

INTERVIEW  
ON

PUBLISHING

volume 2

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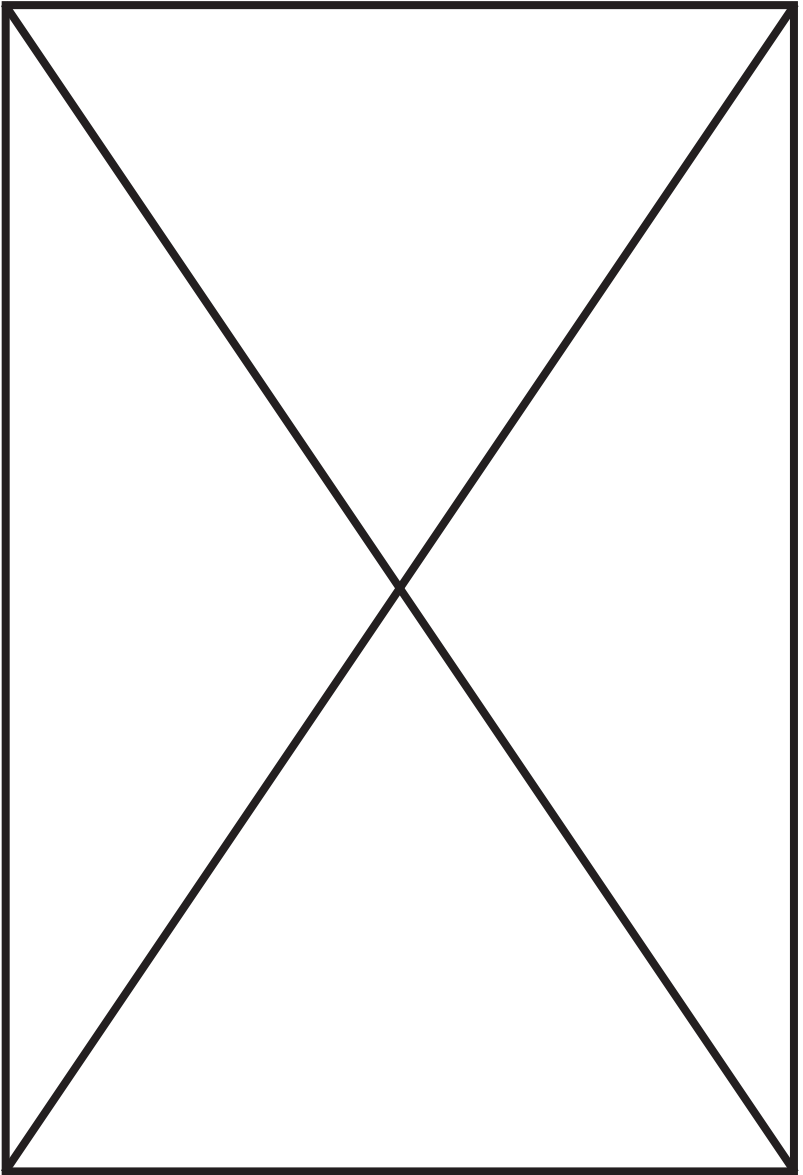
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|                            |      |
|----------------------------|------|
| Introduction               |      |
|                            | p.4  |
| Artists' Books Cooperative |      |
|                            | p.6  |
| Daniel Gustav Cramer       |      |
|                            | p.11 |
| David Senior               |      |
|                            | p.20 |
| Claudia de la Torre        |      |
|                            | p.27 |
| Valentino Tonini           |      |
|                            | p.32 |
| Corina Reynolds            |      |
|                            | p.36 |
| Mark Pezinger              |      |
|                            | p.44 |
| Arnaud Desjardins          |      |
|                            | p.48 |
| Martha Wilson              |      |
|                            | p.52 |
| Micah Lexier               |      |
|                            | p.58 |
| Marc Fisher                |      |
|                            | p.62 |
| Jae Kyung Kim              |      |
|                            | p.68 |

# INTRODUCTION

Alex Chevalier, April 2026

The artist's book (by this term I mean any publication; poster, postcard, ephemera, book, stamp, etc. made by an artist and seen as an artwork and not as a support used to reproduce an existing artwork, produced in another form) underwent a real revolution and proliferation at the end of the 1960s, a period during which social and political activism led artists to rethink their practices and to find forms echoing to a desire to democratize art (to make the artistic object more easily accessible to all), and the dematerialization of the artwork itself.

