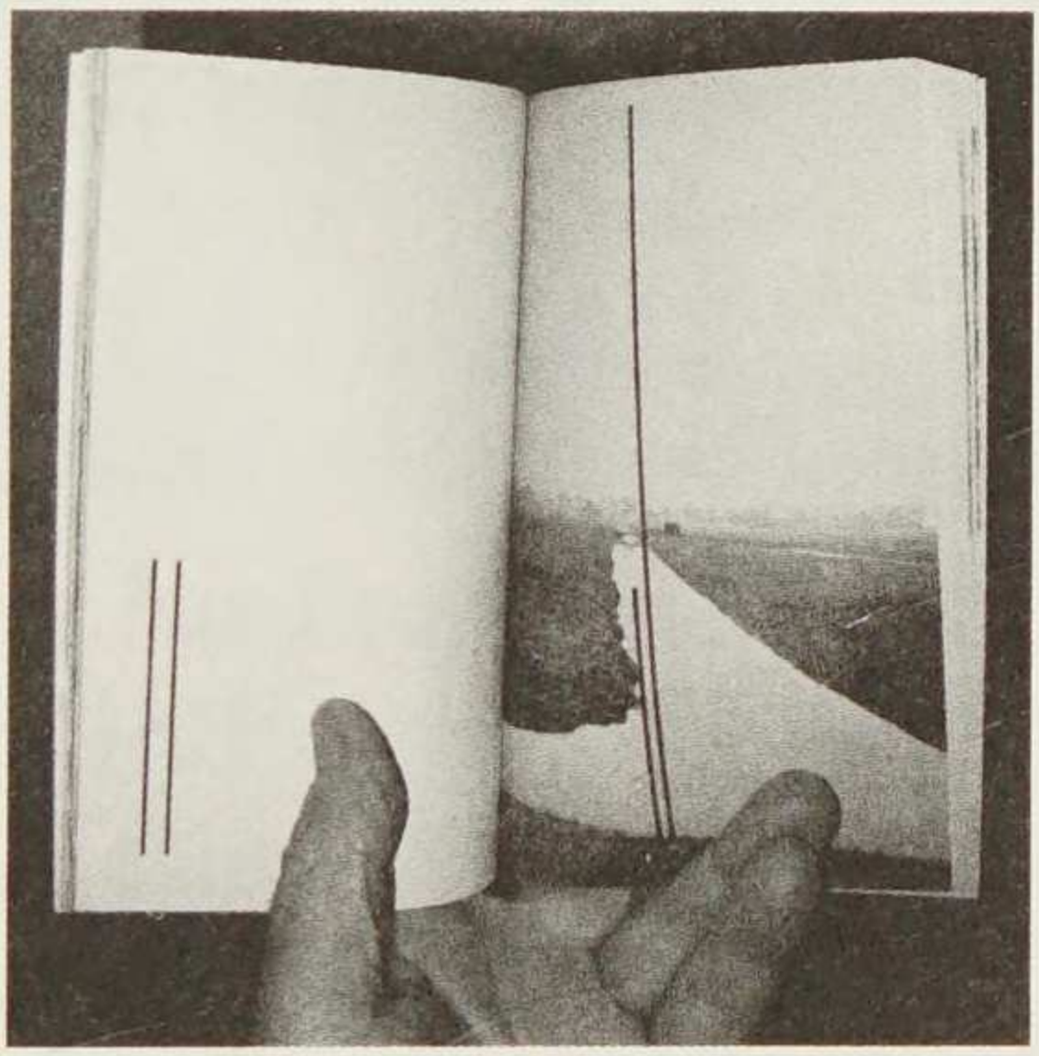
This exhibition is the best survey of the emergence of contemporary artists' books yet undertaken. Over 300 books

by about 75 artists are displayed, together with additional printed matter and multiples, while on the walls above are related prints, photographs and posters. The exhibition is also effective, as intended, in tracing the history of avant-gardes in the 1960s and 1970s by means of the artist's book, provided one sees these mainly in terms of a Paris-New York axis. Indeed the exhibition is so comprehensive on its own terms that it also provokes the need for at least two more such ambitious surveys of this period, one for Eastern Europe, the other for Latin America. Regarding cheap artists' books, these two regions must qualify as terrae incognitae from Western European and North American perspectives.

[1] John Coplans, 'Concerning *Various Small Fires …*', *Artforum*, vol. 3, no. 5 (February 1965), p. 25.

[2] Dieter Schwarz, *Lawrence Weiner: Books 1968–1989, Catalogue Raisonné* (Cologne: König; Villeurbanne: le Nouveau Musée, 1989), p. 143.



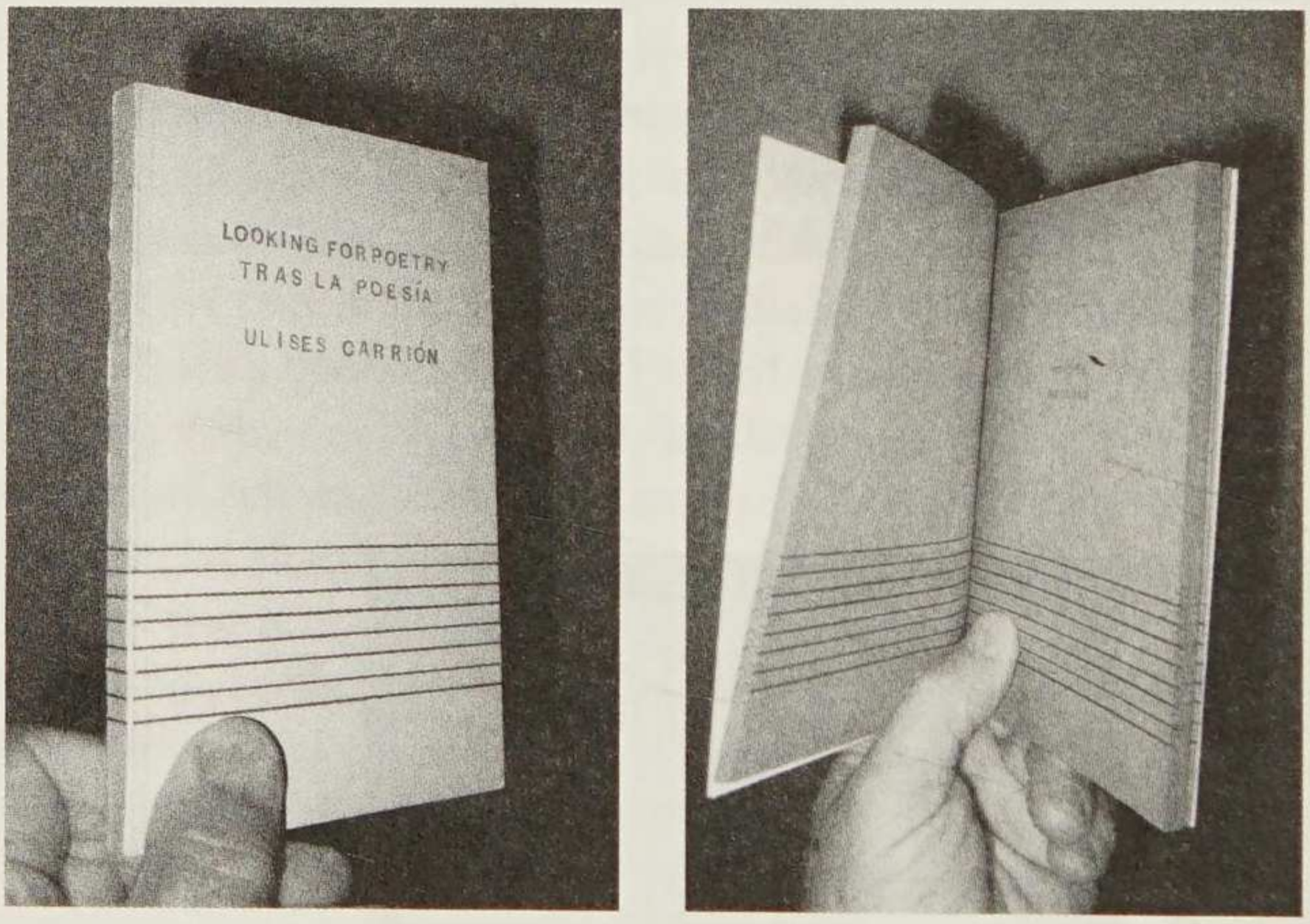


Peter Downsbrough, *And* (Hamburg: Anatol AV, 1977)

Ulises Carrión: Bookworks Etcetera

First published in *Ulises Carrión – Quant aux Livres/On Books* (Geneva: Héros-Limite, 1997), p. 123–126.

On 4 May, 1995, I gave a talk on 'Cheap Books By Artists' at the Centre d'Art Contemporain in Geneva, and while visiting the city met Juan Agius for the first time. This meeting subsequently led to an invitation from him and his colleague, Alain Berset, to write one of the introductions to their planned anthology of the writings of Ulises Carrión that pertained to books; Anne Moeglin-Delcroix was asked to write the other introduction.



Ulises Carrión, *Looking For Poetry* (Cullompton: Beau Geste Press, 1973)

In November 1979 I was rather surprised to hear serious discussion of something that I had written. I was attending a conference at the Visual Studies Workshop in Rochester in upstate New York entitled 'Options in Independent Art Publishing'. The speaker was Ulises Carrión.

I had never met Ulises before, but had been aware of him through his association with the strangely named bookstore Other Books and So (Other Books Etcetera?) which had appeared on my radar sometime after its founding in early 1975. And I had read and enjoyed his essay 'The New Art of Making Books' in *Kontexts*. But I also knew him from his book *Looking For Poetry/Tras La Poesía* published in England by the marvellous Beau Geste Press in 1973. This book was, and still is, one of my favourite artists' books, and a perfect realisation of the artist's idea, utilising red and scarlet ink on brown pages.

It had been rather lonely out there writing about cheap multiple artists' books; nobody much, to my knowledge, had tried to analyse the phenomenon as I saw it, and yet suddenly, here in Rochester, I was being quoted by a comrade who was diving in and pulling out rabbit after rabbit from the same top hat that I had been peering into.

Ulises' talk had been billed as 'Europe: A Survey', but was published just a few months later in *The Print Collector's Newsletter* as 'Bookworks Revisited'. Not only had he taken seriously what I had written, but Ulises had also embedded my original words in an argument that took the idea further. He had settled on the word 'bookwork' as a term to describe art in bookform, having seen it used in the 1975 British exhibition catalogue *Artists' Bookworks*. You can read what he said in § 19 of 'Bookworks Revisited' in particular, ' … one feels reluctant to use the term "artists' books". I'd rather opt for "bookworks" … '

I don't think that I had used 'bookworks' in my writings up until that point, though Ulises suggests that I had in § 21 of 'Bookworks Revisited': 'Clive Phillpot says that "bookworks" are books in which the book form is intrinsic to the work.' This is not quite true. What I actually said, rather laboriously, in the 1976 British exhibition catalogue *Artists' Books* was, 'Works falling into the category of "book art" can be defined as books in which the book form is intrinsic to the work.'

I was still using my term 'book art' to encompass the broad field of 'artists' books' and, very unsatisfactorily, 'book art proper' to describe those books that were artworks in bookform. So Ulises' choice of the term 'bookworks' to describe the latter category was heaven-sent. He expanded my earlier definition to state that 'bookworks are books in which the book form, a coherent sequence of pages, determines conditions of reading that are intrinsic to the work' (see § 24 of 'Bookworks Revisited'). Note that there is no mention of 'art' or 'artist' in this sentence.

I employed 'bookworks' immediately, and with gusto, using it several times in articles in 1980. I even tried out 'magazineworks' in 1980 and 'wordworks' in 1982. And I have continued to use 'bookworks' ever since Ulises seized upon it to describe a territory that seemed to be coextensive with one that I had no name for.[1]

Our meeting in Rochester was only the first. In 1981 I went to Amsterdam and saw what had become the Other Books and So Archive, and talked more with Ulises. Later on he dropped in to see me in New York, and thereafter we kept each other informed of our ideas and our writings through the mail.

Both of us continued to support artists who published art in bookform and especially to promote those books that were unpretentious and inexpensive. Our frequently repeated versions of the history of artists' books were also similar, though Ulises paid more attention to their roots in poetry, especially concrete poetry, as befitted his origins as a writer in Latin America, while I perhaps was more concerned with the politics of their publishing. Together we were co-defenders of similar patches of territory.

But the boundaries of art territories are notoriously unstable and language is fickle. Looking back from the vantage point of 1996, while still sharing Ulises' view of what everyone continues to call 'artists' books', I have to report that the territory popularly includes almost anything book-like, and that even the term 'bookwork' is applied to any of the phenomena in the territory – even unique unreadable books! I could not even convince the compilers of a supposedly objective thesaurus of art that 'bookwork' had the meaning ascribed to it by Ulises and me; my citations were countered by others that described objects quite contrary to what we had espoused. Maybe Ulises would have been philosophical about this? And maybe such obfuscations do not matter greatly when there are people like Ulises who delineate their concerns with conviction.

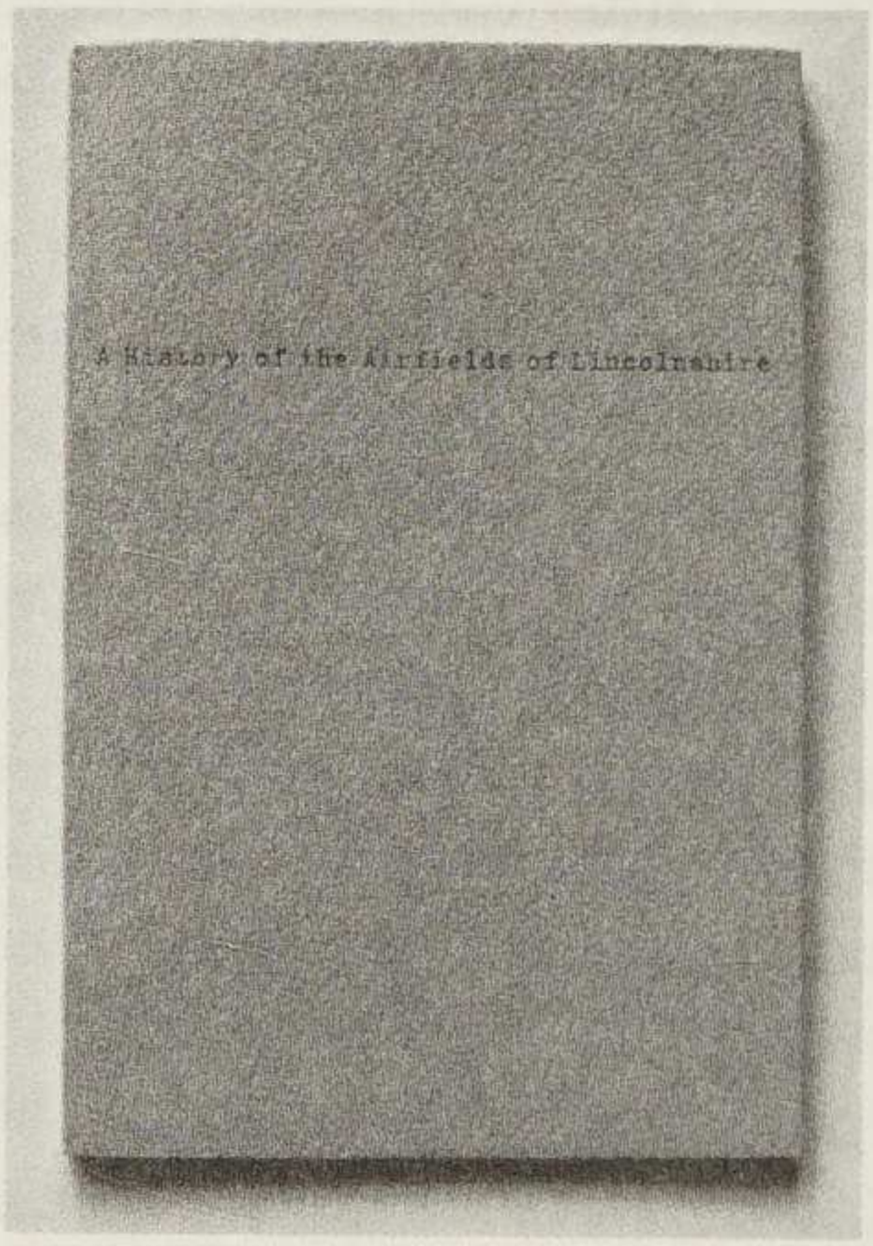
So I am delighted that Ulises' writings about books will now be available in one place in a new publication. His ideas are still fresh and these writings will again inform discussions of artworks in bookform, especially the brilliant 'The New Art of Making Books' and 'Bookworks Revisited' which are as much art pieces as didactic texts. Viva Ulises. Read on.

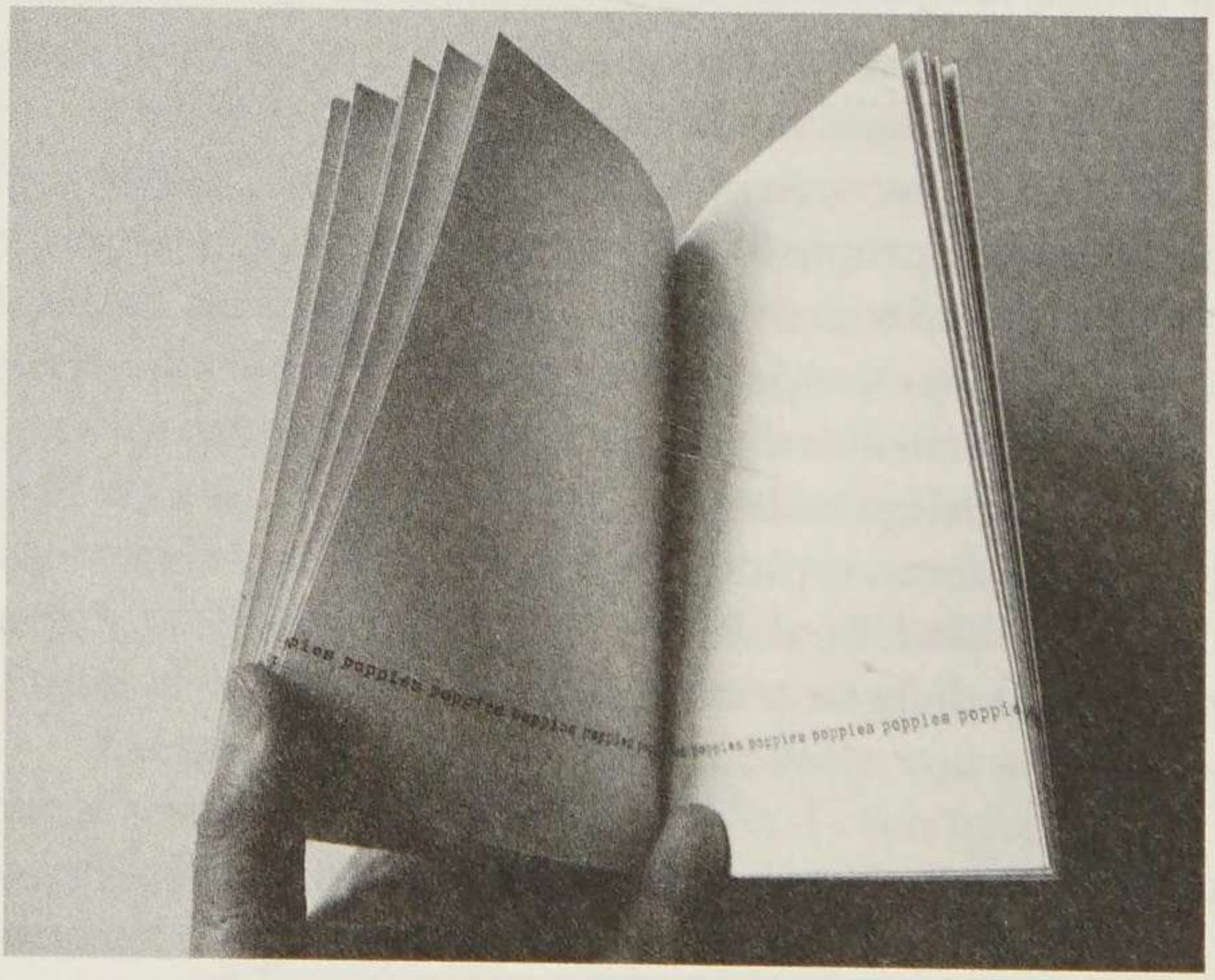
[1] 'Magazineworks' in *Artforum* (February 1980), 'Art Magazines and Magazine Art', p. 52–54. 'Wordworks' in *Art Journal* (Summer 1982), 'Words & Wordworks', p. 95.

Books by Artists and Books as Art

First published in *Artist/Author: Contemporary Artists Books*, Cornelia Lauf and Clive Phillpot ed. (New York: Distributed Art Publishers & American Federation of Arts, 1998), p. 30–55.

Cornelia Lauf conceived the *Artist/Author* exhibition in 1994 and invited me to join her as co-curator and co-editor of the catalogue. We agreed that my emphasis would be on the early artists' books and their progeny, while Cornelia would concentrate on more recent examples. Next we each prepared a selection of books to be included, and found, surprisingly, virtually no overlap between our two lists. Then, in my essay, I took the opportunity to establish a specific historical foundation for artists' books, based on the example of Ruscha and of Siegelaub, as well as proposing a new taxonomy for this kind of publication.





Simon Cutts, *A History of the Airfields of Lincolnshire* (London: Coracle, 1990)

Jackson Pollock owned a copy of the 1947 edition of James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*.[1] If we were to come across this copy, knowing its provenance, we could legitimately describe it as an artist's book. But, by 'artist's book' we would merely mean that the book was once in his possession. If, instead, we had in our hands a book about the work of an artist, say Eva Hesse, with reproductions and a text about her work, we would be likely to call this an art book rather than an artist's book, though the latter is not illogical. However, even though books by poets, for example, are not referred to as 'poets' books', it has become a convention to call almost any book for which an artist is responsible an 'artist's book' – or a 'livre d'artiste', or, in German-speaking communities, a 'Künstlerbuch'.[2] Even so, usage is not always as straightforward as these three possibilities suggest. In fact, the use of the term 'artist's book' can be very haphazard.

Just to take one example: in 1973 an exhibition titled *Artists Books* was organized by the Moore College of Art in Philadelphia. This exhibition included works as various as George Brecht and Robert Filliou's *Games at the Cedilla* (1967, documentation), David Hockney's *Six Fairy Tales* (1970, a book of reduced reproductions of prints), Gilbert & George's *Oh, the Grand Old Duke of York* (1972, an exhibition catalogue), Richard Hamilton's *Polaroid Portraits* (1972, a book of photographs), *Aspen* and *S.M.S.* (magazines), and Dieter Roth's *246 Little Clouds* (1968), perhaps the only one that is an artwork in book form.[3] All these publications can be, and were, designated as artists' books. And this exhibition was not exceptional in its catholicity. Many other shows since then have included equally diverse titles under the umbrella of artists' books.

Not surprisingly, this situation has confused many people, who seem unable to distinguish books that are artworks from all other books and publications authored, in one sense or another, by artists. I would like to make a distinction between 'artists' books', meaning books and booklets authored by artists, and 'bookworks', meaning artworks in book form. Artists' books are distinguished by the fact that they sit provocatively at the juncture where art, documentation and literature all come together. Indeed, one of the characteristics of the field is its mongrel nature. It is populated with many subspecies and hybrids, and ultimately dissolves easily into the larger universe of books, pamphlets and magazines. What really characterises artists' books is that they reflect and emerge from the preoccupations and sensibilities of artists, as makers and as citizens.

A Select History of Artists' Books

A radical break in the tradition of the artist-author occurred in April 1963, when California artist Edward Ruscha suddenly expanded his artistic production from paintings, prints and drawings to books, by publishing the small paperback booklet *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* (A National Excelsior Publication, 1963).[4] Rather than illustrating a text by another person, Ruscha constructed a linear sequence of nondescript photographic images to document the gas stations that then punctuated US Route 66 (now largely subsumed by

Route 40) between Los Angeles, where he lived, and Oklahoma City, where he grew up.[5] These images are like 26 letters of a personal alphabet that are structured by the form of the book.[6] This book was nothing like the limited-edition luxury books (livres de luxe) that artists such as Picasso, Matisse, Miró and Chagall had illustrated earlier in the century. These new artists' books were cheap (*Twentysix Gasoline Stations* cost about three dollars); they were handy (this one could fit in your pocket); and there were more of them (the first printing alone was 400 copies). In every way, Ruscha's book was more like a commercially produced illustrated booklet. And, indeed, this appears to have been his intention. In 1965, he said, 'I am not trying to create a precious limited edition book, but a mass-produced product of high order. All my books are identical. They have none of the nuances of the handmade and crafted limited edition book.' 'What I really want is a professional polish, a clear-cut machine finish.'[7] Ruscha was simply emulating common book-trade practice rather than that used by art publishers. He was making a cheap form of art available to a different audience by utilizing a different distribution system.

The development of the artist's book in Ruscha's hands can be divided into three phases. The first phase began in 1963 when he published the first edition of *Twentysix Gasoline Stations.* Initially, he did not liberate himself entirely from the luxury book tradition. Each of the 400 copies of *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* was numbered. And with his second book, *Various Small Fires and Milk* (Los Angeles: Anderson, Ritchie, & Simon, 1964), he signed the first 50 copies of the edition of four hundred. He soon realised that this was a mistake, however. 'One of the purposes of my book[s] has to do with making … mass-produced object[s],' he said. 'The final product has a very commercial, professional feel to it. I am not in sympathy with the whole area of hand-printed publications, however sincere. One mistake I made in *Twenty-Six* [sic] *Gasoline Stations* was in numbering the books. I was testing – at that time – that each copy a person might buy would have an individual place in the edition. I don't want that now.'[8]

When he published seven hundred copies of his third book, *Some Los Angeles Apartments* (self-published, 1965), Ruscha began a second phase of work by not distinguishing any one

copy from any other, by signing or numbering it. And in 1967, he began a third phase when he reprinted his first book, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, in an edition of 500 copies. This last gesture confirmed the idea of the replicability of an artwork in book form, for there was virtually no difference between the first printing and the reprint.[9] In 1969 Ruscha even produced a third printing of the book, in an edition of 3,000 copies. Altogether, the three printings meant that 3,900 people could, in theory, experience the artist's work in different locations simultaneously. Additionally, by invoking the possibility of continual reprinting in response to demand, Ruscha destroyed any aura of preciousness that might have remained. Indeed, if Ruscha wishes to continue to make his work available to the widest audience, he, like any other artist who discovers that an originally cheap bookwork has become expensive because it is out of print and in demand, can counteract this rarity by simply reprinting the work. This is one meaning of an 'open edition'.

Ruscha created a new paradigm for interactions between the artist, the book and the audience.[10] But very soon the idea that artists could shape their expression in book form, by using texts and/or images to make statements or to make art, became very popular. And, as it happened, this new form neatly coincided with neo-Dada and the rise of Minimalism, Conceptual art and other forms of relatively dematerialised production. Many of the early makers of artists' books were American Minimal and Conceptual artists. Among these early artists' works were Sol LeWitt's *Serial Project #1 1966* (New York: Aspen Magazine, 1966), Lawrence Weiner's *Statements* (New York: Louis Kellner Foundation/Seth Siegelaub, 1968), Joseph Kosuth's *Function* (Turin: Sperone Editore, 1970) and Peter Downsbrough's *Notes on Location* (New York: *T.V.R.T.*, written in 1969 and published in 1972). In Europe, there were Terry Atkinson and Michael Baldwin's *Air-Conditioning Show/Air Show/Frameworks 1966–67* (Coventry, England: Art & Language Press, 1967), Christian Boltanski's *Recherche et présentation de tout ce qui reste de mon enfance, 1944–1950* (Paris: Edition Givaudan, 1969), Richard Long's *Sculpture by Richard Long Made for Martin and Mia Visser, Bergeijk* (1969) and Daniel Buren's *Limites critiques* (Paris: Yvon Lambert, 1970).[11] Beyond these examples there were other key events in the art world of the late 1960s

that altered the status of artists' publications. The person responsible for many of these developments was not an artist, but a dealer named Seth Siegelaub.

From 1964 to 1966, Siegelaub had a conventional art gallery in New York, showing the work of several younger artists, including Lawrence Weiner, who was then exhibiting paintings.[12] However, about 1968 Siegelaub changed his practice and began to work mainly with a small group of artists since known as Conceptual artists, in particular, Robert Barry, Douglas Huebler, Kosuth and Weiner. The significant event in terms of the history of artists' publications was Siegelaub's Douglas Huebler exhibition in November 1968. Here, for the first time, the exhibition appeared principally as a catalogue. The nature of Huebler's work was such that it functioned equally well on the page or on the wall, so viewing (or owning) the 'original' work, became, in effect, beside the point.

