

**Anchoring the Practice —
Contemporary Artists' Books as
Translational Objects**

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ABSTRACT

This research project aims to reconsider the relevance of art's objecthood and the sense of practice by exploring the case of *contemporary artists' books*. What does it mean in today's art world and economy for practice given art's *practice turn* within the post-medium condition to be presented in tangible forms, such as artists' books? What does it mean for practice to be condensed into objects—to be represented, materialized and translated into tangible things?

To address these questions, I integrate critical literature exploring what values practice-based art proposes (Grant, Bourriaud, Lippard), how those values are valorized, evaluated and transmitted as value (Bourdieu, Vatin, Hutter), what art objects are capable of within this context of valuation (Krauss, Graw, Latour, Harman) and how contemporary artists' books function as such art objects (Drucker, Ludovico, Carrión). The theoretical inquiry is echoed and amplified by an empirical inquiry of biographing contemporary artists' books in actual situations of production, distribution, commodification and collection. *Interviewing* various stakeholders of artistic publishing to understand the objecthood of contemporary artists' books, interpreting the collected accounts through *situational* and *thematic analyses* and weaving them with my first-hand observations of artists' books, I construct a written *object biography* and *diagrams* schematizing the findings.

Through this practice-based theoretical research, I conceptualize the expanded agency of contemporary artists' books as translational objects and draw general principles of their operation. I explore the ways artists' books, as synecdochic and metonymic *rematerializations* of practice, translate the immaterial elements of artmaking into objectified forms and anchor the impalpable value of art practice. Indicating such an agency, this project highlights the renewed potential of art objects in facilitating distribution-focused art consumption, prioritizing art's accessibility and, furthermore, problematizing the reductive notions of value prevalent in current society.

KEYWORDS

practice-based art, dematerialization of art, art valuation, art distribution, art object, artists' books, object translation, rematerialization, object biography

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Research Question & Design

Artists' books—this self-explanatory yet slippery term has been claiming its presence in the art world since the latter half of the 20th century. As the term itself gives away, artists' books are books produced by artists as works of art (Bury, 2015). However, their implications are not as straightforward as the surficial definition. Artists' books are expanded things that can hold multiple layers of status. Being objects, they are also projects, an art form, a medium and readily tradeable commodities. They are concrete yet permeable, constantly evolving and circulating. Rather than being isolated objects to be displayed in museum vitrines, they are an objecthood, a “state of mind” (Lucy Lippard in Lyons, 1985, p.56) and artifacts of “process-driven ethos” (Temporary Services et al., 2018, p.18) that can be held and experienced. This research focuses on such an intersectional (Phillpot, 2013) identity to learn what the resulting agency of artists' books achieves in the contemporary art world.

More specifically, this research explores the agency to prove that artists' books play a notable role in representing artistic practice and anchoring its value in socioeconomic terms. Artists' books came to a rise in conjunction with the neo-avant-garde and conceptual art from the 1950s to 1970s, carving out a distinctive space for self-expression beyond the institutional systems of valuation (Lyons, 1985; Yonemura et al., 2021). Being printed matter—multiple, portable and distributable—artists' books quickly charted a new domain of communicating art that was unprecedentedly decentralized and far-reaching (Bury, 2015). Moreover, operating as independent initiatives, the production of artists' books has evolved into a genre of self-publishing (White, 2012), where individual artists or small collaborative groups autonomously assume multifaceted roles as “author-editor-artist-designer-printer-publisher” (Temporary Services et al., 2018, p.4), erasing the traditional border between authorship and valuation. Witnessing this, artists have begun to view publishing as an artistic practice (Gilbert, 2016), which entails not only an indie project of bookmaking but a durational “act of gathering a public” or “collective moments of engaging” (Temporary Services et al., 2018, p.14), during which they “prioritize process over product” (Romberger et al., 2021, p.13). In other words, artists' books in today's art world have come to signify a new way of doing art and an alternative scheme of valuating it.

In addition to the contemporary significance of artists' books, today's overarching context where all our systems—social, political, economic, cultural, communicative, intellectual, etc.—have become dematerialized adds weight to this research project. The accelerating technological development drives today's world to operate at an incredible speed (Virilio, 2010), which causes bodies to fragment, and art to lose its physical sites to occupy. Now, “the body exists everywhere, but at the same time, nowhere”¹ (J.Y. Kim, 2024, para.25). Along with this irresistible stream of change, art has taken its practice turn (Schatzki et al.,

1 Translation from Korean by the author. The original text is: “우리의 몸은 어디에나 있지만 어디에도 없다.”

2001), or “the shift away from the artwork or medium, and toward open-ended actions, series, processes and projects” (Boon and Levine, 2018, p.12), redefining its ontological tie to material conditions. This has led the value of art to reside significantly less in the immediate materiality of the object, especially within the current system of consumption that relies heavily on knowledge-based, intangible transactions, erasing the relevance between the objective status of things and their value (Kaufmann, 2011; Zein, 2019). Thus, this makes us wonder even more whether artists’ books, which are most often physical objects, are a viable and successful format for embodying artistic practice. Considering all the above, what does it mean in today’s art world for practice to be presented in a bodily form, such as artists’ books? What does it mean for practice to be condensed into an object—to be represented, materialized and translated into a tangible thing? To answer these questions, I investigate artists’ books as a unique cultural intersection where constant negotiations between the books’ intersectional identity and the swinging materiality of art occur. Doing so, I attempt to propose a renewed relationship between the objecthood of art and the contemporary sense of practice, considering rematerialization of dematerialized practices an economic task to claim their value.

Various research within the fields of art history and cultural studies have explored artists’ books, but the existing scholarship primarily focuses on their historical evaluation within the development of Fluxus and conceptual art (1960s-80s), their formal analyses as art objects, categorizing artists’ books within library or archive collections, and debates on the fate of printed publications in the post-digital era (Drucker, 1995; Klima, 1998; Chappell, 2003; McDermott and Dunigan, 2013; Phillipot, 2013; Morrison, 2018; Hildebrand-Schat et al., 2021). Very few have paid attention to the contemporary presence of artists’ books since the 2000s and their significance in terms of their position within the economy of cultural production and consumption.

Existing studies on art valuation are also expanded through this research. Many researchers have tackled the issue of measuring and expressing the value of artworks for transaction, but most of them view the issue from purely economic and philosophical standpoints, isolated from the social realities of the art world (Throsby, 2001; Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006; Beech, 2015; Durán, 2016). Moreover, when approaching the issue of art’s valuation by analyzing the cases of specific art forms, studies have focused heavily on paintings or other traditional forms of visual arts (Velthuis, 2003; Hutter and Throsby eds., 2008; Rubião, 2018; Radermecker, 2020), which signals a strong need to diversify the subject of such studies to reflect today’s art scene that encompasses interdisciplinary and post-medium (Krauss, 1999) practice-based works.

Departing from these limitations, I take a materialist approach informed by various cultural and social theories to empirically test the idea of capturing the value of practice by translating them into the specific objecthood and form of artists’ books. First, I review theoretical discourses of art history, material culture studies, sociology, cultural economics and art valuation to solidify the concept of artistic practice and explore the implication of its

object representation to the economy of art, specifically regarding the case of contemporary artists' books. I integrate critical literature exploring what values practice-based art proposes, how those values are valorized, evaluated and transmitted as value, what art objects are capable of within this context of valuation and how contemporary artists' books function as such art objects.

The theoretical inquiry is echoed and amplified by an empirical inquiry of biographing contemporary artists' books in actual situations of production, distribution, commodification and collection. Interviewing various stakeholders of artistic publishing—artists, designers, curators, editors, publishers, distributors, retailers, collectors, archivists and librarians—to understand the objecthood of contemporary artists' books negotiated throughout their ontological operations from conception to consumption, interpreting the collected accounts through thematic and situational analyses, and weaving them with my first-hand observations of artists' books, I construct a written object biography and diagrams schematizing the findings. Doing so, I closely observe the books' journey through real sites and situations, and inquire into the contemporary conditions of artistic publishing and the position of artists' books in art's transaction. I define this practice-like element to be a form of practice-based knowledge production driven by the methodology of object biography, which views objects as social actants with their own life trajectories and interactions with the human world (Kopytoff, 1986; Gosden and Marshall, 1999; Joy, 2009; Hodge, 2017; Wisher and Needham, 2021).

To recapitulate, this research project addresses the following central question:

RQ: What relationship do artists' books establish between the objecthood of art and the contemporary sense of practice, particularly in the socioeconomic situation of art valuation?

To answer the question, I have taken the following steps to generate, analyze and present data:

OB1-1: Analyze discourses from the fields of art history and aesthetics to understand what the practice turn in contemporary art implies in terms of art's objecthood and materiality.

OB1-2: Define what makes artistic practice valuable—namely process, labor and generation of meaning—to understand what valuating artistic practice involves.

OB2-1: Analyze discourses on art valuation to understand how it is philosophically, socially and economically facilitated, and what it suggests for practice-based art.

OB2-2: Analyze discourses on the idea of art object to understand what its agency achieves, particularly within situations of art's valuation and transactions.

OB2-3: Analyze relevant conceptual cases that speak for what rematerializing artistic practice into an object entails and implies.

OB3-1: Analyze discourses on books as cultural objects to understand the core of the agency

artists' books hold.

OB3-2: Analyze discourses on the modern history of artistic publishing and the repercussions artists' books have had in the art world.

OB3-3: Visit the De Appel Archive to study primary sources on Ulises Carrión, an exemplary artist who produced numerous artists' books and theorized artistic publishing during the 1970s and 80s.

OB3-4: Analyze discourses on the contemporary status of artistic publishing and artists' books to understand their position after the practice turn of art.

OB4-1: Conduct interviews with stakeholders of artistic publishing to gain empirical insight into the subject.

OB4-2: Transcribe, translate (when necessary) and edit the collected accounts.

OB4-3: Analyze the accounts using thematic analysis and situational analysis methods.

OB5-1: Construct an object biography of contemporary artists' books based on the voices collected from the interviews and my own experience throughout this research project to highlight the books' agency as translational objects.

OB5-2: Schematize the narrative of object biography in original diagrams.

OB6: Elicit key findings from all steps and recapitulate.

1.2. Definition of Terms

This chapter outlines the operational definitions of major terms used and interrogated throughout the dissertation to scope their conceptual boundaries.

1.2.1. Practice

The idea of *practice* can be pluralist and “can lead beyond the boundaries of art” (Boon and Levine, 2018, p.13) into science, politics, religion, sports, self-care, etc. However, the discussion of practice most relevant to this research is within modern and contemporary art, which tends to blend the term’s meaning in all aforementioned disciplines—political transformation, professional activity, to discipline, rehearse or train—and signify “the shift away from the artwork or medium, and toward open-ended actions, series, processes, and projects” (Ibid, p.12). Practice is and is what results from this recent state of art where the distinctions between making and doing, art and life, are blurred, and where art resorts to the idea, creative process, contextualized meanings and artistic effects to claim its status (Koren, 2018; Sansi, 2020; Irvin, 2022). On such a note, practice redefines art’s ontological tie to material conditions, making the immaterial intentions behind the formal qualities have as loud a voice as object-based outcomes in telling the work’s significance (Morris, 1969; Krauss, 1999; Grant, 2017; Park, 2019). This research zooms in on this moment of departure to interrogate what art’s practice turn means for the art objects—their permanent devaluation or renewal of agency.

1.2.2. Object & Objecthood

Object is another ambiguous term used and discussed in various fields, but in this research, it refers specifically to the art object or a thing to which a specific action or feeling is directed; a tangible thing that can be observed or experienced by a human subject; a manifestation of abstract ideas and intention, specifically within the context of art (Hudek, 2014; Harman, 2018; Han, 2022). In particular, this research project focuses on “the object’s impact on the subject” (Hudek, 2014, p.16), or what an object can achieve in its interaction with human subjects through its agency as a nonhuman actant in socioeconomic situations (Latour, 1994, 1996; Reckwitz, 2002; Clarke et al., 2017), especially regarding the case of contemporary artists’ books. I consider that such an agency originates from the object’s objecthood—the state of being an object—which encompasses its dialogue with the diverse aesthetic, cultural, historical and intellectual significance.

1.2.3. Valuation

Valuation in this research refers to “any social practice where the value or values of something are established, assessed, negotiated, provoked, maintained, constructed and/or contested” (Doganova et al., 2014, p.87). In a sense, it is a concept that combines valorization and evaluation. Valorization is the act of producing and ascribing value, while evaluation is the assessment of value (Vatin, 2013).

1.2.4. Translation

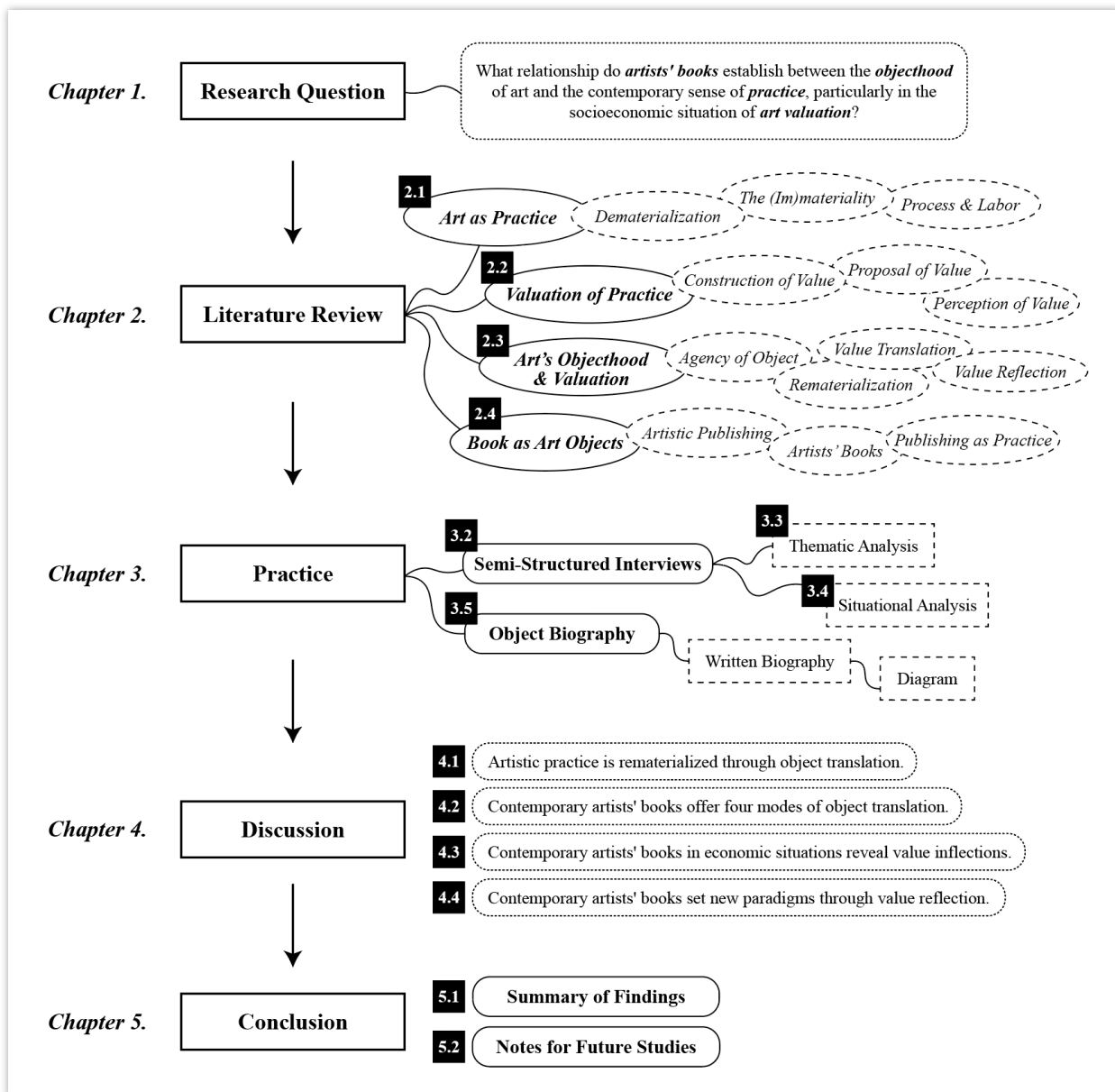
Translation in this research refers to the particular agency of objects or the operation that rematerializes and objectifies dematerialized practice in observable terms to reify its value. Thus, translational object refers to the object that performs the translation, and object translation refers to the translation facilitated by the object. This research suggests that this translation can occur in various modes that develop within the object's objecthood.

1.2.5. Artistic Publishing & Artists' Books

Artistic publishing is an umbrella term that refers to any artistic practice that uses publishing as the medium or conceptual site. The format of produced publications may vary—book, magazine, zine, pamphlet, catalog, etc.—and is not a parameter of defining artistic publishing. The practice of artistic publishing reflects and embodies the artist's intention in the act and product of publication. When publishing, the artist can have various collaborators—designer, printing technician, editor, curator, distributor, retailer, etc.—who play roles along the value chain of publication from production to distribution.

Artists' books are books published through the practice of artistic publishing. The first use of the term is often traced to 1973 when curator Diane Perry Vanderlip organized an exhibition of books made by artists entitled 'Artists Books' at Moore College, Philadelphia (Yonemura et al., 2021). Ever since, the term has been a topic of debate between artists, curators, scholars and librarians who attempted to pin down its categorical definition. For this research, I have chosen to refer to the definition by Stephen Bury, a former librarian of Chelsea School of Art (now Chelsea College of Arts, University of the Arts London) and current Chief Librarian of the Frick Art Reference Library in New York. According to Bury, artists' books are books produced through the artistic practice of publishing, "over the final appearance of which an artist has had a high degree of control; where the book is intended as a work of art in itself" (Bury, 2015). In other words, artists' books are publications produced through autonomous initiatives led by artists as part of their artistic practice. Among artists' books, this research focuses on contemporary publications produced after the 2000s. Furthermore, although this research is more closely concerned with artists' books as physical objects or printed matter, they can also be published in digital formats such as e-books and downloadable PDFs.

1.3. Synopsis of Chapters



[Fig.1] Research structure diagram.

Chapter 1 focuses on situating the research project within its historical, contemporary and theoretical contexts. I deduced the central research question and defined key terms that will be conceptually interrogated throughout the dissertation.

Chapter 2 consists of four sub-chapters that present theoretical explorations hinged to one another. Chapter 2.1. Art as Practice discusses the nature and transdisciplinary impact of practice turn on the contemporary pursuit for knowledge (2.1.1. Defining Practice Turn [p.18]), how the practice turn unfolded for art (2.1.2. Art's Practice Turn: From Dematerialization to Participation [p.22]) and what makes art since the practice turn valuable (2.1.3. The (Im) materiality of Practice: Process & Labor [p.33]). Chapter 2.2. Valuation of Artistic Practice dives into the conceptual definition of valuation and how it is operated as a social system (2.2.1.

The Social System [p.41]). It then moves on to the issues that add complexity to valuating art in practice form. The slippery nature of pricing art, how some artists have resisted the commodification of art and the possible discrepancy between proposed value (production) and perceived value (consumption) are discussed (2.2.2. The Economic Trouble [p.44]). Chapter 2.3. Art's Objecthood & Valuation suggests that although art has taken its practice turn and the art object is largely dematerialized, it may still be necessary to reconsider what offering art in object form can achieve, especially within the context of valuation (2.3.1. Rethinking the Object: Object's Agency [p.49]). I then suggest how the dematerialized art can be rematerialized into objecthood, exploring relevant mechanisms such as documentation, art conservation and intermedia translation. The chapter culminates in the proposal of an original concept—object translation, which is when artistic practice undergoes metonymic and/or synecdochic rematerialization into object form (2.3.2. Rematerialization of the Dematerialized: Object Translation [p.52]). Chapter 2.4. The Book as Art Object zooms into the potential of books—artists' books, in particular—to be translational objects. The chapter begins by exploring the objecthood of books as artifacts, tapping into major characteristics of books as a universal cultural form (2.4.1. The Objecthood of Books [p.63]). I then trace a short history of how artists have utilized and interpreted such objecthood of books (2.4.2. A History of Artistic Publishing & Artists' Books: 1900s-1990s [p.69]). Lastly, I analyze artistic publishing in today's context and show how it has evolved in parallel to the overarching practice turn into pursuits for democratic and postcapitalist ideals (2.4.3. Publishing as Artistic Practice [p.84]).

Chapter 3 turns to the design and operation of the practice. Chapter 3.1. Introduction: Practice-based Knowledge Production [p.91] explains the motivation and justification for including a practice-based element in this project and introduces myself as the practitioner-researcher (3.1.1. Positionality Statement [p.94]). Chapter 3.2. Data Collection: Interviews [p.97] walks the reader through the process of preparing for and conducting semi-structured interviews with various agents of contemporary artistic publishing. Brief introduction to the participants follow (3.2.1. The Interviewees [p.103]). In Chapters 3.3. Data Analysis 1: Thematic Analysis [p.109] and 3.4. Data Analysis 2: Situational Analysis [p.142], I analyze the field texts collected through interviews and deduce major themes and paradigms that delineate the topography of contemporary artistic publishing. Lastly, Chapter 3.5. Object Biography [p.146] includes a methodological introduction and both the written (3.5.1 [p.150]) and visualized (3.5.2 [p.173]) versions of the narrative of contemporary artists' books in the real social world at moments of valuation.

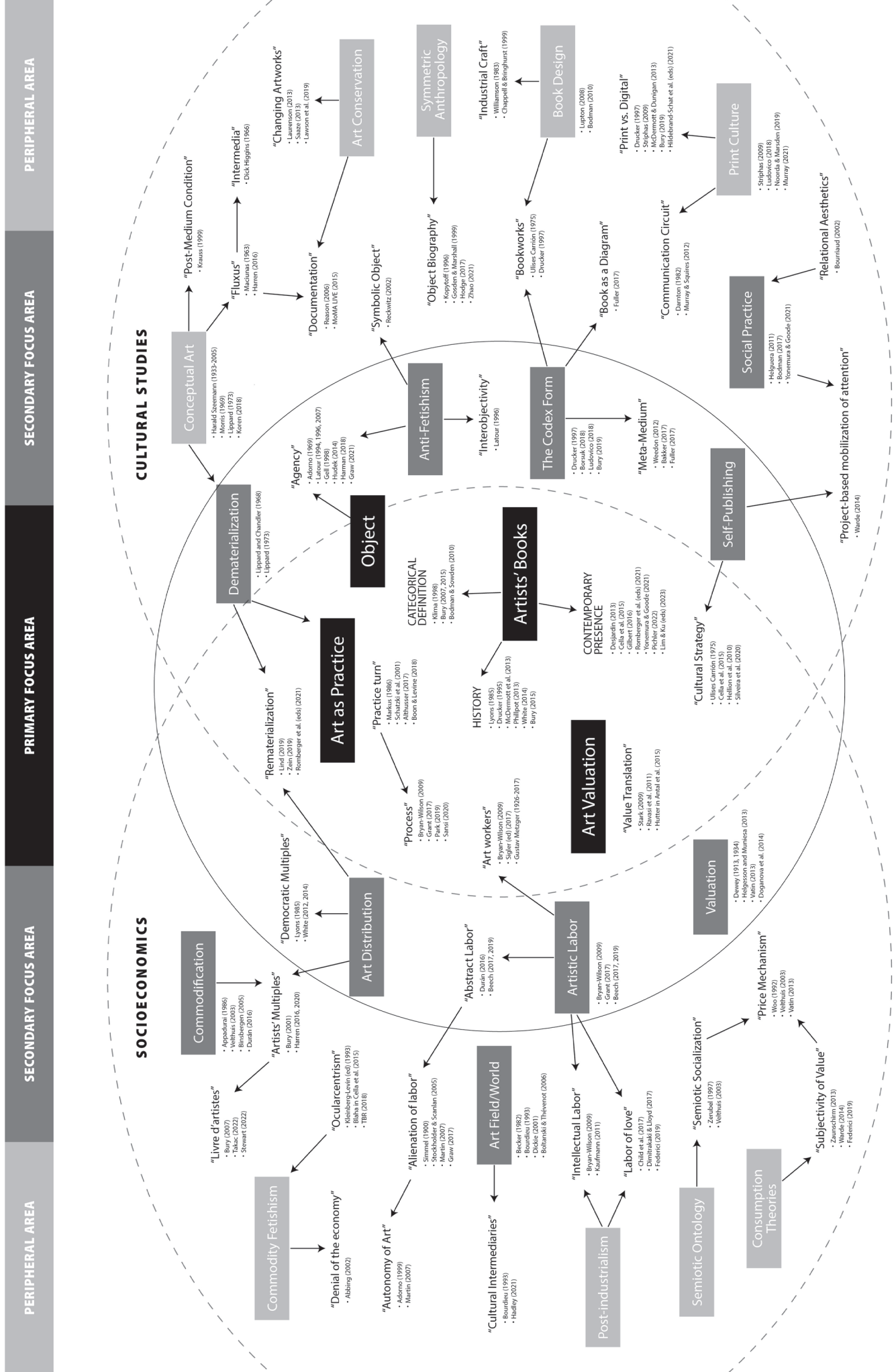
Chapter 4 [p.178] is a comprehensive discussion in reply to the central research question that invites all analytical and empirical findings to the floor. For the convenience of the reader, major points of discussion are highlighted as sub-chapter headings.

Chapter 5 closes the dissertation with a brief recapitulation of findings by chapter (5.1. Summary of Findings [p.193]) and reflective suggestions for any future studies that may refer to this project (5.2. Notes for Future Studies [p.200]).

2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

For this project, I bridge various fields of literature to solidify the theoretical foundations, particularly positioning myself between the domains of cultural studies and socioeconomics. Primarily, I explore cultural theories on artists' books and artistic publishing largely in conjunction with print culture studies. I survey the evolution of the art object and its agency in parallel to major artistic movements since the 20th century until present. As one of the major contextual factors to these movements, I examine art's practice turn, which is deeply connected with the ideas of artistic process and labor. Lastly, to understand how art as practice can be valued in object form, I look into theories on valuation, commodification, art field and market, and art's value.

The diagram on the following page visualizes my focus area across these fields by mapping out thematic keywords and major thinkers. I created the diagram in April 2023, during my second year into this project. The style of the diagram was largely inspired by the project 'Dynamic Literature Mapping: Typography in Screen-Based Media' (Joyce S. R. Yee, 2003).



[Fig.2] Core literature diagram.

2.1. Art as Practice

According to Dieter Roelstraete, current curator at the Neubauer Collegium for Culture and Society at the University of Chicago and former curator of Documenta 14, when we discuss art today, instead of artwork as an absolute or singular entity, we think of “a hazy nebula named ‘practice’” (Roelstraete, 2010 quoted in Boon and Levine, 2018, p.13). Now, when we look at, for instance, painted canvases, stone sculptures, carved wood, framed prints or woven textiles displayed in exhibitions, we are also made aware of what is not physically there: the artist’s positionality, the process of making or the holistic situation that led to what has been put in front of us. In other words, the horizon of art has moved on from the ontological adhesion between it and its material objects to self-defined groupings of activities and information under the umbrella of art. This paradigm shift can be condensed into the concept of *practice turn*. The current chapter digs deeper into what art’s practice turn entails and attempts to understand its fundamental impact on our idea of art and its value.

2.1.1. Defining Practice Turn

First and foremost, it is important to recognize that practice turn does not pertain solely to art—rather, it is a transdisciplinary phenomenon that has been challenging traditional approaches to knowledge production since the 1980s (Schatzki et al., 2001). Theodore R. Schatzki, Professor of Philosophy and Sociology at the University of Kentucky, writes in his introduction to *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory* (2001) that “[v]aried references to practices await the contemporary academician in diverse disciplines, from philosophy, cultural theory, and history to sociology, anthropology and science and technology studies” (p.10). Schatzki goes on to emphasize the breadth of issues the “practice approach” (Ibid, p.11), or the mode of research that interprets the world through the lens of practice, is concerned with. He writes that practice theorists from a wide array of backgrounds are united by the belief that human phenomena such as knowledge, meaning, action, art, science, power, language, social institutions and historical transformations are embedded with practice and its ethos. Simply put, practice constitutes a total nexus of fundamental human activities.

What it means to take the practice approach, then, would be to understand these human phenomena as *praxis*. The idea of practice can be traced all the way back to the philosophy of Aristotle, for whom *praxis* (the Greek word for practice) means “an action that is valuable in itself” (Boon and Levine, 2018, p.13). Rooted in Aristotle’s ethical and political philosophy, *praxis* refers to a “self-shaping” (Ibid) action accompanied by the person’s moral deliberation and the value-conscious making of decisions (Markus, 1986). *Praxis* is also distinguished from different types of actions, among which *poiesis*, most closely translated as ‘production’, is the most prevalently discussed opposition. Unlike *praxis* which claims its self-sufficiency as pure action, *poiesis* is more focused on a specific end goal of making things for pragmatic reasons (Ibid). According to Giorgio Agamben, Professor of Philosophy at the Accademia di Architettura di Mendrisio, various attempts in the modern and contemporary era to recognize human phenomena “have remained anchored to this interpretation of *praxis* as [human] will and

vital impulse” finding its immediate expression in an act in contrast to the idea of poiesis as a mode of action validated by its products (Agamben, 1999, pp.70-71). Such a juxtaposition between poiesis and praxis is perhaps the aptest for capturing the difference between art before and after the practice turn—before, art was to produce things to be called art; now, the practicing of art serves itself as purposeful actions representing human judgment and pursuit of value(s).

This basis of practice that it is a social activity by human subjects built upon the reference to both oneself and the surroundings may explain why we focus so much on various conditions of contemporary art when discussing it—the process of making, the artist’s background, the work’s contexts, presentational settings, etc. Art is no longer in a vacuum of pure aesthetics or praising the singular genius; art of the practice turn is in constant interaction or negotiation with the external. As the philosopher and political theorist Louis Althusser asserts, practice points “to an active relationship to the real” (Althusser, 2017, p.79). Now, instead of the production of artworks through skilled repetition, “continuous processes” carried out through “self-generated rules and protocols” wear the hat of art (Boon and Levine, 2018, p.16).

These protocols of art since the practice turn point to the possibility that the art critic and curator Nicolas Bourriaud has defined as ‘relational art’. In his seminal volume *Relational Aesthetics* (2002), Bourriaud concisely captures the active relationship between art and its sociological surroundings. He writes that within relational art, “[t]he role of artworks is no longer to form imaginary and utopian realities, but to actually be ways of living and models of action within the existing real, whatever the scale chosen by the artist” (Bourriaud, 2002, p.13). Then, referring to how Marx’s theory of human nature, Bourriaud adds that relational aesthetics is founded in the belief that “the essence of humankind is purely trans-individual” (Ibid, p.18), made up of sets of social relations that link individuals together. Although the omission of private and individual spheres from the constitution of human phenomena may be an extreme claim, Bourriaud’s stance highlights one of the major purposes of art since its practice turn: to use the structural mechanism—the *form* (Ibid, p.19)—of art or to construct situations of art to reveal and even problematize various relational dynamics of reality. Rather than art being viewers’ appreciation of physical works or pursuits of subjective aesthetics, now, art as practice mediates encounters between people and the evolving reality, where “new forms of aesthetic collectivity” are enacted (Boon and Levine, 2018, p.15).



[Fig.3] 'All' (2007), Maurizio Cattelan, on view at the artist's solo exhibition 'WE' (2023), Leeum Museum of Art, Seoul (Photo: Hyun Joo Cho). Cattelan's work is representative of Nicholas Bourriaud's idea of Relational Aesthetics in that the artist considers the encounter between his works and the audience itself as art. He sees exhibitions as sites for such meeting, and hence is known for asking not to install prohibitive lines or alarmed sensors around his works that may disturb the encounter. Bourriaud invited Cattelan to the exhibition 'Traffic' (1996) that he curated at Musée d'art Contemporain de Bordeaux.

Thus, art now is understood as “a state of encounter” (Bourriaud, 2002, p.18). However, this state can also be seen as overpowered by vagueness and lack of materiality or logical organization—almost like a state of entropy. Art as practice can be diffuse—not only because it takes place “diffused throughout the social body” (Boon and Levine, 2018, p.16), but also because it is driven by the *impulse* (Agamben, 1999) of human life. For instance, Gerhard Richter, a German visual artist widely revered for his deliberate lack of commitment to a single stylistic direction and for conceptual experiments with art, writes the following in his notes from 1966:

“I pursue no objectives, no system, no tendency. I have no program, no style, no direction. I have no time for specialized concerns, working themes, or variations that lead to mastery. I steer clear of definitions. I don’t know what I want. I am inconsistent, non-committal, passive. I like the indefinite, the boundless. I like continual uncertainty.” (Richter, 1995, p.58)

Such a persistent reference to the artistic freedom that the sense of uncertainty and “indefinability” (Almeida, 2015, p.160) grants has been a standing attribute of art after the practice turn. Although there is immense value implied in practice-based art that lies in its ability to enrich lives, stimulate curiosity and diversify the aesthetics of art (Ingold, 2021), this chaotic, even irresponsible spirit of experimentation deeply embedded in the idea of practice makes it often untamable, unanalyzable and untranslatable into more concrete, valorizable terms. In other words, without additional effort to distill the practice into something more objectively cognizable and graspable, its value can easily become lost in the artist’s subjective world, illegible to others.

This pitfall of practice raises the question of its *embodiment*—can the practice be represented in a way that makes it more apparent and articulate and still uphold its ethos? The apparent answer to this question is yes. Going back to Schatzki, he writes that practice theorists conceive practices as “embodied, materially mediated arrays of human activity” (Schatzki et al., 2001, p.11). For these theorists, practice is largely concerned with not just activities but also bodily properties crucial to social interaction, such as surficial presentations, physical structures and bodily experiences. Furthermore, Schatzki recognizes the materialist influence on practice theory, which emphasizes the involvement of “nonhuman entities” (Ibid, p.12)—such as *objects*—in the social matrix. Because human activities are situated within the milieus of nonhumans, understanding specific practices “always involves apprehending [their] material configurations” (Ibid, pp.12-13). Alan Warde, Professor of Sociology at the University of Manchester, also supports this resurgence of materialistic observation of practice. In his article on the practice turn of consumer culture, Warde points out that discussing practice requires “special emphasis on the roles of embodiment and equipment” (Warde, 2014, p.293), because of their considerable influence on directing our attention to practical aspects of everyday life. Here, equipment is his umbrella term for *things*—objects, tools, material artifacts and infrastructures—involved in the embodiment of practice (Warde, 2014, p.294).

This may strike one as ironic, but by advocating pure action and resisting its reduction to materials and objects to follow the protocols of *doing*, not making, artistic practice has become more deeply entangled with the issue of materiality. This research project sits precisely on this surface of tension, trying to elucidate how art as practice lives on in material forms. I revisit the complexity surrounding the embodiment of practice in Chapter 2.3. Art's Objecthood & Valuation [p.49].

2.1.2. Art's Practice Turn: From Dematerialization to Participation

The practice turn has informed many of the “key tropes of contemporary art, from relational aesthetics to participation, to site specificity, to institutional critique, to interdisciplinarity as such” (Boon and Levine, 2018, p.13). This section explores how these tropes have been established throughout the recent history of art to understand what art as practice entails not only in philosophical terms but also in real cases of manifestation. I discuss here how the practice turn of art has unfolded through major movements since the mid-20th century to the present—namely the *dematerialization* of the art object, the emergence of the *post-medium condition* and the shift from the medium to *social practice*.

The 1960s was a pivotal chapter in redefining the constitution of art. One of the triggers was when George Maciunas, a Lithuanian American artist and a founding member of Fluxus, published the ‘Fluxus Manifesto’ in 1963, launching a neo-avant-garde movement that aimed to “[p]romote living art, anti-art” that reflects the “non-art reality” (Maciunas, 1963, p.1). Two years after the first manifesto, Maciunas produced another titled ‘Manifesto on Art / Fluxus Art Amusement’, where he further emphasized the motive of Fluxus to “establish artists nonprofessional, nonparasitic, nonelite status in society,” by liquidating the specialized sense of authorship in art and deskilling creative practice (Maciunas, 1965, p.1). Hence, the Fluxus artists attempted to show “that anything can substitute [for] art and anyone can do it” through their works (Ibid). Grounded in the principle of the ready-made, Fluxus art aspired to lower the value charged in the materiality of art object by making it unlimited, mass-produced, “simple, amusing [and] concerned with insignificances” (Ibid). *Anything*, even the most mundane goods could become art as long as it carried the ethos of practice (Harren, 2020).

Manifesto:

2. To affect, or bring to a certain state, by subjecting to, or treating with, a flux. "Fluxed into another world." *South.*
3. *Med.* To cause a discharge from, as in purging.

flux (flŭks), *n.* [OF., fr. L. *fluxus*, fr. *fluere*, *fluxum*, to flow. See FLUENT; cf. FLUSH, *n.* (of cards).] 1. *Med.*
a A flowing or fluid discharge from the bowels or other part: esp., an excessive and morbid discharge: as, the bloody *flux*, or dysentery. **b** The matter thus discharged.

Purge the world of bourgeois sickness, "intellectual", professional & commercialized culture, **PURGE** the world of dead art, imitation, artificial art, abstract art, illusionistic art, mathematical art, — **PURGE THE WORLD OF "EUROPANISM"!**

2. Act of flowing: a continuous moving on or passing by, as of a flowing stream; a continuing succession of changes.
3. A stream; copious flow; flood; outflow.
4. The setting in of the tide toward the shore. Cf. REFLUX.
5. State of being liquid through heat; fusion. *Rare.*

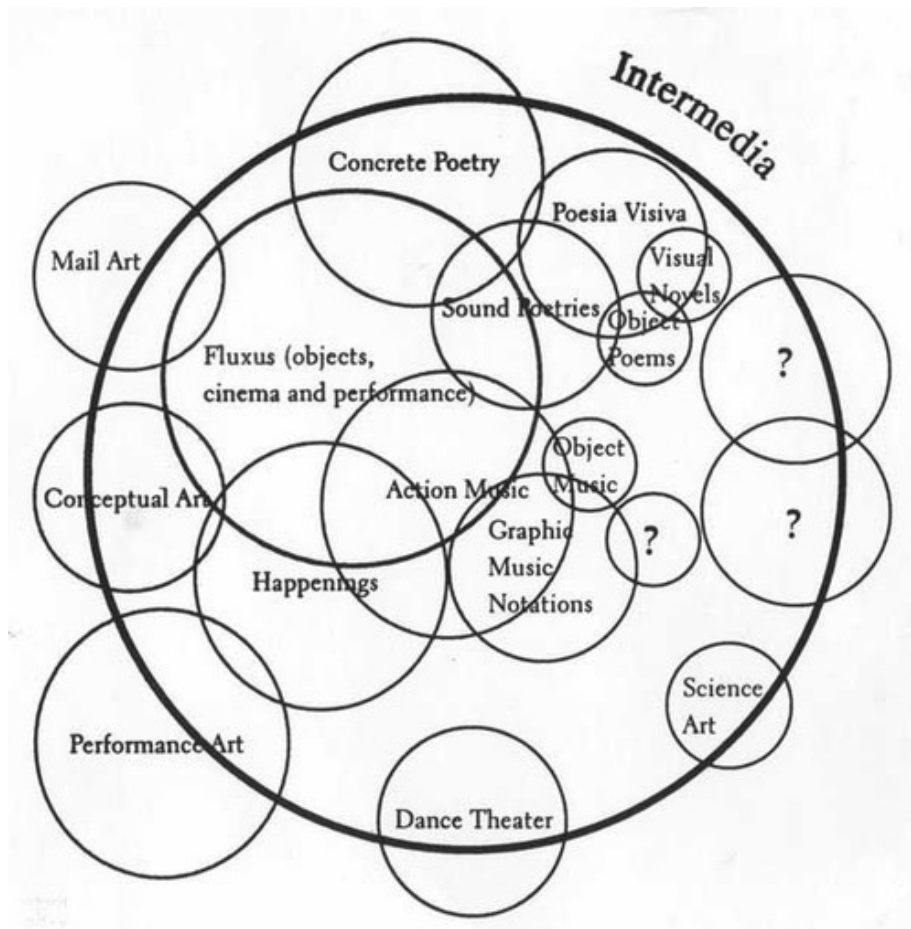
PROMOTE A REVOLUTIONARY FLOOD AND TIDE IN ART,
Promote living art, anti-art, promote NON ART REALITY to be fully grasped by all peoples, not only critics, dilettantes and professionals.

7. Chem. & Metal. **a** Any substance or mixture used to promote fusion, esp. the fusion of metals or minerals. Common metallurgical fluxes are silica and silicates (acidic), lime and limestone (basic), and fluorite (neutral). **b** Any substance applied to surfaces to be joined by soldering or welding, just prior to or during the operation, to clean and free them from oxide, thus promoting their union, as rosin.

FUSE the cadres of cultural, social & political revolutionaries into united front & action.

[Fig.4] 'Fluxus Manifesto' (1963), George Maciunas (Image source: The Museum of Modern Art).

Soon after in 1966, Dick Higgins, an American artist, composer, art theorist, poet, publisher, printmaker and co-founder of Fluxus, proposed another monumental paradigm shift. In the first dispatch of his *Something Else Newsletter* (February 1966), Higgins coined the term *intermedia*, denying the functional boundaries between art disciplines. He argues that “[m]uch of the best work being produced today seems to fall between media,” by which he breaks from the formalist tradition of art medium—“that a painting is made of paint on canvas or that a sculpture should not be painted” (Higgins, 1966 included in D. Higgins and H. Higgins, 2001, p.49) or the idea that what matters most in an artwork is its articulation of the medium, more particularly, its finessing of the terms of the material medium (Greenberg, 1961). Higgins points out that such a conception was constructed in the Renaissance era following the division of society into classes and occupational groups, and then problematizes this sense of division by saying how “the social problems that characterize our time...no longer allow a compartmentalized approach” (D. Higgins and H. Higgins, 2001, p.49). In short, Higgins claims that art has stopped “conform[ing] to the pure medium” or to social preconceptions (Ibid, p.49). This liberation of art from the predestination of medium specificity signaled the full-fledged beginning of art’s practice turn, in which the immaterial imaginations and spirit of *doing* governed over the rules of materiality. Ever since, what form art takes has become a matter of methodological choice of the artist, not a predetermined parameter.



[Fig.5] ‘Intermedia Chart’, published by Dick Higgins in 1995 (Image source: UbuWeb).

The trend of questioning the absoluteness of media and their assigned materiality was soon defined as the ethos of *dematerialization*. The term was coined by Lucy Lippard, an art critic, activist and curator in her 1968 essay co-authored with John Chandler. In the essay, Lippard argues that art might be entering a phase of utter intellectualism by presenting a list “randomly selected from a horde of examples of widely varied kinds of ultra-conceptual or dematerialized art” (Lippard and Chandler, 1968 included in Lippard, 1971, p.32). The list includes: Robert Rauschenberg’s erasure of a de Kooning drawing then exhibited as ‘Erased de Kooning by Robert Rauschenberg’ (1953); Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s site-specific projects of temporarily packaging architectural monuments; Robert Morris’s attempt to call jets of steam as sculpture that were refused by the New York City sculpture exhibition (1967); Sol Lewitt’s exhibition at the Konrad Fischer Gallery in Düsseldorf on conceptual logic and visual illogic (1968); On Kawara’s date paintings, which are a canvas a day with dates painted on them; Hans Haacke’s condensation sculpture and kinetic sculpture where the “motion” is provided by grass growing on a plexiglass cube, and many more.



[Fig.6] ‘Erased de Kooning’ (1953), Robert Rauschenberg (Image source: SF MoMA).



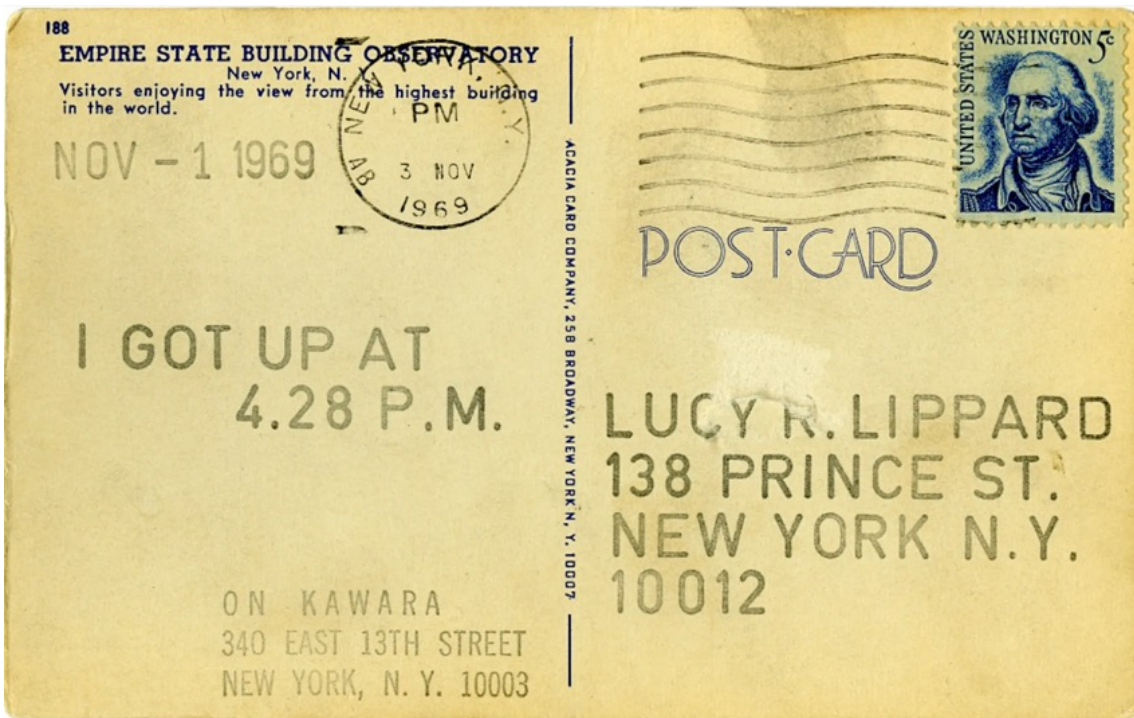
[Fig.7] 'Wrapped Fountain, Spoleto, Italy' (1968), Christo and Jeanne-Claude (Photo: Carlo Bavagnoli).



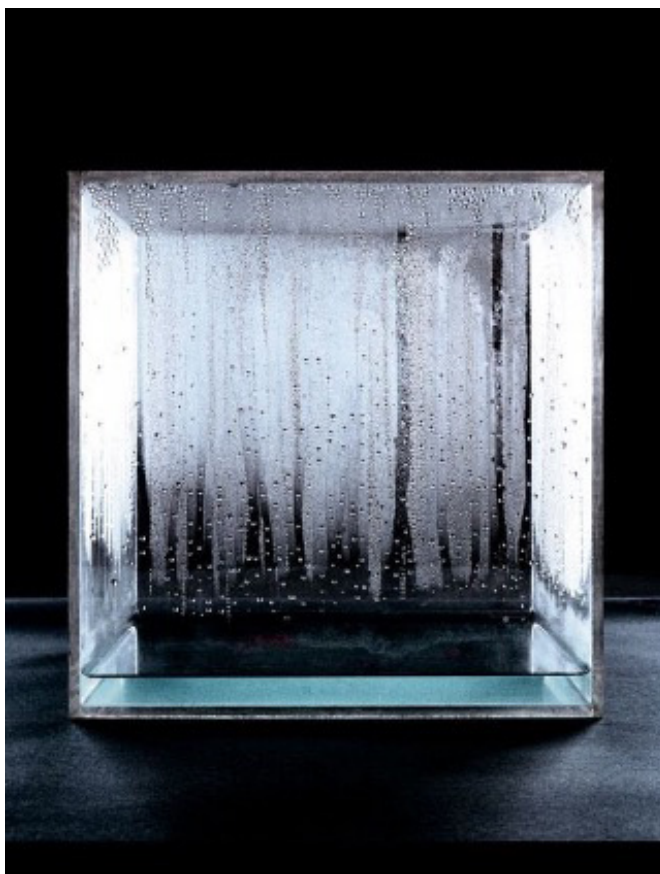
[Fig.8] 'Steam' (1967), Robert Morris, installed in CAPC, Bordeaux, 1995 (Image source: Postdocument).



[Fig.9] Konrad Fischer in front of Sol LeWitt's 'Cubes with Hidden Cubes' (1968), Konrad Fischer Gallery, Düsseldorf, 1968 (Image source: Frieze).



[Fig.10] A postcard On Kawara sent to Lucy Lippard as part of 'I got up' series (1969). Here, the day-to-day practice of posting the card itself is presented as the artwork. According to Lippard (1968), the role this material evidence of stamped postcard plays in the artwork can be seen as subsidiary—aiding the presentation and reminder of the practice (Image source: The New Yorker).



[Fig.11] 'Condensation Cube' (1963-1968), Hans Haacke. Here, the artist focuses on art in the sense of process and physical system. (Image source: Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona).

Pointing to how these artists challenge the traditional notion of art as producing and appreciating tangible objects and prioritize the engagement with conceptual devices in practice, Lippard suggests that the new wave of art may prove the physicality of artworks irrelevant and render object-based art obsolete (Lippard and Chandler, 1968). In her later monograph *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (1973), Lippard bolsters this speculation once again with further exemplification of artists moving away from the traditional use of materials toward the introduction of immaterial elements such as time, space, language, movement, situation, process, etc. as means of practice. In short, the focal point of art started to shift from the production of physical objects towards their dematerialization—the intellectual and interpretation-driven mode of art.

Curator Harald Szeemann's exhibition, 'Live In Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form' (1969, Kunsthalle Bern) is another prime demonstration of art's dematerialization and practice turn. As hinted in its title, this innovative show challenged artistic conventions that adored material objects, claiming that art stems from the artist's mindset, and what is visible in front of us as an art object is a manifestation of the artist's attitude. Artists including Joseph Beuys, Bruce Naumann, Richard Serra, Lawrence Weiner and Hans Haacke among many others presented a wide spectrum of interdisciplinary works that truly resisted categorical definition (Park, 2019). For instance, one of Joseph Beuys's works at the exhibition, 'Fettecke (Fat Corner)' (1969), was an abstract installation using animal fat and margarine. From around 1963, Beuys had been using wedges of fat or felt to mark the boundaries of a space where he would perform or present his other works (Ibid). The work was simultaneously a ritualistic activity, a quizzical object within the exhibition space and a conceptual statement by the artist in preparation for a stage for practice. Szeemann's exhibition turned out to be a monumental statement on the heated issue of what is the new constitution of art and the interplay between the material, the immaterial, the object and the practice within such discussion (Irvin, 2022).



[Fig.12] Joseph Beuys installing his work 'Fettecke (Fat Corner)' for the exhibition 'Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form', 1969 (Image source: New Minds Eye).

Reflecting on how art has evolved throughout the latter half of the 20th century, art theorist and critic Rosalind Krauss captures what she witnessed in the term post-medium condition (Krauss, 1999). In her book *A Voyage on the North Sea* (1999), subtitled 'Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition', Krauss identifies three things that brought this new regime of art: the post-minimalist dematerialization of the art object, the conceptualist emphasis on the verbal definition of the art object and the worldwide success of Duchamp's readymade. Inferring from the dynamics of these three things, Krauss argues in her later anthology of essays *Under Blue Cup* (2011) that artists must now perpetually deconstruct, reenact and invent new uses of "technical support"² (p.16) to survive the post-medium condition. Krauss's argument points to the new situation in art where artists move away from the traditional notion of medium specificity and modernist ways of constituting art. Now, artists take or are given the creative license to utilize any means to configure formats of art, regardless of their materiality, precedented use or disciplinary boundaries, engaging in continual reinvention of the art object.

² This is a term used by Krauss in *Under Blue Cup* to refer to any material, technical equipment or subject matter adopted by artists in post-medium condition. The term is used in contrast to traditional supports, which represent modernist and materialist devices of art. "The car, the slide tape, the animated film are not traditional supports for artistic practice the way oil on canvas, line on paper, or plaster on armatures are. They are 'technical supports'..." (Krauss, 2011, p.16).

to take responsibility. Many see this issue as a side effect of the curatorial stance ruangrupa took—the deliberate lack of authority in their curatorship or their liberal approach to inviting artists and their works through organic networks without any preliminary censorship. Regardless, the significance of ruangrupa’s attempt should not be undermined—the invited artists and the audience participated together in practicing some of the most experimental and beautiful ways of life. When I visited Kassel in June 2022, everything was based on open participation, humor, generosity and “local anchoring” (Kliefoth, 2022, p.7), not about idealized superstructures. Meals cooked in communal kitchens were being served⁴, people were attending film screenings in plein air theaters⁵ and kiosks run by artists to lend an ear to anyone wanting to tell something were bustling with visitors⁶. Even though it was accompanied by exhausting dissonance, ruangrupa’s documenta suggests a brave attempt at a new system of art that generatively resolves the “contradiction between art’s claim to aesthetic autonomy and its ambitions for social relevance” through participatory practice (Nadja Rottner, 2002 quoted in Enwezor, 2007, p.245).



[Fig.14] ‘Hearing Service Bureau’ kiosk installed by the collective Bureau for Listening at documenta 15, 2022 (Photo: Hyun Joo Cho).

4 Project by Britto Arts Trust (founded in 2002). The collective invited people to join their cooking and sharing at PAKGHOR—the social kitchen (20-22 June 2022).

5 Project by Cinema Caravan, a collective based in Zushi City, Kanagawa Prefecture, Japan (founded in 2010).

6 Project by Bureau for Listening, a transdisciplinary and nomadic collective (founded in 2021).

Analyzing the practice turn of art, we arrive at the following points of discovery: 1) Throughout the movement toward conceptualism, artists broke away from the tradition of materiality and medium specificity to place art's value in the act of doing; 2) Now, in many cases, the art object is largely dematerialized and functions as a means of practice or is evidence that reminds one that the practice happened, not the primary form of art; 3) Within this context, when concerning the immateriality of the practice, the materiality of the object gains renewed significance as its embodiment.

2.1.3. The (Im)materiality of Practice: Process & Labor

Thus, for the most part, practice-based art results in largely intangible works of art. Then, how can we comprehend practice or judge its value? What is its (im)materiality constituted of—what is its substance? To answer these questions, I have focused most closely on two core elements that I believe drive and construct artistic practices: *process* and *labor*. It could be argued that these are universal ingredients of any artwork regardless of its era, discipline or (im)materiality, but I would like to argue through the following paragraphs that they are particularly noteworthy when discussing art since the practice turn.

Process

Artists have shifted away from “producing isolated object[s]” to “elevating artistic process over production” (Grant, 2017, p.1). As a praxeological element, process is one of the cornerstones of practice-based art. According to Kim Grant, Professor of Art History at the University of Southern Maine with a longstanding interest in capturing the elusive concept of process, it has been a prevalent trend in recent decades where artists refer to their process more than the material outcomes or the art object in making artistic statements. She points out that this “ubiquity of the cliché” (Ibid, p.1) goes beyond mere descriptive statements, indicating a deeper connection between artistic process and contemporary art. Grant argues that artists’ devotion to process reflects their shared assumption about the meaning and purpose of art that has taken its practice turn, making the embrace of process a “value claim” (Ibid, p.1).



[Fig.15] 'Costner Complex (Perfect Process)' (2001), Jason Rhoades, 400 one-gallon pickled vegetable jars and wall shelving, installed at Portikus, Frankfurt, Germany. The project was to operate this on-site installation as a mundane salad dressing production factory. Grant mentions this work as an example of practices where the process itself is the central focus and purpose. Rhoades described his work as "not meant to be viewed as an object, a performance or even a goal-oriented activity, but simply as a perfect process" (Rhoades quoted in Grant, 2017, p.2) (Image source: David Zwirner).

Process is as slippery and malleable a concept as practice is. It is hard to pinpoint what it exactly entails. The concept of process, when confined to physical or temporal processes of craft, risks oversimplification (Grant, 2017), while its expansive nature poses the risk of becoming too broad for meaningful discussion. To balance between such risks, I have boiled down the idea of process to the following points that could be useful as conceptual pivots:

1) Process is an "intentional state" (Boon and Levine, 2018, p.13) or "an energy" (Morris, 1969, p.68) that produces momentum of practice. It is an unregulated dimension of practice that may not presuppose a clearly outlined plan of action, which is what sets it apart from similar concepts such as 'project' (Sansi, 2020).

2) One quality process most definitely owns is temporality. It is an accumulation of the artist's time spent on the practice and idea (Sansi, 2020).

3) Process in contemporary art often extends beyond the artist's workshop as open-ended activity, encompassing a variety of approaches, connections and relations that artists engage with, emphasizing the broader social and cultural significance of their work (Grant, 2017). Works of art created through such process are refined and intensified forms of the artist's

positionality gained through experience (Dewey, 1934).

4) Artists and artistic practices that refer to process is largely self-referential—they are discussing the procedures of their own construction (Bryan-Wilson, 2009).

Most crucially for this research, by thinking about process, I give credit to the immateriality of practice, such as the lives and values of the artists projected onto their art (Koren, 2018), which are often alienated from the artwork in contexts of valuation. In fact, the practice turn and the subsequent rise of the immaterial constitution of art such as process have shaken the topography of art's valuation. The traditional mode of valuation that centered around the final, material outcomes of art has lost its dictatorial authority—it is now established that “[t]he immaterial has value, too” (Graw, 2017, p.134). This shift challenges earlier formalist approaches rooted in Kantian notions of beauty and disinterested evaluation and instead argues for a reevaluation of art, situating it within the practical dimension of process (Grant, 2017).

Roger Sansi's⁷ interpretation of the project ‘The Artist and the Stone’ (idea conceived in 2014, project carried out in 2015) by artists Matteo Guidi and Giuliana Racco is an exemplary demonstration of this shift in valuation. The following is the description of the project by the artists excerpted from their website⁸:

“The Artist and the Stone is concerned with the ways people can bypass restrictions and limitations in their daily life, managing to move through systems imposed on them, creating their own paths, languages and forms of expression driven by desire.

Directed by Giuliana Racco and Matteo Guidi, this a process-based work which literally negotiates the twofold movement of a subject (a performance artist-refugee) and an object (a 22-ton block of stone) from Palestine to Spain. [...]

From its very conception, ‘The Artist and the Stone’ has catalyzed exhibitions, workshops, round tables and pedagogical activities.”

Here, the artists show their commitment to the artistic process as an ethos and a socially engaged activity contingent upon the contexts of reality, which signifies the dynamic and evolving nature of process-driven and practice-based art. In discussing the project, Sansi highlights this very aspect—how the realistic parameters during the process, such as funding, legal permissions and physical constraints contribute to the intricate web of irreducible interdependencies between the elements of practice, which, holistically, becomes integral to the comprehension of art and its valuation (Sansi, 2020).

⁷ Professor of Anthropology at the University of Barcelona, Spain.

⁸ <https://theartistandthestone.net/about-2/> (Last accessed: 27 April 2024).



[Fig.16-17] The stone in transit for 'The Artist and the Stone' project (2015). Part of the process was documented in video (Image source: àngels Barcelona).

Labor

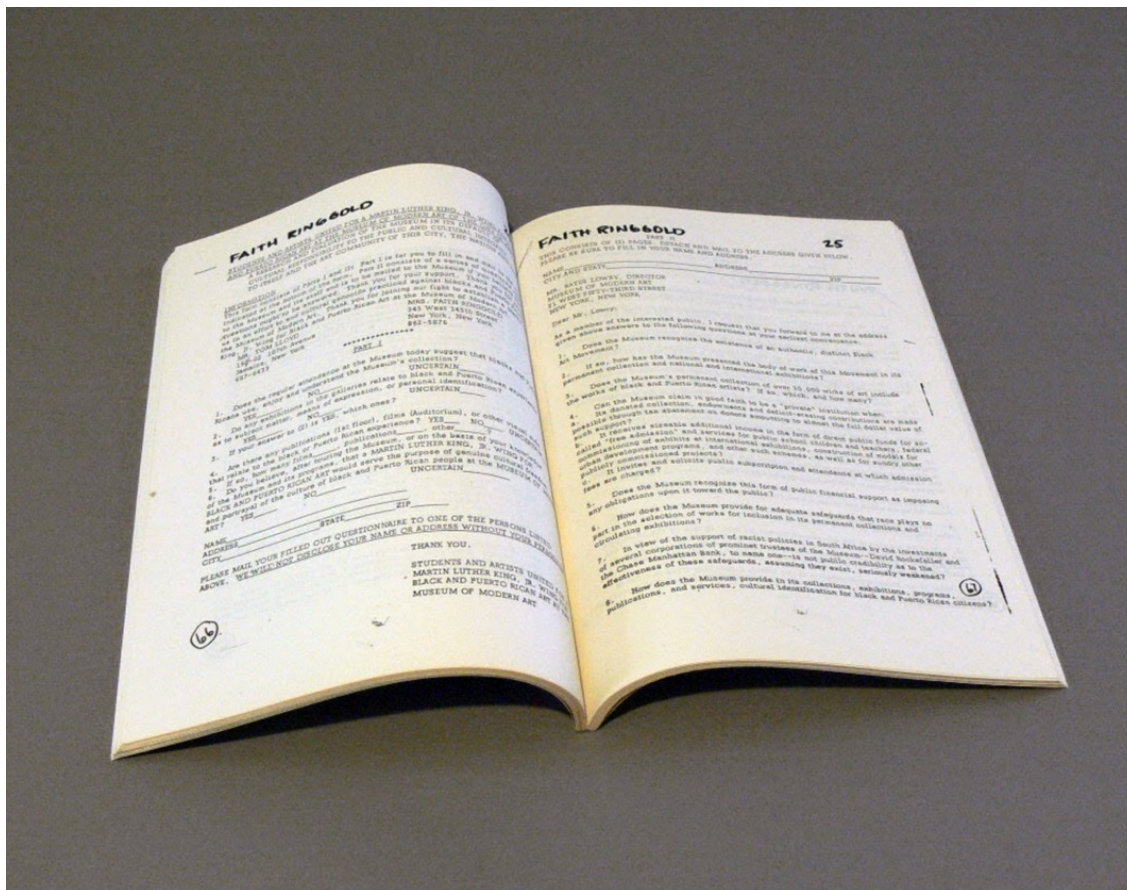
While process highlights the praxeological side of practice, labor makes us ponder on its socioeconomic aspect. Sansi hints that the two concepts are interrelated like two faces of one coin when he writes: “[p]rocess’ brings to focus artistic labor: a form of work that resists completion, alienation, the finished product” (Sansi, 2020, p.710). Artistic labor can also be defined as the “work of the artist and many other [cultural] laborers...who contribute to the manufacture of the object of art or, in some cases, the moment of art” (Stockholder and Scanlan, 2005, p.50).

As laborers, artists arrive at a quizzical juncture. Artists Joe Scanlan and Jessica Stockholder comments on this reality: When “[w]orking with [their] hands, [artists] are laborers. And yet, by expending a great amount of time and materials creating ostensibly useless objects, [they] are wastrels, dilettantes, connoisseurs” (Stockholder and Scanlan, 2005, p.50). This reveals that there is a preconception about the true or legitimate labor in play, more closely associated with producing things of use. With the advent of the industrial age in the late 18th century, the concept of labor was increasingly hierarchized by new capitalist standards such as economic productivity, which sought material production that garners use and exchange value (Sigler, 2017). To such a perspective, artistic labor was an “ontological paradox” (Ibid, p.16)—artists were thought that they “wandered about, observing, debating, thinking, drinking, sleeping...and idling” (Ibid, p.16) until at an ambiguous moment in time in some mysterious way, they came up with new works of art. Less comprehensible, graspable and thus less quantifiable in its amount and value, artistic labor has been marginalized as the illegitimate, or the “unproductive” kind of labor following the Marxist definition of productivity (Dimitrakaki and Lloyd, 2017).

However, being unproductive does not necessarily equate to being not valuable. The isolation of artistic labor demanded “an overhaul of artistic strategies” (Sigler, 2017, p.16) to defend the value it claims. One such overhaul is recounted by art historian Julia Bryan-Wilson in her book *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era* (2009). According to her, in the spirit of social movements such as the anti-Vietnam War protests and the professionalization of art in the late 1960s and 1970s, groups of artists began to identify themselves as art workers and called for the dissociation of art from capitalism. As art workers, artists criticized how they were being marginalized and undervalued within the capitalist context, especially when they did not produce “marketable art” (Bryan-Wilson, 2009, p.36), which commonly referred to traditional object-based artworks alienable from the artists. Art workers set up alliances modeled on trade unions and stood up collectively against the exploitive and alienating mechanisms of large art institutions. Advocating for better working conditions, they even called for strikes⁹, taking the connection between their practice and socioeconomic conditions to an extreme (Sigler, 2017). Doing so, artists propagandistically legitimized artistic practice and all immaterial activities such as performing, participating,

⁹ For instance, Robert Morris and Poppy Johnson co-chaired The Art Strike on the steps of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York on 22 May 1970. Also in 1974, Gustav Metzger, based in London, urged his peer artists to join him in a three-year art strike between 1977 and 1980.

writing, curating and even viewing art derived from practice as a form of value-producing labor. Sociologists Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello identify this—the artists’ critique on the dominance of markets, the factory, homogenization in a mass society and the transformation of all things into commodities—as the origin of immaterial work and the new spirit of capitalism (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2018), which challenges traditional notions of work, erasing the distinction between utilitarian and non-utilitarian activities within artmaking.



[Fig.18] *Open Hearing* (1969), a compilation of handouts and flyers self-published and circulated by Art Workers Coalition (Image source: Primary Information).



[Fig.19] The Art Strike on the steps of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1970 (Photo: Jan van Raay).

Another camp of thought that attests the legitimacy of artistic labor and its value is the social reproduction theorists. First conceptualized by French economist François Quesnay (1694–1774) and other Enlightenment-era Physiocrats, the idea of *social reproduction* originated in the context of bourgeois economics to refer to processes concerning the replenishment of labor power as well as the maintenance of human life traditionally performed by women at home for free (Federici, 2019). Today, the idea has expanded to integrate a wider account of social reproduction—one that is capable of passing beyond the domestic sphere to incorporate public services and the (re)production of social values (Dimitrakaki and Lloyd, 2017). Moreover, the idea has evolved into a collective, non-reductionist critique of the ways modern economic theories overlook various types of labor as not ‘productive’ in the capitalist sense. One of the theorists, feminist political economist Alessandra Mezzadri acknowledges: “given ‘the expanding informal and informalized labor relations, it would be...completely misleading to distinguish between value-producing and non-value producing activities and realms, strictly based on tasks and/or payments’” (Mezzadri quoted in Federici, 2019). Voices from within the art field echo such a discussion. Barbara Formis, Senior Lecturer in Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art at the Pantheon-Sorbonne University, France, and an advocate of live arts and their relationship to everyday practices, criticized the capitalist hierarchy of labors as “violent” during her keynote presentation at the 2023 Arts in Society Conference held at Jagiellonian University, Kraków. According to Formis, the preoccupation with productive labor demeans the value of artistic practice simply because of its lack of materialistic productivity, even when the artists are “serving ‘life’ not an ‘enterprise’” with their art (Formis, 2023, 5 July).

With such ensemble of arguments, the status of artistic labor is changing. Since the 1970s, the economic paradigm shifted from the industrial sector to the service sector, especially in Western industrialized states that provided the political and economic backdrop to the hierarchization of labor. The objective of labor was reassigned to “turning in the perfect performance,” which required “communications skills, flexibility, autonomy and creativity” (Sigler, 2017, p.14). This, together with the growth of the creative industries that became particularly noticeable since the 2010s¹⁰, led to the sudden admiration of the artist as a symbolic figure of the era of immaterial labor or “the model of a new class of hyper-workers” (Ibid, p.14), against the traditional hierarchy of labors. Therese Kaufmann, interdisciplinary researcher in art history, literature and cultural studies, writes that the traditional hierarchy that favored material and manual labor has been overthrown by the new order of cognitive capitalism, “where value is created through intellectual, communicative, relational, and affective activities” of immaterial labor (Kaufmann, 2011, p.1).

* * *

This chapter has surveyed how artists, since the second half of the twentieth century, have consistently explored the limits of what could be conceived as art—and, by extension, whether practice-based art could be considered a legitimate form of labor. The artists did so largely by turning away from the traditional mode of art based on object production and from art forms constricted by the fine lines of categorized media such as painting, sculpture and prints, finding them too static, too commodifiable and too emblematic of the capitalist economy. Within such a context, I discover the specificity of contemporary art that lies precisely in its shift of focus from the creation of objects to the mechanisms of production. In the new mode of art, which could also be referred to as art of the practice turn, artists highlight the social conditions, artistic process and strategies of creation, and thus “work *within* and *in the making of art*” (Sigler, 2017, p.16). In doing so, artists cultivate new methods of value claim that propose the ethos of open-ended *doing*.

¹⁰ There is a 2023 report by Newcastle University and the Royal Society of Arts that the creative industries grew at double the rate of the UK economy as a whole between 2011 and 2019 (Report available here: <https://creative-pec.files.svdcdn.com/production/assets/publications/Final-23.02.23-GWR-release-1.pdf#asset:59232@1:url>).

2.2. Valuation of Artistic Practice

The investigation into art's practice turn revealed that such a shift can also be seen as that of art's value claim. As a paradigm shift, art's practice turn signals the need for a new scheme of valuation to fully recognize and register art's value. To explore the parameters of such a claim, in this chapter, I analyze the conceptual framework of valuation and how it functions as a social system. I then address the complexities that arise in valuating practice-based art within the given system, including the elusive nature of pricing artworks, traditional resistance to art's commodification and the potential gap between the value proposed during production and the value perceived during consumption. It is often thought that "[t]o consider a work of art in economic terms is to invite accusations of pragmatic instrumentality and crass materialism" (Degen, 2013, p.13). Yet, to exclude economics from this discussion would be "to obscure the dynamics of value" (Ibid, p.13), which is precisely what I am venturing to undo.

2.2.1. The Social System

The biggest premise of this discussion is that art does not naturally enter the world—art is purposefully produced, evaluated and consumed. George Dickie, an American philosopher known for his influential theorization of art defines an artwork as "an evaluable artifact of a kind created to be presented to an art world public" (Dickie, 2001, p.55). According to him, art is our collective invention where we inscribe our values in its value. This largely resonates with what the claims of practice theorists highlighted—that (artistic) practice is a social entity that mirrors our contemporary values and concept of value.

The philosophical discussion on art's value and where it originates has transitioned as much as the art itself. Within the modernist tradition of thought, which is generally considered to have expanded from the late 19th century to the first half of the 20th century, the value of an artwork lies in the framework of absolutism or the intrinsic qualities of aesthetic, artistic and broader cultural worth that it possesses (Throsby, 2001). Such a perspective focuses on the universal, transcendental and unconditional characteristics of culture and cultural objects and argues that a value exists in preconstructed or even predestined harmony and regularity (Hutter and Throsby, 2008). However, the postmodernist turn that gained dominance since the mid-20th century—closely preceding the practice turn—extended the idea of value into heterogeneous interpretations based on the central assumption that value is a dynamically and socially constructed idea (Throsby, 2001). According to our contemporary thinkers, value exists because people think it does—it is an outcome of social work and various activities ranging from "production, combination to circulation, assessment"—and practice—that aims at "making things valuable" (Helgesson and Muniesa, 2013, p.6). Now, thinkers reject the claim that things simply have some inherent value reducible to an essence of sort, or that the value is merely given to things. Instead, they argue that value is actively *made* and *performed* (Antal et al., 2015).

Based on this definition, what is more important now than having a structured concept of value are the dynamic processes that construct the value—*valuation*. This new stance

defines valuation as “any social practice where the value or values of something are established, assessed, negotiated, provoked, maintained, constructed and/or contested” (Doganova et al., 2014, p.87). In such a sense, valuation is a concept that entails both valorization—the act of producing and ascribing value—and evaluation—the assessment of value (Vatin, 2013). François Vatin, a sociologist specializing in labor and economic sociology and the history of thought, highlights this compartmentalization between valorization and evaluation, which he claims to be blurred by the umbrella term ‘valuation.’ He refers to this distinction to explain how the two processes should be separately recognized within valuation, not to argue that they are independent of each other but to emphasize the need to investigate the matter of valuation holistically from both sides of the economic chain—the production and consumption of value. Vatin goes on to make another point regarding the sociality of valuation. Sympathizing with the conventionalist economists who show that any form of market exchange of products is based on “common measures,” he highlights the “social conditions” of valuation (Ibid, p.35). These conditions are decided by various parameters which are essentially the “ensemble of social relations” between relevant stakeholders who share the cognition of value (Ibid, p.34).

All these arguments imply that “[t]here must be an exterior to value in order for value to exist” (Endnotes, 2013, para.18). When discussing the idea of external social relations that inform art’s valuation, it is hard to not tread on the intellectual territory of Pierre Bourdieu. Throughout his career, Bourdieu repeatedly attempted to grasp society’s structural dynamics and underlying principles, especially regarding the *field* of art, which he considers a distinctive social structure within the broader realm of cultural production (Webb et al., 2002). The core tenet of his field theory posits the following: 1) Society is an interwoven dimension of numerous ‘fields’ that mutually influence one another. These fields, with each of its own internal logic—ranging from politics and power to economics and culture—construct the societal landscape similar to how galaxies constitute the universe. 2) ‘Capital’ is distributed within each of these fields. Capital, taking diverse forms such as tangible goods, information, experience, reputation and human networks, not only shapes the field’s topography but also serves as the force that propels it forward. 3) An individual’s ‘position’ in the field is contingent upon their ability to occupy and utilize capital. 4) The individual’s behaviors are largely determined by this position that takes effect as the ‘situation.’ From such a standpoint, Bourdieu defines artworks as social artifacts intricately tied to the field of art, meaning that they reflect their creators’ respective positions or situations within the field (Bourdieu, 1993; Webb et al., 2002). In essence, the value of all artworks are shaped by various social conditions to which the members of the field are attached.

However, many of Bourdieu’s critics argue that his field theory is overly deterministic, suggesting that individuals’ actions and outcomes are heavily constrained by their positions within the field and the capital they possess. For instance, Jeffrey C. Alexander, an American sociologist and one of the founding figures in the school of cultural sociology, has been a leading voice in the critical evaluation of Bourdieu’s theory. He writes in the chapter titled ‘The Reality of Reduction: The Failed Synthesis of Pierre Bourdieu’ of his 1995 monograph that Bourdieu misleadingly reduces cultural processes to strategic actions largely embedded in

sociopolitical power struggles. Furthermore, Alexander criticizes Bourdieu's failure to recognize culture as a self-generative phenomenon that can make its own value claims, by which he underplays the role of individual agency and the potential for innovation or resistance within fields. Such a criticism, complementing Bourdieu's perspective, is strongly relevant to this research that aims to explore how this very agency of individual artists, their practice and art objects can facilitate art's representation and valuation in socioeconomic contexts. Bourdieu's perspective dispels the mystical notion that art is created by solitary artists each in introspective isolation and underscores the tight connection between art and society. It would signify more if it could attest to the potential of a reciprocal dynamic where, just as society influences artists and their art, art exerts a profound influence and proposes new social dynamics.

Another idea that captures the social condition for art is the idea of art *world*, proposed by Howard S. Becker, an American sociologist known for his influential sociological readings of art and its production. Becker posits that various individuals and their organic interconnections constitute the art world (Becker, 1982), which differentiates from Bourdieu's later focus on the structure and features of the field as a system that impacts its actors. According to Becker, the art world is an extendable and dynamic space where art is produced and valued through collective activities involving both the artists and those who can be defined as *cultural intermediaries* (Hadley, 2021). These intermediaries—curators, critics, editors, publishers, distributors, other institutional entities, etc.—occupying the conceptual space between the creation and consumption of art, play a crucial role in forming the social condition of art's valuation through their interactions and negotiations (Becker et al., 2006).

Thus, it can be summarized from this part of the inquiry that art, having been intentionally produced, valued and consumed by individuals of agency, reflects contemporary values and concept of value that are dynamically and socially constructed. Value, especially the value of art, is actively created through social processes. One way of formulating this process is the idea of valuation, which is a holistic operation of establishing, assessing, negotiating and maintaining value. Various theorists attempting to define and describe how this mechanism functions reveal two directionally opposing yet simultaneously valid points to take away: 1) the value of art is decided by its positional and situational coordinates within the society; 2) the value of art is produced by relevant stakeholders and proposed to the society. The following section further examines how this apparent tension surrounding the valuation of art together with other dissonant factors concerns the claiming of value for practice-based art.

2.2.2. The Economic Trouble

When an artwork is valued, it is also given the socioeconomic status of a *commodity* (Mazzucato, 2019) that can be transacted in the art market, or the “network of interdependent actors and institutions that produce, circulate and consume art” (Degen, 2013, p.12).

However, certain trouble hatches at this conceptual juncture between a valued artwork and a commodity, which is the commodification of art itself.

Arjun Appadurai, Indian-American anthropologist who devoted his career to studies on globalization and cultural economy, defines this transition from the cultural into the socioeconomic domain as entering the “commodity situation” (Appadurai, 1986, p.13). According to him, commodities are “things in a certain situation” during their social lives where their “exchangeability” becomes a relevant feature (Ibid, p.13). Appadurai disaggregates this situation into three aspects of a thing’s commodity-hood: 1) the commodity phase of the social life of the thing—the temporal definition, 2) the commodity candidacy of the thing—the conceptual definition and 3) the commodity context in which the thing may be placed—the social definition of commodity-hood. Then, following these definitions, when does an artwork meet its phase as a commodity? What or who grants it the candidacy? In what context does it become a commodity? It may be reducibly said that an artwork’s commodity phase starts when its producers—the artist and relevant cultural intermediaries—decide to make it available on the market; the commodity candidacy is given when the artwork is valued and given a price tag; and the commodity context, then, would be the art market—whether it be in a gallery, an auction house or an art fair setting. However, it must also be noted here that answering these questions and meeting the commodity criteria can be far more complicated when it comes to artworks than other things, as they are “culturally valued singularities” of extremely idiosyncratic features and significance (Ibid, p.17). In other words, artworks require much more situational attention or agreement between the producer and consumer to function as commodities¹¹.

Functioning as commodities would mean being successfully transacted in the market (Mazzucato, 2019), which, as Appadurai mentions, denotes *exchangeability*. Zooming into this issue of exchanging art in the market brings to the foreground another critical issue: the ambiguity of its exchange value or *price*. Explaining art’s price—*how* it should be priced or *why* it is priced in such ways—has been an unresolvable topic to countless researchers in various fields encompassing economics, sociology, philosophy and art. Galleries, auctions, art fairs, museums, individual collectors, their connoisseurship and global trends have been repeatedly examined (Throsby, 2001; Ginsburgh, 2003; Velthuis, 2003; Adam, 2014; Radermecker, 2020; Wickham et al., 2020; Gerlis, 2021). Among them, Olav Velthuis, a specialist in economic sociology and sociology of the arts, provides a meaningful observation

11 Recently, the ideas of ‘asset’ and ‘assetization’ have been introduced to this discussion. In their book *Assetization* (2020), Birch and Muniesa argue that “the dominant form that technoscientific capitalism affords is not the commodity but the asset, and that the financial contours it entails are not those of market speculation but of capital investment” (pp.1-2). According to Birch and Muniesa, the ‘asset’ is “anything that can be controlled, traded, and capitalized as a revenue stream” (p.2), and ‘assetization’ is the process of constructing such assets to earn return (pp.3-4). For this research, I remain focused on commodity and commodification to access the thicker strata of discussions tied to the terms.

of the discourse on price mechanism. Arguing on one hand that the price mechanism of art is a comprehensive “symbolic system” (Velthuis, 2003, p.181) in which different actors express a range of cognitive and cultural meanings, Velthuis points out how both economics and humanities have dichotomized the discussion of pricing within the art market in their own ways. While economic theorists have argued that (cultural and aesthetic) value of art is just another form of economic value¹², researchers of humanities have considered that the value of art is “trivialized” or “homogenized” when pricing it (Ibid, p.183) or that art’s value is centered around “the notion of autonomy,” which should be “elevated” into “a separate sphere” from other models of thought, including economics (Ibid, p.189)¹³. Highlighting such an ideological opposition, Velthuis eventually calls attention to the persisting “radical uncertainty about the value of contemporary art” due to the lack of objective criteria to evaluate an artwork (Ibid, p.193).

Perhaps the most important point to take away from the debate surrounding art’s pricing is this sheer dissonance of the topic. Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot, both French sociologists who take political, moral and cultural approaches to their field, collaboratively describe this as an issue that occurs due to the friction between the industrial world and market world or between the industrial worth and market worth (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006). They explain that it is tricky to agree on a fair price for art because we do not know how to precisely translate the unique costs of artistic labor into the universal terms of numbers, or quantify the qualitative resources—inspiration, creativity, the cultural capital of the artist, etc.—put into the making of art. In other words, as a society, we accept that art has value, but we cannot find a common principle to explain why one artwork has more market value than another.

One of the most sought-after explanations for this lack of translational measures between the cultural value and socioeconomic value of art is that art is just not “destined” to be commodified (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006, p.162), as it originally belongs to the *world of inspiration* that denounces the *market world* for commercializing the artistic endeavors. There has been an elongated discussion around this tension between artistic and commercial imperatives, as briefly revealed above in analyzing Velthuis’s observation. This chronic “denial of the economy” (Abbing, 2002, p.48) has been a prevalent stance amongst the artists and their collaborators or any cultural intermediaries who may benefit from generating a more idealized sense of art’s value by supporting its aloofness towards money. Siding with the world of inspiration, they criticize the increasing “hegemony of the corporate model associated with

12 The book *Pricing the Priceless: Art, Artists and Economics* (1989) by William Grampp, an American economist, represents this line of thought very well. Throughout the book, Grampp critiques the segregation of art from economics and describes price as a reliable metric that captures an artwork’s value as a distillation of all other kinds of value: intrinsic, aesthetic and symbolic. Grampp also argues that “[t]here is considerable evidence that the market in art is reasonably well informed, meaning by ‘reasonable’ that the people who buy and sell spend time and money to inform themselves to the extent that the expenditure is worthwhile” (1989, p.29), which largely—and rather dangerously—assumes that the consumers of art are rational and hence art’s price a reliable indicator of value.

13 Regarding the humanities’ side of the discourse, Velthuis labels the first perspective as the ‘contamination model’, grounding it in a Marxist conception of value upheld by the Frankfurt School (Velthuis, 2003, p.187), and the second perspective as the ‘independent spheres model’ from the Formalist tradition of art theory (Ibid, p.189).

the growth of managerialism in the subsidizing arts” (Hadley, 2021, p.208), or how the market capitalizes on artists’ pure pursuit of creativity, aesthetics, social justice or any headline of their values.

One of the points that the denialists are particularly alarmed about is the systematic exploitation of artistic labor. In their conversation between an art historian, a curator and an artist, Danielle Child, Helena Reckitt and Jenny Richards highlight the precarious conditions of contemporary cultural labor (Child et al., 2017). They claim that in today’s neoliberal and capitalist circumstances, cultural labor, which includes artistic labor as its major strand, is largely assumed to be *labor of love*, meaning that cultural workers are expected to be motivated by love and passion—rather than material gain—when engaging in labor. Referring to how the term ‘labor of love’ was coined in 1975 to “call out the mechanism for the exploitation of social reproduction” (Jenny Richards in Ibid, p.151), the discussants argue that cultural and artistic labor is following the same course of implicit victimization. Gregory Sholette, a New-York based artist, writer, educator and activist, also warns about this invisibility of artistic labor by calling it the “dark matter” that sustains the contemporary art world (Sholette, 2011 quoted in Dimitrakaki and Lloyd, 2017, p.7). Under such imposition, being passionate workers, artists are seen as working for their own pleasure or willingly making sacrifices in devotion to art that do not need to be externally compensated, as the rewards for labor of love are automatically granted through emotional, self-expressive or spiritual means, rather than financial means (Child et al., 2017). It appears to me that this precarity is particularly damaging in the case of practice-based art, considering its fundamental connection to the idea of immaterial labor as established in the previous chapter. The interchangeability between the artists’ lived actions and their artwork that lies at the core of art as praxis can lead to further perils of “over-identifying with work” (Ibid, p.156), which only perpetuates the cycle of exploitation.

Paradoxically, though, artworks and artistic labor do *need* to be reduced to prices and traded as commodities because they are “loaded with life” of the artists and cultural intermediaries (Graw, 2017, p.130). For the livelihood of the artmakers and the sustenance of art itself, art needs to have economic significance and be sold. José María Durán, a researcher in cultural studies and Marxist theories, focuses on how this inevitable commodification of art occurs. He points out that unlike most waged workers who provide labor for corporate bodies and hence sell their labor power, artists sell the products of their labor—the artworks. The process of selling the products of labor entails “alienating the product” from the producer by transforming it into “a social form” —the commodity form—that can be circulated in the market (Durán, 2016, p.227), which implies that there has to be an ontological separation between the artist and the artwork for it to be functional as a commodity. Georg Simmel, a German sociologist, Neo-Kantian philosopher and cultural critic, resonates with this idea from more than a century ago that the distance between the human subject and the object establishes value. In his book *The Philosophy of Money* (1900), Simmel argues that value is produced through “a state of appreciation distinct from a utilitarian satisfaction of needs” (Simmel quoted in Degen, 2013, p.13), which is achieved by allowing the subject to keep a distance from the object so they can find value not in the object itself but in the way it stimulates their faculties.

Simmel's perspective does not entirely overlap with Durán's since it is skewed to the concept of aesthetic valuation and illuminates not the artist's but the audience's end of the process. However, his argument together with Durán's still adds to this research that 1) a valuable art object has its own agency that allows it to affect a human subject as a separate entity, and 2) that value accounts for not only the production but also the consumption.

Then, how should the commodification of practice-based art be facilitated, when the artistic labor—the subject's praxis—is allegedly inseparable from the artwork—the object? Isabelle Graw, an art critic and art historian with a strong interest in the art of the post-medium condition and its economy, points out that practice-based art is no exception to this imperative of alienation as long as it is governed by the same market principle (Graw, 2017). In addition, she hints at the need for an extra process for the commodification of practice-based art to be viable. She argues that despite the movement towards dematerialization, contemporary art practices “have a penchant for realization in the physical object as well, usually producing material evidence in the form of certificates, props, relics, or documentary materials” and that the “introduction of such an *anchor* is beneficial” (Ibid, p.134). In such a light, art's commodity form is “metonymic” (Ibid, p.136) of the original artistic practice by rendering the value previously immaterial and unattached into more concrete and distributable outcomes.

Finally, after such commodification and departure from the realm of production, art is in the eye of the beholder or the realm of consumption, where its value continues to be contested and shaped. It is true that in the arts and cultural sector, “production pre-empts demand” (Hadley, 2021, p.205)—most often, artists willingly produce artworks, not in reaction to a pre-existing demand but for their own motivation. However, as long as an artwork aspires to be presented, appreciated and consumed, “[t]he final authority is actually the recipient,” like how the value of money “has nothing to do with [its] origin; it results from the trust and confidence of their users” (Zaunschirm, 2013, p.39). As shown in earlier reference to Simmel's theory of appreciation and in Vatin's compartmentalization of valuation into valorization and evaluation [p.42], it is crucial to recognize that value may be proposed through production and labor, but is realized “not where it is produced” (Federici, 2019, p.56). Hints that operations in the sphere of consumption are as significant as those within production for value creation are ample—from the classic Marxist concept of *value form*, or the “appearance of value...[when] a commodity enters into the exchange relations with others” (Marx quoted in Arthur, 2015) to the critique of neoliberalist exploitation of labor by social reproduction theorists that the market increasingly valorizes but does not put value in socially reproductive work (Child et al., 2017)¹⁴.

Above all, value creation is not only a social process but also a personal one in that it depends on the behavior of individual consumers (Thaler, 2015). Even when an artwork's value is endorsed on a societal level, there is still the individual consumer's *taste* and “consumer

14 As an elaboration on this point, Jenny Richards refers to feminist sociologist Emma Dowling: “Dowling makes a distinction between the valorisation of labour and the valuation of labour. Valorisation denotes capital's methods of valuing labour, which we see through the wage; while valuation relates to how we as human beings conceptually struggle to value for ourselves the activity that we engage in. As the financialisation of work intensifies, it is increasingly difficult for people to see and qualify work that is not represented by monetary value” (Child et al., 2017, p.152).

capital” at play, which encompasses their knowledge, experience, skills, interests, propensities or any other irregular detail that uniquely contextualizes the consumption (Woo, 1992, p.107). These signify two things: 1) the fact that multiple social groups and their dynamics are involved in establishing art’s value makes it politically complicated yet powerful and engaging; 2) the gap of value creation between the parties of production and consumption—between the proposal and recognition of value—has the potential to be the pitfall where misperception, lack of recognition, exploitation or any perversion of value may occur.

* * *

Thus far, I have examined the intricate system and economic complexities of valuating art. Reflecting on the unique characteristics of art after the practice turn I have analyzed in Chapter 2.1—namely, its emphasis on process, labor and dematerialized forms of art in proposing its value—the question arises: can its cultural value be adequately converted into socioeconomic value through the conventional valuation systems and methods discussed thus far? This remains a debatable issue. To resolve it, I wonder what can serve as its “anchor” (Graw, 2017, p.134) in valuation, a means that better captures the nuanced value of practice-based art, ensuring that its significance is not lost in translation to economic and marketable terms. Here, I turn to what art has seemingly left behind—its objects and their agency amongst human subjects.

2.3. Art's Objecthood & Valuation

Given the practice turn, art now extends into the dematerialized and conceptual realm of praxis by process, no longer circumscribed by the necessity of material realization or production of physical objects. Lucy Lippard, for instance, even foretold in her observation of art's dematerialization that the physical art objects would eventually disappear altogether (Lippard and Chandler, 1968). However, Lippard's prediction has proven to have been rather stretched—artists still produce works using materials, and their exhibitions are still largely based on displays of objects. Art's objecthood remains relevant to contemporary art. What has changed, though, is that the objecthood and consequent materiality of the artwork bear renewed significance, no longer as art's natural matter, but as an art form artists choose.