It was also during that time that many artists, driven by this desire for independence from the art market (the commercial system as practiced by galleries and museums) created their own distribution structures. Gradually, the artists started to relocate their practices by intervening in the public space through performances and happenings, which created a form of direct contact with the public. Gradually, the artists bypassed the classical systems of showing and sharing their art, and created independent editorial projects. Although the initial desire for democratization has unfortunately been defeated, it does not prevent a real artistic revolution from taking place, and that it is still as active today.

Fifty years and a few thousand artists' publications later, publishing practices are experiencing an unprecedented boom, a new golden age. On the one hand, more and more structures allow their distribution (bookstores, galleries, publishers), and on the other hand, more and more public collections or exhibition spaces entirely dedicated to these practices are emerging. To which is added the multiplication of salons and fairs dedicated to artists' editions over the last fifteen years.

It is also interesting to note that many artists create their own channels of production and distribution through publishing

structures that they lead and through which they publish their own work, but also the work from other artists. A change of position and a growing appeal that can obviously be explained by the multiple possibilities of dissemination offered by this medium, as well as by the different reinterpretations of the history commonly shared and studied over the past twenty years.

*Interviews on Publishing* are born from the desire of an artist and publisher to understand what he is doing and why he is publishing his work in the form of a book. From those questions, are born discussions with his peers who are or were active in the artist's book community as artists, publishers, collectors, booksellers, or curators. Thus, different personalities, with very different profiles, were invited to discuss their activities, their experiences, their approaches and their point of view on multiple subjects.

*The Interviews on Publishing* led to a number of meetings that are gathered here. Another volume, in French, dedicated to French-speaking personalities has also been published. In your hands, twelve interviews, realised between 2021 and 2024, cross paths and respond to each other. Artists' Book Cooperative, Arnaud Desjardins, Claudia de la Torre, Corina Reynolds, Daniel Gustav Cramer, David Senior, Jae Kyung Kim, Valentino Tonini, Marc Fischer, Mark Pezinger, Martha Wilson and Micah Lexier share their respective histories and their relationships to publishing, its history, its actuality and its possibilities, as an object of sharing, as an artwork, but also as a space for reflection.

# ARTISTS' BOOKS COOPERATIVE

interview realised in winter 2024

**ABC, for Artists' Books Cooperative, is a group of artists working with books made of nearly 12 persons from all over Europe. How did you come out with this idea of creating this collective, and when?**

Actually there are currently 18 of us, based mainly in Europe but we also have four members living in the US. The German artist, Joachim Schmid, founded the cooperative in 2009 as the new technology of Print-on-Demand (PoD) arrived on the scene. He foresaw the explosion of self-publishing that was to ensue and was inspired to communicate and collaborate with early adopters through the establishment of our cooperative. Since then we have expanded beyond those initial parameters and our members engage in a broad range of book-making practices but the impulse to subvert traditional models of publishing remains.

**Being dispatched internationally is kind of unique, al-**

**though, I was wondering how you were working together?**

ABC sporadically opens its doors to the public, providing an anonymous work environment at the *ABC Office*. Similar to the *ABC Office*, which was temporarily installed at DZIALDOV in Berlin (2022) and Filet Gallery in London (2023), ABC operates without a fixed base and instead travels. Communication takes place through online forums such as Slack and WhatsApp, and book fairs serve as meeting points for creating and discussing new projects.