Since Siegelaub had no permanent gallery space at the time, his next month's exhibition was also a publication, Weiner's *Statements,* described as his 'third show with Seth Siegelaub'.[13] In fact, this book is simply a collection of phrases, such as 'One standard dye marker thrown into the sea', which can be regarded either as descriptions of works or as prescriptions for future works. At about the same time, Siegelaub (along with John W. Wendler), published *Carl Andre, Robert Barry, Douglas Huebler, Joseph Kosuth, Sol LeWitt, Robert Morris, Lawrence Weiner*, an offset publication generally known as 'The Xerox Book' since it derived from photocopies made by the artists listed in its title. The printed pages in the book were not conventional art reproductions, though; they *were* the artworks. Thus, the book was a kind of collaborative artwork or anthology.[14]

Siegelaub's innovative use of the exhibition catalogue was yet another twist to this story. For three different group shows – in January, March and July 1969 – Siegelaub published catalogues that largely constituted the exhibitions. In the first, *January 5–31, 1969*, three-quarters of the works were shown in the catalogue and not in the space.[15] In the second, *[One Month] 1969 March 1969*, only verbal works were solicited. And in the third, *July, August, September 1969 ...* , the actual locations of the works on exhibit were scattered over North America and Europe. Barry, Huebler, Kosuth and Weiner

were included in each show; Carl Andre, Sol LeWitt, Richard Long and Robert Smithson in two of the shows; and other artists in just one of the shows. In a recent interview, Siegelaub recalled, 'The catalogue, which served to "document" [the art], was not referring to an (art) object which existed outside of it, but could be simply another aspect of the work, or even the artwork itself.'[16] Earlier he had stated, 'The art that I am interested in can be communicated with books and catalogues … When art does not any longer depend upon its physical presence, when it has become an abstraction, it is not distorted and altered by its representation in books and catalogues. It becomes *primary* information, while the reproduction of conventional art in books and catalogues is necessarily *secondary* information … In the *January 1969* show the catalogue was *primary* and the physical exhibition was auxiliary to it.'[17]

The works by Lawrence Weiner that Siegelaub published in *Statements* were subsequently included in Weiner's book *Works* (Hamburg: Anatol AV und Filmproduktion, 1977). But a quick comparison of the two books shows that works were presented differently in each publication: each uses a different typeface and a different layout. Curator Dieter Schwarz explains this discrepancy by making an analogy to conventional sculpture: 'The book is not the work, the sculpture; it is its plinth … [A] plinth, a support, has to be found to present the work without establishing a binding relationship with it. The relationship between work and support … is a matter of specific use. The use situation is a form of non-specific work that has no finalised form.'[18] Furthermore, Weiner insists that his text works are designed to be translated, and unlike literature lose nothing in the process. By 'translation', Weiner means not only conversion into another language, but also possible incorporation into another medium.[19] Siegelaub had a similar view: 'When a painting was hung, all the necessary intrinsic art information was there. But gradually there developed an "art" which didn't need to be hung … Because the art was not visual in nature, it did not require the traditional means of exhibition, but a means that would present the intrinsic ideas of the art.'[20]

Artists' books really took hold around 1969, inspired by Ruscha's example, the rise of conceptualism, the activities of Siegelaub, and the political and social events of the late

1960s. This was an incredible moment in art when definitions were wide open. As Donald Judd said in 1966, 'If someone says his work is art. it's art.'[21] 1969 was not only the last year of 'the 1960s' but one of the last years in which art did seem to have the potential to be anything, to be totally inclusive. A brief look through *La Vérité de A à Z* (1987, Toulouse: Edition ARPAP), Ben Vautier's index to his life, exploits, achievements and obsessions, reveals the extent of the dissolution of the boundaries of art in that decade. Tragically, this open situation for art closed down rapidly, as did the revolutionary political hopes of the time.

This fleeting moment is captured well in two very different art publications from 1969: the booklet *Sculpture by Richard Long Made for Martin and Mia Visser, Bergeijk* and the first issue of the magazine *Art-Language*. The former is a curious publication that includes no direct reference to publisher, date or place of publication (it was probably published in 1969 or soon after). Richard Long himself had nothing to do with the publication and appears to disown it. The booklet consists of seven views of one multi-part Richard Long sculpture in the landscape, and the anonymous writer claims that the Vissers acquired this work 'as a photographic reproduction for publication in an edition of 500'. In typical late 1960s style, the author maintains that, 'according to Richard Long's idea, the photographs in hand do not have the function of a documentation: [they are] the sculpture made for Martin and Mia Visser'.[22] *Art-Language*, on the other hand, was a rigorous journal of Conceptual art and the organ of the group Art & Language based in Coventry, England. Edited by Terry Atkinson, David Bainbridge, Michael Baldwin and Harold Hurrell, the first number of *Art-Language* was dated May 1969, and included an unsigned introduction that posed the question, 'Can this editorial, in itself an attempt to evince some outlines as to what "conceptual art" is, come up for the count as a work of conceptual art?'[23] (Significantly, in the same issue of *Art-Language*, Sol LeWitt, in his classic text 'Sentences on Conceptual Art', feels obliged to say in his last sentence, 'These sentences comment on art, but are not art', p. 24.)

In different ways, both publications contributed to the general idea that virtually any text or book associated with an artist could be considered an artwork. Moreover,

this misconception was only one of several, for it was also asserted that artists' books circumvented the gallery system, that artists' books were cheap, that artists' books were democratic, and that artists' books were made for a large audience.

Although artists like Ruscha had used artists' books to reach different audiences, this did not mean that they neglected the art world. For example, in 1972 Ruscha said that his new book '*Colored People* had to be finished in time for the November opening at Castelli.'[25] Furthermore, many of the early artists' books were published by galleries or art publishers. For example, Sol LeWitt's *Four Basic Kinds of Straight Lines* (1969) was published in London by the magazine *Studio International*; Daniel Buren's *Limites critiques* (1970) was published in Paris by Yvon Lambert; Joseph Kosuth's *Function* (1970) was published in Turin by Sperone Editore; and Richard Long's *From Along a Riverbank* (1971) was published in Amsterdam by Art & Project. Artist James Collins commented on this fact in 1973 when he observed, 'One tenable common denominator among [artists'] books ... is that they've been cosseted by the art system.'[26]

Another characteristic often attributed to artists' books was cheapness. And, indeed, International General's 1971 *Booklist* lists Lawrence Weiner's *Statements* for two dollars, Jan Dibbets' *Robin Redbreast's Territory/Sculpture 1969* (New York: Seth Siegelaub; Cologne/New York: Verlag Gebr. König, 1970) for two dollars, Ruscha's *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* for four dollars, and so on. Whether they were bookworks or just books, the prices were similar. Compared with the cost of even photographs and prints, books were certainly inexpensive. But these low cover prices obscured the fact that substantial capital was often necessary to finance a large edition of an artist's book. It is therefore no accident that many early artists' books were capitalised by art publishers and galleries.

Yet the low cover prices and the large editions perpetuated the idea that artists' books were democratic. This view accorded with the 1960s notion that the preciousness of the unique art object could be overturned by replicability, by books, photographs, multiples, videos and other non-traditional media. But cheapness and numbers do not necessarily guarantee public access or public interest. In 1977 critic

Lucy Lippard argued that one of the attractive aspects of the artist's book was 'its potential accessibility to an audience more varied in taste, class, economic background than that of the art world'.[27] But in another article of the same year, she acknowledged 'a confusion of the characteristics of the medium (cheap, portable, accessible) with those of the actual contents (all too often wildly self-indulgent or so highly specialised that they appeal only to an elite audience)'. She then went on to say, 'One day I'd like to see artists' books ensconced in supermarkets, drugstores and airports.'[28] Remarks like these had a certain resonance in promoting artists' books, but they often became confused with the artists' intentions. While many artists, like Ruscha, were interested in the book as an accessible 'mass-produced product', not many pitched their art toward a mass audience.

Not withstanding the pervasiveness of these foggy generalisations from the '1960s artists' books still have enormous potential. While they can be cheap to buy, they can also be cheap to make (if the production is humble and flexible enough to generate few or many copies).[29] What is more, the book still provides a form familiar to most people. Within the common sequential, diptych format of the codex book, an artist can articulate a fixed but randomly accessible sequence of images and words. This can not only convey a complex narrative, but also a compelling aesthetic experience. Artists' books can be the vehicles for artists' ideas, however abstruse, arcane or unpopular. They can convey artists' perceptions and critiques of society from the humorous to the philosophical, just as art does.

The Spectrum of Artists' Books

What appears to the lay observer as an undifferentiated mass of artists' books might be likened to a beam of white light that is actually composed of many individual colours. These colours are made manifest in the natural world when white light is passed through a prism that refracts each colour to a different degree. Rather than discuss books in terms of, say, their bindings or printing processes, we might use the prism of genre to differentiate some of the many varieties of artists' books. Among the many categories in this spectrum are these: magazine issues and magazineworks; assemblings

and anthologies; writings, diaries, statements and manifestos; visual poetry and wordworks; scores; documentation; reproductions and sketchbooks; albums and inventories; graphic works; comic books; illustrated books; page art, pageworks, and mail art; and book art and bookworks.

Magazine Issues and Magazineworks

Numerous magazines have included art for the page, such as *Schmuck* (Cullompton, England) in the 1970s and *Aqui* (Brooklyn) in the 1980s. Other magazines have made excursions into pageworks, such as *TriQuarterly* (Winter 1975), *Artforum* (see the ads in the December 1976 issue), and *Art Journal* (Summer 1982). And artists have often placed their art in magazines. Daniel Buren, for example, had inserts in *Studio International* (July/August 1970), *Interfunktionen* (no. 12, 1975) and *TriQuarterly* (Winter 1975). But far fewer are the magazines that publish whole issues that are themselves artists' books or bookworks. Two in particular, *Or* (Amherst, Massachusetts) and *Schism* (San Francisco), are both, in a sense, serial artists' books. *Or* has been published by Uncle Don (Milliken) in one shape or form since 1976, and after 20 years over 160 issues have appeared.[30] The individual issues may be the work of Uncle Don or a guest artist or several different contributors, but they are usually held together by the somewhat sardonic, backwards observations and/or graphic wizardry of Uncle Don, whose frequent targets are the press and the art world. *Schism*, published by Janet Janet, had a brief life in the 1980s, and only 14 issues appeared before it stopped in order to observe the Art Strike (1990–1993).[31] Each issue of *Schism* was about 12 pages and presented a series of phrases or images accented by words that generally addressed social or political themes.[32]

Assemblings and Anthologies

The word 'assembling' acquired a specific meaning in the art world in the 1970s, even though it was sometimes simply a synonym for a collection or anthology. However, the difference between an anthology and an assembling is that an anthology is usually shaped consciously by an editor, while an assembler usually exercises little decision-making

regarding specific content. Contributors to an assembling generally send as many copies of their pages as there are to be copies of the publication. And the assembler, having initiated the project, simply collates the results of their solicitation into an edition of the work. Examples of assemblings include the *L.A. Artists' Publication* (North Hollywood), the Ace Space Company's *Notebook 1* and *Space Atlas* (both Victoria, British Columbia), and the magazine *Assembling* (New Brunswick, New Jersey) itself, all from the 1970s. Some anthologies resemble assemblings in their openness or their gatherings. The proto-Fluxus *An Anthology*, first published in 1963 (New York: Heiner Friedrich), has some affinities with an assembling, though the design and typography of George Maciunas make it appear more unified. Although *An Anthology* includes printed art and pageworks, it is more like a book than the two surprise-packet magazines *Aspen* (New York, 1965–1971) and *S.M.S.* (New York, 1968), which are more object-oriented. The anthology *Carl Andre, Robert Barry, Douglas Huebler, Joseph Kosuth, Sol LeWitt, Robert Morris, Lawrence Weiner* ('The Xerox Book') is somewhat similar to an assembling.

Writings, Diaries, Statements and Manifestos

This category is an obvious one, so only a few examples are necessary to plot the terrain. One particularly stimulating example of a collection of an artist's writings is Robert Filliou's *Lehren und Lernen als Auffuehrungskuenste/Teaching and Learning as Performance Arts* (1970, Cologne/New York: Verlag Gebr. König). This is a wide-ranging polyvalent book containing many textual pieces by the artist, including theories, jokes, documentation, interviews and provocative maxims. The book can also be said to be interactive, in that the reader is specifically invited to become a co-author, with space left on many of the pages for readers' contributions. Artists' statements are ubiquitous and sometimes gathered into books or booklets, but true manifestos are not so common. In the recent past Gustav Metzger is one of the few artists to have employed this distinctively avant-garde form (even groups of artists do not seem to issue manifestos with the frequency with which they were utilised earlier in the century). Metzger's manifestos have been republished, along with two seminal essays, in *Damaged Nature*,

Auto-Destructive Art (1996, London: Coracle@workfortheeye-todo). His 1960s manifestos still have bite.

Visual Poetry and Wordworks

One of the streams of art activity that fed in to the origins of the artist's book was visual poetry, or concrete poetry. Visual poets have a far greater awareness of the page than other poets, and sometimes this sensitivity to typography and page layout extends to sequences of pages. A recent collection of work by visual and other poets, edited by Bob Cobbing and Bill Griffiths with Jennifer Pike, is *Verbi Visi Voco: A Performance of Poetry* (1992, London: Writers Forum). After looking through this book it will be apparent that most visual poems, for all their dynamism and punch, are page-works, not sequences of pages leading to an integrated book concept. But it is not so far from the page to the book. Åke Hodell's book *igevär* (Stockholm: Kerberos Forlag, 1963) is an example of visual poetry in which a single word is extended to the length of a book – 34 pages. But the look of Hodell's pages matters; the sequence has movement, a sudden twist and an overall shape. *A History of the Airfields of Lincolnshire* (Docking/London: Coracle Press, 1990) by Simon Cutts has an affinity with *igevär* in that although it is a vertical bookwork it is comprised of one word that runs horizontally right through the book. But whereas Hodell's one word is stretched to fill the book, Cutts' one word, 'poppies', is repeated over and over to draw a single line of words/flowers running across opening after opening.[33] Finally, there are Davi Det Hompson's many books from the 1960s up to 1980; they are not so much books of visual poetry as books of wordworks. A piece such as 'One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight and one-half' in the innocuous-seeming booklet *You Know It Has to Be a Hairpiece* (Richmond, Virginia: Davi Det Hompson, 1977), has obvious links with visual poetry. But the author's careful choice of type and type-size and his particular placement of the phrase on the page turn it into something else. By the time Hompson arrived at *xp-ix* and *11* (both Kansas City: Davi Det Hompson, 1980), his 'image tellings' had not only become spectacularly visual and book-dependent but also had subverted the form of the book.[34]

Scores

Some booklets by John Cage might be considered musical scores, especially since he has been more directly associated with music than with visual art. His *Diary: How to Improve the World (You Will only Make Matters Worse) Continued Part Three (1967)* (West Glover, Vermont: Something Else Press, 1967), for example, or his *Sculpture musicale* (Madrid: Estampa Ediciones, 1991) can be considered scores in the musical sense but they are also wordworks. The very beautiful and apparently random colouration of the meandering cut-up text of the *Diary*, in reds, blues, pinks and purples, emphasises the booklet's status as a visual work. The word 'scores' could apply differently to other artists' books. The pages of Yoko Ono's *Grapefruit* (Tokyo/Bellport, New York: Wunternaum Press, 1964; London: Sphere Books, 1971), for instance, include pieces that she classifies as music, such as 'Earth Piece – Listen to the sound of the earth turning', while among her group of events is included 'Throwing Piece – Throw a stone into the sky high enough so it will not come back'. These instructions are meant as scores for actions that the reader can attempt to perform.[35] Similarly. Lawrence Weiner's *Statements* can be considered a collection of scores. For such projects as 'A field cratered by structured simultaneous TNT explosions' or 'One aerosol can of enamel sprayed to conclusion directly upon the floor', Weiner notes that, '1. an artist may construct the work 2. the work may be fabricated 3. the work need not be built'. The implication is that such statements are scores for possible fabrication, though the author cautions that such actions must be 'consistent with the intent of an artist'.[36] Finally, a poem is, of course, a score for a reader, whether the reader recites the poem silently or out loud. However, a visual poem without words may also be a score. Bob Cobbing and Lawrence Upton have produced a number of such visual works in booklet form, such as *Domestic Ambient Noise: Theme and Variations* (London: Writers Forum, 1995). The pages are generators of sound poetry to be produced in performance.

Documentation

Documentation is the 'accumulation, classification and dissemination of information', or the material record of an act or event. In the visual arts, one major form of documentation is the exhibition catalogue. With the tendency towards dematerialisation of the art object, and the growth of time-based visual art in the 1960s, documentation was forced to move beyond the format of the exhibition catalogue. This provoked another genre of artist's book. Indeed, because so many artworks were becoming ephemeral, documentation of them acquired a double identity, practically standing in for the art. Many of the publications of Seth Siegelaub, for instance, occupied a liminal space between documentation and art. Jan Dibbets' booklet *Roodborst territorium/Sculptuur 1969/Robin Redbreast's Territory/Sculpture 1969* ... documents his attempts to enlarge a robin's territory. He describes how he 'laid out the form of the new territory with small poles, like a drawing on the ground', thereby drawing the robin out beyond the thicket in the Amsterdam park that was its customary habitat. 'The idea was to change, to enlarge the territory into a form that pleased me ... The sculpture was comprised by the movements of the bird between the erected poles.' But he then goes on to say, 'This sculpture-drawing can never be seen in its entirety; only through its documentation can the viewer reconstruct its form in his mind.'[37] Although the book is printed documentation, it approaches the status of art in the absence of the artwork. Similarly, Daniel Buren's *Ponctuations: Statue/Sculpture* (Lyon: Le Nouveau Musée, 1980) records the way that 'statues punctuate the urban landscape in which they stand'. His book functions on one level as a documentation of the statues and public sculpture in the city of Lyon and its environs, that is, as a practical guidebook with maps and locations. But Buren takes this observation further; for the handbook also contains details of his own actions, which involve 'the pedestals of the statues, punctuating them, in a sense, by colouring the base of each statue' with his characteristic stripes. So this is yet another kind of documentation, for it also records the work of Buren in its entirety and in its specifics.[38]

Reproductions and Sketchbooks

Books of reproductions of autonomous artworks are, of course, the backbone of the art book publishing industry. However, as Seth Siegelaub demonstrated, the status of reproductions may change from secondary manifestations of art to primary, depending upon the nature of the artwork. Some works communicate ideas independently of their form of presentation. One group of artists' books that cannot be said to share equal status with the original artworks is that which derives from artists' sketchbooks. The generally graphic works in sketchbooks lend themselves quite well to reproduction. So, for example, the drawings in Claes Oldenburg's *Notes in Hand* (London: Petersburg Press, 1971) derive from his private notebooks, but in published form share the character of both a sketchbook and an autonomous bookwork. The notebook pages were reduced to a quarter of their original size and arranged in a sequence: then 'the colour of each page [was] remade for this book by the artist, influenced by the example of comic books'.[39] So this is something of a new work. A related approach was used by Gary Goldstein in creating *Lotto: An Altered Book* (San Francisco: The Jewish Museum, 1994). Goldstein takes books found in second-hand bookstores and works over every page with bold drawings and deletions, sometimes adding paint, white typewriter-correction fluid, and collaged elements. In *Lotto*, he used one book from a two-volume set devoted to the work of the Italian Renaissance painter Lorenzo Lotto. Goldstein worked from front to back in an improvisatory way, interweaving the narrative of his cartoon-style drawings into and over the chronological flow of Lotto's work. The 2,000 copies of the original single copy of *Lotto: An Altered Book* are, therefore, reproductions of Goldstein's graphic interventions, as well as reproductions of partially obscured reproductions of Lotto's work.[40]

Albums and Inventories

Richard Long makes several types of books, some of which are albums that mingle photographs of works in the open air with photographs of his installations in museums; these books are printed documentation with virtually no text or

narrative qualities. Then there is his book *Countless Stones* (Eindhoven: Van Abbemuseum and Openbaar Kunstbezit, 1983) that documents 'a 21 day footpath walk [in] Central Nepal'. In this album, Long presents a sequence of snapshots of the walk, and in so doing recreates it for the reader.[41] Other artists use the idea of the album to assemble families of images. For example, in *The Telephone Book (with Pearls)* (Ghent: Imschoot, 1988), John Baldessari uses cropped images of movie actors and actresses in relation to telephones and pearls to weave an obscure narrative involving these accessories, while Christian Boltanski brings together the coarse-grained photographic shadows of portraits of past members of *Le Club Mickey* (Ghent: Imschoot, 1991). In *Die-Cut Plug Wiring Diagrams Book* (London: the Artist, 1992), Mark Pawson assembles a family of wiring diagrams that vary immensely, in spite of their affinities. And in his *Fluxus and Friends Going Out for a Drive* (Berlin: Rainer Verlag, 1983), Ben Vautier spoofs the whole idea of the family album by collecting polaroids of goofy toys and figurines and labelling them with the names of the Fluxus 'family'. The photo album has always appealed to visual artists. Felipe Ehrenberg in *Generacion: Libro 1* (Cullompton: Beau Geste Press, 1973) lays out 14 years of his personal history through a series of images taken by anonymous photographers 'at public spots throughout Mexico'. These images have odd affinities with the 'anonymous sculptures' – gas works, water towers and half-timbered houses – clinically depicted by Bernhard and Hilla Becher. Though obtained quite differently, both sets of images are curiously objective.

Graphic Works

Many artists' books are simply collections of graphic work by the artist, often without a narrative impulse. This is simply due to the convenience of the book format in packaging work for a wider public. Such collections are often similar to more conventional artists' monographs, though they generally stem from a do-it-yourself impulse. The proliferation of linear or graphic work among these artists' books can be attributed to the fact that cheap printing methods are kinder to such work. But some artists use the codex book's fixed sequence of pages to give their graphic imagery a serial logic

or even a narrative aspect. Preeminent among artists using this approach is Sol LeWitt. Starting with his first autonomous artist's book, *Four Basic Kinds of Straight Lines*... (London: Studio International, 1969), LeWitt has repeatedly used the book, and the booklet, to articulate sequences of graphic works (and serial photographic works). LeWitt makes everything clear by declaring his vocabulary to the reader at the outset, and then exploring the logical permutations of these elements. Artists who work on or with the land in remote places around the world sometimes utilise books to create graphic narratives relating to these works. For example, Hamish Fulton's *Twilight Horizons* (London: Coracle Press for Bordeaux, 1983) relates specifically to a walk he made in Nepal. But the book recreates the walk through words and graphics, not through photographs, as might be expected.[42]

For a long time, Lawrence Weiner used only words in his books. But around 1984 he devised a new form of graphic language that has since become ubiquitous in his work. The bookwork that announced this step was *Factors in the Scope of Distance* (Antwerp: ADD, 1984). Ostensibly an alphabet book, with a comic book flavour due to the lettering, the colour and the printing, it does not actually work in this way. The letters do not refer to identifiable objects that can be alphabetised by their names. Dieter Schwarz states that the imagery is not illustrative but is a 'statement of the artist rendered in the context of watching a ship in the distance'.[43] He also relates these graphics to Weiner's now-familiar phrase 'We are ships at sea not ducks on a pond.' This book is the most graphic and the most abstract of Weiner's books.

Comic Books

The status of comic books in the world of artists' books is awkward, because comic books are arguably the most successful verbi-visual book form with which artists of one sort or another are associated, and yet they have a quite separate existence. The comic books that have achieved a presence in the art world, such as Art Spiegelman's *Maus* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986/1991), do not stand out as prominently in the world of comic books. There are many such books on serious themes available outside the artist's book arena, for example, *Breaking Free* by J[ack] Daniels

(London: Attack International, 1989). The cover of this book states that its title derives from the series 'The Adventures of Tintin'. But actually, it is a revolutionary tract that appropriates the familiar Tintin characters and incorporates them into a powerful story of opposition to capitalism. Similarly, the dynamic collaborations of Harvey Pekar and R. Crumb in the comic *American Splendor* from the 1970s (later anthologised in the 1990s) (Cleveland Heights. Ohio: Harvey Pekar, 1976 onwards) cannot be matched by artists' books that use the comic-book form. And yet the comic strip, like the movies, is a pervasive influence on all aspects of the visual arts. The work of Dieter Roth in *246 Little Clouds* and Tomas Schmit in *Katalog Tomas Schmit: Band II* (Berlin: Daadgalerie/Hanover: Sprengel Museum, 1987) exhibits connections with comics. And, of course, it was Roth who created *Bok 3B* in 1961 (remade in 1974 as *Bok 3B and Bok 3D* [Stuttgart: Edition Hansjörg Mayer]), a classic bookwork made by cutting piles of comics into squares, cutting holes in these pages, and gluing the random collations into an edition of new books.

Illustrated Books

Illustration has offered artists gainful employment for centuries, and one of the most common forms of artists' books is the illustrated book. But because artists' books of the 1960s and 1970s were often opposed to both the limited-edition illustrated books associated with the School of Paris and the stagnant fine-press tradition, it was inferred that artists' books were not illustrated books. In fact, many artists' books are simply illustrated books. They may not be expensive or lavish, they may not illustrate great literature or poems, and they may not alternate text and image, but they are comprised of images produced in response to a pre-existing text. For example, *My Pretty Pony* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988) by Barbara Kruger and Stephen King, which originated as a limited-edition luxury book, is a surprisingly conventional illustrated book. There is little evidence of collaboration: the text could be read separately with no loss while the striking illustrations have little meaning on their own. This is a prominent example of a backward-looking contemporary illustrated trade book.

A much cheaper (at an original price of less than two dollars) and more integrated illustrated trade book is the 1967 paperback edition of *The Medium Is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects* by Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore (New York: Bantam Books, 1967), produced by Jerome Agel. Here, the graphic designer, Quentin Fiore, is given top billing with the author because of the book's genuine marriage of text and image. This paperback was a characteristic product of the late 1960s. A more recent collaboration of this kind is the chunky *S, M, L, XL: Small, Medium, Large, Extra-Large* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1995) by Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau, edited by Jennifer Sigler; this amazing illustrated book would not just be impoverished without its visual component, it would not exist. In *How to Avoid the Future Tense* (Banff: Walter Phillips Gallery, 1991) Liz Magor and Joey Morgan disassociate the illustrations from the text. The images appear to be telling such a different story from the text that the reader can only regard the text as memory emanating from the circumstances of the visual narrative. The use of transparent overlays to carry the text seems to confirm this interpretation. Overlays are used in another illustrated book, *If You Sleep On Your Other Side It Will Go Away* (Atlanta, Georgia: Nexus Press, 1991), by Pattie Belle Hastings. But here the translucent negative images of brain sections remind the reader of the site of the narrative, while the opaque pages of the book carry both images and text. The repetitions of image and phrase and the fragments of narratives successfully evoke the drifting into and out of the dream state that the artist is investigating. This union of text and image is very different from the separate but unequal status of illustrations in the past. Finally, the images in *Paradoxic Mutations* (Purchase, New York: SUNY, 1994), by Margot Lovejoy with Clifton Meador, turn the idea of illustration on its head. In this book, the customary dominance of the text is overturned by the powerful imagery, its printing, and the ingenious structure of the book. In fact, this is really a visual book illustrated with words.