As one of the starting points to consider this claim, I have inquired into the relationship between the 'material' and 'immaterial'. Although the two terms are antonyms to one another, they are, in fact, conceptually interdependent and function like two sides of the same coin. In art, the literal interpretation of 'immaterial' commonly denotes "physically imperceptible," and the term can be used "to describe elements that need to go through different processes to be perceived" (Grammatikopoulou, 2012, para.22). This alludes to the idea that immateriality requires additional apparatus or material evidence to render itself substantial and comprehensible, similar to our reliance on a mirror to perceive ourselves. Immateriality does not inherently imply an absolute absence of materiality. Rather, it necessitates material efforts for acknowledgment. Thus, in discussing the valuation of dematerialized practices in contemporary art, I speak not for the denial of art's objecthood and materiality but for a reconsideration—to recalibrate our notion of the object as a strategic format of art for enhanced tangibility of practice.

2.3.1. Rethinking the Object: Object's Agency

To think of what art objects signify to contemporary art, what *objects* mean to us today and are capable of achieving should be considered first. As discussed earlier in Chapter 1.2.2 [p.12], I define object in this research as a tangible entity that can be perceived or experienced by a human subject, representing abstract ideas and intentions. According to Boltanski and Thévenot, objects, as external things to people, substantiate worth by making us "rise to the occasion" and valorize them (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006, p.131). Variable in their form, objects serve as trappings of worth that indicate how we perceive ourselves and our values. Along a similar vein, Michael Hutter, an economist specializing in cultural economics and value theories, writes on the idea of *value translation* that conceptualizes how the value of artistic sources is established through dynamic processes involving objects. Grounding his idea on Latour's 'actor-network theory' that highlights the participation of nonhuman actors in social relations (Latour, 1996; 2007), Hutter describes value translation as "a displacement or delegation of power within networks" where objects function as carriers of value (Hutter in Antal et al., 2015, p.61). Hutter further explains value translation as the transmission of value from artistic sources to objects that function as "symbolic products" (Ibid, p.61). This

involves an “authoring phase” of creating the object and a “reading phase” of interpreting and experiencing it (Ibid, p.61). Such a model of valuation demonstrates that objects are intermediaries of value(s) that play a pivotal role by facilitating the interpretive interaction between human actors.

As shown by Hutter, the idea of the agency of nonhuman entities stems from the thick branch of post-structural approaches to “the theoretical importance of *things*” (Clarke et al., 2017, p.54). As early as 1969, Theodor W. Adorno commented on the matter of recognizing the significance of objects by claiming that “[a]ctually, everything that is in the subject can be attributed to the object... Object, though attenuated, also is not without subject. If the object itself lacked subject as a moment, then its objectivity would become nonsense” (Adorno, 2005, p.257). Here, Adorno criticizes “the pure subjective form of traditional epistemology” or the “epistemological ego” that refuses to reflect on the validity of objects as capable subjective entities in social activities (Ibid, p.256).

From a more scientific perspective, Bruno Latour, French philosopher, anthropologist and sociologist known for his work in science and technology studies, develops a viewpoint best represented by his idea of *interobjectivity* that acknowledges the status of objects as “complete social actor[s]” rather than passive “means” of our social interactions (Latour, 1996, p.236). He also equates objects to human subjects in terms of their agency and level of social impact by saying: “...objects are not means, but rather mediators—just as all other actants are” (Ibid, p.240). According to Latour, the material world must be understood as “artifacts or things that necessarily participate in social practices just as human beings do” (Reckwitz, 2002, p.208). Arguing that humans need to recognize the fact that “we are exceeded by what we create” (Latour, 1996, p.273), Latour emphasizes the importance of committing to a symmetry between the scientific weight we put on ourselves as subjects and the objects we produce. One year prior to publishing his article on interobjectivity, Latour, in his conversation with the philosopher Michel Serres, said: “I agree with you that the social sciences remain obsessed by subjects alone, by people interacting among themselves, and never speak of objects per se... [T]he collectivity is produced by this double circulation of objects that create social relations and social relations that create objects” (Latour, 1995 in Hudek, 2014, pp.37-38). Here, Latour is bringing objects to the center of researchers’ attention by highlighting their role in generating one of the core values of our society—*collectivity*. According to Latour, objects are “social facts” (Latour, 1996, p.240), which we must take into account to learn about ourselves and our social systems.

Andreas Reckwitz, another social scientist and cultural theorist, recapitulates Latour’s perspective as “symmetric anthropology” (Reckwitz, 2002, p.196) and situates it within the broader stream of social practice theories, which are cultural theories that pursue a more practical understanding of the relationship between the human and the nonhuman. According to Reckwitz, Latour’s approach can be seen as the third phase of the development of cultural theories that differ in their conceptualization of the material and object. The first phase is the classical sociology of knowledge such as the work of Mannheim, Scheler and Durkheim that understands the material as ‘social structures’ that provide foundation for orders of knowledge;

the second phase, high-modern culturalism redefines the material as ‘objects of knowledge’ or ‘symbolic objects’ that become visible only in the context of systems of meaning such as categorization, discourses and communicative action; the third phase represented by Latour can be understood “as a critique of a reduction of social order to dematerialized symbolic orders” that enables the researcher to grasp the objects as “artifacts,” which are “constitutive, effective” components of social networks and practices (Ibid, p.196). Reckwitz goes on to claim that artifacts hold significance not only because of their interpretations but also in their being materially “handled,” “applied” and “used” (Ibid, p.208).

From the field of metaphysics, Graham Harman, American philosopher and leading figure in the field of speculative realism¹⁵, presents ‘object-oriented ontology (OOO)’ as the contemporary framework for understanding reality (Harman, 2018). Through OOO, Harman attempts to see our world through the lens of object interactions. He reminds us that all objects, “whether they be human, nonhuman, natural, cultural, real or fictional” (Ibid, p.9), must be given equal attention when discussing their influence on the world. Unlike aforementioned theorists who tend to first make a distinction between human *subjects* and nonhuman *objects* to equate their status in the world, Harman chooses to consider both entities as objects that can autonomously interact with one another, advocating the agency of nonhumans from a slightly different angle. Borrowing his perspective, this agency or the ontological speculation that objects can interact with each other and influence human perception and experience would be an expandable network that constitutes the fabric of reality.

Alfred Gell, British anthropologist most well-known for his anthropological interpretation of art, also comments on how objects—specifically art objects—influence the social fabric of reality. Gell argues that art objects can “mediate social agency” of humans as active participants in social processes and communication (Gell, 1998, p.5). He writes that as much as the art objects should not be reduced to mere “visual codes” for communication, “the innumerable shades of social/emotional responses to artifacts (of terror, desire; awe, fascination, etc.)” human subjects display upon their interactions with the objects prove their substantial and practical power as vehicles of meaning (Ibid, p.6). In discussing this, Gell also emphasizes that the aesthetic properties of art objects should not be abstracted from their “social settings” (Ibid, p.6) because their nature is “a function of the social-relational matrix” (Ibid, p.7), hinting that objects define and are defined by the human system surrounding them.

Such reflexivity of objects is also revealed in Graw’s idea of *value reflection* (Graw, 2021). Referring to the ontological split of commodity objects between ‘symbolic’ and ‘market’ values (Bourdieu, 1993), Graw argues that when it comes to art objects, this division is less absolute than what many scholars have claimed and that it has room for renegotiation through the process of value reflection. Graw defines value reflection as an artistic operation that results from manifold procedures, often suggesting that the “artistic labour expended *for* artworks can be found *in* them” (Graw, 2021, p.8). She acknowledges that art objects are unlike human subjects who can reflect on their values independently, but as objects, they can generate “value-

¹⁵ An international movement in contemporary philosophy known for their resistance to philosophies of human finitude and transcendental idealism inspired by the Kantian traditions of the field (Harman, 2018).

reflective statements” (Ibid, p.10), as long as a viewer or an interpreter is willing to read into them. Thus, as much as that value reflection is not an objective property to be naturally found in artworks, it can be argued that art objects have the “epistemological potential” to charge the viewer with their value claim (Ibid, p.10).

In summary, it becomes clear that objects are active actants that operate among us, between us and for us. Objects, as external entities to people, gain significance by challenging us to appreciate and value them. Their diverse forms act as symbols of worth, reflecting our self-perceptions and values. Objects serve as intermediaries of value, facilitating meaningful interactions between people. They are active participants in social dynamics, not merely passive tools, and are social facts that reveal insights about ourselves and our social structures. Objects interact with one another and shape human perception and experience but are also shaped by the human systems around them. Their importance lies not only in their interpretations but also in their practical use and handling, which is why their qualities should be understood within their social contexts and relations. Among objects, art objects possess a particular potential to convey their value to viewers, generating reflective statements as long as there is an observer willing to engage with them. However, considering all these general abilities of objects, how may they intervene specifically in the matter of representing practice in tangible terms to claim value? What is the actual operation that occurs when the objects deliver practice? I now speculate further on the agency of art objects within the context of valuating dematerialized practices.

2.3.2. Rematerialization of the Dematerialized: Object Translation

Affirming the agency of objects, practice theorists “agree that activity is embodied and that nexuses of practices are mediated by artifacts, hybrids and natural objects” (Schatzki et al., 2001, p.11). Such a claim could be read as corresponding to the analysis by Krauss that since the dematerialization of art, art objects no longer speak only of their immediate materiality but operate based on a synecdochic relation to the practices they are born from (Krauss, 1999). This could be expanded to thinking that objects of art have gained a renewed significance as “forms of knowledge” (Sullivan, 2006, p.1) that cite and conjure artistic practices that extend beyond tangibility. Objects by themselves may no longer be enough to be seen as art, but they represent, mediate and convey art. Ji Yeon Kim, the Korean art critic, writes in her essay that won the 2024 Annual New Year Writing Prize hosted by The Chosun Daily: “In this accelerated world¹⁶, there is an effort in art to slow down the pace and bring its body back to the center of attention. Art critiques the alienation of the body and the fragmentation of perception through the reenactment of physicality”¹⁷ (J.Y. Kim, 2024, para.7). This reenactment can be understood as an effort to rematerialize the dematerialized art into substantial terms, where objects can

16 Here, she is referring to the claim by Paul Virilio, a French cultural theorist, urbanist, architect and aesthetic philosopher, that art has lost its physical site, and the body has become fragmented due to the extreme acceleration of contemporary society (Virilio, 2010).

17 Translation from Korean by the author. The original text is: “이렇게 질주하는 세상 속에서 속도를 늦추며 신체를 중심으로 다시 끌어오려는 미술의 노력이 있다. 신체의 소외와 지각의 파편화를 재현으로서 보여[준다].”

partake as a form of tangibility.

Then, what would it mean to rematerialize art through objects? One interpretation is provided by Maria Lind, curator, writer and educator, who published the book *Seven Years: The Rematerialization of Art from 2011-2017* (2019) in reply to Lucy Lippard's seminal monograph *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (1973). Lind's book presents a collection of her columns for ArtReview that explore works by contemporary artists who have established unique relationships between their art and objects—Haegue Yang, Hassan Khan, Uglycute, Tania Perez-Cordova, Walid Raad and more—in addition to major exhibitions of the decade that represent the ethos of practice such as dOCUMENTA (13), the Sharjah Biennial 12, the 3rd Ural Industrial Biennial and the 54th, 55th and 56th editions of the Venice Biennale. Throughout this compilation of contemporary art history, Lind repeatedly uses the metaphor of the artist's hand to explain how artists have attempted to rematerialize their art. Goldin+Senneby, a Stockholm-based artist subject, who wrote an introductory essay for *Seven Years*, points out an interesting coincidence that Lind was born on 27 February 1966, which is the day when the conceptual artist John Baldessari proclaimed the “death of the artist's hand” and stopped making works by his own hand and signature to commit to the new principle of dematerialization¹⁸ (Goldin+Senneby in Lind, 2019, p.10).

¹⁸ Goldin+Senneby writes that they learned this fact in Lucy Lippard's *Six Years*, which adds to the sense of juxtaposition.



[Fig.20-22] 'Cremation Project' (1970), John Baldessari. In the summer of 1970, the artist decided to destroy all of his painting works that were in his possession dating from 1953 to 1966 by incinerating them at a local crematorium. This was an act that marked the beginning of his later conceptual and dematerialized practices (Photos: David Wing/Image source: John Baldessari Studio).

For Lind, the artist's hand that the conceptual artists so adamantly severed, no longer works solely for the artistic craft or autonomous gesture of the artist genius—rather, it now stands for “what is at *hand*” or the act of “taking things/matters into their own *hands*” (Ibid, p.10). In other words, Lind is highlighting how contemporary artists take a renewed materialist approach to art to substantiate what they believe are at stake, incorporating pragmatic strategies of artmaking in response to social situations. As part of these strategies, artists and other workers of the art world recognize the role of the object anew, not in the sense of “singular artistic gesture or craft alone,” but rather in that they function as expanded, metaphorical nodes of a wider fabric of “conditions and structures” that surround artistic practices (Lind, 2019, p.32). In such regard, ‘materialization’ in rematerialization is not just focused on the materiality of the object but on its objecthood of materialness, for the sake of spelling out the immaterial substance of art in concrete terms. Lind defines this as what lies at the core of the operation of rematerialization.



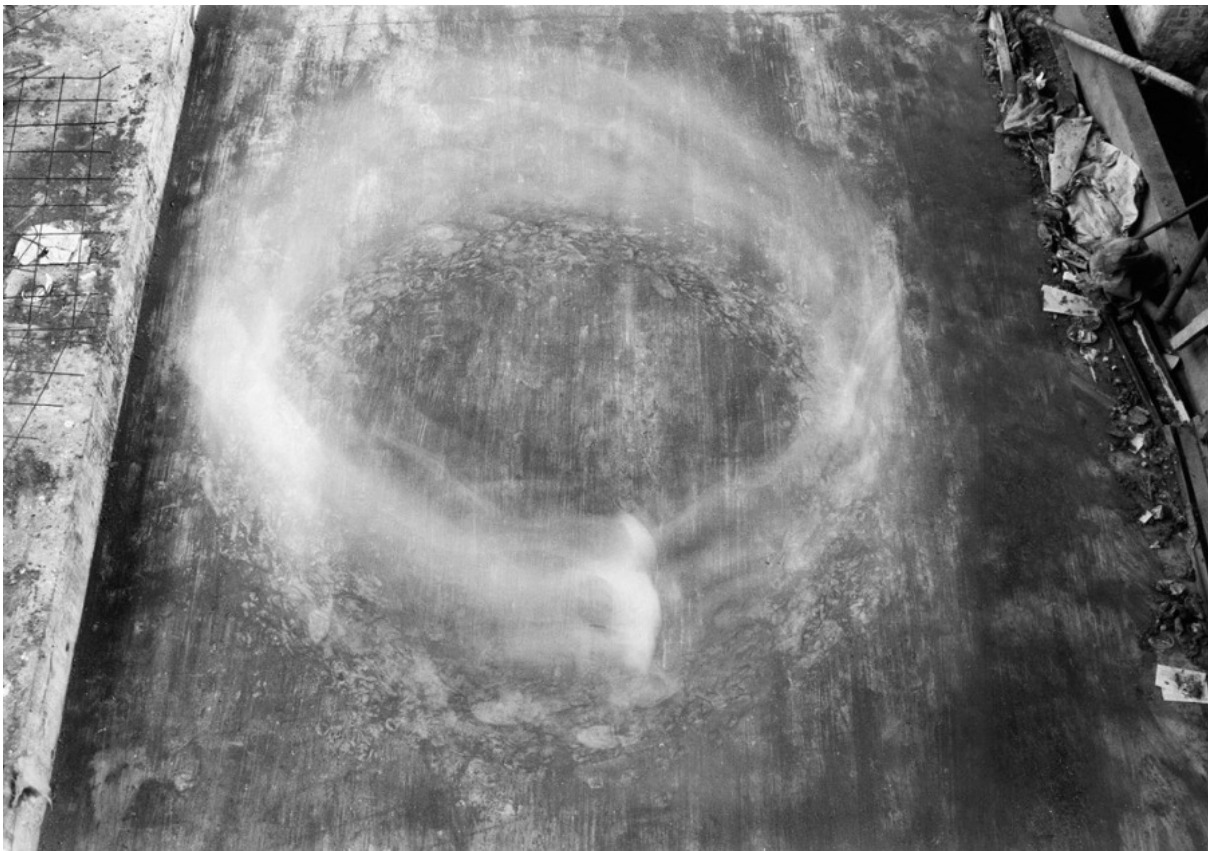
[Fig.23] ‘Fabrications. Shah-neshin and veranda on Satarkhan highways’ (2013), Nazgol Ansarinia in collaboration with Roozbeh Elias-Azar. Maria Lind writes on this work by the Iranian interdisciplinary visual artist as an example of art’s rematerialization that it “insist[s] on actualizing the encounter between the existing and the virtual...breaking the slick surface of normality and embodying the stark contrasts and abundant contradictions so palpable in Tehran today” (Lind, 2019, p.166). Nazgol Ansarinia’s works are known for their examination through objects of the systems and networks that underpin the artist’s daily life (Image source: Green Art Gallery).

There have also been attempts to consider the idea of rematerialization from a socioeconomic perspective. For instance, Azza Zein, visual artist, writer and interdisciplinary researcher working between fine arts and economics, explores the idea of rematerialization as a process of revaluing dematerialized things, including objects, forms and resources. Referring to the dematerialization of our economy—digital transformation, virtualization, reduction of physical transactions and subsequent effacement of in-person labor—Zein claims that it involves reducing things originally with unique narratives and contexts to their superficial price tags in the market, which leads to the disconnection between valuation and the social history of materiality. Such a condition, combined with the artistic dematerialization as a rejection of the fetishized singular art object in the market, has deeply impacted the status of art objects altogether, leading to the destruction of their affective economy and devaluation (Zein, 2019). To intervene in such “violence of invisibility” (Ibid, p.120) and to “revalue the art object” as a tangible token of its context, labor and process (Ibid, p.126), Zein suggests a resistance through rematerialization in art, which happens when artists “attend to materials” (Tim Ingold quoted in Ibid, p.120) by focusing on the correspondence between material objects and cultural gestures, immaterial labor and value embodied in the objects. Zein argues that this process of rematerialization has a “reparative” effect on dematerialized art and its economy, allowing our society to overcome abstraction and standardization of value (Ibid, p.123). To me, this discussion of rematerialization, together with Lind’s interpretation of it as a practical strategy to give tangible form to the conditions of art, resonates with the critique of neoliberalist exploitation of labor by social reproduction theorists and shows great potential to be a methodology for holistically expressing the value of practice-based art in both cultural and socioeconomic contexts.



[Fig.24] Film still from 'Symbiosis (Ritual Battle)' (2015), Cecilia Vicuña. Azza Zein refers to this work as an example of attending to materials and rematerializing objects. She writes: "The collaboration video between Cecilia Vicuña and the conservation ecologist Meredith Root-Bernstein asks us to imagine the formal visual qualities of forces such as competition, reciprocity, and symbiosis... The video emphasizes kinaesthetic forces generated around the objects rather than each object separately... The screen shows objects made of multiple found materials...such as corks, fish cans, lines, threads, wires, matchstick, brush, found plastic, felt, and nails... The three [key]words and the found materials all correspond to a system of exchange and circulation." (Zein, 2019, pp.123-124) (Image source: ARTFORUM).

So far, my discussion of rematerialization has focused on its conceptualization, but it would also be crucial to examine how it can be understood more realistically and utilized in fields of art. One of the fields of art most concerned with utilizing the agency of objects for rematerialization is performance art. Due to its transient nature, performance, unlike traditional artworks such as painting and sculpture that are concrete and immutable, exists only in the moment of its live presentation (Reason, 2006). To overcome its limitation of intangibility, “[p]erformance is being increasingly documented, archived, evaluated, institutionally incorporated, and globally disseminated” (Stuart Comer in MoMA LIVE, 2015, 11:54). Now, “criticism is focused more on the recurrence and persistence of performance than on its disappearance” (*Introduction to Afterlives: The Persistence of Performance* series at MoMA shared by Adrian Heathfield, 2015).



[Fig.25] Photographic documentation of ‘Ascending Fields’ (1992), Rosemary Lee. This photograph was used as the title image of the *Afterlives: The Persistence of Performance series at MoMA* (2015). Rosemary Lee, choreographer, filmmaker and performer, had this photo taken to capture the aftermath of a performance that was staged in Fort Dunlop, an empty tire depot in Birmingham, UK. Eighty dancers and musicians were invited for the performance, whose energy can be imagined from the trace of repeated movement captured by this photograph (Photo: Hugo Glendinning).

Closely observing how documentation of performance art functions as an apparatus to project the value of practice, I have come to think that the dynamic of rematerialization could be compared to that of linguistic operations, namely *translation*. While the live performance is still the primary art form, its documentation serves as an essential supplementary

structure for mediating the artistic practice. The “re-mediation” of performance in the name of documentation serves as a record of the artist’s conceptual and embodied exploration, providing insight into the themes, emotions and ideas delivered during the performance (Reason, 2006, p.9). The documentation can take myriad object forms, including photographs, written descriptions, video and/or audio recordings and other multimedia artifacts that offer different perspectives on the original performance (Ibid). Being “[t]hings, but not the thing itself” (Ibid, p.36), these object forms speak for the performance to deliver its meaning in respective languages and rhetoric, which gives a *translational* sense of the agency of the art object at play in representing the practice. Such an aspect of documentation—that it occurs not within but between disciplines and art forms—resonates with the concept of “intermedia translation” (Hopkinson, 2004, p.42), which ideates the interpretation of one artistic practice by reproducing it in another art form or medium. This assumes that today—under the post-medium condition—art forms have interdisciplinary connectivity that transcends the boundaries of medium and can become alternative expressions of one another. These operations not only grant material stability to performance art but also give it the potential to have wider accessibility. By assigning an object form and materiality to performance, documentation enables it to be disseminated to audiences with significantly fewer physical and geographical limitations (Reason, 2006). By being “channeled” (Ibid, p.26) through documentation, the practice of performance is given “afterlives” (MoMA LIVE, 2015) to reach a much more public, even global audience, expanding its impact beyond the original setting of the presentation—another striking resemblance between documentation and translation.

The idea of rematerializing the dematerialized practices has also sparked active discussions within the field of art conservation, particularly regarding “changing” artworks that must compete against ephemerality to be kept and available to the audience (Saaze, 2013, p.49). From the 1990s onwards, there have been a number of conferences and publications on conservation issues concerning modern and contemporary art. One of the key voices of the discourses, Pip Laurenson, researcher in the conservation of contemporary art and the former leader of the Time-based Media Conservation section at Tate from 1996 until 2010, highlights the shift in the conservators’ “attitudes to change” with the new trend of artistic practice “which is essentially a process, a project or situation, where the objects of art are either props, debris or documentation formed as by-products of the activity” (Laurenson, 2013, p.40). Within such a context, the notion of art as a fixed, unchanging object becomes “highly problematic” (Saaze, 2013, p.36). Laurenson explains that traditionally, fine art conservation has operated under the assumption that an artwork is “finished” after leaving the artist’s studio and was thus focused on referring back to the moment a work entered the collection as an “ideal state” of the artwork (Laurenson, 2013, p.40).

However, with more contemporary artworks leaning towards the dematerialization of the object and practice, conservators are faced with the need to devise new tactics or even a complete shift of the paradigm of conservation, which, once again, reveals a curious parallel between rematerialization and translation. William A. Real, researcher who served as chief conservator at the Carnegie Museum of Art from 1985 to 2001, focuses on installation art,

which he claims to be “often less object than event, existing initially only for the duration of an exhibition” (Real, 2001, p.211). He stresses the complexity of dismantling and re-creating such works and suggests two methodological approaches for more holistic conservation: 1) considering each installation as a reiteration of the original work, and 2) documentation of both the tangible and intangible elements of work, such as the specifications of the work’s hardware and the artist’s process of decision-making process regarding the installation. Embracing that he “cannot arrest change” (Laurenson, 2013, p.40), Real emphasizes that the sense of considering the works’ installation as a repeatable, performative act that has its own value at each version is what retains the integrity of the original practice, not the exact preservation of the first occasion (Real, 2001). Such a perspective hints that reiteration of an original artistic practice can be a valid format for its presentation, which implies how the value claim of an artwork can now happen in ways other than the literal preservation of the original. In turn, this suggests that a translational attempt to capture an artistic practice in another object form can be considered meaningful to its valuation.



[Fig.26] ‘Moon is the Oldest TV’ (1965), Nam June Paik. William A. Real mentions this piece as an example of changing artwork. He describes the hypothetical situation when the CRT monitors used for the work become no longer repairable or replaceable, and the only way to present the piece is through digitization or to re-create working CRT monitors. This points out both the predicament of authenticity and the possibility of ‘translating’ the original artwork into its alternates for the sake of conservation (Real, 2001, p.224) (Image source: Espacio Fundación Telefónica).

Such difficulty surrounding the authenticity of the original artwork can also be found in the field of performance art discussed earlier, because rematerializing and translating the performance into objects causes an ethical controversy surrounding the core tenet of

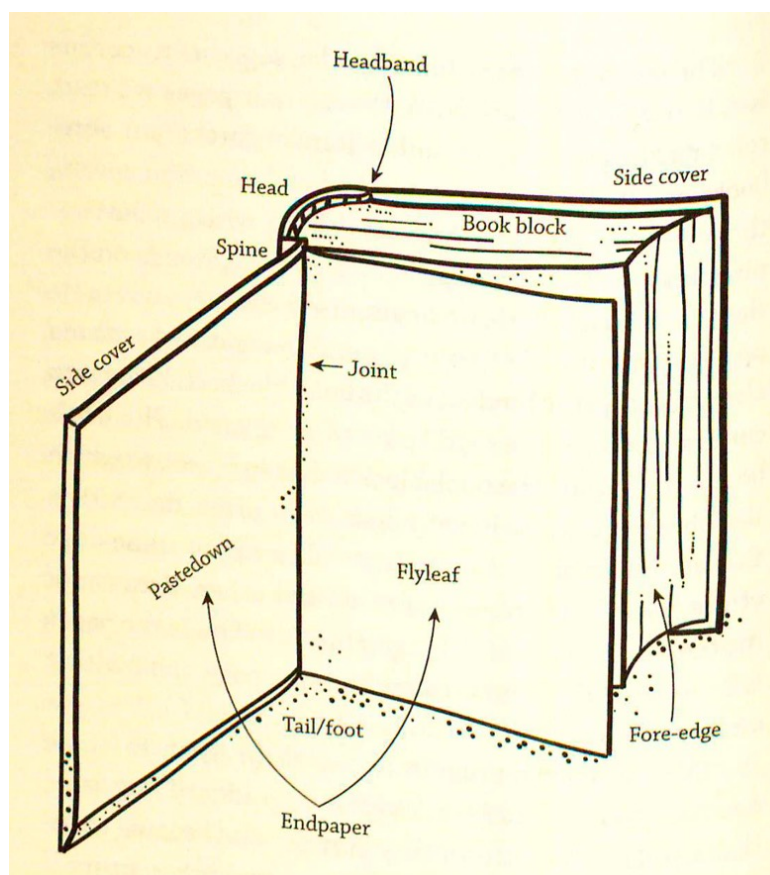
performance art that values liveness and impermanence. Dealing with the “in-betweenness” of artistic states, artists often grapple with questions of how to translate the immediacy and intimacy of the performance into static forms of documentation (Borggreen and Gade, 2013, p.146). Many performance artists often claim that it is instrumentally challenging to preserve the energy of the live event and thus finds different object forms less appropriate for representing practices of performance (Reason, 2006). Thus, for these artists, there is an important distinction to make between repetition and reproduction (Ibid)—or between ongoing process and its product, which is the essential gap between live and non-live media of performance. This struggle is a hard yet inevitable limit documentation, conservation and eventually rematerialization face as artistic operations, but it could also be considered a signal to embrace them as a separate, expanded layer of artistic practice that needs further inquiry. This also proves that documentation and conservation—or any other rematerializing attempts to translate the intangible qualities of artistic practice—are not redundant. They may be optional and imperfect representations of the original work, but not unnecessary or false—in fact, they may even be closer translations of the unfolding and ongoing-ness of art, with regards to process and practice.

* * *

The inquiry laid out in this chapter has inspired me to think that objects may still be the currency of art in that they have established a relation to practice. Objects have gained a renewed significance as tangible forms that render, capture, evidence, mediate and convey the artistic practice that is expanded over the blurred and generalized dimension of ‘doing’. To encapsulate the variety of operations art objects may carry out and embrace their expanded functionality, I propose an original concept of *object translation*, which takes from: 1) Graw’s claim that art objects are “metonymic” (Graw, 2017, p.136) of the original artistic practices they are born from [p.47]; 2) Krauss’s claim that art objects operate based on a *synecdochic* relation to the practices they are born from (Krauss, 1999) [p.52]; and 3) my analysis that the agency of objects that takes effect through rematerialization is largely translational in reiterating the original practice [p.60]. Through the operation of object translation, art objects put practice into valorized, valuable and valued terms and reform both the cultural and socioeconomic spaces for pronouncing art’s value. With these findings, I now turn to the case of the book and its specific genre of artists’ books, what they signify as art objects to contemporary art and how they may facilitate object translation.

2.4. The Book as Art Object

Among the myriad forms of the object, this research asserts that the book has unique connotations and agency that make it a translational object that facilitates the rematerialization of artistic practice. One might say that books are such obvious and universal objects whose characteristics need not be newly interrogated. Considering how everyone knows what a book is and what it generally consists of, I find such a claim valid. In fact, I am somewhat using the ubiquity of the book and how it is ingrained in people's minds as a cultural idea as leverage to demonstrate how the newly proposed concept of object translation operates. However, I must clarify that for this research, I am not focusing on the more obvious question of "what a book is," but rather on "how a book does its particular actions" (Drucker, 2003, April 25). This is to point not at the book itself but at the influence it has on reality. As Harman, the theorist of Object-Oriented Ontology, observes, "[o]bjects are not identical with their properties, but have a tense relationship with those properties, and this very tension is responsible for all of the change that occurs in the world" (Harman, 2018, p.9). Thus, rather than the definition¹⁹ or typology of books, I pay attention to this tension, which may be another way to refer to how the books, through their objecthood, affect contemporary culture and art.



[Fig.27] The body of the book or "the printed codex," commonly referred to as the "form of the book with which we are most familiar with" (Borsuk, 2018, p.74) (Illustration: Mike Force).

¹⁹ I do have my own definition of the book: An artifact produced as a physical condensation of knowledge and information published either printed or via digital media to be made accessible, in many cases, democratically.

2.4.1. The Objecthood of Books

More specifically, what aspects of the book should be explored to learn about its objecthood? The first step of the inquiry had to be grasping different dimensions of the topic to establish a methodical approach, for which I referred to other research projects that explored the cultural significance of books. For instance, Amaranth Borsuk, an American poet and educator known for her experiments with textual materiality and digital poetry, structures her monograph *The Book* (2018) around four chapters that each represents a distinct yet interrelated approach—1) The Book as Object, 2) The Book as Content, 3) The Book as Idea, 4) The Book as Interface. The first chapter discusses the physical components of books, from papyrus and parchment to paper and pixels, and how each version's materiality influences the experience of reading. The second chapter discusses how the form and function of the book have creatively evolved throughout history and along different cultural contexts, partly referring to the practices of making artists' books. The third chapter addresses the role of books in shaping knowledge, culture and identity, emphasizing their importance in the dissemination and preservation of ideas. In the last chapter, Borsuk speculates on the future of books, considering both the potential for newly rising forms of digital storytelling and the enduring appeal of traditional paper books through their physical interactivity.

Another source that has given me insight into this extensive topic is a manual-like publication by book designer Hugh Albert Fordyce Williamson, which gathers the purposes of books into four groups:

“A book is to be sold... The book must attract the buyer, and be worth possessing as a physical object, not merely worth borrowing. Its price must be within the buyer's reach, and its appearance and construction should make the price a bargain. The requirements not only of the public but of booksellers and librarians must be allowed to influence its form.

A book is to be laid open, held, and carried. All but a few books are held while being read, and most books are carried about to some extent before and after reading... Every book should be designed to withstand whatever handling it may receive, without unduly rapid deterioration.

A book is to be seen. If it fails to attract more than a glance, it may not be read at all. Then it must be capable of being read with ease, speed, and accuracy...

A book is to be kept. After being read it is set aside, usually on a shelf, to be read again one day... Once it is on the shelf, the book should be able to stay there indefinitely without undue deterioration, retaining its qualities against its next use.” (Williamson, 1983, p.354-355)

Bringing together Borsuk's and Williamson's analyses and characterizations of books, I can infer that books of our time are complex, multi-layered entities that need to be unpacked

from more than one angle, including: 1) physical objects serving practical functions, 2) printed (and digitizable) medium for communication, 3) evolving artifacts born of creative experiments, 4) cultural commodities meant for collection and consumption. Throughout this chapter, I attempt to gather and analyze insights to reflect all of these aspects of the book's objecthood.

First off, Alessandro Ludovico, a researcher and visual artist, and Johanna Drucker, a book artist, visual theorist and cultural critic, emphasize the physicality and tactility of books. To do so, Ludovico describes the nature of paper, which is, by and large, the most prominent physical material of books: "Paper is persistent, as is the ink printed upon it. Printed paper stays around for a very long time, and its content doesn't change at the click of a button" (Ludovico, 2018, p.27). Such enduring, foundational physicality of the book bears "the two major structural features of the codex"—sequence and finitude that correspond to the axes of the temporal and the spatial (Drucker, 1997, p.94). Drucker writes that "the structural boundedness of the book and the discreteness of the delimited page" become the spatial parameters of bookmaking against which every designable means of bookmaking can be worked to create artistic meaning (Ibid, p.99). These makings of definitive spaces turn the book's pages into punctual "moments within the continuum of the whole," thus allowing the articulation of the temporal (Ibid, p.100). And because these moments in time are triggered anew by points of action—"opening" the book and "turning it over"—and specifically designed sequences of these actions, the book allows the flow of time to become perceptible and even tangible through the holistic experience of reading. Thus, these formal qualities enable books to strategically compress a sensation intended by the artist and deliver it to the reader.

The delivery of books to their readers or audiences is also unique in that it is individualized and private. Throughout the history of culture, "print communication has been crucial in facilitating the development of human individuality because of the psychological interiority that reading permits each reader" (Murray, 2021, p.9). Commenting on the experience of reading, Ludovico adds that the printed page "with its sense of unhurried conclusiveness, allows the reader to pause, to reflect, to take notes," without having to rely on any other device or technology (Ludovico, 2018, p.30). Such a customizable mode of experience the book proposes grants a personal and liberal encounter with art—an encounter that may be designed but not controlled. Artist Pavel Büchler points to this aspect by explaining how books are supposed to be experienced vividly, outside of gallery vitrines:

"Any exhibition of books faces one enormous obstacle: books are not at home in a gallery. They have their place on a bookshelf, among other books, among everyday objects ('artists' books' are no exception). [Books] function in a direct and private interaction with the reader and they only come alive when they are used, touched, handled, manipulated." (Büchler, 1986, no page)

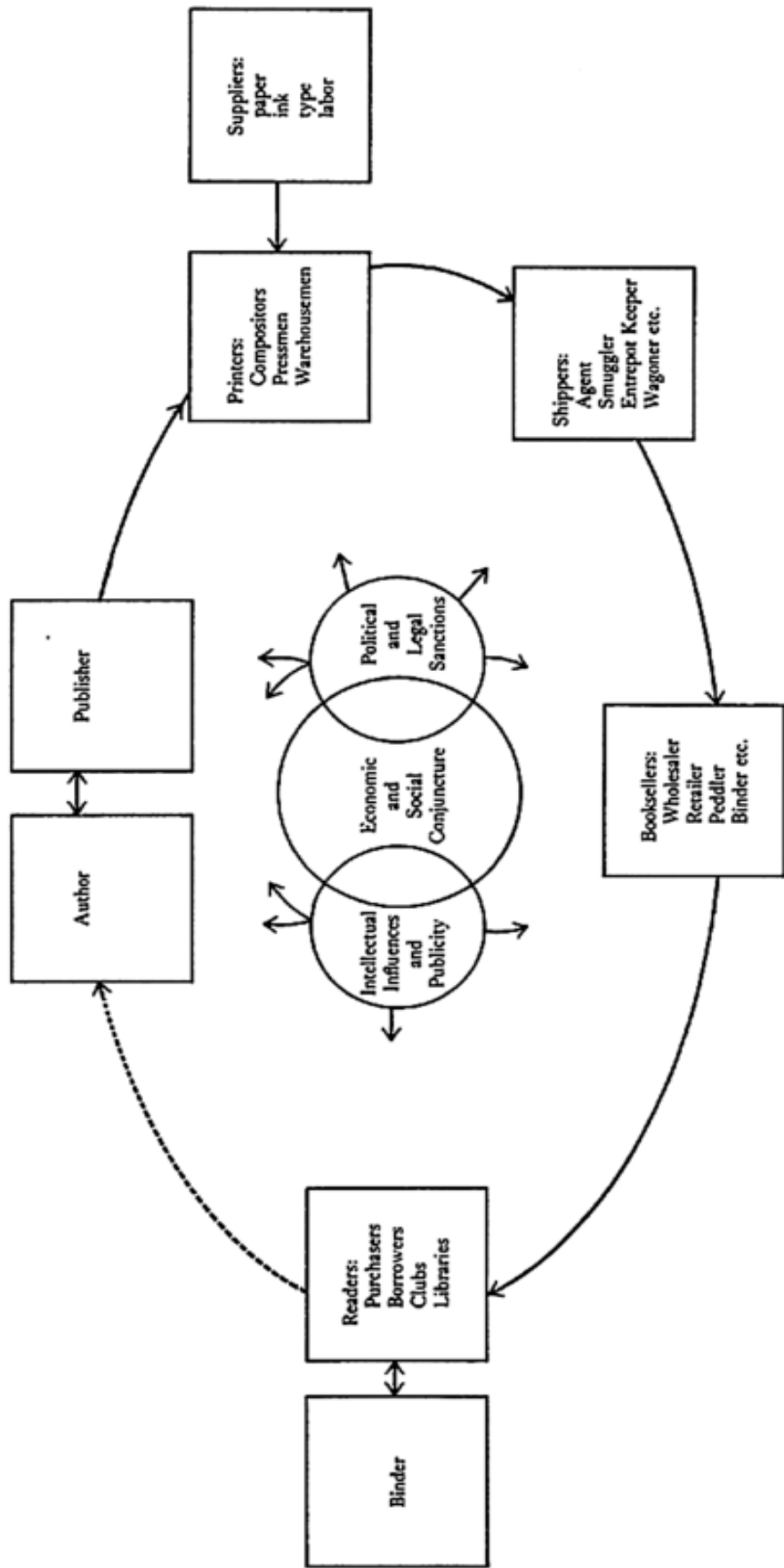
By having to be activated on a personal level, the book places the work it presents closer to the audience, in terms of both physical and psychological distance, intensifying the artistic experience.

Because of their finitude of materiality, books are portable and can be “continuously transmitted” as cultural artifacts (Andrés Ramirez in Chang, 2022, p.421). Because books are objects with longevity that is not dependent upon an energy source, equipment, software or any other apparatus, they grant themselves a unique mobility that is less physically vulnerable than a painting on canvas or sculptural object (Drucker, 1997). In other words, the book “represents a permanent reality in an impermanent world” (Klima, 1998, p.14). “Because it exists as a portable unit, the book becomes a travelling exhibition—over its lifetime a book can insinuate itself into unforeseen locales” (Freeman, 1993, p.10). This makes the book a prime example of Latour’s concept of *immutable mobiles*, which refers to objects that can represent or stand in for other objects or phenomena (Latour, 1987). Latour claims that these objects play a crucial role in the process of knowledge construction and dissemination, helping to stabilize and make information transportable across different contexts. In a later article, Latour adds that the book, as the most common type of printed matter, allows “translation without corruption” (Latour, 2017, p.102), meaning that it guarantees the freedom of circulation with minimal risk of technical aberration, making its content immensely accessible for anyone.

Simultaneously, other theorists consider the book a medium that expands beyond its materiality. For instance, Matthew Fuller, a researcher in cultural studies and media, writes that today’s book medium is pushing its limits of materiality and form and becoming a networked web of cultural mediation (Fuller, 2017). He argues that any book is inherently part of a “diagram” (Ibid, p.2). that schematizes the historical, material, aesthetic and economic ontology of the book to form a constellation of meanings. Continually interacting with other media systems, what appears to be a galaxy of books is also “internally differentiated” and becomes “generative,” fragmenting into new ideas and cultural suggestions (Ibid, p.3). This chaotic momentum does not weaken the system of relations that supports the diagram of books—rather, it interweaves books into “corpuses” of forms, a “schematization of parts” and eventually allows the book to function as a meta-medium that refers to all its parts when being accessed (Ibid, p.3). As Foucault famously argued, the book is a “node within a network” as well as a single material object (Foucault quoted in Bodman, 2017, p.12). Already carrying “a system of signs” within itself of words, texts, narratives and images (Bakker, 2007, p.226), the book simultaneously accesses and contributes to the multidimensional matrix of “sociological imagination[s]” (Ibid, p.222).

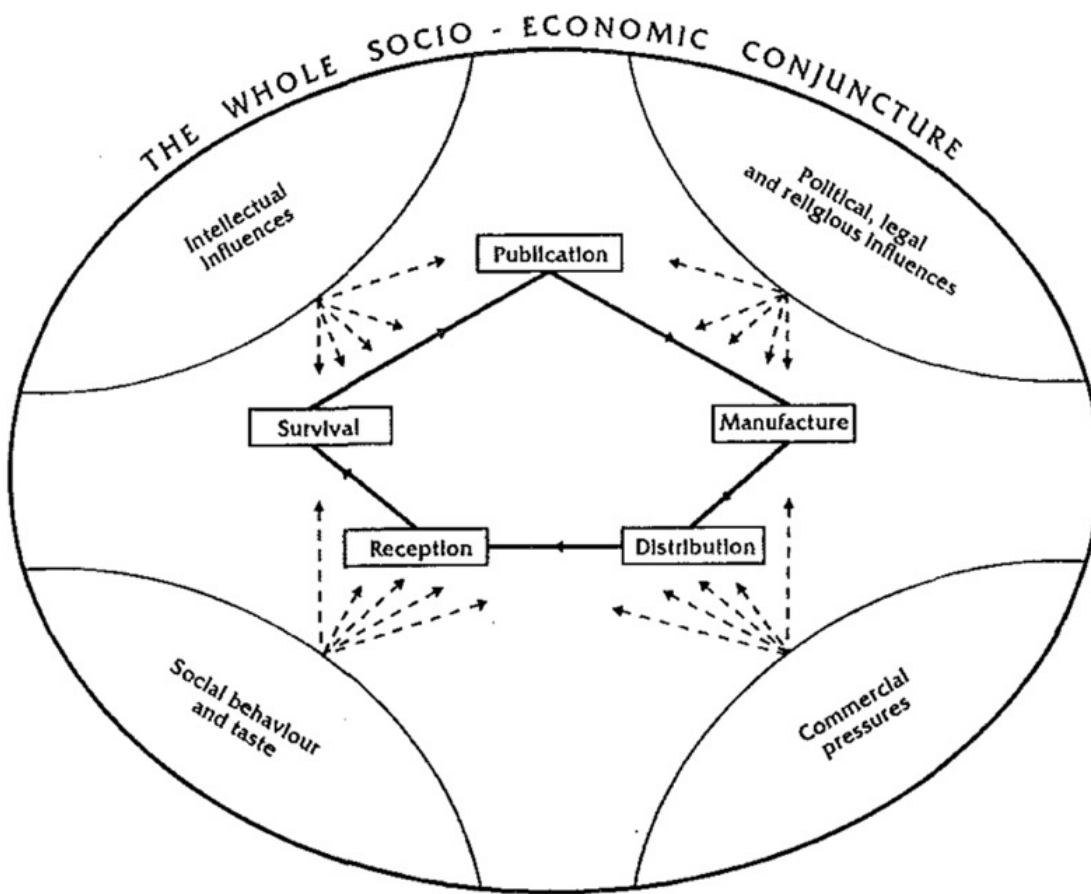
There are other attempts to interpret the significance of the book from a socioeconomic standpoint. Alexis Weedon, another researcher in cultural studies and media arts, suggests that the book is a “system” that packages and stores “the laboring mind into a commodity,” and that this is where the book’s “economic value and cultural worth lies” (Weedon, 2012, p.178). This highlights the book’s identity as both a tradeable commodity and a cultural circuit through which ideas are transmitted. Cultural historian and academic librarian Robert Darnton takes the idea of the book as a circuit to a more concrete, societal level. In his diagram

of 'Communications Circuit' (1982) (on the next page), Darnton attempts to incorporate every aspect of the publishing industry from author to reader within an interconnected life cycle of the book, mapping the social interactions the book goes through from production to consumption, visualizing that publishing is a collective act involving stakeholders of various roles.



[Fig.28] The Communications Circuit, Robert Darnton, Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Vol. 111, no. 3, 1982.

Roughly a decade after Darnton’s model was published, bibliographers Thomas R. Adams and Nicholas Barker proposed a significant modification (Adams and Barker, 1993), claiming that Darnton’s diagram “wrongly favors human agents over [the actual] phases in the book’s life cycle” (Murray, 2021, p.39). The revised diagram re-focuses the model on the process of how books are conceived and produced, connecting the idea of the book as a cultural artifact to socioeconomic mechanisms that constitute the enterprise of publishing. According to the diagram, the system of publishing interacts with broader, more foundational layers of our society, which denotes the symbolic characteristic of the book as a commodity object deeply entangled with the realistically ideological level of valuation. In other words, books fundamentally refer to and embody the ‘relational dynamics of reality’ [p.19] or what could be the contexts of artistic practices.



[Fig.29] Revised Communications Circuit, Thomas R. Adams and Nicolas Barker, 1993.

Acknowledging such a position of the book as a commodity object makes me realize once more how artists’ books claim a unique, dualistic status as both art objects—being artist-made—and commodity objects—being books—which means that they simultaneously represent two different principles of cultural production. This brings my line of thought back to Bourdieu, who captures this ‘opposition’ in his discussion of the *autonomous* and *heteronomous* principles. He describes the field of cultural production as bifurcated between these two

“poles” that each represents a distinct set of values: the *autonomous* believing that art must be produced for art’s sake and the *heteronomous* obeying pre-existing demands for pre-established forms (Bourdieu, 1993 quoted in Webb et al., 2002, p.159). As autonomous artworks in the commodity object form of the book, artists’ books blur the boundary between this dichotomic classification of values and justify a new principle of cultural production in which art neither repels commodification nor is reduced into a fetish. Within artists’ books, the object statuses of commodity and artwork intersect to be in constant negotiation with each other, forming a new dynamic of valuation.

* * *

The inquiry into books thus far has revealed their immense potential to facilitate the translation of artistic practices into their rematerialization into object forms. Books are ubiquitous artifacts and malleable cultural things that can claim themselves to be both “industrially produced stuff” and “sacred products” representing the thick strata of values beneath them (Striphas, 2009, p.9). Books are self-referential tools that employ the “cultural power” they own and embody (Lang, 2012, p.10). As “key artifacts through which social actors articulate and struggle over specific interests, values, practices and world views” (Striphas, 2009, p.3), books are extremely multiplex tokens of the cultural endeavor they represent. Now I turn to artistic publishing and artists’ books to verify how such potential of books unfolds more specifically in the art world.

2.4.2. A History of Artistic Publishing & Artists’ Books: 1900s-1990s

Considering such manifold connotations of the book as a cultural object, the question of more specific relations between the book and artistic production arises. According to Stephen J. Bury, an art historian and Chief Librarian of the Frick Art Reference Library in New York City known for his scholarship on artists’ books, “[t]he artist’s involvement in the making of books is as old as the book itself” (Bury, 2015, p.15). However, it is still possible to point out some of the highlights in art history that contextualize the rise of contemporary artists’ books and illuminate their origin and evolution as a genre, practice and movement. This section follows the historical trajectory of artist publications in the past century leading up to the contemporary practice of artists’ books to demonstrate how the conception, production and distribution of the book object have been explored and utilized to convey artistic messages.

The European Avant Garde & Livres d’artiste (1900s – 1930s)

Between 1900 and 1939, Europe experienced an extraordinary cultural rebirth and interchange of ideas that coincided with an economic surge resulting from industrialization, developments in communications and increase in mobility with the use of automobiles. The introduction of electricity was particularly transforming urban life as well as the landscape of

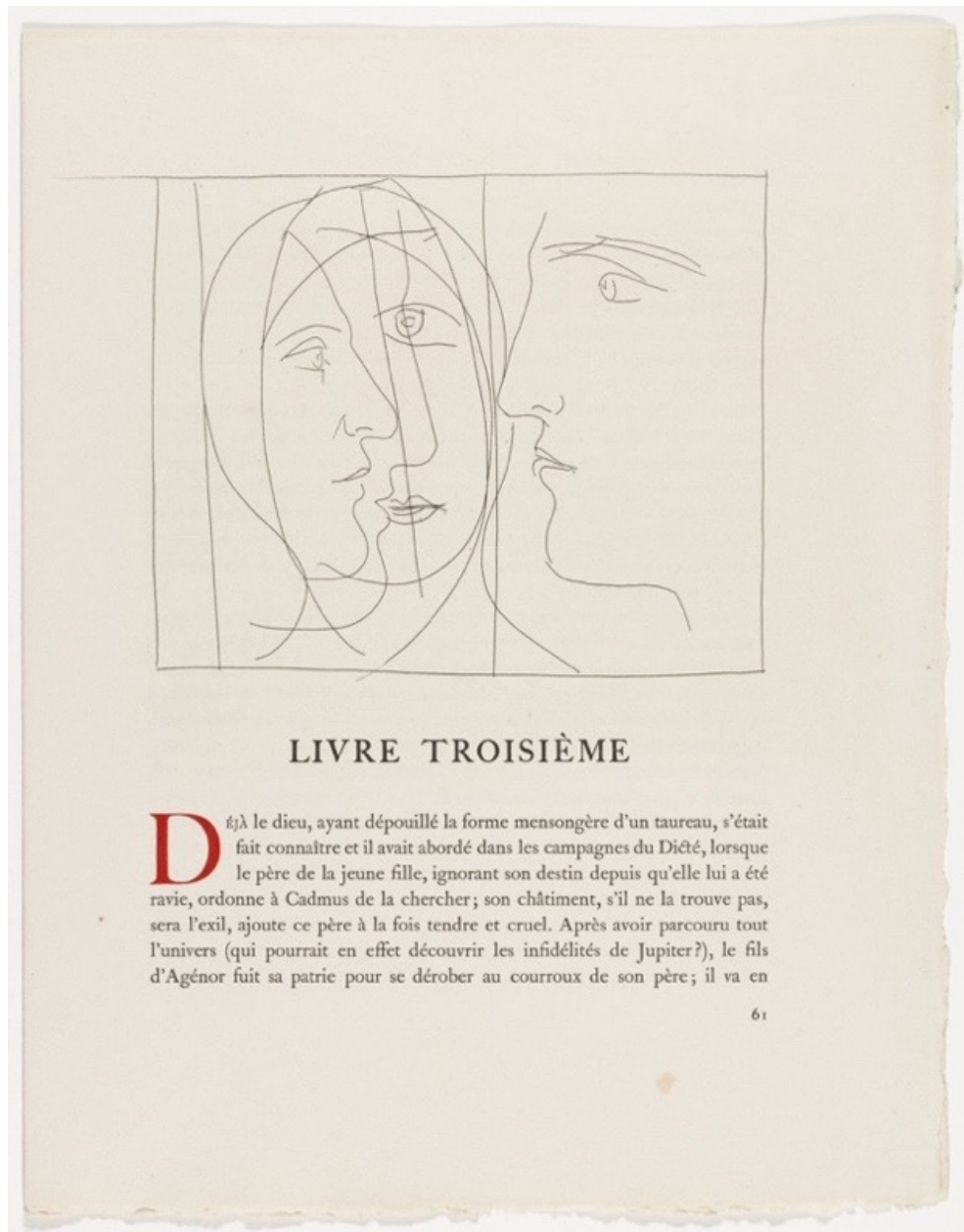
cultural media (Ludovico, 2018). Later defined as the European Avant Garde, this period saw new trends of publications within the field of art ranging from magazine-like periodicals to handcrafted books (Bru, 2018).

‘Livres d’artiste’, one of the distinctive genres of publication that became widely popular during this time, were deluxe publications aimed at exclusive audience of art collectors and bibliophiles. Commissioned mostly to painters and writers by art dealers and gallerists, these publications were often made with rare, imported materials such as Japanese fine art paper and specially designed typographic ornaments to emphasize their “high book production values” (Bury, 2007b, p.28). Because of this, they were also referred to as “beaux livres” (Takac, 2022, para.7), meaning beautiful books. These publications were often sites of collaboration between literature and visual art because livres d’artiste that paired etchings or illustrations by artists with classic works, fables and folk tales were greatly in demand as collectibles at the time (Stewart, 2022).

One of the most famous figures behind such production is Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, a German-born art collector and art dealer best known for his early recognition of the Cubist art movement. Based in Paris at the time, he published livres d’artiste under his own imprint—between 1920 and 1941, he published editions of artist prints compiled into a book or illustrations by artists that accompanied literary works under the name of Editions de la Galerie Simon, which he considered “another strategy to promote the artist” (Bury, 2007b, p.26). Artists he published include Max Jacob, Guillaume Apollinaire, André Masson, André Derain, Gertrude Stein, Pablo Picasso among many others.



[Fig.30-31] Edition of *Cleopatra's Nose* published by Editions de la Galerie Simon that showcases drypoint illustrations by André Derain, 1922, text by Georges Gabory (Image source: MutualArt).



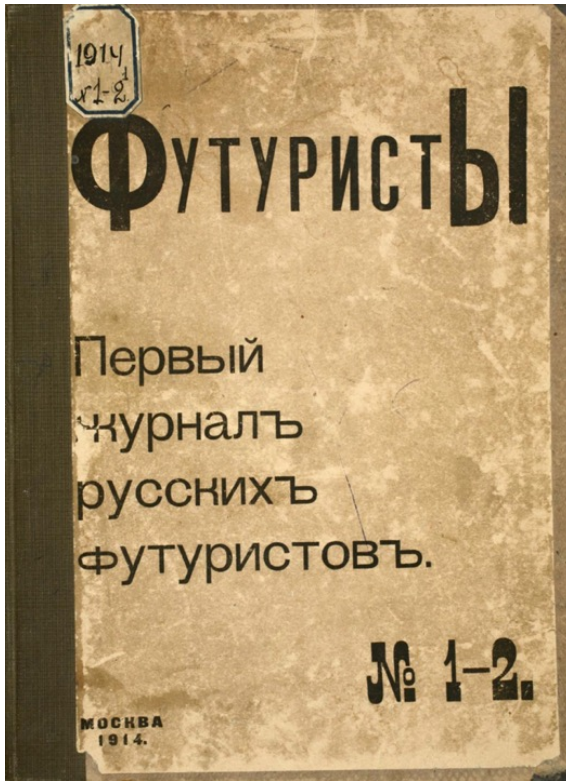
[Fig.32] Pablo Picasso's illustration for Ovid's *Les Metamorphoses* published by Albert Skira (1931) (Image source: The Museum of Modern Art).

Livres d'artiste, because of the name literally meaning 'artists' books' in French, are often considered direct precursors of contemporary artists' books. Although it is true that they paved the road into the publishing industry for later generations of artists, livres d'artiste are clearly distinct from artists' books in terms of the purpose they served in the art world and the context of their publication. While livres d'artiste were produced by the urge of the gallery system as highly valued collectibles for a very secluded part of the art world, artists' books are most often independent projects initiated by the artists themselves with democratic distribution as their primary objective. There are still many evolutions to come before livres d'artiste and contemporary artists' books can be linked. The following sections trace the trajectory of this development.

The Avant Garde Magazine & Fluxus Forms (1950s – 1960s)

Inheriting the experimental spirit of the European Avant Garde, Fluxus, the international, interdisciplinary community of artists representing the Neo-Avant Garde, deployed a wide array of activities including artistic publishing. Emphasizing the artistic process over the finished product, the Fluxus group worked at the intersections of art, music, performance and literature and strived to discover alternative systems of sharing art (Harren, 2020). Departing from the tradition of *livres d'artiste* that relied heavily on the institutional art world and galleries, Fluxus turned to another strand of the Avant Garde publications for reference: the Avant Garde magazines.

The production of magazines was a widespread cultural trend across Europe during the Avant Garde (1900s – 1930s). Ranging from the Italian Futurists led by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti to the Dadaists and Surrealists that sprang in various cultural capitals, various cultural movements were indebted to the transmissive power of the printed media (Ludovico, 2018). Unlike *livres d'artiste* that focused on becoming valuable objects themselves, these magazines were made to serve a very technical and practical purpose—a channel to make reproductions of works of art globally accessible and thus gain an international audience. Necessarily, these magazines became multidisciplinary symposia of their contemporary art, conveying the Avant Garde spirit of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, ‘total work of art’ or ‘synthesis of the arts’ to later generations of artists (Bru, 2018). Enormously variable in their formats and designs yet always compact and constantly traveling, these magazines largely inspired the Fluxus group by showing how “word and image, word as image and image as word, music and photography could be explored in this portable format [of books], which could be shared with those interested in these ideas, almost simultaneously across the world” (Bury, 2007b, p.51). Demonstrating how the production of circulatable printed matter could give a focus for a movement, tendency or artistic program, the Avant Garde magazines strongly encouraged the Fluxus artists to consider publishing as their platform to exhibit works that refused to fit into any other categories of the institutionalized art world such as museums, galleries and auction houses.



[Fig.33-34] *Futuristy: pervyy zhurnal russkikh futuristov 1-2*, edited by Vasily Kamensky and David Burluk, published in Moscow, 1914 (Open access via Monoskop).



[Fig.35] Cover of *bauhaus: zeitschrift für bau und gestaltung 2:1*, edited by Walter Gropius and László Moholy-Nagy, published in Dessau, Germany, 1928 (Open access via Monoskop).

Within such context, Fluxus artists explored the idea of publicizing their art through publishing in various forms, one of which was ‘artist editions’. In the early 1960s, artist and designer George Maciunas conceived of Fluxus Editions, an ambitious publishing program to mass-produce affordable and portable artists’ books and multiples meant to publicize the ideas of Fluxus on an international scale. Often housed in parcel-like boxes or kits, these editions incorporate booklets, instruction scores, photographs, audio recordings, film loops, games, puzzles and found objects, reflecting an interdisciplinary and conceptual approach of the Fluxus artists. These editions were the essence of Fluxus—fluidly situated between unique art objects and highly regulated editions, Fluxus Editions “embrace humble objects and everyday gestures as critical means of finding freedom and excitement beyond traditional forms of artmaking” (Harren, 2020, p.24).

Furthermore, given that “the container is the context for the work or the art object,” Fluxus Editions contextualized art within their consumerist packages of wooden boxes, boxes within boxes, cardboard cartons, jars, bottles and clear plastic containers with hinged lids, allowing the work to escape the gallery distribution system (Bury, 2001, pp.22-23). In the same vein of intention, Fluxus artists invited viewers to physically interact with the Editions, which transformed the experience of beholding art into a performative, haptic and game-like encounter. Fluxus Editions thus pressed for the fetishization of the art objects by purposefully “affirming” their commodity status, hence turning the work into a “gag” of values (Harren, 2016, p.60). This early form of artists’ books marked the beginning of an era where artistic publishing served as a platform for self-representation and self-transmission of values. Dozens of projects resulted from Maciunas’s program, including the ones by George Brecht, Robert Filliou, Willem de Ridder, Milan Knížák, Alison Knowles, Yoko Ono, Nam June Paik, Benjamin Patterson, Mieko Shiomi, Ben Vautier and Robert Watts. *Fluxus 1*, the first collective anthology of this program, was released in 1964 (Harren, 2020).



[Fig.36] *Fluxus 1*, Various artists (1964) (Photo: Brad Iverson from Jon Hendricks, *Fluxus Codex*, New York: Abrams, 1989).



[Fig.37] One volume of *Fluxus 1* and the box it was mailed in, which was the primary method of distributing the editions (Image source: Medium).

Another Fluxus Form integral to the history of artists' books is the 'event score'. While studying with the composer John Cage at the New School for Social Research in New York, artist George Brecht, who is often credited for the invention of the form, started to write brief, enigmatic texts and began calling them 'event scores'. These soon spread into a pan-Fluxus methodology and became "a mainstay of Fluxus performance practice, which hinged on information exchange, public and private participation, and the distribution of disparate effects" (Young, 2012, p.39).



[Fig.38] George Brecht, Games and Puzzles, *Bead Puzzle* from *Flux Year Box 2*, c. 1968, Fluxus Edition announced 1965, assembled by George Maciunas (Image source: The Museum of Modern Art).

The oddly condensed and enigmatic form of the event scores facilitated their rapid circulation between performance, publication and exhibitions. "[S]mall, strange, and belonging to no definable genre, they could go anywhere" (Kotz, 2001, p.60). The event scores were soon mass-produced and published as Fluxus Editions that became globally available through mail order. Distributed texts could be read "under a number of rubrics: music scores, visual art, poetic texts, performance instructions, or proposals for some kind of action or procedure" (Ibid, p.57). Although they were various in terms of the effects they delivered, all event scores shared much in common as vessels to contain the performative and immaterial aspects of Fluxus practice—all of them were tools to activate something else that is the 'real' art. Designed for user experience and physical interaction, scores are direct invitations to enactment, realization and performed response, suggesting reader participation as an activity of reproduction. By forming relays along the line of publication—author or artist, text,

reader, performer, audience—scores demand both universal connectivity of the experience and indeterminacy of the practice as they negotiate the potentials of the distribution with the embodied specificity of the live encounter (Young, 2012). Based on such momentum, George Brecht, together with another Fluxus artist Robert Filliou, proposed the idea of ‘Eternal Network’ in 1968, which conceptualized an ongoing, global artistic network in which artists participated to work on a common creation with no borders between artist and audience (Ludovico, 2018). Artists who participated in event score production include John Cage, George Brecht, Yoko Ono, Nam June Paik, La Monte Young, Ay-O, Dick Higgins, Ken Friedman, Alison Knowles, Mieko Shiomi and many more (Friedman et al., 2002).

Democratic Multiples & The New Art of Making Books (mid 1960s – 1980s)

Fluxus was a forerunner of another movement—Conceptual art, which believed that the idea or concept behind an artwork is more important than the finished art object. Within this context, art became a form of thought, and its transmission as knowledge or information became more crucial than ever. Hence, artists became more and more invested in the idea of distribution and turning the distribution of art itself into practice, which meant that more and more of them began to present their works through the book medium (Lyons, 1985). The term ‘artists’ books’ was also coined and given to the publications produced by artists around this moment in art history, when curator Diane Perry Vanderlip organized an exhibition of books made by artists entitled ‘Artists Books’ at Moore College, Philadelphia in 1973 (Yonemura et al., 2021).

Artist Ed Ruscha, famous for producing one of the earliest artists’ books—*Twentysix Gasoline Stations* (1963) that compiled his photographs from a road trip between Los Angeles and Oklahoma City—expressed keen interest in the fact and effects of distributing his art through the essay ‘The Information Man’ (1971). Ruscha writes:

“It would be nice if sometime a man would come up to me on the street and say ‘Hello, I’m the information man and you have not said the word ‘yours’ for 12 minutes – you have not said the word ‘praise’ for 18 days, 3 hours & 9 minutes. [...]”

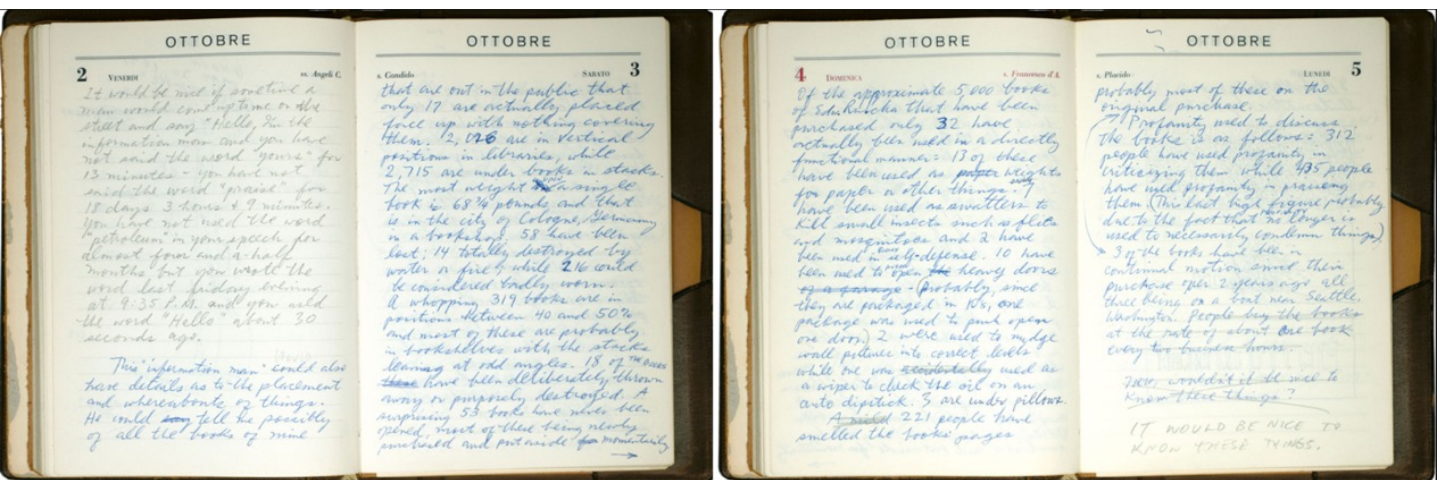
This ‘information man’ would also have details as to the placement and whereabouts of things. He could tell me possibly of all the books of mine that are out in the public that only 17 are placed face up with nothing covering them. 2,026 are in vertical positions in libraries, while 2,715 are under books in stacks. [...] 58 have been lost; 14 totally destroyed by water or fire; while 216 could be considered badly worn. [...]

Of the approximate 5,000 books of Edw. Ruscha that have been purchased only 32 have actually been used in a directly functional manner = 13 of these have been used as weights for paper or other things. 7 have been used as swatters to kill small insects such as flies and mosquitoes and 2 have been

used in bodily self-defense. 10 have been used to push open heavy doors (probably, since they are packaged in 10's, one package was used to push open one door.) 2 were used to nudge wall pictures into correct levels while one was used as a wiper to check the oil on a dipstick. 3 are under pillows. [...]

It would be nice to know these things.'

Here, by listing various fictional destinations his books could have ended up, Ruscha shows that he indeed cares about how the distribution of his art through publishing has been realized and that he yearns to know the impact of his art or how far his art can reach.



[Fig.39] Pages from Ed Ruscha's journal featuring the original manuscript for 'The Information Man' (1971) (Photo: Susan Haller, Ed Ruscha Studio).

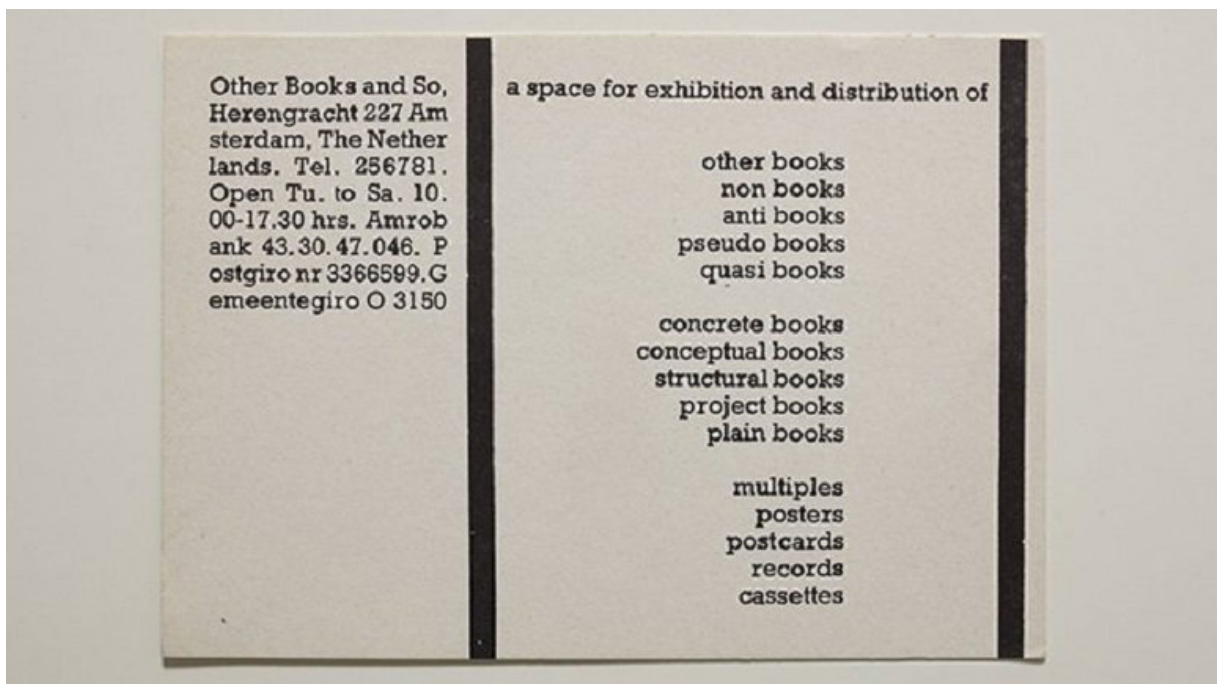
Ruscha was not alone in this shift towards noticing the systems that distribute art and the possibility of transmitting art further than the traditional sites of exhibition to communicate more closely with the audience. From the artists' point of view, museums and galleries represented "a flawed and unfair system that decided over their future using criteria the artists themselves deemed irrelevant and unacceptable, and kept broad spheres of society from accessing art" (Cella et al., 2015, p.178). Thus, from the mid 1960s into the 1980s, many artists consciously produced artists' books that can be best described as 'democratic multiples' to "circumvent the gallery system and produce 'democratic' or, at least, democratically distributable art" (Lucy Lippard, 1985 quoted in Bury, 2001, p.31). This rebellious "ethos of empowerment and social change" is a consistent theme revolving around these artists' books, an anti-capitalist rhetoric that presents artists' books as a way out of a system that does not serve artists or the public (Yonemura et al., 2021, p.18).

Artists who produced democratic multiples were interested in getting art off the wall, out of the gallery and into the hands of a wider, democratic or populist audience. Hereafter, the book form was seen as a “metaphorical space” that offered an alternative repository for art (Cella et al., 2015, p.179). This movement was supported by many. For instance, in 1968, Seth Siegelaub, the art dealer, independent curator and author began making catalogs that “functionally exceeded the accompanying materials published on the occasion of exhibitions until then” as a signal to the age of conceptual practices (Ibid, p.177). Siegelaub viewed these catalogs as metaphorical spaces that can provide “primary information” (Harrison, 1969, p.202) on art and remain not supplementary but parallel to exhibitions in their embodiment of art residing in abstract means. He asserted that if “art concerns itself with things not germane to physical presence, its intrinsic (communicative) value is not altered by its presentation in printed media” (Ibid, p.203), hinting at the immense potential of art being translated into artist publications. The artists producing democratic multiples worked beyond pre-existing systems of art consumption by self-distributing the publications through the channels of mail art, but soon needed a more active network to reach the intended audience. By the mid-1970s, alternative bookshops that specialized in the sale of artists’ books and magazines were founded, supporting the evolutionary development of democratic multiples into an ideal of artists’ books that many artists aspire to pursue until this day (White, 2012; Yonemura et al., 2021).

One of the artists during this period who most clearly articulated the importance of books as an art form was Ulises Carrión. A Mexican-born conceptual artist, Carrión was based in Amsterdam during the height of his career. Carrión trusted the functionality of the object despite the position within his contemporary generation of 1970s conceptual artists who championed the dematerialization of the art object (Romberger et al., 2021). He took a special interest in the book object and form, which led him to write the seminal manifesto ‘The New Art of Making Books’ of 1975. In the manifesto, he emphasizes how artists no longer “write texts” but “make books” (Carrión, 1975, p.1), utilizing “the agency and intentionality of [the book] form, objecthood, and materiality” and claiming them as a pragmatic apparatus for “re-materializing” conceptual art (Romberger et al., 2021, p.31). He also claims that the New Art “knows that books exist in an exterior reality, subject to concrete conditions of perception, existence, exchange, consumption, use, etc,” (Carrión, 1975, p.3), highlighting the quality of the book as an object to transmit art. Due to the tactile interactivity of the book—that it needs to be held, encountered and experienced by the viewer—and its cultural connotation as a medium for democratic communication, the artist’s choice to produce work in the book form initiates a vivid process of “redistributing artistic authority” (Boulanger in Cella et al., 2015, p.254). Having seen far more value in “entering the wider, less well-contoured field of culture” (Carrión, 1979 quoted in Silveira, 2020, p.9) than in staying in the “sacred realm of art” that lingers on the old paradigm of ‘art for art’s sake’ (Carrión, 1979 quoted in Cella et al., 2015, p.252), Carrión believed that the idea of distribution should be combined with art as “a constituent formal element of the final work” (Carrión, 1980, p.51). Adding onto Siegelaub’s phenomenological notion of the printed matter as a metaphorical site, Carrión reclaimed the media as a pragmatic apparatus for any artist seeking means to rematerialize art. He understood

publishing as a *cultural strategy* that art should ally with to become more accessible, communicative and impactful (Carrión, 1979).

Again in 1975, together with the artist Aart van Barneveld, Carrión co-founded Other Books and So in Amsterdam, an independent press and arguably the first bookstore in the world to specialize in the sales of artists' books (Silveira, 2020). Other Books and So was not a commercial enterprise but an art project in itself, through which Carrión attempted to pitch an integral question to his contemporary art world: "Where does the border lie between an artist's work and the actual organization and distribution of the work?" (Carrión, 1980, p.51) Although it was a relatively short-lived initiative—the bookstore met its untimely closure in 1979—it nonetheless served as a key meeting place for international artists' networks and as a reference for later generations of artist publishers.



[Fig.42] Other Books and So postcard, no date (Image source: Monoskop).

Dear Ulises Carrión

I enjoyed seeing your exhibition "Anonymous Quotations" (Anjeliersstr. 153, Amsterdam. 31 March) but wished it had been up for longer than one evening. You certainly believe in being ephemeral! There was a lot to read in the show, not only the excerpts you selected, but also the complete letters, though some were difficult, being photographic reductions of the originals, or in Spanish, or French. Who were the writers? You carefully hid or crossed out the signatures, but there were some writers I recognised. Certain details, a name, a place, pointed to people we both knew. But that knowledge has to remain a secret. You expose enough in any case! Letters are always revealing, both of the writer and the recipient. Not so much the personal details, but the tone - friendly, aggressive, factual, poetic, or whatever. The letters reflect, and often describe the activities of the writers - that many of them are artists, some also involved in mail-art, made me appreciate the show as an art event. After all, art is an activity - it is what an artist does - and it includes the daily life of the artist (sometimes, in extreme cases, this daily activity is the art). I caught glimpses of your activities too, Ulises, as gallery organiser, then later as manager of Other Books & So, and now as mail artist. In all these stages of your career you've been busy writing letters and receiving answers, and receiving letters and writing answers. In a way I wish you had shown your answers to the letters in the show, but that would have introduced a personal element, and, as the title suggests, this was not the approach you wanted. I remember your book 'The Muxlowes', where you present the bare details of a family's births, deaths and marriages, that you found slipped into the pages of an old Bible. Untreated information, anonymously written, but still capable of communicating a sense of history, of humanity. The writers of the letters probably didn't know that their thoughts would be on display, but then someone sitting at a cafe doesn't know that perhaps he is being photographed, or painted, or written about by some artist. You allow people, and their words, to speak for themselves. There is a bit of selection, but no distortion, no manipulating ego. Above all, I enjoyed the exhibition because it was friendly. The letters on the walls represented personalities busy communicating their ideas to us. Both privately and publically.

with best wishes for the continuing correspondences,

Michael Gibbs

[Fig.43] Artist Michael Gibbs' letter to Ulises Carrión as feedback on his exhibition 'Anonymous Quotations' (1979). It highlights how Carrión's practice sought democratic and fiercely experimental communication of art through printed media and their distribution (Image source: De Appel Archive).

Post-Digital Era (1980s – Now)

Even after the digital revolution of the late 1980s, artists' books have not lost their significance. Rather, "[the] printed page has become more valuable, less expendable" (Ludovico, 2018, p.29). Unlike how Johanna Drucker, the visual theorist and cultural critic widely recognized for her expertise in the book medium, claims that "the artist's book is the quintessential 20th-century art form" (Drucker, 1995, p.1), and despite how many feared the extinction of printed matter with the rise of digital media as the primary channel of communication, books and artists' books secured their positions as irreplaceable objects in the new century (Bury, 2015). Ludovico writes that the death of printed media has been "one of the most unfortunate and embarrassing prophecies of the information age" to conclude the debate on the books' survival in the new century (Ludovico, 2018, p.29).

'The Future of Art Publishing' panel discussion that took place at the New York Public Library in February 2013 concludes that art books—a larger category of publications encompassing artists' books—are mostly independent of digital platforms, proving their still-strong characteristics as physical objects (McDermott and Dunigan, 2013). Rather than becoming merged with digital media, artists' books are assisted by digital technology in their transition into a contemporary art form. The advancement of the Internet, software programs, digital printing and print-on-demand technology throughout the 1990s until the present opened a new horizon for the expansion of independent publishing initiatives by artists that rapidly increased in both number and variety (White, 2014). Furthermore, printed media also reciprocates the assistance digital media provides by serving as a reliable repository of electronic content. The editor of printed material is now considered a curator—"the human filter" (Ludovico, 2018, p.30)—who decides what knowledge from the sea of the Internet should be preserved within the persistent physicality of the printed surface. In short, "paper and pixel...have become complementary to each other" (Ibid, p.30) in that they achieve to archive dispersed knowledge and fleeting moments of culture.

Although the digitization of printed media and exploring electronic alternatives to paper books are relevant to the contemporary practice of artistic publishing, this research limits its primary scope to the physical, printed book form and its dialogues with the genre of artists' books for clarity of focus on tangible objects and their translational role in delivering contemporary art.

* * *

Thus far, I have inquired into an edited history of artists' books and their publishing throughout the 20th century. Notably, the Fluxus artists utilized publishing as a way to share their work, viewing it as an alternative to traditional institutional frameworks. They reveal that publishing is a method of publicizing art in intentional ways, through the Fluxus Editions that are provocative commentaries on art's relationship with its commodity status, and through the event scores, which show the distributive potential of artistic practice while retaining their performativity and liveness. The era of democratic multiples allowed artists to extend their

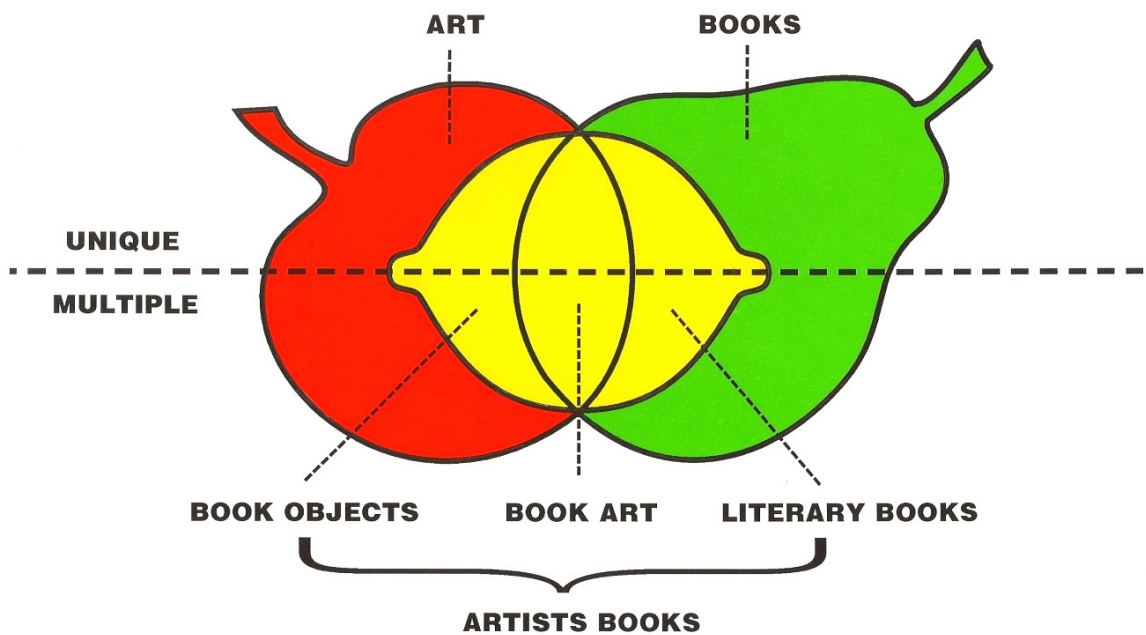
reach beyond conventional exhibition spaces, fostering more direct communication with audiences. This approach embodied a rebellious spirit aimed at social change and anti-capitalist ideals, presenting artists' books as an escape from a system that did not favor neither the artists nor the public, but the market. As democratic multiples, artists' books prove themselves to be channels for self-governing expression, serving as metaphorical yet affirmative platforms to propose alternative forms of art and connect them with real-world contexts. In short, throughout their recent history, artists' books have closed the gap between artistic practices—their processes and labor implied—and the moment of their valuation by delivering practices in their original integrity closer to their audience/readers. With this in mind, I now turn to how the contemporary notion of artists' books and artistic publishing has inherited this agency of value claim.

2.4.3. Publishing as Artistic Practice

Throughout the 20th century, artists repeatedly explored the book as an object, idea, medium and art form, and publishing as the means to communicate art to a wider audience. Now, two decades into the 21st century, publishing and art have become more entangled with each other than ever. Contemporary artists have added yet another layer to their experiment with books by seeing publishing itself as an artistic practice. Instead of viewing the artist's book as an individualized item of production (Cutts, 2007), artists are starting to see what is beyond each volume of books—their publishing as a conscious continuum of activities. On such note, publishing can be and needs to be “understood as an artistic form of expression itself” (Gilbert, 2016, p.7). It is now necessary to question not only the significance of publishing *for* artistic practices but also the potential of publishing *as* artistic practice.

Before delving into this discussion, it needs to be recognized that the recent academic discourse surrounding artists' books has been largely dominated by the issue of their categorization and definition (Chappell, 2003; Bury, 2007a; Farman, 2008; Bodman and Sowden, 2010; Evenhaugen; 2012). According to these studies, there are many neighboring concepts to artists' books that have perplexed researchers and incurred debates. To start off, ‘art book’ is a broad and general term for any book about art. It can have a wide array of variations including a collection of reproduced artworks, photobooks, illustration book, visual novel, etc. ‘Book art’ is a craft-like genre of art that experiments with the form and physical properties of books such as binding, cover, decoration, printing, etc. ‘Catalogue raisonné’ is a comprehensive, annotated compilation of works throughout an artist's career. ‘Exhibition catalog’, also referred to as ‘catalogs’, is a publication that documents exhibitions mostly through texts and photographic reproduction of the installations. ‘Book works’ or ‘bookworks’, which is most interchangeably used with artists' books, refers to the “books that are conceived as an expressive unity...where the message is the sum of all the material and formal elements” (Carrión, 1980, p.25), “books in which the book form, a coherent series of pages, is intrinsic to the work” (Ibid, p.67) or the comprehensive practice of producing such books. Although differentiating between these concepts and clarifying the categorical boundary of artists'

books has been a significant part of their studies, it is as important to acknowledge that these concepts are not exclusive of one another, especially within the contemporary context where the experiments with artistic publishing are becoming more and more multidimensional and self-identifying (Bury, 2015; Yonemura et al., 2021). For example, an artist’s book published as an exhibition catalog can have characteristics of book art. Or an artist can produce a catalog raisonné as their practice of book works. Thus, it can be argued that for discussing artistic publishing today, the comprehensive idea of practice is more meaningful than the detailed definitions of its categories.



[Fig.44] “‘Fruit Salad’ Diagram’ (1982), Clive Phillpot. This diagram also shows that artists’ books encompass various categories of publishing practice (Image source: Monoskop).

Annette Gilbert, a scholar in comparative literature, in the introduction to her anthology of essays to which this section owes its title writes: “Like in the avant-garde’s book art and the artist’s book movement of the 1960s and 70s, the idea of artistic freedom and autonomy is of prime importance to the contemporary artistic publishing scene” (Gilbert, 2016, p.17). Along the same vein, artists Ira Yonemura and Simon Goode who run the London Centre for Book Arts explain how the contemporary practice of artistic publishing is a site of a “heterogenous and democratic” constellation of voices and approaches, relaying the beacon of “ethos of empowerment and social change” that powered the production of artists’ books in the latter half of the previous century (Yonemura et al., 2021, p.18). They add: “In the years since the term ‘artists’ books’ emerged, the practice of making books as art has grown into an expanded notion of publishing” that taps into vast “communities of support—financial, material and communal” (Ibid, p.18). Hinged by the “cultural identity of books and publishing—the concept that published content holds weight and importance” (Ibid, p.64),

these communities aspire to realize their ethos through the practice of publishing.

Bernhard Cella, an artist and curator based in Vienna known for his research projects on artistic publishing such as ‘Salon für Kunstbuch’ (translation: Art Book Salon) and ‘No-ISBN’, also points to this sense of ‘gathering’ as what sets the publishing practices apart from other artistic practices. Similar to how Gilbert says that “[p]ublication is governed by a dual movement or circuit” of ‘making things public’ and ‘making a public’ (Gilbert, 2016, p.26), Cella describes publishing as a “deliberate act of dissemination” that aims to generate gatherings (Cella et al., 2015, p.254). Though often ephemeral like most publishing projects, these communities or the public that publishing practices gather demonstrate two interrelated points that are at the crux of how publishing can be posed as artistic practice: 1) that our society looks for things “around which to conglomerate” and 2) that art has the power to combat alienation by providing these things—“some central ethos or point of common ground”—to conglomerate around (Ibid, pp.205-206).

This conglomeration involves numerous actors who participate in the process of publishing: “artists, graphic designers, authors, editors, producers, distributors, collectors, and readers” (Cella et al., 2015, p.254). The interactivity of these actors or “the participatory framework” (Ibid, p.254)—sharing the authority over the content, co-judging the commercial value of production, establishing networks of distribution and consuming the work—makes the practice of publishing an ultimately decentralized, collaborative act of artmaking. This also implies that publishing as a methodology takes the artist’s focus given heavily to the dimension of production and redistributes it among other processes such as research, conceptualization, fabrication, adaptation, editing, reproduction, dissemination and collection. It thus pushes against the definition of what falls within the praxeological boundary of art practice. With such “radical contemporaneity,” publishing as art practice renegotiates the concepts of “authorship, creativity, the public sphere and accessibility” (Gilbert, 2016, p.34).



[Fig.45] lumbung Press workshop installed in documenta Halle as a project to raise interest in publishing practice among participating artists. The workshop produced numerous flyers and artist zines throughout the entire duration of documenta 15 (Photo: Hyun Joo Cho, June 2022).

Furthermore, artistic publishing is no longer contained in the cultural West. With its inherent power to gain public, publishing as an artistic practice has spread like wildfire to localities outside of Europe and North America. Kyung Yong Lim, Co-founder and Director of Mediabus, a publishing house based in Seoul founded as a collaborative platform of independent curators, designers, artists and researchers, recently published an anthology of interviews with small-scale art publishers currently active in various regions of Asia (*Publishing as Method*, Lim and Ku, 2023). The publication introduces 34 cases of artistic publishing practices based in Seoul, Hong Kong, Taipei, Beijing, Shanghai, Tokyo, Jakarta, Singapore, Bangkok and more. Delivering their accounts, Lim describes their significance by referring to Arjun Appadurai's interpretation of publishing as an act forming a "community of sentiment," in which communities "imagine and feel together" (Ibid, p.21). Although these 34 cases are each located in their own regional context, they ultimately speak of publishing as a networked medium that is important for mutual exchange and developing a common agenda. These practices demonstrate trans-local connections that reorganize geographical regions into zones of knowledge exchange that communicate through books and other publications. Sometimes producing physical evidence of artistic practice, sometimes as a "grey area" (Ibid, p.27) for socio-political discourses, and sometimes providing a conceptual space for solidarity among fragmented and minority units, today's artistic publishing as a global endeavor pursues its own unique "micro-logistics" (Ibid, p.93), or an organic way of working together.



[Fig.46] People waiting to enter the Singapore Art Book Fair 2023. Lim and Ku emphasize the growing presence of art book fairs in Asia as the main site for distributing independently published art books (Image source: SGABF).



[Fig.47] Mediabus's booth at the New York Art Book Fair 2024 (Image source: Mediabus).

Then, what is the central ethos of these collaborative acts? What is it that drives practitioners of artistic publishing to continue their projects? One of the directions they are most clearly headed is towards an alternative, democratic configuration of *systems*—social, political, cultural and economic (Cella et al., 2015). Contemporary practices of artistic publishing work “against alienation” (Pichler, 2022, p.13) and devote their work to the ideal of sharing and collectivism. The people behind these practices prioritize supporting life as a community, the democratic distribution of knowledge and information, and reformative experiments with media over immediate efficiency or monetary profit (Lim and Ku, 2023). For instance, the founders of Book Works, a London-based contemporary arts organization specializing in artistic publishing and bookmaking, believed that “books are a perfect vehicle for sharing information” and distributing knowledge—“democracy of books” was the one reason why they decided to begin as a platform for artists’ books (Yonemura et al., 2021, p.70). Johanna Maierski who runs Colorama, a Berlin-based project space for publishing artists’ books and experimental comics, sees publishing as “a democratic tool for participating in political and artistic discourses” (Ibid, p.201). Kayla Romberger, one of the founders of Ulises, a bookshop and project space based in Philadelphia, writes that “the manner in which viewers engage a published work offers alternative conditions of viewership and engagement that slow down the speed and pace of contemporary life, offering a perspective on a reality outside one’s own and the dictates of an algorithm” (Romberger et al., 2021, pp.9-10). In short, contemporary artist publishing finds its meaning by connecting its readers to a common, accessible cloud of discourses that reflect the world and help the readers notice, learn about and eventually participate in each other’s contexts. Again, as artists make ideas public, they make publics around the ideas (Martine Syms in Romberger et al., 2021, p.111).

