

## AN EXHIBITIONS ANTHOLOGY

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When editing the book *Exhibition* for the Documents of Contemporary Art series, I would visit the UAL libraries almost as routinely as I brushed my teeth. Only it was excitingly different every time. Compiling an anthology brings a new urgency to reading, as one text alters how you read another and, through the brutal process of selection and rejection, you begin to shape a response to a field – in my case, to exhibitions of contemporary art.

In the first section of my book, I gathered texts that debated what exhibitions are, or can be. Here I drew on several genres of publication, not least exhibition catalogues and art periodicals. Browsing back issues of *Studio International* was hugely rewarding, as were my encounters with more recent periodicals, such as *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*. I also sought out the numerous existing anthologies on curating and curatorship (I would argue that the focus of my own book, *Exhibition*, was subtly but significantly different) and from here I picked texts for republication that foreground the voices of artists.

Sometimes selecting an existing text for inclusion in a new book is fraught with concerns over what the act of republication will omit from the original. Take, for example, my decision to transcribe selected cards from Lucy Lippard's loose-leaf publication in accompaniment to c.7,500, her feminist conceptual art show of 1973–74. By fixing the order of Lippard's prose from

cards that had been designed to complicate linear sequencing, I inevitably betrayed her playful intention. Yet, by adding this prose to the second section of my book, titled 'In the Exhibition Moment', I hope I was able to point towards the distinctly event-based nature of its initial incarnation. Moreover, this is an event that may be revisited by consulting the card-based catalogues for further so-called 'numbers shows' organized by Lucy Lippard, which are archived with the [Artists' Books Collection at Chelsea College of Arts Library.](#)

The final section of my publication, titled 'Exhibition Histories', relates most closely to my work on the Exhibition Histories series for Afterall Books, based at CSM. But only one text was drawn from this series and it was a pleasure to sample the field more broadly. The survey of practice in Dakar written by artist El Hadji Si (for a Whitechapel catalogue in 1995), returns us to the question of how we may define exhibitions, with a promising suggestion: 'as arenas for speaking out'.