Page Art, Pageworks and Mail Art

An illuminated manuscript is an example of page art, and many so-called illuminated books from all ages amount to

small collections of such pageworks often sparsely distributed among pages of text. Tom Phillips' *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1987) is a striking contemporary example of such a collection. Phillips found the source book for this work by employing chance: it was the first 'coherent' book that he found for three pence – a few cents. The book he lighted on was *A Human Document* by W. H. Mallock, published in 1892. Phillips then proceeded to delete 'unwanted words' selectively, and later to paint elaborate deletions that took on a life of their own. Out of this improvisation, fragments of the original text were composed into new entities. Eventually, one of each of the pages of *A Human Document,* worked on at different times and from several copies, was assembled into *A Humument,* and a trade edition was published in full colour. But while the pages are arranged in their original numerical order, each of Phillips's versions of Mallock's pages stands brilliantly alone, an album of illuminated numbered pages linked only by the original source and the artist's style.[44] Pageworks are often published in magazines as site-specific printed works by artists, and sometimes they are virtually indistinguishable from illustrations. Another form of pagework is mail art, or, in the hands of the master, Ray Johnson, correspondence art. Johnson typically used the single page as an arena for the wildest Conceptual pirouettes, each drawn impeccably and available for replication either by Xerox or by offset. He often included three or four copies of original pages in a mailing that might seem to have been arbitrarily collated, but which actually had a Johnsonian connectivity. He also liked to call certain highly dispersed mailings, or serial mailings, books. *The Book About Death* was a series of about 13 separate pages sent initially in the 1960s, and apparently randomly, to many people, few of whom received the whole set – or book.[45]

Book Art and Bookworks

Individual bookworks may be classified in this separate composite category of 'book art', but their various predominant characteristics often allow them to be pigeonholed in other genres at the same time, as will have been evident. *Structure, Content, Sequence* (Washington, DC: Pyramid Atlantic, 1988)

by Regina Rodrigues is a simple, beautifully made book. It is rather didactic, though, since it focuses on the repeated mantra 'structure develops/content requires/sequence affects'. These pairs of words are developed typographically through several pages, using the space of the page. The sequence then becomes compacted in the centre of the page, before being completely excised. This moment, in the middle of the book, triggers a change of style and rhythm: the words are suddenly repeated in many different sizes and scattered all over the page. Then, the typographic cacophony ceases, and the reader is gently led out of the book through simple columnar shapes to the back cover. At the end, one realises that there is a distinct connection between the back cover and the front cover – so the whole process may recommence. This little book could be placed in the wordworks category, but it is more than visual poetry, for it offers an experience that is dependent upon the codex form. And even though it may register low on the scale of content, its emphasis on the trinity 'structure/content/sequence' makes it a bookwork both in form and content.

So, at the end of the rainbow, there is a crock of book-works. But before leaving this spectrum of types of artists' books, it should be said that this taxonomy was adopted primarily to illuminate the range of publications that can be embraced under the rubric of artists' books – both books and artworks. This schema could be filled out with many more examples, as well as revised, enlarged and abridged. There are undoubtedly other ways of cutting up this cake, ones that might serve to reveal other useful characteristics of artists' books and book art. This classification by genre is offered as simply a provisional structure to begin to sort out this diverse and still expanding area.

[1] 'Jackson Pollock's Library', in Francis V. O'Connor and Eugene V. Thaw, *Jackson Pollock: A Catalogue Raisonné of Paintings. Drawings and Other Works* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978), vol. 4, p. 193.

[2] I am arguing for the simplest definition of artist's book and of 'livre d'artiste'. While the phrase 'livre d'artiste' has a history in English as a near synonym for 'livre de luxe', it is slowly being abandoned because of confusion generated in the context of the international phenomenon of the cheap artist's book. Later in the text, precise terms are defined.

[3] The catalogue for this exhibition is *Artists Books* (Philadelphia: Moore College of Art, 1973). There was a second showing of the exhibition at the University Art Museum, Berkeley, in 1974.

[4] Ruscha also made 'book objects' in 1961. See 'Chronology', in *The Works of Edward Ruscha* (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1982), p. 159. See also Philip Leider, 'Twentysix Gasoline Stations', *Artforum*, 2, no. 3. (September 1963), p. 57. In this early review, Leider says that Ruscha's book appears 'doomed to oblivion', but that he feels obliged 'to document its existence, record its having been here, in the same way ... [that] other pages [of the magazine] record and document the ephemeral existence of exhibitions'.

[5] See Clive Phillpot, 'Twentysix Gasoline Stations that Shook the World: The Rise and Fall of Cheap Booklets As Art', *Art Libraries Journal*, 18, no. 1 (1993), p. 6. Here p. 144–165.

[6] But Ruscha said, 'I want absolutely neutral material. My pictures are not that interesting, nor the subject matter. They are simply a collection of "facts"; my book is more like a collection of "readymades".' Quoted in John Coplans, 'Concerning *Various Small Fires*–Edward Ruscha Discusses His Perplexing Publications', *Artforum*, 3, no. 5 (February 1965), p. 24–25. This interview is a key document.

[7] Ibid., p. 25.

[8] Ibid.

[9] For a discussion of the small differences in format, see Phillpot, 'Twentysix Gasoline Stations ... ', p. 12, note 16. Here p. 151.

[10] For other artists who were working in related ways, see ibid., p. 7–10. Here p. 155–165.

[11] Stanley Brouwn had made books as early as 1964, but those books seem to be unique. See Thomas Kellein, *'Frohliche Wissenschaft' Das Archiv Sohm* (Stuttgart: Sttaatsgalerie, 1986), p. 113; and Harry Ruhé, *Fluxus: the Most Radical and Experimental Art Movement of the Sixties* (Amsterdam: A, 1979), p. 3.

[12] Seth Siegelaub, 'Some Remarks on So-Called "Conceptual Art"', in Claude Gintz et al, *L'Art conceptuel, une perspective* (Paris: Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1989), p. 91.

[13] In Dieter Schwarz, *Lawrence Weiner, Books 1968–1989: Catalogue Raisonné* (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König; Villeurbanne: Le Nouveau Musée, 1989), p. 136. Contrary to Claude Gintz in *L'Art conceptuel*, p. 91, Schwarz maintains that Siegelaub showed Huebler after Weiner's book was published, p. 186, note 23.

[14] At about the same time, other artists, such as Ian Burn and Hanne Darboven were also using xerography to make books.

[15] Siegelaub, 'Some Remarks ... ', p. 91–92.

[16] Ibid., p. 92.

[17] Quoted in Lucy R. Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (New York: Praeger; London: Studio Vista, 1973), p. 125. Interestingly, Ruscha's *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* was advertised in fliers for Siegelaub's International General book publishing and distribution company in 1971, along with seven other of Ruscha's books, Weiner's *Statements*, various Siegelaub publications, and artists' books by Jan Dibbets, Mario Merz, Allen Ruppersberg and N.E. Thing Co.

[18] Schwarz, *Lawrence Weiner, Books ...* , p. 143.

[19] Ibid., p. 147.

[20] 'On Exhibitions and the World at Large: Seth Siegelaub in Conversation with Charles Harrison', *Studio International* (London) 178, no. 917 (December 1969), p. 202.

[21] Donald Judd, 'Statement', in the exhibition catalogue *Primary Structures Younger American and British Sculptors* (New York: The Jewish Museum, 1966). This assertion, often called 'Judd's Dictum', is reprinted in *Donald Judd Complete Writings, 1959–1975* (Halifax: Press of Nova Scotia College of Art & Design/ New York: New York University Press, 1975), p. 190. (Judd's preceding sentence is '"Non-art", "anti-art", "non-art art", and "anti-art art" are useless.' This alters the meaning of the dictum quoted in isolation.) See also, for example, Philip Pilkington and David Rushton, 'Introduction: Don Judd's Dictum and its Emptiness', in *Analytical Art* (Coventry), no. 1 (July 1971), p. 2–6 (where the phrase is misquoted). Judd's 'Dictum' can be compared with this statement by Dan Flavin, also from 1966: 'Art is what a self-recognised artist thinks it to be. A generosity of his communicable results is not even implied.' Quoted in *Dan Flavin: Three installations in Fluorescent Light/Drei Installationen in fluoreszierendem Light* (Cologne: Kunsthalle Köln, 1973), p. 89.

[22] *Sculpture by Richard Long Made for Martin & Mia Visser, Bergeijk* (no place, no publisher, no date). In conversation, Richard Long referred to this book as a 'bootlegged' work (New York Public Library, March 24, 1994).

[23] 'Introduction,' *Art-Language: The Journal of Conceptual Art* (Coventry), 1, no. 1 (May 1, 1969), p. 3.

[24] Ibid., p. 13.

[25] '" ... a kind of a huh?' An Interview with Edward Ruscha by Willoughby Sharp', *Avalanche*, no. 7 (Winter/Spring 1973), p. 32.

[26] See James Collins, 'Klaus Rinke ... William Haney ... "Artists' Books," Pratt Graphics Center', *Artforum*, 12, no. 4 (December 1973), p. 86. Collins also wrote, presumably in response to the 1973 *Artists Books* exhibition: 'The grossly inflated status of the book as the important new art form of the 60s has been deflated to its proper place as but one of many notational forms available to visual art–alongside film, video and photography. The hysteria surrounding the promotion of "book as artwork" has thankfully subsided.' It is interesting that he characterises the level of enthusiasm for artists' books in 1973 as 'hysteria'. This term suggests that artists' books (and their promotion) must have been highly conspicuous in New York at the time, even though virtually no critical literature on the phenomenon then existed.

[27] In Lucy R. Lippard, 'Surprises: An Anthological Introduction to Some Women Artists' Books', *Chrysalis*, no. 5 (1977), p. 71.

[28] In Lucy R. Lippard, 'The Artist's Book Goes Public,' *Art in America*, 65, no. 1 (January/February 1977), p. 41.

[29] For instance, if the book maquette can be Xeroxed or computer-generated, copies can be made as needed and bound at reasonable expense. Some books can be distributed, the response can be gauged, costs recouped, more books printed and so on. Thus an open edition can be set in motion.

[30] The December 1988 issue of *Or* (no. 120, 'Orology') catalogues and describes all issues of *Or* up to and including, number 120.

[31] The 14 issues of *Schism* are numbered 11–24 (1985–1989). In March 1992, the editor wrote: 'Clive Clive. I never realised that you never realised that I started at #11 ... [i.e. one/one] an old conceptual trick, love J. J.'

[32] The adopted names of the editors of *Or* and *Schism* suggest that the two magazines might have an affinity with mail art; indeed, they could also be considered a special form of mail art.

[33] For more on Åke Hodell's books, see Phillpot, 'Twentysix Gasoline Stations … ', p. 9. Here p. 157–159.

[34] For more on Davi Det Hompson's books see *Davi Det Hompson* (New York: Bound & Unbound, 1991). Here p. 138–143.

[35] Yoko Ono, *Grapefruit* (London: Sphere Books 1971). First published: Tokyo and New York, 1964.

[36] Schwarz, p. 94. Also in 1968, Robert Filliou enunciated his three-part 'Principle of Equivalence', whereby something may be (1) well made, (2) badly made (3) not made. See Robert Filliou, *Lebren und Lernen als Auffuebrungskuenste/ Teaching and Learning As Performance Arts*, (Cologne/New York: Verlag Gebr. König, 1970), p. 227.

[37] In Jan Dibbets, *Roodborst Territorium/Sculptuur 1969/Robin Redbreast's Territory/Sculpture 1969* (Cologne/New York: Seth Slegelaub/Verlag Gebr. König, 1970), p. 7.

[38] 'On Statuary', in *Daniel Buren: Autour de 'Ponctuations'* (Lyon: Le Nouveau Musée, 1980), pamphlet published with *Daniel Buren, Ponctuations: Statue/Sculpture* (Lyon: Le Nouveau Musée, 1980).

[39] Text on the inside flap of the front cover of Claes Oldenburg, *Notes in Hand* (London: Petersburg Press, 1971).

[40] For more on *Lotto* see the essays in *Lotto: An Altered Book by Gary Goldstein–An Introductory Supplement* (San Francisco: The Jewish Museum, 1994), pamphlet published with Gary Goldstein, *Lotto: An Altered Book* (San Francisco: The Jewish Museum, 1994).

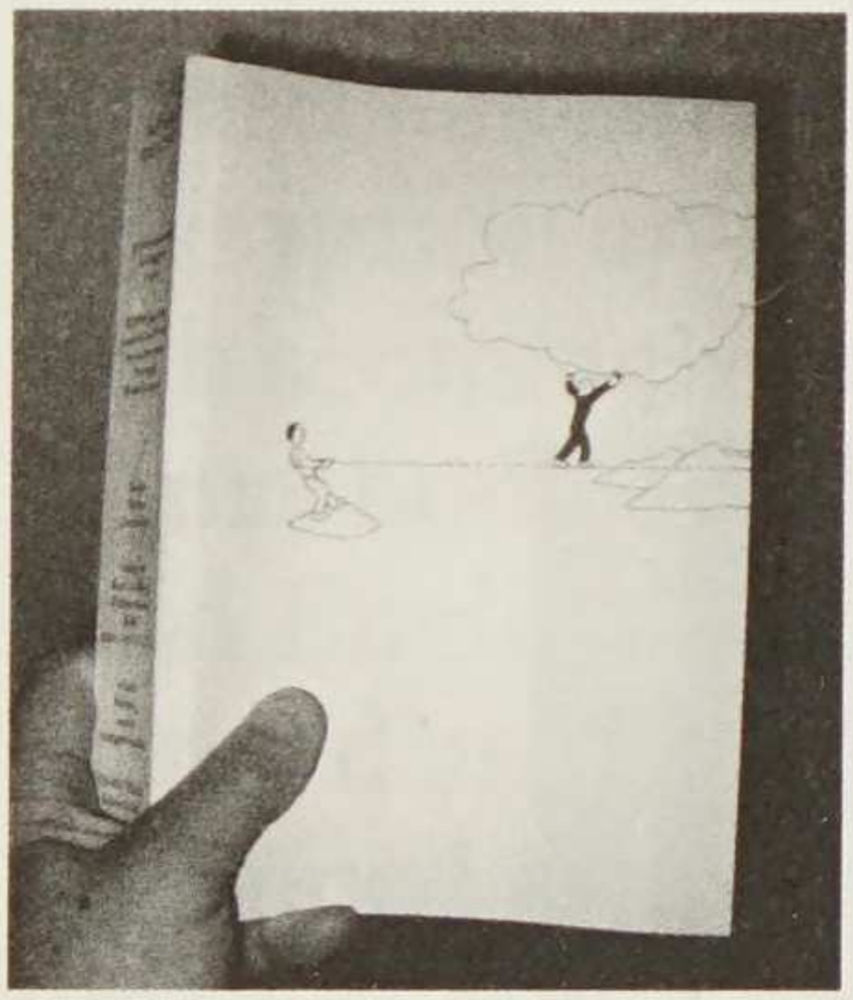
[41] From the title page of Richard Long, *Countless Stones: A 21 Day Footpath Walk, Central Nepal, 1983* (Eindhoven: Van Abbemuseum, 1983). For a list of all Long's 'publications' to 1986, see R. H. Fuchs, *Richard Long* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Thames & Hudson, 1986).

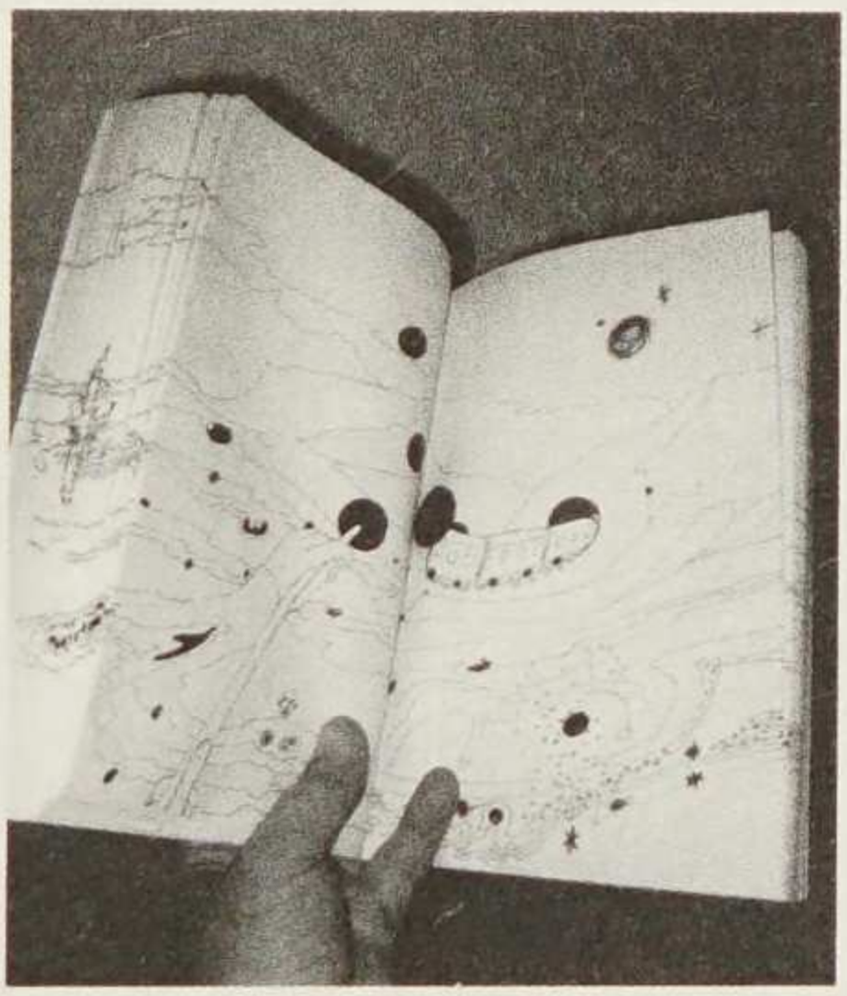
[42] In contrast to Richard Long's *Countless Stones*, though both books relate to journeys made in Nepal in 1983. Together?

[43] Schwarz, *Lawrence Weiner, Books …* , p. 176.

[44] In a postscript to 'Notes on *A Humument*', Phillips suggests that there is a 'central figure', Bill Toge ('Toge' being derived by partial deletion of the words 'together' or 'altogether'). But his appearances do not add up to a narrative.

[45] For more on Johnson's books see Clive Phillpot, 'Two Printed Books by Ray Johnson', in *Lightworks* (Birmingham, Michigan) no. 22 (2000). Here p. 234–243.



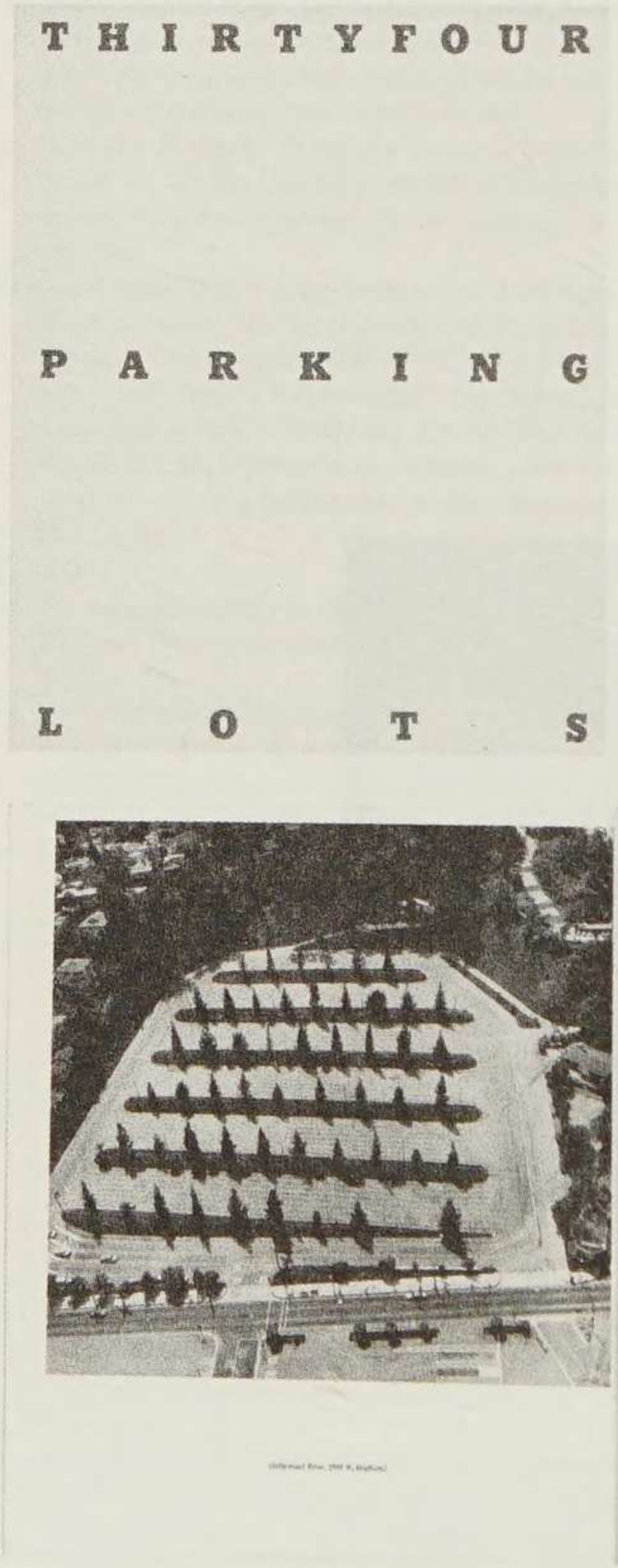


Jan Voss, *Detour* (Amsterdam: Boekie Woekie; Cologne: König; Stuttgart: Edition Hansjörg Mayer, 1989)

Ed Ruscha: Sixteen Books and Then Some

First published in Siri Engberg, *Edward Ruscha: Editions 1959–1999: Catalogue Raisonné* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1999).

When I was preparing my paper on 'Twentysix Gasoline Stations That Shook the World' in 1992, I wrote to Ed Ruscha and asked him 16, sometimes multiple, questions about *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*. He replied briefly in 1994. I wrote again with the same questions in 1995 when I was working on *Artist/Author*. Time went by. Then in 1998 I learned that I was top of Ed's and the Walker Art Center's list of prospective writers about the books for their catalogue raisonné of his prints and books. So I finally got to ask these questions in a telephone conversation later the same year.



Edward Ruscha, *Thirtyfour Parking Lots in Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: Ruscha, 1967)

While there is nothing very new about artists being involved in book making, Edward Ruscha was responsible for a significant shift in the practice. His first book, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, was an uncompromising, nonliterary book in which the images did not simply enhance a text. This slight volume was an artwork that utilised the commonplace codex book form. In time this book, and others by Ruscha and his successors, acquired the appellation 'artist's books'. This phrase was adopted partly as simple description and partly to distinguish such seemingly ordinary books from luxury books, frequently referred to in English-speaking countries as 'livres d'artistes', especially those produced earlier in the century by Picasso, Matisse, Chagall, Miró and others. However, the common paperback book was quickly taken up by artists both as an art form and as a container for photographs, texts or documentation of conceptual, ephemeral or remote works.

Consequently, it has become necessary to sort through the varieties of inexpensive artist's books in order to distinguish between artworks – or bookworks – like Ruscha's books and other types that do not aspire to the status of art.

It is difficult to find precedents for Ruscha's books. Artists such as Leandro Katz on one continent and Åke Hodell on another, to take only two examples, were making artist's books before 1963, but the origins of their books were more literary: the illustrated book and visual poetry, respectively.[1] Although Ruscha has not really volunteered precedents for his work, he has said that he had always been attracted to artists' involvement with books, and came to them himself through several sources: 'I was a printer's devil for a while; I set type and did that sort of thing. I liked the slowness of the craft, and I liked printing. I even took commercial-art courses at Chouinard [Art Institute] … But I was always interested in small books, and I travelled to Europe and saw books over there very unlike the ones here. I just like the feel of them. It's basically aesthetic. I … like books – not to collect them but to look at them, feel the pages.'[2] Commenting further on his experience of European books during his 1961 visit, Ruscha said, 'It's not a specific kind of book, it's books in general that I began to see, especially in Paris, on the street in those little bookstalls. The books themselves were very distinctive, compared to anything American-made. They had some sort of odd, non-commercial look … a strange kind of sober design, including the typography and the binding and everything, so it was not the world of fine books that I was introduced to in Europe so much as just the stuff on the street.'[3]

Surprisingly, in this context, Ruscha has made specific mention of West Coast artist Wallace Berman, who produced issues of his heterogeneous publication *Semina* from 1955 to 1964, and with whom Ruscha exchanged books. 'We hit it off immediately', Ruscha has recalled, 'but we had nothing in common as far as our approaches to making a book. Mine was industrial; his was personal – making it on his own press, binding it himself, carefully handing it to somebody. He had a different aesthetic, but there are still a lot of similarities.'[4] At that time, too, he was the only artist Ruscha knew who made books.

Ruscha has suggested one other source for his conceptual and aesthetic approach: 'Munro Leaf is somebody who

has influenced me. He was a cartoonist who made big, square books for kindergartners and first graders. The title would be something like *Good Morning* and you'd open the book up and there would be little stick figures inside going through their little routines of teethbrushing and so forth.'[5] Leaf is perhaps best known for his children's book *The Story of Ferdinand*, but the title of another of his books is very suggestive in the context of Ruscha's work: *Three-and-Thirty Watchbirds*. However, it is likely that a book such as *Arithmetic Can Be Fun* was at least as influential.[6]

Edward Ruscha was born in 1937 in Omaha, Nebraska, but grew up in Oklahoma City. At the age of 18 he moved to Los Angeles to go to art school and has lived there ever since. Many commentators have emphasised the relevance of Los Angeles to Ruscha's work, and vice versa, but it seems equally significant that he was an 'Okie' who had transplanted himself to the 'Garden of Eden' that was Los Angeles.[7] Furthermore, many of Ruscha's closest friends and peers in Los Angeles had also migrated from Oklahoma, namely Joe Goode, Mason Williams and Jerry McMillan, so the Okie sensibility would not have disappeared overnight.

Ruscha returned five or six times a year to Oklahoma City to see his parents and, after the death of his father in 1959, continued to visit his mother regularly. He drove mostly along old Route 66 (now largely replaced by Route 40).[8] On one such visit to Oklahoma, he had a 'brainstorm in the middle of the night to do this little book called *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*'.[9] The title came first, Ruscha said, before he even thought about the pictures. 'I like the word "gasoline" and I like the specific quality of "twentysix". If you look at the book you will see how well the typography works – I worked on all that before I took the photographs. Not that I had an important message about photographs or gasoline, or anything like that – I merely wanted a cohesive thing.'[10] This apparently simple book of gas stations fleshes out a dotted line that links his adopted home to the hometown of his formative years.

Twentysix Gasoline Stations was conceived in 1962 and published in April 1963 in an edition of 400 copies, each one numbered by hand in red ink, so that 'each copy a person might buy would have an individual place in the edition.'[11] The delay from conception to execution was due, at least in

part, to Ruscha's experimentation with format. 'The printer helped me settle on the size', he said. 'We sat down and went over several papers, figured size and spoilage … Then, with a half inch here and there to play with, I came up with that size. So the format came out of personal design, taste, aesthetics, but only within the confines of the economics and the practical factors involved. It was a matter of completely happy compromises to get something that was satisfactory. My decisions have never been nerve-racking decisions; they're mostly practical, simple and easy. All my books have been free-flowing things; there's no tortured artist in these books.'[12]

But in a 1973 interview, in apparent contradiction, he had said, 'Months went into the planning … I could have saved myself a lot of trouble by loosening up. You know, not gotten so concerned with how I wanted the thing to look. I changed the format about 50 times at the printer's. I couldn't decide what I wanted.'[13] Ruscha also recalls taking 'at least 50, but maybe 60' photographs of gas stations for the book before editing them to correspond with the title. After this experience, however, he photographed no more subjects than a title required, for he came to realise that such editing involved aesthetic choices.[14] Ruscha fabricated his later books in a more deliberate manner in terms of the number of photographs produced and published, though these books do not appear to possess the same kind of underlying emotional link connecting the corpus of images that were eventually distilled to fit the title of his first book.