Such an ethos becomes most pronounced through the rhetoric of the ‘self-’. Because most contemporary practices of artistic publishing are carried out as independent projects, they are “tactics, unities, and possibilities that are prefixed with the ‘self-’”; they are self-aware, self-identified, self-initiated self-exploration of self-assertion and self-worth (Clara Balaguer of HWGL quoted in Romberger et al., 2021, p.55). In other words, having to offer self-justification for their inception, process and objective, contemporary artistic publishing becomes its own genesis, conduit and iteration (Chang, 2022), a self-explanatory and self-referential practice that seeks to topple imposing structures of power and norm.

* * *

Arriving at the end of Chapter 2. Theoretical Foundations, I revisit the starting point of my inquiry—the central research question: *What relationship do artists’ books establish between the objecthood of art and the contemporary sense of practice, particularly in the socioeconomic situation of art valuation?* Based on the knowledge I have gained and structured so far, I can answer at least tentatively that contemporary artists’ books, utilizing their unique objecthood as translational agency, rematerialize artistic practices. As interactive art objects facilitating tactile and tangible encounters between the embodied work and the audiences/readers, artists’

books anchor the practice—the artistic process and labor that led up to its publication—in its generative moment of presentation/reading. Portable and thus distributable, artists' books allow the practice and its ethos they embody to be read by wider and targeted rings of audiences/readers, amplifying art's relational sociality. Furthermore, as cultural artifacts that are both autonomous and heteronomous in their production, artists' books more seamlessly navigate not only cultural but also socioeconomic situations finding their way anywhere from artist studios, art institutions, bookshops, library shelves, mailboxes and to the palms of readers. As they navigate, artists' books provide reflective moments for our systems of art valuation, particularly by proposing new principles of value recognition—the principle of *caring*, looking harder into the grass-roots level of creativity and culture and their economy. Lim and Ku, as practitioners of artistic publishing, remind us: “There may be many micro activities around you that strive to create and distribute books or similar things using their own strategies” (Lim and Ku, 2023, p.33). Publishing books and floating them downstream into the world, artists and their collaborators are looking to drop anchors from their fleeting moments of practice, which may scatter without claims of value.

3. PRACTICE

3.1. Introduction: Practice-based Knowledge Production

The theoretical discussions of Chapter 2 reveal that there is room in the relevant literature and within this research project for a more empirical inquiry into the contemporary (post-2000s) production and consumption of artists' books. To fully grasp the actual impact of artists' books in scenes of art valuation as translational objects, it was imperative to expand the idealized discussions to include real-life observations. Thus, I decided to work towards the section of the project that I define as *practice-based knowledge production*.

The practice for this research was developed in three parts: 1) data collection, 2) data analysis and 3) creative interpretation. Data collection was carried out by conducting *semi-structured interviews* with stakeholders of various roles within the sphere of artistic publishing to understand the objecthood of contemporary artists' books negotiated throughout their ontological operations from conception to consumption. The participants included artists, designers, curators, editors, publishers, distributors, retailers, collectors, archivists and librarians. The main objective of the interviews was to understand the contemporary conditions of artistic publishing—the interviewees' backgrounds, their experience with artist publishing in their respective roles, the significance of such experience to their overall practice and their perception of the position of artists' books within the current art world and market—from which I inferred the role artists' books play in the translation of practice into valorized terms. Further details regarding how the data collection was carried out are explained in 3.2. Data Collection: Interviews [p.97].

The collected data were then analyzed using two distinct methods: *thematic analysis* and *situational analysis*. Further introductions to these methods are given in the respective chapters—3.3. Data Analysis 1: Thematic Analysis [p.109] and 3.4. Data Analysis 2: Situational Analysis [p.142]. Through thematic analysis, I examined the interview transcripts and elicited major keywords, themes and paradigms of the collected data, which are represented through the chart in 3.3.1. Application of Thematic Analysis: Searching for Paradigms [p.111]. Based on the findings from the thematic analysis, I applied cartographic frameworks suggested by the methodology of situational analysis to map out the overall landscape of cultural production and consumption artists' books are engaged with today. The resulting diagrams are explained in 3.4.1. Application of Situational Analysis: Mapping the Arena [p.143].

Lastly, reflecting on the analyses and my first-hand experience as a researcher, I produced an *object biography* of contemporary artists' books, an essay-like piece of writing that narrates different scenarios of fate the books end up in real life to show how they are engaged with the valuation system of the art world as translational objects, and a series of *diagrams* that schematizes the narrative. In most cases, object biography is an observational framework for understanding the agency of objects from a perspective more closely focused on their objecthood, used in the humanities fields such as anthropology, archaeology and museum studies. To be explained further in Chapter 3.5. Object Biography [p.146], the framework considers the object as a social actor with its own trajectory and cycle of life and attempts to give it a 'voice' by borrowing the words of human actors. By claiming the

license to expand this idea into the dimension of practice, I not only observe but also actively produce an original piece of writing that echoes and amplifies the theoretical arguments of the previous chapters with a creative voice. To do so, I weaved in the accounts provided by the interview participants with the autoethnographic accounts from my standpoint as an observer and consumer of artists' books. The resulting object biography (Chapter 3.5.1. Object Biography of Contemporary Artists' Books [p.150]) and its diagrammatic version (Chapter 3.5.2. Diagrammatic Expression of Object Biography [p.173]) focus on five select cases of artists' books that best demonstrate the books' journey through pragmatic situations and sites of valuation and consumption—from the artists' workshops to exhibitions, on- and offline bookshops, art book fairs and archival collections. All five books were either authored or edited by one of my interview participants. Other artists' books I have encountered throughout this research are listed in the appended catalog [p.213].

As I designed and carried out these stages of the research, I debated on how to establish their presence both within the project and the larger discussion surrounding different modes of knowledge production. Largely, there were three aspects that had to be considered.

First, I wondered whether this part of the research could be considered a practice, conscious of how my practice is not a studio-based project that produces artifacts and hence does not have the typicality of artistic practice. Most of the discourses on practice research in the arts field assume that the practice the research incorporates is to be of an institutionalized art form—something visible, documented and hence intellectualized (Smith and Dean, 2009; Knockaert, 2010; Nelson, 2013; Almeida, 2015). More importantly, the production of a concrete work, an artistic artifact, is considered the most common way of presenting or evidencing practice research. For instance, Candy and Edmonds explain in their article on artistic practice within the context of doctoral research (2018) that the artifact is seen as “play[ing] a vital role” (p.63) in demonstrating the new understandings that arise from the practice-based research project. It needs to be addressed at this point that my practice did not produce an artifact for this research—instead, it focused on the empirical inquiry through active, first-hand observations, the production of a written work with a distinct creative style to present the observations and further expressing them in visual diagrams. It may not be a studio-based practice in the traditional sense, but it could be considered a “dialectical practice” (Sullivan in Smith and Dean, 2009, p.50). In his book chapter titled ‘Making Space: The Purpose and Place of Practice-led Research’, Sullivan claims that dialectical practices are forms of inquiry where the artist-researcher explores the “uniquely human process of making meaning” through experiences that are “felt, lived, reconstructed and reinterpreted” (Ibid, p.50). He goes on to emphasize that “the means of representation” of the generated meaning are “only limited by the imagination of the practitioner-researcher and can readily be found in... visual-verbal texts as the artist-researcher takes on the roles of the theorist, designer, storyteller and cultural critic” (Ibid, p.51).

Secondly, assuming I have carried out a practice for this research, I wondered how this research as a whole should be categorized or identified regarding its practice element.

In other words, I pondered how the relationship between this research project and my practice should be explained. The discussions surrounding how practice serves as a means of research can be funneled into the central concept of ‘practice as research (PaR)’ or ‘practice research’, which refers to projects in which the “[artistic] practice is a key method of inquiry and where...a practice...is submitted as substantial evidence of a research inquiry” (Candy and Edmonds, 2018, p.64). Following the categorization proposed by Candy and Edmonds, the most prominent typology of practice research is the distinction between ‘practice-based’ and ‘practice-led’ research. The former refers to a project “undertaken in order to gain new knowledge, partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice,” and where “a creative artifact is the basis of the contribution to knowledge” (Ibid, pp.63-64). The latter is a variant of practice-based research that “leads primarily to new understandings about practice” (Ibid, p.64). In their anthology of essays on practice-led research, Smith and Dean also refer to Candy’s explanation of this typology from 2006: “...in practice-based research the creative work acts as a form of research, whereas practice-led research is about practice leading to research insights” (Smith and Dean, 2009, p.5).

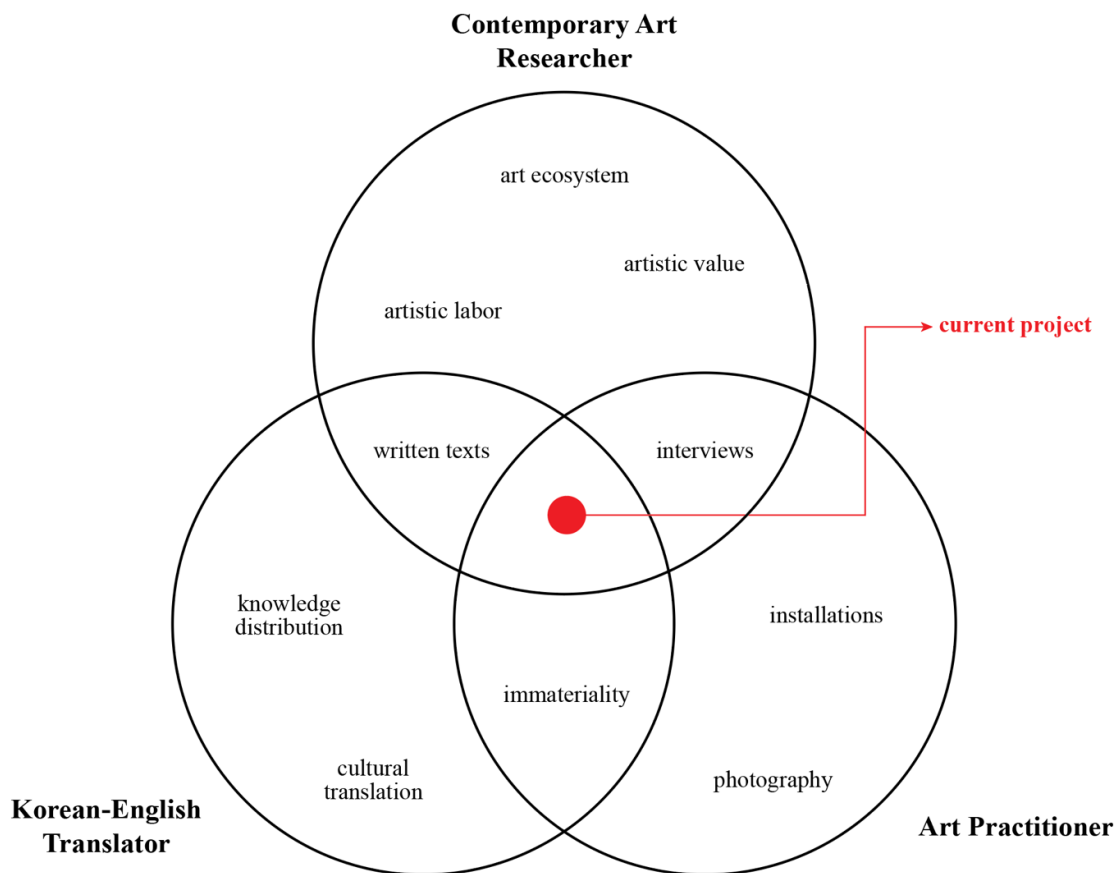
What is critical for the positioning of my practice is what Smith and Dean explain immediately after: “[H]owever, these terms are often used much more loosely” (Smith and Dean, 2009, p.5). They then continue to write that practice as research can best be interpreted “in terms of a broader view of creative practice which includes not only the artwork but also the surrounding theorization and documentation” (Ibid, p.5). Encouraged by such a perspective, for this research, I choose to move away from the much-discussed dichotomy between practice-based and practice-led. Although the two concepts help understand how creative practice is now prevalently recognized as a legitimate mode of research, I find it difficult to claim that neither of these types of practice research sufficiently defines the status of the practice element within this project. Thus, my overall research project could best be defined as practice-based theoretical research that works toward drawing abstract principles out of both practice and theoretical inquiries that reiterate and reflect upon each other. Within this structure, my practice should be considered an original attempt at practice-based knowledge production.

Lastly, having established the practice-based nature of this research, I must address whether practice research itself has legitimacy and integrity, considering that it is a “contested site of knowledge-production” (Nelson, 2013, p.3). Currently, the discussions surrounding the significance of practice as a mode of research and what constitutes practice-based research are still very much ongoing both within and outside of the art field—in fact, this transdisciplinary practice turn was what triggered this project in the first place. Nelson, in his anthology of writings on practice as research, claims that there is a “burgeoning literature” (Ibid, p.4) on the topic that reflects “an international and spreading phenomenon, with strong established or emergent movements of postdoctoral and postgraduate practitioner-researchers” (Kershaw, 2009 quoted in Ibid, p.4). Haseman, one of the key researchers in Nelson’s bibliography of the burgeoning literature, proposes the methodological concept of ‘performative research’ in ‘A Manifesto for Performative Research’ (Haseman, 2006) where “practice is the principal research activity” (p.104). According to him, within the context of performative research,

practice functions as a valuable impetus that “lead[s] research” with its focus on the researcher’s idiosyncratic “enthusiasm” to tackle the research question (Ibid, p.100). This largely resonates with Ingold’s claim during his online seminar on practice research: “Research is not a technical operation, a particular thing you do in life...It is rather a way of living curiously... [that] pervades everything you do” (Ingold, 2021, p.7). Both of these claims hint at the charged potential in practice to produce “personal knowledge” (Ingold, 2013, p.111) tacitly sentient in each individual researcher’s situation and positionality. Hence, incorporating practice as a methodological format bolsters my claim of individual *centrality* (Coessens et al., 2009) as a practitioner-researcher making original contribution to knowledge. Afterall, in artistic approach to research, “the major instrument is the investigator [one]self” (Eisner, 1981, p.8). Further description of my positionality follows.

3.1.1. Positionality Statement

This chapter will present my positionality as the artist-researcher leading this practice to help readers further grasp the personal context and rationale for the overall research endeavor.



[Fig.48] Positionality diagram of the author as the artist-researcher.

At the heart of the current project lies an intricate linkage between my earlier experiences and interests. As represented by the diagram above, I stand at the intersection of three positions: contemporary art researcher, translator between Korean and English languages and art practitioner engaged with the practices of photography and installation art.

As a researcher into various topics of contemporary art, I have been conscious of topics such as the art ecosystem, artistic labor and how the two combined garner artistic value. For instance, as my master's degree project (dissertation title: 'A Narrative Inquiry on Career Sustenance of Contemporary Artists,' 2021), I interviewed 17 early career artists striving to survive in the art world to learn about any systematic hindrances to their career navigation, tracing how the artists value their practices concerning the socioeconomic dimensions of the art world.

As a translator, I have recognized the importance of and worked for the democratic distribution of knowledge, in addition to the notion of cultural translation beyond mere literary or technical translations. Doing so, although I primarily engage with written texts as a translator, my interest has expanded to other prominent things that aid cultural translation, such as concrete artifacts, books and—eventually—artists' books.

Lastly, as an art practitioner, I was already deeply involved with the idea of immateriality and ephemerality in art. Since 2015, I have worked across disciplines ranging from lens-based media to site-specific installations to weave my own artistic vocabulary, one that speaks to the transient nature of creation and the complexities of the human experience. For instance, to present my master's degree dissertation in 2021, I made a visual work to present the findings in metaphorical terms—I interpreted the narratives of the 17 artists into (purposefully) fragile installations using natural light, image projections, photographic prints on translucent paper and words cut out from printed bodies of interview transcripts. Thus, through the current exploration of artists' books, I personally seek to bridge the gap between the immaterial and the tangible, the fleeting and the permanent within my artistic practice, reflecting upon my experience with less concrete works that often dissipate without external efforts to preserve them.



[Fig.49-50] Photographic documentation of the installation by the author for 'how low can the fire burn' (Tokyo University of the Arts, Ueno Campus, 2021) (Photo: Hyun Joo Cho).

In short, my research journey has not been just about uncovering truths but also about reimagining possibilities. It is a testament to the transformative power of art and the enduring quest for meaning and connection in an ever-changing world. With all of these backgrounds and interests, I follow the trails of contemporary artists' books in the real social world.

3.2. Data Collection: Interviews

To gather rich and varied data that capture the multiplicity of perspectives within social situations, Adele E. Clarke, a sociologist and women's health scholar, raises her voice with myriad scholars of humanities and social sciences that data should be collected through qualitative methods, especially interviews and real-life observations (Clarke et al., 2017). Following their course, I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews to collect empirical data. The semi-structured interview is a qualitative research method that holds the middle ground between structured and unstructured interviews. Instead of adhering to a tightly structured list of questions, semi-structured interviews allow room for the conversation to grow and flow naturally, although they do refer to a core set of questions, which serve as generic guidelines or prompts for the interviewee (Adams, 2015). As all interviews do, semi-structured interviews allow researchers to gain "authentic insight into people's experiences" and understand different perspectives on a topic that requires specific interest that quantitative tools could not easily detect (Silverman, 1993, p.91). What is particularly characteristic of this method is that it excels at capturing not only answers to specific questions but also contextual information surrounding participants' experiences by allowing the researcher to explore the social, cultural and environmental factors that influence participants more freely, leading to a more holistic understanding of the subject matter (Holstein and Gubrium, 1997; H.J. Rubin and I.S. Rubin, 2005). Comparing different sources (Adams, 2015; Kallio et al., 2016), I identified and referred to the following key steps to conduct the interview.

Preparation

[1] Developing the questions

As the first step of preparation, I came up with a core set of questions that are aligned with my larger research aims and objectives. The questions largely inquired into the contemporary conditions of artistic publishing—the background of the interviewee, their experience in producing / editing / distributing / retailing / collecting / consuming artists' books, the significance of such experience and their perception of the position of artists' books within the art world and market. The questions were designed to be open-ended to allow the participants to share their experience and thoughts in their own terms without being restricted by the researcher's vocabulary.

The following are the core set of questions:

- 1) Which category of participants best defines you? Please tell me all that apply: Maker (artist, designer), Facilitator (curator, editor, publisher), Distributor (distributor, retailer), Collector (collector, archivist, librarian, consumer).
- 2) Why do you make artists' books? How do your books fit into your overall practice?
- 3) Do you think artists' books are socially and culturally valuable? If so, what makes you think that they are?
- 4) How would you describe the position of artists' books in the contemporary art market? What are the things that you notice are different in their consumption compared to artworks of

other mediums?

5) Do you think the value of artists' books are expressed well in their prices in general? In other words, do you think artists' books are traded at fair prices?

6) What factors do you consider when pricing (your) artists' books? Are there any particular standards or reasonings behind your prices?

7) What do you think are the differences and similarities between artists' books and exhibitions as modes of presentation?

8) I imagine that you have witnessed various artistic practices becoming translated into book forms. Do you recall any particularly interesting cases?

9) What is your standard when purchasing artists' books for the collection? What kinds of books are you after?

10) What role or purpose do you wish your collection to play and serve?

11) How much do you interact with the community that forms around book production and circulation? Does this interaction affect your practice/activity in any way?

Because my interview targets were to come from a variety of background—as shown from the participant categories—the core set of questions was prepared to cover all of their perspectives and interests. During the actual interviews, I selected the questions from the set to best fit the interviewee's background and characteristics. The following table (next page) summarizes my choice of questions for each interview.

	Question # → Category ↓	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
A	Maker	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
B	Facilitator Distributor	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
C	Distributor Collector	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
D	Maker Facilitator	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
E	Maker Facilitator Collector	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
F	Facilitator	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓			✓
G	Facilitator Distributor Collector	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
H	Maker Facilitator Distributor Collector	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
I	Maker	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓
J	Maker Collector	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
K	Maker	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓
L	Maker	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓
M	Maker Facilitator Distributor	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
N	Maker	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓				✓
O	Maker Facilitator Distributor Collector	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
P	Maker	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓
Q & R	Facilitator	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓
S	Maker	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓				✓

✓: Question asked

-: Question asked but the participant did not provide a valid answer due to their lack of knowledge

[Fig.51] Interview questions asked depending on the participant category.

[2] Recruiting the participants

In total, I recruited and interviewed 19 participants following the criteria I have set to align the interviews with the research's aims and objectives. Because the field of artistic publishing is extremely vast and involves numerous stakeholders engaged with the practice in myriad ways, one of the most challenging aspects of this interview was scoping and selecting the interviewees. My approach to this stage of preparation can be summarized as the following.

First, I identified the interview target categories referring to 'Fact-Sheets' published by Book Works (2020a-d), which are manual-like guidelines of artistic publishing covering production to distribution and marketing. Another source I referred to at this stage is Robert Darnton's 'Communications Circuit' (1982), which is a diagram that attempts to incorporate every aspect of the book world from author to reader in an interconnected life cycle (see [\[p.67\]](#)). These sources helped me clarify the 'value chain' of artistic publishing, and as result, I defined major roles involved with artist publishing and grouped them into four categories: 1) Maker (artist, designer), 2) Facilitator (curator, editor, publisher), 3) Distributor (distributor, retailer) and 4) Collector (collector, archivist, librarians). I tried to evenly distribute my participants across these categories as much as possible.

Second, I identified and contacted specific people who fit into one or more of the participant categories. I would like to stress that this stage of selection was a largely organic process. I made an initial contact list of potential interviewees including the people I already had ties with and highly relevant interview targets that I identified from various sources of information ranging from reference list of books I read for this research, exhibitions, art book fairs and encounters on social media platforms. I contacted them individually via their emails, websites and public profiles on social media. After each successful interview session, I asked the participant if they have anyone to point to as the next interviewee for this research, and many of the participants guided me to future participants. Throughout the interviews, I considered each interviewee a 'node' within their social spheres and focused on accessing these nodes to reach out into diverse contexts. This aspect of the process had the risk of making my interviewee pool skewed or overly reliant on human factors, but it also revealed various aspects of how the social fabric of artist publishing operates.

Third, recognizing that building rapport with the participants plays a large role in collecting more vivid, in-depth data, I tried my best to connect with the participants at least once before the actual interview—visiting their studio space, exhibitions, bookshops and booths at art book fairs to have casual conversations during an event or speaking via email at the very least.

Fourth, I tried to diversify the selection of interviewees as much as possible in terms of their geolocations considering that artist publishing has become a globally spread practice that reflects its local contexts. As result, I was able to interview participants based in Seoul, Taipei (Asia), London, Berlin, Antwerp (Europe), Mexico City, Brooklyn and Miami, Ohio (America).

Fifth, to avoid the selection from becoming overly arbitrary, I limited the invitation to those whose experience and practice could speak about at least one of the following: 1) contemporary artist publications (post-2000s), 2) artistic publishing projects that were initiated

autonomously by the artist, 3) artistic publishing projects that shed light on publishing as art practice.

Sixth, I would like to note here that this research has been informed by more than the accounts provided by the 19 participants I selected and eventually managed to interview. In addition to the official interviews, I spoke to 15 other people who are involved with artist publishing. I could not capture these conversations as official interviews due to realistic constraints or people's preference to remain as unofficial contributors. Therefore, I have logged only the date and place of these conversations in the list of Interviews and Conversations [p.250]. The contexts of these conversations include casual gatherings, visits to art book fairs, bookshops, galleries, archives, workshops and art conference.

[3] Pilot testing

Before conducting the actual interviews, the researcher may test the interview questions through a mock session to check whether they capture the intended information and identify any ambiguities. For this research, I ran one mock interview session on 20 August 2022, with a fellow PhD researcher at the University of the Arts London who was informed about my research and the interview questions in the same way as other participants. The mock interviewee chose to remain anonymous regarding their contribution. The prepared questions proved their effectiveness through the mock session but were still slightly refined afterwards to use more appropriate expressions.

During the interview

[4] The logistics

During the interviews, I kept the length of each session between 60 to 90 minutes, which is the recommended length for semi-structured interviews (Adams, 2015). Each interviewee participated in one interview session.

To ensure both the participant's and my safety, I paid close attention when selecting venues for the in-person interviews. The venues were limited to public spaces such as art galleries, bookshops and cafés. When the sessions could not be carried out in person for any reason, I conducted them virtually through online platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams.

[5] Facilitating the interview

During the interviews, I referred to the predetermined questions but also flexibly managed the direction of the interview on the spot with follow-up questions and new prompts that arise organically from the flow of the conversation. I adapted the order of questions based on the participant's responses or line of thought and also reiterated the questions in paraphrase when necessary to help the participants' understanding. Doing so, I was able to balance between standardization and fluidity, which is one of the core advantages of choosing semi-structured interview as the format (H.J. Rubin and I.S. Rubin, 2005; Adams, 2015; Kallio et al.,

2016). All interviews were carried out in a relatively casual, conversational tone, but I did probe into details when necessary to reach deeper into the conversations.

Furthermore, it is a common understanding that the interviews can be enhanced by basing them around objects such as images or artifacts because of what they can reveal about life and reality (H.J. Rubin and I.S. Rubin, 2005; Nelson, 2013; Kara, 2015). Considering such a consensus, I strongly encouraged the interviewees to refer to specific cases of artists' books that they had encountered or to talk about artists' books that were physically available at the site of the interview.

After the interview

[6] Transcription and documentation

After conducting an interview, I transcribed the audio recordings into documents and combined them with any notes taken during the session to produce *field text* (Adam, 2015). This is an essential element for the subsequent phase of data analysis. I collected audio recordings during in-person interviews and video recordings during online interviews. I used a few different transcription software programs to ensure accuracy such as CLOVA Note, Otter.ai and the tool embedded in online Microsoft Word document. I had 7 interview sessions that were conducted in Korean, which I manually translated into English after their transcription. The other 11 sessions were conducted in English. For full transcriptions, see Appendix 3. Interview Transcripts [p.255].

[7] Data analysis

The analysis involved identifying recurring themes, keywords, patterns or trends across participants to uncover nuanced insights from participants' accounts through thematic analysis and mapping out the findings using cartographic methods of situational analysis. Further discussion of the analyses are to follow in Chapters 3.3 [p.109] and 3.4 [p.142].

Throughout the entire process

[8] Ethical considerations

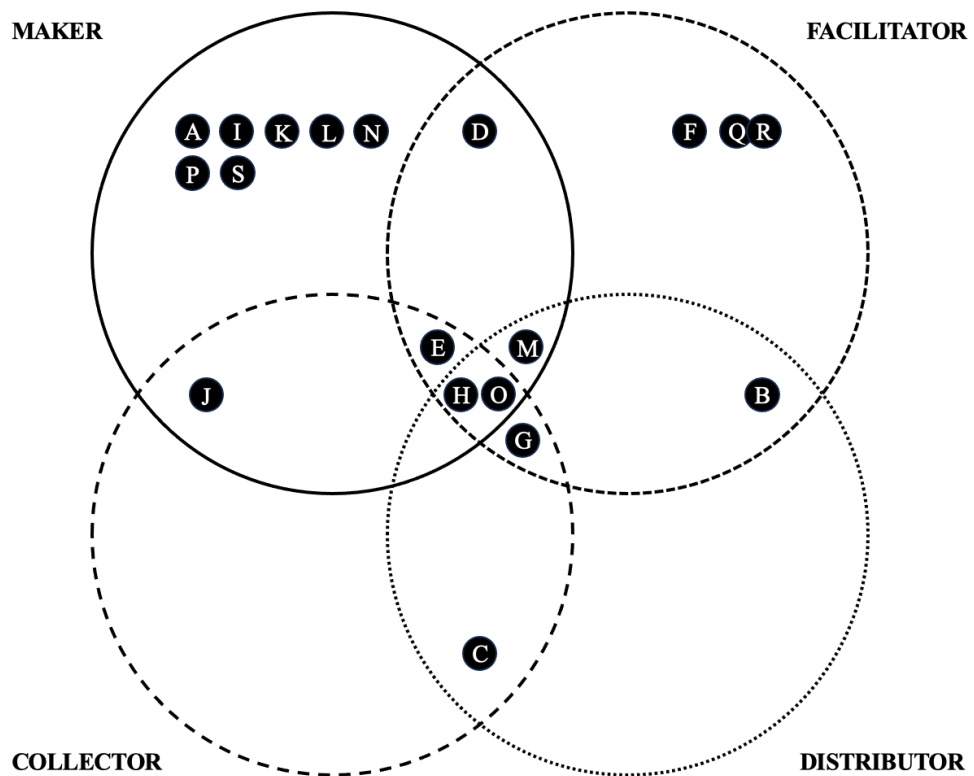
Ethical considerations, such as obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality and respecting participants' autonomy must be present throughout the entire process of conducting interviews. Since this research inquires various details of participants' experience such as their personal background, social ties and economic circumstances of their work or practice, it was imperative to take necessary measures to obtain official consent from the interviewees to include their information and accounts in this dissertation. To do so, I prepared a participant information sheet (Appendix 1 [p.252]) and data collection consent form (Appendix 2 [p.254]) according to the 'Guidance for Research Ethics Approval' provided by the University of the Arts London. The documents were approved by the UAL Research Committee and Research Ethics Sub-Committee on 14 July 2022. Before each interview, I

provided the participants with these documents and made sure of their understanding of the research's purpose, duration, process and methodology and gained their consent to disclose their information and accounts.

All information shared by the participants was treated confidentially, regardless of their consent for them to be included in this dissertation. To ensure security, during the entire duration of this research, all collected data including audio and video recordings, notes, transcriptions and translations as well as the consent forms signed by the participants were digitized and stored in a password-protected laptop that no one else other than I had access to. None of the information was shared with third parties. Furthermore, I kept in contact with the participants throughout practice to check the transcriptions and to confirm their consent to use the accounts for this research. All collected data are to be securely deleted and destroyed upon my completion of the doctoral degree and subsequent termination of this project.

3.2.1. The Interviewees

To ensure the multiplicity of collected data, I distributed my participants across four categories: 1) Maker (artist, designer), 2) Facilitator (curator, editor, publisher), 3) Distributor (distributor, retailer) and 4) Collector (collector, archivist, librarians). The following diagram shows their distribution.



[Fig.52] Categorization of the interviewees by their roles.

Considering how this research is largely concerned with the various social spheres artists' books journey through, it felt integral to clarify the professional positions of the participants as the ground for analysis. To do so, I chose to include the following bios that briefly introduce the 19 participants. All bios have been read and approved by the participants and are being disclosed under their consent obtained through the 'Participant Consent Form' (Appendix 2). In the form, the participants were given the choice to anonymize their contribution, but all of them gave consent to reveal their identity. The list follows the chronological order of the interviews. The translation of non-English names referred to the preferred spelling provided by each participant, which may be different from the standard rules.

Participant A

Meenyea Oh is a visual artist based in Seoul. Her practice is deeply rooted in book arts as she uses creative binding and printing techniques such as cyanotype and Van Dyke brown printing to turn various materials into book form, many of which are singular copies due to the irreproducibility of materials. She defines her works as artists' books that contain her ideas within their experimental materiality, structure and images. Her recent exhibitions include 'The Sound of a Book Closing 책이 닫히는 소리' (Mumokjeok Gallery, 2023), 'New Classic' (KT&G Sangsangmadang, 2022) and 'Unreachable 미치지않는' (Perigee Gallery, 2019).

Participant B

Jeongeun Kim is the Director of the publisher IANN²⁰ (founded in 2007) and the Artistic Director of The Reference²¹, a cultural platform that brings together a bookstore and an exhibition space in Seoul (founded in 2018). Her background in design and photography has led her to her current understanding of the book medium. She aims to share and expand such an understanding through her interdisciplinary work at IANN and The Reference, particularly focusing on the idea of artists' books within the larger context of art books.

Participant C

Yongtae Bae is an art book dealer and collector based in Seoul. He runs Alice Sugar, a bookshop that deals primarily with vintage art books. His background is in Korean literature, which has been one of his gateways to understanding and appreciating books.

Participant D

Heesue Kwon is an interdisciplinary artist based in Seoul. Her background is in video art, art theory and media art, from which she branched out into further fields including film, performance art and writing. She has published artists' books to provide her audience with more diverse channels to experience her works, which are largely immaterial and transitory. In 2021, she founded NUN, an independent publisher, to continue her publishing practice

²⁰ <https://www.iannmagazine.com/>

²¹ <https://www.the-ref.kr/>

and expand it into collaborations with other artists. Her recent exhibitions and performances include ‘Dotolim Concert Series_165 달올림 연주회_165’ (Dotolim, 2023), ‘TELECINEVol.1 텔레시네Vol.1’ (Collection Complete, 2023) and ‘BackgroundRadiationReflection 배경복사반사’ (Platform L, 2019).

Participant E

Myoungsoo Kim is a book artist, curator and collector based in Seoul. He runs Pages Press, a private press, to publish his works and lectures at various institutions on book art, book binding and artistic value of books. He is also known for his collaborations with artist Keith A. Smith. As a curator, he specializes in book art and artists’ books and participated in the Seoul International Book Fair and special exhibitions at the National Library of Korea.

Participant F

Helen Jungyeon Ku is a curator and researcher based in Seoul. Her work primarily focuses on collective art practices and forms of knowledge production and distribution, including art publishing. She worked as a Curator at Zero One Design Centre, Kookmin University and as a Co-Director at Mediabus²² and The Book Society²³, which are hubs of independent art publishing in Seoul. She currently works as the Head of Education Research at Leeum Museum of Art.

Participant G

Jae Kyung Kim is the Founding Director of einBuch.haus²⁴ (founded in 2018), a project gallery and a bookshop in Berlin showcasing books by international artists and designers in the form of exhibitions, thereby transferring the form of a book into three-dimensional spaces. She also runs ENKR (co-founded in 2020 with Dah Yee Noh), an independent publishing house specializing in translating art publications from English to Korean.

Participant H

Arnaud Desjardin is an artist, a specialist art bookseller and a researcher interested in the history of artists’ books based in London. He runs The Everyday Press²⁵ (founded in 2007), a publisher of art books and artists’ books that works closely with artists, designers and writers to release publications paying particular attention to the book as an object. In parallel to The Everyday Press, he also runs Bunker Basement, an underground showroom and archive of books. Additionally, he is an active member of Artists’ Books Cooperative (ABC)²⁶, an international group of artists, publishers and educators seeking to experiment with the form of the book.

22 <https://mediabus.org/>

23 <https://thebooksociety.org/blog>

24 <https://einbuch.haus/>

25 <https://theeverydaypress.net/>

26 <https://abcooperative.cargo.site/>

Participant I

Vinicius Marquet is an artist, designer and independent researcher based in Mexico City. His work centers around the exploration of algorithms and game rules as a means of inducing interactions or processes that create unique experiences, such as a poem, game, or digital experiences. Examples of his work can be seen in electronic literature pieces like *Anacron* (2009), *Bucle* (2017) and *Instructions* (2021), as well as in participatory practices like *La Mole* (2006) and *Palopatear* (2006).

Participant J

Siobhán Britton is an artist and librarian based in London. She is currently in charge of managing the Special Collections and Archives at Chelsea College of Arts as an Academic Support Librarian. As an artist, she is deeply engaged with the idea of self-publishing and the genre of artist zines.

Participant K

An Onghena is an artist and designer based in Antwerp. Combining her background in graphic design and interest in fine art, she creates interdisciplinary works that experiment with the form and status of books. Her interest extends to exploring the boundaries between science and art and to attempting to understand the world of unknown. Her recent exhibitions include 'Bring out into the open' (Goldberg Galerie, 2019), 'Performance for the book' (Kunstraum Lakeside, 2018) and 'Remodeling Graphic Habits' (nr86, The Art Center, 2018). She was an Artist in Residence at the Jan Van Eyck Academie from 2017 to 2018.

Participant L

Rahel Zoller is a visual artist and educator based in London. She specializes in Book Arts and Design, and her practice is primarily concerned with the concepts of materiality, language, translation, reading and writing, as well as the interaction between user, creator and society. Her works are held in collections such as the MoMA Artists' Books collection in New York, Artists' Books Tate Library Collection, the Booklet Library in Tokyo and more. She has been an active member of Artists' Books Collective (ABC) since 2015.

Participant M

Paul Sammut is an editor, curator and artist based in London. Their practice takes a research-based, affirmative approach with a focus on narrative forms, marginalized cultures and archival practices. Their past works include running the DIY queer project space White Cubicle (2012-2017) and curating *Comic Velocity: HIV & AIDS in Comics* (2019-2021), a program for the New York-based non-profit Visual AIDS. They have also taught as visiting lecturer and/or tutor at various institutions and organizations, and regularly holds coaching sessions and artist's surgeries to aid in project development and realization. Currently, Sammut works as Publishing Manager coordinating sales, trade and distribution at Book Works²⁷, a

²⁷ <https://bookworks.org.uk/>

publisher and registered charity for artists' books.

Participant N

Rosa Barba is a visual artist and filmmaker based in Berlin. She shoots films and takes a sculptural approach to the medium to build site-specific installations. She inquires into the ambiguous nature of reality, memory, landscape and their mutational constitution and representation. Since 2004, she has been publishing an artist's book series titled Printed Cinema in parallel to her major exhibitions as a way to deconstruct and re-curate the temporary events. Her recent exhibitions include 'The Hidden Conference' (Tate Modern, 2023), 'Emanations' (Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, 2023) and 'Weavers' (cccod, 2023).

Participant O

Ami Clarke is an artist and educator based in London. As an artist, she works with art and technology, critically engaged with the complex protocols of platform and surveillance in everyday assemblages, with a focus on the inter-dependencies between code and language in hyper-networked culture. She also founded and runs Banner Repeater²⁸ (founded in 2010), a contemporary art space, a reading room and experimental project space dedicated to a wide array of programs including exhibitions, artist talks, archiving and publications. She also developed the Digital Archive of Artists' Publishing (DAAP)²⁹ with a team of people that gathered around Banner Repeater, which is an interactive, user-driven, searchable database of artists' books and publications. She currently teaches as an Associate Lecturer at Central Saint Martins and Chelsea College of Art, University of the Arts.

Participant P

Chang Wen-Hsuan is an artist and researcher based in Taiwan. Her practice questions the narrative structure of institutionalized history with re-readings, re-writing and suggestions of fictional alternatives in order to expose the power tensions embedded in historical narratives. Through versatile platforms including installations, videos and lectures, she often navigates skewed documentations and first-person accounts to trigger reflections on how the understanding of history affects the purport of the present and thrust of the future. In 2018, she launched a long-term project Writing FACTory³⁰, which is a virtual space producing experiences and exchanges concerning writing and publishing as an artistic and political practice.

Participant Q & R

Karen Kelly is an editor and publisher based in Brooklyn. From 1989 to 2011, she directed the publication program and organized special programs at Dia Art Foundation, New York. She has also held editorial positions at the literary journal *Conjunctions* and at the art

28 <https://www.bannerrepeater.org/>

29 <https://daap.network/>

30 <https://www.changwenhsuan.com/writing-factory>

journal Parkett.

Barbara Schroeder is an art historian and editor based in Brooklyn. Previously, she served as editor for Dia Art Foundation, the Austrian Broadcast Company and the Kunsthalle Vienna.

Together, they run Dancing Foxes Press³¹, an independent publishing platform that focuses on editorial collaboration with artists and hands-on production of a wide range of publications.

Participant S

Billy Simms is an artist and educator based in Miami, Ohio. His practice focuses on the intersection of visual art, literature, theatre and storytelling. Working with an interdisciplinary principle, his projects have been in a variety of media including printmaking, writing, sculpture, drawing, painting, crafts, photography and found objects. He currently teaches on various art practice courses as an Adjunct Instructor at Miami University. His recent exhibitions include 'Craftowne: The 7th Hole' (Pyramid Hill Sculpture Park and Museum, 2021), 'Leftovers' (1628 Gallery, 2021) and 'Hamilton Current: Regional Art Exhibition' (Fitton Center, 2021).

³¹ <https://dfpress.org/>

3.3. Data Analysis 1: Thematic Analysis

As the first part of the analysis, I used the thematic analysis method to inductively interpret the data collected from the interviews. Thematic analysis is one of the most common forms of qualitative analysis that is used to identify, analyze and report patterns or themes within a closed set of data (Guest et al., 2012). Although it is most actively used in fields of social sciences, particularly psychology, it has been seeing increased use in the field of humanities as a systematic yet flexible method to understand subjective experiences, perspectives or meanings embedded in the data. The approach allows not only an in-depth exploration of the collected data but also the researcher's reflexive learning to be included in the interpretation. Comparing different sources (Guest et al., 2012; Mortensen, 2020; Caulfield, 2022), I referred to the following key steps of thematic analysis.

[1] Data familiarization

I began by familiarizing myself with the data, which were transcriptions of the semi-structured interviews. This involved reading and re-reading the data to gain a solid understanding of the content. I read through the entire data set three times before moving on to the next step. Each time I read, I read with a fresh copy of the transcriptions so that I could engage with the data objectively. While reading, I paid special attention to and marked key sentences that answered my core set of questions, repeated expressions and unique comments that are outlying from others.

[2] Generating codes

I then began to generate codes, or short labels that can capture and describe the content of the data. My codes were both descriptive and interpretive, pertaining to both the attitude and verbal expressions of the participants.

[3] Searching for themes

The codes were then grouped together based on their similarities and relationships, which naturally revealed the themes, or patterns of meaning that run through the data. This part of the process involved sorting and organizing codes to identify potential themes. The themes were reviewed, refined and named in ways that both represent the original data and respond to the initial research questions.

[4] Coding the data

Then, I systematically applied the identified themes to the entire dataset. This was a highly iterative process of moving back and forth between the original data, codes and themes. Minor revisions of codes and themes were necessary to encompass the data more holistically. The use of analytic software during this stage was not necessary, due to the manageable scale of the interviews (18 sessions with 19 participants—one of the sessions being with participants Q and R at the same time).

[5] Inducing paradigms and writing up the analysis

After coding the entire data and identifying all the major themes, I induced paradigms that best summarize the findings into conceptual directions. The resulting report that can be found in the next chapter includes the codes, themes and descriptions of the major findings from the analysis.

3.3.1. Application of Thematic Analysis: Searching for Paradigms

Data	Codes	Themes	Paradigms
The book as tactile experience The book is to be activated	Artist's book as tangible encounter	The book as the performer	Translational mechanisms
The book is a body People feel corporeal sympathy for books	Artist's book as bodily object		
Reading is a live performance Turning the pages creates a flow	Artist's book as temporal experience		
The book appears in an exhibition	Artist's book as prop		
Pages are sequenced dimensions The book as private encounter	Artist's book as exhibition	The editorial as the curatorial	
Providing formative framework Constructing relations Enabling intermedia translation	Artist's book as a mode of reiteration		
Amplifying data The book doesn't expire	Artist's book as archive	The book as the artifact of practice	
Holistic evidence of practice Structure for notations Post-event document	Artist's book as documentation		
Tangible outcomes of practice Relics of practice	Artist's book as trace		
Collaborative & context-dependent authorship Publishing as a public act The act is reproductive	Artist's book as platform for artistic collaboration	The book as the social thing (continues next pg.)	

Artists' books convey collectivity Artists' books encourage viewer participation	Artist's book as platform for audience engagement		
Bookmaking/publishing is laborious and resource-intensive	High implied value	Prioritizing democratic distribution over monetary gains	Economic statement
The book travels The book is worldly The book is affordable	Choosing the medium to lower the threshold		
Making profit is not a priority Keeping the price as low as possible Providing options	Compromising profit for accessibility		
Books are too common Extremely thin & uneven consumer base Consumer base is very specific Consumers prefer books by famous artists	Oversupply and skewed demand	Embracing the economic conditions (continues next pg.)	
Lack of independent market Ambiguous categorical boundary Considered by-products of other practices Having atypical motive	Ambiguous position in the market		
Cheap for their value because they are books Cheap price means less value Cost-efficient production Unsigned artwork Tactility leading to devaluation	Artist's book as undervalued art object		
Expensive for being books Expensive for being mass-produced goods	Artist's book as overpriced commodity		

Value is constructed and reconstructed Prices are inflated in the secondary market Artistic publishing still relies on the market	Market runs the economy		
Escaping the ghost of the 1960s & 70s artists' books Artistic publishing globalized and localized	The notion of artistic publishing evolves	Adding to multiplicity and diversity of culture	Institutional critique
Rediscovering the book form Suggesting new mode of art Inherently interdisciplinary medium	Proposing new forms		
Publishing as independent domain of practice Putting publication before exhibition	Challenging the hierarchy of practices		
Playing multi-layered roles Seeking self-sufficiency Pricing as a strategy	Individuals taking the initiative	Ethos of self-representation	
Exploring disciplinary boundaries Pushing against the frontiers Forum of affirmation	Consciously marginal		

[Fig.53] Thematic analysis table.

[1] The book as the performer

Artists' books are the performers of their own presentation, extending the process of artmaking to the moment of their consumption. They invite the viewer to a tangible encounter with the art object by having to be activated through tactile engagement such as opening their cover and turning the pages (Participant D, K). Engaging with artwork through touch provides the viewer with a vivid and personalized appreciation that is different for every reiterated experience (Participant L). Within this framework of translation, artists' books are bodily objects with a strong emphasis on their physical presence (Participant A, B, O), which adds to the liveness of the viewer's reading experience (Participant N). The liveness also comes from the temporality of the reading experience, which is often generated by the sense of flow of turning the books' pages (Participant D, P). In certain cases, artists' books are also given the status of props during exhibitions, which adds to the performative sense of their presentation

(Participant P). Overall, artists' books embody the experience of process-driven artistic practice.

One of the interviewees raised a noteworthy critique of this consideration of artists' books as embodiments of practice, arguing that “[t]his idea of embodiment is a fetish” (Participant, O). She spoke from the Marxist point of view³², by which she meant that perceiving artists' books as embodiments of other things may restrict the books' valuation to their materiality. Such a claim is valid, however, I would like to argue back that the material qualities of artists' books should still be seen as core conditions of this research, where I inquire how the books translate the immateriality of practices into tangible terms. This critique will be further considered and incorporated into the discussion in Chapter 4.1. [p.178].

1) Artist's book as tangible encounter

The book as tactile experience

- “[I make artists' books] because it's a format you can actually hold in your hands... You can slow down time with this object by engaging with it through touch and really focusing on the material. I think that's what we're lacking a lot at the moment.” [L]

The book is to be activated

- “...the viewer experiences books through physical contact and that the viewer gets to control the time during appreciation. For instance, performances have a clear beginning and end, and the performer is the one deciding them. But books allow more autonomy for the viewer—you can close and come back to them any time you want.” [D]
- “Another example is *werkboek* published in 2021. It was a collaborative work with artist Jivan van der Ende. The book started with an old ‘problem’ I faced when exhibiting my books. Whenever I displayed them in exhibition spaces, people didn't want to touch it—they were scared of touching it, because they were scared of damaging an artwork. So, we made this book in response to that issue. The book is essentially a guide to a performative reading experience—the readers are invited to physically interact with the book by mirroring the photographs shown in the book that are of hands folding pages of another book. So, as people go through the book, the book turns into this sculptural object that is altered by every interaction. This way, touching the book doesn't really damage it—it adds meaning to it.” [K]

2) Artist's book as bodily object

The book is a body

- “Since books have physical bodies, I think they can also contain the ‘spirit’—like vessels.” [B]
- “...I reject the approach of examining the book solely within the material world and about its physical presence. That dialogue has dominated the analysis of artists' books, but I think it's only one of many substrates. Yes, this paperback is an incredibly well-designed thing. It's amazing. As a design. Just the idea that you can put it in your pocket and get lost in it any time of the day... But equally, I'm against

³² Marx criticized the reduction of socioeconomic relationships between people into the economic value attached to nonhuman things—*commodities*—referring to this phenomenon as ‘fetishization’ (Martin, 2007).

fetishizing anything. This idea of embodiment is a fetish.” [O]

People feel corporeal sympathy for books

- “I decided to learn how to make books from scratch including printing and binding techniques, which led me to a workshop that made books very traditionally. In the beginning, I repeated the process of disassembling old books to repair it page by page and binding them back again. The whole act felt like a process of healing, and I felt as if I was meditating.” [A]

3) Artist’s book as temporal experience

Reading is a live performance

- “Artist publications have a peculiar position in the art market as they offer a zone for reflection rather than a finalized, fixed product. Their form does appear to be fixed because it’s most often printed and physical, but its reception or reading is not something that’s predestined. Artist publications go through individualized processes of comprehension, which makes each of them unique and different depending on who’s reading it.” [N]

Turning the pages creates a flow

- “Also, books provide a more vivid experience that is less fragmented because the experience of turning the pages and feeling their flow accompanies the contents.” [D]
- “...when we read, because there are physical pages that we have to flip through, it’s similar to when we see video art that has a frame and buttons to press. Basically, how we approach a narrative based on objects is through a very flexible and fluent way of seeing.” [P]

4) Artist’s book as prop

The book appears in an exhibition

- “The second approach is when the book makes an appearance in the exhibition space... in this context, my artist’s book becomes the second or alternative layer of narration... The book or the publication appears as an autonomous character in this setting.” [P]

[2] The editorial as the curatorial

Artists’ books demonstrate that editorial decisions can serve curatorial needs, allowing practices to be exhibited within an object form. Many participants consider artists’ books as alternative spaces for exhibition that can be designed and densely configured. For instance, the sequence of pages can serve as the planned route visitors are guided through at exhibitions (Participant E, P, R), while the pages themselves provide spatial finitude that serves as the compositional framework (Participant D). At the same time, artists’ books have the advantage of allowing a private encounter with the art for the viewers, which expands the traditional sense of ‘viewing’ during exhibitions (Participant D, K, R). The editorial ideas are curatorial also in the sense that artists’ books construct relationships “between the content, the form and the idea of dissemination” (Participant J) or between scattered practices within an artist’s

oeuvre (Participant Q&R). As a framework for displaying practices, artists' books also provide a conceptual rubric by constantly questioning the rationale for choosing the translation from another media to the book medium (Participant M, N, O, Q, R). In other words, by answering questions of *why* and *how* something can be published as an artist's book, the artist is required to be selective regarding the book's structure and organization in both editorial and curatorial senses.

1) Artist's book as exhibition

Pages are sequenced dimensions

- "...because books are physically finite spaces with clear boundaries called 'pages', the density of their composition is powerful." [D]
- "I think [exhibitions and artists' books] actually have more in common. The act of turning the pages of a book is conceptually very similar to the routes visitors are guided to take through an exhibition. As far as I know, that's what Ed Ruscha proposed through his artist's books—a 'portable exhibition space' that allows artists in the West Coast exhibit in the East Coast." [E]
- "By reconfiguring the physical terms of cinematic space in the exhibition space—can be outside architecture as well—my aim is to expand and destabilize the conceptual terms of cinematic space... same thoughts apply to the space of a publication." [N]
- "I consider it a portable exhibition space, especially for the projects where I turn my research into an archive installation. After an exhibition ends, not only the archive but also the whole environment disappears. So, within the pages of my books I create an alternative space to continue the show, like a 2D version of the exhibition." [P]
- "Making the first comic was really hard because the way the exhibition worked was that the visitors walked in, and they read the first few texts about Craftowne. And you could wander in the installation and look at it in any order... But with my comics, I did have to put them in a specific order because of the flow of the narrative. It was difficult deciding the linear order of reading and figuring out the most logical way of presenting it." [R]

The book as private encounter

- "...both [exhibition and artists' books] are channels for presenting works, but I think the biggest difference is in their mobility. Compared to exhibitions, artists' books can move further into intimate and everyday contexts and allow you to face art by yourself." [D]
- "I feel that books are also more intimate... It's more yours. And you can create your own context because you're reading in your own mind. You have more time for it." [K]
- "...the book is a product you can engage with in a private way. Books provide an intimate encounter that has a completely different focus from being in a show, for example." [R]

2) Artist's book as a mode of reiteration

Providing formative framework

- "I do artist surgeries quite regularly, and some of the first questions I ask are 'why does it need to be a book?' How does this work as a book? How does it translate into the format? The artist or artists

- have to adapt to the form of the book and what that mode does.” [M]
- “...publishing sort of becomes a framework—temporal and spatial.” [O]
 - “We feel like there has to be a good reason for making books and try to help artists find their reason... Another question to ask to artists is ‘where do you see your book on a bookshelf—in a bookstore or in a library? Who do you see next to it? What’s around it?’ This is to think about the other side, to think of what the book would do in the world.” [R]

Constructing relations

- “I do talk a lot about the relationship between the curatorial and the editorial... These days, many artists want to take the initiative in publishing solid, monograph-like books when they hold solo exhibitions. Books published in this way document the exhibition as part of the content, but also show the research conducted by the artist, the process of creating the work, and references the artist came by while preparing for the exhibition. In other words, these books show a more holistic context surrounding the exhibition.” [F]
- “Artists’ books construct relationships between the content and the form and the idea of dissemination of information.” [J]
- “...an exhibition and a book are the same because you’re placing things for people to interact with or to become the viewer of” [M]
- “...when an artist who has a very diverse process or groups of works thinks it’s difficult for the audience to make sense of how these all relate to one another. This would be a panoramic book where the whole oeuvre comes together. It was about bringing out themes to connect these works because her projects are well known individually but she herself isn’t...but once you look at this book, one can make sense of the whole and see that the works actually come from the same set of questions.” [Q&R]

Enabling intermedia translation

- “I am planning on turning my dance into a book in the near future. I’ve been dancing tango for six years now, and I’m thinking of making a book about the process of learning the dance or my experience with it in general. I think that would be an example of bringing immaterial art into the format of a physical book.” [A]
- “I think [Katrina Palmer is] a particularly interesting example... Katrina, in some ways, epitomizes this idea of writing in place of making objects and her book *Dark Object* grapples with other things she’s been thinking about—it’s a negotiation of how and why she’s doing that. So, the book has become an experimental narrative but essentially a work of fiction. I think this is an interesting translation because Katrina was trained as a sculptor.” [M]
- “I’ve been publishing since 2004 regularly on the occasion of an exhibition thinking that I’m producing a portable film to express and dismantle the cinematic organism... I produce *Printed Cinema* with the idea that it’s another form of screening, another form of editing—I believe it opens up additional space for thinking about the project and the material... I think this way of translating back and forth between mediums or even further is part of my process of spatialization. I also talk about this idea of cinematic spaces in my doctoral dissertation—it’s an anarchic organization of

cinematic spaces. The work itself often has a voice of self-organization—my role is to pay attention to that and opening the right door by giving them mobility between mediums... Printed Cinema also continues my audiovisual work as a personal reflection on the essence of the cinematographic. Gaps, ellipses, dialectics between images—essentially modernist notions—are essential in that respect. In Printed Cinema, this is expressed in the editing principle, as well as in the oppositions between film and printing, between text and image... The filmic projection is translated onto paper and confronted with its conditions—its materiality and temporality—reshaping the text and image fragments from the moving image into stillness. The shift in medium from projection to print emphasizes the difference of such experiences of image and text, exposing their relationships.” [N]

[3] The book as the artifact of practice

Artists’ books can evidence a practice even after it is terminated or dissolved. They have archival quality that does not expire like exhibitions or live performances do (Participant G, K, M, S). As archives, artists’ books function as multi-layered “metadata” (Participant B) that grant access to rich literature expanding the original practice such as the artist’s research material, list of reference, blueprints, photographic or text-based records and fragments of practice that ended up not being used toward the final work (Participant N). In such a sense, they are holistic evidence of practice that document the process leading up to, during and after a practice or its presentation through performances and exhibitions—they are “outlet[s] for internal thinking” and references to the things that allowed the practice to happen (Participant R). Hence, they translate not only the practice itself but also the contextual conditions that informed it (Participant B, D, F, R, Q). As constructed documents, artists’ books are also popular as the structure for notating performative practices so that they can be re-activated even after the event of practice (Participant D, R). Even outside the discipline of performance, many artists’ books can be understood as post-event documents that provide an additional mode of perpetuated communication to exhibitions or any other ephemeral event (Participant D, M, R). Some participants describe artists’ books as traces of practice, in the sense that they are the ultimate things that survive as tangible objects after the practice (Participant B, M). Along this vein, they are also described as relics or remnants of practice, giving them a historical status (Participant D, O).

1) Artist’s book as archive

Amplifying data

- “...my original goal [as an editor] was to let the artist communicate their perspective through the book’s materiality. Now, in addition to that, I desire to create works of slightly larger scale—books that can serve as archives, as metadata.” [B]
- “I think [artists’ books] clearly have value as archives... They’re an effective medium that allows one to experience an artist’s worldview holistically.” [D]
- “It’s like building a secondary or supplementary literature on my work. The publication includes sources like film stills, text, photographs, research material and unused filmic fragments.” [N]

The book doesn't expire

- “Artists’ books and exhibitions both require a long time and effort to produce, but exhibitions just disappear after a month or a couple of weeks. Artists’ books are different in that their viewing period does not expire so fast—once you own them, you can view them anytime, anywhere... Even in terms of resources, holding exhibitions requires several or dozens of times more than producing and distributing artists’ books. In that aspect, [artists’ books are] more accessible for artists as well.” [G]
- “It’s really important for me that my work doesn’t finish with an exhibition and can still stay at home—in the homes or heads of people. An exhibition often lasts only a month, and then it’s over. But with the book, works are brought to another level where they live further and continue to tell the story.” [K]
- “I guess one of the things about an exhibition is that it has a specific space and time, whereas a book can go beyond that.” [M]
- “...turning things into books is a way for the show to survive after the exhibition... it [is] a way to reach a broader audience and have the work live on in another iteration.” [S]

2) Artist’s book as documentation

Holistic evidence of practice

- “All of the photos taken over a period of six and a half years, the dates they were taken, the one-time performance where the photos were displayed and taken away after being sold, basically the entire practice remains only through this book.” [B]
- “I think [an artist’s book] can be very helpful in understanding the artist’s thoughts, process and background in making a work.” [D]
- “We see the book as a product, but it’s also a process. Everything that leads up to it is part of it, and also everything that then comes out of it.” [R]
- “We just finished a book with A.K. Burns and the book includes conversations between her and her curator about the making of her works, the research leading up to it, references and images, her collaboration with others, and her thought process overall. Her practice is to make video-based installations, so she made film stills, selected them, and designed their layouts in the book herself.. We’ve been meeting with her since 7 years ago—from the very beginning of this really epic project, and it was always important for her that there’s going to be an outlet for internal thinking and references to her process.” [R]
- “...when the artist spends a long time on a project and wants to document the process to provide the reader with a holistic view of the project. These project-based books use the space of a book to do what the exhibition might not be able to do—providing details about the research, process, conversations around it, interpretation, etc.” [Q]

Structure for notations

- “Performance artists, in particular, often use their artists’ books as devices to show their ‘scores’. Books are useful for essentially structuring the scores.” [D]
- “We’re also just finishing a book about 12 individual dance histories. There’s this choreographer who couldn’t perform during the pandemic, and she invited other performers to write solos which is their

private dance history. So, the book another outlet to think about what they're doing as choreographers and dancers. I think a lot of artists feel that publishing is a straightforward way to circulate their work." [R]

Post-event document

- "...my book contains multiple layers of time, compiling what was done and not done before and after the performance. I tried to compose the book so that I keep the work itself at the time of the performance and focus on things that happened around it." [D]
- "...about 10 years ago, we did this project called 'Again, a Time Machine'... we were thinking about archiving and distribution—archiving and how to share that—thinking about distribution as a mode of communication. We built an archive and invited people that we had work with to contribute new things to the archive, and then we organized this touring exhibition... And then we published a book alongside that...it had contributions from all participants, again responding to the idea of archiving and distribution." [M]
- "Another example is Alex Da Corte's book. He made this event that was based on an Allen Kaprow performance, and he recreated it in the same space in Philadelphia in March 2020, the day before the lockdown. This event was so chaotic and so wild that he felt it became a weird metaphor of the pandemic. So, he called the book a 'living document'. It brought in performer memories, fragments, photos by different photographers and the designers tried to create that energy from that moment." [R]
- "I consider the book a bit like a catalog for a show, but also a compilation of different things that were involved in the exhibition—I call them artifacts. And the text in the book is the wall text from the show that explains the overall narrative." [S]

3) Artist's book as trace

Tangible outcomes of practice

- "The definition of artists' books, in my opinion, is an 'outcome of practice' that can be encountered as a tangible object—the ultimate object that adds materiality to a practice. Immaterial practices like performance art and land art are eventually materialized when their performative processes and attitudes are captured in photographic documentation or texts... Books are shapes of traces that artistic acts could leave." [B]
- "There's also a duo called Setsuko (Tamsin Clark and Richard Bevan). Tamsin is also the person who runs Tender Books. She has this collaborative practice with Richard, and they mostly publish. I think they're really interesting because they approach things from the viewpoint of a fan effectively. They get each other excited about something, and then they get really obsessed with that together, and then they'll see it through and create something that embodies that." [M]

Relics of practice

- "While exhibitions and performances get consumed and disappear, books keep things through their spatiality and temporality, making themselves feel like relics." [D]
- "I mean, all of these are so process-based...the book is almost like a trace or a remnant of practice." [O]

[4] The book as a social thing

For their producers, artists' books are a platform for collaboration. Many participants emphasize that contemporary artists' books are not created solely by the artist—artistic publishing more often than not entails expanded authorship involving various collaborators such as editors, designers, technicians, translators, proof-readers and other cultural intermediaries who each contribute to the book from their own “subtle tangents” (Participant B). The collaboration involves active and critical dialogues, extending artistic publishing to a public act (Participant N, Q, R). Mediated by the sense of community that forms around the public act of publishing, the collaborators become contextual conditions of one another that inform, aid, reciprocate and reflect each other (Participant F). At the point of distribution, each of the local, project-based scenes is then reconnected to the larger cultural network or ecosystem of artistic publishing. In this larger communal space for exchange, artists and collaborators meet new sites of publishing to participate in. In a sense, they themselves—not just their books—become transmitted into new contexts, reproducing the act of publishing like self-generating ripples (Participant A, F, G, H).

Furthermore, artists' books gravitate their consumers toward this collectivity by bringing them to participate in their content or even by inspiring them to produce their own books (Participant J, K, L). Being familiar, ordinary book objects on one side, artists' books have the charm of being accessible and inviting, which often triggers further creativity. Furthermore, artists' books, often being multiples, inherently convey a sense of democratic distribution and create low-threshold gateways to cultural knowledge (Participant I, P, R). Throughout these social effects on people, artists' books are repeatedly and collectively valorized as cultural objects, which in turn becomes the social condition for their valuation.

1) Artist's book as platform for artistic collaboration

Collaborative & context-dependent authorship

- “...just because a publication is labelled ‘artist's book’ doesn't mean that it's made solely by the artist. Editors or other intermediaries like me intervene as well as collaborators.” [B]
- “It's still very hard to find artists in Korea who use books as their primary medium or sole basis of work. So, there's a bit of discrepancy in assuming artists' books published in Korea so far to be 100% by the artists. Rather, in many cases, intermediaries like me play the role of presenting the context of artists' books and participate in the translation of artists' works into books. But again, that's also a basic condition of artists' books and books in general—born from subtle tangents between collaborators.” [B]
- “When I'm choosing the film stills and texts to include in the publication, it's studio work. But when it comes to bringing them into the printed format, into the decisions of the materials and all that, it's always a local decision.” [N]
- “...we value active and critical dialogues through our [publishing] process... it's a dialogue that involves printers, color correctors, photographers, designers, artists, writers and us. It's the totality of that collaboration and how all those pieces work together to make the project specific and find its own form.” [Q&R]

Publishing as a public act

- “I also learned that although artists have different values about and ways of using the book medium, they were sharing a certain collective dynamic between those who work through books. Knowing that, we try to define IANN and The Reference as platforms where various domains conjoin, rather than as just a publisher, space, place or an exhibition site... Right now, I’m holding art book research meetings with several colleagues who are active in the art publishing field. It’s mainly a place to diagnose how our areas of activity are being formed, based on each other’s opinions and findings.” [B]
- “I’m constantly connected to many people including designers, editors, curators and retailers, whether through contractual relationships or my practice. I expect my network to grow more as I collaborate with other artists to publish their artists’ books at publisher NUN.” [D]
- “A community where you can share your opinions is very important for artists who make artists’ books.” [E]
- “I think Mediabus and The Book Society happened because we had a solid relationship with the designer community as our backdrop. We had become each other’s condition. In fact, because publishing is such a ‘public’ activity, you always need collaborators. Various members, including translators, proof-readers, designers, artists, print shop owners, distributors and so on, come together to maintain this ecosystem. People who still believe in the presence and significance of books as a medium with physical properties continue to participate in publishing.” [F]
- “Around that time, I could also see that there was a field forming—the Printed Matter New York art book fair had just started, for instance. It was really dynamic, really energetic...The generosity of exchange was very different from that of the art world in the sense that it was focused on transmission, communication and exchanges, rather than on selling unique artworks.” [H]
- “...in 2010, when I first started Banner Repeater, I was trying to be attentive to the different ways that we write, the different substrates, the different energies that are used, and the modes of expression that are available and so on... [T]his acted as a sort of ongoing platform, a commissioning platform.” [O]

The act is reproductive

- “I am an artist making artist’s books and consumer of artists’ books by other artists.” [A]
- “Now, artists’ books serve more as sites that allow various collaborators to come together, and it seems no longer meaningful to draw the categorical boundary that they’re solely by the artists. I think artists’ books are valuable in that they open up the possibilities of participation, allowing different subjects to join each other and co-create works.” [F]
- “...it’s also cyclical...the exhibition becomes a book, and the book becomes an exhibition again, and in the process, a network of artists, curators, art dealers, collectors and the public is formed around it. This is also the narrative of the platform for artists’ books itself. For instance, when producing Calendar 2023 earlier this year at einBuch.haus, various artists participated in the project jointly, so the book became a focal point for people to connect in many layers. Artists who met through that project also came up with other projects—this way, production led to more production through our platform... We are also planning to collect and publish the know-how of book production of

publishers and printing technicians based in Berlin sooner or later.” [G]

- “Publishing to me is not a linear thing. It’s much more a question of distributed networks and distributed networks of reception which are also involved in production. The collector can become a publisher, the distributor may also well be a collector of sort... it is very complex in the sense that things received sometimes will elicit further production.” [H]
- “Ultimately, [artistic publishing is] less of a space for individuals producing books, and it’s more of a communal space of transmission and exchange. A thing that needs to be repeated. It bears repeating because that’s also why artists can suddenly decide to make their own books. It’s because they’ve seen that it’s possible, seen other people do it.” [H]

2) Artist’s book as platform for audience engagement

Artists’ books convey collectivity

- “Also, I think they’re meaningful in that they continue to connect people—from artists, publishers, mediators to viewers, and continue to convey this social dynamic to the public.” [B]
- “I think any book is about ‘sharing.’ All these cultural objects are about sharing values. Historically, they were about that as well—publishing one’s book whenever one wanted, finding different routes to put them on display, and eventually showing art outside of the gallery system. Carrión also mentions this in his writings about the mail art—it was about destroying the power, the idea of power because it was open to share.” [I]
- “...every time I think about making a book, I think about not only giving an ideal form to the content but also the appropriate way of distributing it. My interviewees for Xsport on Paper also told me that it’s the circulation that really matters. So, when one chooses to print something, it means not only an old fashion way of producing information and knowledge but also trying to produce a very specific gateway or community that access the information.” [P]
- “You feel you’re connected to other people through reading, because there are a thousand copies of that book out there. But at the same time, you have this really focused, isolated encounter with it... I think that’s very different from experience with other artworks.” [R]

Artists’ books encourage viewer participation

- “Many students get a lot out of seeing these books and looking at them, finding out about what they are and why artists have made them. I think that experience can be quite inspiring.” [J]
- “My general drive to make work starts from wonder, curiosity or excitement for new things, and I make works to try to have people join me in this perspective and make people laugh, have fun and be happy in their own contexts, have a moment of wonder.” [K]
- “I still see value in them because once you experience an artist’s book, it stays with you, even on a personal level. It can trigger something that you wouldn’t have thought about before. I think that’s the case with any artwork—if it touches you on a level that you wouldn’t have considered before, then it has already had an impact.” [L]

[5] Prioritizing democratic distribution over monetary gains

Artists' books have a convoluted relationship with the market and its economy. To begin with, their artists and collaborators do not aim for economic profit through the publication of artists' books. Rather, they adhere to the principle of keeping their books affordable and leverage the status and role of artists' books within the market and art ecosystem as cultural commodities to propose new values to the art economy focused on the democratic distribution of art. It is important to note that this is not because artists' books are less costly or easier to produce than other art objects. In fact, artists' books are very labor intensive and expensive to make, largely due to the significant time, effort and material resources invested by the makers (Participant A, K, Q). Artists and their collaborators compromise their monetary profit to increase accessibility to artists' books—almost all participants strongly emphasized that making profit is not a priority for them (Participant D, E, G, H, J, L, M, N, Q, R) and that they actively try to keep the prices of their artists' books as low as possible by applying for grants to fund their projects, not calculating the time they spent on the project into the prices, doing larger print runs to lower the cost per volume, or simply choosing to give out their books for free (B, H, K, L, O, P). One strategy that many employ to secure a certain degree of economic sustainability of their projects is publishing limited, special editions that they sell for profit in addition to the regular editions (Participant B, G, L).

Regardless, artists still choose the book medium to keep the threshold to their art lower. Participants stress the book's ability to travel freely and efficiently to disseminate artists' thoughts to more diverse audiences (Participant B, G, H, L, M, N, O, P, R). In addition to the portability, the book's worldly nature makes artists' books more approachable and easily loved than other forms of art, allowing them to exist everywhere and anywhere (Participant A, C, D, E, G, J, M, O, S). Instead of being “worshipped” (Participant C) hung on a wall or inside a vitrine case, artists' books are to be held and interacted with, proposing an alternative, more affective way of consuming art. Artists' books are also relatively affordable than other art forms, to both the consumer and the maker. Participants acknowledge that not all artists' books are cheap, but they can still be made on a relatively manageable level compared to other disciplines that require more complicated logistics to produce, transport or sell, making them a powerful way to communicate art to the world (Participant J, K, L).

1) High implied value

Bookmaking/publishing is laborious and resource-intensive

- “I came to think that the process of making a book is similar to building a house. Just like laying groundwork, erecting pillars and building walls, it takes a lot of time and effort to turn sheets of paper into a book.” [A]
- “For me at least, making a book requires much more time and effort than making a print. If I make an artist print of an etching, it's so much faster—not to argue that it's less valuable, but it just requires less resources. The process of bookmaking always takes enormous amount of time, and the cost per page would actually be more expensive than what it costs to make a print or a painting. So, it's very ironic that books are considered cheaper in the market.” [K]

- “...for our books, they’re full of images, colors, need nice paper, and we spend a lot of time on them. They’re very labor intensive and expensive to make. So, it’s not like we’re ever going to earn a surplus from these projects artists’ books. In fact, money has to be raised first to make an art book. We were just listening to our distributors talk about this issue, and they were saying that when you see a fancy art book you can be sure that a painting was sold for it, for example.” [Q]

2) Choosing the medium to lower the threshold

The book travels

- “They are able to disseminate the artists’ thoughts more quickly and make them more accessible than other types of artworks.” [B]
- “...since they don’t weigh much, they can be distributed to basically anywhere in the world if the artist wants. They’re an excellent medium for delivering messages.” [G]
- “Distribution for me is really the key. The idea of producing a book without thinking of its distribution is completely absurd... I was always interested in the conceptual period of production, ascribing an idea to a work. The primary thing is the information, the idea, and ascribing the thing to the author is a secondary thing. I’m also less interested in ‘unique books’, ‘a book object’ type of thing. I’m more interested in that question of duplication, multiplicity...the idea of a distributed object.” [H]
- “Also, books can be distributed—they can go places. Like, someone buys my work, and it goes to Chile or India where I’ve never been myself. This idea that your work can travel in a small envelope without many logistical problems is great—it gives you freedom.” [L]
- “I’ve always been interested in publications. It’s similar to the reasons why Book Works publishes, actually—I’m interested in them as a kind of mode of distribution, sharing knowledge and making things go wider and further... I’m interested in creating new entry points like that, and I guess that also aligns with publishing because you’re creating entry points into various ideas [through books]... [W]e’re not too experimental in format because when you’re thinking about how it’s going to be distributed through bookstores... they still prefer to have things that will go on a shelf. It just makes books easier to distribute... when sticking to the traditional distribution pathways, it means that having a more typical format helps you keep going.” [M]
- “Printing, writing, the idea of publishing as a different distribution model that is very accessible, portable and so on, was always something I did as part of my practice... The specific distribution method...extends the project into a wide range of cultural and social contexts.” [N]
- “...the reason why we do Banner Repeater at all is because it’s a node on a network of distribution. We’re on a platform at Hackney Central station. What this means is that we can distribute items from the space very easily... We put them out on the platform, and people pick them up on their way to work, and you’d read it on the train and possibly leave it on the seat for somebody else. Then, somebody else would pick it up.” [O]
- “The ‘unique’ category is also interesting because the physicality or the value of a unique book seems much more like that of an artwork like painting and sculpture that are made to be rare. But for the ‘multiples’, I think the focus is more on forming communities based on the audience or readership... unique books may generate larger economic values, but multiple books have more potential to

anchor communities by being circulated, which is socially, culturally and also politically valuable.”
[P]

- “For an average person to see art, they have to go to a gallery or a museum, but these publications really get art out into the world. So, people who don’t normally have access to art can get access through these books... In short, I think artists’ books help make art a little more democratic and open to everybody.” [R]

The book is worldly

- “[Artists’ books are more accessible than other forms of art] because they’re just ‘books.’ Personally, I don’t wish to make works that the public finds too esoteric. I think I worry about this aspect because I make ‘books.’” [A]
- “Also, rather than hanging them on the wall and worshipping like you do with paintings, you can take books out of their shelves and take them to anywhere and show people the information and knowledge compressed within them... This, I think, is the power of books—that they can exist anywhere, not just in art museums. To be honest, I don’t really see artists’ books as ‘artworks.’ It’s obvious that they are a genre of art, and it makes no sense to view them only as mass-produced commodities but treating them too carefully as if they are untouchable or sacred, feels like damaging the nature of the book, which is to be held and appreciated.” [C]
- “I think the biggest difference between them is accessibility. To see paintings, sculptures and prints, you need to go to the places where they are displayed, but books can be kept near you.” [D]
- “I’ve always felt that books are the most accessible medium and material—both from the perspective of the person making it and viewing it. I also spent my childhood reading books, which gravitated me towards them.” [E]
- “The first reason I believe artists’ books are valuable has to do with the characteristics of the book medium itself. Art can be quite difficult for the public to approach, but since artists’ books are books, people seem to feel comfortable handling them, relatively. Running this space, since half of it is a bookstore, I’ve seen many people come in more naturally and easily and then grow to enjoy art. Artists’ books serve as this ‘passage’ that minimizes barriers to art... Artists’ books can be esoteric, but many of them are still made for the readers’ pleasure in mind.” [G]
- “I always loved books. Ever since I was a child, I was always making my own little books—I’d be making my own stories and picture books.” [J]
- “I just like books as well, obviously.” [M]
- “It’s just a very straightforward approach because we’re familiar with books.” [O]
- “One is that I have a great love of books. My wife is a writer, so she has a lot of books to begin with. I love books, comic books, and I love to read.” [S]

The book is affordable

- “I think the idea of ‘putting it out there’ [that makes artists’ books valuable]. You could say that about any art, I suppose, but there’s something about books, particularly. Not all artists’ books are cheap, but a lot of them can be affordable—affordable for both the producer and consumer. I almost see them as the interventionist way of getting art into the world.” [J]

- “I think books are much easier to distribute, collect and keep compared to other art forms. They’re more approachable and economically accessible, for the most part. I know books can also be very highly priced, but for me the idea of sharing my work with others is more important—the democratic sense of showing art.” [K]
- “...what’s truly fascinating is that a book isn’t confined to its physical form—it offers a great deal of flexibility and room for interpretation. This flexibility extends to their prices as well. Artists can create affordable books, which is quite remarkable; you don’t need gallery representation or worry about logistics and economics. You can produce an idea inexpensively and distribute it through artists’ books, making art accessible to more people. It’s liberating.” [L]

3) Compromising profit for accessibility

Making profit is not a priority

- “...I can’t cover all the costs from selling the books because they’re more than you’d expect. Making a profit out of books was not my priority to begin with, so I tried to set a reasonable price for consumers. The regular price of BackgroundRadiationReflection is 20,000 won (£12.5), and when large retailers apply their typical 10% discount, the consumer price becomes 18,000 won (£11). Of course, it’d be nice to be able to make a profit, but it’s simply not a priority. It was more important for me to embody my intentions in the book as much as possible, which is why I used multiple types of paper in the volume... Also, in the case of Korea, there is no large demand for artists’ books to begin with, so I thought the price should be kept low to minimize any barriers.” [D]
- “When I first made an artist’s book, I also gave it a ridiculously high price wanting to be compensated for the time and effort I spent on it. I think it’s a mistake any early-career artist can make. However, now, I’m more concerned about ‘expanding’ the artists’ books market than economic return on the project. If you make one copy and price it at 10 million won, there’ll be only one buyer, but if you make 10 or 100 copies, the price per volume will decrease, but the market will expand... [I]n the end, you need to have consumers and collectors to be producing these books, and they need artists to maintain the culture of consuming artists’ books. So, you should recognize this circulation and reach a certain level of compromise when pricing your artists’ books.” [E]
- “Also, as a personal rule, if the price per copy turns out to be too high when I follow the ‘times four’ equation, I lower the price slightly even if that would mean our loss. I would almost always prefer to have more people read our books than see the books pile up in the warehouse, even if they need to be sold at a lower price. I think I feel strongly this way because artists’ books themselves is a medium aimed at being widely distributed. When setting a price, I also consider the overall end points of books, such as by whom I want the books to be read and where I want them to end up.” [G]
- “...the profit motive, or the economic rationale for publication is quite an odd way of understanding the drive, the impetus to publish. For me, the real focus is all on distribution. Art may not need the institution, may not need the gallery, but it would still need a distribution network, forms of social dissemination. It may not need all these structures—these validation structures of the market, either.” [H]
- “I have to say that most of the work I make, as I’ve mentioned, is under £5. I’ve made a few things that are slightly more expensive, but I don’t think I’ve ever made anything more expensive than £20.

And it's enough to make a bit of money back, I'm not really doing it for monetary reasons." [J]

- "I always aim to offer affordable books, which is why I sell some of my works for just £5, and I believe I will always want to have a book available at that price point. The art world can sometimes be quite cruel and tough, so I value the freedom that the book form offers—how it allows me to explore different directions. If that flexibility enables me to live in different areas and constructs, I would rather appreciate that than having just a few collectors control the price, dictate where it sits, or determine who buys it for which collection." [L]
- "We're a charity, so we're non-profit—our aim is to cover the costs we need to and then keep the prices low. Because that's the surest way of making the books more accessible... publishing is one of those things where you're not really in it because you want to make money." [M]
- "For us, the book sales is never going to cover its own costs, which means it doesn't pay a salary for us, either. We're not trying to do that. So, it seems better to go for lower prices, for it to be fair for the consumers." [Q]

Keeping the price as low as possible

- "When external grants or budgets sponsor our projects, we choose to increase the number of copies or lower the price so that even more people can afford it." [B]
- "...the price point of an artist's book should be low because you want to distribute it as much as possible. It's not that costs of production are not related to the price points of a book. They are, but they are not." [H]
- "Jivan and I agreed to keep the initial price low to make it more accessible—we settled for €25. Luckily, we had received funding from the Dutch government, which covered most of the production cost, so we had more room to lower the price." [K]
- "Honestly, I never estimate the time—I just aim for production to break even on materiality and printing costs because I'd like to keep my works cheap and affordable, with the idea for them to travel far and be accessible." [L]
- "In the places where I had exhibitions, the series was seen as a work by itself in the printed format that can be given out for free or at a very low price so that it's affordable for many." [N]
- "We give out our publications for free, too." [O]
- "...when I'm pricing my publications, I set the price as reasonably as possible so that my readers can think that they are accessible, as long as I don't lose too much money." [P]
- "...we don't make books in small editions—we really try to have big print runs and keep their prices affordable. We don't really make money from selling books anyway. We're doing this just to get things out there." [R]

Providing options

- "If needed, we publish books in both special and regular edition. Special editions include artist prints and have much smaller edition numbers, which allows us to set the prices high. As for the regular editions, we price them closer to the general price level of books so that any can easily access them." [B]
- "And artists' books are accessible in terms of prices, too. Books we sell here range from €1 or €2 to

- €1,000, giving buyers a wide range of choices.” [G]
- “In the case of Small Editions, when an artist publishes an artist’s book with them, they make a few copies in limited, special edition and sell them at a higher price to collectors representing libraries or institutions and keep the rest at lower price using more affordable production techniques so that the public can access them. This seems like a smart choice because it gives the market two options and the publisher two revenue channels.” [G]
 - “...diversifying your price is a good strategy, so that you have both affordable works and books that you sell for profit... I think that’s just the key to having a healthy art practice—to be able to reinvest in what you do and not become completely exploited.” [L]

[6] Embracing the economic conditions

To keep their commitment to democratic distribution of art, the producers of artists’ books must embrace unfavorable conditions of the market. Artists’ books—and books in general as well—are oversupplied in the market (Participant D, G, H), especially considering the extremely thin and uneven consumer/collector base (Participant B, C, F, G, M, P). There is a chronic lack of demand for artists’ books outside specific art communities who are already aware of the cultural significance of artists’ books (Participant C, F, J, L, M). Non-expert consumers tend to prefer books by well-known artists (Participant B, C), contributing to the challenges faced by most artists and collaborators producing artists’ books.

Furthermore, the position of artists’ books in the market is ambiguous. To begin with, artists’ books lack official, established platforms compared to other art forms, which makes it difficult for artists and other stakeholders to interact with the audience and/or transact works (Participant D, M). Even within the channels that are recognized as major sites of transaction such as book fairs and art book fairs, the categorical boundary of artists’ books is still unclear or conflated with other neighboring genres, especially book arts and catalogs (Participant A, G, M). Other times, artists’ books are considered by-products of other practices or events such as exhibitions and performance, making it challenging for them to establish themselves as a distinct and valued cultural phenomenon (Participant D). Additionally, the atypical motives behind artist’s book production, driven by disinterested or uninterested mediation rather than a clear focus on monetary profit, has led to mistrust or confusion within the market. The multifaceted roles of artists as creators, publishers and distributors, along with the unconventional positioning of artist’s book publishers further complicate the understanding and valuation of artists’ books in the broader art ecosystem (Participant H, M).

Another disadvantageous condition is that artists’ books are largely undervalued as art objects, which has various reasons related to the market economy. The cost-efficient production methods, such as risograph printing and copy machines, have largely facilitated mass-productions of artists’ books, but this accessibility paradoxically led to their devaluation in the art market (Participant G). The tactile nature of these books, requiring physical interaction to appreciate their content that make them worn over time, poses challenges in presenting them as collectibles or targets of significant financial investment in the art market (Participant G, K,

L). Artists' books are also devalued because of their lack of artist signature in addition to being multiples, making them less appealing to collectors compared to other art multiples such as prints and framed photographs (Participant C, G).

Furthermore, despite the high implied value of artists' books, participants testify that it is difficult to increase their prices, because of consumers' expectation for books to be affordable commodities (Participant A, E). The relatively low price subsequently affects the perceived value of artists' books in comparison to other art forms, hindering their recognition in the art market (Participant K, M). When seen as books, however, artists' books are often considered overpriced, especially when they are mass-produced like other paperbacks, making it even more challenging to price them appropriately in the market (Participant A, E, H, M).

Even when artists and their collaborators accomplish their values by prioritizing the accessibility and affordability of their publications, disregarding all the hurdles and unfavorable conditions of the market, their intention often becomes perverted by the market. The art market, the largest "speculative" (Participant O), quickly adapts to newly proposed values and capitalize on the ethos of artists' books (Participant I, J, P). In addition, the secondary market has the fault of inflating prices of artists' books that were originally intended to be traded as democratic multiples (Participant B, G, J, M, O). Even then, because of their—and everybody's—inevitable reliance on the market and its economy to keep things running, artists and their collaborators continue to publish and reignite their morale (Participant Q).