Twentysix Gasoline Stations weighed in at 3 3/4ounces, had 48 pages, measured 7 1/16 by 5 1/2 inches, and bore its title in three lines of equal length in a bold red serif typeface on the front cover; the spine of this paperback booklet also bore the title in red.[15] A semitransparent glassine dust jacket was added, partly as an elaboration of the design and partly because the paper chosen for the cover easily became dirty after handling, but also, perhaps, as an echo of the paperbacks that Ruscha first saw in Paris.[16]

With his first book, Ruscha established a new paradigm for artist's books that stood in opposition not only to hand-printed books but also to the 'livres de luxe' common earlier in the century. In the case of such luxury books, artists generally used autographic print media to illustrate

texts by poets and others, often long dead, for the delectation of bibliophiles. By contrast, here was a book – primarily visual, comprising nondescript photos of gas stations, assembled by a visual artist, printed carefully but not slickly, and susceptible to reprinting – that could slip into any bookstore, or pocket, and be marketed like any other paperback. The fact that Ruscha also quickly abandoned the initial numbering or signing of his books further separated them from the tradition of 'fine press' and luxury books.[17]

Reflecting on the achievement of *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* ten years after publication, Ruscha said, 'I realised for the first time that this book had an inexplicable thing I was looking for, and that was a kind of a "huh?" That's what I've always worked around. All it is, is a device to disarm somebody with my particular message.'[18] The reception of *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* was mixed. Ruscha showed the book to a gasoline station attendant and he was amused, but others were at a loss, some even outraged.[19] As Ruscha has said, 'A lot of my work is actually met with real head-scratching. For example, when I first did the book on gasoline stations, people would look at it and say, "Are you kidding or what? Why are you doing this?" In a sense, that's what I was after; I was after the head-scratching.'[20] Others thought it was great: 'One girl bought three copies, one for each of her boyfriends. She said it would be a great gift for them, since they had everything already.'[21]

Another view was put forward in 1963 in the magazine *Artforum*, then in its second year. Managing Editor Philip Leider said, 'The book is so curious, and so doomed to oblivion that there is an obligation, of sorts, to document its existence, record its having been here, in the same way, almost, as other pages [of the magazine] record and document the ephemeral existence of exhibitions which are mounted, shown, and then broken up forever.'[22] Meanwhile, there had been a negative response from the establishment that piqued Ruscha sufficiently for him to challenge this judgment and attempt to turn it around. He took out an advertisement in *Artforum* shortly after, which stated in bold capitals over an image of a hand holding a copy of *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, 'REJECTED/Oct. 2, 1963 by the/Library of Congress/ Washington 25, D.C.'[23] This was followed by details for ordering the book that included the address of his self-publishing

company, National Excelsior, and the enterprising New York bookseller Wittenborn & Company.[24]

The number 'twentysix' immediately suggests the 26 letters of the English alphabet. Perhaps *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* is an alphabet book? Yet, if one plots all 26 gas stations sequentially from A to Z along a map of the old Route 66 from Los Angeles to Oklahoma City, one finds that in the book this alphabet becomes jumbled. The sequence of images reads instead: ABECDIGHJKLFMNOPQSTUWRX-YZV. It is easy to guess why the 22nd gas station has been placed at the end, even though it is in Texas, for it is a Fina station – obviously Ruscha had seen some foreign films through to the end. And yet, when asked in 1981 whether he had purposely chosen this closing image, he said, 'No. To me it was just a collection of pictures and I more or less kept them in place.'[25]

Five of the photographs in *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* are out of geographic sequence. One might conclude that they were moved around to improve the visual sequencing, for two night shots have been brought together, and two double spreads have been separated. But Ruscha expressed his concern at the time that the pictures also had to be in a sequence that would not lead to 'a mood taking over'.[26] One might assume that after he had reduced the 50 or 60 photographs to 26, had 'changed the format about 50 times', laid the photos out, and perhaps tweaked the order to dispel 'a mood', he finally added the captions, even though they would reveal that the book was not quite the 'travelogue' he has suggested, since it did not conclude in Oklahoma City.[27] But what Ruscha said he had in mind by ending the book in Texas was that 'it was like going out in a certain direction and then backtracking … I wanted something to appear kind of awkward there, almost like a coda.'[28]

After nearly two years had passed, Ruscha had had enough time to assess the significance of this prime example of an artist's book, or bookwork. 'One of the purposes of my book has to do with making a mass-produced object,' he said. 'The final product has a very commercial, professional feel to it. I am not in sympathy with the whole area of hand-printed publications, however sincere.'[29]

As well as striving for a 'head-scratching, mass-produced' book without a 'mood', Ruscha once remarked, 'I had

a vision that I was being a great reporter when I did the gas stations … I didn't want to be allegorical or mystical or anything like that.'[30] But he also acknowledged that 'as an artist I had to pick a subject that I considered art, so that was my choice. I could have picked flowers, or graveyards, or headstones … I don't know why I picked gas stations, except that they had been unreported.' (He also has said that if he had stayed in Oklahoma City, he might have chosen oil wells.[31]) But as much as this is a book of pictures of filling stations, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* is also a book of signs. One of Ruscha's attractions to gas stations as a subject may have been the often enormous words on the signs at such locations. A person interested in manmade artefacts and vernacular architecture who drives for hours through the landscapes between American cities is likely to take an interest in the corporate and homemade signs that spring up around scattered stores and habitations.

Twentysix Gasoline Stations was published in the spring of 1963. In the fall of that year, Walter Hopps' Duchamp retrospective *By or of Marcel Duchamp or Rrose Sélavy* opened at the Pasadena Art Museum; this was the occasion of a meeting between Ruscha and Duchamp. In his *Artforum* review a month before the opening of the exhibition, Philip Leider had cited Duchamp in connection with Ruscha's first book, though without referring to the idea of the 'readymade': 'Not quite a joke, the idea is at least as complex as the puns and issues posed by Duchamp's urinal …'[32] Much later, in 1989, Ruscha said, 'The readymade was more or less a guiding light to me, the idea of calling something a work of art. It's not necessarily that the artist has the freedom to call anything he wants art; it was another side that intrigued me – I suppose it's an extension of a readymade in photographic form … The photograph by itself doesn't mean anything to me; it's the gas station that's the important thing.'[33] This does suggest a Duchampian preoccupation with the given, and the context, but Ruscha's connection with the older artist is probably much simpler, for when asked about Duchamp's most significant contribution, he said, 'He discovered common objects and showed you could make art out of them.'[34] This statement could apply to most of Ruscha's books.

The layout of *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* is quite varied, though half of the gas stations are portrayed simply in single

square images on the upper right-hand page of a spread. These layouts are interspersed with three full-page spreads, two spreads with one photo on either page, two spreads with one smaller photo on the right-hand page, and two other variants. (Incidentally, when asked, Ruscha confirmed that a number of photographs had been cropped: 'Yes, but that arises from the consciousness of layout in the book.'[35]) When his second book, *Various Small Fires*, was published in 1964, the layout thus seemed more pedestrian; every photograph is square and is placed on the upper right-hand side of each spread. In other ways, however, this book is not so predictable.

The cover of *Various Small Fires* was similar in design to that of the first book, though this time the lettering was printed in black. It, too, had a glassine dust jacket, the same dimensions, and even though it was minimally thinner, weighed the same. The words on the cover were also set in a similar typeface, but this time the letters were all the same size, and arranged so that the words were all the same length. Beyond the front cover, the title page announced that the full title of the book was *Various Small Fires and Milk* – the last two words in italics. A conspicuous difference from the first book was that the first 15 of the 16 photographs, which were all pictures of fires, had been tinted with a yellow varnish, whereas the final photo depicting the glass of milk was simply printed in black and white. Finally, there were more blank spreads at the end of the book than one would have expected to find.[36]

Ruscha took the pictures for the book himself only after experiencing a lack of success in finding stock photographs of fires. It was not important to him who took the photographs; it was simply a matter of convenience.[37] Thus this book was, or would have been, more of a readymade than was *Twentysix Gasoline Stations.* In addition, there is no apparent reason why 15 fires were documented rather than, say, 18 – which would have filled some of the blank spreads in the book. As for the title not being *Fifteen Small Fires*, Ruscha explained that, 'it was a variation on being specific … so "various" still keeps it in the ballpark of numbering something.'[38]

Just as Ruscha has never precisely explained why he chose to make a book about filling stations, and why he

featured 26 of them, so he has not really explained why he made a book of small fires and milk. (Though this is also the year of his painting *Damage*, in which the letterforms are ablaze.) All he has said is, 'My painting of a gas station with a magazine [referring to *Standard Station 10¢ Western Being Torn in Half* of 1964] has a similar idea. The magazine is irrelevant, tacked on to the end of it. In a like manner, milk seemed to make the book more interesting and gave it cohesion.'[39]

Ruscha's reference to apparently incongruous elements in his large paintings (a magazine, a newspaper or a pencil, often painted actual size) indicates that the non sequitur of the glass of milk at the end of *Various Small Fires* was not so anomalous. Ruscha has attempted to explain these: 'A yapping puppy running through a church full of people listening to a sermon is one thought – or it could be a priest walking quietly into a kennel of barking dogs. Unlike thoughts or objects inserted at the end, or out of the way from a main dominant theme.'[40] More such non sequiturs would be utilised in later books, such as the broken drinking glass that concludes the book *Nine Swimming Pools* (1968). Ruscha has denied that fire and milk had anything to do with indigestion, as was once suggested, though he acknowledged his thorough belief in the powers of 'absurdity and paradox'.[41]

The unusual number of blank pages in *Various Small Fires* is repeated and even exceeded in some of the later books. This characteristic, whereby an idea is pushed no further than it need go, as well as his tendency to include like with unlike, exempts Ruscha from the company of those artists, such as Bernd and Hilla Becher, who make books that visually classify collections of similar objects, or true serial artists, such as Sol LeWitt, who exhaustively explore in their books the ramifications of ideas. Ruscha marches to a different drummer. On occasion he has referred to dreams and his 'blind faith' in his ideas, whatever their origin, as sources for his works.

His third book, *Some Los Angeles Apartments*, published in 1965 with a green typographic cover, returned to the more varied page layouts of *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, but like the two previous books, the most common page spread contained a single photograph on the upper right-hand portion of the page. That said, the mix of layouts is richer than in the first

book. There is no obvious 'yapping puppy' in this book, though there are two small photos, without captions, placed close to two larger ones as if to imply a relationship between them, about which we can only guess.

The making of *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* appears to have had an impact on Ruscha's work in other media, especially considering that one of the images in the book was the source for his 1963 painting *Standard Station, Amarillo, Texas*, though there is also at least one study for this dating back to 1962; the study in turn yielded other paintings and prints over the years. *Some Los Angeles Apartments*, however, was accompanied by many carefully rendered graphite drawings of apartments, triggered by the photographs in the book, though 'some of them were distorted or changed and kind of … fantasised, in a way'.[42] Another aspect of this book, though less obvious than in *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, is the ubiquitousness of words (and numbers) as signs on the buildings.

Although they are endlessly intriguing, the reasons-to-be for these books and later ones – often only too obvious, as the artist would perhaps lead us to believe – are usually obscure, and the nuances of their content will mostly escape us. Moreover, Ruscha has said that he has 'always considered the books very private'.[43] But in addition to their intrinsic value, the books may have been significant for their contribution to the formal development of Ruscha's painting and printmaking.

Before he started publishing books, Ruscha's early word paintings, such as *Actual Size*, *Boss*, *War Surplus* and *OOF*, in which the letters were generally embedded in the plane of the painting, were still part of an aesthetic that grew out of Abstract Expressionism – or the route out of it taken by Jasper Johns and others. Even later works that have affinities with Pop and Hard Edge, such as *Flash*, *L.A. Times*, *Smash* and *Damage*, still present words that adhere to the picture plane like type on a page. With the liquid-words paintings in the late 1960s, the words appear to lie not in, but on, the plane of the canvas. Ruscha, however contrary, was still a sign painter. His interlude of bird paintings in the mid-1960s might have played a role in this questioning of the flat picture plane, as might his subsequent illusionistic paintings of ribbon words.

As lettered objects, Ruscha's own books, too, became relevant, for he had spent a great deal of time in his graphic work depicting the books, making drawings of *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* as early as 1963. A 1964 drawing presents the book as a triptych, showing the book first full face, next at an angle, and then nearly side on, providing an opportunity for Ruscha to show the lettering on the cover from varying perspectives. These drawings from the early 1960s were followed by prints in 1970 in which the planes of the book covers appear at a range of angles. Both the prints and the drawings seemed to be occasions for variations – or formal exercises – that would subsequently facilitate his depiction of words in a deep picture space without the books as supports.

In addition to being possible spatial exercises, some of these works may be seen as metaphorical. A print from 1970, also titled *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, shows the book in receding perspective and damaged by water, which trickles out from under it. This picture seems to possess an emotional content quite unlike most of the other book drawings and prints, and however elusive its meaning, it certainly seems to underline the personal significance of this book, among others, for Ruscha.

Throughout the 1960s, he also began to consider those of his paintings that featured words as embellishments of three-dimensional objects, which in turn had affinities with books. He summed up this process much later: 'I consider my books to be strictly visual materials … I even perceived them as bits of sculpture, in a way. They were three-dimensional, they were thick. I even painted on the sides of my canvases for a few years to accentuate the idea that this was a three-dimensional thing. I would make a painting that said "Radio", for example, then paint the title on the side. In an odd way, it was like a book, and so my paintings were book covers, in a way.'[44] Conversely, one might say that Ruscha's books were like portable, miniature word paintings, especially since he would sometimes conceive their covers first.

Ruscha soon established a yearlong gestation period for his books. He said, 'When I did the books, I had a complete feeling of creation in the same sense that a woman would have a child. I even wrote that down: "These books are my children."'[45] In 1966 a rather different book was born, though one that sat comfortably enough on the shelf with

the previous books. It was *The Sunset Strip*, or to quote from the title page, *Every Building on the Sunset Strip*. This book, with its short title lettered on the front cover and spine, was published in a white slipcase that was without lettering and covered in silver Mylar. When the covers are opened, a long accordion-folded, nine-part, 27-foot strip of paper – with one end glued into the covers – spills out to reveal continuous photos depicting every building on the Sunset Strip in Los Angeles. Along the top is a montaged view of the street from address numbers 8024 to 9156, while at the bottom, upside down, is a view of the other side of the road from numbers 8101 to 9145, each view punctuated by cross streets. Almost the only signs of life are curiously sliced cars that must have moved out of or into the shot between takes.

The Sunset Strip satisfied one of Ruscha's early ambitions: 'In Oklahoma City, I delivered newspapers riding along on my bicycle with my dog … I dreamed about making a model of all the houses on that route, a tiny but detailed model that I could study like an architect standing over a table and plotting a city.' As a result of his subsequent fascination with the Sunset Strip, this unrealised youthful idea resurfaced in a different form.[46] The accordion-fold structure of the book was an appropriate format for Ruscha's intended depiction of the famous Hollywood thoroughfare as a series of two-dimensional storefront façades, like those of a Western town.[47] Large words as signs are a conspicuous element of the Strip (the celebrated Hollywood sign, of course, rising above it all on a nearby hillside). For example, on one façade devoid of windows and doors (8844), the large, solitary word 'The' (part of a sign in the process of being installed) is resplendent.

Ruscha reportedly photographed the Sunset Strip with a motorised camera in a pickup truck in the time that it took to drive the two miles and back, but the piecing together of the photographs and the folding and gluing of the printed sheets by hand took more than nine months.[48] Moreover, this was not just a one-time photo shoot, for in 1979 Ruscha said that he had photographed all of the Sunset Strip in each of the previous five years. 'I begin early on a Sunday morning when no one is around. I use a 250 Nikon, change the film real fast, and just go along and document [it].'[49] Indeed, the artist has continued to document the street to the present.

By the time he published his next book, *Thirtyfour Parking Lots in Los Angeles*, in 1967, Ruscha had established himself as a prime recorder of certain aspects of this city in the 1960s. From static photos of single apartments in *Some Los Angeles Apartments*, he progressed to motorised photos in *The Sunset Strip* and then to aerial photos of neighbourhoods in *Thirtyfour Parking Lots* – all seen with the eye of the objective detective. Though he had also paid attention in his work to the more iconic aspects of Los Angeles – especially in paintings that combined signs and geography, such as *Large Trademark with Eight Spotlights* (the 20th Century Fox logo) and later, *Hollywood* – Ruscha's apparently dispassionate collections of photographs revealed the less glamorous but still fascinating elements of the city that he had learned to negotiate as a newcomer.

When he was working on *Thirtyfour Parking Lots*, Ruscha commissioned aerial photographer Art Alanis to take the photographs, and told him to shoot all the empty lots he came across.[50] As to why he wanted images of such phenomena, the artist has said that at the time he liked to think of his bookwork as coming out of specific missions; each of his books reflects a narrow point of view: '*Small Fires* came at a time when I needed to come inside. It's my only interior book. The rest are all exteriors, with the exception of *Records*, which is neuter. *Pools* came when I was swimming every day and *Parking Lots* when I felt like being aerial.'[51] While the images in *Thirtyfour Parking Lots* are striking, especially those lots with herringbone patterning, Ruscha found even more to interest him in the photographs' unexpected visual features, such as the oil droppings on the ground revealed by photographing the lots without cars.

Like Ruscha's first three books, this one has 48 pages, but its dimensions are very different. Instead of 7 1/16 by 5 1/2 inches, it measures 10 by 8 inches, and for a specific, almost pragmatic reason. 'I got the photographs back from the photographer and he'd made beautiful 8 by 10 glossy blowups,' Ruscha said. 'It was amazing that I'd gotten this guy to go up there and shoot the whole thing and give me the negatives for $250. He'd hired the helicopter and everything. I got the photographs back and was floored by them. I couldn't bring myself to reduce those photographs to fit the original format.'[52]

Though the book contains only 31 photographs, it portrays the 34 parking lots of the title by including more than one lot in certain images. There is more use of paired images here than in the earlier books; this and the larger page size bring the experience of reading closer to that of a photography book. By contrast, the photographs in *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* seem to be subservient to the expression of an idea in book form.

Thirtyfour Parking Lots also has a distinctive 'yapping puppy' in that it contains a strange foldout tab at the end of the book. The final image, captioned 'Santa Monica Blvd. from Roxbury to Wilshire Blvd.', is more than four times as long as it is high, presumably cropped from an 8-by-10-inch original. Rather than reduce the image to fit the double spread, Ruscha ran it from the left page across the gutter and then over and off the right page onto a small flap glued to the edge of the page. Apparently he worked very hard at this little extension, and had to pay considerably more to have it included.[53] In response to a comment that there didn't seem to be anything very special in this last inch or so of the image, Ruscha said, 'I know! That's why I like it.'[54]

Until the 1967 publication of *Thirtyfour Parking Lots*, the making of Ruscha's books had been, of necessity, a collaborative process; he had to work with printers and photographers, even though he made each book according to his own intentions. In 1967 he published *Royal Road Test*, the first of his books in which there was collaboration over content. The authors are listed as Mason Williams, Edward Ruscha and Patrick Blackwell. This book, like most of Ruscha's other collaborative books (such as *Business Cards* and *Crackers*), is different in form from his solo books. Larger in size, it also had a spiral binding such as one might see on a handbook for an appliance.

Royal Road Test is a picture-book story of a Royal manual typewriter that was thrown out of the window of a 1963 Buick travelling at 90 miles per hour. Ruscha is cast in the role of the driver, Blackwell the photographer, and Williams the 'thrower'. The core of the book is a photographic examination of the wreckage of the typewriter strewn over many square yards, spoofing the methods of an investigator analysing the demise of an automobile prototype, a detective surveying a crime scene, or even a land artist working in a

remote location. Though the images are deliberately reportorial, the captions are more characteristic of Ruscha's playful relationship with language: 'Edward Ruscha's (left) left hand being examined by Mason Williams' (right) right hand over what's left of the typewriter, right?' In a very brief accompanying text, the typewriter is said to have been 'carrying within itself the seeds of its own destruction'. Perhaps the plan for the event was typed on this very machine, or perhaps the book itself might also be said to have registered the triumph of the camera over the typewriter.

Ruscha's next solo book, which appeared one year later in 1968, bears the words 'Nine Swimming Pools' on the cover, but the blue type of the title page expands this to *Nine Swimming Pools and a Broken Glass*, in the same fashion as *Various Small Fires and Milk*. The typography on the cover recalls the previous books in that the three words comprising the title are placed at top, middle and bottom in a black serif typeface. It also has the same dimensions as the previous books and a glassine dust jacket. Unlike most of the others, however, it has 64 rather than 48 pages and fewer photographs – only ten. It is also the first book in which he used colour photographs.

Nine Swimming Pools is one of Ruscha's strangest in terms of one's expectations of a book. Most of the pages are blank. In a characteristic signature, two images of pools are interspersed with six blank pages. However, as one might by now expect, things are not so simple throughout. The artist has moved two photos from a sequence of six such signatures to the second signature, leaving blank pages where photos might have been expected to appear. He has also added a single larger and completely blank signature at the end that expands the book from 48 to 64 pages, without adding anything else – images or text – to the book. And then there is the punch line, the broken drinking glass. This surprising non sequitur drags one into the depths of these true blue pools, which were mostly photographed around Las Vegas, to question the apparently idyllic scenes.[55] As to his choice of swimming pools as subject matter, Ruscha has simply said, 'I like waking up in the morning and saying, "Well, I guess it's swimming pools today."'[56]

The irregular rhythm of the appearance of blue pools among the white pages creates something other than a

photographic book, for the white pages serve to approximate architectural environments for the randomly occurring pools. Furthermore, the blue pools enhance the whiteness of the blank pages so that they become a compelling element of the reading experience. Ruscha has referred to the blank pages in *Nine Swimming Pools* in characteristically prosaic terms, observing that it was the cheapest way to have the colour printed and that the blank pages just fell as they may (which one might question). In addition, he has said that he could have added one or two more swimming pools at no extra cost, but wanted the book to contain nine pools rather than 11.[57] Recently, in response to questions about his use of blank pages, Ruscha was more forthcoming: 'Well, it would maybe be like asking a painter why he puts wax in his paint, or sand, or something.' In connection with *Nine Swimming Pools*, he said that it was not just the silence of the white pages that was important, rather that the extra pages were valuable because they gave body to the book.[58]

In the same year that he published *Nine Swimming Pools*, Ruscha also made the collaborative book *Business Cards* with artist Billy Al Bengston and a third, *Stains* – if one is to regard this limited-edition portfolio as a book. In 1969 he made just one collaborative book, *Crackers*, derived from a short story by Mason Williams, before reverting to his regular format in 1970 with two new solo books, *Babycakes* and *Real Estate Opportunities.*

Of all Ruscha's books, whether solo or collaborative, *Business Cards* is the least formal in its design. The 'wood-grain' paper cover with its mounted photo and leather-knotted binding immediately signals a different kind of book. Inside, the treatment of the pages is deliberately, even refreshingly, scrappy, though it echoes Ruscha's predilections regarding layout. Like *Royal Road Test*, this collaboration is also a story, telling how Ruscha and Bengston designed business cards for one another, and how they finally exchanged them. The book, signed on the cover by each artist, is like a souvenir intended only for the participants, even though 1,000 copies were made. By contrast, *Crackers*, Ruscha's collaboration with Mason Williams, is an accessible narrative resembling the book version of a silent movie. The story in this case is paramount, so Ruscha's hand is less evident. Like *Royal Road Test*, *Crackers* and *Business Cards* are exceptions to Ruscha's

normal practice when working solo. Besides their narrative drive and physical differences, these collaborative works exhibit a sense of humour and a playfulness that is only hinted at in the surreal twists of the solo books.

Beginning in 1967, and then intensively from 1969 to 1971, Ruscha began to republish his earlier books. *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* and *Various Small Fires* were first published in editions of 400, and *Some Los Angeles Apartments* in an edition of 700. In 1966 he printed 1,000 copies of *The Sunset Strip*, and in 1967, as many as 2,500 copies of *Thirtyfour Parking Lots* and 1,000 copies of *Royal Road Test*. But interest in Ruscha's books, and *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* in particular, was such that this title was reprinted in an edition of 500 in 1967, and again in an edition of 3,000 in 1969. Other titles were in demand, too; 500 copies of *The Sunset Strip* and 1,000 of *Royal Road Test* were printed in 1969, 3,000 copies of *Various Small Fires* and *Some Los Angeles Apartments* were printed in 1970, and 5,000 of *The Sunset Strip* were printed in 1971. Ruscha also began to up the print runs of his new books into the thousands.

These figures are extremely impressive. Given that other artists were only just beginning to engage with the paperback book as an art form, they suggest that the books sold simply on their own merits – however unusual – rather than as artist's books, since that phenomenon barely existed at the time. Even today, such figures for editions of self-published artist's books are exceptional.

In 1969, in the middle of reprinting so many books, Ruscha began to make more prints than ever, and even stopped painting for more than two years. In 1970, he made his first film, *Premium*, based on the book *Crackers.* It would seem that, except for his ongoing interest in drawing, he was intensely focused on multiple art at this time. He also gave up his job doing layout and design for *Artforum* magazine after finishing the summer 1969 issue; he had worked there for four years under the name Eddie Russia. This, then, was a period of substantial shifts in his working life.

Babycakes, one of the two solo books published in 1970, is similar to the earlier books, except for its cover and binding. The book is decked out like a gift book, with robin's-egg blue covers bearing the word 'Babycakes' in green flocking and with pink ribbon tied in a bow holding the pages together. It is reminiscent of a catalogue Ruscha designed

for Bengston's exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in the winter of 1968–1969. The latter had sandpaper covers bearing the word 'Billy' in pink flocking with bolts to secure the pages; it was accompanied by a pink ribbon that resembled a place marker. Perhaps both of these productions, in their own ways, refer back to Ruscha's earlier life when he was earning money working as a commercial artist for a business called Sunset House. 'I would letter children's names on gift items, cheap gift items,' he said. 'I'd do thousands of them every year.'[59]

Babycakes, the full title of which is *Babycakes with Weights*, connects with the birth of Ruscha's son in 1968. The first image in the book is of Edward Joseph Ruscha V, weighing 15 pounds, 8 ounces. This baby portrait is followed by 21 photographs of – what else – cakes! All the confections, like the infant, are captioned with their weights, from 1½ ounces, to 8 pounds 12 ounces, but arranged in random order. The photographs, which appear on the right-hand pages, vary slightly in size, making the book more like a family album and less standard in format than the earlier books. *Babycakes* was published by Multiples, Inc., the publishing arm of New York's Marian Goodman Gallery, and appeared in its 1970 portfolio, *Artists & Photographs.*

The activities of Ruscha's infant son may perhaps have awakened the artist to the possibility of using organic substances as agents for imagery. In the year following his son's birth, Ruscha produced the portfolio *Stains*, a series of loose pages that he stained with random blobs of such foodstuffs as egg yolk, cabbage and milk, plus other substances a baby is not normally involved with, such as Indian ink and nail polish. This engagement with alternative graphic media reached a climax with his sumptuous front cover for the April 1972 *Artnews*, in which the words 'art' and 'news' are composed from substances that include strawberries, peaches, peppers, olives, pickles and anchovies with washes of jam juice.

Real Estate Opportunities, like *Babycakes*, was published in 1970, and it bears the family resemblance shared by *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, *Various Small Fires*, and the others; it, too, measures 7 1/16 by 5 1/2 inches, has 48 pages, a glassine dust jacket, and a similar three-line typographic cover. The square black-and-white photos are placed on

the right-hand pages of the spreads, except for four pairs of photos, each pair depicting vacant lots in the same neighbourhood in or around Los Angeles. The photographs are sober in style, like those in *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* and *Some Los Angeles Apartments*, and as in both of those books, signs are frequently featured. The inclusion of these professional 'For Sale' signs is another echo of Ruscha's early life, for he initially wanted to be a commercial artist, learned sign-painting techniques, and painted many commercial signs, including 'For Sale' signs.[60]

Real Estate Opportunities is the last of Ruscha's books to conform to the house style of the early volumes. Although the three solo books that followed in 1971 and 1972 – *A Few Palm Trees*, *Records* and *Colored People* – have the same dimensions as most of the early books, they have coloured covers, sans-serif typefaces for their titles, more pages, and contain stripped images in which the principal objects in the photographs are removed from their background contexts. The other book published in 1971 is *Dutch Details*, which bears little resemblance to any other book by Ruscha.

Dutch Details is markedly horizontal, with a long superior spine. The longest edge of each page is secured in the spine, but each page also has a foldout that doubles the longest dimension of the page. It is difficult to negotiate. Each long page, bar one, has six square photos (taken by the artist with a hand-held camera at bridge locations in Holland) of successively diminishing details of buildings lining the river bank. Each foldout, bar one, carries six square photos that appear to be views of those buildings on the other side of the bridge in successive close-ups.

Dutch Details was published by the Octopus Foundation within the framework of Sonsbeek 71. Apart from *Babycakes*, it is the only book project not funded by Ruscha himself. The unique place of *Dutch Details* among Ruscha's books and its emphatic horizontality reflect Ruscha's response to the Dutch landscape around Groningen, where he was invited to work. While each sequence of six photos documents a pulling back from, or a focusing on, a detail on the opposite bank of a canal, the fact that the images are laid out from left to right and are continued by the opposite view causes the experience of looking ahead to be strangely confused with the experience of looking left and right. This is in

marked contrast to the smooth scanning required for reading *The Sunset Strip*.

Records also appeared in 1971. A far less complex book than *Dutch Details*, each spread has images of a record album cover on the left and the record it housed on the right. The effect is of paired squares and circles. It seems almost to be a blending of the two little books by Bruno Munari that appeared in English in 1962 and 1966 (*Discovery of the Square* and *Discovery of the Circle*), but without the diverse visual content of those books – save, to an extent, in the imagery of the album covers. The only hiccup in the sequence of spreads in *Records* comes two-thirds of the way through the book, when Ruscha presents two discs from a double album. These rock, rhythm and blues, and country records were 'randomly selected' from Ruscha's own collection. One might have suspected this, because one of the albums is a recording by his friend Mason Williams.[61] In its own way, this book, too, is concerned with signs and words, but the record covers present words on images, rather than documenting words in images, as the earlier books do.