1) Oversupply and skewed demand

Books are too common

- "Nowadays, since so many books come out so sporadically, the effort that goes into each book seems to be undervalued. If we make books more carefully and include more contents to make people want to own them, I think there may be more demand even if the prices are set higher. I myself plan to publish books only when there is a stronger need and the rationale is clearer." [D]
- "...hundreds of titles are released every day, making it difficult for them to be noticed by the public compared to exhibitions." [G]
- "Knowing fully well that books are very difficult to sell, knowing full well that in the context of the arts books are just sent out for free to curators, museum directors, galleries, and then not actually received—they're put in the box. And then the box when it gets full goes to a second-hand book dealer... If you're a gallery of a certain standing, you publish catalogs. If you're an institution of a certain standing, you publish catalogs. It's really part and parcel of the way [the art world] functions. It gives cultural kudos to artists to get a catalog, gives cultural capital to the institutions to be seen, to be publishing things, and gives cultural capital to curators who have books published about the shows they produce. So it's also part and parcel of constructing the reality of the art world." [H]

Extremely thin & uneven consumer base

- "I think the readership of artists' books is very narrow, and the demand is so low to the point that it's almost non-existent. An ideal market would grow from the balance between supply and demand, but there really aren't that many people who understand and are willing to purchase artists' books." [B]

- “Artists’ books themselves have a very shallow consumer base. Few people, unless they are serious collectors, think they can spend a lot of money on purchasing these books.” [C]
- “To be honest, there really is no demand for artists’ books. There are many individual artists and institutions that have the will and desire to produce publications, but I’m not sure if there is a consumer base that actually responds. Not just artists’ books, but books in general as well—there are more people making them than ever, but it doesn’t seem like the readership is growing accordingly.” [F]
- “...it appears to me that artists’ books virtually have no presence in the art market.” [G]
- “[There are] different levels of engagement and knowledge depending on your geolocation.” [M]
- “Most of my readers are also a very niche group of people who are used to the artist’s book culture, so I don’t want to go against the culture and mark my prices up.” [P]

Consumer base is very specific

- “In the case of our shop as well—there are very few customers who come in naturally while passing by. Most of my customers are people who directly commission book collecting or those who come by appointments. The biggest customer currently is Sojeon Book Art Gallery. They gave me a list of about 100 artists and asked me to collect any books that these artists made or participated in. Public libraries also commission bulk purchases with budgets between 10 million to 20 million won (£6,000 to £12,000).” [C]
- “If an artist’s book is purchased in Korea, it would be by someone from a very specific, small group of readers, to whom the book has value as a research material or artistic reference. It’s rare to find cases where a person sees an artist’s book purely as an artwork and buys them for aesthetic appreciation.” [F]
- “From my experience of going to art book fairs, [the people who come are] a very specific, self-selecting crowd. Artists’ books do draw people in, but it tends to be people who are within the art world already. So, the market reinforces itself” [J]
- “Sadly, the community for artists’ books, both in production and consumption, remains relatively small. While there’s always a dedicated audience, these works often remain within their originating communities due to their niche nature.” [L]
- “Some of the artists would have a very specific collector base... I think part of it is knowing how to sell them.” [M]

Consumers prefer books by famous artists

- “Books by artists who are already have a reputation always sell better.” [B]
- “...since books by famous artists are most in demand, I tend to prioritize purchasing books by artists who are well-known to the Korean audience.” [C]

2) Ambiguous position in the market

Lack of independent market

- “Regarding the market, I think artists’ books lack official platforms compared to other mediums of art, which explains why there are so few attempts to collect artists’ books. They often occupy a

section within the overall book category or individual artists each has to deal with their distribution and sales on their own. In other words, there is still a lack of public sites or official markets where artists can interact with their book audience... The artist should be able to publish according to their ideas and intentions, and concentrate on the ‘collision’ or sparks books make when they meet the viewers. But the current book market is incapable of incubating an environment for such a dynamic. Simply put, the process of going to a gallery to view a painting or sculpture and purchasing it is vastly different from the process of going to a chain bookstore to find an artist’s book and buying it—it doesn’t allow people to use their sensibility.” [D]

- “They take a tangent. They still work within other markets, and artist’s book fairs are everywhere now, but... [t]hey still cross over into other areas, though—even at artist’s book fairs, it’s not all artists’ books...” [M]

Ambiguous categorical boundary

- “Book fairs are another major channel, but the categorical boundaries between books that are traded at book fairs seem quite ambiguous. When I visited, there weren’t that many books that I would call artists’ books.” [A]
- “...in the general book market, the boundaries between artists’ books and catalogs, visual novels, etc. become even more blurred, making it difficult to have them as an independent category.” [G]
- “...and I think that there is also a tendency for people who don’t necessarily know so much about the art world sort of conflate artists’ books and book arts.” [M]

Considered by-products of other practices

- “[The lack of official sales platforms] may be because people tend to consider artists’ books only as by-products of other works, which is insufficient to form a prevalent culture that orbits around artists’ books.” [D]

Having atypical motive

- “This idea of disinterested or uninterested mediation is something that’s totally under the surface because of how we accept to talk about our production within the capitalist system. It seems to me that this system is completely overarching the discourse that you’re able to have about certain things and transmissions you can have, almost to the point that if there is transmission of something—say, an artist’s book—that is disinterested [in economic profit], suddenly it’s to be mistrusted as having ulterior motive, as if the financial motive itself was an objective one.” [H]
- “An issue with our value proposition is that people often don’t know where to place us because we’re an arts charity, and we’re part-funded by the Arts Council, making us a commissioning organization, but we more often than not function like a publisher. We do produce exhibitions, we do organize residences, all those kind of things as well, but for the most part, this side of Book Works that I work on functions as a publisher. So, we publish books that go into bookshops and that’s the main distribution method. But people don’t really understand—they are confused by our position or how we fit into categories. Because of this, we’re even seen as having less value.” [M]

3) Artist's book as undervalued art object

Cheap for their value because they are books

- “I think they're still too cheap, even when they are handmade special editions. Perhaps it's difficult to enter the market with higher prices because people generally perceive books as cheap.” [A]
- “It's inevitable to think of the ‘deals’ between producers and consumers within the context of market economy in the capitalist era—accurate supply and predictions of demand, reasonable price suggestions. From the perspective of artists who make artists' books, they may be dissatisfied with their position in the market. Books published over the past 200 years after the Industrial Revolution were produced at extremely low costs due to the value of ‘sharing intellectual property’ pursued by many journalists and intellectuals during the Enlightenment. It's difficult for artists' books to be free from this context since they're also books. In Korea, the market value of books as perceived by the public is between 10,000 and 20,000 won (£6 and £12). Imported books, between \$20 and \$30. So, if you think of the price range of a general book, you obviously cannot capture the value of an artwork in those numbers.” [E]

Cheap price means less value

- “As an artist, a painting and a book have exactly the same standing and meaning. But the market would think that books are something that you could buy more easily, since their prices are lower than other art forms... [Artists' books are] too cheap—cheap for their value and cheaper than other forms of art.” [K]
- “And yeah, people don't necessarily see our books as valuable because they're priced lower... [W]e don't see our books go into the art market—normally they don't. Perhaps because they're being produced in a more DIY way. Even though we're producing projects by artists, because they're new projects that are affordable, they're not seen as having the same value as other artworks.” [M]

Cost-efficient production

- “...recently, risograph printing and copy machines have allowed us to produce books very conveniently and inexpensively, making distribution even easier, although the commercial art market underestimates the books' value because of this facet.” [G]

Unsigned artwork

- “To be honest, artists' books that were basically layers of prints bundled together would have been much more valuable, artistically speaking. But since the pages of those books weren't marked with edition numbers or signed by the artists like individual prints were, artists' books were often sold cheaper than a single sheet of print in the market. They still are. That's why galleries disassembled vintage artists' books and mounted each page separately to sell them as individual prints.” [C]
- “Individuals and professional collectors prefer prints over artists' books.” [G]

Tactility leading to devaluation

- “The problem with artists' books as collectibles is that since they're books, you need to touch them and turn the pages to properly appreciate them. Even when we're at an art book fair, since you can't

tell the value of an artist's book just by looking at its cover, we either have to put on gloves and turn the pages for the visitors to show them the contents or risk damaging the book and allow the visitors to see it for themselves. Since books are bound to wear out in some way, collectors don't really consider them as investment targets. So, there's a greater demand for things like prints by artists who publish artists' books or 'wall-hangable' sculptures made of paper." [G]

- "Whenever I displayed [my books] in exhibition spaces, people didn't want to touch it—they were scared of touching it, because they were scared of damaging an artwork." [K]
- "...artists' books don't position themselves properly within the market. Paintings, drawings and works displayed on walls can be 'presented,' but artists' books require engagement to unlock their value." [L]

4) Artist's book as overpriced commodity

Expensive for being books

- "I think they're still too cheap, even when they are handmade special editions. Perhaps it's difficult to enter the market with higher prices because people generally perceive books as cheap." [A]
- "However, to consumers, an artist's book is clearly a book that most often looks like a book, whether it's signed by the artist or however much its artistic value is highlighted. Such a difference in perspectives just can't be helped. In the end, the best thing we can do is to share and try to understand the different positions as much as possible." [E]

Expensive for being mass-produced goods

- "In short, artists' books in the market are expensive when viewed as mass-produced products, but ridiculously cheap when viewed as works of art." [E]
- "You want people to buy the books, and you want people to receive them as something that has value but hasn't been overly expensive, considering it may not be a unique object, which brings you back to these hierarchies of values and valuations—the unique versus the multiple, the rare versus not rare." [H]
- "If something is really handmade and you can see the craft that goes into it, people will perceive it as having more value because the effort is visible." [M]

5) Market runs the economy

Value is constructed and reconstructed

- "I do sense a problem with the art market itself in that it just inflates the value of an artist's book—or any artwork, really—and takes advantage of the artist's legacy. Institutions look at the monetary value of things rather than their statements. Carrión, for example, is a typical example of an artist that died poor, leaving everything to collectors who then invest a lot of money with different actors in the market to raise the market value of his works. His life has been commoditized—it's almost like Carrión became a cultural object himself" [I]
- "...it's a very small, distorted economy. Obviously, when you read about the history of artists' books... there was this idea of the democratic multiple and radical publishing... It never really panned out that way. As always, in the art market, everything always gets subsumed in the spectacle." [J]

- “So, value is constructed, entirely, in art. It’s the biggest speculation. It can be anything or nothing depending on who decides that it’s great, who then collects it, and who supports that. We all know this. There are many ecologies that are at work there—peer review, peer discussion, connoisseurship, critique, which is a huge generator of interest in itself. When Lucy Lippard spoke of dematerialization...there was a real move away from the idea of art serving only as a commodity. Things shifted to the idea of somehow avoiding the markets by means that were either ephemeral or event-like, or happenings, or where there was nothing produced, in effect. But what then happens is there’s a collecting of the ephemera around that... These things started to have more and more value attributed to them because they are the only things resonating with that ephemeral movement, which in itself just speaks to the ways value is produced. So, this intention to produce something outside of market forces didn’t take into account that it was the aura of the artist that mattered... These things do not exist outside of a system. It’s quite difficult to not be a part of that.” [O]
- “I once interviewed the Brazilian art historian/theorist Paulo Silveira, and he...said that at first, the conceptual artists wanted to see their books as an alternative space to escape the control or governance of the gallery system and art market. But the art market adjusted to this new art form very quickly. For galleries, conceptual art was a big hit, but it was difficult to sell. But after the artists turned it into a contained form, into books, they could actually be traded.” [P]

Prices are inflated in the secondary market

- “So, very extreme prices are set by very small number of buyers...the market itself operates to inflate the prices. Ed Ruscha’s *26 Gasoline Stations*, for instance—the price set by the artist was a couple of dollars, but now that the market has taken over its sales, it’s become this huge title that’s practically impossible to obtain.” [B]
- “However, even if a publisher or an artist sets a reasonable price with such an intention, the market often raises the price arbitrarily. For example, one of Irma Boom’s books, which was sold at €25 in 2013, now goes for €130 in the secondary market. The artist may feel a little proud about this because it implies that the book’s value as a collectible has been recognized, but it still brings up the question of whether the price has to be raised by so much.” [G]
- “...particularly artists’ books that were made by artists who were already established, even if their intention was to sell their books [at affordable prices], the market stands in to ramp the prices up. Ed Ruscha’s *26 Gasoline Stations* is an obvious example of this. He made that book to sell for \$10, \$5 each, but now they’re worth like £3000... So, the intention of the artist is not honored, which is not surprising because it happens all the time in the art market. But it does clash with the original initiatives of artists’ books that were made to circumvent some of the ideas around value in the art market.” [J]
- “We can’t control what happens in the secondary market, so we just try to get them out there and share the work.” [M]
- “...the famous Xerox Book... the original intention of Seth Siegelaub saying that it’s purely about the ideas in the book, exemplified by the desire to pass it through the photocopier machine, to keep the means of production utilitarian, with an emphasis on a poverty of means, completely failed. Now it’s worth £4000 a copy, and it’s a highly collectible item.” [O]

Artistic publishing still relies on the market

- “The financial conditions of making an art book are actually within the art market to a large degree. If not the art market, then the funding mechanisms of the art world—institutional support, etc. They’re often tied to these things. The reality ties them to these things. We also work with artists to raise money they need to publish—helping with their grant application, for instance.” [Q]

[7] Adding to multiplicity and diversity of culture

In addition to the critique on the art market, artists’ books and the practice of artistic publishing offer an institutional critique. Artists’ books propose new cultural forms by rediscovering the book form or challenging traditional expectations of the book medium (Participant A, F, G, J, L). Reserved to the creative license of the artist, they are not confined by established norms of the book type and are able to offer a platform for testing experimental and unconventional formats. With such a versatility, artists’ books are also seen as a tool to redefine the boundaries of art, expanding the horizons of how art may function (Participant B, E, I, J). In addition, artists’ books deny the traditional hierarchy of cultural practices, particularly between publication and exhibition. They advocate for artistic publishing as an independent domain of practice, separate from but interconnected with exhibitions (Participant D, M, N, Q, R). They are considered as providing the viewer with an experience unique to their ontology, which makes some practitioners even prioritize the production of publications over exhibitions (Participant B). Furthermore, the notion of artistic publishing keeps evolving. Participants emphasize that the contemporary notion and practice of artistic publishing have made a departure from the historical influence of 1960s and 70s artists’ books in that they have been much more globalized and localized to fit into various cultural contexts and narratives (Participant B, F, J). Contemporary artists’ books are seen as serving much diverse roles than their traditional, narrower definition as books created by visual artists as works of art in their own right (Lippard, 1985). Now, they are an expanded artifact, evolving form, medium and translational objects active not only in aesthetic, artistic but also social and economic situations.

1) The notion of artistic publishing evolves

Escaping the ghost of the 1960s & 70s artists’ books

- “Artists’ books bring to mind the American Conceptual Artists in the 1960s and 70s or the Fluxus movement, but today’s artists’ books seem to have become much more diversified and broader in terms of their roles.” [B]
- “...there is a gap between the artists’ books of today and of the 1960s and 70s, when...Lucy Lippard was preaching the standards for artists’ books. Compared to those days when they thought that the pages themselves are an exhibition space, that artists’ books can’t include texts on exhibitions outside the book or texts by critics, and that they had to only hold the artist’s voice and art itself, the art world has evolved a lot, which naturally updated and diversified the conditions of artists’ books.” [F]
- “I look for books that reflect what’s going on in terms of the aesthetic trends, sociopolitical issues, new technologies, etc. These objects...tell stories of their time.” [J]

Artistic publishing globalized and localized

- “Another characteristic of the artist’s book market—or the scene itself—is that it has ironically spread to every corner of the world and become localized, more than one might expect... It seems to be an appropriate moment to think of forming a connection of power, or cultural solidarity having art publishing as a common context.” [B]
- “The prevailing view is that our current notion of artists’ books was formed through the sentiments of Conceptual Artists in the 1960s and 70s. Although I really like those works, I think their concept really doesn’t fit the Korean art world today. I think the artists’ books produced in Korea today are not just artists’ books, but rather books by more than a single creative mind.” [F]

2) Proposing new forms

Rediscovering the book form

- “Artists’ books are books, and the book is a medium that we have a pretty common cultural understanding of. People have certain expectations when viewing books, like concepts of pages or symbols in texts. As an artist, it’s interesting to be able to vary these rules.” [A]
- “...historically, people—poets and artists at first—were able to rediscover books through artists’ books. I think the book medium today have higher chance of surviving because of the unique physical properties artists’ books offer.” [A]
- “...artists’ books constantly allow for experimental attempts to be made in terms of the book format. Most popular books often need to follow certain standards or use binding methods to be easily distributed through large channels, but artists’ books don’t have to stick to these pre-existing ‘forms’.. [W]e can provide readers of artists’ books with new experiences that are different from normative ways of reading.” [F]
- “...artists’ books propose a truly diverse range of book forms and its materials—from a book made out of cottons or woods that you might not think it’s a book to the tiny books in a gumball machine I mentioned earlier. I think it’s important that they pioneer such variety.” [G]
- “[artists’ books] challenge what we think about books and what our assumptions are about books. They’re not only part of art history but also a continuum of book history.” [J]
- “...what’s truly fascinating is that a book isn’t confined to its physical form—it offers a great deal of flexibility and room for interpretation.” [L]

Suggesting new mode of art

- “I believe that artists’ books can serve as a tool to expand the horizons of how art functions as art.” [B]
- “...if you think culturally, artists’ books are valuable because they add to the ‘cultural diversity’ of the arts—perhaps as a minority opinion. Without these attempts, the art world we have today would not have existed. Everyone would still be working on paintings now. So, I think artists’ books are meaningful in that they propose a new aspect of art to the viewers.” [E]
- “To me, workshops are similar to publishing because both are constantly dynamic, moving and alive—they’re more performative ways of creating meaning. You might have guessed already, but I think it’s the ‘format’ that’s interesting and important—experimenting with the format of work adds layer and diversity to the practice.” [I]

- “What I also find so fascinating about it is that there’re multiple ways artists’ books work. When you look at the collection of artists’ books we have here, these artists come from different types of practice and backgrounds. They’re sculptors, painters, photographers, performers, etc. They all then come to use the book form in their own ways, which is very interesting.” [J]

Inherently interdisciplinary medium

- “I think bookmaking is valuable because it’s an interdisciplinary practice. If you think of the criteria for the ‘Beautiful Book Awards’, they comprehensively evaluate the cover, binding, contents, editing and typography, which is a very wide spectrum of elements.” [C]
- “The encounter with a book is a very material experience of feeling the paper, a visual experience of seeing certain texts or images and a very multi-layered ‘place’ where you can lead imaginations while reading the book.” [D]

3) Challenging the hierarchy of practices

Publishing as independent domain of practice

- “I make artists’ books because I think the medium of books is another way to experience my works on the same level as exhibitions, screens, stages, etc. But I do think that reading my books should stand as an independent experience apart from other works and exhibitions. It shouldn’t just be about straightforward documentation of works but should also allow people to experience things that they couldn’t at the site of the works or exhibitions.” [D]
- “The publications and exhibitions were definitely related, but the publications could also stand alone. So, there were texts in there that weren’t specifically describing the exhibition, and there were works in there that weren’t in the exhibition. And so, it wasn’t exactly documenting the exhibition—rather referred to it.” [M]
- “...the issues are intended not as companions to my installations but rather as extended and free-form experiments in word and image that can be encountered alongside cinematic experiences or stand on their own.” [N]
- “There are certain similarities between curating exhibitions and working with artists to put their work into a book form, but it’s still a completely different medium with its own history, form, logic, limitations and possibilities.” [Q&R]

Putting publication before exhibition

- “...we put more weight on the ‘bookstore’ side of the identity at The Reference. It’s as if the element of exhibition, which more people find familiar, has been brought in as a bait to further promote the concept of art books, including artists’ books.” [B]

[8] Ethos of self-representation

Contemporary artists’ books remain connected to their historical context of the 1960s and 70s in that they still represent the ethos of self-representation. Stakeholders of artistic publishing take on multiple roles within the creation, production and distribution processes

(Participant B, E, G, H, O). Participants claim that they shift between these roles or occupy several of them simultaneously due to urgent and organic needs but also to be able to have a holistic control over the publishing practice. Doing so, they seek self-sufficiency, which allows them to determine their own space of freedom, enabling their creation and dissemination autonomous and unchecked (Participant F, H, J, P). Along this vein, participants consider pricing as a strategy that is very specific to artists' books because they afford the autonomy of setting initial prices of their works with considerations extending beyond financial aspects to target the ideal mode of circulation. In such a sense, pricing is regarded as a medium that contributes to the overall artistic concept of artists' books (Participant P).

Participants also express their awareness of the marginality of artistic publishing and claim it as part of their ethos. "[T]he margin is the most important thing because [it] is what defines the rest," they say (Participant H). To them, margins are spaces of resistance, autonomy and self-empowerment, where one can assert struggles (Participant H, N, R). From such a perspective, independent presses, which are considered the powerhouses of contemporary artistic publishing, are recognized for their unique role within the broader ecosystem of bookmaking and art practices, as strongholds of ideals and values.

Participants also see artists' books as a forum for presenting and affirming new modes of cultural experiences and artistic practices (Participant Q). Among them, artists particularly emphasize their exploration of disciplinary boundaries that has led them to combine various media with the mode of publishing (Participant A, D, P). In other words, they demonstrate a conscious effort to navigate and move toward inter- and transdisciplinarity by utilizing the site artists' books provide for validation, valorization and valuation of art's immateriality.

1) Individuals taking the initiative

Playing multi-layered roles

- "I'm the Artistic Director of The Reference, which is both a bookstore and an exhibition space, and the Director of publisher IANN, where I'm responsible for everything from publication to sales. In summary, I'm a curator, editor/publisher and distributor/retailer of art books." [B]
- "I'm an artist and curator working based on book art. I run a private press called Pages Press, and I also personally collect artists' books." [E]
- "First of all, my role here, as mentioned earlier, is curating exhibitions that introduce works in the form of books, such as artists' books. Doing so, I find myself connecting the artists with the audience, collectors and librarians... Plus, since einBuch.haus operates as both an exhibition space and a bookstore, I'm also in charge of curating the store space. I tune our selection of books depending on the exhibition theme... Lastly, einBuch.haus has begun publishing books starting this year, so work needed at any publisher such as editing, designing and promotion has been added to my job." [G]
- "My activity encompasses being an artist, publisher, editor, distributor and bookseller. In a way I fit in all of these. I shift from one to the other—sometimes seamlessly, sometimes awkwardly. To be just one [of these categories] in a way, in a publishing and book capacities is an odd thing. I think most of the people that I know who are involved in art book publishing, at one point or another have

occupied these positions. It's context dependent. Those categories and those roles in a sense, are defined by the context, the moment, the activity, the other people..." [H]

- "...more often than not, author and editor for an artist's book will be the same person, which means that the artist takes on the role of a curator as well." [M]
- "My practice is an interesting one because I'm an artist, but I'm also a facilitator for other people, so I also support other people in their projects." [O]

Seeking self-sufficiency

- "The reason why I, who am not a professionally trained editor, took up this role was also because I had to deal with the medium of books, which rose to be at the center of this community. So, I took on my role out of organic necessity. It's not just the editorial role, actually—I think I get involved with almost anything along the publishing process. This is more so because we're a small self-organized project, independent from institutions." [F]
- "Those boundaries of roles are now really blurred. When you have the skillset to bring something all the way from the design process through the editorial process to the printing process, [you tend to do it yourself]." [H]
- "It's not just about self-expression, it's about self-determination. If you decide to print 100 copies of your book, you just do it without any authorization. It is a space of freedom that one gives oneself" [H]
- "...this idea that you could make something, whatever and whenever you wanted to and put it out there. I felt very drawn to that." [J]
- "I usually design my own artist's books." [P]

Pricing as a strategy

- "Perhaps prices depend on what mode of circulation is ideal for the work. There's a book called *Post-Digital Print* by Alessandro Ludovico—he says, in my rendering, there that now, every choice you make is on top of the digitalized world, so you can't just choose to print things on paper just because you like it... Setting the price is another choice that you have to make based on your ideal of perception or consumption... pricing itself is a medium of the whole artistic project. And this is possible because we're dealing with artists' books—the artist generally has the autonomy of setting the price." [P]
- "I think if I sell my upcoming work, I'd do it just to break even for the costs... My background, printmaking, is a medium that was very much for the public. It was about creating art so that any average person can purchase it. So, that's my standard when pricing my works—pushing back on the whole system." [S]

2) Consciously marginal

Exploring disciplinary boundaries

- "Since I deal with artists' books and the book medium, I'm always conscious of my boundaries. It's almost always vague whether my works are just books, artworks or craftworks. My audience has vastly different reactions as well. In fact, any art contains at least a little bit of craft-like element, but

it feels like books are more strongly associated with crafts. I think about this issue when I'm applying for grants as well—whether to apply in the crafts category or the visual arts category.” [A]

- “I’m an interdisciplinary artist focusing on video and performance. I also founded an independent publisher named NUN to experience more of the production and distribution of artists’ books. I think I always work along the boundaries of genres.” [D]
- “I use diverse medium to interpret my understanding of historical narratives including publishing, video, archive, installation, lecture, performance and so on.” [P]

Pushing against the frontiers

- “[Artists’ books are] still marginal. And of course, the margin is the most important thing because the margin is what defines the rest, the middle ground. They’re also space of resistance. They are space of autonomy or space of self-assuredness, places where one can assert one’s struggles.” [H]
- “I do think that the role of independent presses is something that we care about, and we would really love to be able to retain. That’s something to think about as part of the whole ecosystem of bookmaking and art bookmaking—what are the different roles, who plays what role, what’s the commodity, what can you afford, and what can you contribute. I think it’s not the same when a gallery does it or when a museum does it or when a university press does it and when an independent press does it. It makes a huge difference because of the habitats we each live in.” [R]

Forum of affirmation

- “...artists’ books are also a forum to present and affirm a range of cultural experiences and artistic practices.” [Q]

3.4. Data Analysis 2: Situational Analysis

As the second part of data analysis, I chose to apply the method of situational analysis to reiterate and better organize the data. Situational analysis originates from the postmodern approach to the methodology of grounded theory, largely influenced by Anselm Strauss's idea of *social worlds analysis* (Clarke et al., 2017). Together with his fellow sociologist Barney Glaser, Strauss developed the approach that centers on comprehending and examining the diverse social worlds within specific contexts. The approach introduces the concept of 'social worlds', which are intricate and interconnected social systems involving people, relationships, institutions and shared meanings. Social worlds analysis aims at understanding how individuals and groups in society construct and interpret meaning within these social worlds, acknowledging the existence of multiple realities depending on the perspective, interconnected boundaries between social spheres or arenas and cultural nuances (Glaser and Strauss, 2008). Adding on to such a view of the world and society, Adele E. Clarke, a sociologist and pupil of Anselm Strauss, developed situational analysis as a qualitative method to understand and interpret the complex and dynamic nature of social "situations" (Clarke et al., 2017, p.39) which are smaller, more focused or condensed units of research than 'social worlds'. Similar to Strauss, Clarke emphasizes the need to examine contextual factors that contribute to the complexity of the situations.

In addition to humans, Clarke argues that nonhuman elements—objects, for instance—can also have agency within social situations as actants. Referring to Michel Foucault's "displacement of 'the knowing subject' as the sole/main focus of analysis" (Clarke et al., 2017, p.55) and Bruno Latour's actor-network theory that centralized the role of objects in our social worlds and situations, Clarke claims that paying attention to the agency of the nonhuman elements "disrupts the taken-for-granted" (Ibid, p.51), through which we can see the world afresh. Such a view at the core of situational analysis greatly resonates with the purpose of this research to focus on the agency of artists' books. In short, situational analysis seeks to provide a holistic yet nuanced understanding of particular social situations, which in this research refers to those of artistic publishing that surround the conception, production, distribution and consumption of artists' books.

One of the most prominent characteristics of the situational analysis method is its suggestion of three main *cartographic approaches* (Clarke et al., 2017). First is the 'situational map' that lays out the major human, nonhuman, discursive and any other elements in the situation of inquiry. Second is the 'social worlds/arenas map' that lays out the collective actors, key nonhuman elements and the arena(s) of commitment within which they are engaged. The last is the 'positional map' that lays out the major positions taken—and not taken—in the data vis-a-vis particular axes of difference, concern and controversy around issues in the situation of inquiry. Together, these maps elucidate "the key elements, materialities, discourses, structures and conditions" (Ibid, p.2) that characterize the situation subjected to inquiry. Such a mode of approach that focuses on the multiplicity of perspectives is highly appropriate for this research, considering the individual positions and experiences of the participants. Clarke explains that the most important outcome of drawing these maps "is provoking the researcher to analyze

more deeply,” and that they can be used as “analytic exercises simply to get the researcher moving into and then around in the data” (Ibid, p.83).

Among the three proposed cartographic frameworks, I chose to apply the first two—the situational and social worlds/arenas maps—to visualize the sphere of my inquiry. I decided that the positional map approach is not suitable for this research, because it asks to condense the research into two axes, which requires quantitative scales to measure the data or a dualistic division of ideas, neither of which are clearly present in this research.

3.4.1. Application of Situational Analysis: Mapping the Arena

Based on the thematic analysis and referring to Adele E. Clarke’s templates for cartographic approaches, I constructed the following maps that chart the situational arena of contemporary artistic publishing and artist’s book production. The templates were downloaded from the Online Resources page of SAGE Publications.

[1] Situational Map

A situational map includes all the analytically pertinent human, nonhuman, material and symbolic/discursive elements of a particular situation framed by the researcher. Clarke’s template for situational map (ordered version) organizes these categories into a table with two columns, which allows convenient juxtaposition of elements of opposing characteristics such as the human and nonhuman that helps reveal their relational dynamics.

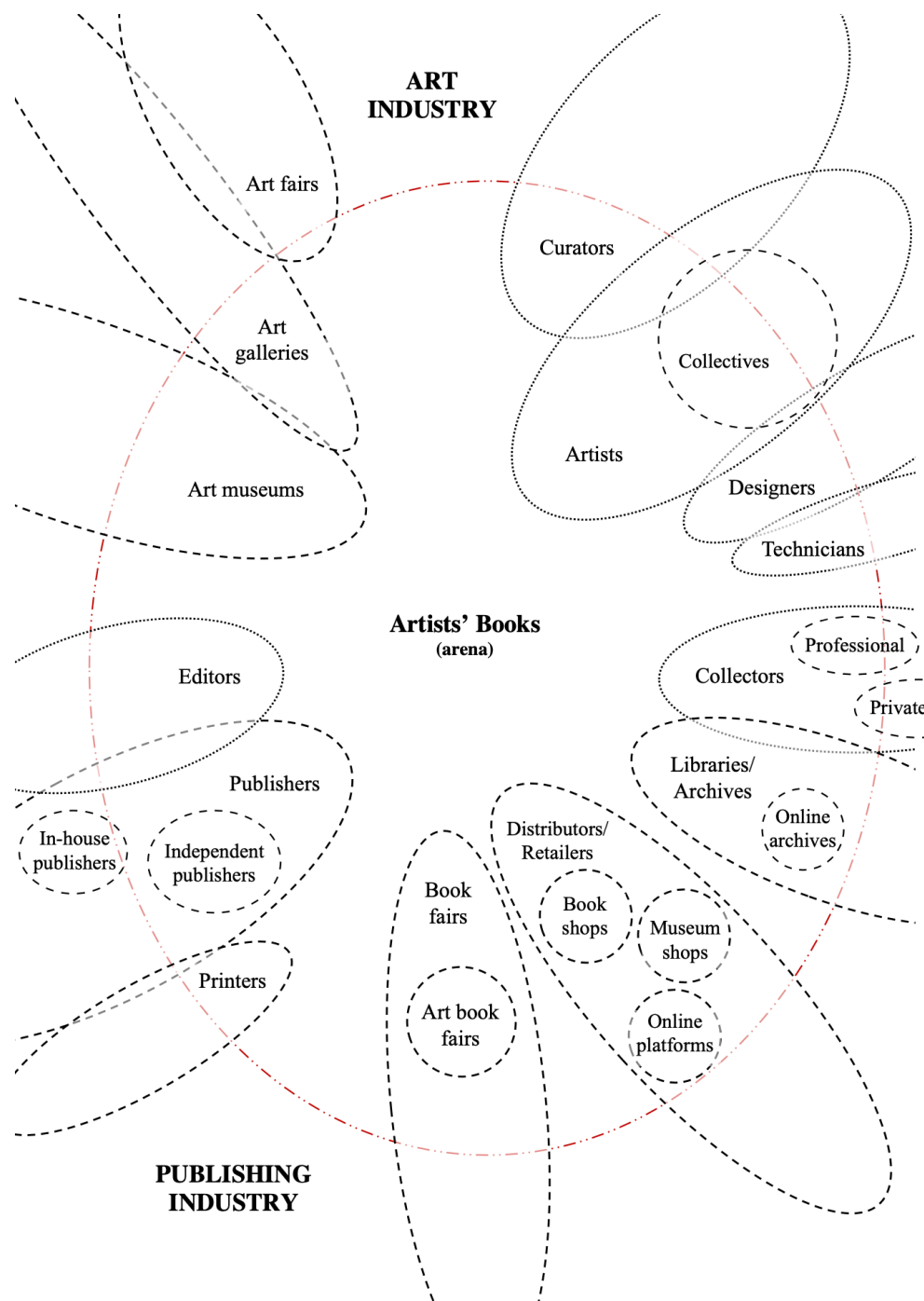
Through this mapping exercise, I was able to effectively dissect the complex, almost muddy situation of contemporary artistic publishing into an organized layers of elements and mark its numerous tangents. Although in real life these elements would never remain static and engage in constant negotiations with one another, their portrayal through this map helped me clarify exactly ‘who’ and ‘what’ are involved in the situation and its extension. The most prominent characteristics of this situational map can be summarized into the following points: 1) There are more nonhuman elements/actants than the human elements/actants involved in this inquiry, which supports my choice to center the research’s focus around an object—artist’s book; 2) Certain voices are only implicated—those of the general consumers of art, books and artists’ books, in particular, were collected indirectly, filtered through the perceptions of the interviewees, who are professionals of art and publishing industries; 3) The relationship between the human actants and the political/economic elements (art economy, art market and book market) is negative—the human actants often work around, ideologically disagree with or attempt to escape the systematic influence of these elements; 4) The most major issue that was repeatedly brought up by the interviewees was the ethos of collectivity and democratic distribution of art.

<i>Individual Human Elements/Actors</i>	<i>Nonhuman Elements/Actants</i>
Artists Designers/Technicians Curators Editors/Publishers Distributors/Retailers Collectors (professional, private) Archivists/Librarians	Artists' books (AB) Publishing as artistic practice Contemporary art industry/market/field/world Art economy Publishing industry Contemporary print/book culture Printing technologies Information technologies
<i>Collective Human Elements/Actors</i>	<i>Implicated/Silent Actors/Actants</i>
Art collectives Art institutions (museums, galleries) Publishers (independent, in-house)/Printers Distributors/Retailers (on-&offline platforms) Art book fairs Libraries/Archives (on-&offline)	General consumers of AB General consumers of art General consumers of books Contemporary art practices
<i>Discursive Constructions of Individual and/or Collective Human Actors</i>	<i>Discursive Construction of Nonhuman Actants</i>
AB add to the multiplicity of art and books. AB challenge the traditional hierarchy between exhibitions and publications. There is a strong relation between editorial and curatorial practices. AB document artistic practices. AB outlives ephemeral artistic practices. AB don't replace other works by the same artist - they exist in parallel, as interdependent experiences. AB are social practices and platforms that bring different actors together.	There is more production of AB than their demand. AB are often traded at compromised prices 1) because of the expected price range for books. 2) because their producers prioritise keeping accessible prices over profit.
<i>Political/Economic Elements</i>	<i>Sociocultural/Symbolic Elements</i>
Art economy/market - that traditionally profits from unique works of art - that hierarchises other artistic practices over publishing - that considers AB and artist publications as by-products of other practices/exhibitions Book market - with a set commodity price range for books - without a defined category for AB	Diversification of materiality and objecthood in contemporary artworks due to the practice turn Cultural connotations of the book (codex) form
<i>Temporal Elements</i>	<i>Spatial Elements</i>
Rise of digital publications - Doubts about the survival of printed matter - The book becoming more of a cultural object than pure medium of communication	Viability of art outside of exhibition spaces Universalised and localised concepts of AB
<i>Major Issues/Debates</i>	<i>Related Discourses (Historical, Narrative, and/or Visual)</i>
Monetary gain is not a priority in artistic publishing. Democratisation of art consumption as a core value. Stakeholders believe that artists' books add to the multiplicity and diversity of culture. Publishing is a site for social practice.	Historical cases of artistic publishing (Livres d'artiste, Avant Garde Magazines 1900s-1930s, Fluxus Forms, Conceptual art) Dematerialisation & Rematerialisation of art New materialism & Thing theories

[Fig.54] Situational map of the project.

[2] Social Worlds/Arenas Map

A social worlds/arenas map focuses on depicting how relevant actants compose social worlds to reveal their “regimes of practice” (Clarke et al., 2017, p.102). Through this mapping exercise, I was able to clarify the conceptual boundary of the current inquiry—the arena—and visualize its social sense by positioning all stakeholders in their collectivity. When drawing the map, I tried to reflect the relative proximity I felt between social groups and spheres by placing relevant circles closer to one another. Although the map is largely simplified, it was useful for making my field of inquiry plain, especially when ensuring the distribution of interview participants across the arena.



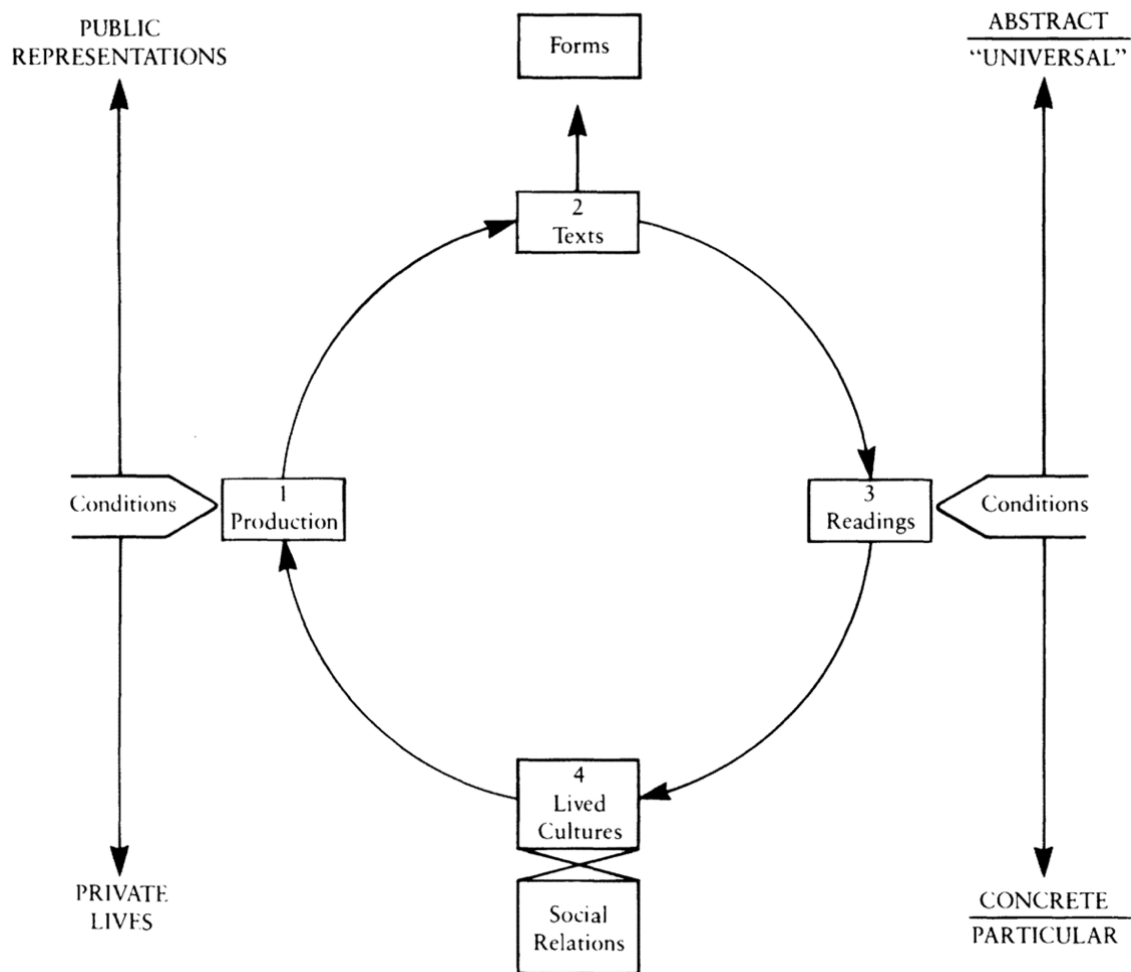
[Fig.55] Social words/arenas map of the project.

3.5. Object Biography

As a culminating attempt to observe and interpret the agency of artists' books in real situations, I have chosen to put together an object biography of contemporary artists' books. Before jumping into the introduction, it should first be noted that there is no systematic or tightly theorized way of representing what an object biography involves. In a way, object biography is closer to a loose conceptual framework or an inspirational notion of objects than a deeply founded methodology. However, I found it influential enough to be able to eclectically gather knowledge that could inform my own, generated or interpreted mode of writing an object biography, which I share here.

Object biography is an approach most famously used in anthropological studies, but it has been gaining presence in other fields such as art history, material culture studies, archaeology, history, conservation and restoration and museum studies (Lehmann, 2021). Although an object biography does not aim to anthropomorphize objects (Hodge, 2017), it assumes that objects live lives like us, as “they intersect and weave with different social worlds, throughout their emergent becoming” (Wisher and Needham, 2021, September 30). The approach aims to recognize objects as social *actants* (Latour, 1994; 1996) and collects real life observations of the object and human accounts on it using qualitative means (Joy, 2009). This resonates with the methodology of oral histories, which “while focusing on the singularity of individual testimony, are understood as creating a vital document to the construction of consciousness” (Sandino, 2007, p.1). Doing so, the researcher is able to illuminate the nature of the interaction an object has with human actants throughout its life and the agency it demonstrates at different scales ranging from intimate personal attachment to broader relationships of exchange within social networks (Wisher and Needham, 2021). Most importantly, this offers an opportunity to tap into the “mutual process of value creation between people and things” (Gosden and Marshall, 1999, p.170), which is exactly what this research intends to highlight regarding artists' books and their stakeholders.

It is important to recognize that this process between people and things encompasses different stages and trajectories in the objects' lives from conception to consumption (Hodge, 2017). On such a note, the methodology of object biography resonates with the principles of cultural studies suggested by Richard Johnson. In his article ‘What is Cultural Studies Anyway?’ (1986), Johnson proposes a diagram that he refers to as the ‘Circuit of Culture’, which is “intended to represent a circuit of the production, circulation and consumption of cultural products” (p.46). Each box in the diagram represents a moment in the circuit that depends on other moments and is “indispensable to the whole” (Johnson, 1986, p.46). This implies that observing the moment of reading (consumption) is equally important as observing that of production in understanding cultural products because the “conditions” (Ibid, p.46) of each moment differ and cannot be predicted from the other side of the circuit. These conditions include “the existing ensembles of cultural elements already active within particular social milieux (‘lived cultures’ in the diagram) and the social relations on which these combinations depend” (Ibid, p.47), which greatly supports the central idea of object biography to find meaning in the interactions between the objects and their environment.



[Fig.56] 'Circuit of Culture' (1986), Richard Johnson.

Furthermore, Johnson suggests two prevalent limitations in analyzing cultural products that should be noted for the object biography and this research overall. The first is the limitation of *economism*—the tendency to neglect what is specific to cultural production and assimilate it with the general model of capitalist production. This means that the analysis can easily pay too much attention to the material means of production and the capitalist organization of labor, instead of considering the idiosyncratic elements drawn from the social milieu and lived cultures. In other words, there must be an effort to draw the value of the cultural product in their subjective conditions of production in addition to the objective, capitalist means when analyzing cultural products. The second limitation is that of *productivism*—the tendency to infer the character of a cultural product and its social use from the conditions of its production, as though production determines everything (Johnson, 1986). Such a reductive error should be avoided by exploring the wide range of possibilities in cultural forms as they are realized in “readership” (Ibid, p.56) or consumption.

The culmination of this methodology or what it produces is often a written object biography itself, which recounts the “life history” or “career” of the object, providing “contextual consideration” (Hodge, 2017, p.1) of the shifting relationships of the thing and

people as the object circulates into and out of different social situations. Thus, by definition, an object biography provides the sum of divergent spheres of relationships that embody an object (Joy, 2009), incorporating “polyvocality” (Zhao, 2021, p.28) contributed by different actors. Such a recount is often based on answering questions about ‘Who? What? Where? When? How? Why?’ for each step of the object’s journey (Hodge, 2017). Kopytoff, in his article ‘The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process’ included in Arjun Appadurai’s seminal volume *The Social Life of Things* (1986), suggests more detailed questions that must be asked from the biographical standpoint of analyzing objects: “What, sociologically, are the biographical possibilities inherent in [the object’s] ‘status’ and in the period and culture, and how are these possibilities realized? Where does the thing come from and who made it? What has been its career so far, and what do people consider to be an ideal career for such things? What are the recognized ‘ages’ or periods in the thing’s ‘life,’ and what are the cultural makers for them? How does the thing’s use change with its age, and what happens to it when it reaches the end of its usefulness?” (Kopytoff, 1986, pp.66-67).

In addition to the theoretical references, I have been greatly inspired by the following two practical thoughts on how to grasp the significance of objects. Anna Panszczyk, a researcher of writing practices within higher education contexts, suggests that observing objects can be a way of navigating our knowledge, referring to Harman’s object-oriented ontology (OOO). At the 2023 Arts in Society Conference held at Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Panszczyk presented a conceptual model for a writing exercise that adopts her interpretation of the OOO. The model instructs: 1) examine a select object, 2) try to reflect on the ontological status of the object—its sensual, material, cultural and intellectual effects on us or its contextual information such as where it is situated, whom or what it interacts with, or what it experiences and 3) write down—”amass” or “capture”—the reflections (Panszczyk, 2023, 6 July). Panszczyk claims that through these processes, we can make the “charisma” or the agency of the object legible, which then leads us to know “what we want to know further” (Ibid). Such an approach challenges the anthropocentrism of epistemology and shows how objects enable human subjects to know more, which directly connects back to the methodological purpose of object biography in this research.

In his creative exchange with artist Antje Majewski, Issa Samb—a Senegalese painter, sculptor, performance artist, playwright and poet—beautifully captures the relationship between human and the nonhuman. In the conversation titled ‘How to Make Objects Talk’ (2010), Samb asserts that anyone who creates should go through an ontological “transmutation” that takes place “through socialized cultural objects” because it “allows for an understanding of the Other” (Majewski, 2011, p.244). He goes on to tell that the object in and of itself has a “force” (Ibid, p.245) that we cannot disrupt, which is essentially its life that is meaningful regardless of our—human—volition, needs, wishes, or aesthetic concerns. Samb claims that the objects are mute only when we say that they are. Objects always speak, “[b]ut speak their own language” (Ibid, p.247), he says. This persistent language is the objects’ (omni-)presence itself, and our perceptions of it contribute to the accumulated narrative or vocabulary of things.

In summary, object biography as a methodological approach and practice of accounting aims to observe, describe and eventually reach an understanding of the significance of objects in its relation to the human subjects that evolves throughout real time and spaces. Considering all above, to construct an object biography of contemporary artists' books, I interweaved autoethnographic accounts of my own experience as an observer and consumer of artists' books throughout this research with the accounts of the interview participants. I paid attention to the precise description of situations that revealed the agency of artists' books, the relationship between human subjects and artists' books in such situations and what artists' books tell about valuating and consuming art today. The resulting object biography of contemporary artists' books zooms in on five select cases of artists' books that best demonstrate the books' journey through pragmatic situations of valuation and consumption—from the artists' workshops to exhibitions, on- and offline bookshops, art book fairs and archival collections. All five books introduced in the biography were either authored or edited by one of my interview participants.

3.5.1. Object Biography of Contemporary Artists' Books

1.

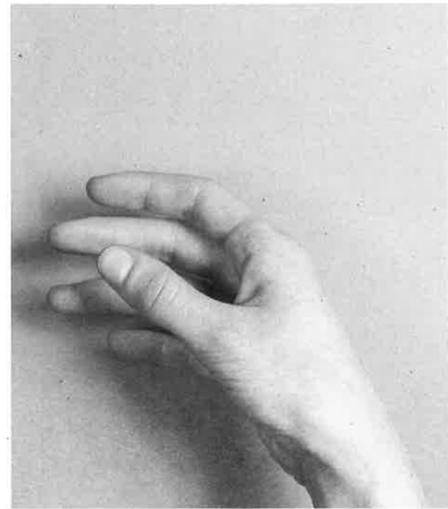
Of all things, art wanted to be a book this time. Why does the proposition *artists'* must be attached to artists' books? We do not say artists' paintings, artists' photographs or artists' sculptures, so why do artists' books have to be specified as being created by artists to establish their identity? Perhaps this is because if the condition is not given, books are just something practical and mundane, difficult to be seen within the context of art.

To be frank, books are old, old things. Without trying, books are everywhere, which makes them seem somewhat tedious. (Even now, as I am writing this, over 200 volumes of books are blankly staring at me from the bookshelf behind my back.) Compared to other technological media that have emerged more recently and captured our attention, books are quiet and tend to only linger until we reach out and open them. Plus, they are frailer than one might imagine. Paper, one of the main ingredients of books, gets covered in dust, likely to be harmful to the respiratory system as the years go by, and if it is excessively exposed to sunlight or moisture even for a day or two, it starts to lose its original complexion and develops lesions. And, most critically, the more we touch them, books become disheveled. In order to utilize them for what they are, one must open the cover and turn the pages, but looking at my fingerprints tarnishing the silkily coated paper and the corners that crumple each time I grab them makes me feel like I am disturbing their chance of living an eternity, which is an uneasy feeling—even more so when the book is a special object that is said to have been created by an artist.

[Fig.57] *Dancing With You* (1973), Ulises Carrión, displayed in Stedelijk Museum
(Photo: Hyun Joo Cho)

2.

Despite being so troublesome, books are hard to get rid of. When I organize my bookshelf, for instance, even when I am deciding if I should give away a book that I have forgotten about for years, the moment I open it and check its contents, I become persuaded of its necessity. Why? Because, in the end, books are more than just piles of sheets tied on one side for convenience—we see value in them. Books are one of the oldest edited forms of knowledge, body—external to humans—for thoughts to reside and the most faithful memory. They even physically preserve our always-ongoing act of reading—think of all the marks we make each time we turn a page. They are sheets of time. When I turn a book sideways and look at the dense forest of oblique lines, it suddenly feels like the book has existed longer than me, no matter how recent it is. Moreover, a book is an ideal, having a front and back, outside and inside, beginning and end, a perfectly complete state. Perhaps, as humans, we yearn for this state of books after having to always live tirelessly without knowing our ends. With this granted self-sufficiency, books travel most fearlessly from one pair of hands to the next, even outliving us and time. Whenever and wherever they go—whether in the storage room of a bookstore, on the desk of a cozy room, on the bench in a park, in the trolley of a university library or the wooden crate of an antique shop—books are always relevant as books. Even as they are placed on a dusty shelf, held in two sweaty palms, put in a cavern-like bag, placed on the nightstand under a dripping glass of water and in a transparent vitrine—even as their status constantly morphs, forgotten or not, books are these particular things that we, as humanity, are rather helplessly in love with.



The moment you held.

[Fig.58] Page from *and hold* (Combind Press, date unknown) (Image source: De Appel Archive).

3.

The first time I encountered books entitled artists' books was in August 2020, when I returned to scorching Seoul in the midst of the pandemic. Like most other people at the time, thanks to the past half a year of pretending that things were real even when they were not in front of me, I had already been extremely fed up with telling myself to be satisfied with staring at images on the screen. I wanted to see real things, so I went outside and wandered around, gallery-hopping.

In one of them, an exhibition titled 'Art of Imagination'³³ was being held. Paintings, photographs, installations and artists' books by four artists were displayed. Frankly, other works have escaped my mind, but I do recall the books most clearly because of how atypical they were. One book³⁴ was made up of faded papers of various sizes piled up like the contours of a slope. The book's spine was sized to fit the largest paper, making it look as if the skeleton of the book was exposed. Another book³⁵ was made entirely of something transparent. It contained no text, only faint geometric lines on murky pages. (Later, I found out when I interviewed the artist who made these books that the patterns were originally on the windowpanes of the house of a friend with whom she had exchanged letters. The friend sent her a rubbed copy of the glass, which the artist chose to engrave onto the page.) Judging from the fact that the book was freestanding, spread out in a fan shape, I could tell that the book was made of something firmer than plain paper (It was PET film). When I looked at the book from one side, the last page appeared dimly on the other side, as if I was looking across time. The last book³⁶ was spread out on a reading table-like structure and was made of milky tracing paper. Each page was punctured with square holes in decreasing order from large to small squares then again in increasing order from small to large, creating two pools of depth inside the book. These three books have lived in my mind like some sensation that awoke. It felt as if I found out something wholly new side of a person I had known for a very long time.

33 At d'ARK ROOM run by Datz Press (https://datzpress.com/exhibition/2020_art-of-imagination).

34 남겨진 *the leftover*, Meenyea Oh (Participant A), 2019, "...When a bookbinder dismantles and rebinds a damaged book, he changes the blank cover sheets from the front and back into new paper. The removed papers can be used later when repairing other books, so they are usually kept for future use. These papers contain traces of the book's life, such as the author's autograph, a short message from the person who gifted the book, the price quoted at a used bookstore, scribbles, coffee stains, and water stains. I gathered these leftover papers that would not have made a book by themselves and weaved them into a volume." (Artwork description excerpted from the artist portfolio).

35 창문예 *on the window*, Meenyea Oh (Participant A), 2019, "I received a letter from S with a rubbed copy of her room's window... I wondered what it would look like if the window became a book. I turned the window into a book, thinking of my experience on a foggy day when I kept writing on the glass with my finger and erased it repeatedly... for the things that were there even though they can't be seen now." (Artwork description excerpted from the artist portfolio).

36 비추는 *reflected*, Meenyea Oh (Participant A), 2019.



[Fig.59-61] *the leftover* (2019), *on the window* (2019), *reflected* (2019), Meenyea Oh (Image source: courtesy of the artist).

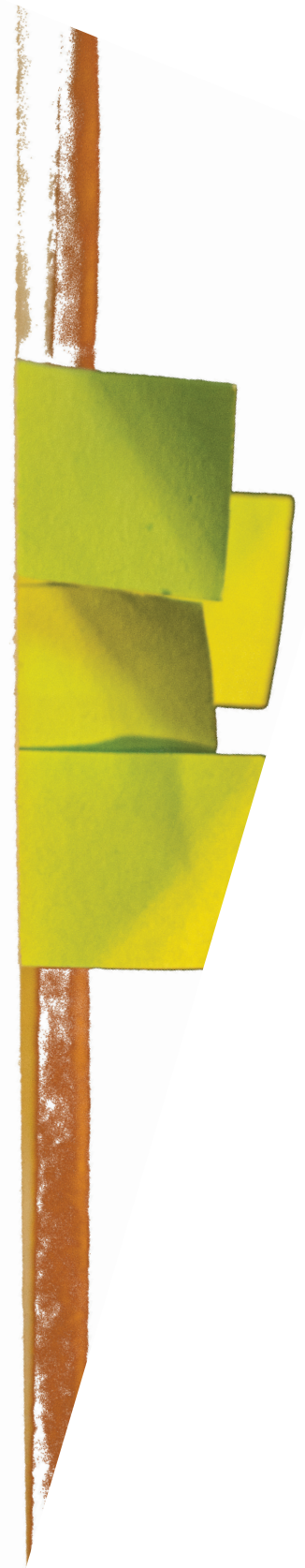


At the exhibition, the books were contained in acrylic boxes. Since they are not meant to be “read,” but rather stand as presentational objects, it seemed that the artist and curator had decided that they needed to be safeguarded. The books were also made as the only copies due to their irreproducible sculptural qualities, and they were not up for sale, either. So, to come to think of it now, I would not say that these books holistically represent the physiology of contemporary artists’ books. Still, they helped me start understanding that one of the levers artists’ books pull is the cultural concept of books itself—artists would annotate it, variate it and utilize it.

In September 2022, once I finished structuring this research and started interviewing people, I met with the artist who made these three books. She was the first participant in my interviews. She told me she thinks making an artist’s book is similar to building a house. Like levelling the ground, erecting pillars and piling up bricks or concrete, it takes a lot of common steps and effort to weave something into a form that everyone can recognize as a book. Although, she added that people’s “approval” is not exactly what she is seeking when presenting her artists’ books—rather, she aims to broaden the frontiers of expectation when it comes to the book form by making works that explore what constitutes the book.

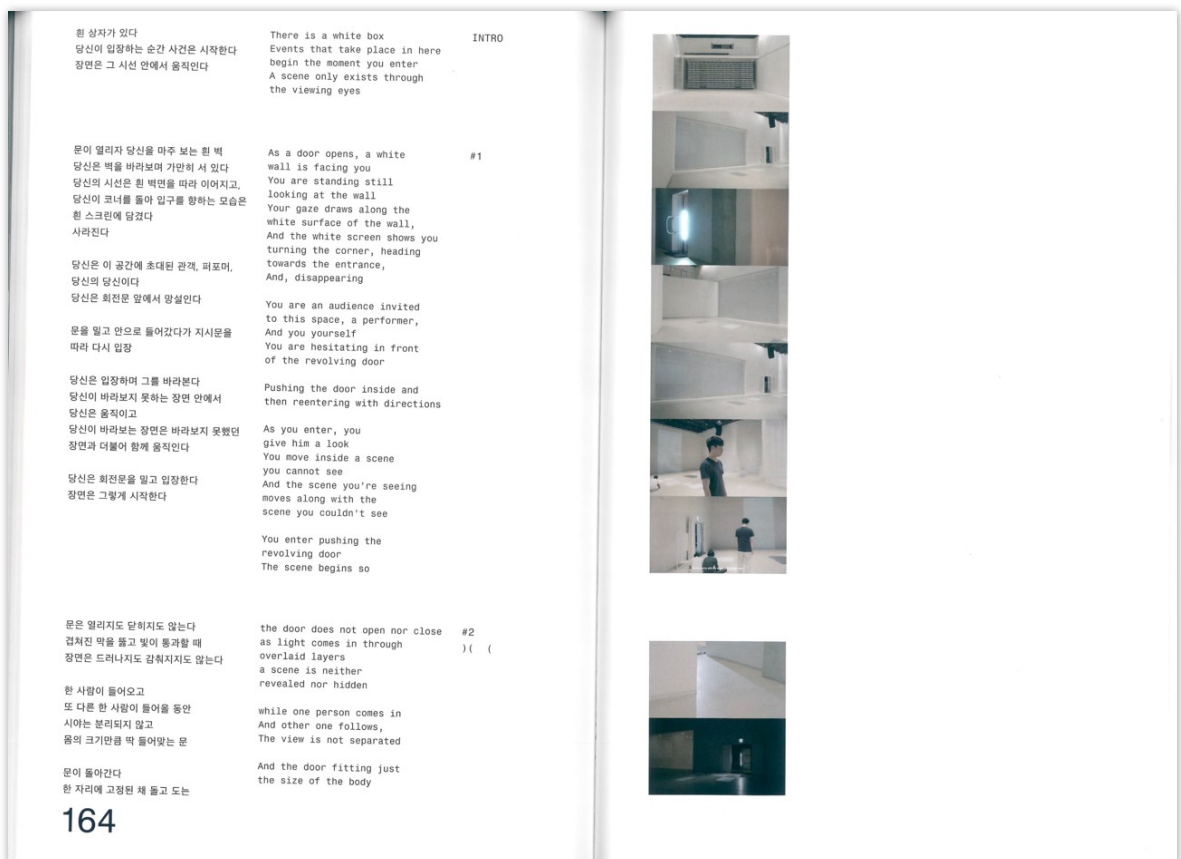
Her books, however, had come to a halt. To my question of what factors she considers when pricing her artists’ books, the artist answered that she had never set prices for sales, except when signing up for artwork damage insurance for exhibitions. She explained that although she admires the ethos of democratic dissemination often linked to historical artists’ books, her books so far turned out to be unsuitable for mass production, largely because of the rare materials³⁷ she used for them. She could have marketed her books for higher prices like any other unique artwork, but she had chosen to abide by her values of sharing art—to keep them within the sphere of public exhibition. In a way, her books had indefinitely postponed their entry into the market, in a stalemate of some sort.

³⁷ I am referring to materials such as the old papers the artist collected from damaged books (see footnote 34 for context). These materials could technically be replicated, but the replicas would never mean the same thing because each original paper represents its unique relationship with the damaged book.




4.

Another day in September 2022, I encountered an artist's book in the most unexpected of places by sheer chance—when I was digging into a list of books on fine art on a webpage for a Waterstones-like bookstore chain in Korea. Titled *BackgroundRadiationReflection*³⁸, the book seemed like a little bit of everything. An exhibition catalog, an anthology of essays, photographic documentation of an event and a creative score for a performance. The artist who published this book later told me during my interview with her that it is meant to be an alternative space that could be considered as the same level of significance as exhibitions, screens and stages, to experience a performance she had designed and presented in 2019. In addition to straightforwardly documenting the performance through photographs, the book extends the experience by providing the artist's notes, the score of the performance and the transcription of a conversation the artist had with two curators after the exhibition of the performance. By presenting materials that are not only of the performance but also about it, the book allows the viewer to go through thicker strata of temporality—before, during and after the performance—which leads to a more holistic understanding of the artist's practice.



[Fig.62] Pages 164 and 165 of *BackgroundRadiationReflection* (Heesue Kwon, NUN, 2021) that show part of the score for the performance.

38 배경복사만사 *BackgroundRadiationReflection* (NUN, 2021) is a single-volume artist's book by Heesue Kwon (Participant D), a Seoul-based artist, that was published as an interpretation of a performance exhibition in 2019 with the same title. Kwon is most known for her interdisciplinary works combining various media including video art, film, performance art and writing. In 2021, she founded NUN, an independent publisher in Seoul, to continue her publishing practice and expand it into collaborations with other artists.



I purchased the book immediately, which turned out to be a formative experience because the bookstore chain automatically gave a 10% membership discount on the price. It was my first time purchasing an artwork off a bookstore chain website and at such a cheap price, too. After the discount, the book—152 by 225mm big and 232 pages thick—cost me 18,000 won or £12.5. It was a great deal for me, but I could not help freaking out how cheap that was. The book was cheaper than most of the books I had bought from that bookstore chain in several years, which meant that it was even far off the mean price.

Because once it is out there, it is just a book—it is what it is, said the artist when I asked her rationale behind her price. No matter how much effort she puts into it, as long as the work takes the book form, the consumers expect a price tag that seems right for a book. Besides, making a profit is simply not a priority, she added. The costs that were put into publishing *BackgroundRadiationReflection* had not been measured or restrained to ensure any profit. For instance, the book consists of multiple types of paper that range from glossy to matte and thick to thin, in order to signal its relation to the original performance the book stems from, in which the performers use different types of paper as stage props. In other words, the materials for the book were chosen not for convenience or considering their cost efficiency, but because they simply make sense for the book and practice. So, in a way, even after making such an aesthetic choice, the artist had chosen to commodify the book—this may not sit well with some people, I thought, but that was the book's cultural strategy to reach out to as much potential audience as possible.

The book faced another systematic problem regarding the market, however, perhaps a harder one to cope with—that artists' books lack official platforms where they can be presented and marketed, especially in Korea, where artists' books are much less known. They often occupy a section within the overall book category or individual artists each have to deal with their distribution and sales on their own. In other words, there is still a lack of public sites or official markets where artists can interact with their book audience, said the artist. This had pushed *BackgroundRadiationReflection* to be displayed in a mundane chain bookstore. Considering the accessibility and popularity of the channel, this may come across as an advantage that allows public promotion, but I had to admit that it is a vastly different process from visiting a gallery and viewing the work on a pedestal or in an acrylic box before deciding to purchase it, per se. Not that such an embellishment is an absolute necessity to transacting or buying art, but it sometimes helps bring out the right sensibility, at the moment of consumption. It is true that I almost did not recognize this as an artist's book, scrolling down the bookstore's webpage—the environment the book was presented in made it quite impossible to immediately realize that it is an artist's book. Such a lack of incubation had made the whole experience feel uncooked.

I now have two copies of *BackgroundRadiationReflection* sitting on my bookshelf side by side, like mirrors to one another. When I met the artist to interview her, she gifted me another copy not knowing that I had already purchased one. Looking at the two identical artists' books that fell into my hands through two completely different economic channels, I was made to ponder on what the ways I get to consume these books could mean about them.

5.

November 2022, an artist's book displayed on the main shelf of an art bookshop in Berlin stirred up this reflection again. There was something odd about it—I could see the pages folded in various directions, escaping the square boundary of the book. When I spotted the book over the shoulder during a zoom call with my interviewee (Participant G) who was sitting in the store space, I asked her to give me a closer look of it.

Titled *werkboek*³⁹, the book is a playful guide to a performative reading experience. Building upon the fact that books are practical objects to be touched and handled, the book invites the viewers to physically interact with it by mirroring the photographs shown in the book that are of the artist's hands folding pages of another book. As the viewer flips through, folds the pages or makes creases, the book gradually transforms into a unique object with sculptural quality. Every interaction that alters the book adds meaning to the object, which, by its existence, perpetuates and embodies the performance through its objecthood.

werkboek lives its height at exhibitions. To begin with, its artist was inspired by her own experience during exhibitions, where she found that visitors did not readily attempt to touch the artist's books displayed, even when they were guided to do so. People were scared to touch the books because they were scared of damaging an artwork, said the artist during her interview. Having wanted to respond to this issue, she created *werkboek* through collaboration with another artist. At the exhibition where they launched the book, they invited visitors to sit on opposite sides of a special device that would hold up the pages of the book as they flipped through it and participated in the tactile interaction with the object. Even after the exhibition ended, *werkboek* continues to live on bookshelves and be handled by more readers in any presentational setting, thus perpetuating its performance and moment of valuation.



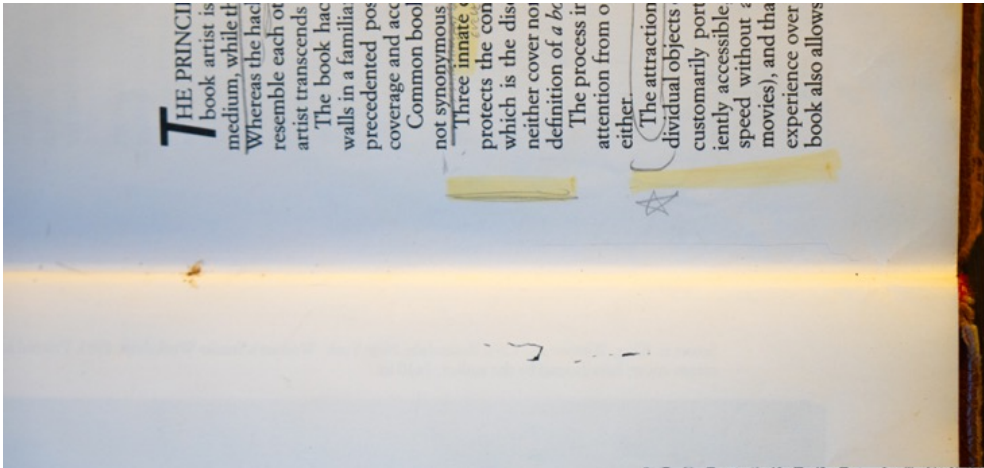
³⁹ *werkboek* (2021) is a single-volume artist's book by An Onghena (Participant K), an Antwerp-based artist and designer, in collaboration with another artist Jivan van der Ende. Consisted of only photographic images, the book intends to guide the viewers through a performative reading experience, during which they are invited to respond to the photographs by altering the pages of the book freely.



[Fig.63] Presentation of *werkboek* at the exhibition ‘Paraphrase’ (einbuch.haus, Berlin, 2021)
(Image source: An Onghena).

However, as soon as *werkboek* attempted to enter the market, a critical issue was revealed—the fact that one needs to actively interact with the book, more so than other artists’ books require, to properly appraise it. The exact same quality from which its value was derived during exhibitions now turns against the book. At art book fairs, visitors were hesitant (again) to touch *werkboek*, let alone interact with it according to the artist’s intention by folding the pages. The artist and publisher of the book at the booth tried to demonstrate the experience for the visitors or had them put on gloves to touch the book, but in the end, they were told that the book was not suitable to be a collectible item—even at its modest price of €50—because it cannot be just seen or hung on the wall. In short, it was inherently exposed to too much potential to be damaged in the future to purchase them.

This anecdote reminds me of the old, damaged books of libraries, the serendipitous traces they have collected over years and layers of reading. Accumulated like time, the traces come in various forms, such as folded corners of pages, scribbles, underlines, circling of keywords, highlighter markings, remnants of post-it notes, detached covers, coffee stains and more. For a while, I used to go into library collections and search for what I have come to think of as unique *reading marks*. And when I did, I photographed or scanned them to turn them into abstract portraits of different imperfections or quirky wornness only books develop over time. Such beautiful marks, however, could easily turn into scars and stains.



THE PRINCIPLE of a book artist is to create a work in a medium, while the book itself resembles each of the artist's previous works.

The book has a long history in a family of media, but its position in the contemporary art world is not clear.

Common book forms are not synonymous with the concept of a book, which is the definition of a book. The process of creating a book is often more important than the final product.

The attraction of individual objects, customarily portable and accessible, is often cited as a reason for the book's popularity. The book's experience over time also allows it to become a part of a larger cultural conversation.

a retailer, in personal contact with the book publisher is a whole new world. The practical predicament that they will not publish a book that is not profitable is a well-known fact. The proposed book that is unproven by editorial-industry standards only in book history such as Andy Warhol.

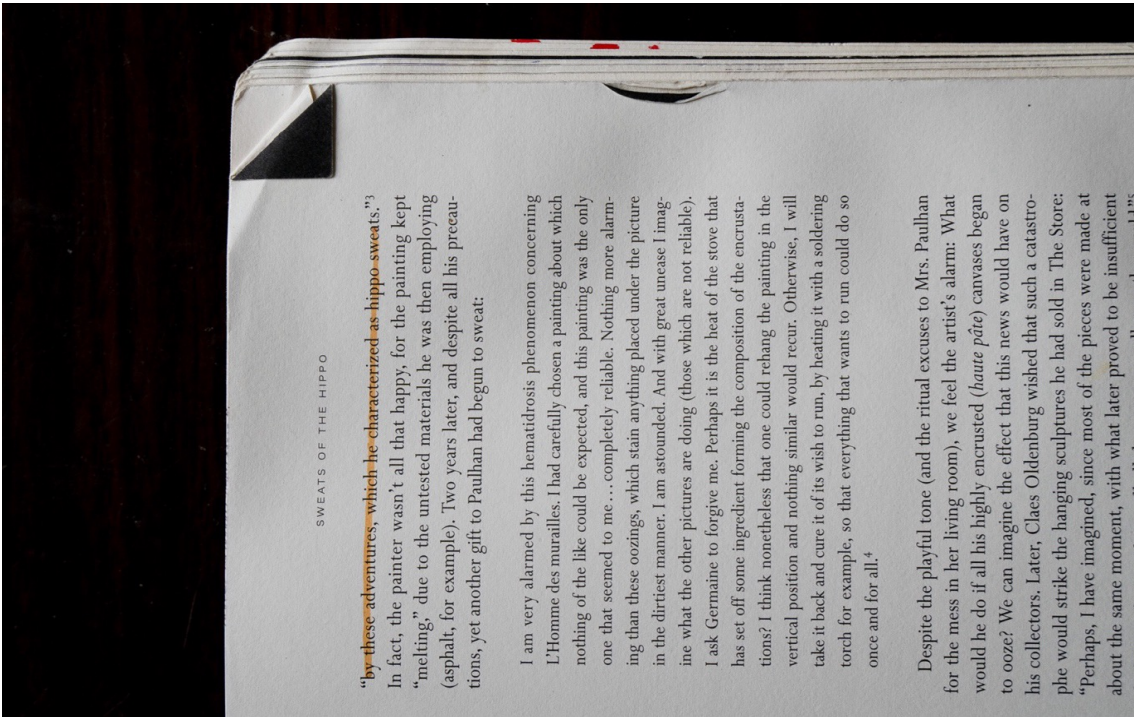
What is most necessary as an imaginative form, a book with less numerous editing and more creative input.

There is a crucial difference between a book and a book form—a retrospective of a book. The first book form is a book that can be saved for books that are not yet published.

The book artist usually how they will be designed and the book artist often eliminating middle-men and considering their functions a part of the overall process.

One practice common to the book form is the creation of a repository of any book form for the invaluable book.

One trouble with the concept of a book form is that it is often used to justify the creation of a book form that is not a book.



[Fig.64-68] Photographs of various reading marks found in books borrowed from the University of the Arts London library (Photo: Hyun Joo Cho).

6.

February 2023, I headed over to Tate Modern to meet my fourteenth interviewee. After our conversation, she let me through the back door into one of the museum galleries where she was installing her works for an upcoming show. The gallery was divided into a main hall and a smaller chamber. When I walked into the dark chamber, I could hear a projector spinning a blank film reel. A dim, white ray of light from the projector repeatedly blinked on the dark concrete wall, like a lighthouse looking out into a midnight sea. In the main hall were more projectors and wide screens showing films the artist shot in what seemed to be some kind of storage facility of a museum⁴⁰. In one of the scenes, paintings from various eras were being slid into storage racks that were spaced tightly from one another. When the job was done, the rack closed even further into a giant rectangular box—to me, it resembled a book, and it felt as if I just witnessed its process of binding the pages together.



[Fig.70] ‘The Hidden Conference’ (2010-2015), Rosa Barba, installed at Tate Modern, 2023
(Image source: courtesy of the artist).

This was my second time viewing works by the artist. The first was a few months back when I visited the artists’ books collection at Tate Library to request for the most recent volume of *Printed Cinema*⁴¹. By the same artist, *Printed Cinema* is an ongoing project of

40 ‘The Hidden Conference’ (2010-2015), Rosa Barba (Participant N).

41 *Printed Cinema* (2004-ongoing) is a series of artist’s books by Rosa Barba (Participant N), a Berlin-based artist. Barba is most known for her films and site-specific installations to incorporate films in physical spaces in an expanded manner. Since 2004, she has published *Printed Cinema* in parallel to her film projects and major exhibitions. The most recent addition to the series was volume 23 titled *Radiant Exposures*, which was distributed during Barba’s

artistic publishing to render the artist's cinematic practice in portable objects. In most cases, the production of *Printed Cinema* begins with studio work, where the artist curatorially hand-picks things to be included in the book, as its content. Oftentimes, these components—film stills, texts, reference materials, unused filmic fragments and image-based documentation of installations—denote and evoke the artist's cinematic practice, as if to install works that originally move, are spatial and temporal within the fixed planes of the book form. Phantasmal film projections are captured and printed on paper. The dimension between the projector and the screen is collapsed. The four-dimensional videos that are displayed in the three-dimensional installations are dismantled and compressed into the two-dimensional images and texts contained in pages of *Printed Cinema*. A shift from fleeting images into stillness occurs. Deconstructing the cinematic practice and reshaping it into a series of printed publications, *Printed Cinema* shows how the printed matter prolongs art's life beyond its mediums. Whenever a viewer picks up a copy of the series and starts flipping through, they reactivate the flow of time and enter the virtual space between pages that summon the spirit of the original practice. During her interview, the artist referred to this—presenting films via pages of printed matter and thus translating between mediums and materiality—as an alternative methodology for her practice.



[Fig.71] Pages from *Printed Cinema #13 Desert – Performed* (Rosa Barba, 2012).

exhibition 'Evoking a Space Beyond Cinema' at Museo de Arte de Lima, Peru, in 2024.

After the production, what is unique about *Printed Cinema* is that it deliberately goes through two distinct channels of distribution. The first is when it is initially launched on the occasion of an exhibition and distributed for free for the limited duration of the show. Because the artist sees the series as an experience parallel to her exhibitions, the books are placed alongside the on-site installations and are freely distributed to anyone who is willing to grab a copy. However, the books are meant to also be independent artworks that have their own agency and can stand on their own without the context of the exhibition. For instance, the books are never framed, cased in vitrine or displayed as a captioned work in the artist's exhibition, which allows it to claim an independent domain to operate outside of the site-specific context. They are there to be taken away, into a much wider range of contexts.

Once the exhibition ends, the books go through the second phase of distribution, which is drastically different from the first phase. In September 2021, after the release of one of the most recent volumes (#22), the series was compiled into an archival box edition that is expandable to include future volumes. The box comes in a limited edition of 200 and can currently be purchased on a few independent platforms such as Dancing Foxes Press (Brooklyn, New York) and Vistamare Gallery (Milan & Pescara) via direct inquiry at the price of \$700 or €600. The purchase of this edition comes with an ongoing subscription to future issues. Through this secondary distribution, which should be considered a separate process of commodification, the books are brought back and re-incorporated into the institutional boundary—institutional archives such as those of the Tate Library, Stanford University Library and Walker Art Center have claimed their copy of the edition for permanent preservation. Through its differentiated channels of distribution, *Printed Cinema* shows how artists' books can situate themselves in more diverse contexts of consumption, carrying a systematic reflection on art ecosystems as its backdrop—the sites of consumption, the audience and the layers of circulation.



[Fig.72] *Printed Cinema*, Archival Box Set Edition (Rosa Barba, Dancing Foxes Press, 2021)
(Image source: courtesy of the publisher).

Beyond all this, they can also hilariously just fall into your hands in a “pirated” version. After our interview, the artist kindly shared with me her self-pirated copies of *Printed Cinema*, which are PDF files of their scans. No more need to run to the Tate Library after a careful consultation a few days in advance, no more having to summon the books from the abyss of endless shelves. The books were once again, outside the boundary.

7.

March 2023, an artist’s book arrived in my mail. I was expecting it—it was from the monthly Book Works Readers Club⁴², which I had signed up for at Offprint London⁴³ the previous year.

The art book fair was packed. Its venue, the Turbine Hall of Tate Modern was booming with both people and books. Everyone was there to see and buy books. The market—the artists, the publishers, the consumers, the commodities, the transaction—was made visible. There were so many parallel situations unfolding, piling on top of one another. Everything was so public yet so personal, as everyone seemed to be moving at their own pace. The visitors were roaming around the booths in all directions, taking quick glimpses of the books, while the artists or anyone keeping the booth patiently waited for questions or requests. Some of them even pretended to be nonchalant, looking down at their phones or casually speaking to their neighbors, perhaps to hide their eagerness to score a sale or to let the visitors feel less watched when approaching the booth. Some visitors seemed a little overwhelmed by how many books there were, all deserving their attention, while others dove straight into a very few select copies and almost finished reading them on the spot. Some of them were scared to touch anything, probably thinking that their fingerprints would permanently damage the books, but more of them did not resist the temptation to open the covers that they judged interesting. Overall, there was a curious air of tension between the two sides of the booth tables, almost like a force that pressured one into the moment of valuation. Everyone’s gaze was on the books—the books on the tables, the books held in the hands of the visitor, the books being newly displayed by a vendor and the pile of books that got knocked over by the vendor, cheap books, expensive books, limited editions, the books that were just sold, the books that were about to venture out into the world.

42 Organized by the publisher Book Works to celebrate the vital role of the community of readers in sustaining their practice of experimental publishing. One can sign up for £5 per month or £50 per year. I was subscribed to the membership from July 2022 to July 2023.

43 An annual art book fair produced by the Luma Foundation since 2015. It opens in different formats in London, Paris, Milan, and Arles. I visited Offprint London in 2022 and 2023 (<https://www.offprint.org/>).









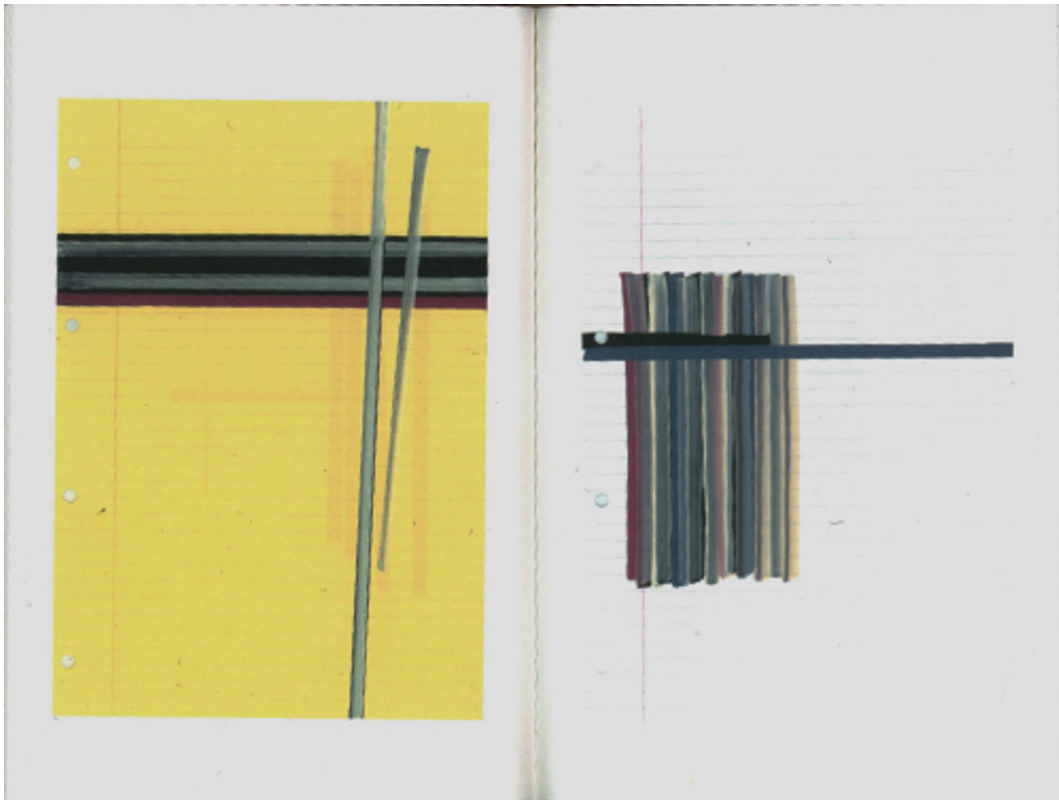
[Fig.73-79] Offprint London 2023 at Turbine Hall, Tate Modern (Photo: Hyun Joo Cho).

Frankly, it was impossible to make acquaintance with all the books there because of the sheer scale of the event. I had to rely on a little bit of luck to find artists' books in the sea of books, and I did get lucky. At the booth run by Book Works⁴⁴, I learned about their Readers Club, which sends you a copy of a select artist's book every month for £5. £5! Most of the books on the booth cost between £10 and £20, which meant that I was getting at least a 50% discount. Signing up for this incredible deal, I had to keep thinking how ridiculously cheap it was. I even felt guilty about consuming artists' books this way and became a little suspicious of the quality of the copies that would arrive. But there was no ulterior motive behind the price—the artists' books that started arriving the following month already proved it. If anything, the motive was to get those books out into the world as much as possible, said the Publishing Manager of Book Works, whom I later met for an interview. Such a spirit had become a book in a parcel and met its subscriber.

The artist's book that was sent out for March 2023 was titled *Black Slit*⁴⁵. Originally trained as a sculptor, its artist had developed a unique practice that combines object-making, writing and publishing books. The book, produced alongside the artist's solo exhibition in 2023, documents her process of overcoming writer's block. Unlike earlier books by the same artist that contained experimental texts, *Black Slit* only shows images, partly of the artist learning to throw a knife, using vibrantly painted clay objects as targets installed in her studio, office, classroom and bedroom. The clay was still wet and unstable when struck by the blade, resulting in unpredictable radical disruptions to the color and shape of these hand-crafted forms. In addition to the knife throwing, *Black Slit* includes scanned pages of the artist's notebook where she repeatedly drew lines, as if to create slits in the paper. The book juxtaposes the two interrelated processes that the artist went through to negotiate a frustrating situation and weaves them into a narrative of destruction and resuscitation. The book has become the successful result of her wrestling with the terrain of lined paper and of her causing deliberate wreckage to be able to free herself. The book read like a long, yet taciturn letter that only spoke in reserved, metaphorical terms and gestures of survival.

44 A London-based contemporary arts organisation established in 1984 specialising in artistic publishing and bookmaking (<https://bookworks.org.uk/>).

45 *Black Slit* (2023) is a single-volume artist's book by Katrina Palmer, a London-based artist and writer, in consultation with Paul Sammut (Participant M), an editor at Book Works. The book documents a symbolic process of the artist learning to throw a knife using vibrantly painted clay objects as her targets. It was developed and published alongside the artist's solo exhibition 'What's Already Going On' (Mead Gallery, Warwick Arts Centre, 2023).



[Fig.80-81] Pages from *Black Slit* (Katrina Palmer, Book Works, 2023) (Image source: courtesy of the publisher).

8.

The life of an artist's book often begins when an artist starts wondering how to intervene in one of the most prevalent cultural forms—books. Hinging on the universality of the concept, the artist alters, sculpts and eventually interprets the *matter* of book into an art object. Other times, artists' books are made to utilize their *objecthood*—their intrinsic role as interactive objects that turns reading into a performative act. They also serve as the *format* to re-curate an event into something concrete and less ephemeral, or to document the process and context of a project, reinforcing its material anchor. In all these times, artists' books are conceived focusing on their quality as the reliable *medium* to deliver and distribute artistic practice.

In fact, one of the most important objectives of artists' books lies in the distribution itself—to attain it, they infiltrate any situation, even when it is an unflattering backdrop. An ideal life of artists' books would be meeting as many readers as possible to have them experience the art in the book form. To expedite the circulation, their prices are compromised, leaving less space for their valuation, since in the current capitalist market economy, prices are usually set for quantifiable rationale. This norm of consumption often betrays the value artists' books aspire to convey. Even when categorized as artworks, artists' books are often left in an awkward position because of how they can age and become frail. Because they need to be physically activated to be fully appreciated, artists' books are rarely capable of maintaining a lofty status expected from an artwork. They are contested and vulnerable as both books and art objects.

Endorsing the value of artists' books today requires courageous effort because it involves a proposition of a new scheme of value—perhaps post-capitalist, communist, apocalyptic or utopian, contemporary artists' books propose that consuming art can escape being about the possession or exclusivity, but rather be about forming solidarity and sharing for circulation. Being objects with a dual status as art objects and practical objects, artists' books give form to the value of practice and translate it into knowledge that their consumers can collectively refer to and reverberate. In such a sense, the death of an artist's book would be not when it gets worn out from being read too much, but when there are no more people to participate in their making—to design them, edit them, produce them, distribute them, display them, sell them, purchase them, collect them or preserve them.

[Fig.82] A crumpled corner of a library book
(Photo: Hyun Joo Cho).

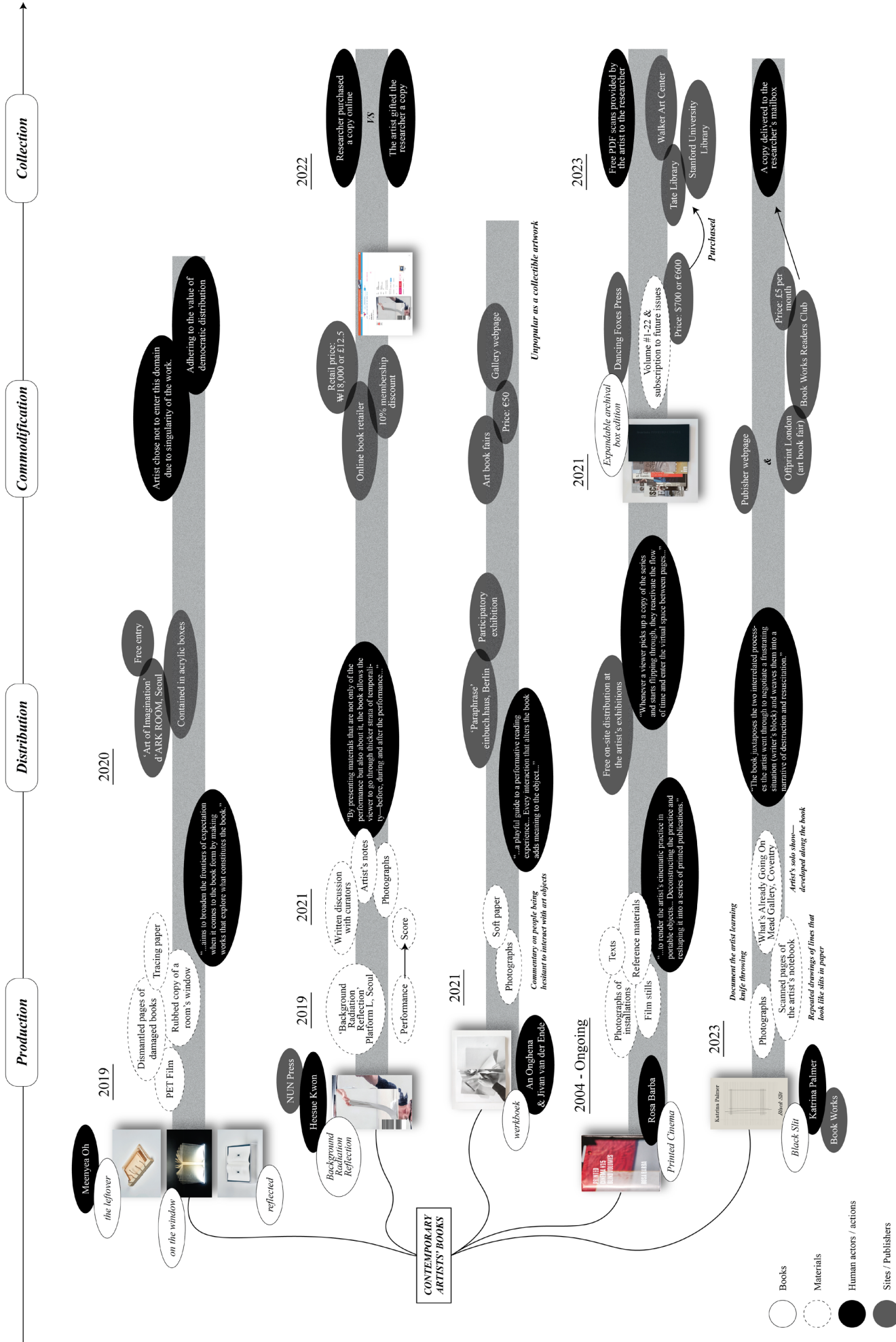
3.5.2. Diagrammatic Expression of Object Biography

The following series of diagrams is a visual expression of the object biography of contemporary artists' books. They follow the five cases of artists' books throughout their lives and mark major details, relevant sites, actors, events and dynamics.

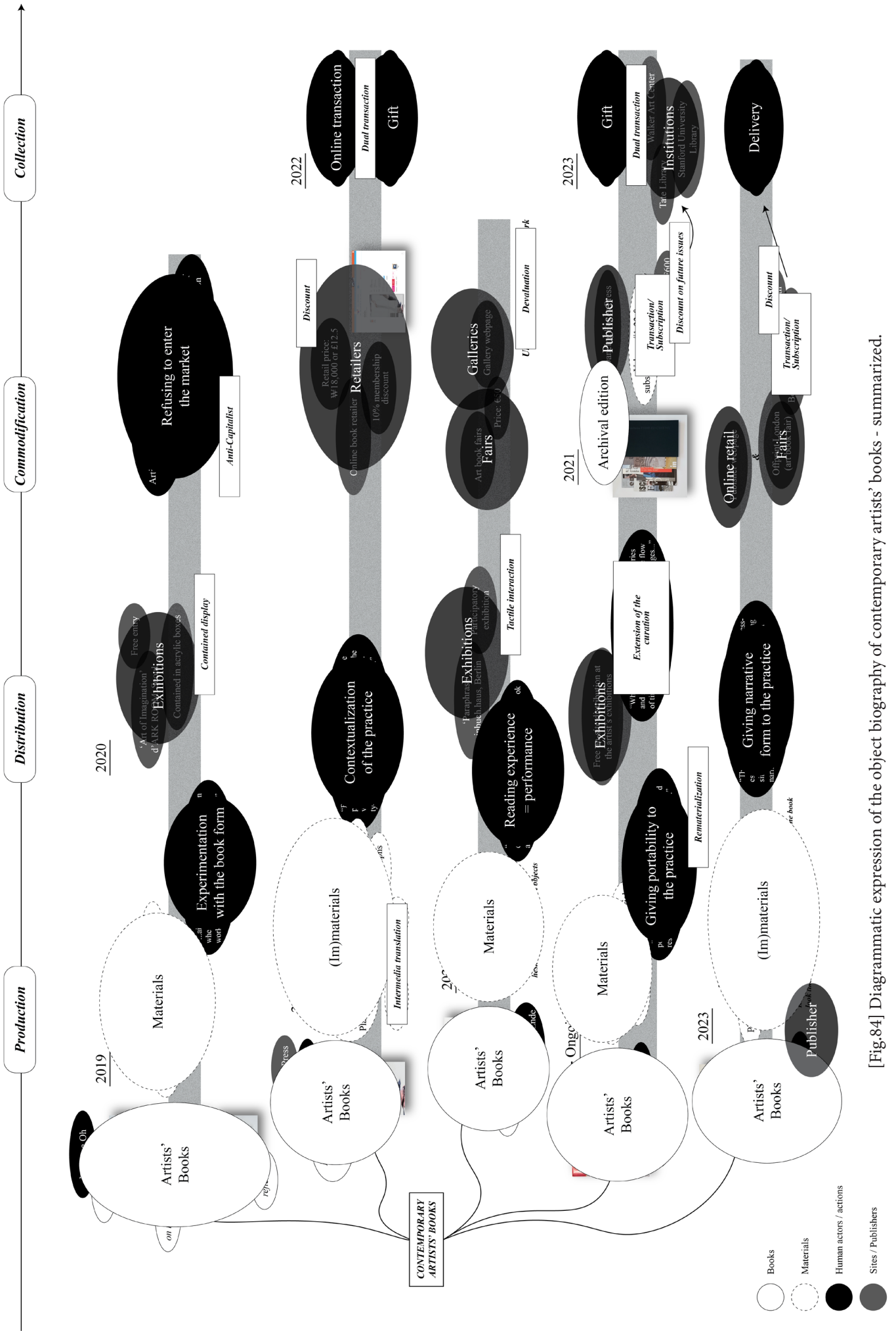
For me, diagrams have always been an important way of expressing knowledge. The visual schematization of thoughts on top of any verbal—written or spoken—accounts always leads to uniquely lucid moments of learning. I was never taught the methods or theoretical backgrounds of designing diagrams, but being a visual thinker (Grandin, 2022), I have always found this visualizing apparatus at the crux of my comprehension of the world. Diagrams allow me to distill complex information into more manageable visual forms, to break down the intricacies of research findings and situations I observe. By materializing the discursive object biography into codified visual representations, I hope to make the conceptual narrative the written version holds more visible and enhance the immediacy of understanding this part of the inquiry.