Ruscha said that once he had devised a format for his books, he felt he could simply plug ideas into his system. Indeed, he could also see 'a thousand books, a thousand titles'.[62] In spite of this vista, the repetition and basic predictability of *Records* suggests that Ruscha's engagement with books was running out of steam. He has said that after *Crackers*, *Records* is one of his least favourite books. He was also printing it at the same time as another book, and felt like he was overdoing it.[63]

His last solo book was *Colored People*, published in 1972, and it brought to a close a decade of publishing his own ideas in book form. Except for its title page, it is similar to *A Few Palm Trees* – one of the three books published the previous year. Ruscha said, 'I guess at that time I was more involved in botanical phenomena … I thought, well, this is maybe something I should investigate.'[64] *A Few Palm Trees* has a solid black cover with no lettering and contains 14 stripped photos of palm trees printed in black ink on a white background, succeeded by 16 blank spreads; it has a total of 64 pages. *Colored People* has a yellow cover bearing the title and contains 15 stripped photos of plants, mostly cacti,

printed in colour, succeeded by 17 blank spreads. It, too, has a total of 64 pages. Apart from the opening credits, there are no words in *Colored People* (which was true of Ruscha's only other book in colour, *Nine Swimming Pools*). Every subject in *A Few Palm Trees* is not only placed on the right-hand page of an opening, but it also has a caption on the opposite page, giving its Los Angeles address. Above the caption for the first palm tree is this helpful statement: 'Camera facing west on all photos.' In *Colored People*, all but one of the plants is on the right-hand page; the exception, a double cactus, straddles the gutter. The plants in this book make up a much more varied group than most of Ruscha's collections.

Ruscha was aware that the title *Colored People* was loaded, but there was at least one specific source for the book: 'There are some graphic connections between what is stereotyped as a coloured person, and a tropical plant … I even remember a [W. S.] Gilbert [of Gilbert and Sullivan] … work called "King Borria Bungalee Boo". There were illustrations in there of Africans that were bent over at the hips and made into strange shapes … That was just a fragment of the thinking behind it.'[65] (It seems likely that when artist Adrian Piper titled her 1991 book *Colored People*, she was referring back to Ruscha's book, especially as she was trying to undermine stereotypical responses to people of colour.)

The emphatic blankness of these two books – and even *Records* – may explain Ruscha's reaction in 1972: 'When I got *Colored People* back from the press, I yawned. I just yawned.'[66] In 1985 he said, 'I don't make books anymore. I feel that my statement has rounded itself off. And even though I have some motivation in that direction, I am keeping it all in the refrigerator just like they've kept Walt Disney. The books became a thing in themselves, almost an artwork. Their potency was diminished. That could have contributed to my stopping making them.'[67] Perhaps Ruscha also considered that he had achieved what he wanted: 'What I was after was no-style or a non-statement with a no-style.'[68]

Upon resuming painting in 1972, Ruscha made both flat-word paintings – generally without surface qualities, by staining paper, canvas, or even moiré with organic substances – and paintings that had more overtly illusionistic space, such as *Jinx* (1973–1974). But even the flat-word works

seemed to exist in a new space: the words no longer fit into the picture plane like jigsaw puzzle pieces; they were no longer like the work of an ex-sign painter. For Ruscha had succeeded in creating paintings of words at liberty (*parole in libertà* – the aspiration of the Futurists). Perhaps his series of books and the drawings of the free-floating *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* and other titles had assisted in this process? A very literal expression of this new freedom shows up in a later painting, *Canada, U.S.A., Mexico* (1980), in which words are like searchlights reaching out beyond the earth. His word paintings took off.

In 1978, six years after *Colored People*, Ruscha made one more book, *Hard Light*, a collaboration with Lawrence Weiner. *Hard Light*, along with each of Ruscha's other collaborative works – *Royal Road Test*, *Business Cards* and *Crackers* – is a narrative book, unlike any of the solo books. *Royal Road Test* was a deadpan, fake forensic story, *Business Cards* was the story of an exchange of graphics, and both *Crackers* and *Hard Light* were effectively photo-novels. Another parallel between the last two is that each has one line of dialogue, placed about three-quarters of the way through the photos, but no other text in the body of the book – in its way, a Ruschaian device. In *Crackers*, among more than two hundred pages of photos, the single word is 'Crackers!' In *Hard Light* the one line in more than one hundred pages of photos is: 'In the year 2000 all racecar driving will be taken over by women.' But a significant difference between the two is that on the inside back flap of the cover of *Crackers*, Ruscha has printed the complete short-short story by Mason Williams that the book illustrates: 'How to Derive the Maximum Enjoyment from Crackers'.

By the time he began work with Ruscha on *Hard Light* in 1978, Weiner had already published 23 books – beginning in 1968 – and the paperback was well established as a medium for artists. There had also been many exhibitions of artists' books, and a fair amount of commentary had been published around the world. Another prolific artist in this field was Sol LeWitt; he had published about 30 books by this time. It is possible to detect an acknowledgement of Ruscha's work in some of the covers of LeWitt's books – the 1980 book *Sunrise and Sunset at Praiano*, for example – but the plain covers and distinctive typography of many more of his books

are also evocative of Ruscha's example. Inside the covers, however, LeWitt pursued quite different aims.

Other artists were well aware of Ruscha's work. Bruce Nauman's third book, *Burning Small Fires*, published in 1968, is an oblique homage to Ruscha. It documents, frame by frame, the burning of a copy of Ruscha's book *Various Small Fires.* Similarly, in 1971, there appeared a small book entitled *Six Hands*, which purported to be by 'Edward Ruscha'. Inside, in characteristic Ruscha style, the full title was revealed as *Six Hands and a Cheese Sandwich*, and the seven photographs that followed revealed just that. The graphic and typographic qualities of the book, however, are very different from Ruscha's (except for the wacky *Business Cards*). But the existence of this anonymous spoof underscores the ubiquitousness of Ruscha's books, which by then had achieved widespread exposure.

More than 25 years after the 1972 publication of *Colored People*, it may be possible to see Ruscha's ten years of concentrated publishing of artist's books in some sort of perspective. Two different threads have already been identified: the subverted, serial-imagery solo books, and the narrative, collaborative books. Within the solo works, the core of books adheres to a general format, albeit with variations and the occasional non sequitur.

Ruscha's regard and affection for his books continues: 'My books were very hot items. It was hot art to me … almost too hot to handle. I liked the idea that my books would disorient, and it seemed to happen that people would look at them, and the books would look very familiar, yet they were like a wolf in sheep's clothing. I felt they were very powerful statements, maybe the most powerful things I've done. I'm considered part of the mainstream of art history now – my work is not revolutionary, but the books that I did were, at that point, a can opener that got into something else.'[69]

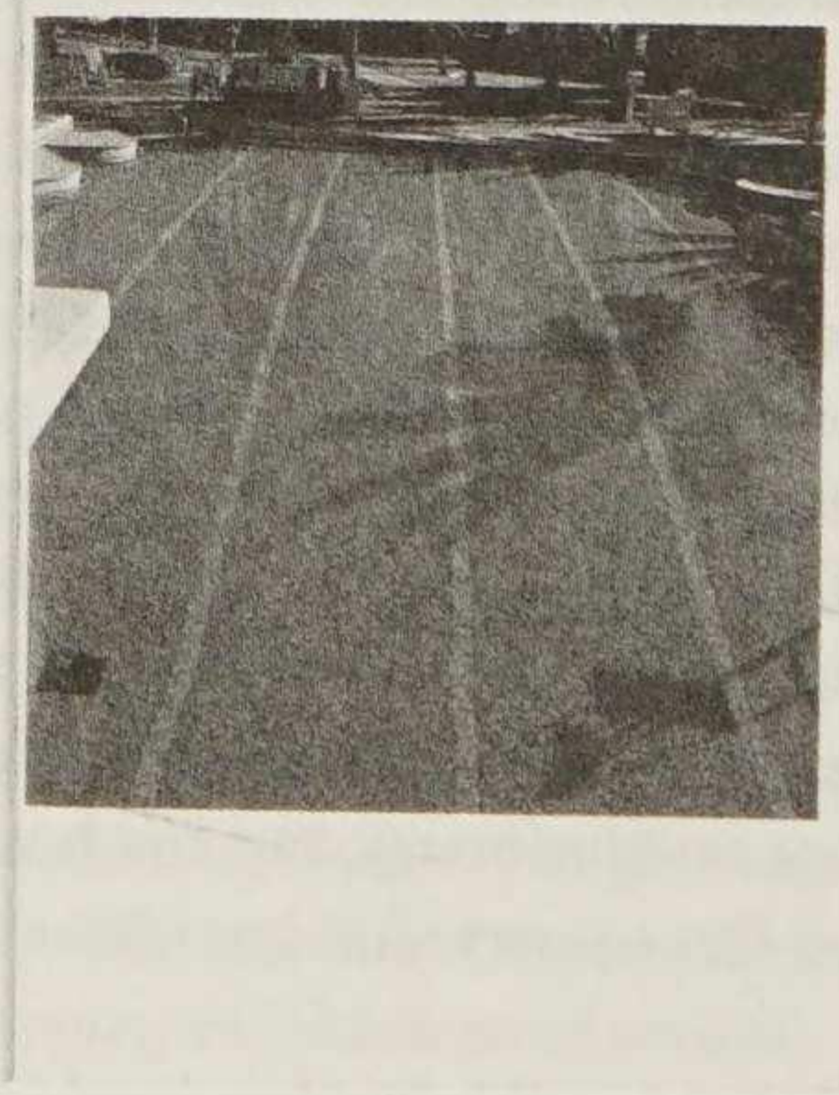
As well as being a possible 'can opener' for Ruscha in the development of his painting, and maybe other things, his books helped to initiate, and then to give impetus to, a whole new area of art production – the publication of cheap, unpretentious, but compelling visual books by artists. If Ruscha had not failed in his attempt to make 'a non-statement with a no-style', we would not still be so interested in all

those books in which he pretended to report objectively on American phenomena. Fortunately, Ruscha the reporter, the sign painter, is also a visual poet.

NINE

SWIMMING

POOLS



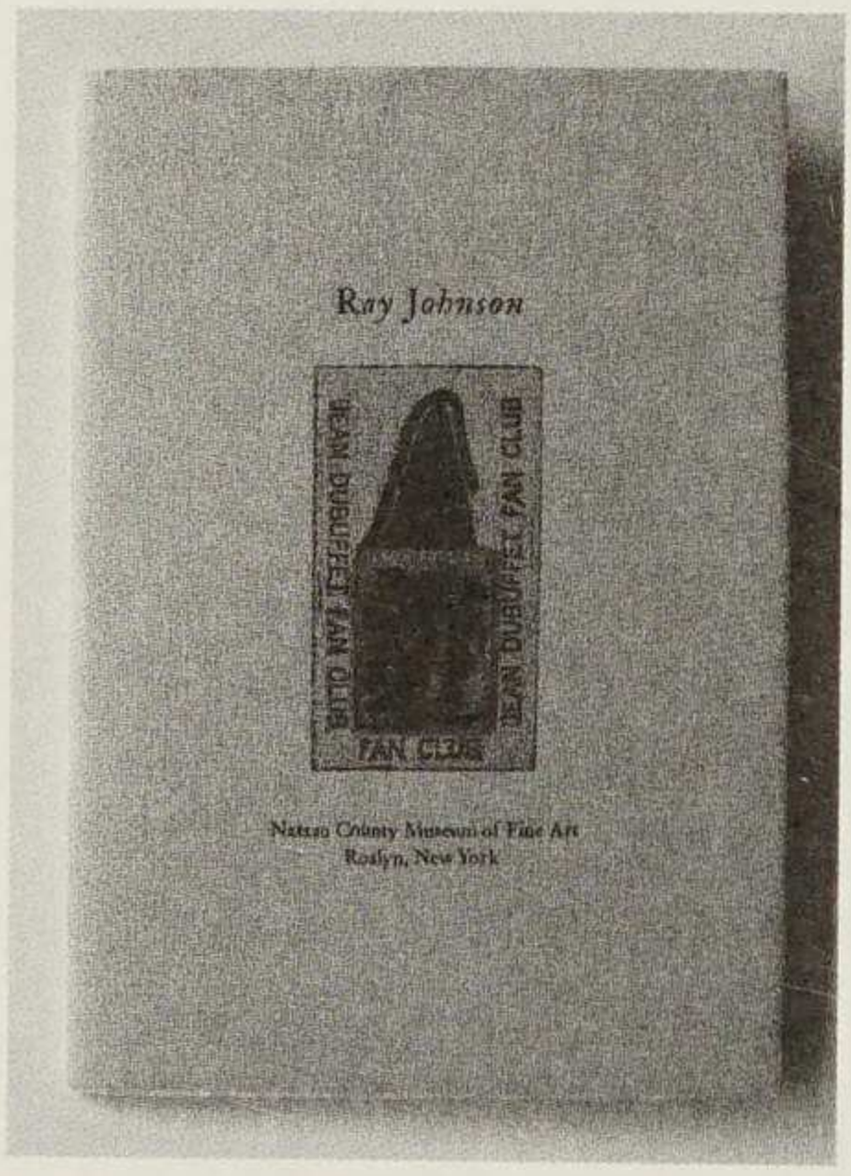
Edward Ruscha, *Nine Swimming Pools and a Broken Glass* (Los Angeles: Ruscha, 1968)

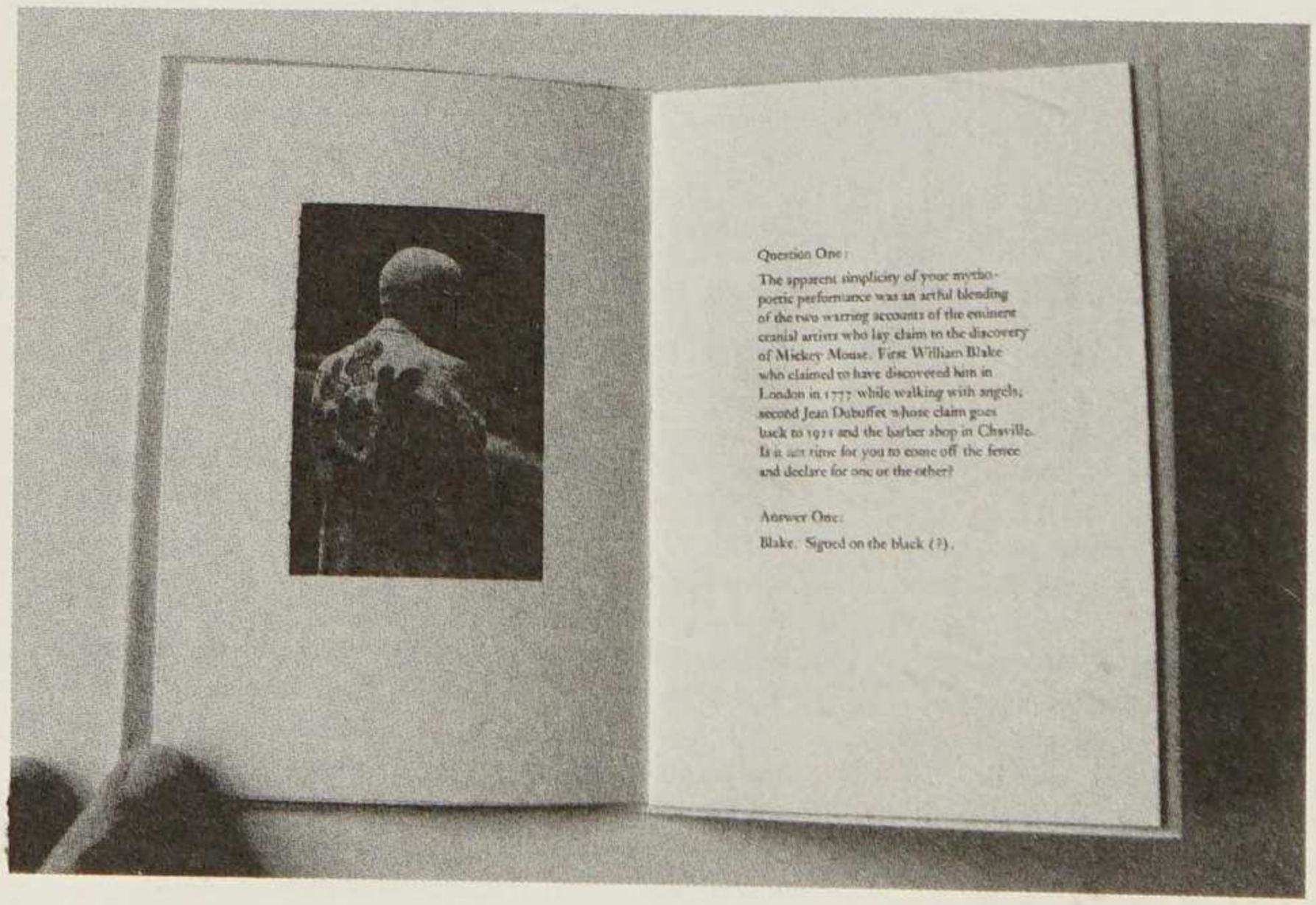
[1] Clive Phillpot, 'Twentysix Gasoline Stations That Shook the World – The Rise and Fall of Cheap Booklets as Art', *Art Libraries Journal*, vol. 18, no. 1 (1993), p. 8–9. Here p. 144–165.
[2] Edward Ruscha, 'Ed Ruscha, An Interview', interview by Henri Man Barendse, *Afterimage*, vol. 8, no. 7 (February 1981), p. 10.
[3] Ruscha, conversation with the author, 13 October, 1998.
[4] Barendse, 'Ed Ruscha, An Interview', p. 10.
[5] Ruscha, 'A Conversation with Ed Ruscha', interview by Trina Mitchum, *Southern California Art Magazine* (LAICA Journal), no. 21 (January–February 1979), p. 24.
[6] *Three-and-Thirty Watchbirds* has been reprinted in part in *Four-and-Twenty Watchbirds*. (Munro Leaf illustrated many of his own books, but others, including *Ferdinand*, were illustrated by Robert Lawson.)
[7] Ruscha, 'Conversation with Ed Ruscha', interview by Bernard Blistène in *Edward Ruscha: Paintings/Schilderijen*, (Rotterdam: Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, 1989–1990, exhibition catalogue), p. 126.
[8] David Bourdon, 'Ruscha as Publisher (or All Booked Up)', *Art News*, vol. 71, no. 2 (April 1972), p. 33.
[9] Ruscha, '" ... a kind of a "Huh?" An Interview with Edward Ruscha', interview by Willoughby Sharp, *Avalanche*, no. 7 (Winter–Spring 1973), p. 30.
[10] Ruscha, 'Concerning *Various Small Fires*: Edward Ruscha Discusses His Perplexing Publications', interview by John Coplans, *Artforum*, vol. 3, no. 5 (February 1965), p. 25.
[11] Coplans, 'Concerning *Various Small Fires*', p. 25.
[12] Barendse, 'Ed Ruscha, An Interview', p. 10.
[13] Sharp, '" ... a kind of a "Huh?"', p. 30.
[14] Ruscha, conversation with the author, 13 October, 1998; also, Bourdon, 'Ruscha as Publisher', p. 33.
[15] The first edition differs from the second and third editions–or reprintings–of the book, in that the publication details are at the back; the binding is also different. With regard to his moving this information to the front of the book, Ruscha said, 'Maybe I was just trying to make it more traditional ... I didn't want anything to appear too radical.' Conversation with the author, 13 October, 1998.
[16] Ruscha, conversation with the author, 13 October, 1998.
[17] Ruscha numbered all first edition copies of *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, signed the first 50 copies of the first printing of his second book, *Various Small Fires*, then effectively stopped these practices. However, both he and Billy Al Bengston signed the front covers of all the copies of their book *Business Cards* in 1968. Similarly, he has not subsequently been averse to book-signing events.
[18] Sharp, '" ... a kind of a "Huh?"', p. 30.
[19] Coplans, 'Concerning *Various Small Fires*', p. 25.
[20] Mitchum, 'A Conversation with Ed Ruscha', p. 24.
[21] Coplans, 'Concerning *Various Small Fires*', p. 25.
[22] Philip Leider, review of *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, *Artforum*, vol. 2, no. 3 (September 1963), p. 57.
[23] 'Rejected ... by the Library of Congress', advertisement for *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, *Artforum*, vol. 2, no. 9 (March 1964), p. 55.
[24] Excelsior was a type of generic packaging material used in the 1960s. Ruscha's name for the publishing house was a parody of the formality of the publishing business. (Ruscha, conversation with Siri Engberg, December 9, 1998.)
[25] Barendse, 'Ed Ruscha, An Interview', p. 10.
[26] Coplans, 'Concerning *Various Small Fires*', p. 25.
[27] One might also wonder why *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* proceeds from Los Angeles to Oklahoma City (or Groom, Texas!)–even though books in Western cultures generally read from left to right–given that Ruscha's move was from Oklahoma to Los Angeles. By contrast, the catalogue of Ruscha's 1982 retrospective, which he co-designed, has a map of Oklahoma City inside the front cover and a map of Los Angeles inside the back cover. Ruscha's comment on beginning with Los Angeles was, 'There are many ways to skin a cat ... there's no important message, or reasoning behind that.' (Conversation with the author, 10 October, 1998.)
[28] Ruscha, conversation with the author, 10 October, 1998.
[29] Coplans, 'Concerning *Various Small Fires*', p. 25.
[30] Bourdon, 'Ruscha as Publisher', p. 33.
[31] Barendse, 'Ed Ruscha, An Interview', p. 8–9.
[32] Leider, review of *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, p. 57.
[33] Barendse, 'Ed Ruscha, An Interview', p. 9.
[34] Ruscha, 'Interviews with Ed Ruscha and Bruce Conner', interview by Elizabeth Armstrong, *October*, no. 70 (Fall 1994), p. 56.
[35] Coplans, 'Concerning *Various Small Fires*', p. 25
[36] First edition not seen; these details relate to the second edition, of 1970.
[37] Coplans, 'Concerning *Various Small Fires*', p. 25.
[38] Ruscha, conversation with the author, 10 October, 1998.
[39] Coplans, 'Concerning *Various Small Fires*', p. 25.
[40] Ruscha, 'Interview with Ed Ruscha', interview by Barbara Radice, *Flash Art*, no. 54–55 (May 1975), p. 49.
[41] Ruscha, conversation with the author, 10 October, 1998.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ruscha, 'Premeditated: An Interview with Ed Ruscha', interview by Jana Sterbak, *Real Life Magazine*, no. 14 (Summer 1985), p. 26.
[44] Blistène, 'Conversation with Ed Ruscha', p. 134.
[45] Sharp, '" ... a kind of a "Huh?"', p. 32.
[46] Andrew Bogle, from introduction to *Graphic Works by Edward Ruscha* (Auckland: City Art Gallery, 1978), p. 21. Quotation from Ruscha interview by Marshall Berges in *Los Angeles Times Home Magazine*, March 28, 1976.
[47] Bourdon, 'Ruscha as Publisher', p. 34.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Mitchum, 'A Conversation with Ed Ruscha', p. 22.
[50] Sterbak, 'Premeditated: An Interview with Ed Ruscha', p. 26.
[51] Howardena Pindell, 'Words with Ruscha', *The Print Collector's Newsletter*, vol. 3, no. 6 (January–February 1973), p. 127.
[52] Barendse, 'Ed Ruscha, An Interview', p. 10.
[53] Bourdon, 'Ruscha as Publisher', p. 34
[54] Ruscha, conversation with the author, 10 October, 1998.
[55] Of the nine swimming pools, three were in Los Angeles and six in Las Vegas; the broken drinking glass was photographed in Los Angeles (conversations with the author, November 20–21, 1998).
[56] Barendse, 'Ed Ruscha, An Interview', p. 10.
[57] Bourdon, 'Ruscha as Publisher', p. 34.
[58] Ruscha, conversation with the author, 10 October, 1998.
[59] Blistène, 'Conversation with Ed Ruscha', p. 128.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ruscha designed an album cover for Mason Williams in 1968. (Conversations with the author, 20–21 November, 1998.)
[62] Barendse, 'Ed Ruscha, An Interview', p. 10.
[63] Ibid., p. 9.
[64] Ruscha, conversation with the author, 10 October, 1998.
[65] Ruscha thought that this work might have been in an operetta, but it is a ballad from W. S. Gilbert's book *Bab Ballads*, many editions, first published 1874. The illustrations to 'King Borria Bungalee Boo' are by Gilbert himself, as are similar images in 'The Three Kings of Chickeraboo'. (Conversation with the author, 10 October, 1998.)
[66] Sharp, '" ... a kind of a "Huh?"', p. 32.
[67] Sterbak, 'Premeditated: An Interview with Ed Ruscha', p. 28–29.
[68] Barendse, 'Ed Ruscha, An Interview', p. 10.
[69] Blistène, 'Conversation with Ed Ruscha', p. 134.

Two Printed Books by Ray Johnson

First published in *Lightworks*, no. 22 'The Ray Johnson Issue' (Spring 2000), p. 56–59.

The mercurial artist Ray Johnson died in 1995. Perversely his death unzipped an enormous amount of writing about him as well as many exhibitions of his work. Charlton Burch, editor of the long-running *Lightworks Magazine* from Ray Johnson's home state of Michigan, had been discussing the possibility of an issue of the magazine with Ray since 1987, but because Ray died before it had gelled, he slowly and conscientiously continued to gather reminiscences about Ray Johnson until he finally published an indispensible memorial resource in 2000. I was delighted to be included in this collective homage (and have here slightly amended my original account).





Ray Johnson & Clive Phillpot, *Jean Dubuffet Fan Club* (Roslyn, NY: Nassau County Museum, 1988)

I think I first met Ray in England in the pages of the first number of *Art & Artists* magazine edited by Mario Amaya in April 1966, in which an article by Bill Wilson, with a photo of Ray, intrigued me.

In January 1981, a few years after I had moved to New York, I received some mail from Ray, quite out of the blue, perhaps because John Russell had written about me in *The New York Times* the previous October. I duly responded. Then later that year, in September 1981, I saw him at an exhibition entitled *Writing & Reading* at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum, and introduced myself. Some pieces by him were on exhibit. Regrettably there is no catalogue of what I remember as a fascinating show. In later years I learned that he had written to other correspondents about our meeting, and about another meeting with me in December 1981 (which I cannot remember).

Ray Johnson: Jean Dubuffet Fan Club, 1988

Much later, in June 1987, Ray gave me a call to tell me about a performance that he had done at the New York Correspondence (sic) School, *Jean Dubuffet Fan Club Meeting*, in the rose garden of the Nassau County Museum the previous September. He was calling to ask (as he put it in a formal letter soon after) if I 'would write a piece to be included in the brochure the Museum will print to document the Performance'. He thought 'that three questions about the Event might be asked'.

I said that although I had received the invitation, I had not been able to go, so I had no idea what questions to ask. Ray said that he could show me photographs of the event. Not knowing quite where he or I were at, I agreed.

Ray came to The Museum of Modern Art Library, where I was working at the time, on 2 July, 1987, accompanied by his 'muse' Toby Spiselman. He showed me scores of photos of the performance, showing him in a Mickey Mouse jacket standing in front of 40 or 50 people sitting on a grassy bank. Sometimes he would go for a stroll with one of his audience; sometimes chat with them. The whole event seemed to have been improvised. Then he repeated his request that I ask him three questions about the performance. I agreed, once again without any bearings.

I thought about what I had heard and seen for a few days and finally decided to dream up some questions that might provoke or amuse him. So, on 15 July, I sent him a letter and enclosed a sheet with 'Three Questions to Ray Johnson ... ' The questions were:

Question One: The apparent simplicity of your mytho-poetic performance was an artful blending of the two warring accounts of the eminent cranial artists who lay claim to the discovery of Mickey Mouse. First William Blake who claimed to have discovered him in London in 1777 while walking with angels; second Jean Dubuffet whose claim goes back to 1921 and the barber shop in Chaville. Is it not time for you to come off the fence and declare for one or the other?

Question Two: Your orbit around the fountain in the rose garden might be described as planetary or cometary. If you consider it to be like a planet, which of the following planets best characterises it: Mercury the winged messenger, Venus the bringer of peace, Mars the bringer of war, Jupiter the bringer of jollity, Saturn the bringer of old age, Uranus the magician, Neptune the mystic or Pluto the hound of heaven. And why? If, however, you would describe the orbit as that of a comet, how would you characterise this heavenly body?