The reason why this is a 'series' of diagrams, not 'a' diagram, is because I wanted to demonstrate my process of thinking through diagrams. The series is presented in the order of production. My first diagram (Fig.83) lays out all the major details of the narrative, trying to schematize all parts of the object biography visually. The second version of the diagram (Fig.84) summarizes the first diagram into keywords. The third version (Fig.85) simplifies the summary into more abstract forms, focusing on the larger dynamics in the narrative. The final version (Fig.86) amplifies the pattern in the lives of contemporary artists' books recognized from previous diagrams and interprets it further regarding how the books embrace the socioeconomic conditions of their valuation and provide reflections on our system of value. The resulting diagram incorporates findings from previous versions of the diagram and the 'Social worlds/arenas map' [p.145] that depicts the sphere this research is concerned with. The final version of the diagram will be revisited in Chapter 4.3. [p.185] for further discussion of its contents.

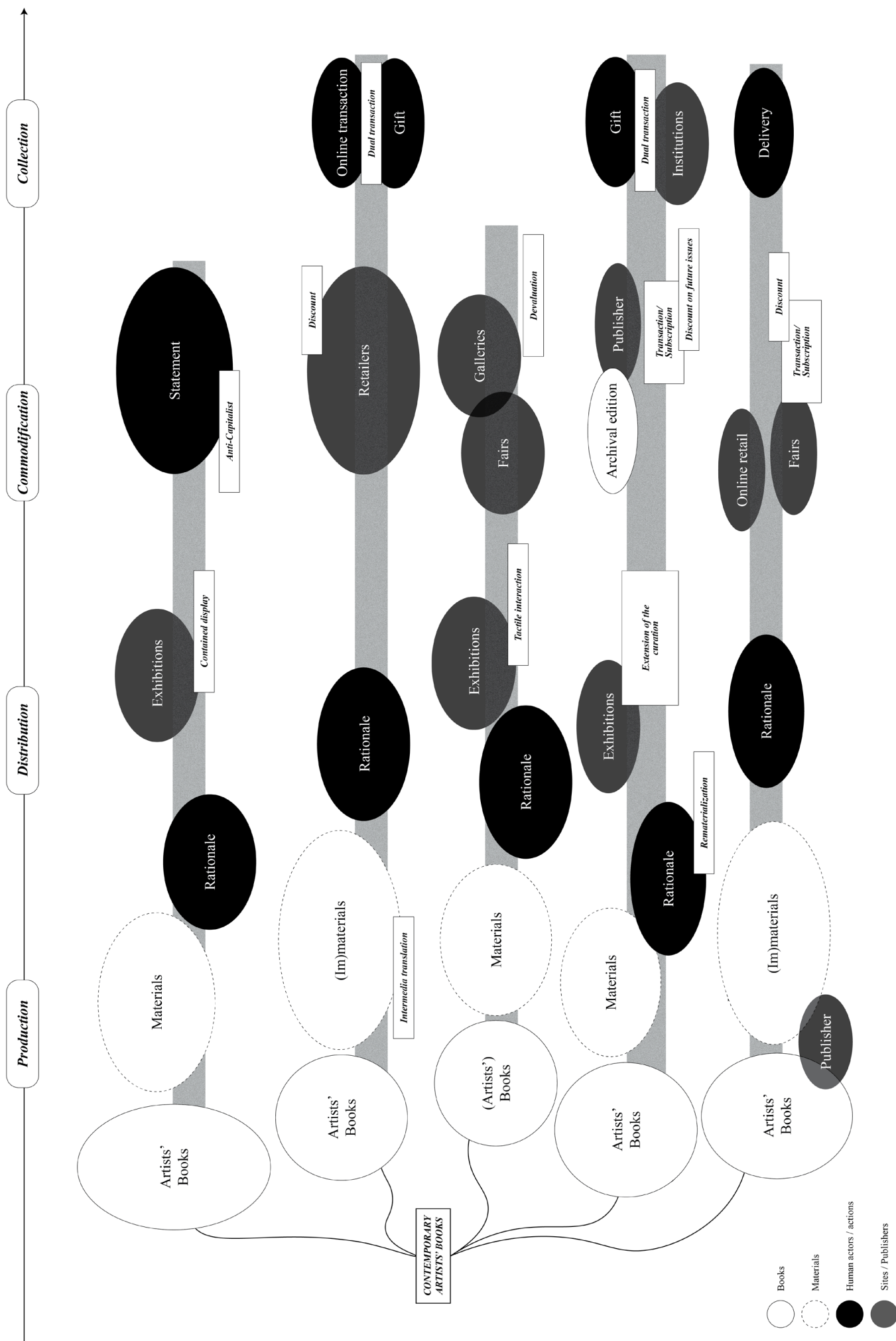
This development from the most verbal to the most abstract/visual and beyond (interpretive) has proven to me once again the power of diagramming as a practice for knowledge production. While the written version of the object biography focuses on spelling out the subtleties of "meanings and experiences...in the cultural web" surrounding the contemporary artists' books (Eisner, 1981, p.6), the diagrams "locate the general in the particular," hence constructing an "anticipatory schema" (Ibid, p.7) for the situation. Thus, this part of the practice has revealed that although the lives of artists' books are overwhelmingly myriad and countless, they can still be processed, analyzed and added to knowledge.



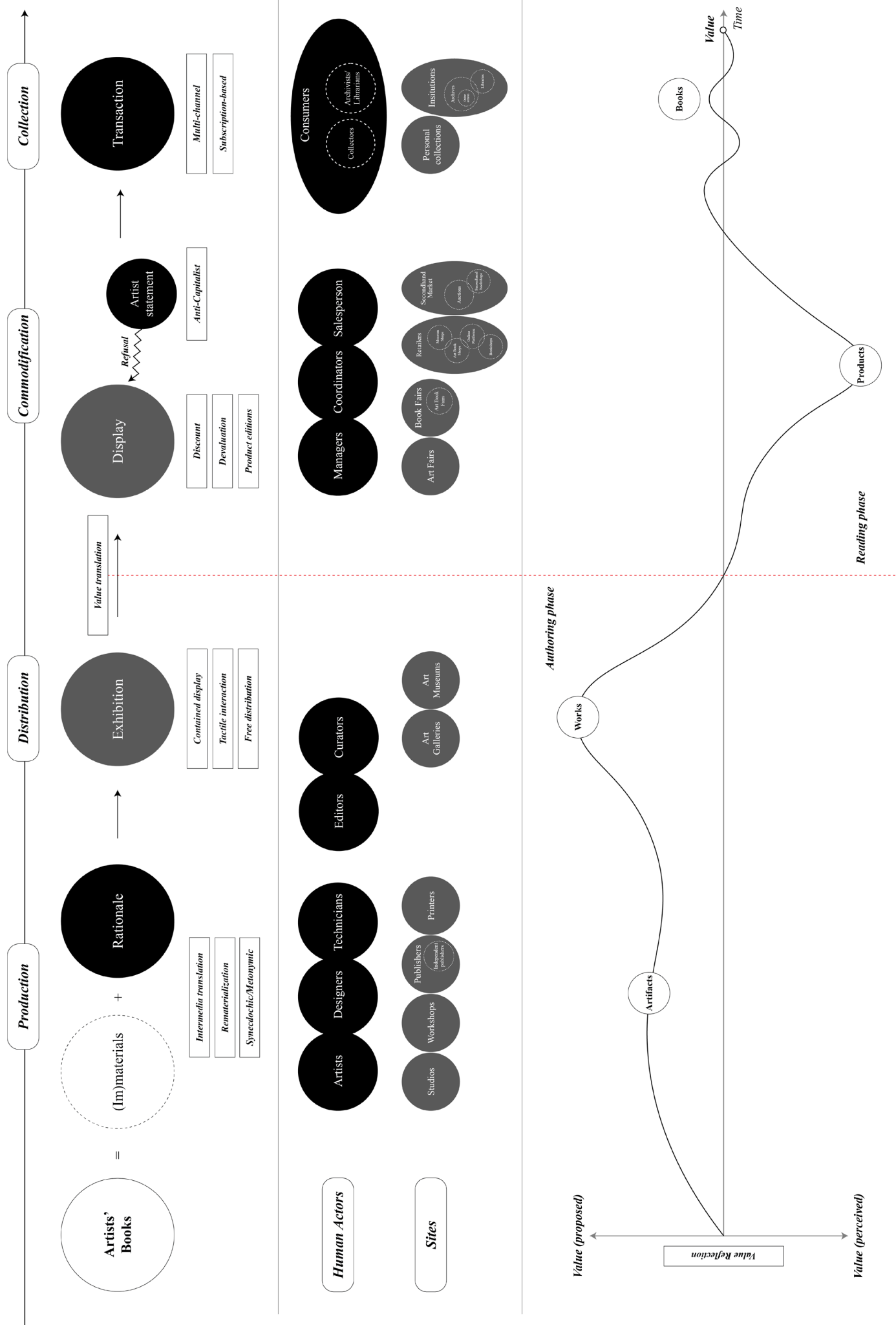
[Fig.83] Diagrammatic expression of the object biography of contemporary artists' books.



[Fig.84] Diagrammatic expression of the object biography of contemporary artists' books - summarized.



[Fig.85] Diagrammatic expression of the object biography of contemporary artists' books - simplified.



[Fig.86] Diagrammatic expression of the object biography of contemporary artists' books - interpreted.

4. DISCUSSION

Despite the prevalent doubt of the printed matter in the age of the digital revolution and the existing focus on historical cases of artists' books from the last century, the books' intersection with practice, critique on the art market and proposition of new rationale for producing and consuming art prove them relevant to today's art world where the relationship between the objecthood of art and the contemporary sense of practice needs renewed discussion on many levels. The following are the major points this research adds to such a discussion.

4.1. Artistic practice is rematerialized through object translation

The central premise this research aims to establish is that practice and its immaterial 'substance'—the process and labor—and contextual conditions of artmaking are anchored by the visibly valuable terms of the object that translate the less tangible terms of the practice. This research encapsulates this mechanism in the coined concept of *object translation*. I define object translation as an operation driven by the object that has both cultural and socioeconomic effects of *rematerializing* the artistic practice. Here, rematerializing refers to taking a renewed materialist approach to art as a response to the current conditions that put the valuation of contemporary art at stake—the simultaneous advent of a dematerialized economy and dematerialization of art that make the process and labor that precede consumption and the outcome of such activities more and more intangible and thus invisible.

Object translation occurs specifically because art is no longer object-driven, or because art has taken its *practice turn* (Schatzki et al., 2001). Since art's dematerialization and the subsequent shift away from concrete artwork and medium specificity toward open-ended actions and projects, the dynamic between practice and object in art has changed from a conventional course of production to a strategic, statement-like choice to express the artist's mind. While practice in the traditional sense was purposed to create the object as its product of action (*poiesis*), the renewed sense of practice claims value in itself (*praxis*)—practice can now claim the status of art on its own and the object is no longer the sole objective of practice. Consequently, what art objects signify has also evolved. Now, art objects are made to highlight what it is that they contain (the content—process and labor) and how they have come to contain it (the contextual conditions) instead of pointing to themselves as the topic of art. In other words, in today's art world where the ontological adhesion between objects and practice has become loose, art objects have gained a renewed significance as tangible forms that render, capture, evidence, mediate and/or convey the practice that is expanded over the blurred and generalized dimension of *doing* (Boon and Levine, 2018). Thus, object translation is when the agency of objects is substantiated anew as tangible tokens of practice that produced them or as nodes in the field of art that manifest the presence of a wider fabric of effort that garners contemporary art practices. Through object translation, the practice is embodied in the more concrete, valorized terms of the object, thus resisting the abstraction of their value.

As mentioned earlier during the thematic analysis of the interviews [p.114], one of the interviewees raised a critique of my emphasis on the objects' agency for embodying the practice, arguing that the "idea of embodiment is a fetish" (Clarke, 2023, 21 March). She spoke from the Marxist point of view, by which she meant that perceiving artists' books as embodiments of other things may restrict the books' valuation to their materiality. Such a claim is valid, however, I would like to argue back that the material qualities of objects and artists' books should still be seen as core conditions of this research, where I inquire how the books translate the immateriality of practices into tangible terms. This discussion on object translation is not to argue that the objects function as stand-ins for the practices that erase their presence, but rather as significant reiterations for their reinforced claims of value. Besides, rejecting any empowerment of the objects and their materiality would also be a folly of reducing the perspective to the label of fetishism. As Latour writes in his argument for interobjectivity to refute a similar critique of fetishism, this is "simply a recognition of the fact that we are exceeded by what we create" (Latour, 1996, p.237), or an acknowledgement of the influence of the objects on our culture, society and economy.

4.1.1. Translational objects are synecdochic and metonymic of practice

Object translation operates on the basis that art objects can reiterate the practice they stem from in terms of their own objecthood. However, such a translation is not simply literal. The objects with such translational agency, or the translational objects, are 1) *synecdochic* (Krauss, 1999) and 2) *metonymic* (Graw, 2017) of the practice. In other words, the translational objects signal the practice 1) symbolically and 2) referentially, by representing and alluding to it as one of its possible outcomes. Such aspects of object translation take from the effects of *value translation* and *intermedia translation*. The former refers to the translational process where the value of an artistic source is transmitted from the producer to the consumers through symbolic products that are more readily distributable to connote the original's value (Hutter et al., 2015). The latter is the case of translation when a practice is interpretatively delivered by transforming it into an alternative art form, assuming that the transdisciplinary reproduction of a practice contributes to the representation of the original by referring to the practice in its own artistic language (Hopkinson, 2004).

The translational objects can never be the practice itself or completely replace it, but they can serve as its deferred expressions, often more palpable than the original, within our cultural and socioeconomic systems. The objects can do so as they operate as signs of worth and facilitate interactions or communication between the artist, the cultural intermediaries and the audience, capturing the (im)materiality of practice and its value(s). The processual sense of *doing art*, the investment of labor out of love and passion, the social dynamics and relational aesthetics dispersed throughout practice are distilled and funneled into the objects that reiterate the practice and make it more graspable as its tokens. The translational objects are in a relationship to the practice distinct from the traditional sense of art objects that are produced as the predetermined form of the medium. These objects simultaneously come out of,

belong to, but are also external to and hence objective towards the practice upon their creation, distribution and consumption. When and how these objects are produced are a matter to be decided by the artist, but there is a usual temporal delay between the happening of practice and the production of translational objects. Because of this gap between the practice and the objects, volatile elements of practice—such as the liveness of performance, the on-site quality of installations and the dynamics of collaboration during publishing—that exist strictly in the moment of practice are lost in translation. However, the temporal delay also allows them to trace the practice as a mode of documentation, historiography or even interpretation. In such a sense, the significance of these objects is not found in their ability to suspend the practice in the justice of preserving like stuffing an animal—rather, it is in their capacity to expand and extend practice through their afterlives.

Among myriad cases of objects, artists' books demonstrate their translational agency uniquely well in both artistic and socioeconomic senses as a 'currency' of the contemporary practice of publishing and its ethos. This argument will be further unpacked in the upcoming chapters (4.2 and 4.3).

4.2. Contemporary artists' books offer four modes of object translation

What powers the translational agency of the object is its objecthood, and I argue that the unique agency of artists' books originates from their multidimensional status as objects. As objects, artists' books are also projects, a medium, an art form and readily tradeable commodities—they are concrete yet permeable, constantly evolving and circulating. Rather than being isolated objects to be displayed in museum vitrines, they are an objecthood, a "state of mind" (Lucy Lippard in Lyons, 1985, p.56) and "artefacts of process-driven ethos" (Temporary Services et al., 2018, p.18) that can be held and experienced. This *intersectional* (Phillpot, 2013) identity results in the agency of artists' books that perform object translation in the following four major modes. Although it would be wrong to argue that each artist's book is exclusively associated with one of the four modes, for the clarity of explication, each mode is paired with one typical example in this discussion.

4.2.1. The book as the performer

Artists' books take on an active role in their own presentation, bridging the gap between the creation and consumption of art. They encourage viewers to engage physically by necessitating interaction like opening covers and flipping through pages. Touching the artwork provides a unique and individualized understanding for each encounter. Moreover, artists' books are physical entities with a strong emphasis on their material presence, enriching the immersive experience of reading. This immersion is also heightened by the sequential flow of pages, adding a temporal dimension to the act of reading. Often, these books are also utilized as props symbolic of the artist's practice in exhibitions, further emphasizing their performative aspect.

A notable example that best demonstrates what I mean by this mode of translation is *werkboek* (2021), published by An Onghena (Participant K) [\[image available in p.158\]](#). *werkboek* is an outcome of a collaborative project between Onghena and Jivan van der Ende where the two artists place the book in a special metal tool that holds up the pages of *werkboek* to facilitate a performative reading experience. This work refers to the artists' shared experience of exhibiting their artists' books to be flipped through and experienced only to find out that the audience would not—feeling prohibited by the convention that artworks are not supposed to be touched. At the exhibition of *werkboek*, two readers were invited to sit on opposite sides of the metal tool and work their way through the pages, folding, making creases and turning the book into a live “sculptural object” (Onghena, 2023, 17 January) with its figurative qualities constantly evolving as the reading continues. The images in the publication that show Onghena's hands interacting with paper function as an inspirational ‘guide’ for the audience/readers to respond to the book. Even after the project ended, *werkboek* continues to live on bookshelves and be handled by more readers, perpetuating the performance.

This repetitive process of ‘damaging’ the book by perpetuating its purpose of being read is a symbolic testament to the bodily qualities within the objecthood of the book. Being bodily objects, (artists’) books own both longevity—the sense of being able to perpetuate their role—and frailty—due to their physical composition based on paper—entwined within themselves. *werkboek* draws out the contradiction between these qualities of books, showing that the rematerialization of practice through the books’ object translation is another, metonymic state of art, which may be closer to slowing the pace of the practice down and granting it eventual impermanence, rather than containing it in a vacuum of time, severed from the momentum of practice. Thus, there is an ontological parallel between the practice of publishing and the object outcome of the book to be found in this case, which adds to the integrity of the translation artists’ books provide for the practice.

4.2.2. Editorial choices as curatorial apparatus

Artists’ books exemplify how editorial choices can serve curatorial purposes, enabling artistic practices to be exhibited in a tangible and tailored format. Many artists and their collaborators view the virtual plains of artists’ books as alternative sites of exhibition that can be more intricately designed and densely arranged than actual galleries to facilitate the encounter between the practice and the audience/readers. For example, the sequence of pages can function as a predetermined path for exhibition visitors, while the pages themselves offer a spatial limitation that serves as the rubric for composition. In other words, the editorial interventions themselves—by the artists themselves or other collaborators—in choosing what to include in the book and how to arrange the elements have curatorial significance as the resulting publications symbolize the contextualizing connections between the content, format of the presentation, the position of the practice within the artist’s oeuvre and the idea of conveying the work to the public.

A notable example that best demonstrates this facet is *Printed Cinema* (2004-ongoing) by artist Rosa Barba (Participant N) [images available in pp.163-164]. *Printed Cinema* shows that artists can utilize editorial choices for their books as a curatorial apparatus. Since 2004, Barba has regularly published the series in parallel to her major exhibitions as a way to deconstruct and re-curate the events. The publications vary in their sizes and formats, but together they form a supplementary or alternative literature on Barba's practice by presenting film stills, texts, research materials, unused filmic fragments and photographic documentation of the installations Barba builds. Editing the exhibitions to fit the book form, Barba translates her practice and artistic process into portable units of cinema. Barba thus attempts to refer to her previous curations of her practice through an editorial approach, installing—or anchoring—the works that originally move, are spatial and temporal within the planes of the book form, which she calls “anarchic spaces” (Barba, 2023, 16 February) to discuss and grow her practice in a way that is much more aware of the expansive contexts of production.

4.2.3. The book as the artifact of practice

Artists' books serve as enduring evidence of practices that persists even after their conclusion or dissolution. Unlike exhibitions or live performances, books possess archival qualities that do not diminish over time. Functioning as archives, artists' books contain multiple layers of metadata, offering access to a wealth of literature that extends beyond the original practice. This literature may include the artist's research materials, references, blueprints, photographic or textual records and fragments of practice that were not incorporated into the final work. Consequently, they represent evidence of the holistic process surrounding a practice, from its inception to its presentation through performances and exhibitions, serving as repositories for internal reflections and references crucial to the realization of the practice. Thus, artists' books not only document the practice itself but also the contextual factors that influenced it. As constructed documents, artists' books are commonly used to document performative practices, enabling their reactivation even after the initial event. Beyond the realm of performance, many artists' books can be viewed as post-event documents, offering an additional means of sustained communication following exhibitions or other transient events. Some contributors describe artists' books as traces of practice, highlighting their role as tangible remnants that endure beyond the practice itself, granting them a historical significance akin to relics or remnants of the practice.

A notable example of this mode is *instagram@kdkkdk* (2019) published through a collaboration between artist Dokyun Kim and publisher Jeongeun Kim (Participant B). Dokyun Kim, also known as KDK, is an artist based in Seoul exploring the social and psychological encounters with spaces beyond the visual and physical realm using tools of photography. In 2017, the artist exhibited 1,555 photographs printed in polaroid format that he had previously uploaded to Instagram over the course of 2,456 days between 2011 and 2017. All prints were made available to purchase during the exhibition period and were sold out by the time the exhibition finished. KDK also deleted all photographs from Instagram,

making his book *instagram@kdkkdk* which chronologically compiles all 1,555 photos the only artefact retaining the practice comprehensively. The book also records the list of collectors who purchased the prints at the 2017 exhibition, adding another layer to its identity as a relic and final form of practice.



[Fig.87-88] (Left) '20110326-20171214 Instagram@kdkkdk 20171215029171231' (Sahngup Gallery, Seoul, 2017) (Image source: Dokyun Kim) / (Right) *instagram@kdkkdk* (Dokyun Kim, IANN Books, 2019) (Image source: courtesy of the publisher).

4.2.4. The book as the social thing

Artists' books echo the sociality of practice. They provide a platform for collaboration among creators and with their audiences. Many contributors stress that contemporary artists' books are not solely the work of the artist; rather, artistic publishing typically involves expanded authorship, with various collaborators such as editors, designers, technicians, translators, proofreaders and other cultural intermediaries contributing from their unique perspectives. This collaborative process fosters active and critical dialogues, transforming artistic publishing into a communal endeavor. Facilitated by the sense of community that coalesces around the public act of publishing, collaborators become contextual factors for each other, influencing, assisting, reciprocating and reflecting upon one another's contributions. Upon distribution, these local, project-based scenes reconnect with the broader cultural network or ecosystem of artistic publishing. Within this expansive communal space for exchange, artists and collaborators encounter new publishing opportunities to engage with. In a sense, they themselves—not just their books—become disseminated into new contexts, perpetuating the act of publishing like self-perpetuating waves. Artists' books also draw their audience into this collective spirit by inviting participation in their content or inspiring them to create their own books. While appearing as familiar, ordinary objects, artists' books possess a captivating accessibility that often ignites further creativity. Furthermore, being often produced in multiples, artists' books convey a sense of democratic distribution and offer easily accessible

gateways to cultural knowledge (Cella et al., 2015; Gilbert, 2016; Temporary Services et al., 2018; Romberger et al., 2021; Yonemura et al., 2021; Chang, 2022). Through these social effects on individuals, artists' books are consistently and collectively revered as cultural artifacts, thereby creating the social conditions for their valuation.

A notable example of this mode of translation is art collective N55 and their *N55 Book* (2004). N55 was founded in 1996 as a Copenhagen-based Scandinavian art collective that works between art and architecture to devise ways of realizing utopian ideas. Current members are Ion Sørvin (founder), Øivind Alexander Slaatto and Sam Kronick. Since 1996, the collective has produced materials that they define as 'manuals' that teach their readers how to construct structures, create environments or curate events that they believe would contribute towards sustainable ideals within daily lives. In 2004, N55 compiled 24 of these manuals published between 1996 and 2003 into an open access PDF book titled *N55 Book*, which shows their commitment to democratic distribution and providing accessible entry points to artmaking. Through this publication, the collective invites their audience/readers to empathize with their values of the ideal and eventually participate in their practice, using the book as a platform for new aesthetic collectivities to form. Their initiative is still ongoing—new manuals published after 2003 are also available open-access on N55's website.



N55 manuals and publications, 1996-2003

Introduction:

N55 BOOK is an accumulation of manuals for different things made by N55. New manuals and developments of existing manuals will be published continuously at www.N55.dk.

Construction:

Most of the manuals have been published separately between 1996 and 2003 as periodicals and on the N55 website. They do not appear in N55 BOOK in chronological order. A digital version of N55 BOOK can be downloaded for free at www.N55.dk.

Copyright:

The texts and images in N55 BOOK may be copied, reproduced and distributed freely. N55 will be thankful to be notified on n55@n55.dk whenever material is being used.

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Soundtracks:

Music by Anders Remmer for a number of N55 things can be downloaded for free at www.N55.dk

Publisher:

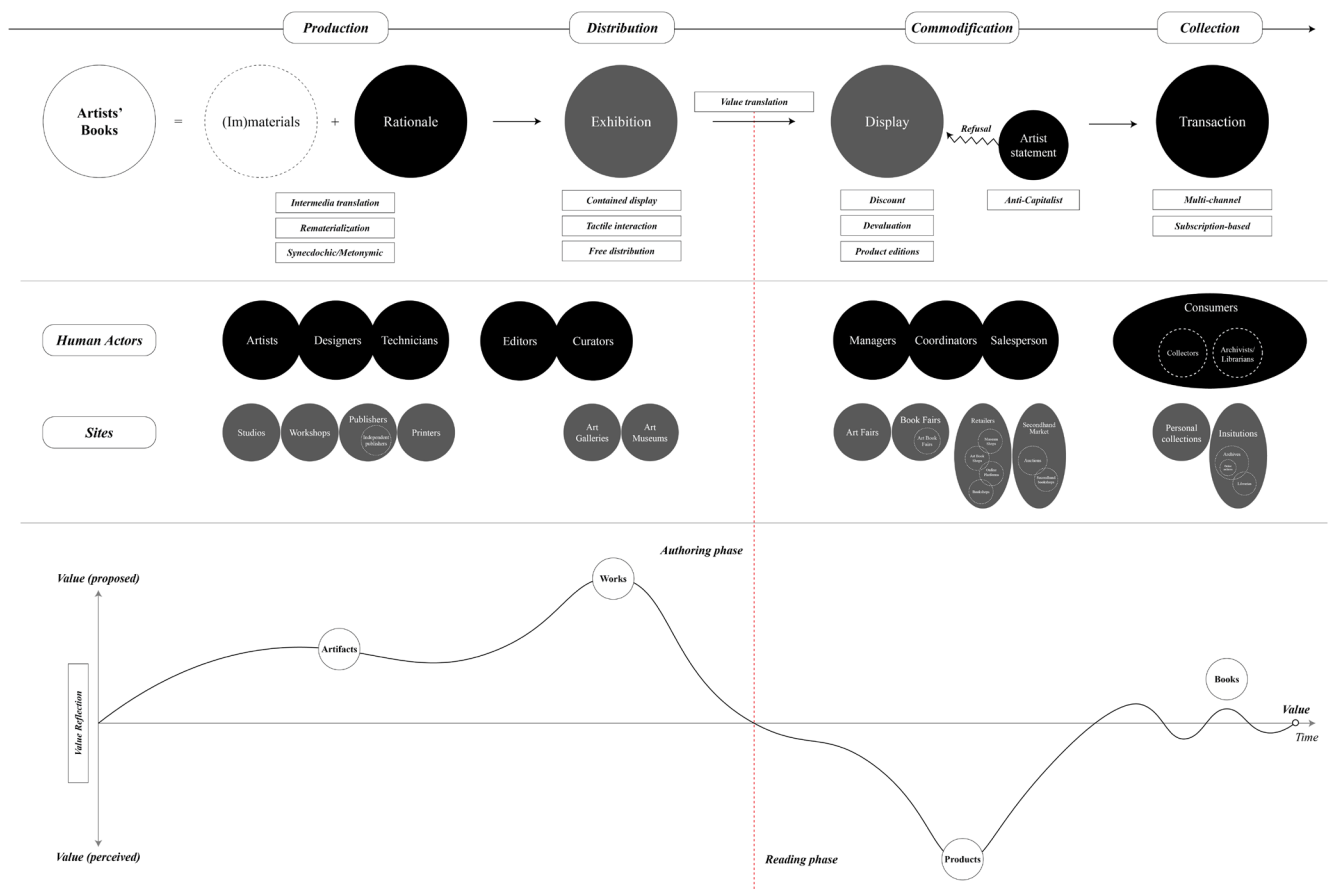
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[Fig.89] Introductory page of *N55 Book*, (N55, Pork Salad Press, 2004) (Image source: N55 website).

In summary, the four modes of object translation contemporary artists' books offer represent how different facets of the books' objecthood can be utilized as the apparatus to rematerialize and revalue practice and its conditions. With their materiality, the books embody their reading as a reiterative performance and an ongoing practice itself. As a format of documentation, the books serve as the conceptual structure to rematerialize the process, labor and context of practice. With the enduring temporality inherent in the experience they provide, the books capture and preserve practice even after their termination, reinforcing their impact. Lastly, they function as a platform for participation in practice due to the sociality embedded in their making and consumption.

4.3. Contemporary artists' books embody the economic trouble of art valuation

Through object translation, artists' books not only embody the artistic practice itself but also speak for the experience of valuation the practice undergoes by providing *value reflections* (Graw, 2021) on the current system of the art economy and consumption. For this discussion, I revisit the final version of the diagram I produced in Chapter 3.5.2 [p.173]. As shown in the diagram, I condense the major economic situations contemporary artists' books go through into four stages: 1) production, 2) distribution, 3) commodification and 4) collection.



[Fig.90] Diagrammatic expression of the object biography of contemporary artists' books – interpreted.

4.3.1. Production

The stage of production is where the (im)materials of the practice meets with the rationale to publish and become rematerialized into artists' books that present themselves as cultural artifacts. How artists' books are produced varies in every volume because each publication is a unique creative endeavor—straightforwardly put, as Rosa Barba told me, “[i]t’s hard to define what happens” (Barba, 2023). In general, however, production is when artists amass value in artists' books by reflecting their artistic intention onto the book's contents, format and materials.

In most cases, the production begins with studio work, where the artist hand-picks things to be included in the book as content. Oftentimes, these components are synecdochic and/or metonymic of the artist's practice. In the case of *Printed Cinema*, each volume includes various elements of Barba's works such as film stills, texts, reference materials, unused filmic fragments and image-based documentation of installations. This selection is led by a particular “editing principle” (Barba, 2023, February 16) of installing works that originally move, are spatial and temporal within the fixed planes of the book form. Unlike the permeable fabric of exhibitions where visitors can often decide their order of viewing, the book form operates on carefully designed dynamics between components—sequence, gaps, segmentation and juxtaposition—that facilitate the translation into printed matter. However, the potential of the book is not necessarily limited to these dynamics—even when the readers do not follow the intended sequence and take randomized approaches, the experience still remains within the curated finitude of the book, similar to how an exhibition can still be appreciated by following one's own route. Depending on the case⁴⁶, artists even omit pagination to grant the audience/reader the whole liberty to lead their experience within the work.

It is also crucial to have the materials and format align with the book's content. In other words, it is important to choose the materials and format that “make sense” (Oh, 2022, September 14) considering what the book is about. For instance, as a stylistic mode of expression or an aesthetic, materials can connect the book to the original practice. In the case of *BackgroundRadiationReflection*, the book consists of multiple types of paper that range from glossy to matte, thick to thin, to signal its relation to the original performance the book stems from, during which the performers use different types of paper as stage props (Kwon, 2022). For some of the volumes of *Printed Cinema*, Barba chose to make them as large posters folded into a book form, which indicates the publication's connection to the artist's cinematic practice as an anchor that signals the artistic event of film screening or a token that symbolizes the underlying practice.

Some artists also incorporate external contexts as part of their books' identity and value. *Printed Cinema*, once the contents of the publication are decided, moves into the local context of where the “occasion” (Barba, 2023, February 16) is happening—because most of the series is published and distributed in parallel to the artist's exhibitions, the process of its production is always entwined with the event's curation and situational factors. To minimize

⁴⁶ From the artists' books that I have mentioned so far, *werkboek* and most issues of *Printed Cinema* are not paginated.

logistic procedures and costs, *Printed Cinema* is printed in the locality of the occasion, which contours the production as a unique parameter. The size, format, paper, printing method, color scale, binding—all technical details reflect what resources were available in the locality during production.

4.3.2. Distribution

Artists' books enter their first *moment of valuation* (Antal et al., 2015) during their distribution. This stage should be differentiated from commodification in that the artist and other stakeholders of the publication focuses on the dissemination of their books itself, rather than marketing them to gain monetary profit. Upon publication, artists' books enter the public domain where they are situated in cultural sites to be presented to their audience. This is when the artists propose the value of their books to the public, and where the most playful consumption of artists' books occurs.

The sites appropriate for the distribution can be any place or event where the dissemination of artists' books focusing on their valorization in cultural terms can overpower their evaluation in economic terms—in other words, where the author's intention can be heard louder than the consumers' personal tastes. The most popular sites for such distribution are exhibitions, particularly those prepared around or in parallel to the publications, where artists and their close collaborators such as curators have more immediate control over the zone of appreciation. Rosa Barba's *Printed Cinema* demonstrates this—each issue of the series is published on the occasion of an exhibition, where it is distributed for free for the limited duration of the show. Some notable exhibitions where the distribution has taken place in Museo de Arte de Lima, Peru (Volume 23, 2024), Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin (Volume 22, 2021), Wäinö Aaltonen Museum of Art, Turku, Finland (Volume 21, 2021), Museo de la Inmigración, Buenos Aires, Argentina (Volume 14, 2014), Tate Modern, London (Volume 11, 2011), Dia Beacon, New York (Volume 10, 2008) and the Istanbul Biennial (Volume 4, 2005). Inspired by the grassroots ethos of “free screening” and independent artistic publishing (Barba, 2023, February 16), the artist prioritizes meeting a wider audience over making a profit—or sometimes even generating any income—from selling her books. Another widespread site of distribution is where open-access artists' books are available online. Mostly provided in PDF formats, the open-access artists' books are often distributed via artists' websites or non-profit digital archives. The *N55 Book* by the collective N55, *Bucle*⁴⁷ by Vinicius Marquet (Participant I) and *Craftowne*⁴⁸ by Billy Simms (Participant S) are notable demonstrations of the open-

47 *Bucle* (2017) is a PDF publication by Vinicius Marquet (Participant I), an independent designer, author, and researcher based in Mexico City. The book is hyperfiction based on the life and work of artist Ulises Carrión including the manifesto “The New Art of Making Books” (1975). The book explores the potential of the PDF format to offer an interactive mode of reading, where the reader can click or type into parts of the book powered by Adobe Flash Player. Unfortunately, after Adobe's termination of their Flash Player software support in December 2020, the book no longer functions as Marquet originally designed.

48 *Craftowne* (2017) is a visual novel and comic book by Billy Simms (Participant S), an artist and educator based in Miami, Ohio. The book contains a series of pieces that brings together text and images to create a narrative of a planned suburban community outside of Washington, DC during the 1970s and 80s. The narrative is fictional, but largely inspired by the artist's personal experience of growing up in a similar town in Maryland. Originally a printed

access distribution.

These liberal modes of distribution “extend the project[s] into a wider range of cultural and social contexts” (Barba, 2023, February 16), aiming to promote the democratic value artists’ books propose. Here, the proposed value overpowers the valuation of artists’ books, owing to the fact that the audience is ready to look for what the books propose, what they are intended for and what ideals they serve.

4.3.3. Commodification

Things change drastically once artists’ books enter the situation of commodification. Commodification of artists’ books most often occurs after the initial distribution or at least separate from it, at art book fairs, art fairs, online and offline bookshops that specialize in art books. Here, exhibition turns into display, audience turns into consumers, and the distributed objects becomes cultural commodities.

The relationship between artists’ books and the market is intricate from the point of entry. As hinted in the earlier situation of distribution, the producers of artists’ books do not prioritize generating financial profit (J.K. Kim, 2022; M. Kim, 2022; Ku, 2022; Kwon, 2022; Barba, 2023; Britton, 2023; Kelly and Schroeder, 2023; Sammut, 2023; Zoller, 2023). Despite the considerable labor and resources required to produce artists’ books, the artists and their collaborators often sacrifice potential gains or profits to make their books more affordable by pricing them as low as possible and viewing them as products that can introduce new values to the art economy, emphasizing democratic access to art. Such a phenomenon is readable from the perspective of social reproduction theory—this may be a symptom of the producers of artists’ books giving into the logic of “labor of love” (Child et al., 2017), a sacrifice expected of today’s cultural workers to make in order to propose their values. Doing so, the artists disregard the time and effort invested in the production, opt for a larger production scale to reduce costs per unit, or rely on external capital—mostly governmental grants—to operate their projects rather than on the market to support them. In short, the artists repeat the exact same value proposal that they made during the distribution in the market.

However, the conditions of the *market* that artists’ books must navigate are not as favorable as what they encountered during distribution. Artists’ books, along with books in general, face severe saturation in the market (Desjardin, 2022; J.K. Kim, 2022; Kwon, 2022), particularly given the limited and uneven consumer base (Bae, 2022; J.E. Kim, 2022; J.K. Kim, 2022; Ku, 2022; Chang, 2023; Sammut, 2023). Demand for artists’ books remains primarily within specific art communities already familiar with the books’ cultural significance, with non-expert consumers among them who are not deeply involved with the art world often favoring works by famous and popular artists (Bae, 2022; Britton, 2022; Ku, 2022; Sammut, 2023; Zoller, 2023). Moreover, the position of artists’ books in the market is ambiguous. Unlike other art forms, they lack established platforms, making it difficult for artists and their collaborators

publication, *Craftowne* has been digitised and shared open-access via F(r)iction, the online imprint of the Brink Literacy Project, a non-profit initiative.

to engage with consumers and market their works (Kwon, 2022; Sammut, 2023). Even within recognized channels such as art book fairs, the categorization of artists' books is unclear, often conflated with neighboring genres like book arts and exhibition catalogs (J.K. Kim, 2022; Kwon, 2022; Oh, 2022; Sammut, 2023). With their category obscure, artists' books are sometimes viewed as mere by-products of other practices or events (Kwon, 2022), not works of equal standing or parallel domains, which further complicates their recognition as a distinct cultural phenomenon.

Most critically, the value of artists' books proposed by their producers often fumble with meeting the capitalist standards. This is largely because artists' books, being at the dual status as art objects and book objects, have two modes of expectations to satisfy as 1) artistic products and 2) book commodities. As artistic products, artists' books are frequently undervalued due to multiple reasons. While their cost-efficient production methods such as risograph printing and the use of recycled paper have enabled mass production, they have also led to devaluation in the market because of their less durable quality (J.K. Kim, 2022; Ongheña, 2023; Zoller, 2023). Durability is a significant factor in deciding the value of a product in the market, which also means that the tactile nature of artists' books that makes them inevitably wear out as they are read and consumed presents challenges in positioning the books as worthwhile products. In addition, their status as multiples further diminishes their appeal to consumers compared to other art forms that ground their value in rarity and uniqueness (Desjardin, 2022; M. Kim, 2022; Sammut, 2023). Along the same vein, their lack of artist signatures only worsens the situation (Bae, 2022; J.K. Kim, 2022). Lastly, the unconventionally low prices for art objects, prioritizing democratic dissemination of art over monetary profit, further contributes to the books' value confusion or even mistrust in the market (Desjardin, 2022; Sammut, 2023). Simply put, as products, artists' books are too ideal to be true, or, in other words, erroneous in the capitalist standards.

Even as book commodities, artists' books are prone to being undervalued due to the market's preconception regarding books. To contemporary consumers, books are already affordable commodities that serve as open podiums of knowledge that should not be barricaded with price tags. The market even systematically applies discounts on books to promote their egalitarian consumption, such as that found in large chain bookstores or memberships for reading clubs. This means that the proposed democratic value of artists' books is only redundantly implied in their status as books to the eyes of the consumers, contributing no additional factors to the equation of valuation. The producers' effort to provide their works in the most affordable form is overlooked, exactly due to the preconceived idea of the books. To make the situation worse, the consumers could even consider artists' books overpriced when they appear to be regular paperbacks offered at a slightly premium price for a hinted sprinkle of creativity (Desjardin, 2022; M. Kim, 2022; Oh, 2022; Sammut, 2023). Unless the artistic labor is overtly marked in the forms of illustrated pages, sculptural format, experimental binding, decorative elements, fancy use of paper or vibrant colors—which most often incur costs too high to be affordable for most producers—artists' books are easily brushed off as simply pricey books.

In such a sense, commodification reveals the discrepancy between the dual status of artists' books or a critical dissonance between the proposed value and perceived value; the sociocultural value and market value; the objective value and subjective value; what is produced and what is consumed. "The text-as-produced is a different object from the text-as-read" (Johnson, 1986, p.58). Thus, this moment in the valuation of contemporary artists' books could be considered a *value inflection* from the proposed value to perceived value overtaking the valuation—in other words, the command of value swings from the producers to the consumers. Afterall, valuation always comes in two parts: valorization and evaluation.

4.3.4. Collection

Despite the discrepancy, the commodification of artists' books enables their transaction through which their value is validated—transaction is where an equilibrium of value is reached between the axes of the proposed and the perceived. Upon transaction and transition into the situation of collection, artists' books exit the market and swing back to their status as art objects—another value inflection occurs at this point. At libraries, archives, museums and university collections, the librarians, archivists, curators and collectors seek and restore the original intention of the artists in their books. These human actants are often the most ardent fans of the value the books propose and are the bedrock of the market's demand for them. On sturdy shelves, in archival boxes, customized cases and vitrines, artists' books return to the vacuum that they once were in during distribution—they are now free from the capitalist rationales, free to preach their values once again. Occasionally, they may return to the market—mostly to the secondhand market—where their perceived value is taken to another extreme, but until then, the books serve their ideal to be shared as reference materials and educational sources for researchers, artists, students or anyone willing to participate in recognizing their value (Britton, 2022). The value of artists' books that have been swinging between the axes of the proposed and the perceived meets the chance of reaching an agreement—an equilibrium.

The situation of collection has its limits, however—the books in collections need to be correctly summoned in order to be accessed. At public collections such as libraries and archives, the books remain in their designated spots of seclusion until they are requested to be brought into the light of public access. Requiring more effort to be seen, artists' books in this situation are readily skewed toward specific groups of audiences who already have professional reasons to consume them. Furthermore, in cases of private collections that do not provide standing gateways for the public, without deliberate occasions, the collected artists' books may even be deterred from realizing their value(s) of being shared and available. Regardless, the situation of collection is still meaningful in that it powers a cyclical dynamic toward other situations. Surpassing the threat of time, these collections serve as a reservoir of value(s) that channels ways to further production, distribution and even commodification of artists' books. Viewing them within collections, in carefully gathered yet massive arrays of accumulation, anyone could be inspired and dream of making their own books as artists to add to the body of knowledge—both physically and figuratively.

Considering this potential of endless repercussion, it can be inferred that all aforementioned situations are, in effect, connected to one another, operating as one, non-linear economic mechanism that facilitates valuation as a whole. This is because the exposure to the idea of artists' books on any level or in any context can garner value in that it is always linked to the potential of adding more to the mechanism of practice, of further *doing*. Such a revelation may be true for any art form in that they inspire their audience all the time, but it is particularly true for the case of artists' books because they are books, the cultural things that everyone is familiar with and has aspired.

4.4. Contemporary artists' books set new paradigms of valuation

Throughout their journey through various economic situations, contemporary artists' books carry out their *value reflection*, where the proposed and perceived values are "renegotiated" (Graw, 2021, p.7). As Graw mentions, as objects, artists' books can generate "value-reflective statements" (Ibid, p.10) which function as sites for us—human subjects—to reconsider the value we invest in artists' books and our broader values, furthermore. The following are the points of these statements artists' books provide today.

4.4.1. Advocating multiplicity of culture

Contemporary artists' books add to the multiplicity and diversity of culture. They propose new cultural forms by reimagining the book format and challenging conventional expectations. Artists' books, guided by the creative freedom of the artist, explore experimental and unconventional formats, thereby reshaping the boundaries of art. They also challenge the hierarchical distinctions between publication and exhibition, advocating for artistic publishing as an equally significant domain. Artists' books provide viewers with a distinct ontological experience, sometimes even prioritized over exhibitions by practitioners. Moreover, the concept of artistic publishing continues to evolve, departing from its historical roots in the 1960s and 70s. Contemporary artists' books are more globalized and localized, adapting to diverse cultural contexts and narratives. They serve multiple roles beyond their traditional definition as visual artists' creations, expanding into social and economic spheres as dynamic, evolving objects.

4.4.2. Ethos of self-representation

Contemporary artists' books embody the ethos of self-representation. Those involved in artistic publishing take on multiple roles across conception, production and distribution, often shifting between or assuming several simultaneously to exert holistic control over the publishing process. This pursuit of self-sufficiency allows them to carve out their own sphere of autonomy, enabling creation and dissemination without external constraints. Pricing is considered a critical strategy unique to artists' books, offering autonomy in setting initial prices

based on considerations beyond finances to optimize circulation. Thus, pricing is viewed as integral to the artistic concept of artists' books. Participants also acknowledge the marginality of artistic publishing and embrace it as part of their ethos. They see margins as spaces of resistance, autonomy and self-empowerment, where struggles can be asserted. Independent presses, seen as the backbone of contemporary artistic publishing, play a crucial role in bookmaking and art practices, embodying ideals and values. Furthermore, artists' books are viewed as platforms for presenting and affirming new cultural experiences and artistic practices. Artists emphasize their exploration of disciplinary boundaries, integrating various media into the publishing format to advance inter- and transdisciplinarity. Through artists' books, they validate, valorize and evaluate the immaterial aspects of practice.

4.4.3. Democratic distribution of art

Contemporary artists' books prioritize widespread and democratic distribution, even if it means compromising the monetary profit they may earn. Achieving this often necessitates compromising on pricing—the producers of artists' books keep their prices as low as possible or even distribute them for free—to maximize the books' accessibility and affordability. Artists' books also give up on the lofty status traditionally expected of fine art by offering tactile experience, by having to be interacted with to be appreciated. With such a rebellious position as both a commodity and art object, contemporary artists' books advocate for a new approach to valuing art, one based on solidarity and shared circulation rather than possession or exclusivity. These books embody the value of practice and translate it into collective knowledge. Ultimately, their agency offers a glimpse into the potential for reevaluating how artistic practice is valued in society, hinting at a shift toward a more equitable and inclusive approach to art consumption.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1. Summary of Findings

Through this practice-based theoretical research, I addressed the following question: *What relationship do artists' books establish between the objecthood of art and the contemporary sense of practice, particularly in the socioeconomic situation of art valuation?*

To answer the question, I integrated critical literature exploring what values practice-based art proposes, how those values are valorized, evaluated and transmitted as value, what art objects are capable of within this context of valuation and how contemporary artists' books function as such art objects. The theoretical inquiry is echoed and amplified by an empirical inquiry of biographing contemporary artists' books in actual situations of production, distribution, commodification and collection. Interviewing various stakeholders of artistic publishing to understand the objecthood of contemporary artists' books negotiated throughout their ontological operations from conception to consumption, interpreting the collected accounts through situational and thematic analyses and weaving them with my first-hand observations of artists' books, I construct a written object biography and diagrams schematizing the findings.

The theoretical inquiry is represented throughout Chapter 2 of the dissertation. Through Chapter 2.1 [p.18], I established that contemporary art has taken the practice turn, which has made it more focused on the aesthetic of praxis and doing, turning art into a 'state of encounter' or a continuum of social activities that emphasizes the process and immaterial labor themselves as artistic achievements. This has led to various movements since the previous century, most notably the dematerialization of the art object, the rise of the intermedia and the discovery of participation as a mode of practice, which are described as the post-medium condition of art that relies on conceptual means and temporal situations to convey art rather than on the traditional sense of art objects and their materiality. Such a paradigm shift has given rise to the issue of art's embodiment to anchor its ethos and gain concrete presence.

In Chapter 2.2 [p.41], I analyzed the idea of valuation and its system, which revealed that the value of art is socially constructed and performed by different stakeholders, including the artists themselves, cultural intermediaries working with the artists to produce and distribute artworks, and consumers who acknowledge the artworks. It became evident that valuating art is a dynamic process that involves the proposal (valorization) and recognition (evaluation) of art's value, during which various social conditions such as the positional and situational coordinates of the stakeholders within the field and/or conscious efforts to make specific value claims can influence the valuation. Bringing this idea of valuation into the economic framework, I highlighted the trouble that hatches when artworks enter the market and are given the commodity status. Due to the reductive nature of monetizing, the value of artworks can only be articulated incompletely in a commodity form, with the complex trajectories of valorization and evaluation not plainly visible. This has made commodifying art considered problematic since it bears the risk of defectively representing the worth of lives and labor provided by cultural workers to create art. Here, I discovered the potential need to reconsider representing art in its object form, a metonymic material that renders the art's value even when it is alienated from the artist. Especially now when the art is process-driven, and what the

artwork we are attempting to transact in the market is interchangeable with the artists' lived actions themselves, the matter of embodying process-driven art is not only cultural, but also largely entwined with its economic impact.

In Chapter 2.3 [p.49], I began to test this hypothesis that art taking an object form can mean a strategy for claiming art's value by analyzing various discourses on the object's agency. I established that many scholars have argued that we must recognize the epistemological significance of objects, which participate in the matrix of social relations as nonhuman actors and serve as trappings of worth or carriers of value. As artifacts that are handled, applied and used by us, objects can also be considered 'social facts' that project meanings and provide us with opportunities to reflect on our systems and values. In addition to these findings about the object's agency, I showed that there are emerging discourses around art's rematerialization, which refers to the conceptual stance to restore the value of the dematerialized labor and objects of art against the dominant system of neoliberal and capitalist economy that makes them intangible and invisible. As long as the artist seeks institutional and/or market recognition or attempts to ground a position within the existing field of art, they are subject to this system. Furthermore, I examined documentation and conservation of contemporary art as examples of how the idea of rematerialization is being put to realistic use. I concluded that these operations translate intangible and/or changing artworks into distributable and lasting reiterations of the original practices. Based on all findings, I coined the concept of object translation, which refers to the rematerialization of art facilitated by objects that render, capture, evidence, mediate and convey the practice as metonymic and synecdochic tokens of the original work.

Lastly, in Chapter 2.4 [p.62], I turned to the case of the book and its specific genre of artists' books to explore how they may facilitate object translation. To understand the agency of artists' books, I first explored their objecthood as books. As books, artists' books are physical objects serving practical functions, printed (and digitizable) medium for communication and evolving artifacts born of creative experiments in a dualistic status as both art objects and commodity objects. Their tactility, portability and universality as nodes in the cultural network, books and artists' books not only represent but also actively deliver multiple layers of cultural endeavors and socioeconomic positions that make art. Then, focusing on the history of artists' books from the early 20th century to the present, I demonstrated how their presence in the art world has evolved from being an alternative art form or 'cultural strategy' to channel art more democratically to being organic outcomes of publishing as artistic practice and social interactions between the practitioners. In a nutshell, I concluded that contemporary artists' books today are material anchors of art's ethos, speaking for the value of the process-driven, self-asserted and reproductive nature of practice.

The empirical inquiry is represented throughout Chapter 3, which is assisted by the catalog of artists' books I examined for this research [p.213] and Appendix 3, the transcripts of the interviews [p.255]. Here, I verified my findings from the theoretical inquiry by analyzing the actual situations of contemporary artistic publishing and collecting accounts of the stakeholders. The thematic analysis of the interviews [p.109] revealed: 1) several mechanisms that can be seen as effective towards facilitating object translation, 2) statements on the art

economy of cultural workers artists' books represent and 3) points of institutional critique the books make as an experimental art form.

The situational analysis of the interviews [p.142] resulted in two 'maps' of the project—the situational map and the social worlds/arenas map. The former revealed that: 1) There are more nonhuman elements/actants than the human elements/actants involved in this inquiry, which supports my choice to center the research's focus around an object—artist's book; 2) Certain voices are only represented and implicated—those of the general consumers of art, books and artists' books, in particular, were collected indirectly, filtered through the perceptions of the interviewees, who are professionals of art and publishing industries; 3) The relationship between the human actants and the political/economic elements (art economy, art market and book market) is negative—the human actants often work around, ideologically disagree with or attempt to escape the systematic influence of these elements; 4) The major issue that was repeatedly brought up by the interviewees was the ethos of collectivity and democratic distribution of art. The latter—the social worlds/arenas map—revealed the groupings of human stakeholders and their sites of practice. This mode of mapping was especially useful for defining the different cultural practices involved in artistic publishing and for confirming that my interview participants appropriately represent different groups of stakeholders.

The object biography [p.146] was an attempt to explore and understand how artists' books are produced, treated, transacted and eventually exert their influence on us in actual sites and situations by focusing on five select cases that I could closely observe throughout the research project. The practice resulted in a text-based narration of the different trajectories the books took throughout their lives and a series of diagrams that visualized the trajectories. Together they revealed: 1) An artist's book begins its life when an artist seeks to transform a common cultural form—the book—into a unique art object. Artists reinterpret books, turning reading into an interactive, performative experience. These books can document events or projects, offering a concrete and material form to otherwise ephemeral artistic practice; 2) Artists' books occupy a precarious space when it comes to their valuation as artworks because they inevitably age and become frail due to their need to be picked up and handled to activate the experience of their content; 3) Regardless, the key goal of artists' books is still the idea of distribution, even at the expense giving up financial gains, to reach as many readers as possible; 4) Promoting the value of artists' books today requires bold efforts, suggesting a new value recognition system that transcends capitalist idea of value and emphasizes solidarity and sharing. The true end of an artist's book is not its physical wear but its absence from social participation. As objects, they embody artistic practice—of publishing, performance, installation, conceptual, participatory, etc.—and translate it into circulatable forms of knowledge that symbolize and refer to the practice.

Based on these inquiries, I reached the following key points of discussion:

[1] Artistic practice can be rematerialized through object translation. The practice and its immaterial ‘substance’—the process and labor—and contextual conditions of artmaking are anchored by the visibly valuable terms of the object that translate the intangible terms of the practice.

[1-1] The objects with the translational agency, or the translational objects, are synecdochic and metonymic of practice. They signal the practice symbolically and referentially. Object translation operates on the basis that art objects can reiterate the practice they stem from in terms of their own objecthood. Such a translation is not quite literal—the objects are never the practice itself. However, as limited as any cultural form in holistically representing ideas and experiences are, the translational objects can still speak for the practice as its tangible expressions, even amplifying their presence in the cultural and socioeconomic systems.

[2] Contemporary artists’ books offer four modes of object translation that originate from their multidimensional or intersectional status as objects.

[2-1] Artists’ books are performers. They take on an active role in their own presentation, bridging the gap between the creation and consumption of art. They encourage viewers to engage physically by necessitating interaction that leads to immersive experience of reading. This immersion is heightened by the sequential flow of pages, adding a temporal dimension to the act of reading. Often, the books are also utilized as props symbolic of the artist’s practice in exhibitions, further emphasizing their performative aspect.

[2-2] Artists’ books show how editorial choices made during their production can serve curatorial purposes, enabling practice-driven art to be exhibited in a tangible and tailored format. Artists and their collaborators view the virtual plains of artists’ books as alternative sites of exhibition that can be consciously and intently designed and arranged to facilitate the encounter between the practice and the audience/readers. The editorial interventions in choosing what to include in the book or in arranging the elements have curatorial significance as the resulting publications symbolize the contextual connections between the content, format of the presentation, the position of the practice within the artist’s oeuvre and the idea of conveying the work to the public.

[2-3] Artists’ books serve as enduring evidence of practices that persists even after their conclusion or dissolution. Unlike exhibitions or live performances, books possess archival qualities that do not easily diminish over time. As archives, artists’ books contain multiple layers of metadata, offering access to a wealth of contextual information that extends beyond the original practice. This literature may include the artist’s research materials, references, blueprints, photographic or textual records and fragments of practice that were

not incorporated into the final work. Consequently, they represent evidence of the process surrounding a practice, from its inception to its presentation, serving as repositories for internal reflections and references crucial to the realization of the practice.

[2-4] Artists' books echo the sociality of practice. They provide a platform for collaboration among creators and with their audiences. Contemporary artists' books are not solely the work of the artist; rather, artistic publishing most often involves expanded authorship, with various collaborators contributing from their unique perspectives. Upon distribution, these local, project-based scenes reconnect with the broader cultural network or ecosystem of artistic publishing. Within this expansive communal space for exchange, artists and collaborators encounter new publishing opportunities to engage with. Artists' books also draw their audience into this collective spirit by inviting participation in their content or inspiring them to create their own books. These collaborative processes foster active and critical dialogues, transforming artistic publishing into a communal endeavor, echoing the ethos of proactive doing.

[3] Contemporary artists' books embody the economic trouble of art valuation. As translational objects, artists' books not only embody the artistic practice itself but also speak for the experience of valuation the practice undergoes by providing value reflections on the current system of the art economy and consumption. The ability to represent the process-driven consideration of artistic practice allows artists' books to be valued, in principle, not just as static commodities dictated by market prices but as dynamic operations that facilitate the appreciation of the labor involved in their creation. Yet, this nuanced understanding is often obscured and overpowered by the conventional capitalist standards for market valuation.

[3-1] The stage of production is where the (im)materials of the practice meet with the rationale to publish and become rematerialized into artists' books that present themselves as cultural artifacts. How artists' books are produced largely varies because each publication is a unique creative endeavor. In general, though, production is when artists amass value in artists' books by reflecting their artistic intention onto the book's contents, format and materials.

[3-2] The stage of distribution is where artists' books become situated in public, cultural domains to be presented to their audience. This stage should be differentiated from commodification in that the artist and collaborators focus on the dissemination of their books itself, rather than marketing them to gain monetary profit. This is when the artists propose the value of their books to the public, and where the most playful consumption of artists' books occurs, often away from the conditions of the neoliberal and capitalist market.

[3-3] Commodification of artists' books is staged in more commercial arenas such as on- and offline bookshops, art book fairs and art fairs. Here, exhibition of the books turns into display, audience turns into consumers, and the distributed objects become cultural

commodities. The conditions of the market do not exactly favor artists' books—being both artworks and books at the same time, they face obscure positioning within the market; as art objects, they are often devalued for having to be 'touched' and thus vulnerable to the chance of becoming damaged; they are also considered suspiciously cheap as artworks, leading to underestimation of their value; as books, they are considered unjustifiably overpriced. Thus, as commodities, artists' books reveal the discrepancy between the dual status of artists' books or a critical dissonance between the proposed value and perceived value; the sociocultural value and market value; the objective value and subjective value; what is produced and what is consumed.

[3-4] Despite the discrepancy, the commodification of artists' books enables their transaction through which their value is validated—transaction is where an equilibrium of value is reached between the axes of the proposed and the perceived. Upon transaction and transition into the stage of collection, artists' books exit the market and enter various institutional, public and personal sites where the original value artists have invested in their books is recognized through the act of purchasing to keep and preserve the books.

[4] Through their journey through various socioeconomic situations, contemporary artists' books set new paradigms of art valuation by functioning as the conceptual arena for us to reconsider and discuss our current scheme of constructing and recognizing value of artistic practice.

[4-1] Contemporary artists' books add to the multiplicity and diversity of culture. Guided by the creative freedom of the artist and the art's turn toward practice-driven experimentation, artists' books propose new cultural forms by reimagining the book format and challenging conventional expectations attached to it, thereby reshaping the boundaries of art.

[4-2] Contemporary artists' books embody the ethos of self-representation. Those involved in artistic publishing take on multiple roles across conception, production and distribution to exert holistic control over the publishing process. This pursuit of self-sufficiency, wanting to control the process, allows participants to carve out their own sphere of autonomy to claim the value of practice. Participants acknowledge the marginality of artistic publishing and embrace it as part of their ethos. They see margins as spaces of resistance, autonomy and self-empowerment, where struggles can be asserted. Furthermore, artists' books are viewed as platforms for presenting and affirming new cultural practices. Artists emphasize their self-exploration of disciplinary boundaries, integrating various art forms into the publishing format to advance inter- and transdisciplinarity.

[4-3] Producers of contemporary artists' books prioritize democratic distribution of art over the conventional—monetary—form of profit. Artists' books imply a new approach to

valuing art, one based on solidarity and shared circulation rather than possession or exclusivity. Their dualistic agency as both an art object and commodity object suggests a potential shift toward a more equitable and inclusive approach to art consumption.

Therefore, contemporary artists' books, as a currency of practice and its ethos, remind us that cultivating methods of valuation built out from the belief in practice is central to insisting on the valuation as a form of post-capitalist struggle and as the basis for building solidarity and new social structures.

* * *

Concluding this research, I sincerely hope for it to be read, discussed, interpreted, rejected and bolstered by anyone who finds it relevant to their situation, but especially by those who are starting to feel fatigued from the practice of publishing, which, at times, could feel like throwing pebbles in the ocean to build a piece of ground to stand on. I want to remind them that what they are doing may appear vain at the moment, but it is certainly dropping anchors in our minds as an inspiration, point of reference or exactly what we need to feel heard.

5.2. Notes for Future Studies

This research entails the following points of limitation:

[1] Being based on qualitative inquiries that focused on a relatively narrow pool of participants and cases, the findings of this research cannot be fully generalized.

[2] To minimize the risk of interview accounts becoming skewed, I tried to distribute my participants as much as possible regarding their professional and cultural backgrounds. However, due to realistic constraints such as time and willingness of people to participate, some categories of roles and cultures are less represented than others in this research.

[3] This research was initially developed to include an element of bookmaking practice—I considered producing an artist's book myself and tracking it through its stages of distribution and consumption. However, the plan was later revised to scope the project realistically and focused on conducting interviews for situational analysis and constructing the written object biography based on my first-hand experience as a consumer and observer of contemporary artists' books. Thus, this research relies heavily on the interviewees' accounts when discussing artists' books from the perspective of the producer.

Possible agenda for further studies includes:

[1] One could conduct practice-based research on this topic from the perspective of an artist who publishes artists' books or whose practice could benefit from an object translation into an artistic publication. This could help promote empirical knowledge production, which is now considered extremely valuable in academic endeavors.

[2] One could focus on the translational relationship between artists' books and specific art disciplines. For instance, many of my interview participants (Participant D, F, K, Q, R) emphasized the connection between performance scores and artistic publishing, which could also be seen in historical cases such as the event scores produced by Fluxus (Chapter 2.4.2 [p.69]).

[3] One could situate the findings of this research in contexts other than the cultural West and Global North. Much of the academic discussion on artistic publishing and artists' books have centered around works from Europe and North America. However, the contemporary practice of artistic publishing has grown into a global activity or artistic tendency (Chapter 2.4.3 [p.84]) that could be analyzed within the much-needed framework of decentralization and decolonization.

[4] One could conduct a comparative study on how the concept and role of artists' books has evolved in different localities. Many of my interview participants (Participant B, E, F) from outside of the European and North American contexts have informed me that as the practice of artistic publishing became globalized, artists have interpreted the cultural notion of

artists' books to suit their local art scenes.

[5] One could further develop the methodology of object biography. As mentioned earlier (Chapter 3.1 [p.91] and 3.5 [p.146]), object biography has not yet been strictly theorized as a methodology and thus has room for interpretation and creative application. Such an attempt could contribute to the current post-humanist shift of academic perspectives and further recognizing the cultural, socio-political and economic impact of objects on humanity.

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ARTISTS' BOOKS

This catalog lists the artists' books I interacted with in person throughout this research project. The list roughly follows the chronological order, but some books that are relevant to each other are grouped, ignoring the chronology. I am the source of the images unless specified otherwise. The books I was able to purchase have the price and date of collection listed. The prices are what I obtained the books for and may differ from the books' official prices.

1.

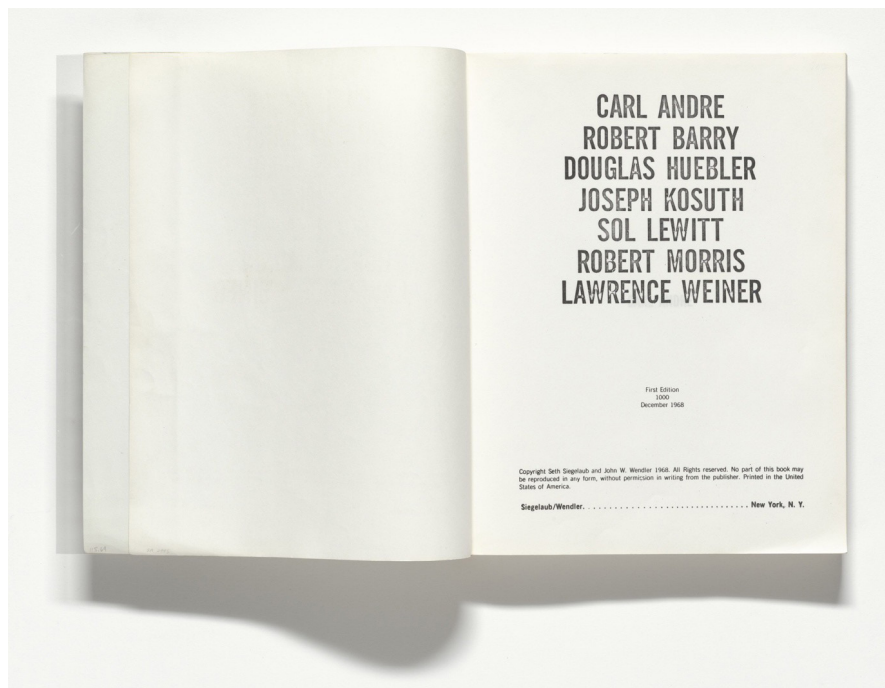
Carl Andre, Robert Barry, Douglas Huebler, Joseph Kosuth, Sol Lewitt, Robert Morris, Lawrence Weiner
a.k.a. *Xerox Book*

Seth Siegelau, John W. Wendler

New York, 1968

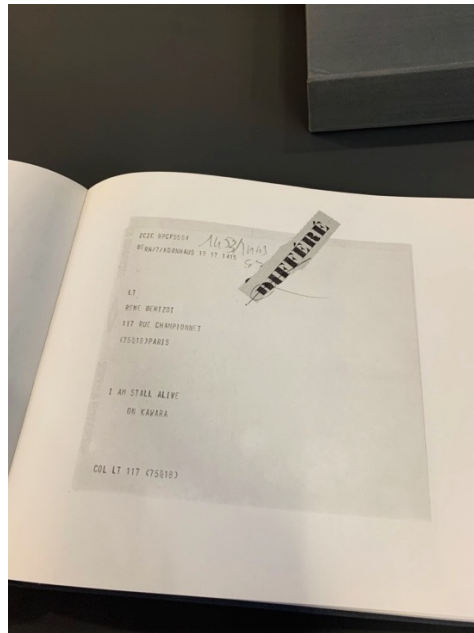
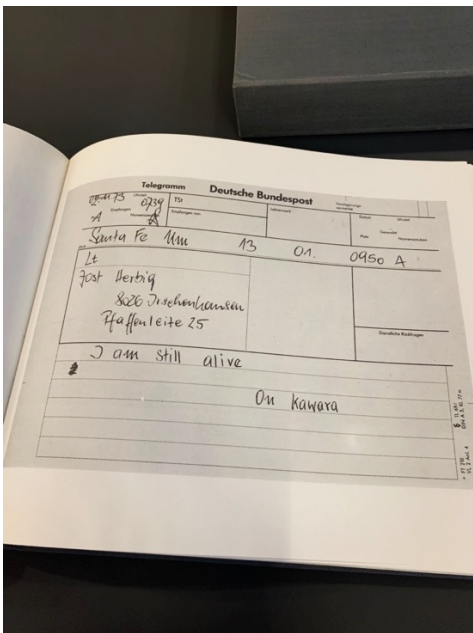
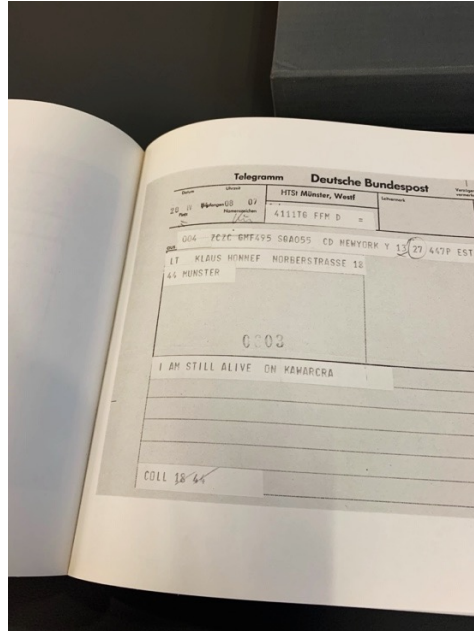
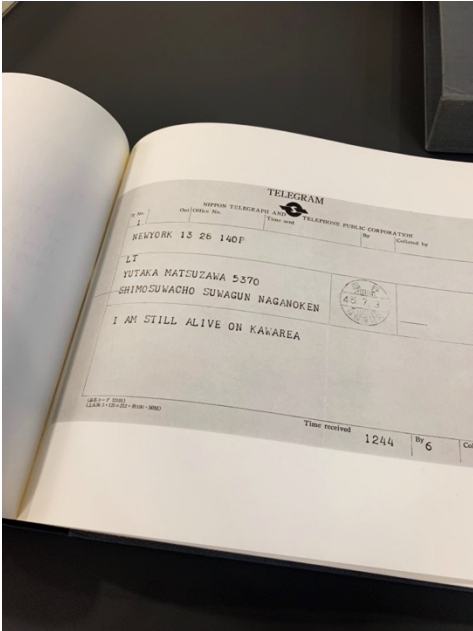
27 x 21.2cm, 190 pgs

PDF format downloadable from [Primary Information](#)

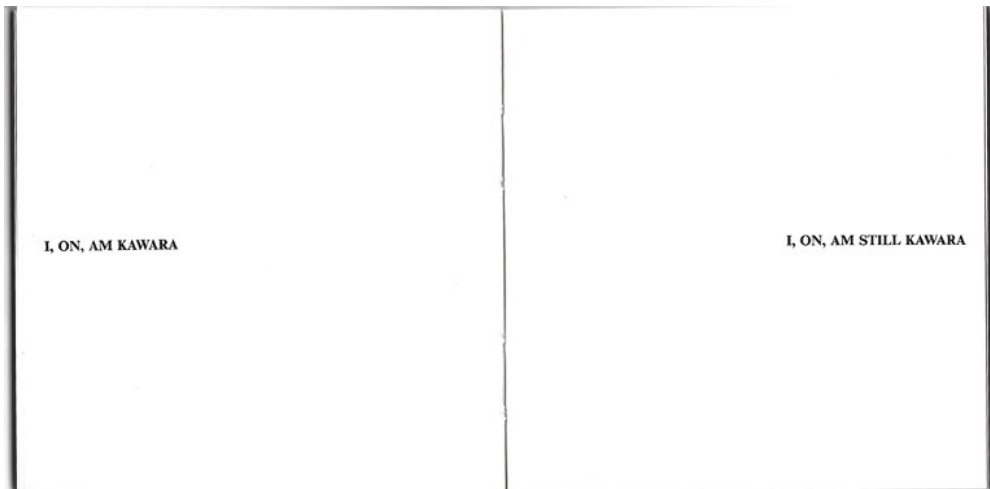
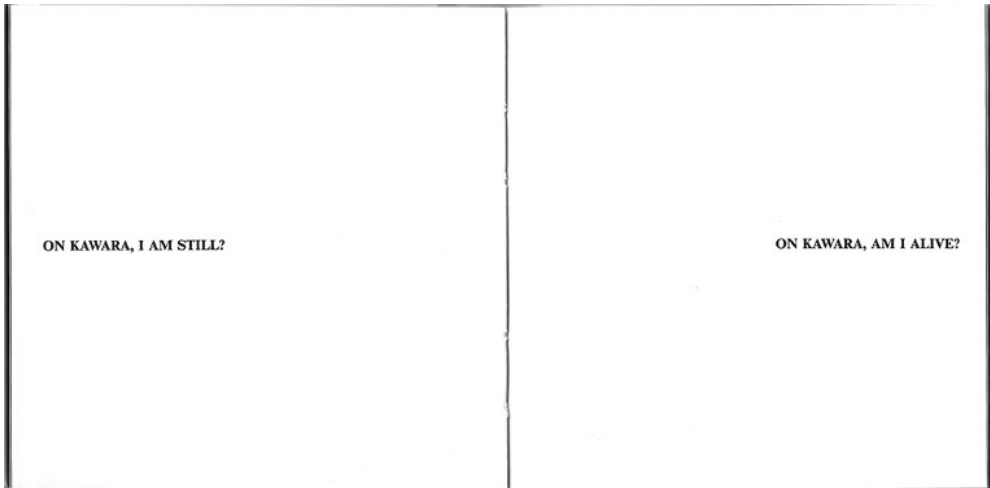


(Image source: Book as Exhibition)

2.
I am Still Alive
 On Kawara
 Berlin: René Block, 1978
 21 x 24cm, 205 pgs



3.
Variations on I am Still Alive On Kawara
Sol Lewitt
Firenze & Lugo, 1988
12 x 12 cm, 40 pgs



4.

Burning Small Fires

Bruce Nauman

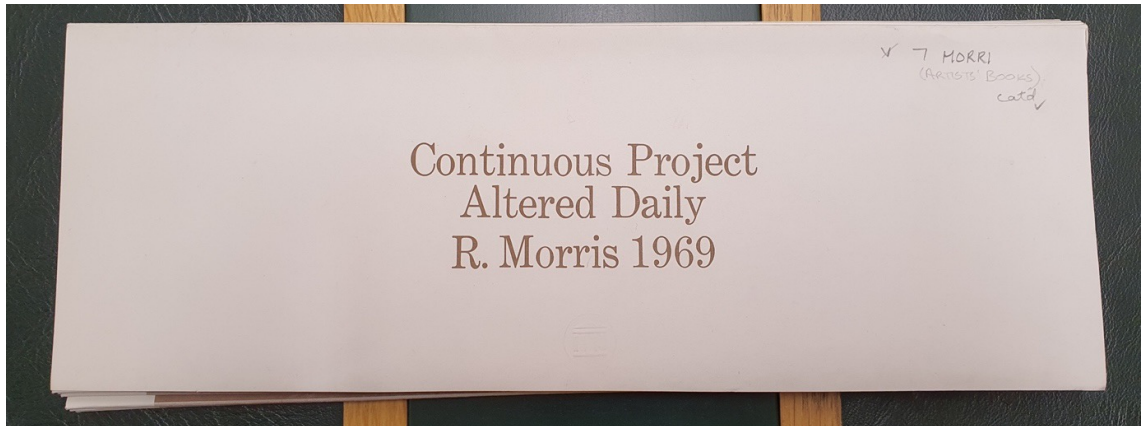
San Francisco, 1968

95 x 125cm, folded into 32 x 25 cm



(Image source: Artsy)

5.
Continuous Project Altered Daily
Robert Morris
New York: Multiples, Inc., 1970
183 x 31cm, folded into 11 x 31cm



6.

Publication

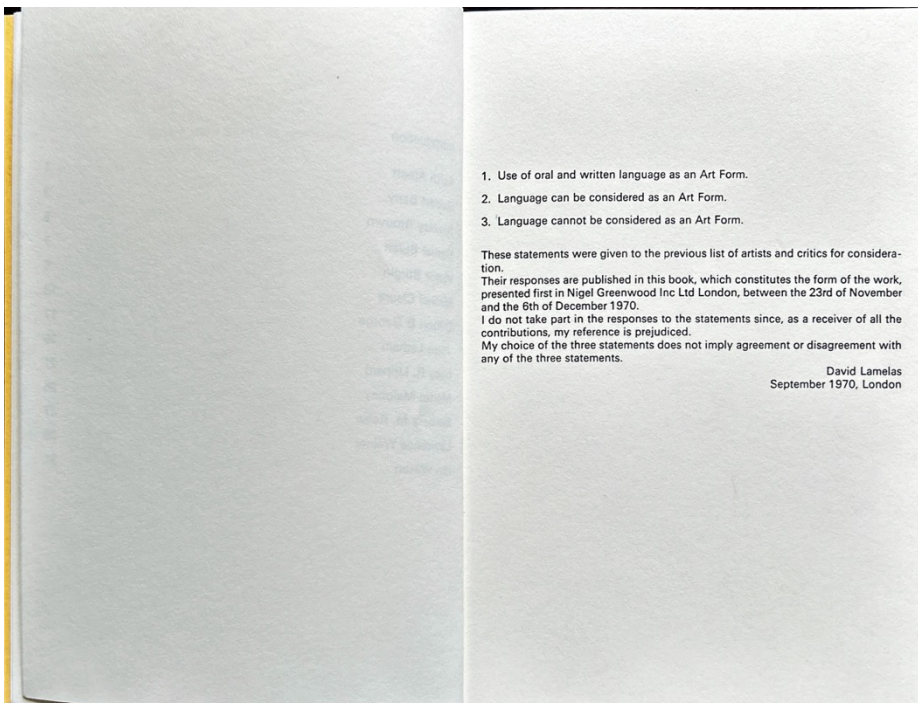
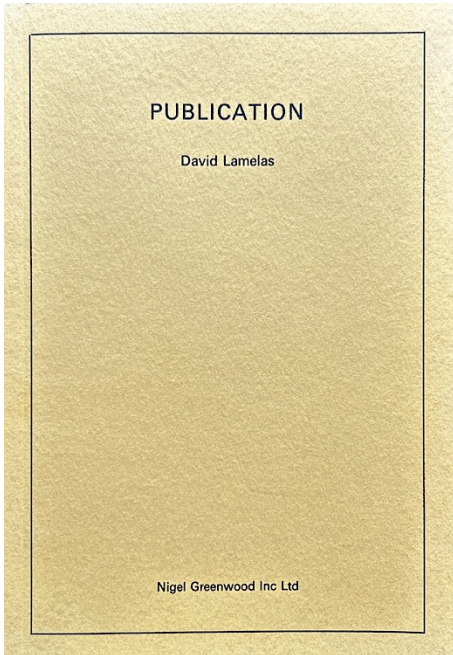
David Lamelas

New York: Primary Information, 2016

Originally published by Nigel Greenwood Inc., Ltd. In 1970

20 x 14.5cm, 34pgs

£15.00, 14 June 2022



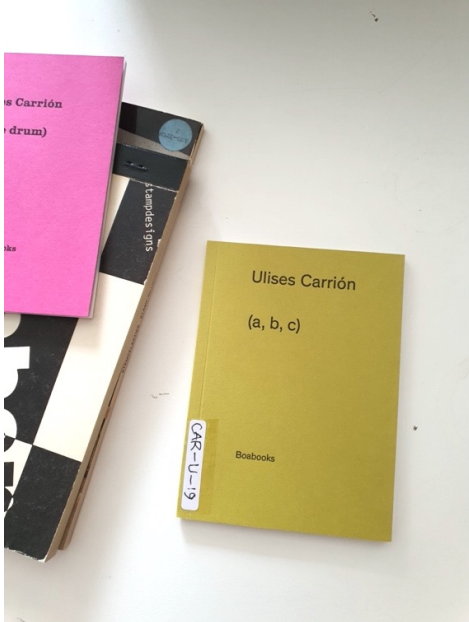
1. Use of oral and written language as an Art Form.
2. Language can be considered as an Art Form.
3. Language cannot be considered as an Art Form.

These statements were given to the previous list of artists and critics for consideration. Their responses are published in this book, which constitutes the form of the work, presented first in Nigel Greenwood Inc Ltd London, between the 23rd of November and the 6th of December 1970.

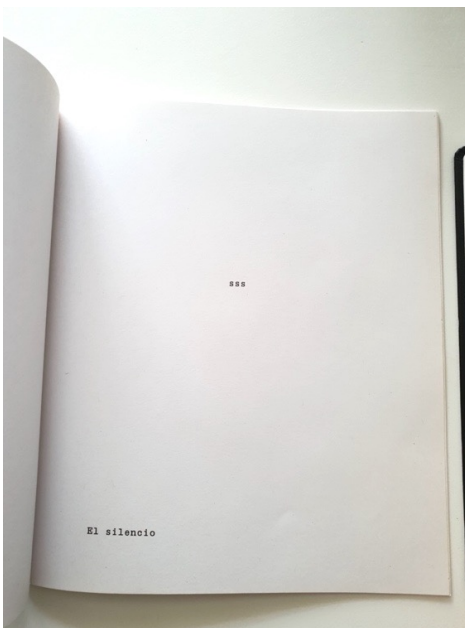
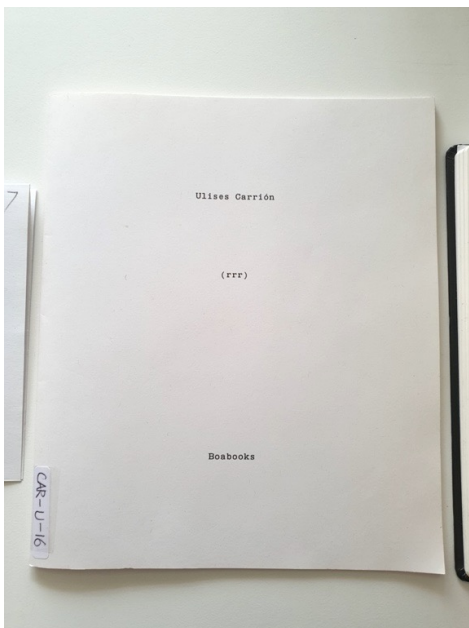
I do not take part in the responses to the statements since, as a receiver of all the contributions, my reference is prejudiced. My choice of the three statements does not imply agreement or disagreement with any of the three statements.

David Lamelas
September 1970, London

7.
(a, b, c)
Ulises Carrión
Geneva: Boabooks, 2016
Originally handwritten by the artist in 1972
14.5 x 10.5cm, 48pgs



8.
(rrr)
Ulises Carrión
Geneva: Boabooks, 2016
Originally typewritten by the artist in 1972
20 x 23.5cm, 24pgs



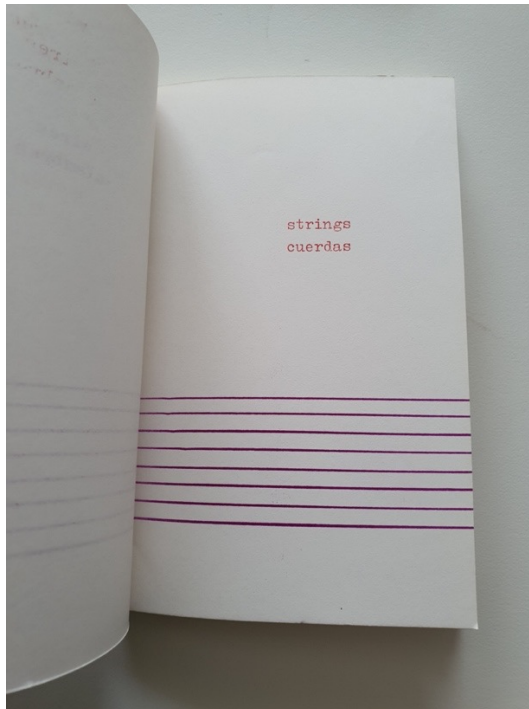
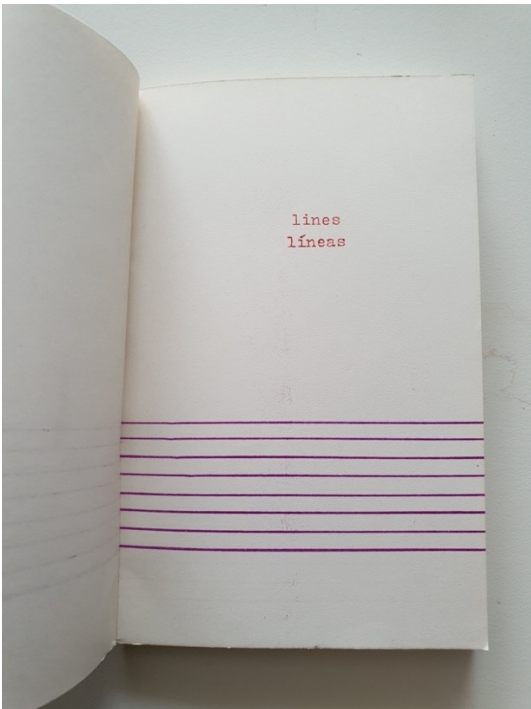
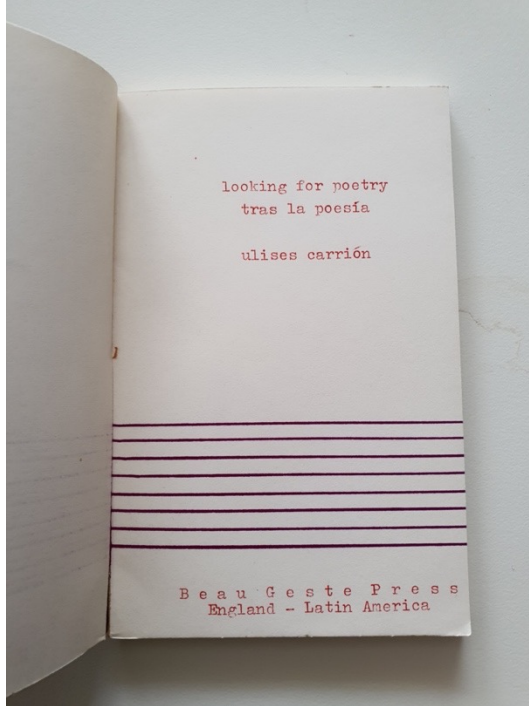
9.

Looking for Poetry / Tras La Poesía

Ulises Carrión

Cullompton, Devon: Beau Geste Press & Amsterdam: In-Out Center, 1973

15 x 7.5cm, 60pgs



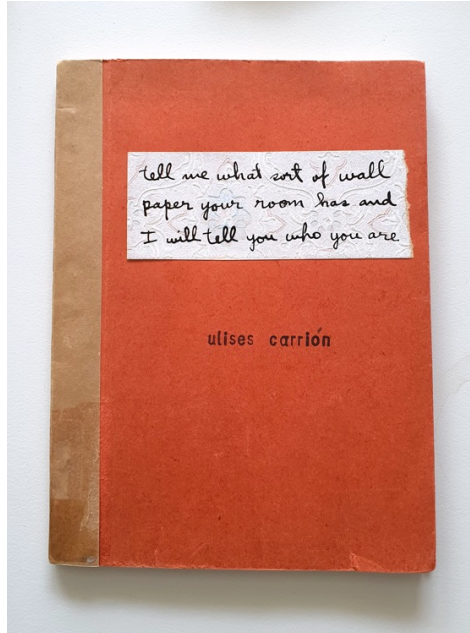
10.

Tell me what sort of wall paper your room has and I will tell you who you are

Ulises Carrión

Amsterdam: In-Out Productions, 1973, 1974 (2nd ed.)

18 x 11.5cm



11.

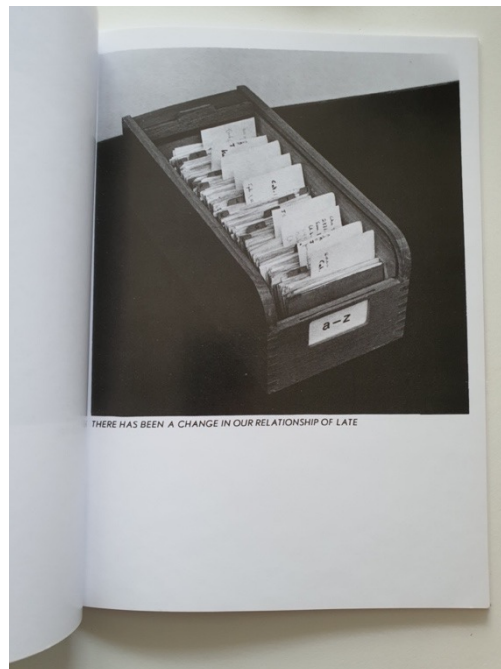
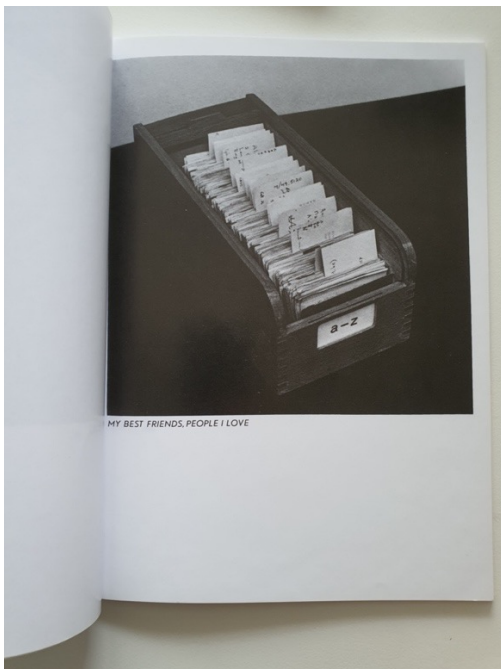
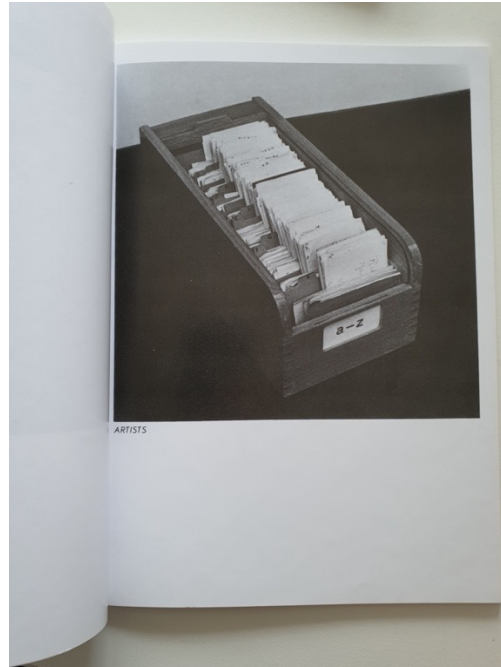
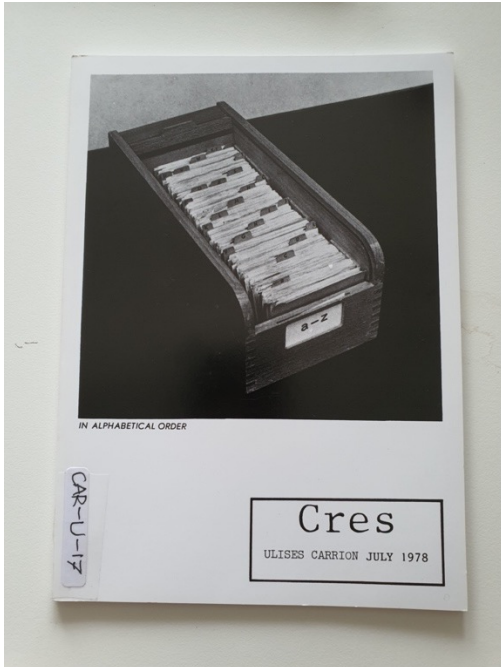
In alphabetical order

Ulises Carrión

Geneva: Boabooks, 2016

Facsimile of magazine published by the artist in 1978

21 x 14.8cm, 48pgs



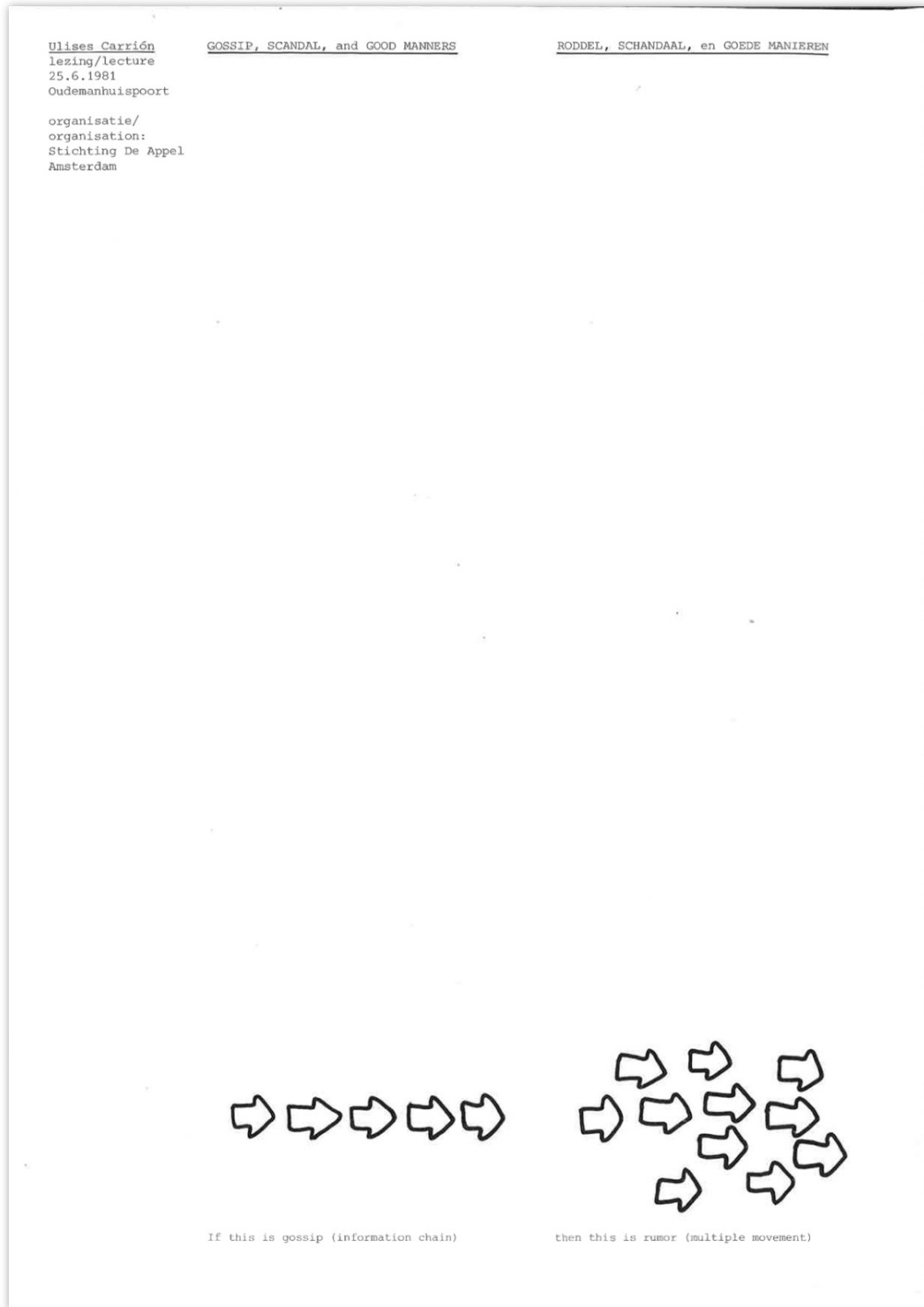
12.

Gossip, Scandal, and Good Manners

Ulises Carrión

Amsterdam: Stichting De Appel, 1981

29.4 x 21cm, 8pgs



13.

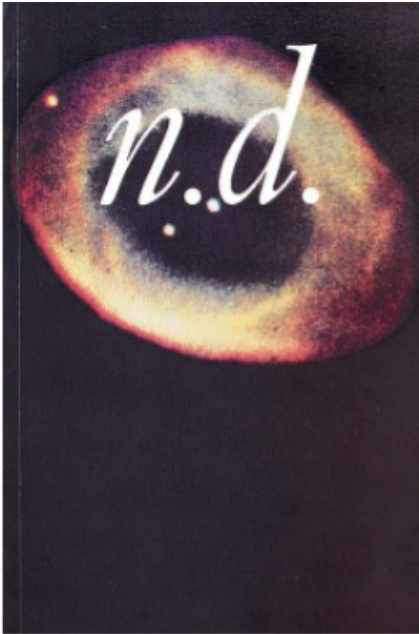
Notable Days

Pavel Büchler

London: Book Works, 1990

21.5 x 14.5cm, 208pgs

£12.50, 3 December 2021

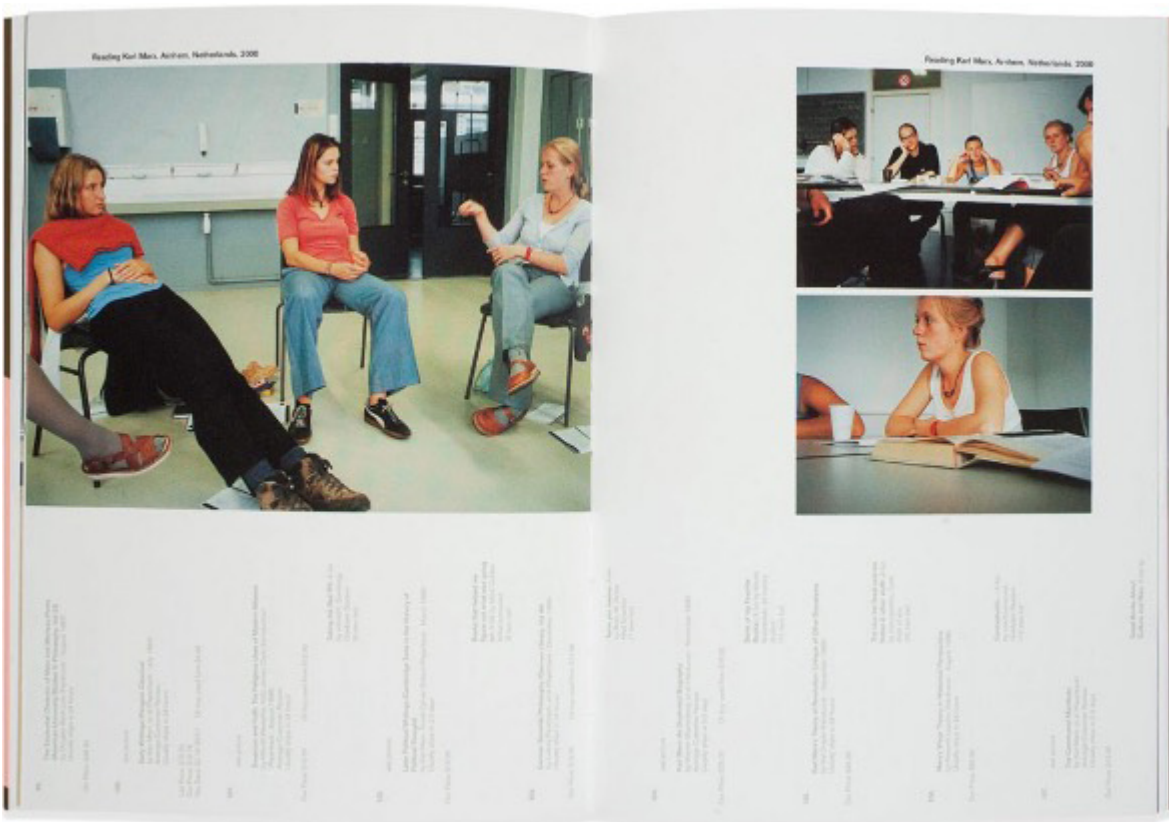
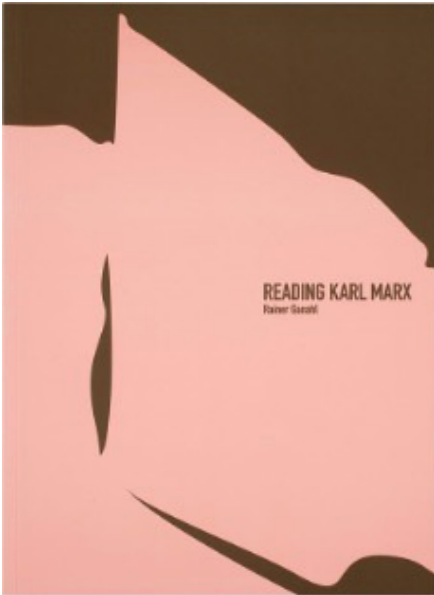


(Image source: Book Works)

14.
Annual Table on Art in Austria
 Bernhard Cella
 Vienna: InfoArcadia, 2000
 89 x 154cm, folded into 22,5 x 15.5cm
 €18.00, 20 June 2022



15.
Reading Karl Marx
 Rainer Ganahl
 London: Book Works, 2001
 23 x 17cm, 56pgs
 £7.50, 3 December 2021



(Image source: Book Works)

16.
N55 Book
N55
Copenhagen: Pork Salad Press & N55, 2004
Project ongoing since 1996
21 x 14.8cm, 400pgs
Free, 23 October 2022
PDF format downloadable from the [artist website](#)



(Image source: N55)



17.

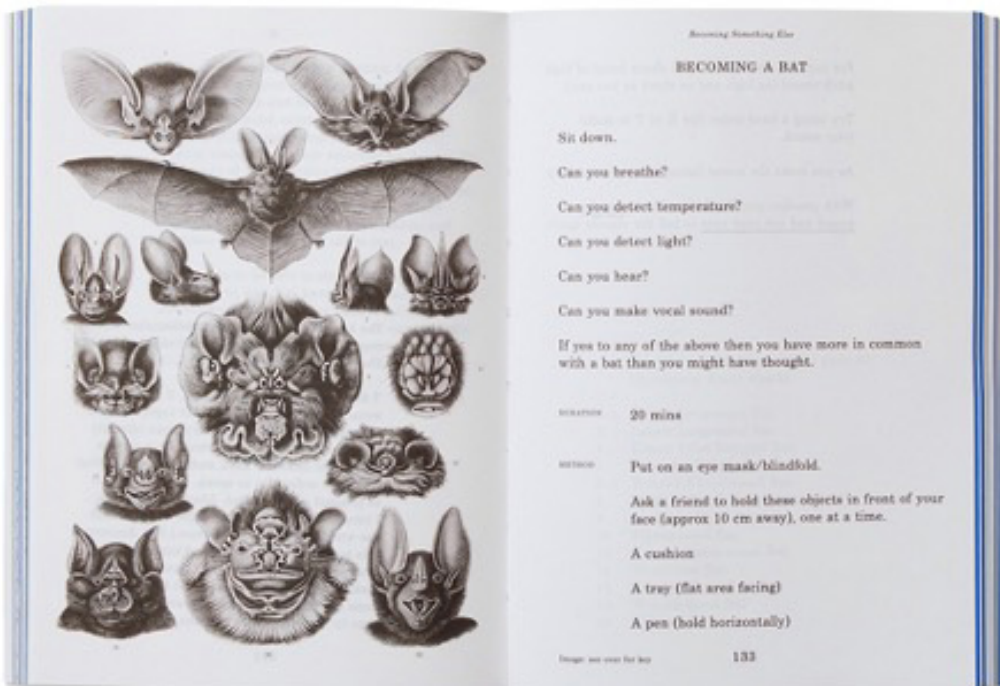
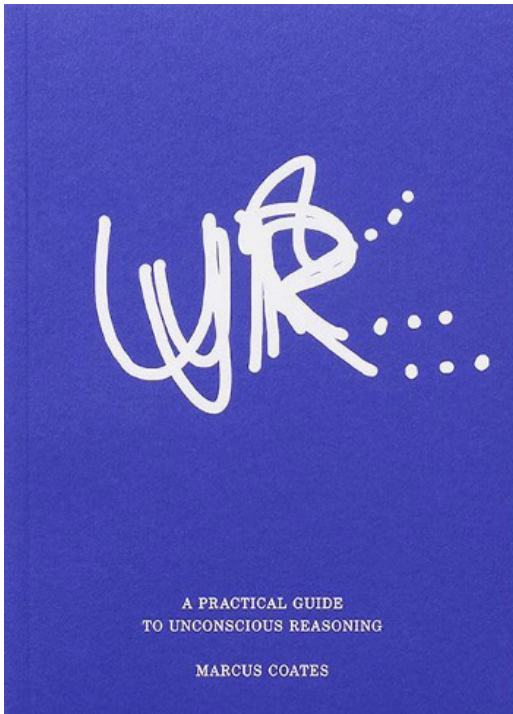
UR... A Practical Guide to Unconscious Reasoning

Marcus Coates

London: Book Works, 2008, 2020 (2nd ed.)

18 x 12.8cm, 320pgs

£13.00, 3 December 2021



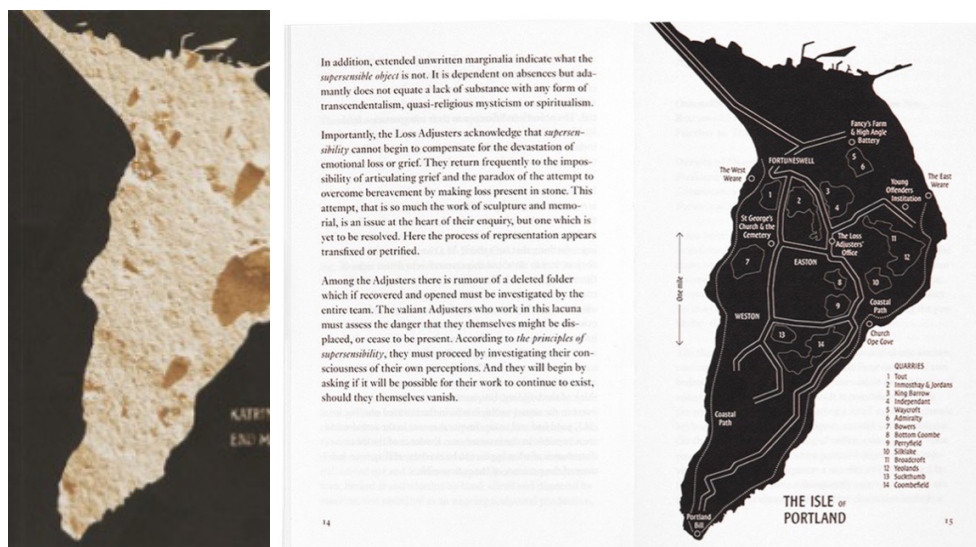
(Image source: Book Works)

18.
The Dark Object
 Katrina Palmer
 London: Book Works, 2010, 2013 (2nd ed.), 2023 (3rd ed.)
 19.5 x 13cm, 128pgs
 £5.00 (Book Works Readers Club subscription), 2023



(Image source: Book Works)

19.
End Matter
 Katrina Palmer
 London: Book Works, 2015
 18 x 12cm, 96pgs
 £10.00, 3 December 2021



(Image source: Book Works)

20.

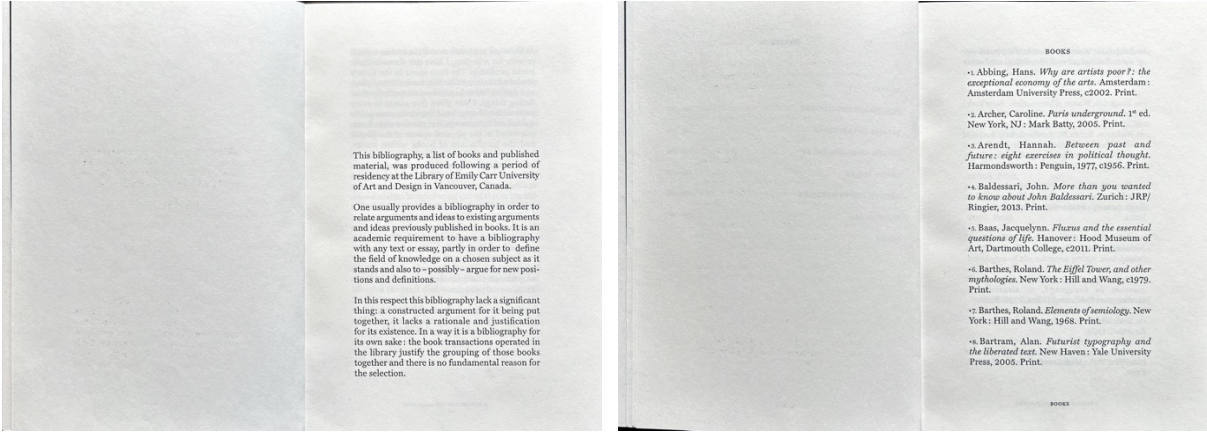
A Vancouver Bibliography

Arnaud Desjardin

London: The Everyday Press, 2014

20 x 14.5cm, unpagged

£8.00, 14 June 2022



21.

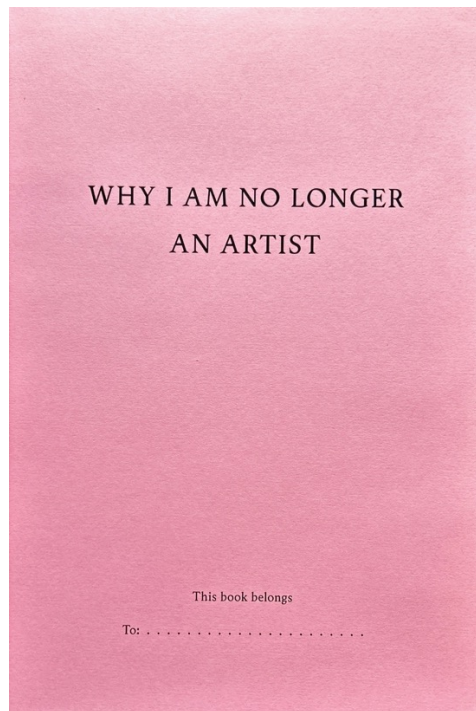
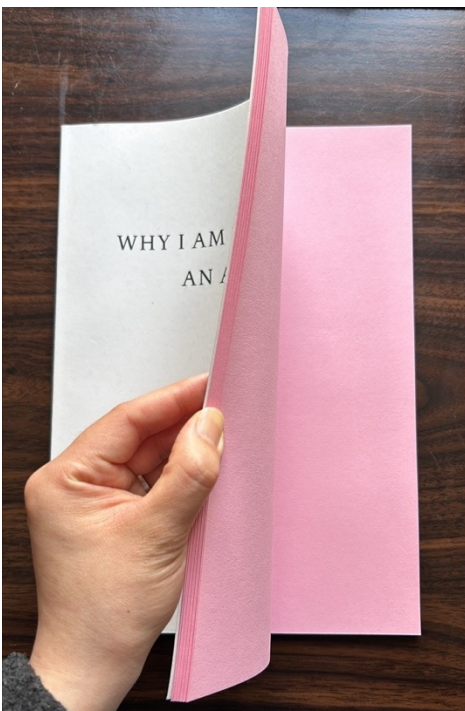
Why I am no Longer an Artist

Arnaud Desjardin

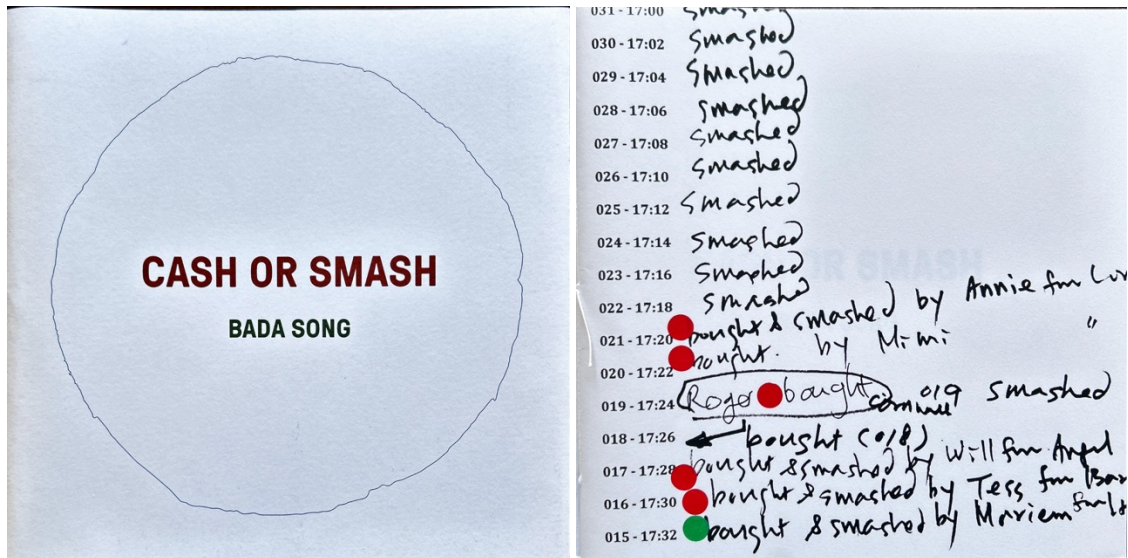
No date

28 x 20cm, unpagged

Free, 14 June 2022



22.
 Cash or Smash
 Bada Song
 London: eedo, 2015
 20 x 20cm, 50pgs
 £14.95, 30 July 2022



23.

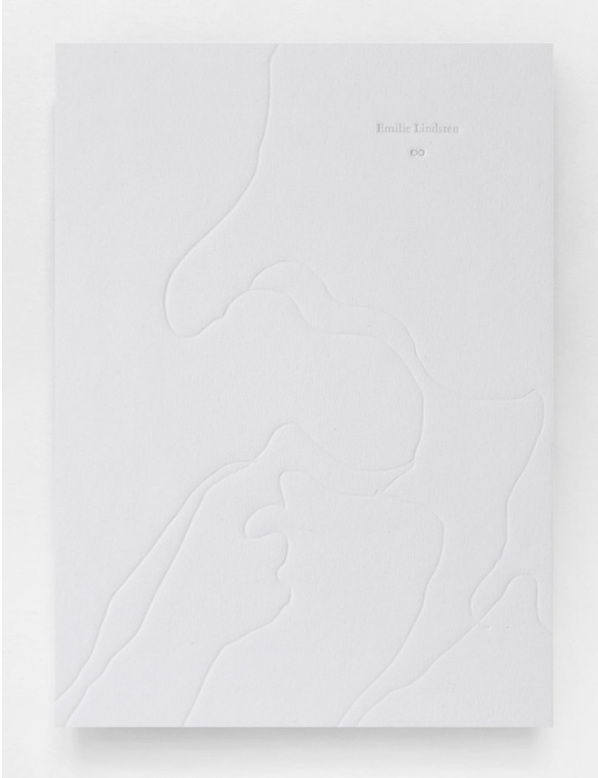
∞ (*Infinity*)

Emilie Lindsten

London: Jane & Jeremy, 2015

20 x 14.5cm, 60pgs

£50.00, 10 September 2021



(Image source: Jane & Jeremy)

24.
남겨진 *the leftover*
Meenyea Oh
2019
24.5 x 17 x 3.2cm



25.
창문에 *on the window*
Meenyea Oh
2019
21 x 15 x 3cm



26.
비추는 *reflected*
Meenyea Oh
2019
23.8 x 16 x 0.7cm



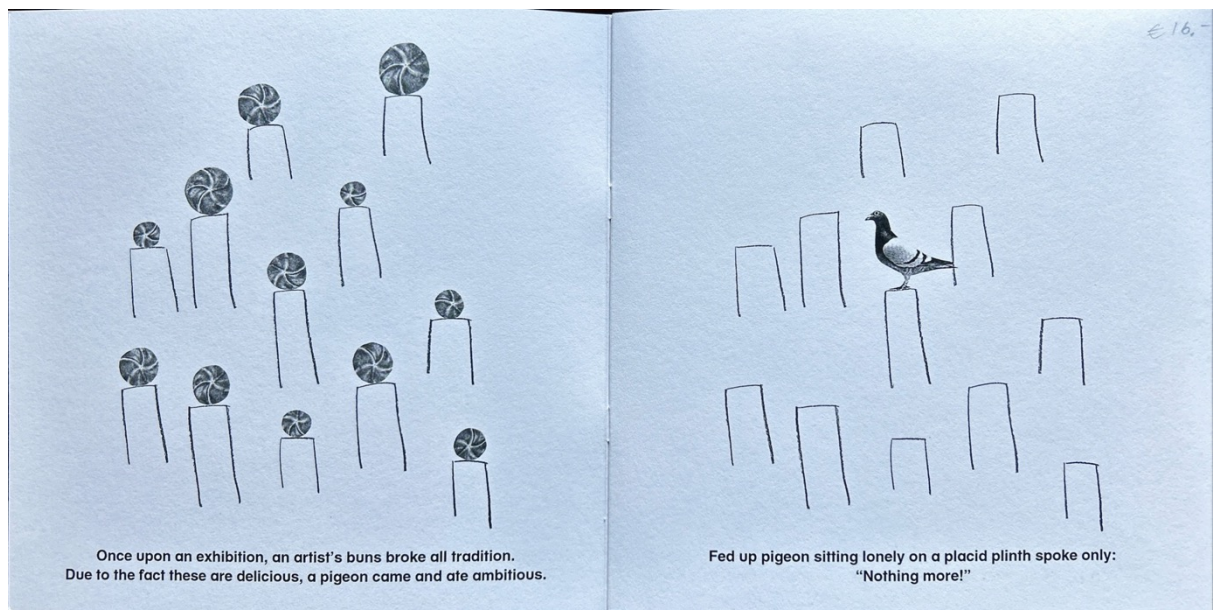
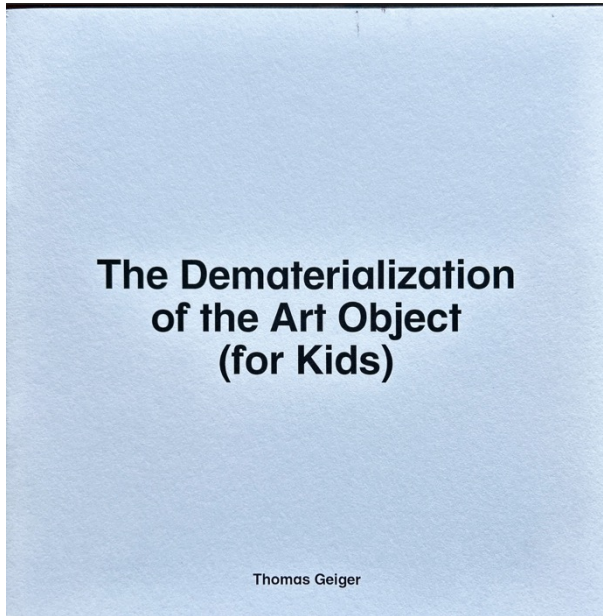
27.
instagram@kdkkdk
KDK (Dokyun Kim)
Seoul: IANN Books, 2019
10.7 x 14.7 x 6cm, 1568pgs
42,000 KRW (£24.00), 15 September 2022



(Image source: IANN Books)



28.
The Dematerialization of the Art Object (for Kids)
Thomas Geiger
Vienna: Mark Pezinger Books, 2020
21 x 21cm, 6pgs
€16.00, 20 June 2022



29.

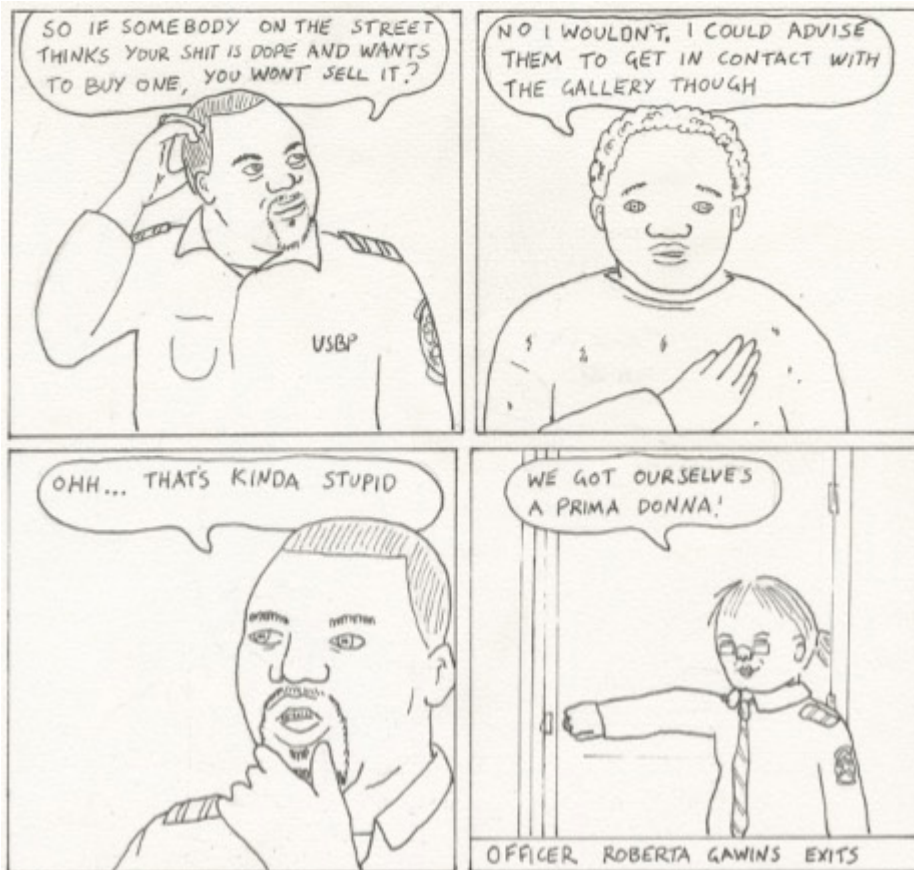
Airport Love Theme

Hamishi Farah

London: Book Works, 2020, 2023 (2nd ed.)

20 x 15cm, 128pgs

£5.00 (Book Works Readers Club subscription), 2023



(Image source: Book Works)

30.
 배경복사반사 *BackgroundRadiationReflection*
 Heesue Kwon
 Seoul: NUN, 2021
 22.3 x 15.2cm, 232pgs
 18,000 KRW (£12.50), 14 September 2023
 Free, 28 September 2023



<p>흰 상자가 있다 당신이 입장하는 순간 사건은 시작한다 장면은 그 시선 안에서 움직인다</p>	<p>There is a white box Events that take place in here begin the moment you enter A scene only exists through the viewing eyes</p>	<p>INTRO</p>	
<p>문이 열려자 당신을 마주 보는 흰 벽 당신은 벽을 바라보며 가만히 서 있다 당신의 시선은 흰 벽면을 따라 이어지고, 당신이 좌너를 돌아 입구를 향하는 모습은 흰 스크린에 담겼다 사라진다</p>	<p>As a door opens, a white wall is facing you You are standing still looking at the wall Your gaze draws along the white surface of the wall, And the white screen shows you turning the corner, heading towards the entrance, And, disappearing</p>	<p>#1</p>	
<p>당신은 이 공간에 초대된 관객, 피포어, 당신의 당신이다 당신은 회전문 앞에서 망설인다</p>	<p>You are an audience invited to this space, a performer, And you yourself You are hesitating in front of the revolving door</p>		
<p>문을 열고 안으로 들어갔다가 지시문을 따라 다시 입장</p>	<p>Pushing the door inside and then reentering with directions</p>		
<p>당신은 입장하며 그를 바라본다 당신이 바라보지 못하는 장면 안에서 당신은 움직이고 당신이 바라보는 장면은 바라보지 못했던 장면과 더불어 함께 움직인다</p>	<p>As you enter, you give him a look You move inside a scene you cannot see And the scene you're seeing moves along with the scene you couldn't see</p>		
<p>당신은 회전문을 열고 입장한다 장면은 그렇게 시작한다</p>	<p>You enter pushing the revolving door The scene begins so</p>		
<p>문은 열리지도 닫히지도 않는다 겹쳐진 막을 뚫고 빛이 통과할 때 장면은 드러나지도 감춰지지도 않는다</p>	<p>the door does not open nor close as light comes in through overlaid layers a scene is neither revealed nor hidden</p>	<p>#2</p>	
<p>한 사람이 들어오고 또 다른 한 사람이 들어올 동안 시야는 분리되지 않고 몸이 크기만큼 막 들어오는 문</p>	<p>while one person comes in And other one follows, The view is not separated</p>		
<p>문이 들어간다 한 자리에 고정된 채 들고 도는</p>	<p>And the door fitting just the size of the body</p>		

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31.

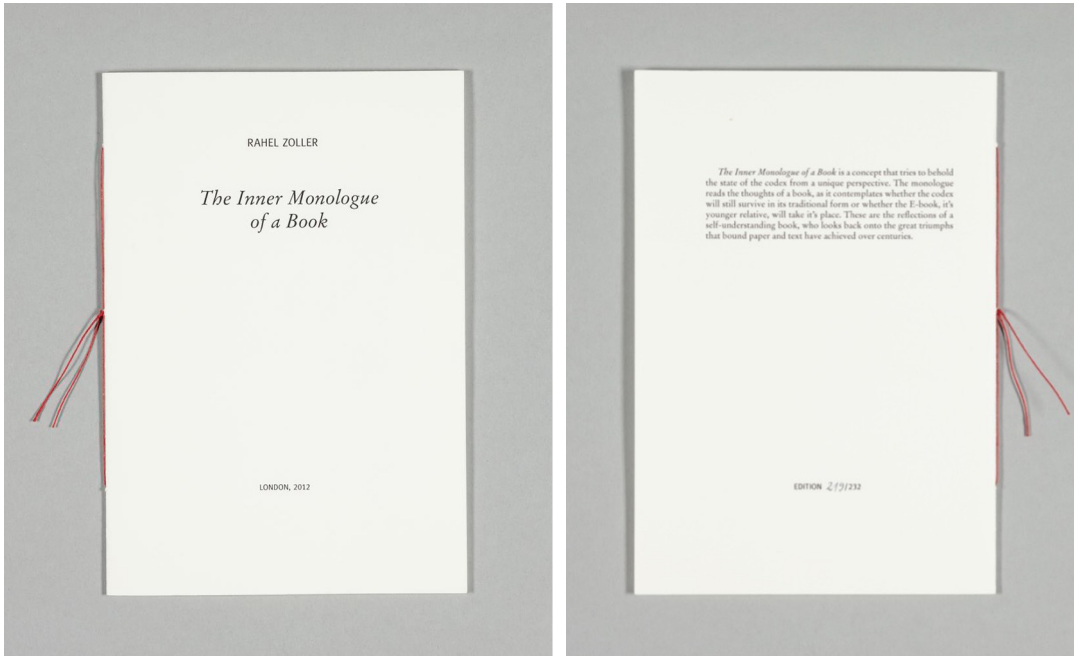
The Inner Monologue of a Book

Rahel Zoller

London, 2012, 2021 (2nd ed.)

21 x 14cm, 8pgs

Free, 1 February 2023



32.

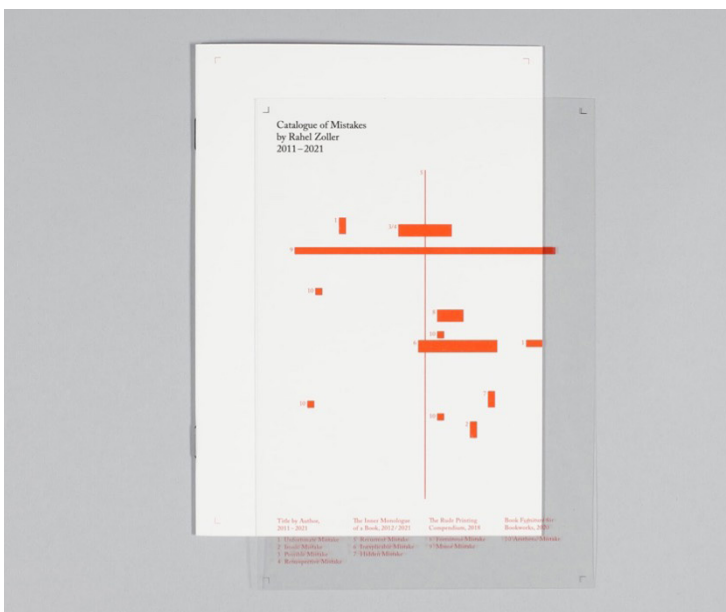
Catalogue of Mistakes 2011-2021

Rahel Zoller

London, 2021

21 x 14.8cm, 24pgs

£15.00, 7 April 2022



(Image source: Rahel Zoller)

33.

Printed Cinema

Rosa Barba

New York: Dancing Foxes Press, 2021 (Archival box edition)

Project ongoing since 2004

22 issues of various dimension

Free, 16 February 2023 (PDF file provided by the artist)



(Image source: Dancing Foxes Press)

34.

werkboek

An Onghena & Jivan van der Ende

Antwerp: kabinet.studio, 2021

29.7 x 21cm, 48pgs



(Image source: einbuch.haus)

35.

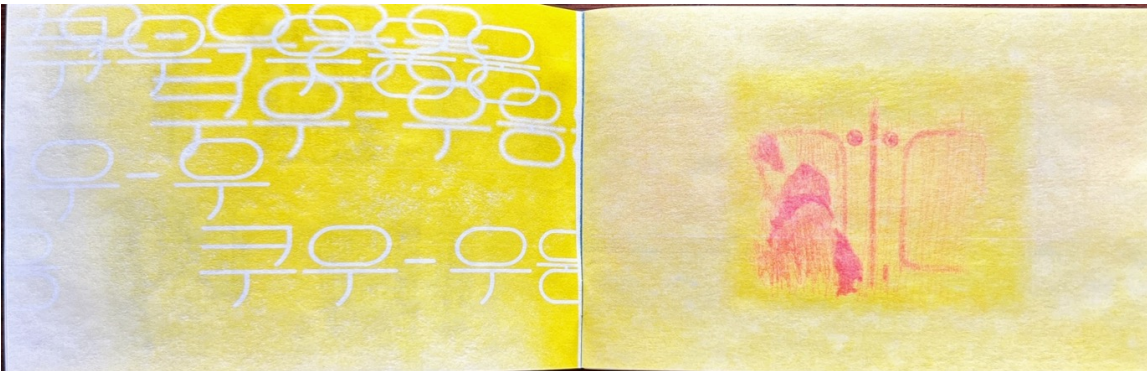
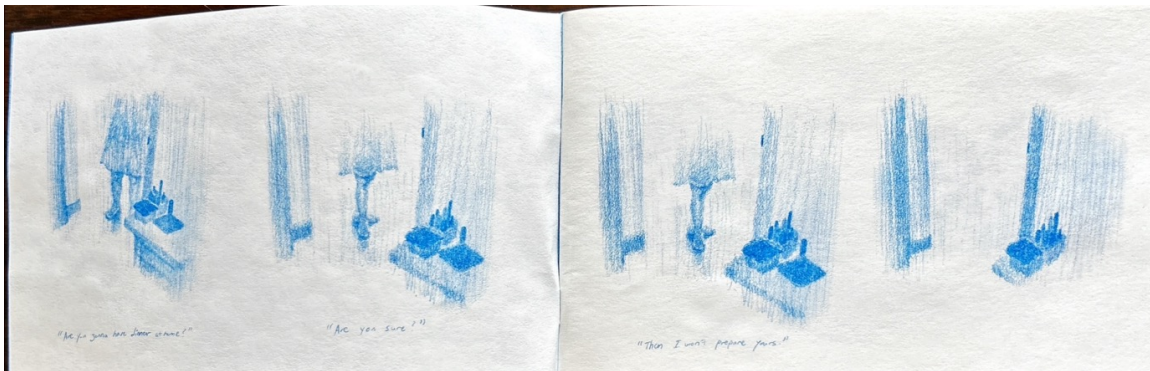
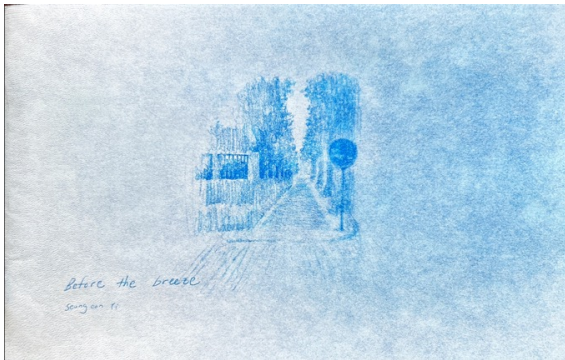
Before the Breeze

Seungeon Yi

2022

12.5 x 19.5cm, 56pgs

\$30.00 (including international shipping), 20 July 2022



36.
Book Manifest (3rd ed.)
Irma Boom
Köln: Buchhandlung Walther König, 2022
15 x 11 x 4cm, 1000pgs
£38.00, 29 October 2022



(Image source: shashasha)

37.

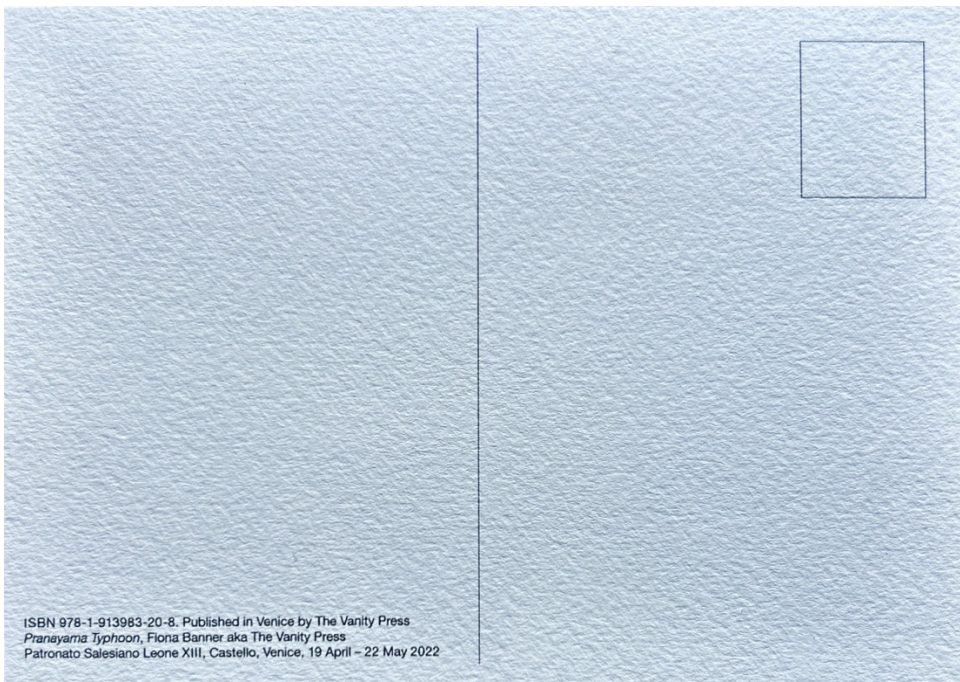
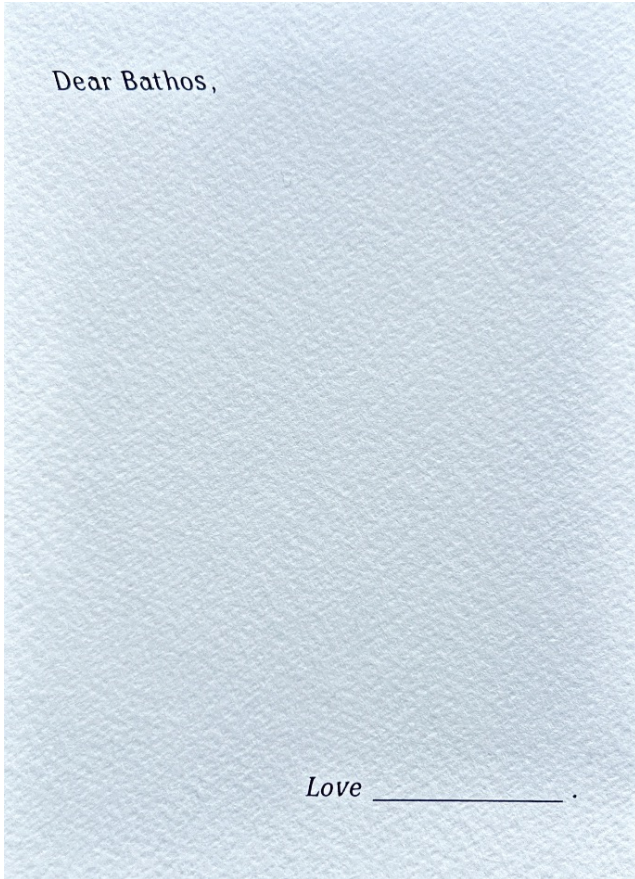
Dear Bathos, Love _____ .

Fiona Banner

London: The Vanity Press, 2022

14.8 x 10.5 cm, postcard

£5.00, 7 April 2022



38.

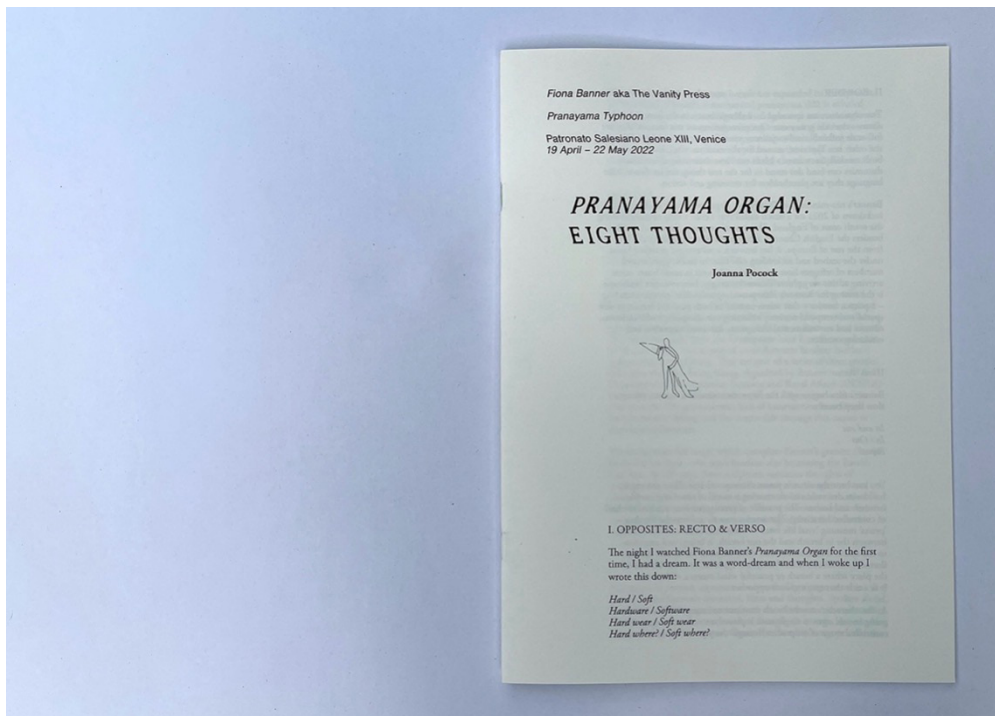
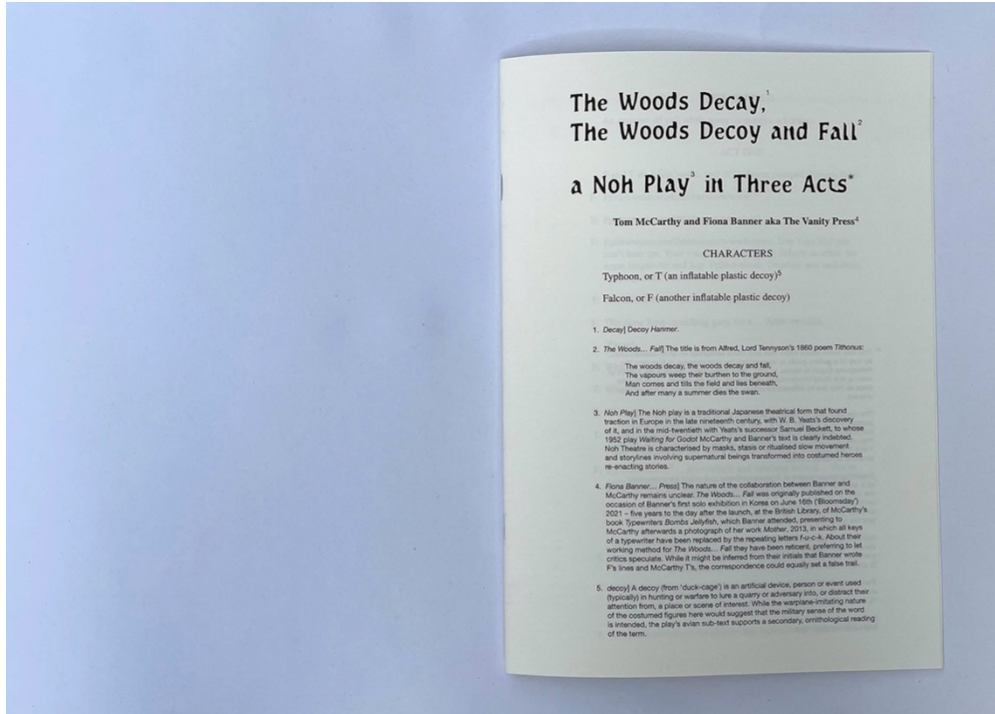
The Woods Decay, The Woods Decoy and Fall, a Noh Play in Three Acts
/ *Pranayama Organ: Eight Thoughts* (Recto/Verso)

Fiona Banner

London: The Vanity Press, 2022

29.7 x 21cm, unpagged

£15.00, 7 April 2022



(Image source: Fiona Banner)

39.

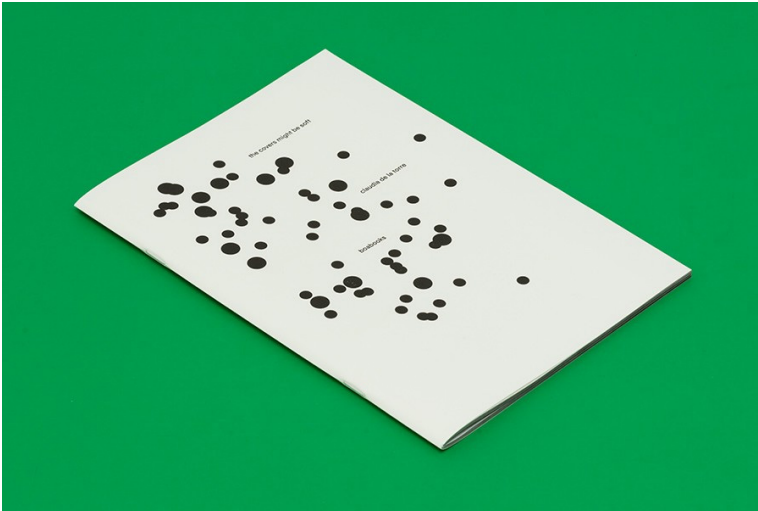
The covers might be soft

Claudia de la Torre

Geneva: Boabooks, 2022

17 x 24cm, 112pgs

£25.00, 12 May 2023



(Image source: Boabooks)

40.

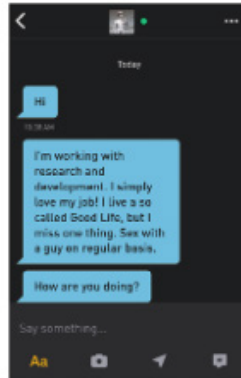
Fantasies on a Found Phone, Dedicated to the Man Who Lost it

Mahmoud Khaled

London: Book Works, 2022

17.8 x 10.6cm, 144pgs

£5.00 (Book Works Readers Club subscription), 2022



41.

Practice Makes Perfect

Rosa-Johan Uddoh

London: Book Works, 2022

14 x 20cm, 140pgs

£5.00 (Book Works Readers Club subscription), 2022



(Image source: Book Works)

42.

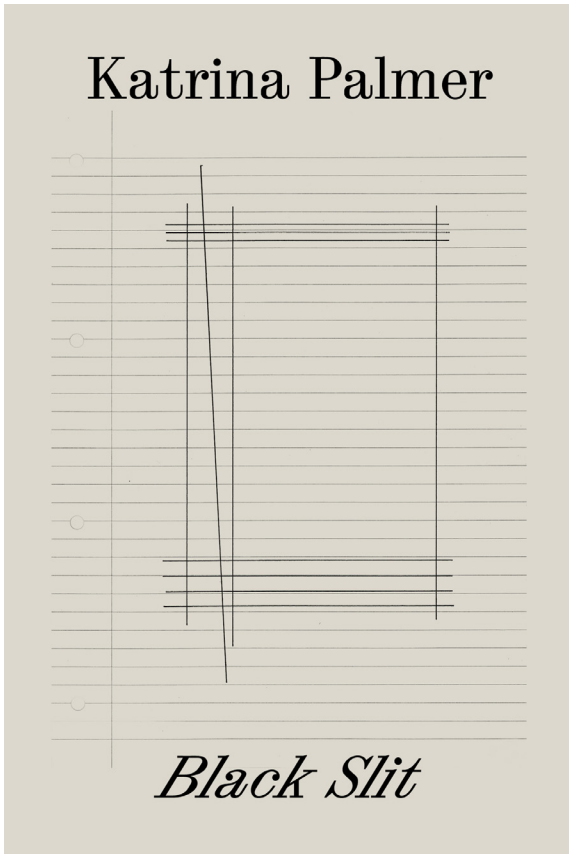
Black Slit

Katrina Palmer

London: Book Works, 2023

18 x 12cm, 96pgs

£5.00 (Book Works Readers Club subscription), 2023



(Image source: Book Works)

43.

Did you spot the Gorilla?

Sigune Hamann

London: The Everyday Press, 2023

23.3 x 17.5cm, 32pgs

Free, 25 January 2023



(Image source: The Everyday Press)

44.

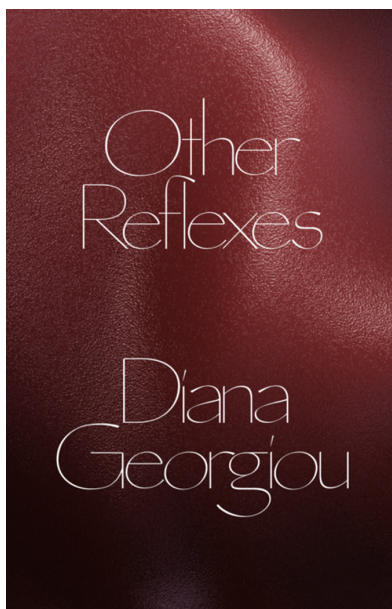
Other Reflexes

Diana Georgiou

London: Book Works, 2023

18 x 11.5cm, 176pgs

£5.00 (Book Works Readers Club subscription), 2023



SONIC MEMORIES

Did I ever tell you that I am a little deaf? My left ear is more tuned up than my right. This is the ear I sleep on to shut the world out. It is the one that I press the handset against when I pick up the phone. The ear that I always extend to spy on secret talk, the one that I first pierced at the helix, the left ear that once leaned over to meet your lips in a noisy room.

Did I ever tell you that I used to be afraid of the dark? Mum would have to sit patiently by my side or pretend to sleep so that I could doze off. When she snuck out, she would make sure that the door was half open so that a triangle of light lit up our floor. Triangles of light still make me feel safe. We slept together until I was nine. Rather, I slept, while she guarded my dreams. I don't ever remember her sleeping.

A window in the bedroom, as far as I can recall, would always have to be slightly open and never covered. To this day, this little detail follows me through the hundreds of rooms I have slept in. I developed an aversion to curtains, low ceilings, thick fabrics, clothes, tights — restraining and swaddling things. I cultivated a passion for transparent, light and delicate goods, like filo pastry and lace, porcelain tea cups and crystal ashtrays. But this is not what you need to know. As one of my first lessons in perseverance, I refined my ability to block out certain sounds by becoming more of a reader than a listener. While such a conversion shouldn't ordinarily be of concern, it is nonetheless the reason

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for where you and I find ourselves. Let me tell you what I remember; memories from before I made myself selectively deaf.

With the night window about three inches ajar, I could feel that outside my room the world was still reassuringly in motion. Late at night, in such a small town, all you might hear would be the occasional car, the neighbours taking out the trash, the odd couple speaking in hushed tones on their way home from a restaurant. Pigeons would rest between the rooftops cooing gossip to one another, and bats would swing into the trees like acrobats somersaulting onto a luscious banquet. The cats were always the highlight of my evenings. They made me laugh and, if I wasn't too sleepy, I would jump to the window, watch their spiky backs, and feel my own nape hairs prick up at their shrill and throaty threats when they fought over the contents of the garbage cans. Only later did I find out that this was the preliminary sound to what most often ended in savage copulation. These few sounds were enough for me to know that all was as it should be in the world outside. These sounds also signalled that the morning would soon arrive, and with it the buzzing that I longed to hear. There was no danger in sleeping if I could hear even the faint humming of the day in the darkness and stillness of the night.

Morning. The tempo slowly rising. Cars and trucks revving up their engines at the crack of dawn have long held a place on my roster of comforting sounds. We didn't have trains. The reverie of endless distance and escape which they evoke was something that could not

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(Image source: Book Works)

45.

That Fire Over There

Prem Sahib

London: Book Works, 2023

24 x 17cm, 240pgs

£5.00 (Book Works Readers Club subscription), 2023



(Image source: Book Works)

INTERVIEWS & CONVERSATIONS

- Azzedín, E. (2021) Conversation, 24 December. AADK Spain, Centro Negra.
- Estrada, I.A. (2022) Conversation, 19 January. Publications Workshop, CSM, UAL.
- Goode, S. (2022) Conversation, 28 January. Publications Workshop, CSM, UAL.
- Grandal Montero, G. (2022) Conversation, 18 February. Online.
- Aðalsteinsdóttir, H. (2022) Conversation, 14 April. CSM, UAL.
- Voss, J. (2022) Conversation, 20 June. Boekie Woekie.
- Elsberg, J.V. (2022) Conversation, 21 June. De Appel Archive.
- Springer, A.S. (2022) Conversation, 22 June. Online.
- Song, B. (2022) Conversation, 30 July. ASP Fair.
- Mey, A. (2022) Conversation, 11 August. CSM, UAL.
- Oh, M. (2022) Interview, 14 September. Seoul.
- Kim, J.E. (2022) Interview, 15 September. The Reference.
- Bae, Y. (2022) Interview, 15 September. Seoul.
- Kwon, H. (2022) Interview, 28 September. Seoul.
- Kim, M. (2022) Interview, 29 September. Seoul.
- Ku, H.J. (2022) Interview, 2 October. The Book Society.
- Lim, K.Y. (2022) Conversation, 2 October. The Book Society.
- Kim, J.K. (2022) Interview, 21 November. Online.
- Desjardin, A. (2022) Interview, 1 December. Bunker Basement.
- Marquet, V. (2022) Interview, 7 December. Online.
- Britton, S. (2022) Interview, 9 December. Chelsea Library, UAL.
- Onghena, A. (2023) Interview, 17 January. Online.
- Cao, L.A. (2023) Conversation, 20 January. Lethaby Gallery, CSM, UAL.
- Zoller, R. (2023) Interview, 1 February. The Book Arts Workshop, LCC, UAL.
- Estrada, I.A. (2023) Conversation, 6 February. Publications Workshop, CSM, UAL.
- Sammut, P. (2023) Interview, 7 February. Online.
- Barba, R. and Mey, A. (2023) Interview, 16 February. Tate Modern.
- Clarke, A. (2023) Interview, 21 March. Online.
- Chang, W.H. (2023) Interview, 26 April. Online.
- Kelly, K. and Schroeder, B. (2023) Interview, 10 May. Online.
- Torre, C. (2023) Conversation, 12 May. Offprint London.
- Zuccarelli, M. (2023) Conversation, 7 July. The Arts in Society conference, Kraków.
- Simms, B. (2023) Interview, 21 July. Online.

OTHER SOURCES

Book Fairs/Events/Programs

ASP Fair, 2022

Offprint London, 2022

Lumbung Press, Documenta 15, 2022

Offprint London, 2023

Book Works Readers Club, 2021-2023

Book Works Artist Surgery, 2 March, 2023

Bookshops/Archives

London

Banner Repeater

Bunker Basement

London Centre for Book Arts

Tate Library Special Collections

UAL Chelsea Library Collections

Amsterdam

Boekie Woekie

De Appel Archive

Seoul

Platform P

Seoul Museum of Art

The Reference

The Book Society

Online Platforms

Adocs.co

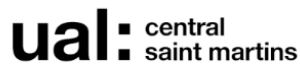
DAAP (The Digital Archive of Artists' Publishing)

Edcat.net

The Floorplan

APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Participant Information Sheet



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

To whom invited,

I would like to invite you to take part in my PhD research. To help your decision, I will briefly explain what this research is about and what it would be asking from you. I ask that you first review the following information. Please feel free to ask any questions that may arise.

It is entirely up to you to decide whether to participate in this research. If you agree to take part, I will then ask you to sign a consent form. Please note that you have the right to withdraw your participation at any time without having to give a reason before the fieldwork period for this research is terminated (by August 2023). Even after this point, you will still be able to change your consent regarding data use and request for withdrawal of any specific information or quotation until the research is completed (August 2024).

Research Title and Purpose

Anchoring the Practice—Contemporary Artists' Books as Translational Objects

This research rediscovers the contemporary presence of artists' books, focusing on how they embody and represent artistic process. In light of the art market's relative lack of interest in artworks that are dematerialised, ephemeral, and hence more process-driven, artists' books can be seen as an alternative mode for representing these practices. Within this context, the research investigates how publishing artists' books today can be an effective cultural strategy for translating the values in the immaterial dimension of practice into distributable outcomes and clarifies the rationale for choosing artists' books as a methodology to convey art.

What Your Participation Entails

Your role in this research will be an **interviewee** sharing your experiences and knowledge relevant to the production, distribution, and collection of artists' books. If you agree to participate, you will be involved **until August 2024**, which is when this research is expected to be completed. While you are involved, I will contact you to conduct the interview, check the interview's transcription or translation, and ask for your approval of my use of data prior to any publication of the research.

The interview will be approximately **1 to 1.5 hours long**. I would prefer to have the interview in person, but please express your concern if that would make you less comfortable. In such case, we can switch to online or written format. When having the interview in person, **we will agree on a venue** that we both find most appropriate and comfortable. Examples of ideal venues would be cafés, public studio spaces, lobbies of libraries, etc.

Participant Privacy and Confidentiality of Data

The data collected digitally through interviews (voice-recordings, photographs, notes, transcriptions, translations, and self-documentation) as well as the consent forms, will be encrypted and stored in my password-protected laptop. The data collected in physical form (notes, sketches, physically signed consent forms) will be reproduced in digital formats through scans and be stored under the same protocol as other digital data.

All information you share will be treated confidentially, and data will only be used for the purposes of the research for which written consent has been sought. I will not share the data with any third parties. Where specific quotes or pieces of personal information (e.g., your name, job title, organization) are to be made public, you will always be consulted before any material is made public.

Upon completion of the research (expected to be August 2024), all data will be securely deleted. However, if you agree to give me consent, I would like to retain your data for possible publication opportunities beyond the PhD dissertation for 2 years (until August 2026). If your data are to be used for any purposes other than the current PhD research, I promise to inform you again and renew the consent. The data will always be stored securely in a password-protected device.

Expected Outcomes of Research

The findings of this research will be articulated through the publication of my dissertation (60,000 words), addressing both general and academic audiences.

Contact Points

Research Degrees Team: researchdegrees@arts.ac.uk

Research Ethics Team: researchethics@arts.ac.uk

Central Saint Martins, UAL: Granary Building, 1 Granary Square, London N1C 4AA

Thank you for your time and attention. Your participation will be immensely appreciated.

Appendix 2. Participant Consent Form

ual: central
saint martins

CONSENT FORM

Research Title

Anchoring the Practice—Contemporary Artists' Books as Translational Objects

Please tick boxes for the consent you give:

- I confirm that I have read, understood, and been given a copy of the information provided about the research. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions, and I have had them answered satisfactorily.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time until August 2023 without giving any reason, without my legal rights being affected.
- I understand that even after August 2023, I can still request to change my consent regarding data use and request for withdrawal of any specific information or quotation until the research is completed.
- I agree to take part in the above research.
- I agree that my interview can be voice-recorded and photographed.
- I provisionally agree to my name, job title, and organization (if relevant) being used in the PhD dissertation. I understand that I will be consulted again before any material is made public.
- I agree that my interview data can be retained beyond this PhD research for possible publication opportunities other than the PhD dissertation, such as journal articles, book chapters, conferences, and monographs until August 2026.

Name of Participant:

Date:

Signature:

Appendix 3. Interview Transcripts

This appendix includes edited versions of the accounts provided by the official interviewees. The interviews are listed in chronological order. For interviews that were conducted in Korean, I included both the original transcription and their English translation. The transcription of non-English names in the text referred to the official version given by the interviewee.

Interviewee A

Meenyea Oh is a visual artist based in Seoul. Her practice is deeply rooted in book arts as she uses creative binding and printing techniques such as cyanotype and Van Dyke brown printing to turn various materials into book form, many of which are singular copies due to the irreproducibility of materials. She defines her works as artists' books that contain her ideas within their experimental materiality, structure, and images. Her recent exhibitions include 'The Sound of a Book Closing 책이 닫히는 소리' (Mumokjeok Gallery, 2023), 'New Classic' (KT&G Sangsangmadang, 2022), and 'Unreachable 미치지않는' (Perigee Gallery, 2019).

14 September 2022, Seoul

Hyunjoo Cho: Which category of participants best defines you? Please tell me all that apply: Maker (artist, designer), Facilitator (curator, editor, publisher), Distributor (distributor, retailer), Collector (collector, archivist, librarian, consumer).

Meenyea Oh: I am an artist making artist's books and consumer of artists' books by other artists. 아티스트북을 만드는 작가이자 다른 아티스트북들의 소비자다.

HC: Why do you make artists' books? How do your books fit into your overall practice?

MO: Artists' books are books, and the book is a medium that we have a pretty common cultural understanding of. People have certain expectations when viewing books, like concepts of pages or symbols in texts. As an artist, it's interesting to be able to vary these rules. 아티스트북은 책에서 시작된 것인데 책이라는 것은 문화적으로 합의가 된 매체이지 않은가. 사람들이 책에 기대하는 바들이 있고, 페이지의 개념이나 텍스트의 경우는 문장 부호처럼 약속된 부분들이 있다 보니 그 규칙을 변주할 수 있는 것이 작가로서 흥미롭다.

I always liked reading books since I was young, and I went to an art-focused middle school where I came to know about art books and artists' books. I studied design in college and took a 'conceptual design' course. One of the assignments from the course was to interpret everyday experiences through designer's eyes, and I chose to make a book for that project. Then I went to graduate school to study art history, but I felt that it suits me better to make my own works than to curate exhibitions or research. So, I started making books again, but the print shops just didn't understand most of my plans or projects. I decided to learn how to make books from scratch including printing and binding techniques, which led me to a workshop that made books very traditionally. In the beginning, I repeated the process of disassembling old books to repair it page by page and binding them back again. The whole act felt like a process of healing, and I felt as if I was meditating. From that experience, I came to think that the process of making a book is similar to building a house. Just like laying groundwork, erecting pillars, and building walls, it takes a lot of time and effort to turn sheets of paper into a book. I want my books to have such a sense in their quality and structure, so I try to come up with formats and materials that match the contents. 어릴 때부터 책을 읽는 걸 좋아했었고,

중학교 때부터 예술 계통의 학교에 다녀서 아트북이나 아티스트북에 대한 지식은 그때 얻었다. 대학교 학부에서 디자인을 전공했는데, 그때 ‘개념 디자인’ 수업이 있었다. 그 수업 과제 중 하나가 일상의 경험을 디자인적으로 풀어보는 거였는데 나는 그걸 책으로 만들었다. 그러다가 대학원에 가서 미술사학을 공부했는데, 전시 기획이나 연구보다는 내 작업을 하는 것이 더 맞다는 생각이 들었다. 그래서 다시 책을 만들기 시작했는데, 인쇄소에 가서 내 책을 설명하면 이해하지 못하는 경우가 너무 많았다. 그래서 인쇄나 제책 방식 같은 책을 만드는 방법을 처음부터 배워보고 싶어져서 전통 기법으로 책을 만드는 공방에 찾아갔다. 처음에는 이미 만들어진 책을 다 뜯어서 한 장씩 찢어진 부분을 보수하고 다시 제책을 해서 책으로 묶는 과정을 반복했다. 그런 행위가 치유의 과정 같기도 했고, 수행하는 거랑 비슷한 기분이기도 했다. 그때의 경험으로 책을 만드는 작업이 집을 짓는 과정이랑 비슷하다는 생각을 하게 됐다. 터를 잡고, 기둥을 세우고, 벽을 쌓고 하는 것처럼 낱장의 종이들이 책이 되기까지도 굉장한 시간과 공력이 필요하다. 재질이나 제책 방식에도 다 그런 개연성이 있었으면 해서 내용에 어울리는 판형, 재료를 사용하려고 고민하는 편이다.

‘Why a book? Why does it have to be a book?’ When I hear questions like this, all I can say is that it just happened. Works that I think don’t ask for the book form are made in other mediums, too. I’ve made framed prints, hanging installations, and fabric pieces. ‘왜 책이야? 왜 꼭 책이어야 해?’ 이런 질문을 들으면 그냥 그렇게 됐다는 얘기밖에 할 수 없다. 책이 아니어도 되는 작업들은 다른 형태로 만들기도 한다. 액자 형태나 공중 설치, 패브릭 작업도 한다.

HC: Do you think artists’ books are socially and culturally valuable? If so, what makes you think that they are?

MO: Yes, I do think so. The reason is that historically, people—poets and artists at first—were able to rediscover books through artists’ books. I think the book medium today have higher chance of surviving because of the unique physical properties artists’ books offer. These properties include spatiality and temporality. And, although it’s not the case for my single-copy books, most artists’ books can be relatively mass-produced and thus are more accessible to people than other forms of art. Also because they’re just ‘books’. Personally, I don’t wish to make works that the public finds too esoteric. I think I worry about this aspect because I make ‘books’. 그렇다고 생각한다. 이유는 역사적으로 아티스트북을 통해 시인이나 예술가 등이 책을 재발견할 수 있었기 때문이다. 아티스트북과 그 특유의 물성이 있기에 책이 살아남을 확률이 좀더 높아진다고 생각하게 된다. 그 물성에 공간성과 시간성이 들어있기도 하니까. 그리고 유일본 위주인 내 작업 방식과는 다르지만 다른 아티스트북들은 비교적 대량 생산이 가능하고, 또, 책이기 때문에 다른 예술 작품보다 사람들의 접근성이 더 높을 수 있다고 생각한다. 개인적으로 대중이 너무 난해하다고 느끼는 작품을 만들고 싶지 않다는 욕심이 있다. 내가 ‘책’을 만들기 때문에 이런 고민을 하는 것 같기도 하다.

HC: Why are your books unique copies? Is this something that you pursue on purpose?

MO: I don’t particularly pursue to produce unique copies. It’s usually due to unavoidable conditions. When I can no longer obtain the paper I used for the first copy or when I relied heavily on coincidental effects to make the book’s aesthetics that I decide against making further editions. I am aware that this somewhat conflicts with the values of artists’ books I mentioned just now. 유일본을 일부러 추구하는 것은 아니다. 작업에 사용한 종이를 더는 구할 수 없다든지, 우연의 효과로 얻은 요소가 많은지 하는 불가피한 조건들 때문에 유일본을 만들게 된다. 이런 작업의 특성이 앞서 말한 아티스트북의 가치와 다소 상충한다는 것은 인식하고 있다.

HC: How would you describe the position of artists’ books in the contemporary art market? What are the things that you notice are different in their consumption compared to artworks of other mediums?

MO: While other mediums are mostly distributed through galleries, artists’ books go through bookstores. Other than that, the most common way to present artists’ books to the public is

exhibitions. Book fairs are another major channel, but the categorical boundaries between books that are traded at book fairs seem quite ambiguous. When I visited, there weren't that many books that I would call artists' books. I can't speak for book fairs in other countries since I haven't been to them, but at least Korean book fairs seem to focus more on independent publishing and related goods. 다른 매체들이 보통 갤러리를 통한다면 아티스트북은 대개 서점을 통하는 것 같다. 그 외에 공개되는 방식은 전시 형태가 가장 많은 것 같다. 북페어도 아티스트북이 유통되는 주요한 통로지만, 북페어에 나오는 책들은 경계가 사실상 모호하다. 아티스트북들이라고 할 만한 책들이 그렇게 많지는 않다고 느꼈던 것 같다. 외국 북페어의 경우는 가보지 않아 잘 모르지만, 한국의 북페어는 독립 출판물에 가까운 책들과 관련 굿즈가 주류인 것 같다.

HC: What about the position of immaterial art and its consumption? Do you notice anything?

MO: I agree with your view that the current art market favors traditional mediums and that it makes it difficult for immaterial art to be fully recognized. To a certain extent, this is inevitable because immaterial art generally disappears after its staging or exhibition, and it's virtually impossible for the audiences to fully remember it. Even when you archive it with photographs or videos, I don't think it captures all the tension or realism of the site at that moment. Because it's already over. That's why there's always a gap between the viewer and the artist when it comes to immaterial art. 예술 시장이 전통적인 매체에 편향돼 있고 비물질적인 예술이 인정받기가 힘들다는 관점에 동의한다. 이걸 어쩔 수 없는 부분이기도 하다. 비물질적인 예술은 대체적으로 현장을 떠나면 사라지는 것이고, 관객들이 그것을 온전히 기억하는 건 사실상 불가능하니까. 사진이나 영상으로 아카이빙을 하더라도 그때 그 공간의 긴장감이나 현장성을 다 담을 수는 없다고 생각한다. 이미 끝난 것이기 때문에. 그래서 향유자와 작가 사이에 간극이 생기는 것 같다.

HC: One of my hypotheses in this research is that artists' books can function as the container for immaterial art. Does this idea make sense to you? Have you made any books in line with this idea?

MO: That hasn't been the direct motivation for any of my works yet, but I am planning on turning my dance into a book in the near future. I've been dancing tango for six years now, and I'm thinking of making a book about the process of learning the dance or my experience with it in general. I think that would be an example of bringing immaterial art into the format of a physical book. 그걸 직접적인 동기로 삼아본 적은 아직까진 없지만, 앞으로 춤을 책으로 만들어보고 싶긴 하다. 6년 전부터 탱고를 추고 있는데 그것을 배우는 과정이나 경험을 책으로 남겨보고 싶다는 생각이 들고 있다. 그것도 비물질적인 예술을 책이라는 물성의 틀 안으로 가지고 오는 것이니 말씀하신 경우에 해당될 것 같다.

HC: What do you think are the differences and similarities between artists' books and exhibitions as modes of presentation?

MO: Most books have texts, images, and spatial concept that we call 'pages'. I once thought that these elements are quite similar to those that make up exhibitions. But they are also different. I find books to be 'closed structures'—their most natural state is when their covers are closed, to begin with. But exhibitions are spatially open, open structures'. These conflicting qualities make it difficult to exhibit artists' books (or any books). You have to open this previously closed object and present it in an open space, and it's not easy. In my early days, I kept my books in acrylic boxes or vitrines to prevent damage, but that way was disappointing that only a very small section of the book could be shown and that the audience could not feel the weight or texture of the pages. So, I started to exhibit video recordings of me turning the pages and displayed them in QR codes or just risk the book getting damaged and let the visitors flip through the books themselves. 보통 책에는 글과 이미지가 있고 지면이라는 공간이 있는데, 이 요소들이 하나의 전시를 구성하는 것들과 닮았다는 생각을 한 적이 있다. 물론 전시와 다른 점도 있지만. 내가 느끼기에 책은 기본적으로 '닫힌 구조'다. 가장 기본적인

형태가 닫혀 있는 모습이고. 하지만 전시라는 건 열린 공간, ‘열린 구조’라고 생각한다. 이 상충하는 특성 때문에 아티스트북을 (또는 책 전반을) 전시하는 것이 어렵기도 하다. 열려 있는 공간에서 닫힌 것을 열어서 보여줘야 하는데, 쉽지 않다. 그래서 설치 면에서 많은 고민을 한다. 초반에는 파손을 우려해서 책에 아크릴 박스를 씌웠는데, 지금은 그런 방식은 책의 극히 일부분만 보여주게 되는 거니까 아쉬웠다. 관람객들이 종이의 무게나 촉감을 느끼지 못하는 게. 그래서 책을 넘겨서 보여주는 영상을 따로 찍어 QR 코드 형식으로 비치하던지, 그냥 책이 망가질 걸 감수하고 관람객들이 넘겨볼 수 있게 전시하기 시작했다.

HC: That’s one of the effects of working with the book medium on your practice, I guess. Is there anything else that you find unique to the practice of making artists’ books?

MO: Since I deal with artists’ books and the book medium, I’m always conscious of my boundaries. It’s almost always vague whether my works are just books, artworks, or craftworks. My audience has vastly different reactions as well. In fact, any art contains at least a little bit of craft-like element, but it feels like books are more strongly associated with crafts. I think about this issue when I’m applying for grants as well—whether to apply in the crafts category or the visual arts category. I hope people’s understanding of artists’ books could be expanded. 아티스트북, 그리고 책이라는 매체를 다루기 때문에 경계에 대한 고민이 항상 있다. 그냥 책인지, 작품인지, 공예인지 그런 부분들이 항상 애매하다고 느낀다. 보는 사람들도 받아들이는 게 천차만별이다. 사실 모든 예술에는 공예적인 부분이 조금씩은 들어있는 것 같은데, 유독 책에는 그런 분류가 따라붙는다는 느낌이 들었다. 사업 공모 같은 것에 지원할 때도 공예 부문으로 지원해야 할 지 시각 예술로 지원해야 할 지 고민이 되기도 한다. 아티스트북에 대한 이해가 넓어졌으면 좋겠다.

HC: Do you think the value of artists’ books are expressed well in their prices in general? In other words, do you think artists’ books are traded at fair prices?

MO: I think they’re still too cheap, even when they are handmade special editions. Perhaps it’s difficult to enter the market with higher prices because people generally perceive books as cheap. 아직 너무 저렴하다고 생각한다. 수작업 에디션들도 그렇고. 사람들이 책은 보통 싸다고 인식하기 때문에 시장에 높은 가격으로 진입하는 게 무리인 것 같다.

HC: What factors do you consider when pricing your artists’ books? Are there any particular standards or reasonings behind your prices?

MO: When setting the price, I think the cost of raw materials, amount of time that went in, and the prestige of the artist are the key. In the case of Korea, there are not that many famous artists who make artists’ books, which I think could be making the prices lower in general. In my case, I don’t sell my books since most of them are unique copies. The only context in which I set a price for my books was when I was getting them insured before exhibitions, so, I was more focused on whether or not I could make the same book again. 가격을 매길 때는 보통 원재료비, 작업 시간, 작가의 네임 벨류가 중요하다고 생각한다. 사실 한국의 경우에는 아티스트북 분야에서 유명한 작가가 많지 않다보니 전반적으로 아티스트북이 저렴할 수밖에 없는 것 같기도 하다. 나의 경우, 유일본들이 많아서 판매를 하지는 않고 있다. 그래서 가격을 매긴 건 전시 전 작품 보험 가입을 위해서였는데, 이 책을 다시 만들 수 있는지 없는지에 더 초점을 두었다.

Interviewee B

Jeongeun Kim is the Director of the publisher IANN (founded in 2007) and the Artistic Director of The Reference, a cultural platform that brings together a bookstore and an exhibition space in Seoul (founded in 2018). Her background in design and photography has led her to her current understanding of the book medium. She aims to share and expand such an understanding through her interdisciplinary work at IANN and The Reference, particularly focusing on the idea of artists' books within the larger context of art books.

15 September 2022, The Reference, Seoul

Hyunjoo Cho: Which category of participants best defines you? Please tell me all that apply: Maker (artist, designer), Facilitator (curator, editor, publisher), Distributor (distributor, retailer), Collector (collector, archivist, librarian, consumer).

Jeongeun Kim: I'm the Artistic Director of The Reference, which is both a bookstore and an exhibition space, and the Director of publisher IANN, where I'm responsible for everything from publication to sales. In summary, I'm a curator, editor/publisher, and distributor/retailer of art books. 서점 겸 전시 공간인 더레퍼런스를 운영하는 아티스틱 디렉터이자 책을 만드는 일부터 판매까지에 대한 전반적인 책임을 지는 출판사 이안북스의 대표도 맡고 있다. 정리하자면 기획자, 편집자, 판매 플랫폼 운영자를 겸하고 있다.

HC: Do you think artists' books are socially and culturally valuable? If so, what makes you think that they are?

JK: Artists' books bring to mind the American Conceptual Artists in the 1960s and 70s or the Fluxus movement, but today's artists' books seem to have become much more diversified and broader in terms of their roles. I believe that artists' books can serve as a tool to expand the horizons of how art functions as art. They are able to disseminate the artists' thoughts more quickly and make them more accessible than other types of artworks. Also, I think they're meaningful in that they continue to connect people—from artists, publishers, mediators to viewers, and continue to convey this social dynamic to the public. Artists' books or art books in general are yet to be deeply understood within Korea. So, I'm very conscious of defining and expanding this topic through our platform at the Reference. How we perceive books often decides who we are. 아티스트북이라면 미국의 60년대, 70년대 개념 미술이나 플럭서스 운동 등을 떠올리게 되는데, 지금의 아티스트북은 그 역할의 범주가 훨씬 다양하고 넓어진 것 같다. 예술이 예술로서 기능하는 방식의 차원에서 그 지평을 넓혀주는 데 아티스트북이 하나의 도구가 될 수 있다고 생각한다. 다른 형태의 작품들보다 오히려 더 빠르게 작가가 생각한 바를 전파하고 손쉽게 다가갈 수 있게 하는 특성을 가지고 있다. 또, 작가, 책을 만드는 사람들, 매개자들부터 관람자들까지 계속해서 사람들을 연결시키고, 그러한 사회성을 계속해서 대중에게 전하는 역할을 맡고 있기에 유의미하다고 생각한다. 아직까지는 국내에서 아티스트북 또는 총칭 아트북이라고 불리우는 장르는 심도 있게 이해되지 못하고 있는 것 같다. 그래서 더레퍼런스라는 공간을 통해 이 주제를 어떻게 정의하고 확장시켜야 할까에 대한 고민이 크다. 책이라는 것을 어떻게 분류할 것인가가 거꾸로 공간에 성격을 부여하기도 하는 것 같다.

HC: In the most expansive way, what would the category of artists' books include for you?

JK: It's very difficult know their boundaries. In the case of Korea, artists' books were properly introduced only in the 2020s within the context of independent publishing that had started to flourish as a practice in the mid- or late 2010s. Depending on the desired format and function, these publications can be zines, magazines, monographs, periodicals, or catalogues. Also, just because a

publication is labeled ‘artist’s book’ doesn’t mean that it’s made solely by the artist. Editors or other intermediaries like me intervene as well as collaborators. 그 한계를 가능하기란 정말 어렵다. 한국의 경우, 2020년대에 들어서야 독립 출판이 활성화되기 시작하면서 ‘내가 만든 책’이라는 큰 맥락으로 아티스트북이 본격적으로 소개되기 시작한 것 같다. 형식이나 기능에 따라 그것은 진(zine)이 될 수도 있고, 매거진이 될 수도 있고, 모노그래프가 될 수도 있고, 연쇄 간행물이나 작품집이 될 수도 있다. 또, 아티스트북이라고 해서 그 제작 과정에 반드시 작가의 공헌만 있다고 할 수 없다. 나 같은 편집자나 중계자들이 공모자의 역할을 하는 경우도 많다.

The definition of artists’ books, in my opinion, is an ‘outcome of practice’ that can be encountered as a tangible object—the ultimate object that adds materiality to a practice. Immaterial practices like performance art and land art are eventually materialized when their performative processes and attitudes are captured in photographic documentation or texts. Since books have physical bodies, I think they can also contain the ‘spirit’—like vessels. We could understand these books as holistic artworks or as by-products and relics of practices. It’s all about archiving, eventually. Books are shapes of traces that artistic acts could leave. 내가 생각하는 아티스트북의 정의란 실질적인 오브제로 만날 수 있는 어떤 ‘수행의 결과물’이다. 수행에 물질성을 붙여넣은 최종의 오브제. 비물질적인 퍼포먼스 아트나 대지 예술 같은 것들도 결국에는 그 수행적인 과정과 태도, 혹은 그 결과가 사진이나 텍스트 등을 통해 구체화되지 않는가. 책은 일종의 신체를 갖고 있기 때문에 거기에 ‘정신’도 담을 수 있는 것 같다. 그러처럼. 그것을 총체적인 작품으로서 이해할 수도 있고, 하나의 부산물이나 유물로 이해할 수도 있는 것 같다. 결국에는 아카이빙이다. 예술가의 행위가 하나의 흔적처럼 남아지는 게 책일 수도 있겠다는 생각도 든다.

HC: How would you describe the position of artists’ books in the contemporary art market? What are the things that you notice are different in their consumption compared to artworks of other mediums?

JK: I think the readership of artists’ books is very narrow, and the demand is so low to the point that it’s almost non-existent. An ideal market would grow from the balance between supply and demand, but there really aren’t that many people who understand and are willing to purchase artists’ books. So, very extreme prices are set by very small number of buyers. Books by artists who are already have a reputation always sell better. And the people who purchase artists’ books even when the prices are high do so because they consider the books as artworks, not just ‘books’ or souvenirs. On top of all that, the market itself operates to inflate the prices. Ed Ruscha’s 26 Gasoline Stations, for instance—the price set by the artist was a couple of dollars, but now that the market has taken over its sales, it’s become this huge title that’s practically impossible to obtain. 아티스트북의 독자층은 일단 대단히 좁고, 거의 전무할 정도로 수요가 적다고 생각한다. 이상적인 시장의 모습이라면 생산자와 수요자가 비례해서 시장 자체가 활성화되는 것이겠지만, 아티스트북을 이해하고 구매하고자 하는 사람들은 정말 많지 않다. 그래서 굉장히 소수의 수요자들에 의해 극단적으로 가격이 형성되는 것 같다. 이미 명성이 있는 작가들의 책이 언제나 더 잘 팔린다. 그리고 구매가가 높아도 아티스트북을 구매하는 사람들은 그것을 작품으로 생각하고 사는 것이지, 단순히 책이나 어떤 기념품으로 생각하고 사는 건 아니다. 거기에 더해 시장 자체가 작동한다. 에드 루샤의 <26 가솔린 스테이션> 같은 경우에도 작가가 책정한 가격은 단돈 몇 달러였지만 시장의 손이 닿은 지금은 구할 수도 없는 엄청난 책이 됐다.

Another characteristic of the artist’s book market—or the scene itself—is that it has ironically spread to every corner of the world and become localized, more than one might expect. Book fairs in Singapore and Shanghai have grown to become much larger markets than the ones in Korea. It seems to be an appropriate moment to think of forming a connection of power, or cultural solidarity having art publishing as a common context. 아티스트북 시장과 씬의 또 한 가지 특징은 아이러니하게도 그것이 생각보다 전세계 구석구석에 퍼져 있고 각자의 문화에 맞춘 스타일로 발전하고 있다는 것이다. 싱가포르나 상하이의 북페어들은 한국보다도 훨씬 더 커진 것 같다. 예술 출판을 공동의 맥락으로 삼아 어떤 힘의 연결, 즉, 문화연대를 형성하는 것도 중요한 시점인 것 같다.

HC: What factors do you consider when pricing your (artists') books? Are there any particular standards or reasonings behind your prices?

JK: As the Director of IANN, I decide the prices based on costs. I calculate how many copies we need to produce to make the amount of cost allocated to each copy reasonable. If needed, we publish books in both special and regular edition. Special editions include artist prints and have much smaller edition numbers, which allows us to set the prices high. As for the regular editions, we price them closer to the general price level of books so that any can easily access them. When external grants or budgets sponsor our projects, we choose to increase the number of copies or lower the price so that even more people can afford it. 이안 북스의 대표로서는 제작비에 따라 결정한다. 투입된 비용을 몇 권으로 나누었을 때 한 부의 가격이 적당한가를 따진다. 필요하다면 스페셜 에디션과 일반 에디션을 나누어 발간한다. 스페셜 에디션은 프린트를 포함한다면지 에디션 넘버도 훨씬 소수로 해서 가격을 높게 책정한다. 그리고 일반 에디션은 누구라도 쉽게 다가갈 수 있도록 일반 책의 판매가에 가깝게 가격을 책정한다. 어떤 외부적인 후원이나 예산이 책정될 때는 인쇄 부수를 늘리거나 책 가격을 일부러 조금 낮춰서 더 많은 사람들이 읽을 수 있도록 하는 선택을 하고 있다.