Question Three: Did you feel the weight of history on you during the performance? If so, about how much did it weigh?

I waited anxiously for his response, worried that I might not have grasped what Ray was after. The post was quick. In a few days I got a formal letter dated 16 July. It said ' … Thank you for your letter … I will reply. Appreciatively and sincerely yours … ' I stood by.

Then I received another formal letter, dated 20 July: ' … I have pondered your three questions and submit my three answers. Most sincerely yours … ' With the letter was a sheet that mimicked exactly the layout of my three questions, but was headed: 'Three Answers to Clive Phillpot … '
The answers were:

Answer One: Blake. Signed on the black (?).

Answer Two: Comet. Present location unknown.

Answer Three: Yes. Weighed 451 tuppence.

I didn't get it. (Fahrenheit 451?) Perhaps he thought that I had tried to be too clever or too witty and did not want to get into a game of who was wittiest, and so had just sent nonsense?

Since we were talking on the phone in parallel with the letters, we soon spoke. I said I didn't understand his response. Another envelope arrived. Inside was a piece of paper folded like a kid's paper aeroplane. I unfolded the

sheet. It was a photocopy of a page from a catalogue of Picasso's Cubist works, focusing on a small oval work of early 1912, number 451, entitled *The Letter*. Ray had ringed in red certain fragments of text on the page: '451', 'Signed on the back (?).' 'Present location unknown.' and 'two-penny'. So that was the answer??

The same month Ray also sent me some mail using the old trick of writing an address that was way out of date or incorrect. The letter was addressed to 'Monsieur Picasso, 11 Bd de Clichy, Paris, France', and was returned to sender inscribed 'inconnu'. However, Ray had put my address top left on the envelope, as if I had sent it; so it came back to me, not him. His letter had travelled from Locust Valley to Manhattan, by way of Paris. But it suddenly dawned on me that the address on the envelope had been copied from the painted envelope in the Picasso painting *The Letter* reproduced on the paper plane that he had sent me earlier …

[He also talked to me and said that he would like to make me a work as thanks for my participation in the project. He asked me whether I liked Mickey Mouse. I said I preferred Donald Duck. In August I received an envelope containing a square piece of board on which was a black rectangle composed of black on black shapes with tiny white dots, plus a small wooden block fixed to the corner which had two little figures on it. The board had been slightly bent in the mail. Under the images it said, 'For Clive Phillpot. Jean Dubuffet Fan Club, Ray Johnson, 1987.' It was beautiful. I had it framed.]

In the course of these interactions, the two curators at the Nassau County Museum, Phyllis Stigliano and Janice Parente, decided to turn the project into a small booklet, telling me that they had been looking at booklets by Niki de Saint Phalle and Stephanie Brody Lederman.

A long time elapsed before the book was published. It was printed letterpress by George Laws of Astoria, Queens, when he was not doing his regular work. The book was set in 'Modern Times Letterpress' (though Janson (sic) had been spoken of earlier) and published in a numbered edition of 125 copies in November 1988. The title might be: *Ray Johnson: Jean Dubuffet Fan Club*.

Book About Modern Art, 1990

After the publication of the Dubuffet book, Ray's correspondence to me dwindled. I only have a few letters from 1989. But at the end of that year I was talking with Elsa Longhauser, Director of the galleries at the Moore College of Art and Design in Philadelphia, about her future programme, and whether I might write a piece for her. When she said she wanted to do a Ray Johnson show, I said that I would really like to write for that catalogue. So in January 1990 I wrote to Ray to say that I had agreed to do this.

We talked, and then it was quiet again for a few months, until I got a call from Ray on 20 June, during which I took notes. (I had only jotted down details of a couple of calls previously. One of the reasons I started to take notes from now on was to prepare for the essay that I was to write.)

Ray's calls always covered many topics, but during this one he told me that the Philadelphia show had got funding. He said, 'It is interesting that they would give money for an artist who died last year.' (A reference to the drawing of the triangular plaque that Ray sent around: 'Ray Johnson 1927–1989.') I told him that I was thinking of constructing a chronology of his life that would incorporate a commentary by him, as well as a text. He said that he would start sending me things.

Ten days later Ray called me to ask about the Artist's Choice exhibitions at The Museum of Modern Art. I told him that so far Scott Burton and Ellsworth Kelly had selected works from the collection on themes of their choice. I guess it was Ray who told me that Chuck Close was next in line for this series, and wanted to focus on portraits from the collection.

On 2 July Ray called and said that he wanted to send MoMA three 'prints' that were 'pages from a Ray Johnson book about modern art'. They would be 'loose pages in written form, made by xerox or offset'. The pages would be 'the exhibition for Philadelphia, humorously loaned from MoMA to Philadelphia'. Any number of pages would follow. The first 'three pages relate to Chuck Close and portraiture' and they should formally enter the Library's collection. 'The modern art book will probably be bigger than the death book. The death book had 12 pages.' (In 1992 Ray sent me

Xeroxes of photographs of 'the original art works for *Book About Death*', which was originally mailed out years before, but these numbered 13 pages – even though numbers up to 15 were used. However, he also enclosed another Xerox of a photo of 'the aluminium metal printing offset plates'; these appear to number 27! He deliberately sent images that were not completely legible, hence the uncertainty.)

A couple of days later I got a letter at home containing a portrait of Ed Ruscha to 'send to' Chuck Close. The same day, at work, I received a short letter also dated 2 July, 1990, on which was a large crayoned Buxus head. It read: 'Dear Clive, I enclose three pages from my *Book About Modern Art*; 1. Silhouette head. Nothing. 2. Face. Nothing. 3. How to draw Elsa Longhauser.' There were three sheets: the first had an outline of Ray's profile, the second had a half-tone photo of Ray as a youth, the third was a simple drawing lesson.

More letters followed dated 3, 9 and 11 July, each briefly listing the sheets that were included, and each bearing a Buxus head drawing. Four sheets now accompanied each cover letter, and on one of the pages a black triangular logo had appeared with the words 'A Art Book About Modern" fitted neatly inside, in descending order from its apex. Many of the pages related to portraits.

Then I got a call on 15 July. Ray said, 'I have talked to Chuck Close and I will do a bunny portrait of Bill de Kooning.' He said that, 'I have the black ink on my drafting board now, and will send one copy to MoMA, one to Chuck Close.' I said 'Will you send it folded, or in a large envelope?' He said, 'Folded. It has to be damaged in some way.' Ray went on to say that it was he who introduced Chuck Close to Bill de Kooning, having arranged it with Elaine de Kooning.

The de Kooning head subsequently arrived, was borrowed from the Library, framed, and shown in *Artists Choice, Chuck Close: Head-on, the Modern Portrait* at MoMA from January to March 1991. The brochure illustrated the bunny head prominently (though Chuck Close's copy was reproduced – it had a cross at the bottom and pin holes at the top). Fittingly, the bunny head faced van Gogh's head of the postman Roulin.

On the 20 July I thanked Ray for the Bill de Kooning head which had arrived that morning. 'Which letter is that?' said Ray. 'Number five.' 'Well, number six is on the way. It has Bill de Kooning on a tiger's head; rather Rauschenbergian.'

Letters continued to arrive every few days up to and including 26 July.

Meanwhile, on the phone, Ray expressed an interest in getting Bob Abrams at Abbeville Press to make a trade book of *Book About Modern Art*, even that it might be co-published with Moore College for the Philadelphia show.

The next letter from Ray was a request that I confirm in writing that I had received seven letters. Which I did. When he called on 2 August, I was also able to thank him for the newly-arrived first installment of *Part Two. Book About Modern Art*. Ray said that there would eventually be 26 parts, each of 26 pages (like part one). A total of six letters containing 24 pages from part two of the book arrived, dated from 30 July to 7 August.

I had previously told Ray that I would be away from the museum for about three weeks, and eventually left the country on 14 August. No seventh letter for part two arrived. In fact my departure, and the lack of a verbal dialogue to accompany the letters, seems to have disrupted his work rhythm.

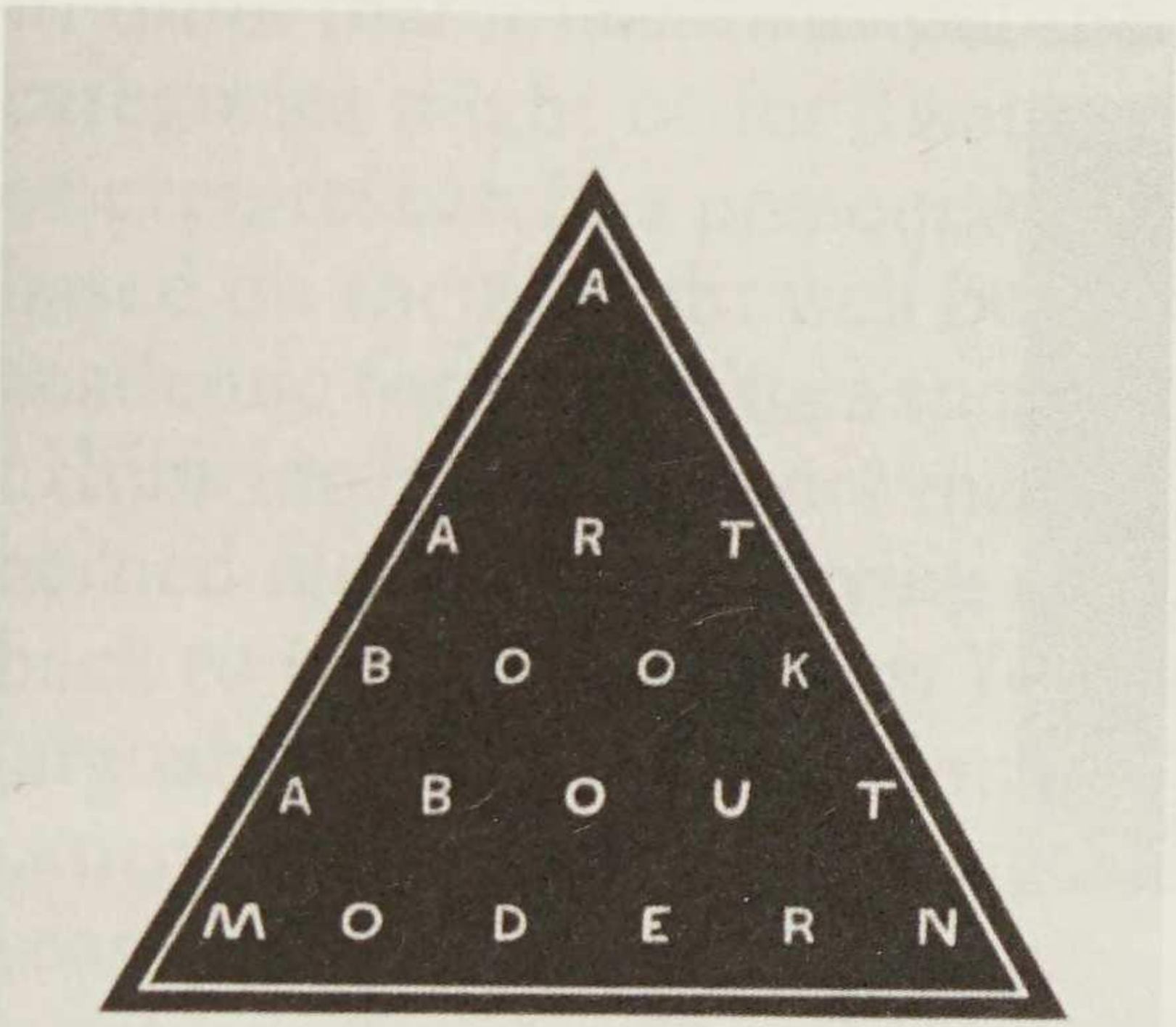
While I was away Ray sent three letters to Kirk Varnedoe, the head of painting and sculpture at MoMA, each of which included four sheets from *A Book About Modern Art Nothing, Part Three*. Then on 29 August, he sent a one-page letter bearing a tiny Buxus head and a large black triangle into which was fitted the legend 'A Art Book About Modern Diedied' (sic). The letter said simply: 'Dear Kirk Varnedoe: A Book About Modern Art Diedied.' But Ray followed this with three more letters to Kirk Varnedoe, each with pages from *A Modern Mural Art Book*. (He also told me that pages of the modern art book had gone to Charles Stuckey in Chicago: a small echo of *A Book About Death* of which he said, 'very few people got the whole thing'.)

I returned from vacation on 8 September. Nearly two weeks later I got a letter from Ray dated 15 September; it said: 'Clive, *A Book About Modern Art* is now *A ART BOOK*. I must keep my mouth closed when a visitor enters. Ray.' And that was that. Ray moved on. But the pages of the book were exhibited along one wall of the Philadelphia exhibition in November and December 1991, though without the Varnedoe interlude by Ray's request ('a different communication'), and pages were reproduced in the catalogue of the show: *More*

Works by Ray Johnson 1951–1991. Also exhibited and reproduced were the pages of Ray's *A Book About Modern Artists (Five Thousand Dolls)*, which were sent to Phyllis Stigliano, one of the guest curators.

This book story does not quite end there. In January 1992 Ray got a throwaway camera. He said, 'I will be the Warhol of Locust Valley.' Among other things, he began to photograph many of his works, often laid out on the ground. At the end of July 1992 Ray sent me Xeroxes of a photograph of 10 drawings, which he said were a book titled *No Exit*, and another photo of 35 drawings titled *An Broken Dish* (sic). Also in 1992 and 1993 Ray sent four other 'books' for the Library at MoMA. The first book, made up of three letters and 12 pages, is *A Book About Cranky Ant*; the other three were single letters with from four to eight pages: *Moderately Successful Pop Art, A Book About Unknown Art*, and *This Typewriter Needs A New Ribbon*.

In retrospect it is amusing to me that, contrary to all the campaigning I have done for cheap open editions of artists' books, Ray involved me in one limited, numbèred edition, and one probably unique book!



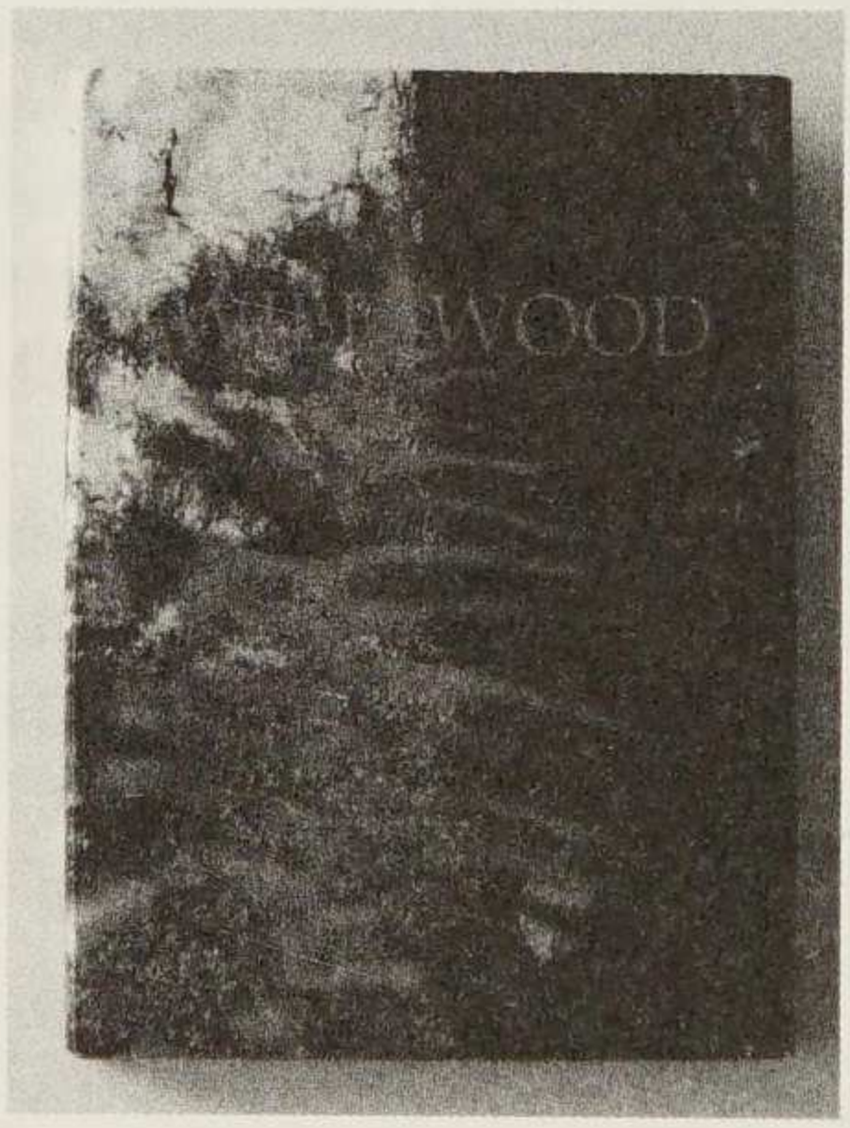
Ray Johnson, detail of *Letter from Ray Johnson to Clive Phillpot* (14 September 1990)

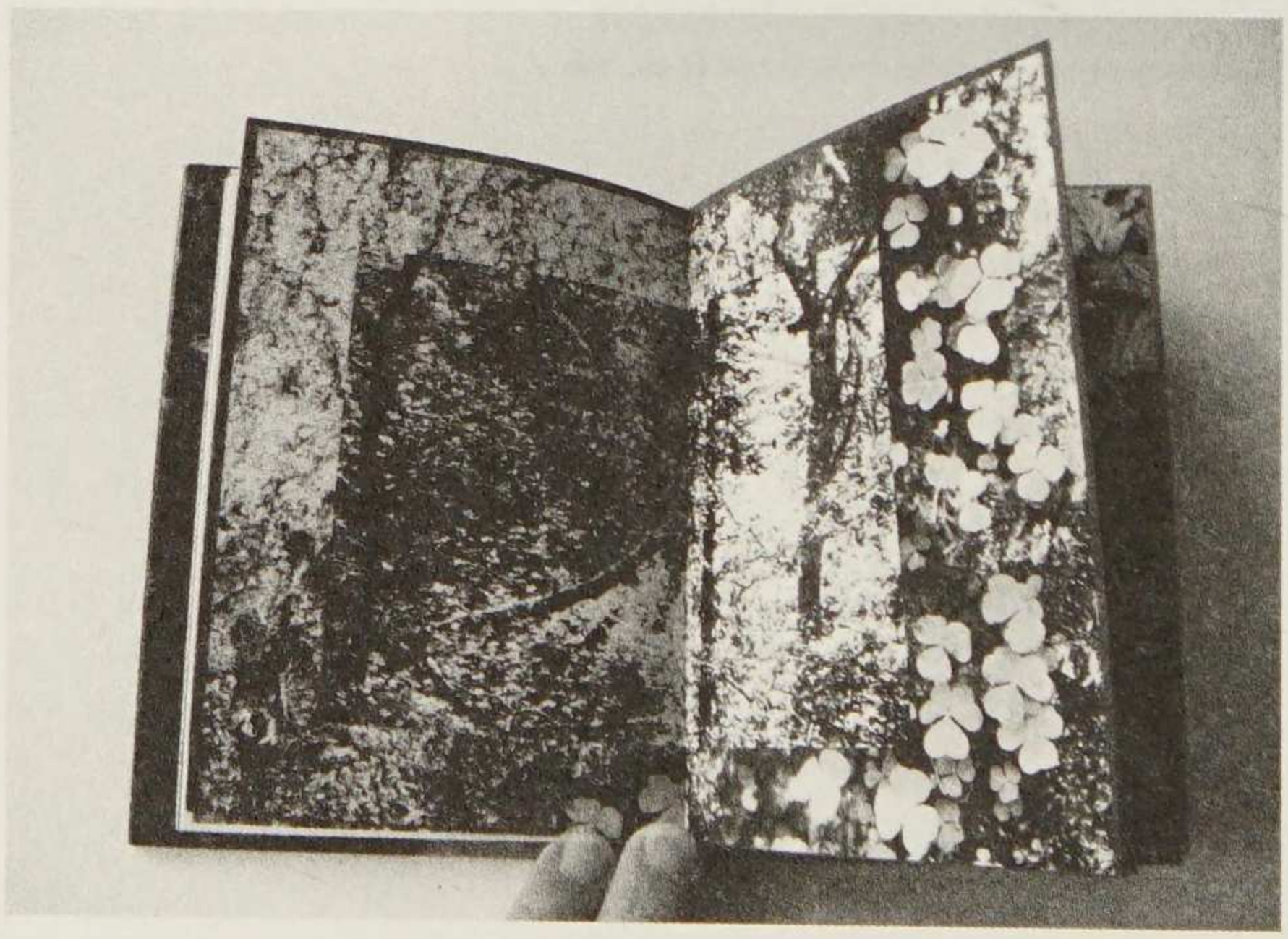
Bookworks, Mongrels, Etcetera, *and* Selector's Choice of Books

First published in *Outside of a Dog: Paperbacks and Other Books by Artists* (Gateshead: Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, 2003), p. 2–4, 15.

'Outside of a dog a book is man's best friend. Inside of a dog it's too dark to read.'
– Groucho Marx.

I told this joke to Sune Nordgren, the director of Baltic, when we met for lunch to discuss his idea for an exhibition of artists' books in May 2003. He immediately said: 'That's our title!' I followed up with a proposal for a collaborative exhibition. Correspondence and preparations moved speedily and we were able to open the show in Gateshead on 26 September, with the choices of 24 people. We had the idea that since the show would be on for eight months, there might be different editions of the exhibition and the catalogue. Thus there is a second enlarged edition of the publication that also includes the choices of another four people, making a total of 28 people in all.





Helen Douglas, *Wild Wood* (Yarrow: Weproductions, 1999)

Initially I contemplated an exhibition based on the types of books by artists that I had identified in my essay for *Artist/Author: Contemporary Artists' Books*[1] in 1998. But, after reflecting upon this mode of organisation for a while, I began to think that however useful the categories might be for discussion or even research, a presentation based on them might well be rather academic for the visitors to an exhibition. Other factors that concerned me were that having moved back to London from New York (arguably one of the most important centres for artists' books) some years ago, and being no longer involved in regularly acquiring artists' books for a substantial collection, I was not seeing as many new books from around the world as I had before. My knowledge was getting stranded in time. Furthermore, I felt that I had said most of what I wanted to say about the origins and evolution of artists' books, as I see it, in *Artist/Author*

in 1998. In parallel with these factors, now that I was based on the right-hand side of the Atlantic, I had become more aware of the history, quantity and quality of artists' books published in Europe, including Eastern Europe. Finally, I had had an eye-opening visit to Oaxaca, Mexico, in 1998, which informed me of the wealth of artists' book publishing in Latin America. Thus it dawned upon me that if I were to attempt a more inclusive picture of artists' publishing I should seek collaborators.

My proposal for the Baltic exhibition sought, therefore, to overcome the limitations of my own geography and experience, and incorporate other perspectives on the broad field of artists' books. There were several people who had published on artists' books whose views I respected, and whom I knew would augment my perspectives, so I jotted down their names. Then it occurred to me that I should move beyond critics and curators and try to incorporate those representatives of the larger ecology of artists' books who had extensive experience of the field. This led me to jot down the names of several publishers, booksellers, artists, collectors and others with overlapping roles. In thinking about geography I sought the names of people involved with artists' books who worked in countries beyond my usual acquaintance. The list of names and countries began to lengthen still further, and I eventually had far too many names. So I decided to prune back the British and American specialists on my list so that ideas from more countries could be represented. Sune Nordgren also added names.

Now that we had our selectors, what were the rules for selection to be? Above all I wanted visitors to the exhibition to be able to handle books. However, artists have generally published their own books in relatively small editions – frequently only a hundred or two – so any artists' book more than, say, a decade old might already be scarce or long out of print. The repeated handling of such books in an exhibition was likely to wear them out, thereby making them scarcer still. So I decided that older books should be exhibited under glass, while those still in print could be bought in multiple copies for handling in the exhibition, anticipating that some would wear out. This decision led me to separate the two groups by century: 20th century books (1950–1999) would be in cases; 21st century books (2000–2003)

would be available to be handled. I road-tested this idea on myself and found it relatively easy to select old favourites for the last century, but much more challenging to select books for the new century. So I decided to present this same challenge to our chosen selectors.

The eventual request to selectors was for a list of 6–10 artists' books from the period 1950–1999, 3–6 artists' books from 2000–2003, and a short statement of 100–500 words commenting on or explaining their selections. The responses that Sune Nordgren and I received were very instructive. What I had hoped for, diversity, was manifest. But while I had planned for the diversity of origins of individual selectors, their choices of books of diverse genres from many countries other than their own was surprising, and even suggested more of an internationalism than I had expected. The results also hinted at a frail consensus of what the key artists' books since 1950 might be, and who the key book makers might be.

In thinking about the exhibition there had been at the back of my mind the idea that I needed to shake up my own ideas, opinions and view of the history of the subject. Later, as I regarded the selections of my collaborators, and as I wrestled with my own choices of books, one consequence was that I dispensed with all my concerns over detailed categorisation and came to the conclusion that artists' books are simply books or bookworks (or occasionally in-between mongrels). By this I mean that some artists use the book in a similar way to writers, while other artists consider the book as an integrated visual entity.

(It has been said many times that most writers construct one long line of words, punctuation and spaces, and then let their publishers, or word processors, chop this into regular lengths to fit the pages of a book. This has everything to do with reading, and is characteristic of most books. Can it be that the 'bookwork' is the antithesis of the 'book'?)

I have spent a long time trying to explain to myself, and others, what a 'bookwork' might be. Indeed I do not think I had this term to distinguish books that were visual artworks from all the rest, until Ulises Carrión crystallised the words out of a verbal ping-pong that the two of us engaged in during the 1970s and 1980s. Ulises' thoughts on this and related subjects were diligently put together in the posthumous gathering of his

writings: *Quant aux Livres/On Books.*[2] To cut a long story short, Ulises ultimately came up with the idea that 'bookworks are books in which the book form, a coherent sequence of pages, determines conditions of reading that are intrinsic to the work'.[3] Since this definition grew out of my own ideas on the subject, and since Ulises' death terminated our intermittent dialogue, I have until now let it be. But having pondered the choices of myself and others for this exhibition, I see that while this definition may have been right for Ulises Carrión, who after all began as a writer, it is not right for me. Where I diverge from Ulises is over the notion of 'reading'. The act of reading has been stretched from reading a literary work, to reading a map, to reading a painting, to reading a city, but in essence it applies to the decoding of writing.

At this point perhaps I can be permitted to interpolate a fragment of my own history. Like most children, my early encounters with books were with picture books. I looked at these books over and over again. Next I learned to read and enjoyed books with words and pictures, until finally I borrowed books from the local mobile library that had no pictures at all. I won't say that this was a traumatic moment, but I will say that I still remember the change to a different mode of understanding that required you to make up the pictures out of your own head!

What I am getting at is that, if we accept that reading is 'the decoding of writing', the other activity we engage in with books by artists is looking. Thus, simplistically, we read artists' books, but we look at artists' bookworks. My ongoing preoccupation with the identification of bookworks is over the nature of those books that are artworks, designed to be looked at, and designed specifically page by page, verso by recto, opening by opening, to constitute an integrated flowing whole.

The word 'bookwork' has unfortunately been kidnapped and used to describe any kind of book made by an artist, especially, it seems, conspicuously three-dimensional unique craft objects that only resemble books – a long way from the 'democratic' impulse behind the original mass-produced printed artists' books. But maybe this is not too important? I have simply found the word 'bookwork' useful to designate a certain kind of artwork embodied in the codex book form.

After thinking again about the books that I chose for this exhibition (see below) I have come to see a related pair of opposed characteristics other than books and bookworks, which is, visual books and verbal books. Thus the books that I have chosen to exhibit by Ruscha, LeWitt, Stokes, Osborn, Jaar, Douglas, Downsbrough and Zubeil are primarily visual books, or books for looking at, whereas the books by Weiner, Ross, Durham and Sackett are primarily verbal books, or books for reading. In the middle are those books that contain not only the words that tend to drive the reader through the book from left to right, but also images or design features that subvert the march of reading and encourage more looking around. These verbi-visual books include the books by Piper, Hompson and the Smiths. But this categorisation is not quite the end of the matter, for besides this division of artists' books into visual, verbi-visual and verbal, there is the dualism of books and bookworks to be considered.

The visual books that I have listed are also all book-works, that is 'integrated visual entities'. However, it seems to me that the verbal books by Weiner and Sackett are also 'integrated visual entities'; their placing of letters and words is very considered. So I think we can ultimately talk of artists' books in terms of: visual bookworks, verbal book-works, verbi-visual bookworks and other books. These 'other books' would include verbal and visual books that do not exist as self-sufficient artworks, books such as artists' sketchbooks or theoretical writings.