HC: Why do you make artists' books? How do your books fit into your overall practice?

JK: I've always ambiguously liked being in the general cultural environment related to books and reading. I studied Design during college and learned about the medium of photography when I was in the UK to study abroad. When I returned to Korea, I founded IANN in 2007, then a magazine specializing in Asian photography art. It later grew into a publishing house. As I encountered numerous books in the process and traded them at The Reference, I came to know the larger context of artists' books to which the magazines and books I had been making belonged. I also learned that although artists have different values about and ways of using the book medium, they were sharing a certain collective dynamic between those who work through books. Knowing that, we try to define IANN and The Reference as platforms where various domains conjoin, rather than as just a publisher, space, place, or an exhibition site. And we definitely put more weight on the 'bookstore' side of the identity at The Reference. It's as if the element of exhibition, which more people find familiar, has been brought in as a bait to further promote the concept of art books, including artists' books. 책과 독서에 관련된 전반적인 문화 환경 안에 있는 것 자체를 늘 막연하게 좋아했던 것 같다. 대학교 학부에서 디자인을 공부했고, 영국으로 유학을 갔을 때 사진이라는 매체를 알게 되어 결국 한국에 돌아와 2007년에 IANN이라는 아시아 사진 예술 전문 잡지를 창간을 했다. 후일 이안북스라는 출판사로 확장했다. 그 과정에서 많은 서적을 접하고, 또 2018년에 더레퍼런스를 시작한 이후로 무수히 많은 책들을 실제로 판매하게 되면서 내가 만들고 있던 잡지와 책들이 속하는 아티스트북이라는 더 큰 맥락을 알게 되었다. 그리고 그 맥락 안에서 작가들이 책에 대해 갖고 있는 가치관이나 활용 방식이 제각각이긴 하지만 또 한편으로는 책을 거점으로 하는 작가들간의 어떤 콜렉티브적인 역학이 공통 분모라는 것도 알게 되었다. 그래서 이안북스와 더레퍼런스를 단순한 출판사, 공간, 장소, 전시장보다는 다양한 영역의 접합체 혹은 플랫폼으로 정의할 수 있도록 노력하고 있다. 그리고 반드시 무게를 '서점' 쪽에 더 두고 있다. 아티스트북을 포함하는 아트북의 개념을 더 확장적으로 알리기 위해 사람들에게 더 친숙한 '전시'라는 요소를 끌어들이는 것이나 다름없다.

As for my sense of duty as a publisher, my original goal was to edit to let the artist communicate their perspective through the book's materiality. Now, in addition to that, I desire to create works of slightly larger scale—books that can serve as archives, as metadata. For example, we publish an archival series on Korean photographers. It's a series that reissues or reinterprets photo books by modern and contemporary Korean photographers. 출판인으로서의 사명감이라면 원래는 작가의 작품 세계를 책이라는 물성을 통해 소통할 수 있게 만드는 편집을 목표로 했다. 지금은 그것에 더해 조금 더 큰, 메타 데이터로서의 아카이브가 될 수 있는 책을 만들어야겠다는 욕심이 든다. 일례로 한국 사진 작가

아카이브 시리즈를 출간하고 있다. 근현대 한국 사진 작가들의 사진집을 재발행하거나 재해석해서 출간하는 시리즈다.

HC: I imagine that you have witnessed various artistic practices becoming translated into book forms. Do you recall any particularly interesting cases?

JK: If I were to pick from the projects I participated in, there is a book called *instagram@kdkkdk* by Do Kyun Kim. It's an artist's book in the concept of post-exhibition catalogue, and I participated in its production as a director and editor. Do Kyun Kim uploaded 1,555 photos to his Instagram account over 2,456 days since 2011, when Instagram was starting to gain attention. And in 2017, he held a solo exhibition at Sangup Gallery, Seoul, where all of these photos were printed in single Polaroid format and displayed for sale. All of the photos were sold out during the exhibition period, and upon the end of the exhibition, Do Kyun Kim deleted his Instagram account. When he published this book, *instagram@kdkkdk*, he included all of the 1,555 photos and the list of people who purchased the prints. All of the photos taken over a period of six and a half years, the dates they were taken, the one-time performance where the photos were displayed and taken away after being sold, basically the entire practice remains only through this book. 제작에 직접 참여했던 책들 중 한 가지 예시를 들자면 김도균 작가의 *instagram@kdkkdk* 라는 책이 있다. 전시라는 영역을 책에 담은 사후 도록 형식의 아티스트북인데, 나는 책의 기획자 겸 에디터로 참여했다. 김도균 작가는 인스타그램이 처음 주목 받기 시작했던 2011년부터 2,456일 동안 1,555장의 사진을 본인의 인스타그램 계정에 업로드했다. 그리고 2017년 을지로의 상업화랑에서 개인전을 열고 이 사진들을 모두 낱장의 폴라로이드 형식으로 프린트해서 판매가 가능하도록 전시했다. 사진들은 전시 기간 중 모두 판매가 되었고, 전시 종료와 함께 김도균 작가는 본인의 인스타그램 계정을 삭제했다. 그리고 1,555장의 사진들을 구매해 간 사람들, 즉, 컬렉터들의 목록과 함께 모아 *instagram@kdkkdk*를 출간했다. 6년 반 동안 촬영한 사진들, 촬영한 날짜, 사진들을 전시하고 팔린 사진들이 사라지는 일회적인 퍼포먼스까지 그런 일체의 행위가 오직 이 책으로 남은 것이다.

It's still very hard to find artists in Korea who use books as their primary medium or sole basis of work. So, there's a bit of discrepancy in assuming artists' books published in Korea so far to be 100% by the artists. Rather, in many cases, intermediaries like me play the role of presenting the context of artists' books and participate in the translation of artists' works into books. But again, that's also a basic condition of artists' books and books in general—born from subtle tangents between collaborators. Being involved in these processes is interesting and fun. It becomes very obscure when someone starts questioning whether the books I published could be classified as artists' books or not. I don't think that's the crux of the issue, though. 아직 국내에는 작가가 책을 주요한 매개물이나 작업의 유일한 기반으로 삼는 경우는 정말 드물다. 그래서 여태까지 국내에서 등장한 아티스트북들이 100% 작가에 의한 책이라고 보기에는 약간의 괴리가 있다. 오히려 나 같은 매개자가 작가의 작업을 치환하는 과정에 참여하면서 아티스트북이라는 맥락을 제시하는 역할을 하는 경우가 많다. 그런데 그건 아티스트북, 더 나아가 책의 기본적인 조건이기도 하다. 기묘한 공모자들 간의 관계 속에서 탄생하는. 그 활동에 대한 개입이 흥미롭고 재밌다. 누군가가 내가 참여한 책들의 분류가 아티스트북인지 아닌지 따지기 시작하면 굉장히 애매해지긴 하지만. 그게 정말로 중요한 건 아닌 것 같다.

Still, I think of categories persistently. Right now, I'm holding an art book research meetings with several colleagues who are active in the art publishing field. It's mainly a place to diagnose how our areas of activity are being formed, based on each other's opinions and findings. 그래도 범주에 대한 고민은 꾸준히 한다. 지금도 예술 출판 영역 안에서 활동하는 몇몇 동료들과 함께 아트북 리서치 모임을 열고 있다. 주로 우리의 활동 영역이 어떻게 형성되어지고 있는지 서로의 발견과 의견을 빌어 진단하는 자리다.

Interview C

Yongtae Bae is an art book dealer and collector based in Seoul. He runs Alice Sugar, a bookshop that deals primarily with vintage art books. His background is in Korean literature, which has been one of his gateways to understanding and appreciating books.

September 15 2022, Seoul

Hyunjoo Cho: Which category of participants best defines you? Please tell me all that apply: Maker (artist, designer), Facilitator (curator, editor, publisher), Distributor (distributor, retailer), Collector (collector, archivist, librarian, consumer).

Yongtae Bae: I'm an art book dealer and collector running an antique bookshop called Alice Sugar. The item that I collect the most personally is pop-up books. I've been collecting them for 20 years. '앨리스슈가'라는 안티크 북샵을 운영하면서 북 컬렉터를 겸하고 있다. 개인적으로 가장 많이 수집하는 품목은 팝업북이다. 20년째 수집해오고 있다.

HC: What is your standard when purchasing artists' books for the collection? What kinds of books are you after?

YB: Since most of the books I deal with are vintage books from the early or mid-20th century, the condition, such as that of the binding and paper, is the most important. And considering the rarity and originality, I try to obtain the original editions, if possible. If not, I choose reprints that are most similar to the original edition in terms of the cover page, binding, printing method, and paper type. Also, since books by famous artists are most in demand, I tend to prioritize purchasing books by artists who are well-known to the Korean audience. 빈티지북을 모으는 경우가 대부분이다보니 제책이나 종이 등 책의 상태가 가장 중요하다. 그리고 희소성이나 오리지널리티를 고려해서 되도록 초판본을 구하려고 한다. 초판본을 구할 수 없다면 복간본 중에 표지, 제책 방식, 인쇄 방식, 종이 종류 등이 초판과 가장 유사한 것을 고른다. 그리고 아무래도 유명한 작가의 책이 제일 수요가 많다보니 국내 사람들이 익숙한 작가 작품을 먼저 구입하게 된다.

HC: How would you describe the position of artists' books in the contemporary art market? What are the things that you notice are different in their consumption compared to artworks of other mediums?

YB: Artists' books themselves have a very shallow consumer base. Few people, unless they are serious collectors, think they can spend a lot of money on purchasing these books. In the case of our shop as well—there are very few customers who come in naturally while passing by. Most of my customers are people who directly commission book collecting or those who come by appointments. The biggest customer currently is Sojeon Book Art Gallery. They gave me a list of about 100 artists and asked me to collect any books that these artists made or participated in. Public libraries also commission bulk purchases with budgets between 10 million to 20 million won (£6000 to £12,000). 아티스트북이라는 품목 자체가 소비층이 굉장히 얇다. 컬렉팅에 정말로 심각하게 투자하는 사람들이 아니라면 '책'을 사는 데 돈을 많이 쓸 수 있다고 생각하는 사람은 드물다. 우리 샵의 경우에도 지나가다 자연스럽게 들어오는 일반 손님은 거의 없다. 손님은 대부분 내게 컬렉팅을 직접 의뢰하거나 예약을 하고 오는 사람들이다. 그중 현재 가장 큰 손님은 '소전 북아트 갤러리'다. 100명 정도 작가 리스트를 주면서 그 작가들이 만들거나 참여했던 아티스트북은 뭐든 좋으니 모아달라고 했다. 공립 도서관에서 1천 만 원에서 2천 만 원 정도 규모로 대량 구매를 의뢰할 때도 있다.

And since artists' books were an alternative format of art transaction from their beginning, it's not easy to associate them with high prices. Some say the genre started with the Arts & Crafts Movement of the 1880s, some say the French livre d'artiste in the 1920s and 30s. In 1920s and 30s, since there

was a global economic depression, large artworks such as paintings were not selling well. So, art dealers had artists produce prints and artists' books that were even smaller in size than prints to diversify their channel of revenue. Also, artists' books could have come across as a more strategic choice because they could target not only the art market but also the book collecting market and gift book market. To be honest, artists' books that were basically layers of prints bundled together would have been much more valuable, artistically speaking. But since the pages of those books weren't marked with edition numbers or signed by the artists like individual prints were, artists' books were often sold cheaper than a single sheet of print in the market. They still are. That's why galleries disassembled vintage artists' books and mounted each page separately to sell them as individual prints. 그리고 아티스트북은 탄생 배경부터가 예술의 대안적인 거래 형식이었기 때문에 높은 가격과 연결 짓기가 쉽지 않다. 1880년대 아트 & 크래프트 운동이 시작이라는 얘기도 있고, 1920~30년대 프랑스 livre d'artiste 가 시작이라는 얘기도 있는데, 1920~30년대의 경우는 세계적인 경제 불황기에 그림 같은 큰 작품들이 안 팔리니까 아트 딜러들이 판매 루트를 다양하게 하기 위해서 판화랑 판화보다도 더 작게 만들 수 있는 아티스트북들을 만들게 된 것이라고 한다. 또, 아티스트북은 그림 시장 뿐만 아니라 책 수집가 시장과 기프트북 시장도 타겟할 수 있었기 때문에 더 전략적인 선택이었을 지도 모른다. 사실 책으로 여러 장의 판화들이 묶여 있으면 예술적으로는 훨씬 더 가치가 있겠지만, 각 페이지마다 에디션 넘버가 붙거나 작가의 사인이 들어가지 않기 때문에 시장에서의 아티스트북은 판화 한 장보다도 저렴하게 팔리는 경우가 많다. 지금도 그렇다. 그래서 갤러리들이 빈티지 아티스트북을 분해해서 페이지마다 따로 표구한 후에 프린트로 팔기도 한다.

HC: What role or purpose do you wish your collection to play and serve? Is the collection just for sales?

YB: No. Like most collectors, I have a great desire to keep these books as an archive. So, when a book I really like goes on sale, I often collect it again to keep it in my personal collection. I often exhibit the collection as well. I've collaborated with public venues such as Lotte Gallery, POSCO Art Museum, and Seoul Auction to show these books. 아니다. 대부분의 컬렉터들이 그렇듯이 나도 이런 책들을 아카이빙하고 싶은 욕심이 크다. 그래서 정말 마음에 드는 책이 팔리게 되면 개인 컬렉션에 두려고 다시 구하기도 한다. 전시도 계속 열고 있다. 롯데 갤러리, 포스코 미술관, 서울 옥션 같은 대중적인 장소에서 협업 전시를 하기도 한다.

HC: Do you think artists' books are socially and culturally valuable? If so, what makes you think that they are?

YB: I think bookmaking is valuable because it's an interdisciplinary practice. If you think of the criteria for the 'Beautiful Book Awards', they comprehensively evaluate the cover, binding, contents, editing, and typography, which is a very wide spectrum of elements. Also, rather than hanging them on the wall and worshipping like you do with paintings, you can take books out of their shelves and take them to anywhere and show people the information and knowledge compressed within them. This, I think, is the power of books—that they can exist anywhere, not just in art museums. To be honest, I don't really see artists' books as 'artworks'. It's obvious that they are a genre of art, and it makes no sense to view them only as mass-produced commodities, but treating them too carefully as if they are untouchable or sacred, feels like damaging the nature of the book, which is to be held and appreciated. 책을 만드는 것은 하나의 종합 예술이기 때문에 가치롭다고 생각한다. '아름다운 책' 시상 기준만 생각해봐도 표지, 제책, 콘텐츠, 편집, 타이포그래피 등 굉장히 다양한 요소들을 종합적으로 평가한다. 또, 그림처럼 벽에 걸어두고 숭배하는 게 아니라 꺼내서 어디든지 들고 가서 그 안에 압축된 정보와 지식을 보여줄 수도 있고, 미술관에 가야만 있는 것이 아니라 어디서든 존재할 수 있다는 것도 책의 힘인 것 같다. 사실 아티스트북이 예술품이라는 생각은 잘 하지 않는다. 예술의 한 장르임에는 분명하고, 상품으로만 보는 것도 말이 안되지만 다른 작품들을 대하듯이 너무 신성한 것을 떠받드는 듯한 자세로 대하는 건 손에 들고 감상해야 하는 책의 본연을 해치는 것 같다.

Interviewee D

Heesue Kwon is an interdisciplinary artist based in Seoul. Her background is in video art, art theory, and media art, from which she branched out into further fields including film, performance art, and writing. She has published artists' books to provide her audience with more diverse channels to experience her works, which are largely immaterial and transitory. In 2021, she founded NUN, an independent publisher, to continue her publishing practice and expand it into collaborations with other artists. Her recent exhibitions and performances include 'Dotolim Concert Series_165 달올림 연주회_165' (Dotolim, 2023), 'TELECINEVol.1 텔레시네Vol.1' (Collection Complete, 2023), and 'BackgroundRadiationReflection 배경복사반사' (Platform L, 2019).

28 September, 2022, Seoul

Hyunjoo Cho: Which category of participants best defines you? Please tell me all that apply: Maker (artist, designer), Facilitator (curator, editor, publisher), Distributor (distributor, retailer), Collector (collector, archivist, librarian, consumer).

Heesue Kwon: I'm a film director and a visual artist working in mixed media with a focus on audiovisual performance. I'm also the director of the publishing company NUN, which I founded to try producing and distributing artists' books independently. I continue my practice with an interest in exploring the frontiers between genres. 현재 영화감독이자 오디오비주얼 퍼포먼스를 중심으로 복합매체 작업을 하고 있다. 아티스트북을 자체적으로 제작하고 유통해보고자 '출판사 눈'을 만든 출판사 대표이기도 하다. 다양한 장르를 매개하는 경계시대 위에서 보는 행위에 관심을 갖고 창작활동을 이어나가고 있다.

HC: Why do you make artists' books? How do your books fit into your overall practice?

HK: I make artists' books because I think the medium of books is another way to experience my works on the same level as exhibitions, screens, stages, etc. But I do think that reading my books should stand as an independent experience apart from other works and exhibitions. It shouldn't just be about straightforward documentation of works, but should also allow people to experience things that they couldn't at the site of the works or exhibitions. So, I consider my books to be both extensions of my works and somewhat independent domains at the same time. The encounter with a book is a very material experience of feeling the paper, a visual experience of seeing certain texts or images, and a very multi-layered 'place' where you can lead imaginations while reading the book. Simultaneously, because books are physically finite spaces with clear boundaries called 'pages', the density of their composition is powerful. 책이라는 매체가 전시, 스크린, 무대 등과 동등한 위계를 갖는, 내 작품을 경험할 수 있는 또 다른 경로라고 생각해서 아티스트북을 만들고 있다. 하지만 다른 작품과 전시를 보지 않고 책만 접한다 하더라도 그 자체로의 경험이 있어야 한다고 생각한다. 단순히 작품을 아카이빙하는 의미 뿐만 아니라 현장에서 보지 못하는 것이라도 책 속에서는 독자적인 경험을 할 수 있도록 하는. 그래서 내 책은 작품들의 연장선 상에 있음과 동시에 어느 정도 전시나 공연과는 독립된 영역이라고 여기고 있다. 책을 접한다는 건 종이를 만지는 굉장히 물질적인 경험이기도 하고, 어떤 활자나 이미지를 보는 시각적인 경험이기도 하고, 내용을 읽으면서 상상을 하기도 하는 굉장히 다층적인 공간이 공존하는 일종의 '장소'라고 생각한다. 동시에 '지면'이라는 분명한 경계가 지어져 있는 물리적으로 유한한 공간이기 때문에 그 구성의 집중도가 탁월하다.

Also, books provide a more vivid experience that is less fragmented because the experience of turning the pages and feeling their flow accompanies the contents. In the case of my book BackgroundRadiationReflection (2021), which is a project that stemmed from my exhibition and performance in 2019 of the same title, worked with the motif of 'revolving doors'. I thought that the

act of reading a book and turning the pages seem to be in a revolving door-like cycle rather than a linear, sequential timeframe. 또, 책은 페이지를 넘기며 흐름을 느끼는 경험이 내용을 동반하기 때문에 파편적이지 않은, 더욱 생생한 경험을 제공한다. 2021년에 출간한 <배경복사반사> 같은 경우, 2019년에 진행했던 동명의 전시 겸 퍼포먼스에서 시작한 책인데, ‘배경적 시점’과 ‘회전하는 운동성’에 관한 작품의 구심적인 발상이 책으로 연계되어 나오게 되었다. 배경복사반사는 전시가 이루어지는 7시간동안 관객이 입장하면 상영되고 퇴장하면 중단되는 포맷 안에서 관객들과 퍼포머가 실시간으로 움직이며 관계도를 형성해나가는 라이브퍼포먼스 형식의 작품이다. 전시장에서도 회전문을 설치해서 공간 안에서 그 입퇴장의 회전성을 빛을 통해 느낄 수 있도록 구성했었는데 책을 읽는 행위도 그 페이지를 넘기는 것이 어떤 직선적이고 순차적인 시간이 아니라 회전문 같은 (회전문처럼 순환하고 중첩적인 시간성을 경험하는 장소라고 생각을 했다. 책을 읽는다는 것은 그 특정한 시공간으로 입장하는 특별한 경험이며 물리적인 제약을 받지 않고 그 장소로 들어갈 수 있다는 점이 책이 가진 매력이라고 생각한다.) 순환 안에 있는 것 같다.

HC: One of my hypotheses in this research is that artists’ books can function as the container for immaterial art. Does this idea make sense to you? Have you made any books in line with this idea?

HK: I think it’d be possible to a certain extent, but don’t think an artist’s book can completely substitute another work. Rather, I think it can be very helpful in understanding the artist’s thoughts, process, and background in making a work. I think my works and books each deliver its own experience to the viewer, which are quite different from one another. 어느 정도는 가능할 것 같은데, 그것이 작품을 완전히 대신할 수는 없을 것 같다. 오히려 작가가 어떤 생각을 갖고 작품을 만들었는지, 그 과정과 배경을 이해하는 데에는 도움이 많이 될 수 있을 거라 생각한다. 작품은 작품대로, 아티스트북은 아티스트북대로 향유자에게 제공하는 각각의 경험이 있다고 생각한다.

HC: Do you think artists’ books are socially and culturally valuable? If so, what makes you think that they are?

HK: Artists’ books are a complex genre as their framework is books. First of all, I think they clearly have value as archives. While exhibitions and performances get consumed and disappear, books keep things through their spatiality and temporality, making themselves feel like relics. They’re an effective medium that allows one to experience an artist’s worldview holistically. Performance artists, in particular, often use their artists’ books as devices to show their ‘scores’. Books are useful for essentially structuring the scores. In the case of my book, BackgroundRadiationReflection, I showed not only the score but also compiled personal reasons behind creating the work in an essay format, included my conversations with people after the performance and a contributive piece by curator Ji-yeon Kim. Ji-yeon did not see my work at the exhibition in person, but she read my score for the audience titled ‘Instructions for the Audience who has Converted into a Performer’ and annotated it. The purpose of this score is not really to encourage the audience to replicate my performance, but rather to guide them into a realm of imagination. So, as a result, my book contains multiple layers of time, compiling what was done and not done before and after the performance. I tried to compose the book so that I keep the work itself at the time of the performance and focus on things that happened around it. 아티스트북은 그 틀이 책인 만큼 복합적인 장르다. 일단 아카이브로서의 가치가 분명히 있다고 생각한다. 전시나 공연이 소모되고 사라지는 데에 비해 책은 그 공간성과 시간성으로 기록을 가능하게 하는 특성을 많이 갖고 있어서 시간의 누적된 지층을 느낄 수 있는 고고학적인 유물 같은 느낌이 있다. 작가의 총체적인 세계관을 경험하게 할 수 있는 효과적인 매체라고 생각한다. 특히 퍼포먼스 아티스트들은 ‘스코어’를 보여주는 장치로서 책을 많이 이용한다. 스코어를 실질적으로 구조화하는 데 유용하다. 책 <배경복사반사>의 경우, 스코어 뿐만 아니라 작품을 만들게 된 사적인 계기 등을 에세이 형식으로 풀고, 퍼포먼스 후에 사람들과 나눴던 대화들, 그리고 김지연 큐레이터의 기고문을 담았다. 김지연 큐레이터는 내 작품을 현장에서 직접 보지 않았지만, 내가 쓴 관객들을

위한 스코어 <퍼포머로 전이된 관객을 위한 지시문>을 읽고 거기에 대한 각주의 형식을 글을 썼다. 이 지시문은 관객들이 내 퍼포먼스의 특정한 스코어를 따라하도록 유도한다기 보다는 관객 각자가 떠올리는 상상의 영역으로 사람들을 안내하고자 했다. 책이 우리에게 각자 스스로의 내면과 대화하는 장소라는 점에 착안해서 이렇게 구성하게 되었다. 그래서 결과적으로 내 책에는 작품의 전후로 이루어진 일, 이루어지지 않은 일들이 모여 여러 시간의 레이어들이 담겨 있다. 작품의 시간은 전시 현장에서의 그 순간으로 놔두고 그 안과 밖에서 발생했던 일들이 책의 주된 내용이 되도록 구성했다.

HC: What do you think are the differences and similarities between artists' books and exhibitions as modes of presentation?

HK: As you just said, both of them are channels for presenting works, but I think the biggest difference is in their mobility. Compared to exhibitions, artists' books can move further into intimate and everyday contexts and allow you to face art by yourself. 말씀하셨다시피 둘다 작품을 선보이는 통로지만, 이동성에서 가장 큰 차이를 보인다고 생각한다. 아티스트북은 아무래도 더 내밀한 장소와 일상적인 맥락 안에서 예술을 1대 1로 접할 수 있는 전시다.

HC: How would you describe the position of artists' books in the contemporary art market? What are the things that you notice are different in their consumption compared to artworks of other mediums?

HK: I think the biggest difference between them is accessibility. To see paintings, sculptures, and prints, you need to go to the places where they are displayed, but books can be kept near you. Another huge difference is that the viewer experiences books through physical contact and that the viewer gets to control the time during appreciation. For instance, performances have a clear beginning and end, and the performer is the one deciding them. But books allow more autonomy for the viewer—you can close and come back to them any time you want. 다른 매체의 예술품들과 가장 큰 차이는 접근성이라고 생각한다. 회화, 조각, 프린트 같은 것들은 내가 그것이 전시된 장소로 가야만 하는 경우가 대다수지만 책은 곁에 두기가 더 용이하다. 보는 이가 신체적인 접촉을 하며 감상한다는 것도 굉장히 큰 차이점이다. 그리고 감상 안에서의 시간을 보는 이가 컨트롤한다는 것도 책의 특징이다. 예를 들어 퍼포먼스는 시작과 끝이 분명히 정해져 있고 퍼포머가 그것을 결정한다면 책은 독자가 원할 때 덮어뒀다가 원할 때 다시 읽는 것이 가능한, 향유자가 더 자율적인 콘텐츠다.

Regarding the market, I think artists' books lack independent, official platforms compared to other mediums of art, which explains why there are so few attempts to collect artists' books. They often occupy a section within the overall book category or individual artists each has to deal with their distribution and sales on their own. In other words, there is still a lack of public sites or official markets where artists can interact with their book audience. This may be because people tend to consider artists' books only as by-products of other works, which is insufficient to form a prevalent culture that orbits around artists' books. 시장에 대해 얘기하자면, 다른 매체들에 비해 아티스트북을 위한 독립된 플랫폼은 많이 부재하다고 생각한다. 그만큼 컬렉팅하려는 시도도 적고. 책이라는 카테고리 안의 한 섹션으로 들어가 있거나 작가들 개개인이 직접 유통과 판매에 참여하는 형식이 대부분인 것 같다. 다르게 말하면 작가들이 독자들과 만날 수 있는 공공의 장소나 오피셜한 시장이 굉장히 부족하다는 뜻이다. 아직은 다른 작품들의 부산물로만 아티스트북을 인식하는 경향이 커서 그런 것 같기도 하다. 아티스트북을 중심으로 한 보편적인 문화가 형성되기는 아직 부족하다.

HC: Do you think the value of artists' books are expressed well in their prices in general? In other words, do you think artists' books are traded at fair prices?

HK: There may be a difference in degree depending on the case, but I don't think they necessary are. In fact, rather than the current prices, the way artists' books are traded and distributed in the market and the cultural perception of creating and experiencing books need to change. Nowadays, since so many books come out so sporadically, the effort that goes into each book seems to be undervalued. If

we make books more carefully and include more contents to make people want to own them, I think there may be more demand even if the prices are set higher. I myself plan to publish books only when there is a stronger need and the rationale is clearer. 경우에 따라 정도의 차이는 있겠지만 꼭 그렇지는 않다고 생각한다. 사실 당장의 가격보다도 책이 시장에서 거래되고 유통되는 방식이나 책을 만들고 경험한다는 것에 대한 문화적인 인식이 바뀌어야 한다고 생각한다. 요즘은 책이 너무 많이, 산발적으로 나오다 보니 한 권 한 권에 들어가는 노력이 평가 절하되는 것 같다. 한 권을 만들 때 정말 제대로, 소유하고 싶다는 욕망이 일גע끔 많은 것을 담아서 만든다면 가격이 좀 비싸더라도 수요가 더 있을 것 같다. 나도 앞으로는 책을 만들 필요성이 더 강력하게 있을 때, 그 동기가 확실할 때 제작을 하려고 한다.

At the same time, though, I don't think the artist needs to accommodate the needs or perspectives of the viewers when creating a book. The artist should be able to publish according to their ideas and intentions, and concentrate on the 'collision' or sparks books make when they meet the viewers. But the current book market is incapable of incubating an environment for such a dynamic. Simply put, the process of going to a gallery to view a painting or sculpture and purchasing it is vastly different from the process of going to a chain bookstore to find an artist's book and buying it—it doesn't allow people to use their sensibility. 동시에, 작가가 책을 만들 때 꼭 독자의 니즈나 관점에 맞춰서 만들 필요는 없다고 생각한다. 작가는 자신의 생각과 의도대로 만들고, 그 책이 독자와 만났을 때 어떤 '충돌'을, 스파크를 일으키는가에 집중할 수 있어야 하는데 그런 환경이 되기에는 책을 유통하는 시장이 그런 토양을 조성해주지 못한다. 단순히 말해서 갤러리에 가서 회화나 조각을 보고 그걸 구매하는 과정과 교보문고에 가서 아티스트북을 보고 그걸 사는 과정은 너무 다르니까. 감상자가 감수성을 가질 수 있게 해주는 환경이 아니다.

HC: What factors do you consider when pricing your artists' books? Are there any particular standards or reasonings behind your prices?

HK: The price is obviously set based on the production costs. However, I can't cover all the costs from selling the books because they're more than you'd expect. Making a profit out of books was not my priority to begin with, so I tried to set a reasonable price for consumers. The regular price of BackgroundRadiationReflection is 20,000 won (£12.5), and when large retailers apply their typical 10% discount, the consumer price becomes 18,000 won (£11). 책의 제작비를 바탕으로 가격을 책정한다. 하지만 생각보다 비용이 많이 들어가기 때문에 책을 팔아서 그 제작비를 전부 충당하지는 못했다. 처음부터 수익을 내는 것을 우선순위에 두지 않았기 때문에 소비자들이 보기에 합리적인 가격을 책정하려고 노력했다. <배경복사반사>의 정가는 20,000원, 대형 서점으로 유통된 경우에는 그쪽에서 10% 할인이 들어가서 소비자가는 18,000원이다.

HC: 18,000 won (£11) sounds quite cheap considering the quality and variety of paper you've used in this book. It's also not a thin volume. Why didn't you bring up the price level?

HK: Of course, it'd be nice to be able to make a profit, but it's simply not a priority. It was more important for me to embody my intentions in the book as much as possible, which is why I used multiple types of paper in the volume. I chose to do this to make a connection to my performance, where I also used different types of papers as props. 물론 수익을 낼 수 있으면 좋긴 하지만, 단순히 그게 우선순위가 아닐 뿐이다. 그것보다는 나의 의도를 최대한 책 안에 구현하는 게 더 중요했다. 책을 읽는 경험이 글자를 읽고 보는 행위를 넘어서서 만지고 경험하는, 나아가 퍼포먼스를 보거나 보지 않았던 관객들이라 할지라도 독자들이 그러한 경험을 직간접적으로 상상하고 떠올릴 수 있도록 종이 선택에도 굉장히 신경을 많이 썼다. 미색보조, 백모조, 스노우 아트지 등의 종이를 사용했고 각각의 두께에도 미세한 변화를 두어서 책을 읽을 때 빛이 투과하거나 반사되는 순간을 염두하며 책을 제작했다.

Also, in the case of Korea, there is no large demand for artists' books to begin with, so I thought the price should be kept low to minimize any barriers. I think that attracting people's interest in artists' books first requires the artists who create them to be aware of the current situation and their role, although the artist may not be so interested in playing such a role. 또, 한국의 경우 아티스트북에 대한 수요가 크게 활성화되어 있지는 않다는 생각이 든다. 아티스트북에 대한 관심을 이끌어내는 것은 우선 그것을 만드는 예술가들에게도 이러한 현상항에 대한 인식과 역할이 요구된다고 생각한다. 그러나 작가 개인에게는 그러한 부분이 중요하지 않을 수도 있다고도 생각한다.

HC: How much do you interact with the community that forms around book production and circulation? Does this interaction affect your practice/activity in any way?

HK: I'm constantly connected to many people including designers, editors, curators, and retailers, whether through contractual relationships or my practice. I expect my network to grow more as I collaborate with other artists to publish their artists' books at publisher NUN. 디자이너, 편집자, 큐레이터, 유통 담당자 등 많은 사람들과 협업하여 한 권의 책이 탄생한다. 책을 만들 때의 협업과 소통은 창작하는 방식과 크게 다르지 않다. 출판사 눈이 책을 읽고 보는 것을 넘어서서 독자의 총체적인 경험을 안과 밖으로 이끄는 통로가 될 수 있다면 좋겠다.

Interviewee E

Myoungsoo Kim is a book artist, curator, and collector based in Seoul. He runs Pages Press, a private press, to publish his works and lectures at various institutions on book art, book binding, and artistic value of books. He is also known for his collaborations with artist Keith A. Smith. As a curator, he specializes in book art and artists' books and participated in the Seoul International Book Fair and special exhibitions at the National Library of Korea.

29 September 2022, Seoul

Hyunjoo Cho: Which category of participants best defines you? Please tell me all that apply: Maker (artist, designer), Facilitator (curator, editor, publisher), Distributor (distributor, retailer), Collector (collector, archivist, librarian, consumer).

Myoungsoo Kim: I'm an artist and curator working based on book art. I run a private press called Pages Press, and I also personally collect artists' books. 북 아트를 기반으로 활동 중인 작가이자 큐레이터다. 'Pages Press'라는 프라이빗 프레스를 운영 중이다. 개인적으로 컬렉팅도 하고 있다.

HC: Why do you make artists' books? How do your books fit into your overall practice?

MK: I've always felt that books are the most accessible medium and material—both from the perspective of the person making it and viewing it. I also spent my childhood reading books, which gravitated me towards them. And since books can be produced with relatively less manpower and cost compared to other art mediums, I was able to experiment with them more. 예전부터 책이 가장 접근성이 훌륭한 미디엄이자 재료라고 느꼈던 것 같다. 만드는 사람 입장에서도 그렇고 보는 사람의 입장에서도 그렇다. 어렸을 때부터 책을 읽으면서 친밀감이 있기도 했고. 그리고 다른 매체에 비해 적은 인력과 비용으로도 제작이 가능하기 때문에 더 실험적으로 접근할 수 있는 미디엄이었던 것 같다.

HC: Do you think artists' books are socially and culturally valuable? If so, what makes you think that they are?

MK: I think artists' books are interesting because they conceptually expand the form of a book itself. However, before answering further, I would like to clarify the definition of the genre of artists' books as I understand it. First of all, livres d'artiste and artists' books are different in terms of how much the artist takes an initiative. Most of livres d'artiste were made in response to the demands of publishers or galleries, so they're different from artists' books where the artist is the main subject. From what I understand, artists' books became a trend in the 1960s when the mainstream art world migrated to the United States after the end of World War II, where its meaning was later expanded by the Fluxus Group. I think the term artists' books itself being an English word carries this context. Furthermore, book art is an umbrella concept that encompasses book objects, sculpture books, altered books, artists' books, etc., but it also differs from artists' books in terms of its purpose. For example, I lecture on and work with bookbinding, but that's only a means and methodology, not the goal of my work. In other words, I think there is a difference in direction between binding to create a work in the form of a book and making a book for the sake of binding. There's also a clear difference between artists' books and the catalog raisonné or catalogue. 아티스트북은 책이라는 형식 자체를 개념적으로 확장하고 있기 때문에 흥미로운 것 같다. 하지만 더 대답을 하기에 앞서 우선 내가 이해하고 있는 아티스트북이라는 장르의 정의를 분명히 하고 싶다. 우선 livres d'artiste와 아티스트북의 차이를 생각해보자면 작업에 대한 작가의 주도성이 다른 것 같다. Livres d'artiste의 경우 출판 업자 혹은 갤러리의 수요에 의해서 만들어진 작품들이기 때문에 작가가 주체가 되는 아티스트북과는 다르다. 내가 이해하기로 아티스트북은 어떠한 예술의 흐름 자체가 2차세계대전 종전 이후 미국으로 넘어온 1960년대부터 본격적으로 사용되고 이후에 플럭서스 그룹에 의해 그 의미가 확장된 케이스로, 아티스트북이라는 용어 자체가 영어라는 것이 그러한 맥락을 보여준다고 생각한다. 또, 북아트는 북오브제, sculpture book, altered book, 아티스트북 등을 모두 포괄하는 상위 개념이긴 하지만 아티스트북과 그 목적에서 차이를 보인다. 예를 들어 나도 북바인딩 강의를 하고 작업을 하지만 그것은 하나의 수단이자 방법론일 뿐이지 작업의 목표인 것은 아니다. 즉, 책의 형태인 작품을 만들기 위해 바인딩을 하는 것과 바인딩을 하기 위해 책을 만드는 것에는 방향성의 차이가 있다고 생각한다. 카탈로그 레조네나 도록과도 분명한 차이가 있고.

However, the important thing is these genres cannot be fully understood only in one plane. It is necessary to distinguish them clearly, but, in fact, they can never be completely separate from each other as long as they're all within the meta category of books. If you think about it, their relationship may rather be three-dimensional. When viewed from the side, they are separate from each other, but when seen from the front, they may appear overlapping. So, in the end, we could say that it's the viewer's angle that determines their distinction. 그러나 중요한 것은 이러한 장르들을 평면적으로만 이해할 수는 없다는 것이다. 그들의 차이를 명확히 이해하고 구분짓는 것도 필요하지만, 사실 책이라는 거대한 매체적 범주 안에 있는 한 이들은 절대 서로로부터 완전히 분리될 수 없다. 생각해보면 이들 간의 관계는 평면이 아니라 입체일 지도 모른다. 옆에서 보면 서로 떨어져 있지만 정면에서 보면 겹쳐보일 수도 있는 것이다. 결국 그것을 보는 향유자의 관점이 그들에 대한 이해와 구분을 결정한다고도 할 수 있겠다.

Coming back to the original question, honestly, I don't think I can say that artists' books are socially important. At this point, I feel like there are many more serious issues, both personally and socially. But, if you think culturally, artists' books are valuable because they add to the 'cultural diversity' of the arts—perhaps as a minority opinion. Without these attempts, the art world we have today would not have existed. Everyone would still be working on paintings now. So, I think artists' books are meaningful in that they propose a new aspect of art to the viewers. 질문으로 돌아와서, 솔직히 나는 아티스트북이 사회적으로 중요하다고 할 수는 없을 것 같다. 현 시점에서는 개인적으로나 사회적으로나 더 심각한 사안들이 많다고 느껴진다. 그러나 문화적으로 생각한다면 아티스트북은 예술을 다양하게 만드는 코드 중 하나이기 때문에 '문화 다양성' 측면에서 가치롭다고 생각한다. 마치 소수 의견 같은? 이러한 시도들이 없었다면 지금의 예술도 없었을 것이다. 지금까지도 모두 다 똑같은

회화 작업을 하고 있었을 테니 말이다. 보는 이들에게 예술의 새로운 모습을 제안한다는 점에 있어서 의미가 있다고 생각한다.

HC: What do you think are the differences and similarities between artists' books and exhibitions as modes of presentation?

MK: I guess the difference is the size or physical scale. Aside from that, I think they actually have more in common. The act of turning the pages of a book is conceptually very similar to the routes visitors are guided to take through an exhibition. As far as I know, that's what Ed Ruscha proposed through his artist's books—a 'portable exhibition space' that allows artists in the West Coast exhibit in the East Coast. 차이점이라면 규모나 물리적인 스케일? 그걸 제외하면 사실 공통점이 좀더 많을 것 같다. 책장을 넘기는 행위가 전시장을 거니는 동선과 개념적으로 굉장히 비슷하다고 생각한다. 에드 루샤가 아티스트북을 통해 제안했던 것도 결국 서부에 있는 작가가 동부에서 전시를 할 수 있게끔 하는 '이동 가능한 전시장'이었다고 알고 있다.

HC: How would you describe the position of artists' books in the contemporary art market? What are the things that you notice are different in their consumption compared to artworks of other mediums?

MK: The reason why I used to co-direct a bookstore and studio for the past five years was because I was concerned about this exact issue. What we emphasized the most there was serving as a platform for discussion about the value of artists' books. It's inevitable to think of the 'deals' between producers and consumers within the context of market economy in the capitalist era—accurate supply and predictions of demand, reasonable price suggestions. From the perspective of artists who make artists' books, they may be dissatisfied with their position in the market. Books published over the past 200 years after the Industrial Revolution were produced at extremely low costs due to the value of 'sharing intellectual property' pursued by many journalists and intellectuals during the Enlightenment. It's difficult for artists' books to be free from this context since they're also books. In Korea, the market value of books as perceived by the public is between 10,000 and 20,000 won (£6 and £12). Imported books, between \$20 and \$30. So, if you think of the price range of a general book, you obviously cannot capture the value of an artwork in those numbers. However, to consumers, an artist's book is clearly a book that most often looks like a book, whether it's signed by the artist or however much its artistic value is highlighted. Such a difference in perspectives just can't be helped. In the end, the best thing we can do is to share and try to understand the different positions as much as possible. 이 부분에 대한 고민으로 지난 5년간 서점 겸 스튜디오를 공동 대표 자격으로 운영했었다. 거기서 가장 강조했던 것이 아티스트북의 가치에 대한 담론의 장을 여는 것이었다. 자본주의 시대 시장 경제라는 맥락에 있어서 생산자와 소비자 간의 딜은 고민이 될 수밖에 없는 것 같다. 정확한 공급과 수요에 대한 예측, 합리적인 가격 제안. 아티스트북을 만드는 작가 입장에서 보면 시장에서의 지위에 불만이 있을 수 있을 것 같다. 지난 200년간 산업혁명 이후에 만들어졌던 책들은 많은 저널리스트들, 계몽주의자들이 추구했던 '지식재산의 공유'라는 가치관 때문에 굉장히 저렴한 비용으로 만들어졌다. 아티스트북도 그런 책이라는 미디어를 빌렸기 때문에 그런 맥락을 벗어나기가 힘든 것 같다. 한국에서 대중이 인지하고 있는 책의 시장 가치는 1만 원에서 2만 원 사이다. 외국 서적의 경우는 20달러에서 30달러 정도. 그러니까 일반적인 책의 가격대를 생각하면 당연히 그걸로 예술 작품의 가치를 표현할 수 없는 것이다. 하지만 반대로 소비자 입장에서 아티스트북도 분명 책인데, 책처럼 생겼는데, 아무리 작가가 뒤에 사인을 하고 예술성을 강조한다고 한들 결국 책으로 받아들여지게 된다. 이렇게 다른 관점들은 정말 어쩔 수 없는 것 같다. 결국 최선은 최대한 서로 다른 입장을 공유하고 이해하는 수밖에 없다.

When I first made an artist's book, I also gave it a ridiculously high price wanting to be compensated for the time and effort I spent on it. I think it's a mistake any early-career artist can make. However, now, I'm more concerned about 'expanding' the artists' books market than economic return on the

project. If you make one copy and price it at 10 million won, there'll be only one buyer, but if make 10 or 100 copies, the price per volume will decrease, but the market will expand as much. You shouldn't sell books at a loss, but in the end, you need consumers and collectors to be producing these books, and they need artists to maintain the culture of consuming artists' books. So, you should recognize this circulation and reach a certain level of compromise when pricing your artists' books. 나도 처음 아티스트북을 만들었을 때 시간이 너무 많이 들고 힘든 작업이다보니 작가의 입장만 생각하고 말도 안 되는 가격을 붙이기도 했다. 초보 작가들이면 누구나 하는 실수인 것 같다. 하지만 지금은 사실 그런 제작 과정에 대한 경제적 보상보다는 '아티스트북 시장의 확장'을 더 염두에 두고 있다. 1천 만 원짜리 아트웍이라고 생각하고 한 권만 만들면 구매자가 한 명이지만, 그걸 10권, 100권으로 나누어 팔면 권당 가격은 내려가도 시장은 넓어지니까. 책을 손해 보면서 팔지는 말되, 결국 소비자와 컬렉터가 있어야 생산자가 있을 수 있는 것이고, 생산자가 있어야 아티스트북을 소비하는 문화도 유지될 수 있다는 순환의 고리를 인지하고 가격 면에서는 어느 정도 타협을 이뤄야 한다.

I think the curator(commissioner) plays an important role here. Curators must be able to persuade the market that the price set on an artwork is justifiable and must also play a role in helping artists create works more productively. For example, they could suggest increasing the number of editions, but at the same time keeping the number limited so that the market value of the publication could be protected and controlled. 여기서 중요한 것이 큐레이터(커미셔너)의 역할이기도 한 것 같다. 큐레이터는 작가가 내놓은 창작물의 가격이 그만한 가치가 있는 것이라고 시장을 설득할 수 있어야 하고, 조금 더 생산적인 측면에서 효과적인 작품을 만들 수 있도록 작가를 돕는 역할도 해야한다. 예를 들어 에디션을 늘리는 방향을 조언한다던지, 그렇지만 또 동시에 어느 정도 한정판, 즉, 리미티드 에디션으로 만들어서 시장 가치를 보호하고 가격을 안정화하는 방법을 알려준다던지.

In short, artists' books in the market are expensive when viewed as mass-produced products, but ridiculously cheap when viewed as works of art. 정리하자면, 시장에서의 아티스트북은 대량 생산품으로 보면 비싸고, 하나의 예술 작품으로 보면 터무니없이 저렴하다.

HC: How much do you interact with the community that forms around book production and circulation? Does this interaction affect your practice/activity in any way?

MK: A community where you can share your opinions is very important for artists who make artists' books. To serve that purpose, I ran a program called 'Lab' when I was working for the bookstore, where we selected artists and supported their publications. I was in charge of guiding the artist and providing technical advice throughout the entire process of formulating an idea into a book. 아티스트북을 만드는 작가로서는 의견을 나눌 수 있는 커뮤니티가 굉장히 중요하다. 그래서 서점에 있을 때 '랩'이라는 프로그램을 운영했는데 작가를 선정해서 제작 과정을 서포팅하는 프로그램이었다. 나는 아이디어가 책이라는 매체로 출판되기까지의 과정 전반을 코칭하고 기술적인 부분을 조언하는 역할을 맡았었다.

Interviewee F

Helen Jungyeon Ku is a curator and researcher based in Seoul. Her work primarily focuses on collective art practices and forms of knowledge production and distribution, including art publishing. She worked as a Curator at Zero One Design Centre, Kookmin University and as a Co-Director at Mediabus and The Book Society, which are hubs of independent art publishing in Seoul. She currently works as the Head of Education Research at Leeum Museum of Art.

2 October, 2022, The Book Society, Seoul

Hyunjoo Cho: Which category of participants best defines you? Please tell me all that apply: Maker (artist, designer), Facilitator (curator, editor, publisher), Distributor (distributor, retailer), Collector (collector, archivist, librarian, consumer).

Helen Jungyeon Ku: I'm a curator and researcher who plans and produces various art publications. I majored in French literature, but I worked for planning cultural events such as film festivals and started my career as a curator at Kookmin University's Zero One Design Centre Gallery. 다양한 예술 출판물을 기획하고 제작하는 큐레이터이자 연구자다. 불문학 전공이었으나 영화제 같은 행사들을 기획하는 일을 하다가 국민대학교 제로원 디자인 센터 갤러리에서 본격적인 큐레이터 일을 시작했다.

HC: What made you become interested in artists' books? How does art publishing fit into your overall practice?

HJK: My job at the Zero One Design Centre involved curating graphic design exhibitions. At the time (mid-2000s), exhibitions focusing on design were rare in Korea. Nevertheless, designers were already developing their own visual language and making various art publications with it in Europe, especially in the Netherlands, so many of the exhibitions I curated were introducing the works of overseas designers to Korean audience. This really opened up my thoughts towards art publications, and I grew to be interested in new formats they were proposing. 제로원 디자인 센터에서의 일이 그래픽 디자인 전시를 기획하는 포지션이었는데, 당시(2000년대 중반) 국내에서는 디자인에 초점을 맞춘 전시가 드물었다. 그럼에도 불구하고 유럽, 특히 네덜란드 같은 문화권에서는 이미 디자이너들이 고유한 시각 언어를 개발하고 그걸로 예술 출판물들을 다채롭게 만들고 있던 시점이었기 때문에 그런 해외 디자이너들의 작업물을 국내에 소개하는 전시를 많이 기획했다. 기획을 하면서 나 스스로도 출판물에 대한 생각이 많이 개방적으로 변하게 되었고, 그것들이 제안하는 새로운 형식에 관심이 갔다.

As I continued to curate exhibitions, a network with designers was naturally formed, which made me want to create a more independent platform. So, in 2007, I co-founded the publishing house 'Mediabus' with Director Kyung Yong Lim. Since we had dreamed of a platform where we showcase the stories and works of our colleagues, we published various materials including artist zines, catalogues, and monographs, and curated exhibitions. We also held events to distribute our publications, one of which was 'The Book Society'. It started in 2009 as an art book fair combining seminars, book talks, and workshops, and in 2010, we established it into a permanent bookstore space for Mediabus. 그렇게 전시 기획을 거듭하면서 자연스럽게 디자이너들과의 네트워크가 만들어졌고, 그러다보니 좀더 자체적인 플랫폼을 만들고 싶어서 2007년에 임경용 대표와 함께 '미디어버스'를 만들었다. 주변 동료들의 이야기나 작품을 선보일 수 있는 플랫폼을 꿈꿨기 때문에 아티스트 진, 도록, 모노그래프 등 다양한 출판물을 만들고 전시도 했다. 또, 우리가 생산한 출판물들을 유통하기 위한 이벤트도 많이 기획했는데, 그중 하나가 2009년에 세미나, 북토크, 워크숍을 모두 곁들인 아트북 페어 '더북소사이어티'였다. 그렇게 시작한 것이 2010년부터는 미디어버스의 상설 서점 공간으로 자리를 잡았다.

Everything started with the objective of consolidating a site, or a community where we could work with our colleagues. The reason why I, who am not a professionally trained editor, took up this role was also because I had to deal with the medium of books, which rose to be at the center of this community. So, I took on my role out of organic necessity. It's not just the editorial role, actually—I think I get involved with almost anything along the publishing process. This is more so because we're a small self-organized project, independent from institutions. 결국 모든 건 어떤 판, 즉, 동료들과 함께할 수 있는 커뮤니티를 다지기 위해 시작한 일이다. 전문 편집자가 아닌 내가 이런 활동을 하게 된 것도 그런 커뮤니티의 구심점에 놓인 책이라는 매체를 다뤄야 하다 보니 유기적인 필요에 의해 역할을 겸하게 된 것이다. 사실 편집 뿐만 아니라 출판이라는 경로로 엮이는 모든 역할은 조금씩은 다 맡게 되는 것 같다. 기관으로부터 독립된, 스스로 조직한 소형 프로젝트라 더 그렇다.

And on the other hand, I think Mediabus and The Book Society could happen because we had a solid

relationship with the designer community as our backdrop. We had become each other's condition. In fact, because publishing is such a 'public' activity, you always need collaborators. Various members, including translators, proofreaders, designers, artists, print shop owners, distributors, and so on, come together to maintain this ecosystem. People who still believe in the presence and significance of books as a medium with physical properties continue to participate in publishing. 그리고 또 반대로 좋은 디자이너 커뮤니티와의 관계가 바탕이 되었기 때문에 미디어버스나 더북소사이어티도 가능했다고 생각한다. 서로가 서로의 조건이 된 것이다. 사실 출판은 정말 '퍼블릭'한 행위이기 때문에 협업자들이 항상 존재한다. 번역가, 교정교열자, 디자이너, 작가, 인쇄소 사장님, 서점 유통업자 등 정말 여러 사람이 모여서 이 생태계를 유지한다. 여전히 책이 물성을 가진 매체로서 존재하는 것을 신뢰하는 사람들, 책의 의미를 믿는 사람들이 계속해서 이 일에 참여한다.

HC: Do you think artists' books are socially and culturally valuable? If so, what makes you think that they are?

HJK: The prevailing view is that our current notion of artists' books was formed through the sentiments of Conceptual Artists in the 1960s and 70s. Although I really like those works, I think their concept really doesn't fit the Korean art world today. I think the artists' books produced in Korea today are not just artists' books, but rather books by more than a single creative mind. Now, artists' books serve more as sites that allow various collaborators to come together, and it seems no longer meaningful to draw the categorical boundary that they're solely by the artists. I think artists' books are valuable in that they open up the possibilities of participation, allowing different subjects to join each other and co-create works. 우리가 흔히 떠올리는 아티스트북은 1960년대와 70년대에 활동했던 개념 예술가들의 정서로부터 출발했다는 관점이 지배적인데, 그 작품들을 정말 좋아하기는 하지만 오늘날 한국의 상황과 정말 맞지 않는 종류의 책이라고 생각한다. 지금 한국에서 만들어지는 아티스트북들은 오히려 단지 '아티스트'북이 아닌, 저자 자체가 단일 저자가 아닌 책들이라고 생각한다. 아티스트북은 이 다양한 협업자들이 모일 수 있도록 해주는 '판'의 역할을 할 뿐, 그것이 오롯이 작가만의 작업물이라고 선을 긋는 건 더이상 의미가 없는 것 같다. 여러 주체들이 모여서 공동의 저작물을 만들 수 있게 해주는, 그런 참여의 가능성을 열어주는 것이 아티스트북이 예술계에서 갖는 의미인 것 같다. Additionally, artists' books constantly allow for experimental attempts to be made in terms of the book format. Most popular books often need to follow certain standards or use binding methods to be easily distributed through large channels, but artists' books don't have to stick to these pre-existing 'forms'. I think artists' books are still an established medium and platform precisely because being under their umbrella grants such a creative freedom. And this also means that we can provide readers of artists' books with new experiences that are different from normative ways of reading. In such sense, the designer's role becomes as essential as that of artist when making an artist's book because it's ultimately the power of design that creates the structure of the book and materializes the content so that the readers can have the experience we want to deliver. Artists who understand this aspect sometimes reaches out to designers first, hoping for their active participation in visually interpreting the artist's work. 또, 아티스트북은 책의 형식 면에서도 끊임없이 다양한 시도들이 이루어지도록 한다. 보통의 대중 서적들은 기존의 채널들을 이용한 편리한 유통을 위해 일정한 규격이나 제책 방식 등을 따라야하는 경우가 많은데, 아티스트북은 이러한 기존의 '꼴'을 전부 무시해도 무방하다. 아티스트북이라는 이름 안에서 허용되는 제작 방식의 파격이 있기 때문에 아티스트북이 매체이자 플랫폼으로서 지금도 성립하는 것 같다. 그리고 이것은 곧 아티스트북을 읽는 독자들에게 우리가 기존의 읽는 방식과 다른, 새로운 경험을 제공해줄 수 있다는 뜻도 된다. 이러한 지점에서 아티스트북을 만들 때 작가만큼 디자이너의 역할이 필수적이 된다. 독자가 우리가 바라는 경험을 할 수 있도록 책의 구조를 만들고 콘텐츠를 물체화시키는 것은 결국 디자인의 힘이기 때문이다. 그러한 측면을 이해하는 작가들은 오히려 먼저 자신의 작업을 시각적으로 해석해줄 수 있는 디자이너의 적극적인 참여를 원하기도 한다.

HC: What do you think are the differences and similarities between artists' books and exhibitions as modes of presentation?

HJK: I do talk a lot about the relationship between the curatorial and the editorial—I've conducted seminars on such topics. These days, many artists want to take the initiative in publishing solid, monograph-like books when they hold solo exhibitions. Books published in this way document the exhibition as part of the content, but also show the research conducted by the artist, the process of creating the work, and references the artist came by while preparing for the exhibition. In other words, these books show a more holistic context surrounding the exhibition. Of course, there are many cases where the exhibition and the publication stand as separate projects, and conversely, there are also cases where books are brought into the exhibition to emphasize the conceptual relation. However, it seems that there aren't many artists who produce artists' books only to document exhibitions. I can't say for sure because the situations and conditions in which an artist needs the book medium vary significantly, but I think books that record only the exhibitions would be closer to catalogues than artists' books. 큐레토리얼과 에디토리얼의 관계에 대한 이야기는 정말 많이 하게 된다. 그런 주제에 관한 세미나를 진행한 적도 있다. 요즘에는 개인전을 기점으로 단단한 모노그래프 같은 책을 직접 기획해서 만들고 싶어하는 작가들이 많다. 그렇게 만들어진 책들의 특징은 전시를 내용의 일부로 담기도 하지만, 작가가 수행했던 리서치나 작품을 만드는 과정, 전시를 준비하면서 읽었던 레퍼런스 등을 추가적으로 보여 준다. 즉, 전시를 둘러싼 좀더 총체적인 맥락을 보여 준다. 물론 전시와 책을 아예 별도의 프로젝트로 분리해서 제작하는 경우도 많고, 또 반대로 그렇게 제작한 책을 아예 전시장 안으로 들여와서 관계성을 강조하는 경우도 있다. 하지만 기본적으로 전시만을 기록하기 위한 도큐멘테이션으로 아티스트북을 제작하는 작가들은 많지 않은 것 같다. 사실 작가가 책이라는 매체를 필요로 하는 상황이나 조건이 다 제각각이라 단정할 수는 없지만, 그렇게 전시만을 기록한 책들은 아티스트북이 아니라 도록에 가깝지 않을까.

HC: How would you describe the position of artists' books in the contemporary art market? What are the things that you notice are different in their consumption compared to artworks of other mediums?

HJK: To be honest, there really is no demand for artists' books. There are many individual artists and institutions that have the will and desire to produce publications, but I'm not sure if there is a consumer base that actually responds. Not just artists' books, but books in general as well—there are more people making them than ever, but it doesn't seem like the readership is growing accordingly. And especially in Korea, because there are almost no 'collectors' for artists' books, it's extremely rare for publications in limited edition worth hundreds of dollars to be bought like in other countries. So, such books don't really exist at the first place and are even less in demand. If an artist's book is purchased in Korea, it would be by someone from a very specific, small group of readers, to whom the book has value as a research material or artistic reference. It's rare to find cases where a person sees an artist's book purely as an artwork and buys them for aesthetic appreciation. 솔직하게 말하자면 아티스트북은 정말 수요가 없다. 생산하려는 의지, 욕구, 그런 프로젝트를 수행하려는 기관들은 많은데, 실제로 이걸 원하는 소비자층이 있는지는 잘 모르겠다. 아티스트북 뿐만 아니라 책 자체가 어느 때보다도 만드는 사람은 많아진 것 같은데, 그에 맞춰서 독자층이 개발되고 있는 것 같지는 않다. 그리고 특히 한국의 경우, 컬렉터 층이 거의 전무하기 때문에 외국처럼 수십만 원 짜리 리미티드 에디션 아티스트북이 거래되는 것은 정말 드문일이다. 그래서 그런 책들은 잘 존재하지도 않고 수요도 더욱 없다. 국내에서 아티스트북이 팔린다면 그건 정말 특정한, 매우 소수의 독자들이 사는 것이다. 연구 자료나 참고 서적으로서의 가치가 있는 경우. 아티스트북을 순수하게 작품으로 보고 미학적으로 감상하기 위해 사는 경우는 거의 없을 것이다.

The reason why I talk about the case of Korea separately is because I feel the concept of 'artists' books' has been localized. Artists' books in the US, UK, Netherlands, and Korea all seem to have slightly nuanced significance tailored to their respective art scenes. And as I mentioned earlier, there is a gap

between the artists' books of today and of the 1960s and 70s, when the genre met its height and Lucy Lippard was preaching the standards for artists' books. Compared to those days when they thought that the pages themselves are an exhibition space, that artists' books can't include texts on exhibitions outside the book or texts by critics, and that they had to only hold the artist's voice and art itself, the art world has evolved a lot, which naturally updated and diversified the conditions of artists' books. This will continue to be the case. 내가 한국의 경우를 분리해서 말하는 이유는 '아티스트북'의 개념이 다 로컬라이징이 됐다고 느끼기 때문이다. 미국, 영국, 네덜란드, 한국에서 말하는 아티스트북은 전부 각자의 아트씬에 맞춰서 미묘하게 다른 뉘앙스를 갖고 있는 것 같다. 그리고 앞서 말하기도 했지만, 1960년대와 70년대, 처음으로 아티스트북 붐이 일고 루시 리파드가 아티스트북의 기준을 설명하던 때와 지금의 아티스트북은 또 차이가 있다. 페이지 자체를 전시장으로 생각하고, 책 밖의 전시에 대한 글이나 비평가의 글이 들어가면 안되고, 오직 작가의 목소리와 작품만 존재해야 한다고 생각했던 그대에 비하면 지금은 예술계의 흐름이 많이 달라져서 아티스트북의 조건도 더 다양해지고 자연스럽게 갱신된 것 같다. 앞으로도 계속 그럴 것이다.

Interviewee G

Jae Kyung Kim is the Founding Director of einBuch.haus (founded in 2018), a project gallery and a book shop in Berlin showcasing books by international artists and designers in the form of exhibitions, thereby transferring the form of a book into three-dimensional spaces. She also runs ENKR (co-founded in 2020 with Dah Yee Noh), an independent publishing house specializing in translating art publications from English to Korean.

21 November 2022, Online

Hyunjoo Cho: Which category of participants best defines you? Please tell me all that apply: Maker (artist, designer), Facilitator (curator, editor, publisher), Distributor (distributor, retailer), Collector (collector, archivist, librarian, consumer).

Jae Kyung Kim: I curate artists' books exhibitions at project gallery einBuch.haus and am a co-director of ENKR, a publishing house translating art publications from English to Korean. I am collecting publishing projects from artists who use the book as their own medium and also books on books. I came across the intersection of books and art including art books, artists' books, book art, and binding in undergraduate, during which I majored in graphic design in Korea. Afterwards, in 2012, I studied exhibition design and UI/UX design in the Information Experience Design programme at the Royal College of Art in London. During that time, I also made some works that are closer to artworks, but I wouldn't introduce myself as an artist now. But, working this way, my various interests encompassing design, artists' book, and exhibition came together, and in 2017, I curated a group exhibition in Berlin of a collection of artists' books by artists and designers that considered books as architectural structures. The title was 'Architectural as Material'. I think this was the starting point for my career as a curator specialising in artists' books. Now, 'exhibition, space, and book' are the three keywords I focus on. 프로젝트 갤러리 아인부흐하우스의 아티스트북 전시 기획자이자 ENKR 라는 번역 출판사의 공동 대표다. 책을 매체로 활동하는 작가의 출판물 및 책에 대한 책들을 수집하고 있다. 한국에서 그래픽 디자인을 전공하면서 아트북, 아티스트북, 북아트, 바인딩 등 책과 예술의 교집합을 접했다. 그후 2012년에 런던 Royal College of Art의 Information Experience Design 프로그램에서 석사 과정을 하면서 전시 디자인, UI/UX 디자인 등에 대해 배웠다. 당시에는 아트웍에 가까운 작업들도 있었지만, 지금은 스스로를 작가로 소개하지는 않는다. 하지만 그렇게 활동을

하면서 디자인, 아트북, 전시 등 다양했던 관심사가 구심점을 갖게 되어서 결국 2017년에 베를린에서 'Architectural as Material'이라는 제목으로 책을 건축 구조로 생각한 아티스트북들을 모아서 전시를 했다. 이때가 아티스트북 전시 기획자로 활동하게 된 어떤 시발점이 된 것 같다. 지금은 '전시, 공간, 책', 이 세 가지가 나에게 가장 중요한 키워드다.

HC: einBuch.haus seems to be a very interesting space. Could you please explain a little bit more about what you do there?

JKK: First of all, my role here, as mentioned earlier, is curating exhibitions that introduce works in the form of books, such as artists' books. Doing so, I find myself connecting the artists with the audience, collectors, and librarians. I think this intermediary type of role suits me best. Plus, since einBuch.haus operates as both an exhibition space and a bookstore, I'm also in charge of curating the store space. I tune our selection of books depending on the exhibition theme. And since neither the careers of artists who mainly produce artists' books nor our space could be maintained solely through book sales, we also sell artist prints in the bookstore. Lastly, einBuch.haus has begun publishing books starting this year, so work needed at any publisher such as editing, designing, and promotion has been added to my job. 일단 이곳에서 나의 역할은 앞서 말했듯이 아티스트북과 같이 책의 형태를 가진 작품들을 전시를 통해 소개하는 기획자다. 그러면서 작가와 독자, 콜렉터, 도서관 사서를 연결하는 역할을 하고 있다. 그런 일이 나한테는 제일 잘 맞는 것 같다. 또, 아인부흐하우스는 전시 공간과 서점이 함께 운영되는 구조이기 때문에 서점 큐레이션도 맡고 있다. 전시 테마에 맞춰서 그때그때 판매하는 책의 셀렉션을 바꾼다. 그리고 아티스트북을 주된 작업으로 삼는 작가들의 커리어도 그렇고 공간 운영도 책 판매로만 유지할 수 없기 때문에 아티스트 프린트도 함께 판매하고 있다. 마지막으로 올해부터 아인부흐하우스에서 자체적으로 책을 출판하기 시작해서 출판에 필요한 편집, 디자인, 홍보 등의 일도 더해질 예정이다.

HC: Do you think artists' books are socially and culturally valuable? If so, what makes you think that they are?

JKK: The first reason I believe artists' books are valuable has to do with the characteristics of the book medium itself. Art can be quite difficult for the public to approach, but since artists' books are books, people seem to feel comfortable handling them, relatively. Running this space, since half of it is a bookstore, I've seen many people come in more naturally and easily and then grow to enjoy art. Artists' books serve as this 'passage' that minimises barriers to art. Even during the pandemic, books were classified as daily necessities in Berlin, allowing bookstores to open legally. So, einBuch.haus was also able to open, and visitors, even if they came without knowing what an artist's book is, many responded that it was nice to be able to see art in such an enjoyable and 'fun' way. The gumball machine on display there, for example, is also an artwork that dispenses mini artists' books. Artists' books can be esoteric, but many of them are still made for the readers' pleasure in mind. Since I'm a mother, I'm very interested in books that are for not only those working in the art world but also the general public, including children. 아티스트북이 가치로운 이유는 첫 번째로 책이라는 매체의 특성이 가장 큰 것 같다. 아무래도 예술은 대중이 다가가기에는 조금 어려운 면이 있는데, 아티스트북은 책의 형태를 띄고 있다보니 사람들이 비교적 친숙해하는 것 같다. 이 공간을 운영하면서도 반은 서점이다 보니 사람들이 자연스럽게 편하게 들어와서 예술을 향유하게 되는 것을 많이 목격했다. 아티스트북은 그런 장벽을 낮추는 '통로'의 역할을 한다. 팬데믹 기간에도 베를린에서는 책을 생활필수품으로 분류해서 법적으로 서점들을 열 수 있게 했다. 그래서 아인부흐하우스도 문을 열 수 있었는데, 방문객들이 아티스트북이 뭔지 모르고 왔다 하더라도 일단 들어와서 예술에 재미있게, 'fun'으로 접근할 수 있어서 좋았다는 반응이 많았다. 저기 전시된 gumball machine도 돈을 넣고 돌리면 미니북이 나오는 작품이다. 아티스트북은 난해한 경우도 많지만 향유자의 재미를 고려해서 만들어진 경우도 그만큼 많은 것 같다. 아무래도 내가 엄마이다보니 예술계 종사자 뿐만 아니라 아이들을 포함한

일반인들도 즐길 수 있는 책들에 관심이 많다.

And artists' books are accessible in terms of prices, too. Books we sell here range from €1 or €2 to €1,000, giving buyers a wide range of choices. Art collectors often start with purchasing an artist's book and, once they can afford it, expand their collection to prints by the same artist. In that sense, artists' books serve as a kind of bridge that allows people to attempt collecting art. 그리고 가격적인 면에서도 아티스트북은 접근성이 좋다. 여기서 판매하는 책의 가격도 가장 저렴한 건 1, 2 유로부터 1000유로까지 가격대가 다양해서 구매자의 입장에서 선택의 폭이 넓다. 아트 콜렉터들은 아티스트북으로 시작해서 어느 정도 경제적인 여유가 생기면 그 작가의 프린트도 사는 식으로 컬렉션을 확장하기도 한다. 그런 의미에서 아티스트북은 사람들로 하여금 아트 콜렉팅을 시도해볼 수 있도록 하는 일종의 가교 역할을 하는 것이다.

Thirdly, artists' books can serve as archives. They don't take up as much space as other mediums and are easy to store, allowing people to view them for a long time. Also, since they don't weigh much, they can be distributed to basically anywhere in the world if the artist wants. They're an excellent medium for delivering messages. And recently, risograph printing and copy machines have allowed us to produce books very conveniently and inexpensively, making distribution even easier, although the commercial art market underestimates the books' value because of this facet. 세 번째로는 아티스트북은 아카이브로서의 역할을 수행할 수 있다. 다른 매체에 비해 부피를 많이 차지하지도 않고 보관이 용이해서 오랫동안 볼 수 있다. 또, 무게도 많이 나가지 않아서 작가가 바라기만 한다면 세계 어디로든 배포가 가능하다. 메시지를 전달하기에 탁월한 매체다. 심지어 최근 들어서는 리소그래프나 복사기 등을 이용해서 정말 쉽고 저렴한 가격으로 책을 만들 수 있어서 이러한 배포가 더욱 용이해졌다. 그런 것 때문에 상업 예술 시장에서는 아티스트북을 좀 가볍게 여기긴 하지만.

Lastly, artists' books propose a truly diverse range of book forms and its materials—from a book made out of cottons or woods that you might not think it's a book to the tiny books in a gumball machine I mentioned earlier. I think it's important that they pioneer such variety. 마지막으로 아티스트북은 정말 다양한 책의 형태 및 매aterial을 제안한다. 이것도 책인가싶을 정도로 천이나 나무로 만든 책부터 아까 언급했던 gumball machine 의 미니북까지. 다양한 모습을 개척해 나가기 때문에 중요하다고 생각한다.

HC: What do you think are the differences and similarities between artists' books and exhibitions as modes of presentation?

JKK: Artists' books and exhibitions both require a long time and effort to produce, but exhibitions just disappear after a month or a couple of weeks. Artists' books are different in that their viewing period does not expire so fast—once you own them, you can view them anytime, anywhere. Particularly, many of the 'books as exhibitions' that we focus on here at einBuch.haus provide different experience every time you read them. Even in terms of resources, holding exhibitions requires several or dozens of times more than producing and distributing artists' books. In that aspect, the latter is more accessible for artists as well. 아티스트북을 만들든 전시를 만들든 둘 다 준비 기간도 오래 걸리고 노력을 많이 하게 된다. 그런데 전시는 길면 한 달, 짧게는 몇 주만에 기획이 끝나고 나면 모든 게 허무하게 사라져 버린다. 아티스트북은 볼 수 있는 기한이 그렇게 한정되어있지 않다는 점이 가장 다르다. 책을 소장하게 되면 언제, 어디서든지 볼 수 있다. 게다가 아인부흐하우스에서 가장 초점을 맞추고 있는 '전시로서의 책'들은 읽을 때마다 매번 다른 경험을 하게 되는 것들이 많다. 자원적인 부분에서도 아티스트북 한 권을 만들어서 배포하는 것과 전시를 여는 것은 몇 배 혹은 몇십 배의 차이가 있다. 그런 면에서 볼 때 작가로서도 쉽게 접근할 수 있는 것은 아티스트북 쪽이다.

However, one thing to note at the same time is that hundreds of titles are released every day, making it difficult for them to be noticed by the public compared to exhibitions. That's one of the reasons why we produce both of them side by side—to diversify our channels. Our exhibitions select and highlight books that are otherwise not easily seen when they're overwhelmed by the publications

market. They're in a complementary relationship. And it's also cyclical—rather than being a one-to-one complement, the exhibition becomes a book, and the book becomes an exhibition again, and in the process, a network of artists, curators, art dealers, collectors, and the public is formed around it. This is also the narrative of the platform for artists' books itself. For instance, when producing 'Calendar 2023' earlier this year at einBuch.haus, various artists participated in the project jointly, so the book became a focal point for people to connect in many layers. Artists who met through that project also came up with other projects—this way, production led to more production through our platform. 그러나 동시에 의식해야하는 점은 그만큼 책은 하루에도 수백 권씩 출간되기 때문에 전시에 비해 대중의 눈에 띄기가 힘들다는 것이다. 그래서 아인부흐하우스에서는 채널의 다양화를 위해 책과 전시를 동시에 다루고 있기도 하다. 출판 시장에 묻혀있으면 잘 드러나지 않는 책들을 전시가 뽑아서 조명을 하는 역할을 하는 것이다. 둘은 상호보완적인 관계이기도 하다. 순환적이기도 하고. 1대 1의 보완이라기보다는 전시가 책이 되고, 책이 다시 전시가 되고, 그러면서 그것을 둘러싼 작가, 기획자, 아트 딜러, 콜렉터, 방문객의 네트워크가 형성된다는 점에서 그렇다. 그리고 그건 아티스트북을 주제로 한 플랫폼 자체의 이야기이기도 하다. 예를 들어 올해 아인부흐하우스에서 Calendar 2023 를 제작할 때 여러 명의 작가들이 공동으로 참여한 작업이었기 때문에 그 책을 매개로 사람들이 이리저리 연결이 되는 구심점이 생기기도 했다. 그 작업을 통해 만난 사람들끼리 또 다른 프로젝트를 구상하기도 하고, 그렇게 우리 플랫폼을 통해 생산이 또다른 생산을 부를 수 있게 된다.

HC: How would you describe the position of artists' books in the contemporary art market? What are the things that you notice are different in their consumption compared to artworks of other mediums?

JKK: There's a difference between books that increased in market value due to the artist's fame and those that haven't, but nevertheless, it appears to me that artists' books virtually have no presence in the art market. Although artists' books also have private collectors, their main consumers are libraries, museums, institutions, and publishers engaged in art publishing. Individuals and professional collectors prefer prints over artists' books. The problem with artists' books as collectibles is that since they're books, you need to touch them and turn the pages to properly appreciate them. Even when we're at an art book fair, since you can't tell the value of an artist's book just by looking at its cover, we either have to put on gloves and turn the pages for the visitors to show them the contents or risk damaging the book and allow the visitors to see it for themselves. Since books are bound to wear out in some way, collectors don't really consider them as investment targets. So, there's a greater demand for things like prints by artists who publish artists' books or 'wall-hangable' sculptures made of paper. 이미 작가의 유명세를 타고 시장 가치가 상승한 경우와 그렇지 않은 경우의 차이는 있겠지만 그럼에도 불구하고 예술 시장에서의 아티스트북의 입지는 사실상 없다고 봐야할 것 같다. 아티스트북도 개인 콜렉터가 있긴 하지만 도서관, 뮤지엄, 기관, 예술 출판물 하고 있는 출판 활동가들이 주된 소비층이다. 개인이나 전문 콜렉터들은 아티스트북 보다는 프린트를 더 선호한다. 소장품으로서의 아티스트북의 문제라면 아무래도 책이다 보니 감상을 하려면 만지고 넘겨봐야 한다는 것이다. 아트북 페어 같은 곳에 나가도 아티스트북은 걸만 봐서는 가치를 알 수가 없다 보니 장갑을 끼고 페이지를 넘기면서 사람들에게 내용을 보여주거나 아니면 책이 좀 망가지는 것을 감수하고 방문객이 직접 볼 수 있도록 해야 한다는 취약점이 있다. 그런 식으로 책은 닳을 수밖에 없다 보니 자산 투자의 대상으로 잘 고려되지 않는다. 그래서 아티스트북을 만든 작가들의 프린트나 종이를 소재로 한 '벽에 걸 수 있는' 조각품 같은 것들이 더 수요가 있다.

One advantage of artists' books when entering the market is that they can participate in both art fairs and book fairs. But of course, in the general book market, the boundaries between artists' books and catalogues, visual novels, etc. become even more blurred, making it difficult to have them as an independent category. 아티스트북이 시장으로 진입할 때의 한 가지 장점은 아트 페어와 북 페어 양쪽에 참여할 수 있다는 것이다. 물론 일반 책 시장 안에서의 아티스트북은 작가가 만든 굿즈나 카탈로그, 비주얼 노블 등과의 경계가 더욱 흐려져서 독립적인 분류로 취급되기가 힘들어지긴 한다.

HC: What factors do you consider when pricing your artists' books? Are there any particular standards or reasonings behind your prices?

JKK: If you take an average of what publishers say, the sales from a publication need to be roughly four times the production cost to sustain their activities. For example, if the cost was €100, then four times that is €400, which is divided by the number of editions of the book to get the price per copy. If it's an edition of 10, the price per copy would be €40. The reason for setting such a margin is because it's rare to sell all of the copies produced, and other costs—artists' fee, taxes, distribution commissions, shipping costs, etc.—need to be covered with the sales profit. 제작자들이 하는 이야기의 평균을 내보면 책 제작에 들어간 비용의 약 4배가 그 책을 팔았을 때의 매출이어야 출판 활동이 유지된다. 예를 들어 제작 비용이 100유로가 들었으면 4배는 400유로, 그것을 책의 에디션 수로 나누면 한 권당 가격이 된다. 10권을 만들었다면 한 권의 가격은 40유로가 될 것이다. 이렇게 마진을 두는 이유는 제작한 책을 모두 파는 건 거의 일어나지 않는 일인데다가 세금이나 유통 채널 커미션, 배송비 등을 매출 안에서 부담해야하기 때문이다.

A publishing house in New York called Small Editions published in 2020 a manual called How to Book about self-publishing. It explains in great detail how to apply for fundings, distribution methods, why you should attend book fairs, and more. In the case of Small Editions, when an artist publishes an artist's book with them, they make a few copies in limited, special edition and sell them at a higher price to collectors representing libraries or institutions, and keep the rest at lower price using more affordable production techniques so that the public can access them. This seems like a smart choice because it gives the market two options and the publisher two revenue channels. 뉴욕의 Small Editions라는 출판사에서 2020년에 HOW TO BOOK이라는 출판 매뉴얼을 발행했는데 거기에 책 제작 펀딩을 받는 법, 배포 방식, 북 페어는 왜 나가야 하는지 등이 잘 설명되어 있다. 이 출판사 같은 경우 한 작가가 아티스트북을 만들면 몇 부는 리미티드 에디션으로 만들어서 높은 가격에 도서관이나 기관을 대표하는 콜렉터를 대상으로 판매하고 나머지는 일반 대중도 구매하기 쉽게 좀더 저렴한 제작 기법을 사용해서 배포한다. 이렇게 하면 시장에는 두 가지 옵션을 주고, 출판사도 두 가지 수익 채널이 생기니 영리한 선택인 것 같다.

Also, as a personal rule, if the price per copy turns out to be too high when I follow the 'times four' equation, I lower the price slightly even if that would mean our loss. I would almost always prefer to have more people read our books than see the books pile up in the warehouse, even if they need to be sold at a lower price. I think I feel strongly this way because artists' books themselves is a medium aimed at being widely distributed. When setting a price, I also consider the overall end points of books, such as by whom I want the books to be read and where I want them to end up. 또, 가격을 책정할 때 개인적인 원칙이 있다면 제작 비용의 4배를 해서 그걸 에디션 수로 나눴을 때 권당 가격이 너무 높다면 약간 손해를 보더라도 가격을 낮춘다. 책이 창고에 쌓이는 것보다는 좀 싸게 팔리더라도 더 많은 사람들이 책을 봤으면 좋겠다는 마음이 더 크다. 아티스트북 자체가 대중에게 널리 배포되는 것을 목적으로 하고 있는 매체이다보니 더 그런 것 같다. 가격을 매길 때는 전반적으로 이 책이 누구에게 가서 읽혔으면 좋겠다, 맨 마지막에 어디에 도착했으면 좋겠다, 그런 최종 지점들도 고려한다.

However, even if a publisher or an artist sets a reasonable price with such an intention, the market often raises the price arbitrarily. For example, one of Irma Boom's books, which was sold at €25 in 2013, now goes for €130 in the secondary market. The artist may feel a little proud about this because it implies that the book's value as a collectible has been recognised, but it still brings up the question of whether the price has to be raised by so much. 그런데 사실 출판사나 작가가 그런 마음으로 합리적인 가격을 책정해도 시장이 멋대로 가격을 올려버리기도 한다. 예를 들어 Irma Boom의 책 같은 경우 2013년에 25유로였던 책이 지금은 130유로에 2차로 거래되고 있다. 책이 소장 가치를 인정받아서 그렇게 된 거라 작가 입장에서 조금은 뿌듯할 수 있겠지만 이렇게까지 가격이 올라야하는가 하는 의문이 드는 건 사실이다.

HC: How much do you interact with the community that forms around book production and circulation? Does this interaction affect your practice/activity in any way?

JKK: Yes, of course. Participating in book fairs is partly to bolster our network. einBuch.haus also serves as a community at the first place. We always hope to provide help to people who produce and read books—I want people working with books to come together through this place. We are also planning to collect and publish the know-how of book production of publishers and printing technicians based in Berlin sooner or later. 물론이다. 북 페어도 그런 네트워크를 돈독히 하기 위해서 나가는 측면도 있다. 또 애초에 아인부흐하우스는 커뮤니티 역할도 하고 있다. 책을 제작하고 읽는 사람들에게 뭔가 도움이 되고 싶다는 생각을 항상 한다. 그래서 이 공간을 통해서 책과 관련된 사람들이 많이 힘을 모았으면 좋겠다는 바람이다. 조만간 베를린에서 활동하는 출판인들과 인쇄 기술자들의 노하우를 모아서 책을 만들 계획도 있다.

Interviewee H

Arnaud Desjardin is an artist, a specialist art bookseller, and a researcher interested in the history of artists' books based in London. He runs The Everyday Press (founded in 2007), a publisher of art books and artists' books that works closely with artists, designers, and writers to release publications paying particular attention to the book as an object. In parallel to The Everyday Press, he also runs Bunker Basement, an underground showroom and archive of books. Additionally, he is an active member of Artists' Books Cooperative (ABC), an international group of artists, publishers, and educators seeking to experiment with the form of the book.

1 December 2022, Bunker Basement, London

Hyunjoo Cho: Which category of participants best defines you? Please tell me all that apply: Maker (artist, designer), Facilitator (curator, editor, publisher), Distributor (distributor, retailer), Collector (collector, archivist, librarian, consumer).

Arnaud Desjardin: My activity encompasses being an artist, publisher, editor, distributor, and bookseller. In a way I fit in all of these. I shift from one to the other—sometimes seamlessly, sometimes awkwardly. To be just one [of these categories] in a way, in publishing and book capacities is an odd thing. I think most of the people that I know who are involved in art book publishing, at one point or another have occupied these positions. It's context dependent. Those categories and those roles in a sense, are defined by the context, the moment, the activity, the other people. But yes, I'm an artist. I was trained as an artist—I went to art school, and I have a practice. I guess if I am not something on the list it would be designer.

I think in a sense, what's interesting to me about this series [of roles] is really the linearity of that understanding of the release and distribution of books, and I think that linearity to me doesn't really... I mean it exists in the production, but then it really does not at the level of distribution. It's changed with technology, which is another aspect of editing now—the birth of 'designer-editor'. Those boundaries of roles are now really blurred. When you have the skillset to bring something all the way from the design process through the editorial process to the printing process, [you tend to do it yourself]. So, it's not just a digital forming—it can also be materialization.

So, that question of the linearity of productions and the roles assigned to different individuals along the line of production, I think is inherently problematic today in the in the digital realm. It's a more traditional sense of the process. Publishing to me is not a linear thing. It's much more a question of

distributed networks and distributed networks of reception which are also involved in production. The collector can become a publisher, the distributor may also well be a collector of sort.

HC: So, it's a cyclical thing?

AD: Yeah, it is. I mean, I don't want to say cyclical necessarily, but it is very complex in the sense that things received sometimes will elicit further production. Distribution for me is really the key. The idea of producing a book without thinking of its distribution is completely absurd.

HC: Why do you make artists' books? How do your books fit into your overall practice?

AD: Well, for example, this is a book I published a few years back, and the title says Why I'm no longer an artist, and then there's no publisher, no publishing date, no artist name. You open the title page, and it says at the bottom 'this book belongs to dot dot dot'—as in, you would write in your name because it's your book. The rest of the book is blank. So, this ascribes the reader the ownership, which can also turn into the authorship, in a tangential way. Maybe that shows you how conflicted I am about the idea of being an artist or about my practice.

I studied fine art. I studied sculpture in Paris in the early 90s, so I have a diploma. Then I started making sculptures, and then sculptures started to fill my studio, and I couldn't produce anymore because it [filled up the space]. In the meantime, I got a job at a second-hand bookseller in London. I arrived in London in mid 90s, and by the time I got that job it was late 90s. I've gone back to school to join the master's program in Visual Culture at Middlesex University, which got me onto teaching a little bit. I taught at Chelsea College of Arts, Goldsmiths University, and some other places. And then I got this regular gig working in this second-hand bookshop near Tate, which was called Marcus Campbell Art Books. It was great, I learned a lot. Marcus specialized in modern contemporary art, design, architecture, and artists' books. And it's really through books—or through second-hand bookselling—that I developed familiarity with artists' books and with the subtle and complex relationship between art and its equivalent in printed form.

After having done that for about 10 years, I got an opportunity to do a PhD in Fine Art, and I thought, well, maybe it could be interesting to propose the start of a new imprint for artist publications, within the confines of the practice-based Fine Art PhD. And that tied a lot of loose ends for the things that I've been doing before. Around that time, I could also see that there was a field forming—the Printed Matter New York art book fair had just started, for instance. It was really dynamic, really energetic. Lots of young people were involved, lots of exchanges. The generosity of exchange was very different from that of the art world in the sense that it was focused on transmission, communication, and exchanges, rather than on selling unique artworks. And so, I saw it as an opportunity to enter the fray, really. Knowing fully well that books are very difficult to sell, knowing full well that in the context of the arts books are just sent out for free to curators, museum directors, galleries, and then not actually received—they're put in the box. And then the box when it gets full goes to a second-hand book dealer.

So, I was really aware of those forms of free dissemination of printed matter that belonged to the art world as a matter of course. If you're a gallery of a certain standing, you publish catalogues. If you're an institution of a certain standing, you publish catalogues. It's really part and parcel of the way [the art world] functions. It gives cultural kudos to artists to get a catalogue, gives cultural capital to the institutions to be seen, to be publishing things, and gives cultural capital to curators who have books published about the shows they produce. So, it's also part and parcel of constructing the reality of the art world.

But that's been changing a little bit in the last decade and a half, I'd say—particularly the relationship between the blue-chip galleries and major, established publishers. I think the blue-chip galleries have

started publishing their own books, so they all carry their own publishers or imprints now. Whereas 20 years ago they would've gone to a mainstream art publisher—Phaidon, Thames and Hudson—and probably would have paid for part of the production costs. They would have entrusted the whole process to an editor, so then the kudos the artist would receive from that large monograph would have been seen as slightly more independent [from the gallery]. But now, a lot of these galleries produce their own large monographs, and some of them are well-produced and edited.

HC: Just going back to your practice—so in a way when you entered the field of art publishing, you sort of transposed your original practice of making sculptures, and then you sort of never returned to it?

AD: No, I still make objects. I occasionally make things for shows. But it's just not the only thing I do now. Recently I've been making these little paper sculptures. They're pieces of paper that's concertina-ed and concertina-ed again with ink blots along the folds. I was inspired by the American artist Bruce Conner and his ink blot drawings. And then I would give out these drawings, folded like a gift parcel. When you fold it, it becomes the size of a sugar cube.

I also made some button badges that say 'No work, no show, no sell' for a show around 2015, 2016. My friend who put up this exhibition in his gallery jokes that this is the longest running show he's had because the work is still there. So, as you can see, I've always made works that were fairly anonymous in the make-up of their projected authorship. I was always interested in the conceptual period of production, ascribing an idea to a work. The primary thing is the information, the idea, and ascribing the thing to the author is a secondary thing.

I'm also less interested in the 'unique books', 'a book object' type of thing. I'm more interested in that question of duplication, multiplicity, but also the idea of a distributed object. Ed Ruscha writes that it's really about distribution. He said that one day it would be great if he could meet this Information Man, who would tell him where all his books are. He'd be able to tell that 2,527 copies of Ruscha's books of various sizes stored in so-and-so books in Cologne, and he'd be able to tell me that some are sitting at an angle of 20 degrees on some shelves and some propped up under a table, et cetera, et cetera. So, it's about the distribution and about where the books end up and whether they end up being actually seen or not.

HC: Do you think artists' books are socially and culturally valuable? If so, what makes you think that they are?

AD: I'd say yes. But they're still marginal. And of course, the margin is the most important thing because the margin is what defines the rest, the middle ground. They're also space of resistance. They are space of autonomy or space of self-assuredness, places where one can assert one's struggles. Ultimately, it's less of a space for individuals producing books, and it's more of a communal space of transmission and exchange. A thing that needs to be repeated. It bears repeating because that's also why artists can suddenly decide to make their own books. It's because they've seen that it's possible, seen other people do it.

And I think it need not be artists. The old, you know, 'everybody is an artist'. Not everybody is an artist, but everybody has the capacity to slowly take up on themselves, to do it. It's not just about self-expression, it's about self-determination. If you decide to print 100 copies of your book, you just do it without any authorization. It is a space of freedom that one gives oneself.

HC: How would you describe the position of artists' books in the contemporary art market? What are the things that you notice are different in their consumption compared to artworks of other mediums?

AD: Artists' books, books as artworks, books as conceptual sideline supplements—there's so many

different kinds of modulations now. But the profit motive, or the economic rationale for publication is quite an odd way of understanding the drive, the impetus to publish. For me, the real focus is all on distribution. Art may not need the institution, may not need the gallery, but it would still need a distribution network, forms of social dissemination. It may not need all these structures—these validation structures of the market, either.