Of course my obsession with categorisation – or more generously, my obsession with understanding – does not affect my enjoyment of these books. After all, my choices range over all the categories, and each is significant to me in a different way. But awareness of the fact that some artists' books are artworks, while others may be literary works, should help dispel some of the confusion around the term 'artist's book'.

Finally, the fact that this publication and exhibition brings together the choices of nearly 30 people from many countries, with diverse experience of artists' books, should help all of us to re-examine the received histories and definitions of this mongrel medium. In addition the discovery of new books by artists that this method of collaborative selection brings forth will be its own reward.[4]

Titles selected by me for the exhibition

1950–1999

Edward Ruscha, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* (2nd ed. Alhambra: Cunningham Press, 1967; first published 1963).

Sol LeWitt, *Lines in Two Directions and in Five Colors on Five Colors with all their Combinations* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1981).

Telfer Stokes, *Passage* (London: Weproductions, 1972).

Lawrence Weiner, *And/or: Green as well as Blue as well as Red* (London: Jack Wendler, 1972).

Ulises Carrión, *Looking for Poetry/Tras la Poesía* (Cullompton: Beau Geste Press, 1973).

Adrian Piper, *Colored People: a Collaborative Book Project* (London: Book Works, 1991).

Davi Det Hompson, *You know it has to be a hairpiece* (Richmond VA: Hompson, 1977).

Kevin Osborn, *Real Lush* (Arlington VA: Osbornbook, 1981).

Alfredo Jaar, *A Hundred Times Nguyen* (Stockholm: Fotografiska Museet i Moderna Museet, 1994).

Helen Douglas, *Wild Wood* (Yarrow: Weproductions, 1999).

2000–2003

Monica Ross, *Valentine* (London: Milch, 2000).

Jimmie Durham, *Stone Heart* (Kitakyushu: Center for Contemporary Art, 2001).

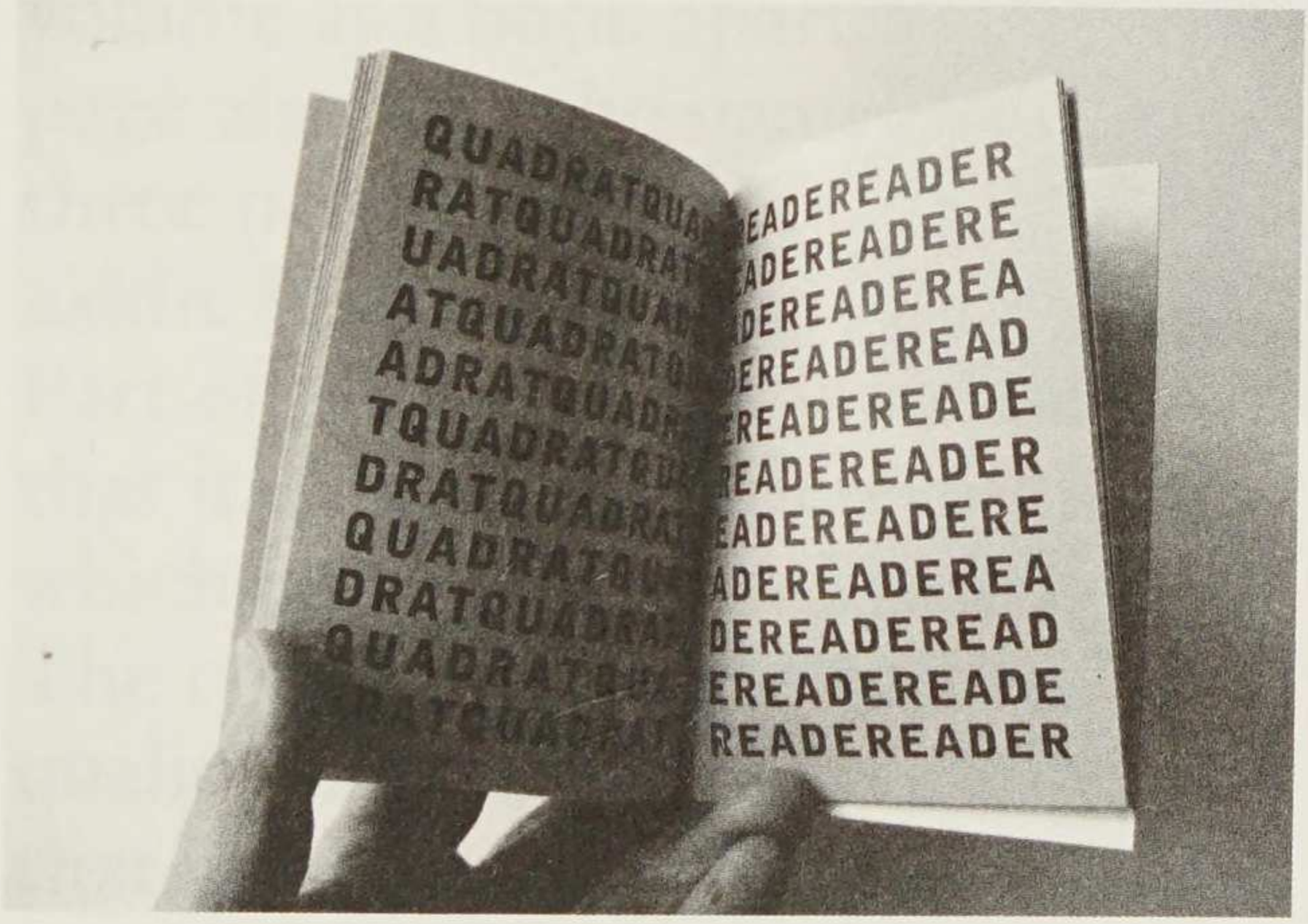
Bob & Roberta Smith, *A is for Book: a Colouring in Book* (London: Mrs. + Mr. Design, 2001).

Peter Downsbrough, *And Here, As* (Châteaugiron: FRAC Bretagne & Rennes: Les Éditions Incertain Sens, 2002).

Francine Zubeil, *Hors de Contenance* (Marseille: La Fabrique Sensible, 2002).

Colin Sackett, *Theenglshalphabet* (Axminster: Sackett, 2002).

[1] Cornelia Lauf & Clive Phillpot, *Artist/Author: Contemporary Artists' Books* (New York: Distributed Art Publishers & The American Federation of Arts, 1998), p. 38.
[2] Ulises Carrión, *Quant aux Livres/On Books* (Geneva: Héros-Limite, 1997).
[3] Ibid., p. 170.
[4] My collaborators were: Juan Agius, Kaatje Cusse, Simon Cutts, Mirtha Dermisache, Johan Deumens, Leif Eriksson, Alec Finlay, György Galántai (Artpool), Conrad Gleber, Gary Goldstein, Skuta Helgasson, Martha Hellion, Márton Koppány, Florence Loewy, Joan Lyons, Hansjörg Mayer, Anne Moeglin-Delcroix, Maurizio Nannucci, Sune Nordgren, Harry Ruhé, Marvin Sackner, Ulrike Stolz, Stefan Szczelkun, Jan Voss, Lawrence Weiner, Barbara Wien and Mami Yoshimoto.

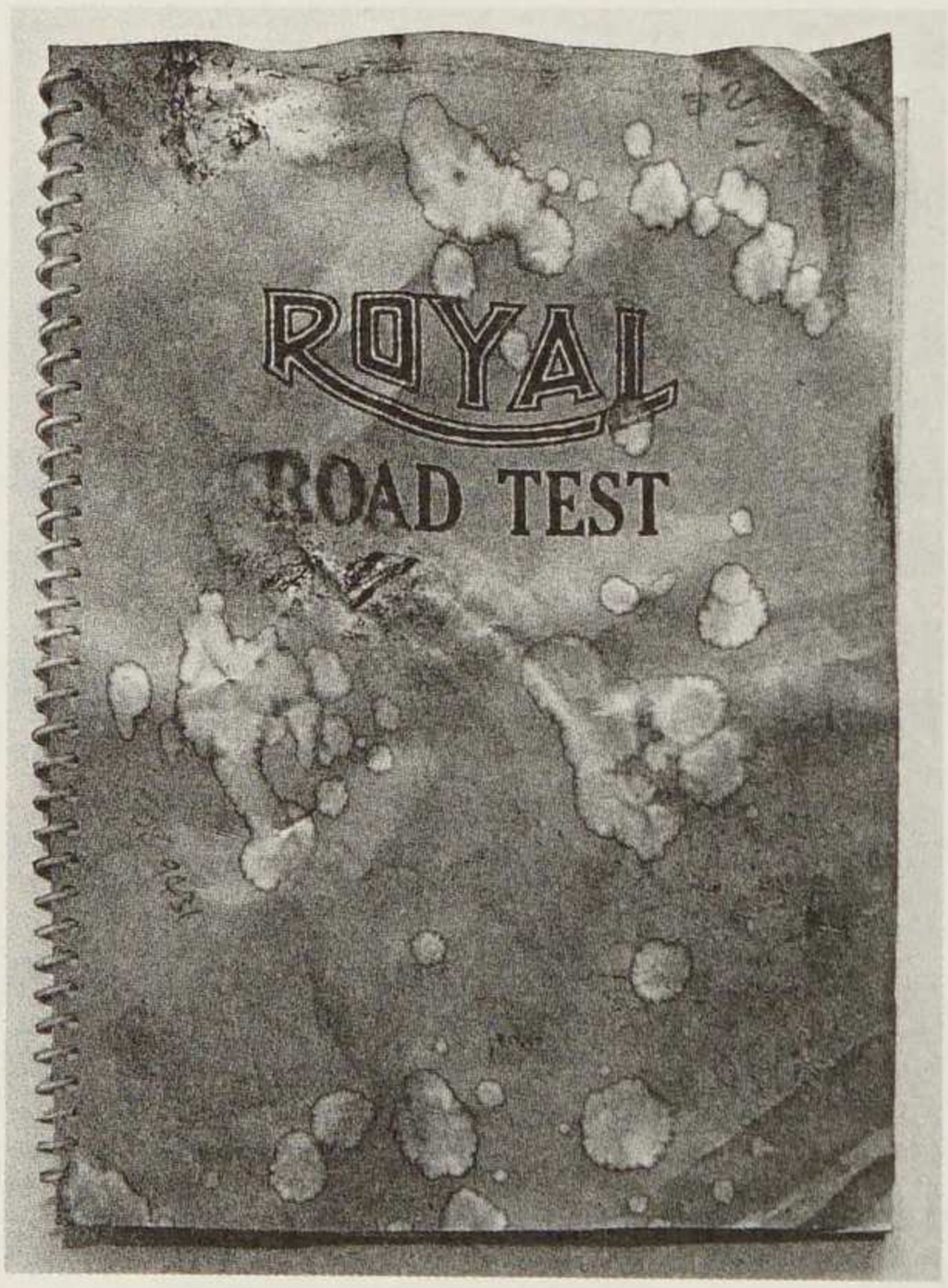


Colin Sackett, *Theenglshalphabet* (Axminster: Sackett, 2002)

Evidence: Royal Road Test by Cleve Filpot

First published in Simon Morris ed., *Documentation for 'The Royal Road to the Unconscious' at the Freud Museum* (York: Information As Material, 2004), p. 29–31.

In 2003 Simon Morris, of Information As Material, asked me, as someone familiar with Ed Ruscha's books, if I would write an essay on the history of the cutup in art or on a subject loosely related to his video project 'The Royal Road to the Unconscious', which represents a coming together of Freud and Ruscha. My response, repeated here, concerned Ruscha's book *Royal Road Test* of 1967. I was very surprised when I got to the opening of the exhibition at the Freud Museum in London, to find this pseudonymous text blown up and mounted as a wall piece.



Eddie Russia and Others, *Royal Road Test*, n.d.

This spiral-bound booklet has the appearance of a manual for a domestic appliance. The wear that it has experienced would appear to confirm this function. However, the purposes to which this booklet might be put make one fervently wish that it has not, nor ever shall be used as a manual for the practices described within, whatever the ultimate justification.

The cover of the booklet bears a regal typographic device that is also repeated on the title page. The word 'Royal' brands this volume as a book apart. The title page also lists the names of the three perpetrators: Mason Dixon, Eddie Russia and Inky Blackwell. Part of the title page is missing so that it is difficult to determine which edition or printing this is. The coarseness of the picture quality and the ragged texts suggest that the contents have been reprinted many times. Perhaps this copy is even a pirate edition?

The booklet is in three sections, let us name them A, B and C. Section A unashamedly portrays the main actors in this drama, together with their accoutrements. Thus the first image (A1) is of the doomed Royal, while the second (A2) depicts the very vehicle of doom. The third image (A3) is the first snapshot of accomplice Eddie Russia, named as the driver of the vehicle. The similar fifth image (A5) depicts the second conspirator, Mason Dixon, who is identified as the principal perpetrator. Finally the seventh photo (A7) is of the third man, Inky Blackwell, who, as photographer, effectively incriminates the first and second conspirators, and even himself.

Other images in Section A include: the window through which the Royal was ejected (A4), the rocky plain where the violent act was perpetrated (A6), the scene of the crime (A8), and a photograph of two of the perpetrators posed nonchalantly among the scattered body parts of the Royal (A9). There is also a view of the point of impact where the body of the Royal disintegrated (A10). Strangely, the perpetrators have also inserted a brief text between A1 and A2 that reports that the act was perpetrated on a Sunday, seven minutes after five o'clock in the afternoon, in a region of California 122 miles from Las Vegas, Nevada (known as the Devil's Playground!).

The motivations of the three men in compiling and publishing this self-incriminating documentary record, are difficult to divine. But the numerous reprintings and new editions of *Royal Road Test* attest to the folkloric quality of their exploits, and the huge following that they have acquired. (Perhaps this booklet only appears to have been compiled by the perpetrators and is in fact an act of homage by some of their more ardent, and misguided, followers?)

If Section A is sufficiently incriminating, then Section B serves only to further document the depravity of Russia, Dixon and Blackwell, for this section meticulously records the scattered body parts of the Royal in the locations where they ultimately came to rest. This was presumably some time after the diabolical act, for not only have the bones been picked clean, but many parts are missing, perhaps carried off by marauding carnivores? Here is the list of parts so carefully photographed by the three perpetrators: B1 left clavicle, B2 cervical vertebra, B3 right femur, B4 left

ischium, B5 right scapula, B6 tarsal, B7 lumbar vertebra, B8 ribs, B9 sternum, B10 left humerus, B11 coccyx, B12 right ilium, B13 left ilium, B14 right ischium and left scapula, B15 vertebrae, B16 right fibula, B17 rib cage, B18 sacrum, B19 skull – side view, B20 skull – top view, B21 left radius and left ulna, B22 vertebrae, B23 right radius and right ulna.

As if the almost forensic depiction of the scattered body parts in Section B was not enough to convict the three men, two of the three photographs that comprise section C portray Russia and Dixon posing with the skull of the Royal (C1 & C2). The last morbid photograph is of the wrecked skull of the Royal, overlaid, as if for all time, by the long shadows of all three perpetrators (C3).

There remains for our consideration the apparently gratuitous short text at the beginning of the book. This is the only piece of prose not confined to describing the pre-meditated act or its consequences. Perhaps it was included in the booklet as an attempt to absolve the three regicides:

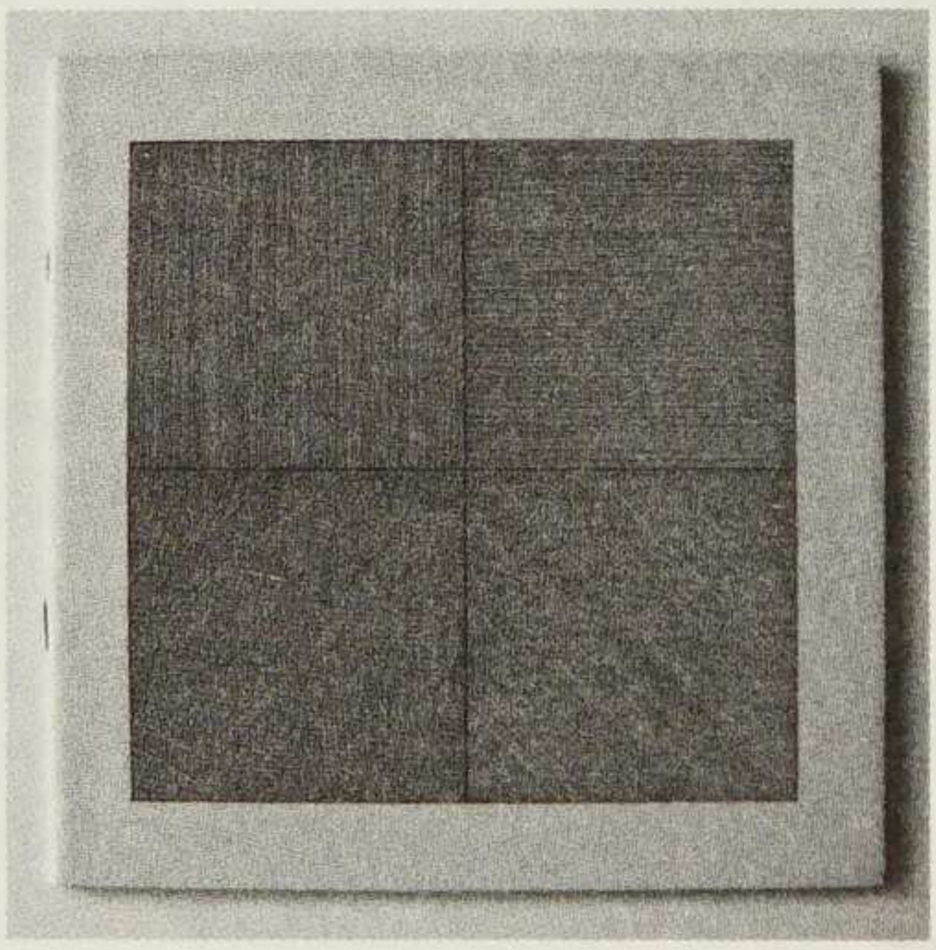
> They were too directly bound up in their own anguish to perpetrate anything other than an act of negation. But since monarchy carries within itself the seeds of its own destruction, they must be held guiltless.

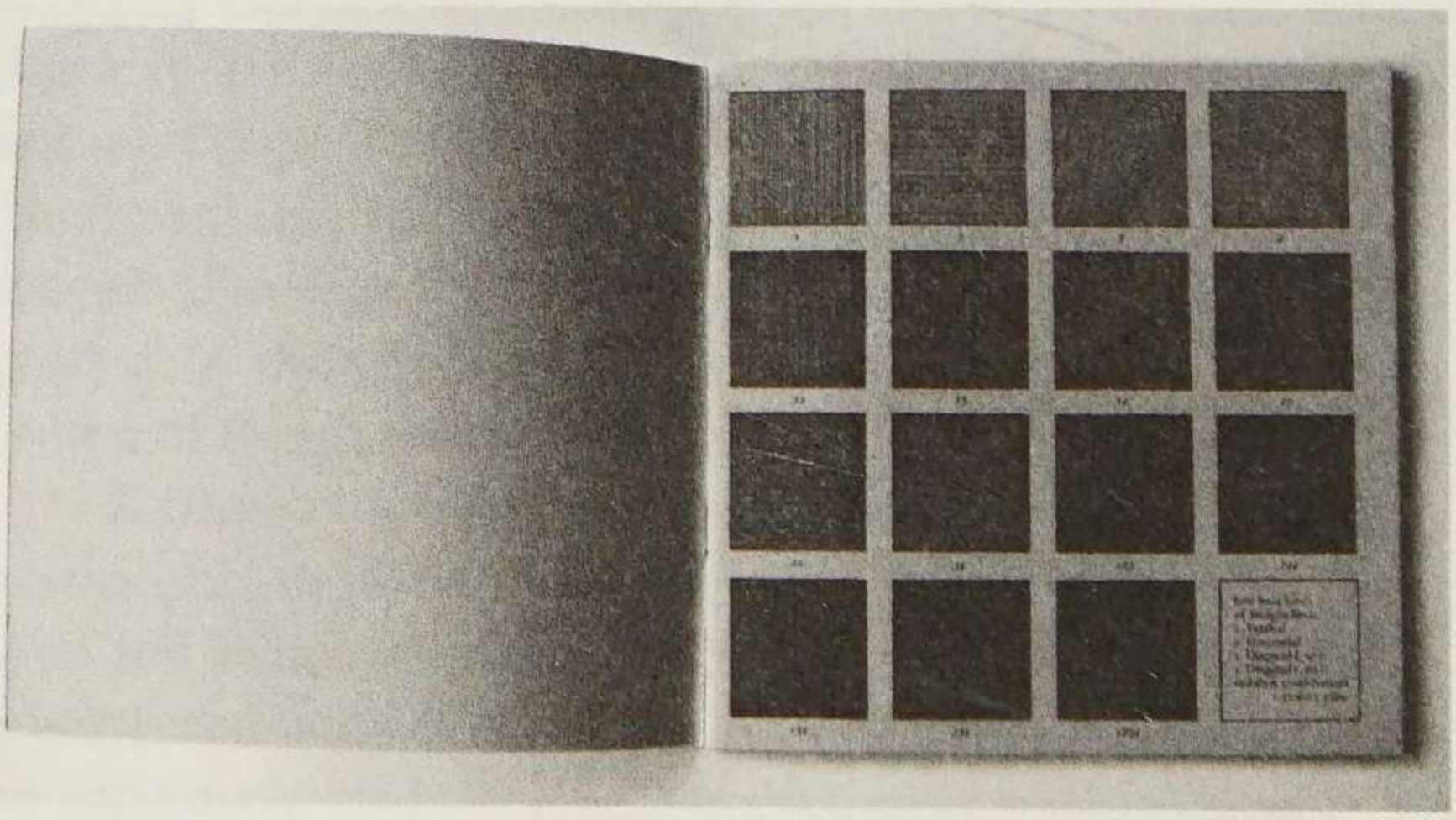
Finally, all is silence.

Sol LeWitt's Books: Complete & Incomplete

Previously unpublished essay, 2010.

Martin Rogers invited me to give a paper at a conference that was held at Site Gallery in Sheffield on 8 May, 2010, in conjunction with an exhibition of the books of Sol LeWitt. The other speakers were Anne Moeglin-Delcroix and Simon Cutts. I had regularly seen work by LeWitt in England in the 1970s, but actually got to meet him in New York within a couple of months of arriving at The Museum of Modern Art, since he was there preparing for his 1978 retrospective exhibition. Subsequently we also served together on the Board of Printed Matter Inc.





Sol LeWitt, *Four Basic Kinds of Straight Lines* (London: Studio International, 1969)

In an interview with Saul Ostrow in 2003, Sol LeWitt said that he 'became interested in making books, starting about 1965, when [he] did the *Serial Project #1*'. This was eventually dated 1966 and published as a component of issues 5 and 6 of the seminal *Aspen Magazine* portfolio in 1967.[1] He said that he 'needed a small book to show how the work could be understood and how the system worked. From that time', he says, he 'began to do books as works in themselves, not as catalogues.'[2] Thus *Serial Project #1 1966* was just a pamphlet to accompany one of his sculptures, and while it is elegantly designed, it exists, as he said, to show how the work could be understood. It is not, therefore, an autonomous artist book. (Apropos this mention of design, it is perhaps worth noting parenthetically that a bit earlier, around 1960, Sol LeWitt was practicing as a graphic designer at precisely the same time as another significant artist's book maker, Ed Ruscha.)

Sol LeWitt's next book project was more significant for his subsequent history as a book maker. He was invited by Seth Siegelaub, along with six other artists, to contribute 25 pages to what has been familiarly called 'The Xerox Book', but which is actually titled *Carl Andre, Robert Barry, Douglas Huebler, Joseph Kosuth, Sol LeWitt, Robert Morris, Lawrence Weiner*, and which was published by Siegelaub and John W. (Jack) Wendler in New York in December 1968.[3] Because of the publishers' discriminating choice of artists, the timing of their publication during the emergence of 'conceptual art', and the powerful yet spare contributions, this book is a milestone publication. It is also an early example of the use of the Xerox machine in the production of art. While it was initially intended that each of the 25 original Xerox pages from each artist would be Xeroxed again as many times as would be necessary to produce an edition for binding, it was soon apparent, however, that at that time it would have been a very costly endeavour, so that ultimately the original single Xeroxed copies were reproduced by photo-offset and only then bound up to make the edition of 1,000 copies.

Robert Barry, Robert Morris and Lawrence Weiner each appear to reproduce a single original Xerox sheet 25 times, Douglas Huebler plays some perceptual games with each of his 25 pages, and Joseph Kosuth successively deconstructs the process of making the book over his 25 pages. Carl Andre and Sol LeWitt, however, use their pages to articulate a sequence of images. Carl Andre wittily performs one of his 'scatter pieces' on the platen [glass] of the Xerox machine, starting with a single small square of block cardboard and then adding one more after each print, ending up, therefore, with one square on the first page and 25 on his last page. Sol LeWitt draws four sets of four squares on each page inside a margin, but makes permutations of each of the four varieties of drawn lines within the squares to generate 24 different images. His 25th image is an explanation of the components of his process and the permutations.

This drawing exercise was very fertile for Sol LeWitt. Indeed this particular outcome became both a wall drawing and two autonomous books: *Sol LeWitt: [Set IIA, 1-24]* published in 1968, and *[Drawing Series I, II, III, IIII A & B] [1968]* which was published as a substantial volume in Europe some years later in 1974. The wall drawing was in fact Sol LeWitt's

first, and was done for a group exhibition at the Paula Cooper Gallery in SoHo, New York. Significantly, this group exhibition in October 1968 was to benefit the Student Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam.[4] 'The Xerox Book', is dated two months later in December.

LeWitt's first book-spin-off from 'The Xerox Book', was *Sol LeWitt: [Set IIA, 1-24]*, which would appear to be Sol LeWitt's first autonomous book. It was published to coincide with his exhibition at the Ace Gallery in Los Angeles from 2 December, 1968, to 11 January, 1969. It would seem to be simply a breaking out of his 25-page contribution to 'The Xerox Book' into a self-sufficient volume of 28 pages. We might, therefore, consider *Sol LeWitt: [Set IIA, 1-24]* to be LeWitt's preferred version of the work that he contributed to 'The Xerox Book', especially since the new booklet is not only self-contained, but is also square. His first publication, *Serial Project #1 1966*, was also square, while his contribution to 'The Xerox Book' was not, since he had agreed to work within the restrictions imposed by the limits of the Xerox machine, which used standard-size American stationery measuring 8 ½ by 11 inches. So this might well have been a compromise that LeWitt subsequently rectified in *Sol LeWitt: [Set IIA, 1-24]*.

Thus this first autonomous book or artist's book (which incidentally was published on the occasion of an exhibition but is clearly not an exhibition catalogue), was of four squares within a square multiplied four times within a square page-format. This overall plan sets out the schema for nearly all LeWitt's subsequent artist's books. For example, in most of his photographic publications LeWitt arranges nine photographs in three rows of three on the square page. This is the case in *PhotoGrids* (1977), *Five Cubes on Twenty-Five Squares* (1978), *On the Walls of the Lower East Side*, an *Artforum* project of 1979, *Autobiography* (1980) and *From Monteluco to Spoleto/ December 1976* (1984). One of his later photographic works, *Sunrise And Sunset at Praiano*, 1980, lays out four photos on each page.

Sol LeWitt discovered the square! One could propose that he originally 'discovered' the square in the early 1960s in his relief structures of 1962. Then, more significantly for his sculpture, he also 'discovered the cube' around 1965, when he embarked upon his modular structures. I say that he 'discovered the square'; this choice of words comes

straight from another book! In 1965 the legendary New York bookseller George Wittenborn published the English translation of a book by the Italian designer and artist Bruno Munari. Its title was *Discovery of the Square*[5]. (In England it was published by Tiranti.)

This small square book, with a black square dominating its white front cover, is a cornucopia of illustrations and information concerning the square in science, mathematics, architecture, language, art and other disciplines. It is not in itself scientific, it is rather a small sourcebook for readers, including designers and artists. (In 1966, George Wittenborn followed this book with another Munari book in translation, *The Discovery of the Circle*.) It is highly likely that Sol LeWitt was aware of Munari's book.