This idea of disinterested or uninterested mediation is something that's totally under the surface because of how we accept to talk about our production within the capitalist system. It seems to me that this system is completely overarching the discourse that you're able to have about certain things and transmissions you can have, almost to the point that if there is transmission of something—say, an artist's book—that is disinterested [in economic profit], suddenly it's to be mistrusted as having ulterior motive, as if the financial motive itself was an objective one.

HC: Then, what factors do you consider when having to price your artists' books? Are there any particular standards or reasonings behind your prices?

AD: You can claim that something has value, an inherent value, or you can say that the value of something is what someone is going to pay for it. Those transactions are important because they're connected to desire, one's ability to pay, the availability of the stuff, etc. Of course, the price point of an artist's book should be low because you want to distribute it as much as possible. It's not that costs of production are not related to the price points of a book. They are, but they are not. The price of books is totally not commensurate with the production costs. You want people to buy the books, and you want people to receive them as something that has value but hasn't been overly expensive, considering it may not be a unique object, which brings you back to these hierarchies of values and valuations—the unique versus the multiple, the rare versus not rare.

I mean, if you're a collector, an archivist, or someone who's interested in the rarified, difficult-to-find, obscure publications that very few people know about, you enter a realm of desire, which is the frenzy of art. Or if you're interested in having a privileged relationship with a unique object—this idea that you're in the presence of something that's one-of-a-kind and that you have a personal interaction with that object.

For myself, pricing is definitely not an exact science. But when I do book fairs, and so when I'm public-facing and selling books, I always mix the books I publish with the rare materials I bring to the table. The latter helps me pay for the trip and expenses—the table cost, accommodation, other fees—which actually aren't that cheap. It's much more difficult to justify spending one or two or three grand on doing a book fair, shipping the books, staying in a hotel, travelling, living there for a long weekend by selling £20 books. The money has to come from somewhere else. So that again, part of the art book publishing realm is propped up by money that comes from the sales of artworks that comes from institutions or from grants, and other kinds of support systems. For myself, the support system is dealing in rare books.

I mean, the cost analysis is an ongoing part of the conversations that I have with the people I work with when I publish a book. How much money we've got, what can we do with that money? And then eventually, we are going to try and recoup some of that money throughout the distribution process, but that's just a little bit of sprinkle over time, and it's not our primary objective. The objective is not to try and make money from selling books—the production has to be paid for in the first instance.

HC: What do you want people to understand when they see your books? What is it that you're trying to achieve through the distributions of books? Why do you keep this practice going even when it's so tough to sustain it?

AD: Well, one, the fact that I enjoy making these books. I enjoy it because it's not just about books,

it's about the interaction you have with other people around the projects. It's about self-knowledge, transmission, showing things to other people.

And, why do I do this? Because I have to. I don't know. It's the best I can come up with. Under the circumstances, I don't see any way not. But it's a positive thing. I'd be really miserable if I didn't.

Interviewee I

Vinicius Marquet is an artist, designer, and independent researcher based in Mexico City. His work centers around the exploration of algorithms and game rules as a means of inducing interactions or processes that create unique experiences, such as a poem, game, or digital experiences. Examples of his work can be seen in electronic literature pieces like *Anacron* (2009), *Bucle* (2017), and *Instructions* (2021), as well as in participatory practices like *La Mole* (2006) and *Palopatear* (2006).

7 December 2022, Online

Hyunjoo Cho: Which category of participants best defines you? Please tell me all that apply: Maker (artist, designer), Facilitator (curator, editor, publisher), Distributor (distributor, retailer), Collector (collector, archivist, librarian, consumer).

Vinicius Marquet: The borderlines of what I do are quite blurry, but I'm an artist, designer, and researcher. My background is in graphic design, and I also studied video game design and UX design in the Netherlands. My interest as a researcher lies in the translation and mutation of the written language into the digital environments including e-books and interactive PDFs. Using these formats, I've made works that I define as electronic literature since the 2000s. More recently, I've started to pay attention to workshops as formats to promote storytelling. To me, workshops are similar to publishing because both are constantly dynamic, moving, and alive—they're more performative ways of creating meaning. You might have guessed already, but I think it's the 'format' that's interesting and important—experimenting with the format of work adds layer and diversity to the practice.

HC: I see. So, your practice is focused on electronic publications, not on printed matter?

VM: No, not really. Things I've produced are primarily electronic because that's the dimension I explore. In fact, when I made *Bucle*, the PDF book on Ulises Carrión, I coded in the back of the file so that if one tries to print it out, they won't be able to—they'd print something else.

But my interest in these electronic publications does stem from the printed book form. I used to work with publishing houses to make books, but it ended up being very boring for me because I felt overpowered by the editors. They play a strong role in basically deciding what is going to be in the book or not even when they produce artists' books. I thought the electronic or digital realm is more liberated from such gatekeeping.

HC: Do you still think artists' books are socially and culturally valuable? If so, what makes you think that they are?

VM: Well, I think any book is about 'sharing'. All these cultural objects are about sharing values. Historically, they were about that as well—publishing one's book whenever one wanted, finding different routes to put them on display, and eventually showing art outside of the gallery system. Carrión also mentions this in his writings about the mail art—it was about destroying the power, the idea of power because it was open to share. You could jump over the evaluative systems, and you

didn't need to have a lot of money to do it either.

Going back to the question, do I think books are socially and culturally valuable? I think they're super valuable—I don't even question it. The book has maintained the cultural life since the beginning of the book. The ideas they carried and shared have transformed people and societies. Collecting books is like charting your journey—buying one by one, forming a library, and then brewing the idea of your collection of books. It's basically making your own way into knowledge that would stay there—always stay there.

HC: Do you think that could still be true now that we have the internet? People get access to a lot more knowledge on the web nowadays.

VM: Yes, but the book has its own language, its particular way of communicating and arriving to people. The other day, I was interviewing Johanna Drucker, and she sounded exactly like [her book]. This happens with a lot of books in my experience—when you read a book and you hear the author's voice and language. The same goes for artists' books—artists used the book form as a tool to make vigorous and accessible statements.

HC: How would you describe the position of artists' books in the contemporary art market? What are the things that you notice are different in their consumption compared to artworks of other mediums?

VM: I think artists' books scene is big and very wide as well. It caters to diverse cultural contexts, too, especially after the medium expanded into the digital realm. However, I do sense a problem with the art market itself in that it just inflates the value of an artist's book—or any artwork, really—and takes advantage of the artist's legacy. Institutions look at the monetary value of things rather than their statements. Carrión, for example, is a typical example of an artist that died poor, leaving everything to collectors who then invest a lot of money with different actors in the market to raise the market value of his works. His life has been commoditized—it's almost like Carrión became a cultural object himself. And this doesn't happen just between an artist and a collector—it happens between artists as well. Artists also re-sell works by other artists when they see the prices go up. The recent boom of artists' books is definitely related to this market dynamic. Since artists' books are often part of a larger portfolio of works, people invest in artists' books as well to inflate the value of the whole. This makes me think that the art market is not different from the stock market. It's highly variable and manipulated. So, it's very difficult to know what's truly valuable in the art market.

HC: So, you think the prices are not the right indicators of value in a sense?

VM: No, definitely not in the art market. It's only symbolic of the cost of the purchaser or what they want to own.

HC: Then, what factors do you consider when having to price your artists' books? Are there any particular standards or reasonings behind your prices?

VM: I love art, and I do think it's art what I'm doing, but it's more as a cultural manifestation, not to sell my works in the market. In fact, I don't want to enter the art market. Exhibition and distribution is the furthest I go—I don't want to sell my works anymore. During the couple of times when I did sell my works, I just calculated what I had invested, what the work costed me to produce, plus a little bit of surplus because selling art used to be my source of living.

Interviewee J

Siobhán Britton is an artist and librarian based in London. She is currently in charge of managing the Special Collections and Archives at Chelsea College of Arts as an Academic Support Librarian. As an artist, she is deeply engaged with the idea of self-publishing and the genre of artist zines.

9 December 2022, Chelsea Library, UAL

Hyunjoo Cho: Which category of participants best defines you? Please tell me all that apply: Maker (artist, designer), Facilitator (curator, editor, publisher), Distributor (distributor, retailer), Collector (collector, archivist, librarian, consumer).

Siobhán Britton: I'm the Academic Support Librarian working at Chelsea College of Arts. I manage the Special Collections and Archives. I'm also an artist—I self-publish zines and artists' books as part of my practice.

HC: Why do you make artists' books? How do your books fit into your overall practice?

SB: Well, this is a very cheesy way to say it, but I always loved books. Ever since I was a child, I was always making my own little books—I'd be making my own stories and picture books. Then when I was a teenager, I got interested in punk music, and I came across zine culture for the first time. It was also the first time I read about feminism, and those two things changed my life—this idea that you could make something, whatever and whenever you wanted to and put it out there. I felt very drawn to that.

And then I went to college to study fine art and art theory, where I learned that there's a whole history of artists working with the book form and using self-publishing as a platform for their practice, which fascinated me even more. During college, I was very keen to not just have works in gallery spaces—I was always more interested in being out in the world and to me, a book or a zine or something you've self-published has been the best way to do that. It was about challenging norms. I mean, artist publishing is also a very established practice, but it does have an inherent quality of resistance and being an alternative. I never studied book arts specifically, but self-publishing using the book form just made sense.

HC: Do you still think artists' books are socially and culturally valuable? If so, what makes you think that they are?

SB: I do think they're socially and culturally valuable, in lots of different ways. Obviously, I'm talking from the context I'm in as a librarian and as an artist who self-publishes and makes zines and artists' books. I'll start with the librarian. I've always engaged with the book as a form. And I think, particularly in terms of the collection we have here at Chelsea, the way we define artists' books is very much looking at the movement that developed in the 1960s and 70s with democratic multiples and this idea that artists were trying to use it to take more control over how their artwork gets out in the world—how it was distributed—and challenge the received norm of having to have your work in a gallery space, and it having to be expensive and one-off. I think that's a really, really significant thing. If you think about art history, it was the point in time where artists really started to incorporate the book form into art. And showing these books to students makes me think of their value a lot. Many students get a lot out of seeing these books and looking at them, finding out about what they are and why artists have made them. I think that experience can be quite inspiring. What I also find so fascinating about it is that there're multiple ways artists' books work. When you

look at the collection of artists' books we have here, these artists come from different types of practice and backgrounds. They're sculptors, painters, photographers, performers, etc. They all then come to use the book form in their own ways, which is very interesting.

And when you think about books in general, they're often seen as containers for information, vessels for knowledge. But artists' books, in addition to that, are art objects in and of themselves. They construct relationships between the content and the form and the idea of dissemination of information. Basically, they challenge what we think about books and what our assumptions are about books. They're not only part of art history but also a continuum of book history.

From a more personal perspective, I think the idea of 'putting it out there' [that makes artists' books valuable]. You could say that about any art, I suppose, but there's something about books, particularly. I think it's because they're portable and affordable most of the time. Not all artists' books are cheap, but a lot of them can be affordable—affordable for both the producer and consumer. I almost see them as the interventionist way of getting art into the world.

HC: How would you describe the position of artists' books in the contemporary art market? What are the things that you notice are different in their consumption compared to artworks of other mediums?

SB: Well, to begin with, it's a very small, distorted economy. Obviously, when you read about the history of artists' books, particularly about the kind of books we have here at the Special Collections, there was this idea of the democratic multiple and radical publishing, like what Lucy Lippard said about women becoming able to read about birth control, or they could pick up these self-published artists' books at the chemist, and they could read these things that they wouldn't necessarily expect to read in the supermarket, etc. It never really panned out that way. As always, in the art market, everything always gets subsumed in the spectacle. Everything, particularly artists' books that were made by artists who were already established, even if their intention was to sell their books [at affordable prices], the market stands in to ramp the prices up. Ed Ruscha's *26 Gas Stations* is an obvious example of this. He made that book to sell for \$10, \$5 each, but now they're worth like £3000. There's always a speculative [elements involved], especially with artists' books that are done in small print runs and are limited editions. Once they go out of print, their prices ramp up and up. So, the intention of the artist is not honored, which is not surprising because it happens all the time in the art market. But it does clash with the original initiatives of artists' books that were made to circumvent some of the ideas around value in the art market. It's not surprising, but it's kind of depressing. Going back to what Lucy Lippard said about the potential of the artists' book to draw those who are not [involved in the art world] in, didn't really work. From my experience of going to art book fairs, [the people who come are] a very specific, self-selecting crowd. Artists' books do draw people in, but it tends to be people who are within the art world already. So, the market reinforces itself. As someone who manages this collection, I'd buy new artists' books all the time for this collection. We're all part of that.

The money in the art world is a weird, opaque thing, but fundamentally, making money from art isn't necessarily a bad thing. We all have different reasons for making and publishing our own work, right? Some people want to turn a profit, and that's fine. I don't think artists' books necessarily have the same moral issues that zines may have around money. Zine culture assumes all participants to be not-for-profit, give everything out almost for free. You're probably not going to make much money off publishing artists' books, but it could still be a stable, repeatable practice.

HC: What is your standard when purchasing artists' books for the collection? What kinds of books are you after?

SB: Libraries generally have what we call collection development policies, which are guidelines that

help you pick and choose. When I purchased books for the collection, I think about the collection quite holistically, what's already there—my choices are very informed by the fact that this collection is a continuation of what started in the 1960s and 70s. Something I do consider a lot personally, is trying not to just buy books by like White, American or European men. They were a big part of founding story of the books that we have here, but artists who are making books now these days are various, you know. I don't want our collection to just reflect a small, limited subset of people, even though they're sort of the loudest voices. I'm conscious of the students here as well and what they would be interested in. Overall, I look for books that reflect what's going on in terms of the aesthetic trends, sociopolitical issues, new technologies, etc. These objects are quite historical, too—they tell stories of their time. It's important to keep them here.

HC: Do you think the value of artists' books are expressed well in their prices in general? In other words, do you think artists' books are traded at fair prices?

SB: There's a real range, isn't there? A lot of them are around £10 mark, but some of them are much more expensive. But mostly, they're fine. I don't think there's ever anything that I find outrageous. I think that's one of the good things about artists' books—that they are generally an affordable way to access and own art. And that's partly about the artists' intent. They price their publications according to what artists' books culturally signify and aim at. Another part to it would be that you're setting the price against what people generally think books are worth.

HC: What about when you're pricing your own publications? What factors do you consider? Are there any particular standards or reasonings behind your prices?

SB: I mean, I have to say that most of the work I make, as I've mentioned, is under £5. I've made a few things that are slightly more expensive, but I don't think I've ever made anything more expensive than £20. And it's enough to make a bit of money back, I'm not really doing it for monetary reasons. The worst thing, actually, is when you go to book fairs or zine fairs, people want to swap things with you. That's where it gets unfair sometimes. So, somebody coming up to you and wanting to swap, say you've got a nice risograph-printed zine or book, you're selling it for about like £4 or £5. Then they want to swap it for a mini zine that they made from one sheet of paper.

HC: What role or purpose do you wish your collection to play and serve?

SB: I try to be conscious of the background of this collection, which is that it was started by Clive Phillpot for preserving these materials and making them accessible for research purposes. When these books in museums, they're kept behind vitrines even when they're on display. Here, you can touch them and interact with them to the fullest. It's important to think of this because it's installed within the university, a higher education context. So, I want students and researchers to just be able to access it as much as they need to. Artists' books are actually quite ephemeral because they go out of print, their prices get ramped up, they end up in inaccessible places, or become damaged and destroyed—basically get lost [in the process of consumption]. So, the fact that they're here and accessible is even more important.

Interviewee K

An Onghena is an artist and designer based in Antwerp. Combining her background in graphic design and interest in fine art, she creates interdisciplinary works that experiment with the form and status of books. Her interest extends to exploring the boundaries between science and art and to attempting to understand the world of unknown. Her recent exhibitions include 'Bring out into the open' (Goldberg Galerie, 2019), 'Performance for the book' (Kunstraum Lakeside, 2018), and 'Remodeling Graphic Habits' (nr86, The Art Center, 2018). She was an Artist in Residence at the Jan Van Eyck Academie from 2017 to 2018.

17 January 2023, Online

Hyunjoo Cho: Which category of participants best defines you? Please tell me all that apply: Maker (artist, designer), Facilitator (curator, editor, publisher), Distributor (distributor, retailer), Collector (collector, archivist, librarian, consumer).

An Onghena: I found this question intriguing because it's something I ask myself as well, working as both a designer and an artist. My academic background is in graphic design—I completed my Master's degree in 2014, but I've actually done more autonomous and conceptual works in the fine arts field ever since. I do still work as a designer—I run a design studio called Kabinet with my friend Freya Clijmans. So, let's say it's more of a hybrid practice that really interests me.

HC: Why do you make artists' books? How do your books fit into your overall practice?

AO: I think it's partly because of my graphic design background—the love for books just happens. In the first year of my Master's degree, I was already making small books, binding them myself, printing them. And with every project, I felt the need to make a book or always think in the form of a book in some way. It's really important for me that my work doesn't finish with an exhibition and can still stay at home—in the homes or heads of people. An exhibition often lasts only a month, and then it's over. I always feel a bit sad about that. But with the book, works are brought to another level where they live further and continue to tell the story.

I feel that books are also more intimate. If you're in an exhibition space, everything goes on so fast. When I'm at an exhibition or in a gallery, I see the work, but I have to be aware of the surroundings more and feel more pushed to go onto the next. But with the book, you can go every way—you can go back and forth, and all moments are yours. It's more yours. And you can create your own context because you're reading in your own mind. You have more time for it.

In 2015, I had an exhibition in Hasselt. Every artist got a room. I painted my room dark grey, because all my works were about the universe and about not knowing what was beyond our solar system. I made two books for the exhibition. (Showing the book) This one started from a list of stars—all the stars we can see from the Earth, and I sequenced them by size, and the color changes with the size of the stars, from purple going into blue, then whitish yellow, red and orange and end up in red. The smallest stars are red. So, the book is about this simple idea of color and size, and I used my graphic design background to translate this world of stars into a book. I know others might have presented this information differently, but for me, the book felt right to do it. To me books feel like the container for all the information I want to share with the public.

Another example is *werkboek* published in 2021. It was a collaborative work with another artist, Jivan van der Ende. The book started with an old 'problem' I faced when exhibiting my books. Whenever I displayed them in exhibition spaces, people didn't want to touch it—they were scared of touching it, because they were scared of damaging an artwork. So, we made this book in response to that

issue. The book is essentially a guide to a performative reading experience—the readers are invited to physically interact with the book by mirroring the photographs shown in the book that are of hands folding pages of another book. So, as people go through the book, the book turns into this sculptural object that is altered by every interaction. This way, touching the book doesn't really damage it—it adds meaning to it.

HC: Do you still think artists' books are socially and culturally valuable? If so, what makes you think that they are?

AO: To be honest, this is the first time I ever think whether my books are socially or culturally valuable. Well, it's not that I never thought about it, but it's more that I never spoke of it. Perhaps because making a social or cultural statement through my works is not something I'm focused on. My general drive to make work starts from wonder, curiosity or excitement for new things, and I make works to try to have people join me in this perspective and make people laugh, have fun, and be happy in their own contexts, have a moment of wonder. That's my contribution, I believe.

HC: Then, is that why you choose the book as a medium—as a channel to reach your audience?

AO: Yes, definitely. I think books are much easier to distribute, collect, and keep compared to other art forms. They're more approachable and economically accessible, for the most part. I know books can also be very highly priced, but for me the idea of sharing my work with others is more important—the democratic sense of showing art.

HC: How would you describe the position of artists' books in the contemporary art market? What are the things that you notice are different in their consumption compared to artworks of other mediums?

AO: It's a difficult question, but it's something that I've been thinking about continuously. How to deal with the book in the market compared to, for example, painting? As an artist, a painting and a book have exactly the same standing and meaning. But the market would think that books are something that you could buy more easily, since their prices are lower than other art forms. It is how it is, unfortunately. For me at least, making a book requires much more time and effort than making a print. If I make an artist print of an etching, it's so much faster—not to argue that it's less valuable, but it just requires less resources. The process of bookmaking always takes enormous amount of time, and the cost per page would actually be more expensive than what it costs to make a print or a painting. So, it's very ironic that books are considered cheaper in the market. I think I still choose to make books for myself. They feel much more private and intimate as a space when making, and I can invest more emotions in them. In comparison, I feel more distant from prints. It probably has something to do with whether you can touch the work or not.

HC: Do you think the value of artists' books are expressed well in their prices in general? In other words, do you think artists' books are traded at fair prices?

AO: To be honest, no, I don't think the prices are fair. They're too cheap—cheap for their value and cheaper than other forms of art. I want my work and time to be translated straightforwardly into prices, but people don't see that behind just a 'book'. I find these struggles helpful, though, because they make me think. And that's how I ended up making pieces like the *werkboek*—all because of this question, not only for the love of books, but also the troubles I had with them.

As it is with a lot of things, that's just how a system works, or how we've developed a certain logic that everybody assumes to be true. However, I do think that if people find an artist's book valuable, the book finds the right audience over time, even if it's more highly priced than other books. For example, I only made 10 copies of *Analysis of the other side of the moon* and asked €150 per copy. I was really

scared because it's a high price for a book, especially by a young artist, but in the end I only have a couple of copies left. Of course, the book is from 2015, so it sold over the course of 8 years—it's a long process, but I did find people who were genuinely interested in the book. In that sense, publishing and selling artists' books is all about finding the right audience for the book.

HC: What factors do you consider when pricing your artists' books? Are there any particular standards or reasonings behind your prices?

AO: I'd like to share the story of how I priced *werkboek*. Jivan and I agreed to keep the initial price low to make it more accessible—we settled for €25. Luckily, we had received funding from the Dutch government, which covered most of the production cost, so we had more room to lower the price. Soon, 50 copies from the first printing were sold out. In the following summer, we decided to reprint the book, but that time we had to pay all the cost on our own. So, we had to bring the price up to €50, and it still sold well.

What I wanted to say from this is that pricing books can be puzzling. Obviously, you need to think things through and try to earn back the costs you invest in projects, but there's never an answer. Sometimes, it's actually better for the market to adjust to your prices. It takes a bit of experiment and guessing.

Interviewee L

Rahel Zoller is a visual artist and educator based in London. She specializes in Book Arts and Design, and her practice is primarily concerned with the concepts of materiality, language, translation, reading, and writing, as well as the interaction between user, creator, and society. Her works are held in collections such as the MoMA Artists' Books collection in New York, Artists' Books Tate Library Collection, the Booklet Library in Tokyo, and more. She has been an active member of Artists' Books Collective (ABC) since 2015.

1 February 2023, The Book Arts Workshop, London College of Communication, UAL

Hyunjoo Cho: Which category of participants best defines you? Please tell me all that apply: Maker (artist, designer), Facilitator (curator, editor, publisher), Distributor (distributor, retailer), Collector (collector, archivist, librarian, consumer).

Rahel Zoller: I started off as a graphic designer, and then I studied book arts and design. I was always more interested in fine art than in the client-facing aspect of graphic design. The idea of making your own work and having a voice through an object was always more appealing to me. Now, I would describe myself as an artist and educator, though I encompass a variety of roles: artist, designer, curator, publisher, editor, and distributor. Perhaps not a retailer, and I don't collect professionally, nor am I an archivist. As an artist who self-publishes books, you find yourself responsible for designing the books and sourcing everything. Distribution is also a significant aspect—getting the work into bookshops, collections, or archives. Therefore, you oversee the entire process, which isn't as compartmentalized as some might assume. Although having said that, I do occasionally collaborate with designers. For my work *The Catalogue of Mistakes*, for example, I conceived the idea and concept, then collaborated with a designer to refine it together. He served as a facilitator of the idea, in a sense. Additionally, I like to explore beyond the book format. Materiality is one of the things I'm really interested in, and I also make sculptures related to paper, focusing on the shape and materiality

of the book.

HC: What do you usually make when you work with the sculpture medium?

RZ: I recently created a piece titled Paper Weights, where I utilized paper clay—a type of clay made from paper fibers and porcelain. The piece is an edition of 5 A5 and 4 A4. I rolled out ‘sheets’ of paper using the paper clay and stacked them like a pile of paper. When I fired the piece, the fibers burnt away, leaving only the porcelain to maintain the shape. Essentially, the object becomes a sort of ghost of its original form. The object describes something that it no longer contains, reflecting on the complicated presence and absence of paper. I also glazed them with matte white to mimic the texture of matte paper. Now, it’s a stack of paper that can function as a paperweight—hence its name, Paper Weights.

This approach is apparent in many of my works and reflects my teaching style as well. I always encourage students to consider their concept, the materiality, and the form, and how these three elements can interact or coalesce to create meaning. This philosophy extends to the creation of books as well.

HC: Why do you make artists’ books? How do your books fit into your overall practice?

RZ: Because it’s a format you can actually hold in your hands. Not every artist’s book is very graspable in terms of its concept, but it’s at least an approachable artwork you can engage with, so there’s an intimate interaction you can have with it, and you can also take your time with it. You can slow down time with this object by engaging with it through touch and really focusing on the material. I think that’s what we’re lacking a lot at the moment.

It’s also about the materiality of paper itself, in a way. I collaborated with another artist, Louis Porter, on a mail art project during the pandemic called Works on Paper. In that project, we exchanged various materials made of paper, which eventually question what paper means to our society. We’re born with a birth certificate, and we die with a death certificate. So, what is everything in between those, and what role does paper play in our lives? It reveals how deeply connected our lives are with paper. The work, consisting of artist books, unique artworks, letters, creative experiments and found objects examines our social and cultural relationship to paper and in particular its function as a medium of transference of information, of touch and aura. As such, the project was an attempt to maintain a form of connection that reached beyond the digital abyss created by the pandemic. Also, books can be distributed—they can go places. Like, someone buys my work, and it goes to Chile or India where I’ve never been myself. This idea that your work can travel in a small envelope without many logistical problems is great—it gives you freedom.

HC: Do you still think artists’ books are socially and culturally valuable? If so, what makes you think that they are?

RZ: Sadly, the community for artists’ books, both in production and consumption, remains relatively small. While there’s always a dedicated audience, these works often remain within their originating communities due to their niche nature. However, I still see value in them because once you experience an artist’s book, it stays with you, even on a personal level. It can trigger something that you wouldn’t have thought about before. I think that’s the case with any artwork—if it touches you on a level that you wouldn’t have considered before, then it has already had an impact. I always see an artist’s book as a reflection on time and also on what people are conceptually engaging with at the time. This connection is essentially linked to their nature as books, which are fundamentally tools for communication.

HC: How would you describe the position of artists' books in the contemporary art market? What are the things that you notice are different in their consumption compared to artworks of other mediums?

RZ: There are indeed more artists exploring the book medium now, and there are also more platforms to showcase them, such as book fairs—these seem to be increasingly prevalent nowadays. Still, I myself am in the process of figuring this matter out because artists' books don't position themselves properly within the market. Paintings, drawings, and works displayed on walls can be "presented," but artists' books require engagement to unlock their value. I almost believe that as an artist creating books, one must break away from their usual practice to explore directions beyond books and consider how different mediums can complement each other. Yet, there's always a demand for books. They exist on multiple levels—within artistic practice, exhibitions, and documentation. Moreover, what's truly fascinating is that a book isn't confined to its physical form—it offers a great deal of flexibility and room for interpretation. This flexibility extends to their prices as well. Artists can create affordable books, which is quite remarkable; you don't need gallery representation or worry about logistics and economics. You can produce an idea inexpensively and distribute it through artists' books, making art accessible to more people. It's liberating. However, I do believe that each book has its own unique direction or angle, particularly when it comes to targeting specific audiences. Different individuals will be drawn to different types of books.

HC: What factors do you consider when pricing your artists' books? Are there any particular standards or reasonings behind your prices?

RZ: Ideally, one should always make sure to cover costs, including materials and printing, and the time invested, although quite often the former falls off. Honestly, I never estimate the time—I just aim for production to break even on materiality and printing costs because I'd like to keep my works cheap and affordable, with the idea for them to travel far and be accessible. But I've also noticed that book dealers don't buy my works as frequently because they make no money with them, being so cheap. There's not enough margin for them to cut out of. The dealers can add on top of my price—it's always an option, but it does inflate the price.

Also, diversifying your price is a good strategy, so that you have both affordable works and books that you sell for profit. There's a book I've made called *Book of Sand*, and it's a conceptual work, so it only takes four sheets of sandpaper to make, material-wise. But it's probably the most expensive book I take to fairs at the moment and it's €60 or £50. I heard people who saw this book at a fair and go like "€60? I can't believe it. I can do this myself." But these are the books that then pay my hotel and my transportation. This way, the money I make from other books is 100% profit. I also get them into bookshops, so they travel a bit further, and then it's usually either a 30:70 or 40:60 split depending on their conditions. One can insist on 30:70—I know artists who do that because otherwise, they don't make any money. So, price-wise, I always make sure that I cover the costs—materials, printing, the trips to go to book fairs, basically the amount that I need to keep it going. It took me 10 years to reach this balance, but now my practice is self-sustainable. I used to have to put what I earn at my paid University job into my practice to pay for production, but now it pays for itself.

HC: So, you're basically posing yourself a double standard, in one stream of which you want your books to be affordable, so you sort of lower the price consciously, but on the other you make some books for the collectible market. And I think you do this because eventually you want to make your books affordable, right? If you wanted to make money, you could make all your books collectibles, but you choose not to do that because you want your books to stay affordable, democratic, and accessible.

RZ: Yes, I think that's just the key to maintaining a healthy art practice—to be able to reinvest in what you do and not become completely exploited. I always aim to offer affordable books, which is why I

sell some of my works for just £5, and I believe I will always want to have a book available at that price point. The art world can sometimes be quite cruel and tough, so I value the freedom that the book form offers—how it allows me to explore different directions. If that flexibility enables me to live in different areas and constructs, I would rather appreciate that than having just a few collectors control the price, dictate where it sits, or determine who buys it for which collection.

HC: How much do you interact with the community that forms around book production and circulation? Does this interaction affect your practice/activity in any way?

RZ: I've been part of the Artists' Books Cooperative since 2015, and I find it to be a supportive community. It helps tremendously with practical matters too. For instance, we participate in book fairs like Offprint London and Paris together as a group. Each of us contributes €100 to a pooled fund, which allows us to attend at least four book fairs in a year. Just for that, it's incredible. Otherwise, if I were to participate individually, a table at Offprint would cost €350, if not more, and breaking even on that amount from selling books is nearly impossible as an individual.

We also collaborate on projects together. They're not always limited to books—we've worked on business cards, postcards, and stamps, essentially expanding into various forms of printed matter or artist multiples. Our projects tend to be quite conceptual, and I believe that's where our strength lies as a group.

Interviewee M

Paul Sammut is an editor, curator, and artist based in London. Their practice takes a research-based, affirmative approach with a focus on narrative forms, marginalized cultures, and archival practices. Their past works include running the DIY queer project space White Cubicle (2012-2017) and curating *Comic Velocity: HIV & AIDS in Comics* (2019-2021), a program for the New York-based non-profit Visual AIDS. They have also taught as visiting lecturer and/or tutor at various institutions and organizations, and regularly holds coaching sessions and artist's surgeries to aid in project development and realization. Currently, Sammut works as Publishing Manager coordinating sales, trade, and distribution at Book Works, a publisher and registered charity for artists' books.

7 February 2023, Online

Hyunjoo Cho: Which category of participants best defines you? Please tell me all that apply: Maker (artist, designer), Facilitator (curator, editor, publisher), Distributor (distributor, retailer), Collector (collector, archivist, librarian, consumer).

Paul Sammut: I'd say definitely more than one category. I'm thinking about things mostly from my position at Book Works. So, we're a publisher, but then we also fit into curator because we're a commissioning organization through programs. We're also our own distributor. We're a retailer—we retail online and do book fairs. So, we kind of fit into all of these categories, I would say. Individually, I'm also an artist and curator. Most of us work part-time, which means we do other things outside of Book Works. I studied Fine Arts, so I've been working in various disciplines including painting and drawing, and curating has come into my practice in lots of ways. I'm interested in affirmative approaches to marginalized histories, primarily. I used to work as a duo with an American curator called Alexandra Terry. We curated a project space in South London—we organized exhibitions and

also produced a few publications. I also used to curate this queer project space called White Cubicle in London. The last big project I did was for Visual AIDS, which is a charity in New York. Their mission is to promote art and artists relating to HIV and AIDS. I organized an exhibition for them, which also had a publication program that was based on the representation of HIV and AIDS in comics. I also hold artist surgery sessions with those who want advice.

HC: What do you do during your artist surgeries?

PS: We just talk about the book, talk about their projects. I've got some training in coaching and in counselling. So, it's really just a space for people to talk through what they're doing. Sometimes people will want more practical advice on production, but it's really just talking through the projects and trying to think about it in different ways.

HC: It sounds like your work until now has connections with publications at various points. What do publications or books mean to your practice?

PS: I've always been interested in publications. It's similar to the reasons why Book Works publishes, actually—I'm interested in them as a kind of mode of distribution, sharing knowledge and making things go wider and further. I just like books as well, obviously. But I bring in publishing only if it seems appropriate for the project. A couple of things we produced were artist-led projects, and we acted as curators and editors for them. For example, when I was working with Alexandra, we worked with other artists to produce publications that were affiliated with exhibitions, but they weren't catalogues. When we produced the book for the Visual AIDS exhibition, again, I didn't see it as a catalogue. It was kind of a stand-alone publication. I wouldn't see it strictly as an artist's book, either, because it deals with lots of other people's practices as well, but I don't approach these publications as catalogues because they're not so situated in a specific way. The publications and exhibitions were definitely related, but the publications could also stand alone. So, there were texts in there that weren't specifically describing the exhibition, and there were works in there that weren't in the exhibition. And so, it wasn't exactly documenting the exhibition—rather referred to it. I'm interested in creating new entry points like that, and I guess that also aligns with publishing because you're creating entry points into various ideas [through books].

HC: Do you still think artists' books are socially and culturally valuable? If so, what makes you think that they are?

PS: Clearly, I do. Because we're sharing information through them. For Book Works, specifically, the reason why they started publishing at the first place was to get the artists' books to go as far as possible. That was back in the 1980s when you could find artists' books in chain bookstores, which doesn't really happen anymore. But it was about making them as accessible as possible. We publish in a quite traditional format—we're not too experimental in format because when you're thinking about how it's going to be distributed through bookstores, although we also rely on gallery, museum and art bookshops, they still prefer to have things that will go on a shelf. It just makes books easier to distribute. And one of the reasons why we keep the distribution in-house within the UK is because then I can maintain the relationships with the retailers who are actually selling the books. We have book fairs where people will be more open to different formats and things, and we sell through our website, but when sticking to the traditional distribution pathways, it means that having a more typical format helps you keep going.

An issue with our value proposition is that people often don't know where to place us because we're an arts charity, and we're part-funded by the Arts Council, making us a commissioning organization, but we more often than not function like a publisher. We do produce exhibitions, we do organize

residences, all those kind of things as well, but for the most part, this side of Book Works that I work on functions as a publisher. So, we publish books that go into bookshops and that's the main distribution method. But people don't really understand—they are confused by our position or how we fit into categories. Because of this, we're even seen as having less value.

HC: I think organizations like Book Works or artists' books themselves are on the boundaries of many things and are hence marginalized. I've had interviewees saying that it's quite tricky to hit the right price level because in the end, what you produce is just a book. But at the same time, they're art objects, so the values are often discounted from that perspective.

PS: But I think similar to a lot of other art practices, things seem to have more value in retrospect, and that's definitely the case with artists' books, especially in the way we're making the books. If something is really handmade and you can see the craft that goes into it, people will perceive it as having more value because the effort is visible. We're a charity, so we're non-profit—our aim is to cover the costs we need to and then keep the prices low. Because that's the surest way of making the books more accessible. And yeah, people don't necessarily see our books as valuable because they're priced lower, but the books will still go further. We can't control what happens in the secondary market and things like that, so, we just try to get them out there and share the work.

HC: Just briefly going back to commissioning, when you commission artists for exhibitions and publication projects, who do you try to invite? Are there any standards you keep internally?

PS: I think standard sounds a bit tricky because it sounds like you're judging the artists, but we do have a remit in terms of what we create—we'll develop strands of our program and because we're historically Arts Council-funded. We have to develop that to some extent in advance because we're applying for the funding. We invite artists as part of a program and that program changes, responding to our interest as an organization and the demands of the Arts Council. We also have a co-publishing strand, in which we work with other organizations that don't normally publish, so at the minute we're working with Chisenhale Gallery, and we've worked with the Mosaic Rooms, recently. And we also have an open submission every year—we'll first invite a guest editor and then set a theme with them, and then we'll have an open call. That's a way of casting a wider net so that we find out about people who we don't necessarily know. Some of our most popular books have come from these open calls. Going back to 'standards', I think it's tricky because lots of people want to produce books and everybody loves the book, you know. The way we choose from the open calls is the quality of the application and whether we think it's suitable as a publication. The artist's experience sometimes comes into it, although we generally publish early career writers and artists. I do artist surgeries quite regularly, and some of the first questions I ask are 'why does it need to be a book?' How does this work as a book? How does it translate into the format? Which I guess gets into your question about exhibitions and books. The artist or artists have to adapt to the form of the book and what that mode does. A lot of that is subjective, but there's a narrative that runs through artists' books.

We had a conversation very recently, where we asked each other 'Is that [project] a Book Works project?' And then we were saying that we could say anything is a Book Works project because if we decide to publish it, it's our project. An example would be *Dark room* by Phyllis Christopher, which is about queer photography work primarily focused on females. It's a work around women's sexuality and protest. We knew about what Phyllis was working on—there were some of us who were really interested in Phyllis's practice. But my concern was, well, we don't really publish photography because there're a lot of people who publish photography, and there's a whole kind of world around photography publishing and photography as an art form itself, and that's slightly aside from what Book Works usually does—so is it a Book Works book?

But when we met Phyllis and began talking to her, it was her approach to shaping the book [that persuaded us]. We normally don't take projects that are kind of [pre-]formed, but we pulled in an editor and writer that we all knew to help shape it, and then the design was shaped by a specific designer. So, it wasn't just a document—it became more than that for us. There are a lot of photographs in there, and there are some texts by some writers, but it functions differently from a photo book. I don't know if this answers your question, but we do have a remit, and we do have an idea of the things that we publish, and we do plan some of that in advance.

HC: What do you think are the differences and similarities between artists' books and exhibitions as modes of presentation?

PS: With exhibitions, in terms of similarities, it's a space for sharing ideas and artwork. There's this thing David Hockney said that 'all art is innately positive because when you're creating something like that, you're creating a dialogue.' So, in that sense, you know, an exhibition and a book are the same because you're placing things for people to interact with or to become the viewer of. But I guess one of the things about an exhibition is that it has a specific space and time, whereas a book can go beyond that. Also, more often than not, author and editor for an artist's book will be the same person, which means that the artist takes on the role of a curator as well. Whereas in an exhibition, you know, unless it's a solo exhibition, [it's not so individualized].

HC: Have you, as an organization, curated exhibitions and also publish books on those exhibitions?

PS: We have. For example, in 2016 or 2017, we did some projects with some organizations in Hull in the north of England. We organized it into different strands, but as part of that we were able to access some public spaces. So, we had exhibitions of the work, but then with the artists we produced books individually. On one strand, we commissioned six artists to self-publish. Although we were there to oversee and give advice, they published books themselves.

So, we do publish in relation to the exhibitions because for us it's all part of the same program. Back in the 1990s there were some projects that were bigger, touring projects. In fact, about 10 years ago, we did this project called *Again, a Time Machine*. We were looking at the fact that we were just about to turn 30 years-old as an organization, and we were thinking about archiving and distribution—archiving and how to share that—thinking about distribution as a mode of communication. We built an archive and invited people that we had work with to contribute new things to the archive, and then we organized this touring exhibition that was different in different places. I think it was in about five different locations in the UK and then also in Norway, Germany, and the US. And then we published a book alongside that. But the book didn't document the exhibitions—it had contributions from all participants, again responding to the idea of archiving and distribution. So, our books and exhibitions are connected, but one thing is not a simple signpost of the other.

HC: How would you describe the position of artists' books in the contemporary art market? What are the things that you notice are different in their consumption compared to artworks of other mediums?

PS: It's difficult to know from where I am. Looking at your later question about how we price our books as well because we don't see our books go into the art market—normally they don't. Perhaps because they're being produced in a more DIY way. Even though we're producing projects by artists, because they're new projects that are affordable, they're not seen as having the same value as other artworks. Some of the artists would have a very specific collector base—for example, we worked with Jonathan Monk a few times, and these collectors will always buy his books. But our projects still don't enter the art market in the normalized way. So, I'm not the best person to answer that question.

HC: Would that imply that your books and artists' books in general form a market of their own?

PS: They take a tangent. They still work within other markets, and artist's book fairs are everywhere now, but yeah, they're often grouped independently. They still cross over into other areas, though—even at artist's book fairs, it's not all artists' books, and I think that there is also a tendency for people who don't necessarily know so much about the art world sort of conflate artists' books and book arts. There are tons of crossovers there, but they're still slightly different. We do a book fair in Edinburgh every year, and it's mostly book arts. So, I don't think it's completely independent of anything. I think part of it is knowing how to sell them. For example, we've published in the past, probably like 10 years, a lot of text because there's been a movement of artists writing in place of making objects, and art writing has become a thing in a way—creative fictions and automatic writing and all those things. But then that still places us in a different position because I'd try and get those books into more literary bookshops, and they're a bit suspicious of them. But then these bookshops will see people like Jarett Kobek or Deborah Levy, who we published years ago, publishing more mainstream books. I think this tells about our position—we're in a position to publish those people while they're still working things out, while things are more experimental.

HC: Also, artists' books in general have a very different economy in terms of where their transaction occurs. It's usually facilitated by people who already know what artists' books are. They come to the fairs and stuff but that already assumes that they have the knowledge of the field. So, I suspect that the hurdle is still high for the public—it's like an acquired taste.

PS: Yeah, I think it depends on the kind of books that you're publishing. It's interesting being at different book fairs and seeing different vibes of engagement. We'll do the Printed Matter NY book fair and it's chaos, but it's brilliant and really interesting because people really do know what we do—people come looking for specific things. More people also come to just look and find things out. But when Printed Matter first started their art book fair in LA, it was really bizarre because people literally didn't know what they were at. I was asked 'what is this?' And when I said 'an art book fair', the response was 'well, what is that?' So, it's interesting—the different levels of engagement and knowledge depending on your geolocation. That's also the case for bookshops. I just went to Hastings to visit a bookshop there and it's quite a new bookshop and the buyer there was really interested in what we do and knew some of the people that we'd worked with. So, they do translate to varying degrees depending on the audience.

HC: Do you think the value of artists' books are expressed well in their prices in general? In other words, do you think artists' books are traded at fair prices?

PS: I'm always surprised by how expensive things are. But I come from a working-class background, and I work for a charity—we price everything as low as we can. When I was in New York, David Zwirner gallery had just taken on the state of Ruth Asawa, and they had big shows in institutions. There was this beautiful art book, and I'm sure it costs a lot to produce it, but the price was just ridiculous. It wasn't even like a special edition or anything. It was just a regular book they had published.

In the areas we work, there are more reasonably priced projects. I think that's also because we work with early-career or emerging artists. They're the ones doing more DIY projects, and they're not doing it to make them money—they're doing it to share their work or to experiment. So, for the most part, the stuff that I see around me isn't overpriced. But again, I can't really speak for the art market itself or the secondary market.

HC: What about from the perspective of artists? Don't you think artists' books are too cheap to represent what they put into them?

PS: Yes, that's also true. Even in terms of us, we try and pay fair fees with our sales, but of course, it often doesn't go far enough. And if you've got an artist producing a book themselves, I'm sure that the time and work that they put into it, they probably should be making an awful lot more back, but I think that's just not often the case. That's why, you know, publishing is one of those things where you're not really in it because you want to make money.

HC: What factors do you consider when pricing your artists' books? Are there any particular standards or reasonings behind your prices?

PS: Some books take years to complete, and some happen really quickly depending on the initial premise for the book or the availability of the artist or the designer. Things take completely different amounts of time to produce. But we're just always trying to cover the costs and get the book out there—that's why the prices are always quite consistent. It's rare that a book will be over £15. We still try and discount on the tag prices because there're still people who turn their nose up at things above £10. We are aware that there are publishers selling things for much more. We keep our prices low because it just means that it's more accessible. And that's irrespective of how long we've worked on it or how much work has gone into making a book. Again, most people who are producing them aren't producing to make money—they might see a little bit of a return, and that's obviously helpful and positive. But also, you're dealing with artists, you're dealing with creative people who will all have their own ways of doing things, you know.

HC: I imagine that you have witnessed various artistic practices becoming translated into book forms. Do you recall any particularly interesting cases?

PS: Yes, of course. I think the first example I would suggest is Katrina Palmer. I think she's a particularly interesting example, especially now because we've just published our fourth book with her. Katrina, in some ways, epitomizes this idea of writing in place of making objects and her book *Dark Object* grapples with other things she's been thinking about—it's a negotiation of how and why she's doing that. So, the book has become an experimental narrative but essentially a work of fiction. I think this is an interesting translation because Katrina was trained as a sculptor.

And four books later, we just published a book with her, which is all images, and it's affiliated with an exhibition, a big solo show that she's having at the Mead Gallery in Coventry, which is grappling with the same subjects, but she's gotten writer's block. So, she's now negotiating and physically making things, but there's also a kind of an element of destruction, trying to break through. She's essentially negotiating two areas that are the antithesis of each other—writing and not being able to write. The book has become the image of her negotiating the terrain of lined paper, which can maybe sound overblown, but that's literally what she was doing. Images of sculptures she made out of clay, and she was then doing knife throwing—she recorded a lot of this process.

There's also a duo called Setsuko (Tamsin Clark and Richard Bevan). Tamsin is also the person who runs Tender Books. She has this collaborative practice with Richard, and they mostly publish. I think they're really interesting because they approach things from the viewpoint of a fan effectively. They get each other excited about something, and then they get really obsessed with that together, and then they'll see it through and create something that embodies that. For example, they made this little book about this footballer. They collected all of these stickers that were of this footballer. So, the book is just stickers—some of them are lenticular as well. There's an element of fan workshop but also a portrayal of him. The name of their project comes from the Japanese actress Setsuko Hara. Their latest publication is called *Like a Quest*, and they got super into Nick Cage the actor. They found out about

when Nick Cage was courting Patricia Arquette the actress, she gave these quests for him to profess his love for her, and they were different tasks that he had to do. So, they've gotten elements of these tasks into the book.

There's another duo and it's completely related—Tamsin's parents (Thomas and Laurie Clark) are also artists. Her dad is a poet called Thomas Clark, and he also runs a small press in Scotland called Moschatel Press. Their influences are a lot older, involving historical things like concrete poetry. They also have a gallery space there. Most of the things they produce are publications in more experimental forms, like pamphlets or folded cards. They're all very tied into the ideas around poetry and space, calm asceticism that their publications embody. They fit in between book arts and art book publishing.

There was also a recent book by Aki Hassan which was published by the Good Press in Glasgow. I think it's a beautiful example of an artist's book that is also an experimental comic, even though it's quite traditionally formatted. It really embodies this 'in-between-ness'.

Interviewee N

Rosa Barba is a visual artist and filmmaker based in Berlin. She shoots films and takes a sculptural approach to the medium to build site-specific installations. She inquires into the ambiguous nature of reality, memory, landscape, and their mutational constitution and representation. Since 2004, she has been publishing an artist's book series titled Printed Cinema in parallel to her major exhibitions as a way to deconstruct and re-curate the temporary events. Her recent exhibitions include 'The Hidden Conference' (Tate Modern, 2023), 'Emanations' (Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, 2023), and 'Weavers' (cccod, 2023).

16 February 2023, Tate Modern, London

Hyunjoo Cho: Which category of participants best defines you? Please tell me all that apply: Maker (artist, designer), Facilitator (curator, editor, publisher), Distributor (distributor, retailer), Collector (collector, archivist, librarian, consumer).

Rosa Barba: I'm a visual artist who makes films and constructs spatial installations. I also produce printed publications as another way to engage with my work.

HC: Why do you make artists' books? How do your books fit into your overall practice?

RB: Printing, writing, the idea of publishing as a different distribution model that is very accessible, portable, and so on, was always something I did as part of my practice. I've been publishing since 2004 regularly on the occasion of an exhibition thinking that I'm producing a portable film to express and dismantle the cinematic organism. I know that people consider this side of my work a form of expanded cinema where everything is in expansion and becomes sort of limitless, constant mutability. I produce Printed Cinema with the idea that it's another form of screening, another form of editing—I believe it opens up additional space for thinking about the project and the material. In the places where I had exhibitions, the series was seen as a work by itself in the printed format that can be given out for free or at a very low price so that it's affordable for many. It's like building a secondary or supplementary literature on my work. The publication includes sources like film stills, text, photographs, research material, and unused filmic fragments.

HC: How would you describe the relationship between Printed Cinema and your installations in the exhibition spaces? And how would you describe the relationship between Printed Cinema and your films? How are the two versions connected and/or different as your works?

RB: I think this way of translating back and forth between mediums or even further is part of my process of spatialization. I also talk about this idea of cinematic spaces in my doctoral dissertation—it's an anarchic organization of cinematic spaces. The work itself often has a voice of self-organization—my role is to pay attention to that and opening the right door by giving them mobility between mediums. Mechanisms proper to the film medium find their translation in a different context.

Printed Cinema also continues my audiovisual work as a personal reflection on the essence of the cinematographic. Gaps, ellipses, dialectics between images—essentially modernist notions—are essential in that respect. In Printed Cinema, this is expressed in the editing principle, as well as in the oppositions between film and printing, between text and image. The specific distribution method, of course, extends the project into a wide range of cultural and social contexts. In this way, Printed Cinema challenges the boundary of the artist's book as well.

Addressing key tendencies in my work, questioning how we occupy space by investigating crisis through an unusual treatment of time and language, the issues are intended not as companions to my installations but rather as extended and free-form experiments in word and image that can be encountered alongside cinematic experiences or stand on their own. The filmic projection is translated onto paper and confronted with its conditions—its materiality and temporality—reshaping the text and image fragments from the moving image into stillness. The shift in medium from projection to print emphasizes the difference of such experiences of image and text, exposing their relationships. Alongside my film installations, sculptures, and text-based wall works, Printed Cinema further my inquiries into the ambiguous nature of reality, memory, and landscape while probing the precarious relationships between historical record, personal anecdote, and fictional narrative. Printed Cinema expands those dimensions that project the possibility of activating a collective subconscious—an artistic method of mine—to release and reach into the oscillating environments of the works they accompany. The series records my continuous engagement with the material and sociopolitical conditions of the cinematic apparatus in a contemporary environment dominated by visual information. By means of translation, layering, and fragmentation, the publications reveal structuring principles of how visual information and the moving image become a means of knowledge production.

Adeena Mey: So, it's not just about the aesthetics of film or cinema, what just happens on screen, but cinema that is also a model to think about art ecosystems—space, audience, distribution, circulation, and material resources. I'm saying that because I feel like it's really connecting to other recent conversations—for example, documenta 15 had videos like that. One thing that defines the contemporary moment is the fact that we approach, produce, practice, and think of art as a form of ecosystem. And I feel like you've been doing that for a long time, having this cinematic perspective to rework spaces, circulate, and how you engage not only with images but the atmospheric aspect of exhibition spaces and temporality. There are so many temporalities you play with. It's just brilliant the way you recombine the apparatus. That's always been what attracted me—the possibility for constant transformation while, in a way, sticking to cinema and exploring all the possibilities it offers.

RB: Thank you. It's about using the language, instruments, or tools to open up another thing that you might not have considered as cinema. Like in my White Museum series, I project out of a building onto a space to highlight historical hidden history or narrative, and then using that cinematic light to kind of bring these two spaces together and open up this other space.

HC: I noticed that the format—the size and structure—of each issue in *Printed Cinema* is different. Why? How do you settle on the right format?

RB: It always depends on the material and the subject. They often had similar, a kind of wider A4 size, but there have been projects that I felt needed to be bigger posters, folded. It's hard to define when that happens, but it happens quite often. Perhaps with the landscapes, I tend to go a little bit more into irregular formats. The paper I want to use, the observation of the color scale on paper... all these factors bring me to the decision on what size and what materials to use. I often print them in local places—local to where I exhibit—to avoid shipping and other logistics. When I'm choosing the film stills and texts to include in the publication, it's studio work. But when it comes to bringing them into the printed format, into the decisions of the materials and all that, it's always a local decision.

HC: What are your main concerns when you install your work in the exhibition space? What are they when you're making and editing publications? What do you hope to achieve in each situation?

RB: By reconfiguring the physical terms of cinematic space in the exhibition space—can be outside architecture as well—my aim is to expand and destabilize the conceptual terms of cinematic space, so that the formal terms by which we understand that space are extended and incorporate dimensions that are not conventionally associated with cinema. The goal is to explore how those terms coincide with the terms of disciplines and areas of enquiry that exist beyond the scope of the norm or convention. The same thoughts apply to the space of a publication.

HC: How would you describe the position of artists' books in the contemporary art market? What are the things that you notice are different in their consumption compared to artworks of other mediums?

RB: Artist publications have a peculiar position in the art market as they offer a zone for reflection rather than a finalized, fixed product. Their form does appear to be fixed because it's most often printed and physical, but its reception or reading is not something that's predestined. Artist publications go through individualized processes of comprehension, which makes each of them unique and different depending on who's reading it.

HC: What factors do you consider when pricing your artists' books? Are there any particular standards or reasonings behind your prices?

RB: I keep the price of *Printed Cinema* as low as possible as I'm interested in the idea of 'Free screening' at least during my exhibitions. I leave the copies in the exhibition space, or sometimes they are displayed in bookshops of the institution to be sold for cheap prices. They are never framed or exhibited in my show in any way. Only after exhibitions, I compile them into an expandable set that's sold as a limited edition, archival box.

Interviewee O

Ami Clarke is an artist and educator based in London. As an artist, she works with art and technology, critically engaged with the complex protocols of platform and surveillance in everyday assemblages, with a focus on the inter-dependencies between code and language in hyper-networked culture. She also founded and runs *Banner Repeater* (founded in 2010), a contemporary art space, a reading room, and experimental project space dedicated to a wide array of programs including exhibitions, artist talks, archiving, and publications. She also developed the *Digital Archive of*

Artists' Publishing (DAAP) with a team of people that gathered around Banner Repeater, which is an interactive, user-driven, searchable database of artists' books and publications. She currently teaches as an Associate Lecturer at Central Saint Martins and Chelsea College of Art, University of the Arts.

21 March 2023, Online

Hyunjoo Cho: Which category of participants best defines you? Please tell me all that apply: Maker (artist, designer), Facilitator (curator, editor, publisher), Distributor (distributor, retailer), Collector (collector, archivist, librarian, consumer).

Ami Clarke: My practice is an interesting one because I'm an artist, but I'm also a facilitator for other people, so I also support other people in their projects. For example, the Un-Publish series—it's a series of published works that basically looks at the kinds of technologies that we write through. We then get to see what can be said about these, and you end up in a political domain quite quickly, because you're dealing with everything from the printing press to the telegram to the telegraph to the telephone to TikTok. Everything has its own particular capacities that allow certain things to happen above others. So, it's very interesting the way they inflect our subjectivity. So, if you take it from a post-human position, where we emerge in synthesis with our environment, we understand that there's an emergent subjectivity that is ongoing, constantly evolving. It's not static, it's not fixed in any way, there's a performative element to it, and it's just very interesting to think about the different kinds of writing that comes of these new ways of communicating with one another.

Un-Publish started with my project, actually. I was interested in the writing that Chelsea Manning was doing in the lead up to her arrest for transferring classified data and uploading it to WikiLeaks. There's this very famous quote now, where she describes how she was sort of singing and lip syncing to Lady Gaga's Telephone whilst uploading possibly the largest data spillage in American history. This then informed the rest of the Un-Publish series.

HC: I see that Banner Repeater is the platform for all these activities. Would you also call it a publishing house?

AC: We have several imprints—Un-Publish is one of them. The Outage (Erica Scourti, 2014) has also been a popular one in the series of paperbacks we do. It's super interesting because it's the artist Erica Scourti looking at her data footprint and the different ways this data gets used, whether it's by HR or by health insurance looking at whether you smoke or not—all sorts of ways that the data might get put to purpose. And she gathered it all together and gave this to a ghost writer called J. A. Harrington, who then wrote her a ghost-written memoir. This has become a very popular artists book—many colleges have it on their school curriculum. It's interestingly successful for an artist's publication.

There's also a book that Jamie Sutcliffe and Petra Szemán edited called WEEB Theory which includes commissioned essays, artists' texts, and interviews with theorists working with media, philosophy, and animation, that we're publishing this year.

We also support artists wanting to publish specifically artists' books. Melanie Jackson (Deeper in the Pyramid, 2018)—which you can download from our website. We've also curated exhibitions about artist publishing: 'Publishing as Process' in 2016 was one of them. I mean, all of these are so process-based, really.

HC: What does the name 'Un-publish' mean? Does that reveal something about how you view publishing?

AC: It's from when Julian Assange (Wikileaks founder) and the curator Hans Ulrich Olbrist were having a conversation and Julian Assange commented on how easy it is to redact things online. And I

was very interested in this unstableness of writing. Julian Assange went on to suggest it might be better to print on paper which is of course, a more stable substrate—which can then be distributed outside the censorious reach of the surveillance aspect of [the Internet]. In 2010, when I first started Banner Repeater, I was trying to be attentive to the different ways that we write, the different substrates, the different energies that are used, and the modes of expression that are available, and so on. It was a very interesting premise— which acted as a sort of ongoing platform, a commissioning platform.

HC: Why do you make artists' books? How do your books fit into your overall practice?

AC: So, the reason why we do Banner Repeater at all is because it's a node on a network of distribution. We're on a platform at Hackney Central station. What this means is that we can distribute items from the space very easily. We give out our publications for free, too—Un-Publish, for example, has always been free. We put them out on the platform, and people pick them up on their way to work, and you'd read it on the train and possibly leave it on the seat for somebody else. Then, somebody else would pick it up. It could even potentially go up to Stansted Airport, go flying somewhere else. We were using the public transport networks as a distribution channel.

Whilst having the material resource on the platform, we also started to think about precedents in publishing that afford insights into what's happening today in terms of network culture, because almost everything that has happened in an online sense has happened before in the history of publishing. It's just a very straightforward approach because we're familiar with books. We can understand that these are multiples, and that there are copyright issues, ideas of authorship, that they are distributed, and all sorts of things. So, we get to think about them in a very deep way. And that was the point of Banner Repeater—making publishing history available to people, as an entry point to something that seemed completely opaque at the time, with regards online culture, you know.

DAAP challenges many of the issues I identified during the programming at Banner Repeater over the years. So, if you take from a database that is reflecting, say, the status quo, you have to understand that that is also then going to have the same biases and discriminations of the status quo, at any given time. This is what the technologists don't recognise—they say technology is neutral. No, it's not. Of course, it's not. It's a reflection of society, at any given time. We have power relations all the time changing, constantly in flux, if they are biased, so will your data-set be. And you're going to reproduce them and possibly amplify it by drawing upon those data. So, constructing DAAP was about how to address these problems that crystallise around archival practice because the archive is the site at which exclusion typically happens.

HC: Do you think artists' books are socially and culturally valuable? If so, what makes you think that they are?

AC: Yes, publishing sort of becomes a framework—temporal and spatial. And the book is almost like a trace or a remnant of practice. But I reject the approach of examining the book solely within the material world and about its physical presence. That dialogue has dominated the analysis of artists' books, but I think it's only one of many substrates. Yes, this paperback is an incredibly well-designed thing. It's amazing. As a design. Just the idea that you can put it in your pocket and get lost in it any time of the day. It's just extraordinary. But equally, I'm against fetishizing anything. This idea of embodiment is a fetish—I think it's humans having a bit of wishful thinking. It's not up to certain modes of production and distribution to limit what can be said and done.

HC: How do you feel about the commodity status of artist publications?

AC: I have no problem with that whatsoever. Artists need to earn a living—the idea that you're selling your art is fine.

HC: Do you think the value of artists' books are expressed well in their prices in general? In other words, do you think artists' books are traded at fair prices?

AC: I think this is an impossible question... So, we've got this thing at the Banner Repeater archive called the Xerox Book Library—you know, the famous Xerox Book. What happened with it was that in the end it never got to be produced through the xerox machine—it got made as a lithographic print, which is a more traditional mode of printing. I was at Chelsea Space for a Donald Smith and Theresa Gleadowe curated exhibition with Jack Wendler's archive, and they had letters and ephemera, some stuff was in a vitrine, so you couldn't touch. And I found myself leafing through the Xerox Book. I was curious about it because the original intention of Seth Siegelaub saying that it's purely about the ideas in the book, exemplified by the desire to pass it through the photocopier machine, to keep the means of production utilitarian, with an emphasis on a poverty of means, completely failed. Now it's worth £4000 a copy, and it's a highly collectible item.

So, I was sitting there in Chelsea Space when Donald Smith just laughed and said oh, Jack Wendler gave me a photocopy. And I just went 'What? He gave you a photocopy? Can I borrow it?' at last, this book had become a photocopy! And this began the whole project of the Xerox Book Library. Back in 2012 or something, we invited people to contribute their own bootleg Xerox Book. So, we got these copies of copies of copies of copies of copies. We would then have a little brief description, an anecdote on the back page and what was in each copy. We also included descriptions of the photocopiers the books had been through, so they then became defined by their reproduction. Anyways, despite its means of production, the original Xerox Book became a very sought-after book, and it speaks to the aura of the artist being the essential product. So, value is constructed, entirely, in art. It's the biggest speculation. It can be anything or nothing depending on who decides that it's great, who then collects it, and who supports that. We all know this. There are many ecologies that are at work there—peer review, peer discussion, connoisseurship, critique, which is a huge generator of interest in itself.

When Lucy Lippard spoke of dematerialisation, in her book *Six Years*, there was a real move away from the idea of art serving only as a commodity. Things shifted to the idea of somehow avoiding the markets by means that were either ephemeral or event-like, or happenings, or where there was nothing produced, in effect. But what then happens is there's a collecting of the ephemera around that. You end up with people collecting pamphlets and lists and things associated with the event. These things started to have more and more value attributed to them because they are the only things resonating with that ephemeral movement, which in itself just speaks to the ways value is produced. So, this intention to produce something outside of market forces didn't take into account that it was the aura of the artist that mattered. And this is exactly my point. These things do not exist outside of a system. It's quite difficult to not be a part of that.

HC: I think a lot of the artists back then thought that the market is more like an institution with a clear borderline. But I think the market's more of an expandable thing—something that sets itself up naturally through new value propositions.

AC: I don't know if it's natural because coming from a post-humanist perspective, you might be critical of the thinking that thinks something is 'natural' at all - because what this is doing is saying it just seems so obvious because it's become the accepted norm. It just means that we're caught in a bubble where market driven forces are seen to be natural. It isn't necessarily natural at all. I think the construction of value in the market, specifically in art, takes an enormous amount of work and effort and intention to keep going - as do other markets. There is little by way of equilibrium at all.

Interviewee P

Chang Wen-Hsuan is an artist and researcher based in Taiwan. Her practice questions the narrative structure of institutionalized history with re-readings, re-writing, and suggestions of fictional alternatives in order to expose the power tensions embedded in historical narratives. Through versatile platforms including installations, videos, and lectures, she often navigates skewed documentations and first-person accounts to trigger reflections on how the understanding of history affects the purport of the present and thrust of the future. In 2018, she launched a long-term project Writing FACTory, which is a virtual space producing experiences and exchanges concerning writing and publishing as an artistic and political practice.

26 April 2023, Online

Hyunjoo Cho: Which category of participants best defines you? Please tell me all that apply: Maker (artist, designer), Facilitator (curator, editor, publisher), Distributor (distributor, retailer), Collector (collector, archivist, librarian, consumer).

Chang Wen-Hsuan: I'm an artist and researcher. I studied Fine Arts all the way through my bachelor's and master's, and now I'm also doing my PhD at Taipei National Fine Arts University. I also occasionally do pedagogical projects, and I use writing a lot in my art practice, so sometimes people think I'm a writer. I like to write and read but I never really thought of myself as a writer. But in a sense, I'd also define myself as a 'storyteller' using not only the medium of the text but also images, videos, and objects.

In my practice, I focus on the power relationship between different kinds of historical narratives. As you might know, Taiwan is in the center of political discord and unrest, and this in many ways influences our current understanding of certain historical figures and events. So, I use diverse medium to interpret my understanding of historical narratives including publishing, video, archive, installation, lecture, performance, and so on.

HC: Would you call your publications artist's books?

CWH: Actually, for my most recent book—Xsport on Paper—I wouldn't really define it as an artist's book. It's closer to a book made by an artist. I started this project in 2018, and I decided to publish it in a printed form after the pandemic. For this book, I invited a designer to help me find the right format, but other times, I usually design my own artist's books. When I discussed with the designer, I told him that I really want this book to be a 'proper' book as in I want this to be quoted in articles or brought into class discussions. Of course, artist's book can also be in standardized form, but the way we access it is similar to how we access an artwork—it's quite arbitrary and hard to locate within a body of knowledge. But for this one, I really wanted it to be read and understood as information. The designer did play with the outline and stuff, but editorial-wise, it's just a simple book—not very complicated in terms of the relationship between the content and format.

HC: Do you approach things differently in your other books? Like, in the books that you would call artist's books.

CWH: Yes. In terms of my own artist's book, I mainly take two approaches. One, I consider it a portable exhibition space, especially for the projects where I turn my research into an archive installation. After an exhibition ends, not only the archive but also the whole environment disappears. So, within the pages of my books I create an alternative space to continue the show, like a 2D version of the exhibition.

The second approach is when the book makes an appearance in the exhibition space to create double layers of narrative as a virtual space residing within a physical one. In my archive installations, I try to transform the white cube into a specific space for narratives--an editorial room or a conference room, for example, so that the audience has to somehow put themselves into roles when accessing the historical documents or text I present in the exhibition and understand the whole thing. So, in this context, my artist's book becomes the second or alternative layer of narration. It's like expanding into a meta space of the whole thing. The book or the publication appears as an autonomous character in this setting.

I learn a lot about formats from literature, not from visual arts. My reference comes a lot from literature. Every time I make a new work or after I finish research, I feel the need to find a proper format for the content, and I always find it fascinating how we approach different mediums through different senses of temporality. For example, when we read, because there are physical pages that we have to flip through, it's similar to when we see video art that has a frame and buttons to press. Basically, how we approach a narrative based on objects is through a very flexible and fluent way of seeing. This somehow reminded me of the boundary or the limitation of the modern way of understanding historical narrative. In terms of the mode of representation, I think an artist can try to do more than historians because when using different kinds of medium we can somehow intertwine different kinds of temporality when we perceive an issue. So, this is why I use more than one way of narration in my own work.

HC: Do you think artists' books are socially and culturally valuable? If so, what makes you think that they are?

CWH: Yes, but when I think deeper about this, I first think about the famous diagram drawn by Clive Phillpot. The diagram reminds me a lot about art, book, and the relationship between these two things within social, cultural, or even political contexts. The most inspiring part of that diagram is how Phillpot made a distinction based on the strategy of distribution—so, how he separated the top and bottom sections [between the unique and multiple works], and he says he favors the multiple, which is the case for me as well. The 'unique' category is also interesting because the physicality or the value of a unique book seems much more like that of an artwork like painting and sculpture that are made to be rare. But for the 'multiples', I think the focus is more on forming communities based on the audience or readership. From such a perspective, unique books may generate larger economic values, but multiple books have more potential to anchor communities by being circulated, which is socially, culturally, and also politically valuable.

For *Xsport on Paper*, I actually conducted 30+ interviews and picked out the best cases when compiling them into the book. I tried to focus on the cases that demonstrated the value of artists' books in terms of their social and political facets. There were artists making very cool, precious books as well, but I took them out for the sake of the focus.

HC: I think that's a very important distinction to make that there're two tracks of value in artists' books—one that comes from things like limited editions favored by the art market, and the other one coming from the accessibility and affordability. A lot of people that I approached with my research asked me which value I'm talking about because in my research description I say that I'm interested in the position of artists books within the art market, and some people sort of misunderstand that. It's important to be aware of this distinction, yet pay attention both, I think.

CWH: I'm really curious, though, what makes you choose 'art market' as one of your key words when you're researching about artists' books?

HC: I just thought that it'd be important to be conscious of it. Before I started the interviews, I

thought there would be a more synchronized relationship between the artist's book producers and the art market because that's where I thought would be a lot of the distributions happening. But it turned out that the distribution channels are rather independent from the market or at least the ideal channels that artists consider important or meaningful are independent art book fairs, bookshops or press—more grass root channels rather than auctions or gallery bookshops. At the same time, though, I still think that these two systems are overlapped—the layer of mainstream art market and the routes that artists' books take. In reality, those two can't really be separated. For instance, the art market appropriates from these other channels, which is what happened with the conceptual art in the 1960s and the 70s.

CWH: Actually, what you just said about conceptual art is also how I'd like to answer the next question (How would you describe the position of artists' books in the contemporary art market? What are the things that you notice are different in their consumption compared to artworks of other mediums?).

I once interviewed the Brazilian art historian/theorist Paulo Silveira, and he situated artists' books within literature, conceptual art, and artist autonomy. This made me reflect on my naïve understanding of artists' books as just some aesthetic language. What you're saying reminded me of Paulo's interview. He said that at first, the conceptual artists wanted to see their books as an alternative space to escape the control or governance of the gallery system and art market. But the art market adjusted to this new art form very quickly. For galleries, conceptual art was a big hit, but it was difficult to sell. But after the artists turned it into a contained form, into books, they could actually be traded.

So, every time I think about making a book, I think about not only giving an ideal form to the content but also the appropriate way of distributing it. My interviewees for Xsport on Paper also told me that it's the circulation that really matters. Maybe it's also because nowadays we're in this digital or post-internet era. So, when one chooses to print something, it means not only an old fashion way of producing information and knowledge but also trying to produce a very specific gateway or community that access the information.

HC: I think you put it very well—you've pointed out how artists' books are one of the few art forms that actually want to remain in the 'circuit' versus other art forms, for example paintings or sculptures that are more present in the traditional art market or want to 'kept' in museums, collections, etc.

HC: What factors do you consider when pricing your artists' books? Are there any particular standards or reasonings behind your prices?

CWH: Well, I just try to make my costs back, and that's enough. As an artist, I'm not very familiar with setting a proper price. I actually miscalculated a lot when publishing Xsport on Paper. It's not a super fancy book, but somehow the colors and the binding ended up costing me quite a lot to print. So, when I set the price, I just wanted to cover the printing costs. But I sold this book through crowd funding platform, and I had to spend some money on advertisement of the project, which was something I didn't account for when setting the price. Another cost that I missed is the discount—in Taiwan, most of the independent bookshops buy my book with a 30 percent discount. So, there's a gap between what I'd normally earn and the profit after the discount.

In general, however, when I'm pricing my publications, I set the price as reasonably as possible so that my readers can think that they are accessible, as long as I don't lose too much money. Most of my readers are also a very niche group of people who are used to the artist's book culture, so I don't want to go against the culture and mark my prices up.

HC: Do you think the value of artists' books are expressed well in their prices in general? In other words, do you think artists' books are traded at fair prices?

CWH: That's an interesting question, but I might not be able to answer it. It's similar to asking whether I think the value of another artwork is expressed well in its price, and I don't have a good answer to that either. Perhaps prices depend on what mode of circulation is ideal for the work. There's a book called *Post-Digital Print* by Alessandro Ludovico—he says, in my rendering, there that now, every choice you make is on top of the digitalized world, so you can't just choose to print things on paper just because you like it. Every choice should be based on concerns about procedures. Setting the price is another choice that you have to make based on your ideal of perception or consumption.

HC: Yes, I think price itself is a statement. As you said, you consciously try to keep a balance between covering your costs and leaving the price affordable for your readers. And when that's reflected onto your prices, that itself is an artist statement on how you think this artwork should be understood.

CWH: Yes, and pricing itself is a medium of the whole artistic project. And this is possible because we're dealing with artists' books—the artist generally has the autonomy of setting the price.

Interviewees Q & R

Karen Kelly is an editor and publisher based in Brooklyn. From 1989 to 2011, she directed the publication program and organized special programs at Dia Art Foundation, New York. She has also held editorial positions at the literary journal *Conjunctions* and at the art journal *Parkett*.

Barbara Schroeder is an art historian and editor based in Brooklyn. Previously, she served as editor for Dia Art Foundation, the Austrian Broadcast Company, and the *Kunsthalle Vienna*.

Together, they run *Dancing Foxes Press*, an independent publishing platform that focuses on editorial collaboration with artists and hands-on production of a wide range of publications.

10 May 2023, Online

Hyunjoo Cho: Which category of participants best defines you? Please tell me all that apply: Maker (artist, designer), Facilitator (curator, editor, publisher), Distributor (distributor, retailer), Collector (collector, archivist, librarian, consumer).

Karen Kelly: We're publishers and editors. I'd say that our publishing practice is really an editorial practice from planning through the conception of a project and all the way to the distribution of a project, so basically the entirety of an editorial process.

Barbara Schroeder: What's specific about us is that we value active and critical dialogues through our process. We're not publishing only painters or any [one segment of the art world]. It's not thematic, either. It's more about the process that relates our books with each other. And that's how these projects make sense together without having a rigid theme. So, it's really focusing on the singularity of each project and then trying to find its form coming from the minds of artists and writers.

KK: When we're working with artists or writers, we talk through the content of the project and what the ultimate goals and missions of these projects are and then work through that to find the form that they take. So, it's a dialogue—it's a dialogue that involves printers, color correctors, photographers, designers, artists, writers, and us. It's the totality of that collaboration and how all those pieces work together to make the project specific and find its own form.

BS: We were wondering how you actually define the term 'artist's book' because I think there are many different ways. For us, we define it really broadly. We actually wouldn't call some of our books artists'

books, but a lot of them we would even when they're not the traditional examples of artists' books. It's about the collaboration that tries to use the book as a parallel site to an exhibition space. Books can't do what the exhibitions can do, but they can do other things. So, we try to really use that form and that history of the book and work through it and find the form and the content and the design that relates to the work in many ways. Our books are always coming from the work, and it's always—if the artist is still alive—conceived in really close collaboration with the artists. We are sort of helping them with our knowledge. That's a little unusual for some artists' books, you know, but [that's how we work].

KK: Maybe to briefly go back to your question, I think our personal backgrounds might help to see where we've come to start Dancing Foxes Press together. We worked together at the Dia Art Foundation—I was there for 22 years, Barbara for 10. And there, we really tried to work together with artists on very specific projects to do exactly what we're doing now here.

BS: And we both had a parent who was an artist and we're both art historians. So, I think our work is coming from that too, biographically.

HC: Do you also have your own artistic practice? Would you also define yourselves as curators?

KK: No, I would not define myself either as an artist or as a curator.

BS: I did complete a curatorial studies program, and I worked as a curatorial assistant for two years in Europe where we made books at the same time as we curated exhibitions. And I learned there that those two things are very different. We do make shows about the people who work on books and make books for the sake of public awareness. There are certain similarities between curating exhibitions and working with artists to put their work into a book form, but it's still a completely different medium with its own history, form, logic, limitations, and possibilities.

BS: We're maybe getting to the second question—why do we make artists' books or books with artists? It's partially because the book is a product you can engage with in a private way. Books provide an intimate encounter that has a completely different focus from being in a show, for example. Also, we don't make books in small editions—we really try to have big print runs and keep their prices affordable. We don't really make money from selling books anyway. We're doing this just to get things out there. We see the book as a product, but it's also a process. Everything that leads up to it is part of it, and also everything that then comes out of it. So, we organize a lot of events and for our book launches or events that are triggered by the book...

KK: Or events that explore an aspect of the book that amplifies it.

BS: Yes, to make sure that the process and everything that comes after publishing are all a conversation and keep the connections to things that didn't make it into the book. You feel you're connected to other people through reading, because there are a thousand copies of that book out there. But at the same time, you have this really focused, isolated encounter with it. You can also come back to it and annotate it. I think that's very different from experience with other artworks. Moyra Davey is one of the artists we've worked with, and she cuts up her books when they're too big, and she takes them everywhere. She also puts a new cover around them and has them with her. That's what a book allows you to do—you can make it your own.

KK: I think we should go back to our question of what you think is an artist's book.

HC: Yes, I should clarify. I really agree with your sense of having a flexible boundary. I'm focusing on artists' books that were conceived through the autonomous projects by artists—whether the subject of this making is the artist themselves. And I think the ethos of artists' books really moved on to being accessible from the more traditional forms neighboring book arts. I think this focus on the distribution or circulation of art is underrepresented in the art world right now because the system is still very much focused on how one can collect unique or rare art. Artists' books represent the other

end of the spectrum.

BS: It makes total sense to me. Karen once said that artists' books are also a forum to present and affirm a range of cultural experiences and artistic practices. That's what drives us in many of the projects. I think even exhibition catalogues, the more ambitious ones now, are starting to be more like artists' books. We just finished a book with A.K. Burns and the book includes conversations between her and her curator about the making of her works, the research leading up to it, references and images, her collaboration with others, and her thought process overall. Her practice is to make video-based installations, so she made film stills, selected them, and designed their layouts in the book herself. She tried to bring these elements into the exhibition as well, but she thought the book was the more appropriate moment [to do that]. We've been meeting with her since 7 years ago—from the very beginning of this really epic project, and it was always important for her that there's going to be an outlet for this internal thinking and references to her process.

We made another book with Julia Christensen, which is quite similar. It shows how she talks about the process. She brings in a few pages of snippets of conversations that informed her—it's very interspersed throughout the book. She also acknowledges that it's always the input from others that forms the work. It's a beautiful book about an artistic process and at the same time about culture, waste, climate change, and all these important topics. And we just helped her with the designer to find the right form for it, to edit it, and make things tighter.

HC: How do your projects start? Do artists come to you?

KK: Every project starts differently. It's often an artist coming to us, and sometimes it's a curator coming to us. We are often approached by an institution when an artist wants to have this kind of collaborative editorial attention.

HC: Do you think artists' books are socially and culturally valuable? If so, what makes you think that they are?

KK: Well, my first reaction was no, not inherently. Many artists actually don't know why they're producing books. They just think that that's what they're supposed to do.

BS: To many artists, their practice is just engrained in them. We feel like there has to be a good reason for making books and try to help artists find their reason. Making a book has carbon footprint—it takes money and energy, so there has to be a relevance or necessity.

KK: And that question then leads to what kind of book would actually do what you want it to do and become a viable project.

BS: We also ask that question to inform us to find the right form and to find the right collaborators. Another question to ask to artists is 'where do you see your book on a bookshelf—in a bookstore or in a library? Who do you see next to it? What's around it?' This is to think about the other side, to think of what the book would do in the world. I think that's part of our responsibility as publishers—to think about its purpose and what the context of this book is going to be.

HC: In other words, you're asking what value it adds to the world.

BS: And that can be as personal as making a book for your mother. You know, the value can be of very different kinds.

HC: What do you think happens to make artists think that they need to make a book? Have you noticed any recurring patterns of projects?

KK: I mean, every book has its own story and reasons. I can give you a couple of very different examples. One is when an artist who has a very diverse process or groups of works thinks it's difficult for the audience to make sense of how these all relate to one another. This would be a panoramic book where the whole oeuvre comes together.

BS: It was about bringing out themes to connect these works because her projects are well known individually but she herself isn't. And she was frustrated about that. And it's not obvious, but once you look at this book, one can make sense of the whole and see that the works actually come from the same set of questions.

KK: Another example would be like the case of A.K. Burns—when the artist spends a long time on a project and wants to document the process to provide the reader with a holistic view of the project. These kinds of project-based books use the space of a book to do what the exhibition might not be able to do—providing details about the research, process, conversations around it, interpretation, etc. A good example would be Zoe Leonard's book (*Available Light*, 2014) about her camera obscura projects in London, Cologne, Venice, Texas, and New York. Most of the photos in the book are taken by Zoe herself, so they act as fragments of her experience in her own work.

BS: It was also her urge to bring those five sites together so you understand how site-specific they each were, which you wouldn't have been able to see when you were in the installation.

Another example is Alex Da Corte's book. He made this event that was based on an Allen Kaprow performance, and he recreated it in the same space in Philadelphia in March 2020, the day before the lockdown. This event was so chaotic and so wild that he felt it became a weird metaphor of the pandemic. So, he called the book a 'living document.' It brought in performer memories, fragments, photos by different photographers, and the designers tried to create that energy from that moment. We're also just finishing a book about 12 individual dance histories. There's this choreographer who couldn't perform during the pandemic, and she invited other performers to write solos which is their private dance history. So, the book another outlet to think about what they're doing as choreographers and dancers. I think a lot of artists feel that publishing is a straightforward way to circulate their work.

HC: How would you describe the position of artists' books in the contemporary art market? What are the things that you notice are different in their consumption compared to artworks of other mediums?

KK: Well, I think in terms of the economics of making art books they're not really viable in general. It depends on what you're doing, but generally speaking, it's not like fiction or non-fiction. Especially for our books, they're full of images, colors, need nice paper, and we spend a lot of time on them. They're very labor intensive and expensive to make. So, it's not like we're ever going to earn a surplus from these projects artists' books. In fact, money has to be raised first to make an art book. We were just listening to our distributors talk about this issue, and they were saying that when you see a fancy art book you can be sure that a painting was sold for it, for example. The financial conditions of making an art book are actually within the art market to a large degree. If not the art market, then the funding mechanisms of the art world—institutional support, etc. They're often tied to these things. The reality ties them to these things. We also work with artists to raise money they need to publish—helping with their grant application, for instance.

BS: Also, art books have become such a sales tool for so many galleries now. Galleries now have all these huge publication departments, like David Zwirner, Gagosian, etc. And they can pay their collaborators better. For them, that's of course all about increasing the value [of the art they sell]. What they make now is not just a simple catalogue but actually has really good text so that they can brand themselves as a critical environment. The art publishing economy is getting really, really complicated, and we still have to figure out how we find our way in that. It's a problem for us not only in terms of competition, but it's in that they don't collaborate with external publishers like us anymore. It's a very strange shift that's happening right now that has a huge impact on the publishing world.

HC: Can I ask you how you fund your press? Do you have a core funding?

KK: We've had benefit exhibitions where artists contributed their works and got us off the ground. We also apply for grants for each project.

BS: We're also, in a way, artist-driven. The whole start of our press was really coming from artists encouraging us and the way we work.

KK: But for each of our books, we had to have separate roadmaps for funding—we had to have the funding in place to start.

HC: Do you think the value of artists' books are expressed well in their prices in general? In other words, do you think artists' books are traded at fair prices?

BS: Fair for whom? For the audience? For the artists and publishers?

HC: I'd like to hear your answers for both parties.

KK: For us, the book sales is never going to cover its own costs, which means it doesn't pay a salary for us, either. We're not trying to do that. So, it seems better to go for lower prices, for it to be fair for the consumers.

HC: What factors do you consider when pricing your artists' books? Are there any particular standards or reasonings behind your prices?

KK: We really rely on our distributor for pricing. We also think about who might be wanting this book and think about what price is going to be affordable for them. But of course, we also think whether it is a hard cover, soft cover, is it a 500-page book? I mean we do look at what the object is and how much work it's been. It's not like we don't consider what it took to make this book. We just know that it's not going to be profit-driven.

BS: Maybe we weren't clear earlier, but when you're talking about the art market, I do think that the role of independent presses is something that we care about and we would really love to be able to retain. That's something to think about as part of the whole ecosystem of bookmaking and art book-making—what are the different roles, who plays what role, what's the commodity, what can you afford, and what can you contribute. I think it's not the same when a gallery does it or when a museum does it or when a university press does it and when an independent press does it. It makes a huge difference because of the habitats we each live in.

Interviewee S

Billy Simms is an artist and educator based in Miami, Ohio. His practice focuses on the intersection of visual art, literature, theatre, and storytelling. Working with an interdisciplinary principle, his projects have been in a variety of media including printmaking, writing, sculpture, drawing, painting, crafts, photography, and found objects. He currently teaches on various art practice courses as an Adjunct Instructor at Miami University. His recent exhibitions include 'Craftowne: The 7th Hole' (Pyramid Hill Sculpture Park and Museum, 2021), 'Leftovers' (1628 Gallery, 2021), and 'Hamilton Current: Regional Art Exhibition' (Fitton Center, 2021).

21 July 2023, Online

Hyunjoo Cho: Which category of participants best defines you? Please tell me all that apply: Maker (artist, designer), Facilitator (curator, editor, publisher), Distributor (distributor, retailer), Collector (collector, archivist, librarian, consumer).

Billy Simms: I see myself as an artist. It took me a while to get there. My undergraduate degree is in theatrical scenic and lightning design, and I worked in technical theatre for 11 years, and then I

went back to school and got a degree in special education. So, I taught middle school and high school special education for 15 years. And then all of a sudden, I got into printmaking, and while I was doing printmaking, I decided I wanted to quit my job and go back to school full-time and get an MFA. So, ever since I finished the MFA, I think of myself as an artist. I've still gone back and done some theatre lighting design and all sorts of stuff. I don't like pigeonholing myself as just a printmaker—I think of myself as an artist who makes and does what I see fit for the practice.

HC: Why do you make artists' books? How do your books fit into your overall practice?

BS: One is that I have a great love of books. My wife is a writer, so she has a lot of books to begin with. I love books, comic books, and I love to read.

When I did my thesis show with my work *Craftowne*, it was going to have written text, but everyone kept saying that I should make it so it doesn't. In the end, though, I realized I couldn't do that. I couldn't tell these stories only in images. So, it just made sense to make a comic book version of it. I had done a couple of book projects before that, too—I did a 42 woodblock wordless novel, and I collaborated with a friend who works at Miami University to publish our travel photography. I would take pictures while I was on trips and send them to him, and he would write texts to go with them. Also, turning things into books is just a way of for the show to survive after the exhibition. I think that's one of the limitations of visual arts, especially installations like my work *Craftowne*, which is meant to be seen as a whole. Once the exhibition's over, you've only gotten that limited number of visitors. So, it was a way to reach a broader audience and have the work live on in another iteration. I consider the book a bit like a catalogue for a show, but also a compilation of different things that were involved in the exhibition—I call them artefacts. And the text in the book is the wall text from the show that explains the overall narrative.

HC: I'm very curious of your process when you're making this. Where do you start? Do you start with a story, and then you sort of see it in the exhibition form, and then you collapse it into a book?

BS: It starts with the story. I get ideas or stories first, and they inform the artwork. I grew up in Maryland, and the town was called Crofton, which I changed to *Craftowne* in my work. A good number of the stories in *Craftowne* are actually true.

HC: So I guess your take on this idea of making a book really comes from two big directions—one, you wanted to come up with a channel where this your exhibitions and your work lives on and travel, and two, maybe it was more natural for you to think of it because you start from story, and one of the mediums that we connect the most with story is the book. Do you think that's true?

BS: Yes, absolutely. I'd agree with that. Especially once I got into the notion that the installation is essentially a graphic novel you walk into, the logical extension of that to me was to make it into a graphic novel, to actually make a physical graphic novel out of it.

HC: How was that spatial transformation into something 2D?

BS: That's the tricky thing. Making the first comic was really hard because the way the exhibition worked was that the visitors walked in and they read the first few texts about *Craftowne*. And you could wander in the installation and look at it in any order. I'm fascinated by the notion that you and I can walk into the same show, but if we go and look at things in a different order and read the stories in a different order it's a very different experience. There are books that actually do that as well. I've got a few examples. One of them is called *Composition No.1* (Marc Saporta, 1963). It's unbound, so it's a box and all the pages are loose leaved so that you can read them in any order. I love that kind of thing because it's a very different experience for each read based on the temporal experience of what you read first second and third. But with my comics, I did have to put them in a specific order because of the flow of the narrative. It was difficult deciding the linear order of reading and figuring out the most

logical way of presenting it.

HC: I think it's also interesting how you call your publications 'comics'. Why do you borrow from the genre of comics?

BS: The reason I call it a comic is because the physical format of the publication was a comic book. I had it in the same dimension, stapled it, I bought plastic bags and backing boards, so I really presented it as how they would be selling a graphic novel in a shop. I think I did that because my real love of reading and books originated from comics. I had a great deal of trouble learning to read when I was a kid—I'm a little bit dyslexic. Reading comic books was really how I got into reading, and it really helped me learn to read. So now, I just have this great affinity for them. I also thought if I'm doing this installation, this show about the town I grew up in, it should reflect the person I am.

HC: I saw on the cover page of your Craftowne written 'free and cheap' like the tag—does that come from the comics aesthetic?

BS: It's a direct reference to Mad magazine. It was larger than a comic book—more like a magazine format, and it still gets published but in a kind of a different way. It's a parody magazine where you can find movie parodies and TV cartoons. It was a collection of things, and the cover always had the price written, and under it said 'cheap'. One of my favorite covers ever was just a big slogan saying 'mad magazine lowers its price', and the price was always written in the upper left hand corner, and there was an arrow to the bottom of the cover page with the same price but it was just lower on the page.

HC: What does the price of your books mean to you? What factors do you consider when pricing your artists' books?

BS: I think if I sell my upcoming work, I'd do it just to break even for the costs. I'm not a Marxist or a socialist, but I feel like capitalism has run amok, and the gold standard example of that is the fine arts and galleries and museums. It's so insane how much a few select people make on art, which is always bought by these super rich, elite people. My background, printmaking, is a medium that was very much for the public. It was about creating art so that any average person can purchase it. So, that's my standard when pricing my works—pushing back on the whole system.

HC: Do you think artists' books are socially and culturally valuable? If so, what makes you think that they are?

BS: The answer is yes, definitely, because I think it ties into what I was just saying. For an average person to see art, they have to go to a gallery or a museum, but these publications really get art out into the world. So, people who don't normally have access to art can get access through these books. I think there's a lot of people who would really appreciate art but live in a rural area with not much of it around. In short, I think artists' books help make art a little more democratic and open to everybody.