What we might find useful now about *Discovery of the Square* are a few words at the beginning. The very first sentence tells us that, 'the square is as high and as wide as a man with his arms outstretched'. The square is thus not only an abstract figure, but also a measure of mankind. Munari then says that from the earliest times, the square has signified 'the idea of enclosure, of home, of settlement'. He also says that, 'its structural possibilities have helped artists and architects of all generations and styles by giving them a harmonic skeleton to which to apply an artistic construction'.[6] An artist who has conspicuously used the square in this way is Josef Albers. He is well known for his enduring series of paintings entitled *Homage to the Square*, which are formal skeletons on which are hung colour harmonies. It is not surprising that in later years Sol LeWitt paid his own homage to Albers with a wall drawing at the Josef Albers Museum in Germany, at a time when he, too, was very concerned with colour relationships.[7]

The square, considered separately from the cube, and initially in conjunction with drawing and only later with colour, occurs throughout Sol LeWitt's work and particularly in his books. Using Giorgio Maffei and Emanuele de Donno's excellent and useful book *Sol LeWitt: Artist's Books* that catalogues almost every one of Sol LeWitt's artist's books and other publications, I estimate that well over half of Sol LeWitt's 76 listed publications are square in format, and that when one focuses on just his books, the proportion is nearer to two thirds.[8]

Following *Serial Project #1*, 'The Xerox Book' and *Set II A 1-24*, Sol LeWitt's fourth book is *49 Three-Part Variations Using Three Different Kinds of Cubes/1967–68*, which was published in 1969 and is large and oblong in shape, its proportions being two squares wide by one square high. This doubling of the square format is approximately repeated with other books such as *Schematic Drawings for Muybridge II, 1964* of 1970, *Open Geometric Structures* ... of 1979 and *All Four Part Combinations of Six Geometric Figures* of 1980. In each case the horizontal format is dictated by the content. *49 Three-Part Variations* ... is the second of LeWitt's autonomous artist's books, and, again, is not an exhibition catalogue but more a catalogue of forms.

Sol LeWitt's clarity in laying out the components of his work alludes to order itself. One of the pleasures of his books is due to his presentation, not just of an idea, but of images that coexist in an obvious relationship with each other and which rest harmoniously on their platform, the book. Despite LeWitt's claim that 'conceptual artists are mystics', it seems to me that what Sol LeWitt does in his early books is rational and not mystical, though his later work is another matter.[9] (In making this contrary assertion I am comforted by another remark of LeWitt, that 'the artist may not necessarily understand his own art'.[10])

The book that expresses order most explicitly is his fifth book, the autonomous artist's book *Four Basic Kinds of Straight Lines* of 1969; it has an absolute clarity of design and content. This book was published in London by the magazine *Studio International*, and was printed by their printers, W & J MacKay & Company. The individual involved was the magazine's editor Peter Townsend.

The front cover of *Four Basic Kinds of Straight Lines* is an exemplary statement of the compositional elements: vertical lines, horizontal lines and the two sets of diagonal lines. The proportions are immaculate. The back cover, in turn, states the narrative: one square with lines in one direction, a second with two kinds of lines overlaid, a third with three kinds and the fourth with all kinds superimposed; it too is superbly clear and perfectly designed. The front cover is derived from one of the tetradic squares on the first page of LeWitt's contribution to 'The Xerox Book', and from *Sol LeWitt [Set IIA, 1-24]* both published in 1968, as well as

prefiguring *[Drawing Series I, II, III, IIII A & B (1970)]* to be published later in 1974. In addition, when a volume of his friend Lucy Lippard's writings, *Changing: Essays in Art Criticism*, was published in 1971, the cover bore this essential tetrad, the same four squares in one.[11] Incidentally, this last volume includes Lippard's 1967 essay on LeWitt in which she states that, 'the two ideas that have … occupied Sol LeWitt over the last four years are enclosure, or containment, and the paradoxical relationship between the visual (or perceptual) and the conceptual emphases in making art'.[12]

The first page of *Four Basic Kinds of Straight Lines* after the cover reveals a grid of 16 squares, and functions rather like a contents page. Fifteen of the squares declare the elements of the work: the four basic kinds of lines, the six combinations of two kinds of line, the four combinations of three lines, and the single square with all four lines. The 16th square contains the title of the work. This is comparable to a magician showing their audience that they have nothing up their sleeve before they begin their act. In LeWitt's case he proceeds from this introductory page to show us exactly what was prefigured on the contents page, except that each of the 15 components is now blown up and bled off, one to a page. But while there is, therefore, no surprise, there is magic. This magic lies in the completeness of the scenario, its simplicity and clarity, its capacity for exact re-enactment, the beauty of its design and execution, and the perfect physical qualities of the book. Once experienced, the structure of the work repeats exactly: its simple evolving narrative might even be replayed in the mind, like a tune. In 1967 Lucy Lippard used the word 'containment' to describe one of LeWitt's preoccupations; she also referred to 'enclosure', which is exactly what Munari said about 'the square' itself in his little square book. In parallel with his evolving series of books, Sol LeWitt's free-standing cubic structures were, of course, proliferating in the 1960s, and were particularly numerous in the 1970s, and while they, too, conspicuously possess these qualities of 'containment' and 'enclosure', the same two words can also be applied to the structure of *Four Basic Kinds of Straight Lines*. This book, like much of LeWitt's art, has a stability, also a rightness. Nothing can be, or needs to be, taken away; it is a clear and beautiful expression of his idea.

I mentioned that the physical qualities of the book were 'perfect'. The size of each page, the length of the book, its unpretentious and pragmatic binding, the single fascicule, the quality and colour of the paper of the cover and of the contents, the proportions of the layout, the bleeding of the majority of the pages, and the quality of the drawing, all add up to an exemplary work. The tetradic drawing presented on the cover is immensely satisfying in its inevitability, the weight of its constituent lines, their frequency, the tone that they collectively convey, and in the space that they occupy as a four-part figure. The texture of the drawing, especially the fields of criss-crossing lines in the interior of the book, reminds me of engravings.

The engraver that I am most aware of is the artist William Hogarth, a painter who, like Sol LeWitt, had ambitions to disseminate his work widely, though, in his case, not by means of inexpensive booklets, but by means of multiple engraved copies of his paintings. If one looks at details of Hogarth's prints, particularly his renderings of architectural details such as windows, doors, columns, steps and façades, one observes a regularity of line, shading and hatching, which, when isolated, resembles the transparent abstractions of LeWitt. I am sure that there are many other examples of engravers and engravings that one could employ in this context, and given that LeWitt once worked as an architectural draughtsman, one might also mention architectural engravings, but I am encouraged in citing Hogarth by one small fact. If one peers into a corner of one of the pages of Sol LeWitt's *Autobiography*, one sees the image of one of the two prints that Hogarth published in 1753 to accompany his own 'artist's book', *The Analysis of Beauty*, with its various techniques of engraving.[13]

Turning back to *Four Basic Kinds of Straight Lines*, one can take from its reproductions of Sol LeWitt's original drawings echoes of the sharpness of detail evident in the long tradition of engraving. Sol LeWitt's line has a bite, and while his draughtsmanship is amazingly regular, there are a multitude of inadvertent irregularities in the constituent lines that contribute collectively to the impact and solidity of each image or page. These irregularities may be partly due to the process of photographing LeWitt's original drawings, but are more likely to be due to the fluctuating pressure of

graphite (?) on paper. They are certainly not due to a lack of skill, which may be confirmed by the efforts of schoolboys, decades ago, engaged in what the then English education system labelled 'ruler drawing'.

In 1971, two years after the publication of *Four Basic Kinds of Straight Lines*, the Lisson Gallery in London published *Four Basic Colours and their Combinations*. This was LeWitt's first book to employ colour printing, and while it is virtually the same as the earlier monochrome book published by Studio International, it effectively colour codes the four original modes of shading. Unfortunately it was poorly produced in that it was crudely stapled through the side. This fact may have contributed to LeWitt's decision to publish a combined version of these two books *Four Basic Kinds of Lines & Color*, a few years later in 1977. Whereas the first of these three books had all the black and white images printed on the right side of each opening, this third book placed these black and white images on the left with their coloured equivalents on the right. The textures of the full-page bleeds are beguiling, with the minute irregularities of the straight lines intermingling with their contraries to produce a subtle incidental, moiré effect.

Sol LeWitt went on to make several more books using a vocabulary of lines with colour, including *Lines & Color* of 1975, *Color Grids* of 1977, and especially *Lines in Two Directions and in Five Colors With all their Combinations*, published by the Walker Art Center in 1988, which amounts to LeWitt's own 'homage to the square' (though coming from a different direction from the 'Homage' of Josef Albers).

By 1974, when Sol LeWitt published *[Drawing Series I, II, III, IIII A & B] [1968]*, deriving from his contribution to 'The Xerox Book' of 1968, the landscape of artist books had already been consolidated. The pioneer of the genre, Ed Ruscha, had effectively concluded his series of books, his 15th and penultimate book, *Colored People*, having been published in 1972. (He was to publish only one more book in this vein, *Hard Light*, co-authored with Lawrence Weiner in 1978.)[14] Sol LeWitt acknowledged the role of Ed Ruscha in spearheading the expansion of books as artworks; indeed he said specifically that 'the importance of Ed Ruscha in this cannot be ignored'.[15]

(At this point, I would like to draw your attention to the very first appearance of Sol LeWitt's 'Paragraphs on

Conceptual Art' in the pages of *Artforum* in 1967, since here it is illustrated with photographs of artworks. The list of artists assembled to complement LeWitt's ideas includes one or two surprises. They are: Jo Baer, Dan Graham, Ruth Vollmer, Don Judd, Robert Morris (twice), Robert Smithson, Dan Flavin, Carl Andre, Mel Bochner, Sol himself, Eva Hesse, Paul Morgensen, Jane Klein, and last, but not least, Ed Ruscha! LeWitt chose Ruscha's *Every Building On The Sunset Strip* to conclude his text on 'conceptual art'!)[16]

But Sol LeWitt built and expanded upon the example of Ruscha, and through his productivity, networking, commitment and quiet forcefulness promoted the book as a means of creation and dissemination to other artists, especially in New York and the USA, but also in Europe and elsewhere. Furthermore, as is well known, in 1976 Sol LeWitt joined up with Lucy Lippard to establish a specialised bookstore and book distributor in Manhattan, solely for artists' publications. I mean, of course, Printed Matter Inc., which has prospered for over 30 years. Lawrence Weiner, whose productivity in the publication of artist's books rivals Sol LeWitt's, also contributed to the field but in another direction through his work with Franklin Furnace Archive, another agency for artists' books, also founded in 1976 in Manhattan but by Martha Wilson. Franklin Furnace, as is well known, set about collecting, archiving and exhibiting these publications.

In 1977 Sol LeWitt marked a decade of book making by beginning to utilise sequences of photographs in his books, in, for example, *Brick Wall* and *PhotoGrids*. The photo sequences in these books are basically open series; the inclusion of particular photographs, particularly in *PhotoGrids*, seems almost arbitrary. This is in marked contrast to those of his earlier books that embodied sequences, since most of these were complete, closed series. In his earliest books Sol LeWitt generally explored an idea to its logical conclusion, along the lines of his well-known 1967 statement in 'Paragraphs on Conceptual Art' that 'The idea becomes a machine that makes the art.'[17] It would seem that a decade after this declaration, and a decade after his first book *Serial Project #1 1966* of 1967, Sol LeWitt was ready to pay more attention to subjectivity. (He had, of course, also said in 1967 that 'To work with a plan that is pre-set is one way of avoiding subjectivity.')[18]

In 1977, at the end of this first decade of publishing, Sol LeWitt was engaged in planning his mid-career retrospective exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art in New York that opened early in 1978; he was also designing the catalogue. It seems reasonable, therefore, to conclude that, for him, it marked a period of taking stock of his achievements. What is more, his life was also changing. He had met Carol Androccio 'in 1975, just after he bought a house in Spoleto, a town about 80 miles north of Rome'. Furthermore, 'Sol and Carol moved to Spoleto in 1980 and married in 1982.'[19] By 1985 they had two daughters, Sofia and Eva.

Looking back much later, in 2003, Sol LeWitt said: 'I reached a point in the evolution of my work at which the ideology and ideas became inhibiting. I felt that I had become a prisoner of my own pronouncements or ideas ... At that point I had moved to Italy.'[20] These remarks actually compress a few years, but the fact that Sol LeWitt acknowledged a change in his attitude to making art at the end of the 1970s is paralleled by a change in his way of making books. It is possible to say that around this time, beginning with the photographic books, LeWitt forsook completeness in the narratives of his books, and began to accept incompleteness. The later books are not often as self-contained as the early ones in that the structures that previously underpinned them are frequently absent. There is a randomness about his photographic books, in that they tend to become just thematic collections of images, almost sourcebooks, whether for grids, chickens, sunrises and sunsets, or urban and rural panoramas. In a way, they echo the role of Bruno Munari's *Discovery of the Square* and *Discovery of the Circle*; they are catch-alls for designated phenomena.

Returning to the *Brick Wall* of 1977, this does have a coherence, but the coherence is due simply to the repetition of the image, albeit subject to the randomness of sunshine and cloud, morning and evening. *PhotoGrids*, also of 1977, is, however, just a family of images. An uninformed viewer might have thought that Sol LeWitt was just a graphic designer who had set out to package a theme, and with the help of his distributor, in this instance Rizzoli, disperse it to countless coffee tables. But in 1980 Sol LeWitt published his third discursive photographic book, *Autobiography*. This is not just a semi-arbitrary collection of images, but may be taken to

represent another aspect of LeWitt's taking stock of his life and his work in the period leading up to 1980 and the move to Spoleto, further to his preparations for his 1978 retrospective.

Autobiography gives the impression that the camera that created the images might actually belong to an alien or a robot nosing around in Sol LeWitt's environment and examining and reporting almost indiscriminately on just about everything visible from its point of view. *Autobiography* differs from most of LeWitt's other photographic books because it implies a kind of invisible connective tissue that binds the images together into a whole. It might be said to have achieved a kind of complete incompleteness that amounts to an oblique autobiographical record of his life on the cusp of change. And it was this book, among other works, that prompted Rosalind Krauss to characterise some of 'the matter in his work of the objective pole being flooded by a sense of its subjective opposite'.[21]

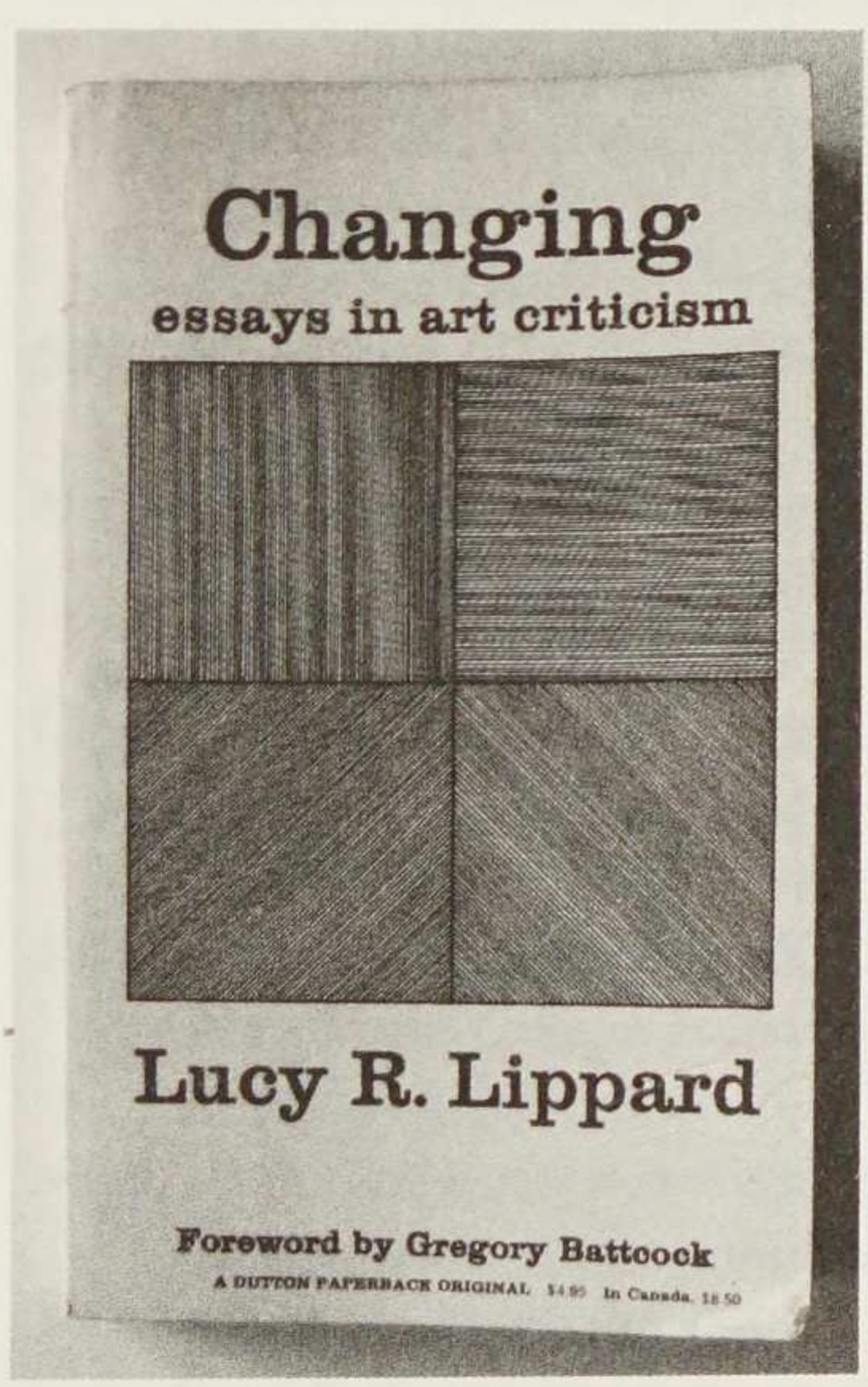
Sol LeWitt's book making falls off towards the end of his life. If we take the current 2009 catalogue *Sol LeWitt: Artist's Books*, already mentioned, as a complete list, 76 of his publications are included (though admittedly some of these, like the *Art & Project Bulletins*, are not books). Simple arithmetic reveals that over half of all LeWitt's publications, namely 39 of them, were published in a single decade, between 1967 and 1976, which was the first of four decades of production. In his last decade only three books were produced. There must be many reasons for this decline, some purely pragmatic. For example, Sol LeWitt's reputation had soared, and he was receiving more and more commissions for wall drawings and structures from all over the world, and more and more requests for exhibitions; in addition he now had a family. I have linked this decline in his output of books to his abandonment of the development of finite series, and the introduction of his photographic books, but perhaps we can also recognise that in his work, as in his life, he gradually relinquished the two characteristics of his early work that Lucy Lippard identified – enclosure and containment – and as Rosalind Krauss observed, moved from the objective to the subjective.

Sol LeWitt did not completely abandon his earlier preoccupation with finite series and with variations: his later books (not to mention his structures), such as *Geometric*

Figures & Color (1979), *Lines in Two Directions and in Five Colors with all their Combinations* (1988) and *Cube* of 1990, all carry forward his early achievements in a relaxed and full-bodied way. But these books, and a few others, are paralleled by others that straddle order and randomness, such as *Lines & Formes* (1989), *Black Gouaches* (1992) and *Flat & Glossy Black* of 1998.

Given the loss of logical structures in his books, and the increase in his photographic image anthologies, Sol LeWitt would seem to have veered from making bookworks to simply designing books of reproductions, as with *PhotoGrids* in one direction, and the 1996 *100 Cubes* in another. Perhaps Sol LeWitt understood this and realised that he had less use for book structures at this stage in his evolution. But while we might regret this loss of artist's book ideas, his other work was massively expanded, and blossomed incredibly. His late wall drawings and murals and his polychrome structures are astonishing, joyful and celebratory. Books seem simply to have taken a back seat to them. While he was discovering his potential in the 1960s and 1970s and slowly unfolding his ideas of series and completeness, his works on paper and his books helped him to articulate ideas that also became possibilities for both wall drawings and structures. With the discovery of full-blooded colour, and perhaps the art and climate of Italy, as well as a different way of life, Sol LeWitt no longer needed to observe closed orders, but could embrace subjectivity, openness, incompleteness – and the uncategoriseable.

[1] Saul Ostrow, 'Sol LeWitt', *Bomb*, no. 85 (Fall 2003). (http://bombsite.com/issues/85/articles/2583 p. 6 of 10.)
[2] Ibid., p. 6.
[3] Although I have used the colloquial title 'The Xerox Book' in this essay, in all other instances I have used the titles for Sol LeWitt's books given in Giorgio Maffei and Emanuele de Donno (eds.), *Sol LeWitt: Artist's Books* (Sant'Eraclio di Foligno: Edizioni Viaindustriae, 2009).
[4] Andrea Miller-Keller, 'Sol LeWitt: Twenty-Five Years of Wall Drawings', *Sol LeWitt: Twenty-Five Years of Wall Drawings, 1968–1993* (Andover MA: Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy; Seattle & London: University of Washington Press, 1993), p. 41. For illustrations see *Sol LeWitt* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1978), p. 92–93.
[5] Bruno Munari, *The Discovery of The Square* (New York: Wittenborn, 1965), reissued as Bruno Munari, *The Square* (Mantova: Maurizio Corraini, 2006).
[6] Ibid., p. 5.
[7] Sol LeWitt's wall drawing for the Josef Albers Museum in Bottrop, Germany, is number 1176, *Seven Basic Colors and All Their Combinations in a Square Within a Square: Walldrawing for Josef Albers*, 2005. See for example: http://www.massmoca.org/lewitt/walldrawing.php?id=583H%26F (last accessed November 2012).
[8] Maffei and de Donno, *Sol LeWitt*.
[9] Sol LeWitt, 'Sentences On Conceptual Art', *Art-Language*, vol. 1, no. 1 (May 1969), p. 11. (Twenty-four years later, LeWitt seems to have pulled back from the word 'mystics' when he says, 'Conceptual artists were intuitive rather than rational.' In Andrew Wilson, 'Sol LeWitt Interviewed', *Art Monthly*, no. 164 (March 1993), p. 9.
[10] Ibid., p. 12.
[11] Lucy R. Lippard, *Changing: Essays in Art Criticism* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1971).
[12] Ibid., p. 154.
[13] Sol LeWitt, *Autobiography* (New York: Multiples Inc.; Boston: Lois & Michael K. Torf, 1980), pages unnumbered. Also: William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty* (London: William Hogarth, 1753). For illustrations see, for example, Sean Shesgreen, *Engravings by Hogarth* (New York: Dover, 1973), plate 85.
[14] Siri Engberg and Clive Phillpot, *Edward Ruscha: Editions 1959–1999, Catalogue Raisonné* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1999).
[15] Ostrow, 'Sol LeWitt', p. 6.
[16] Sol LeWitt, 'Paragraphs On Conceptual Art', *Artforum*, vol. 5, no. 10 (June 1967), p. 79–83.
[17] Ibid., p. 80.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Martin Friedman, 'LeWitt House in Praiano', *Art In America*, article dated '2/1/09', see http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/features/lewitt-house-in-praiano/ (last accessed November 2012).
[20] Ostrow, 'Sol LeWitt', p. 7.
[21] Rosalind Krauss, 'The LeWitt Matrix', *Sol LeWitt: Structures 1962–1993* (Oxford: Museum of Modern Art, 1993), p. 28.

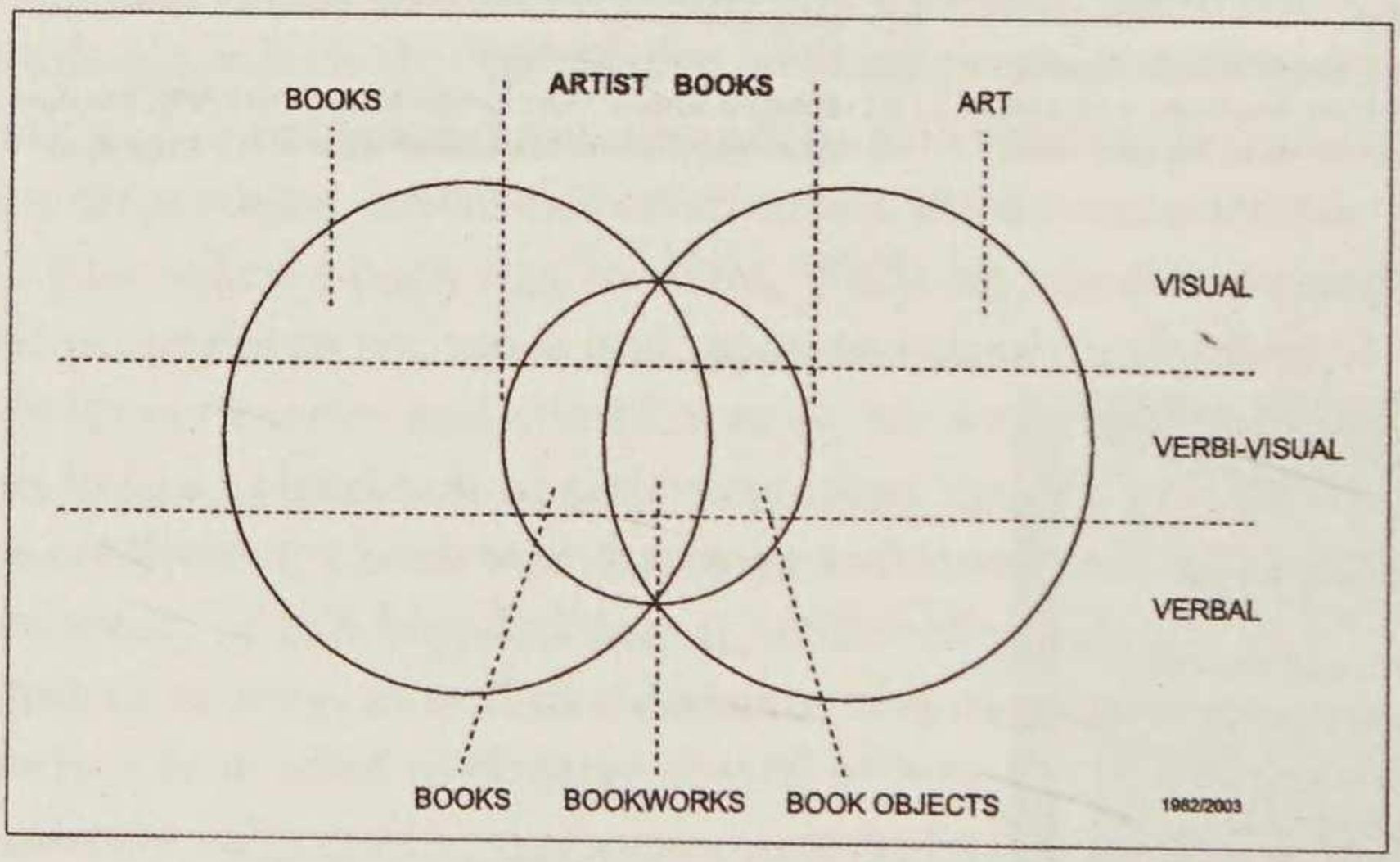


Sol LeWitt, cover of Lucy Lippard, *Changing: Essays in Art Criticism* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1971)

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First published in Simon Morris ed., *Bibliomania 2000/2001* (York: Information As Material, 2002), p. 455–456.

I was asked by Simon Morris if I would contribute to his Bibliomania project along with 148 other people, including artists, art historians, curators, filmmakers, psychoanalysts, theorists and writers. We were asked to select books that reflected our individual interests and practice. The potential enormity of a response did not deter some of the contributors, but I thought that if I drilled an arbitrary core sample through the layers of my reading it might still yield some useful information, hence this use of the alphabet. I have resisted the temptation to update some of the choices that I made in 2001.



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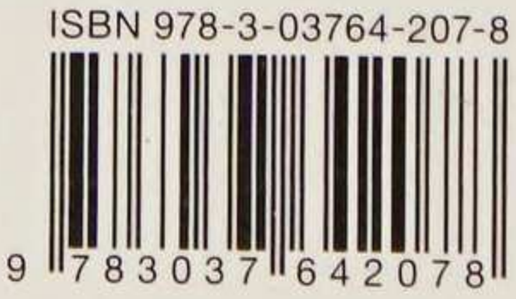
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A former librarian at Chelsea School of Art (London), Clive Phillpot became the Director of the Library at MoMA (New York) in 1977, and mapped out the field of artists' books from an institutional point of view. Collaborating with Printed Matter and Franklin Furnace among other organisations dedicated to the medium of the book, he helped raise awareness of these works, while giving them the necessary credentials to enter museums.

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Nicknamed the "godfather of artists' books" when he left MoMA in 1994, Clive Phillpot is currently a freelance writer and curator based in London.

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