**One thing we can notice about ABC, is the fact that you are very active and produce collective projects (publications/bookfairs) regularly. The question may sound dumb, but how do they come on the table? Are they initiated by a single person who proposes a project and whom wants to take part in does?**

ABC project ideas can come from a number of places; an individual wanting to make something that benefits from collaboration, a group debate or discussion of a shared interest, a half-joke made after being sat behind a book fair table for 7 hours. Participation is never compulsory, but is always open to all members and often extended to external artists when possible. As an example, our recent project *ABC Stampa*, which pays homage to Ulises Carrión's *Stampa Newspaper*, was instigated by ABC member Louis Porter. Louis had an interest in Carrión's unfinished newspaper, and brought his idea to "finish" the work to a general meeting. The rest of the cooperative were invited to participate, and volunteer for duties of co-curation, exhibition installation and printing. In addition to members, international artists were invited by Louis and George Gibson, and this co-curation led to a collaboration with new friends from Venezuela, France, Indonesia, Peru, Canada and Lebanon amongst other countries.

**To me ABC looks like a network that brings creative people around publishing questions. Was it the intention?**

I think that's right, but the questions are always changing, and so must the discussion that we are having. When Joachim started the process, Print-on-Demand and how it might change the scales and economies of publishing was in the foreground. Technologies still interest a lot of us, but it is fair to say that it has also taken a kind of backseat more recently, to the book as an object, the book as a collaborative vessel, and even publishing as a collaborative activity. Today for me one of the most interesting realisations is that ABC contains lots of people who also act as publishers, supporting the work of others: how publishing generates constructive eco-systems is something really important, and who better to answer these questions than creative people who also solve problems.

**One particularity of ABC is the fact you regularly occupy**

**booths during art book fairs. How does it work?**

The fairs we decide to attend vary depending on interest at the time and our members' availability. We try to go to one or two of the big fairs every year, ones that are relatively good for sales and catching up with colleagues, curators, librarians, collectors, etc. These fairs also serve as a good opportunity to get together as a group and have a bit of fun, meet prospective new members and discuss group projects. Outside the big fairs if one or two members want to try something new we always encourage it, that's the benefit of the collective money pot (see below), it lets us experiment without too much stress. Over the years we've taken very different approaches to how we present our books at fairs, from simple table cloths to elaborately constructed bespoke display systems, to submerging books in a fish tank and even turning our table into a makeshift public bar.

**A point I'd like to talk about is also the financial of being artists who are working with publications. How do you deal with that part?**

ABC members contribute 100 euros per year to the ABC "kitty." This covers applying for book fairs and individual expenditure in regard to group shows and projects - for example, ABC member John Maclean bought our prized ABC lanyards and was refunded the costs, and a new ABC tablecloth was purchased by ABC member Monika Orpik and the fund paid her back. Generally all applications and purchases are agreed by the group in our online meetings. ABC member Wil van Iersel holds the ABC purse and updates us on when subscriptions need paying and, if or when our financial account runs dry. In regard to ABC's latest project, *Stampa* (a homage to Ulises Carrión) initiated by ABC members Louis Porter and George Grace Gibson, we all paid for our own stamps and the reserve paid for guest artists to take part, the paper and the inks. If we make a collective

ject, recently purchased by the Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek, then the proceeds get divided amongst the members who took part.

For a group publication ABC collective pays, however individual publications, objects and projects are financed 100% by the individual ABC member. The artist then independently prices their own work for the ABC table and receives all sales proceeds, minus a small charge for the card machine. The ABC table is pretty democratic - nothing is refused and the quantity and quality of publications can vary for each art fair, depending on availability of publications and members schedules.

**When checking at the work of all of you, we can easily notice the different types of orientations, subjects and forms all the members are working on, on their own. Because, this is the point of ABC, and this is also what I found interesting in your group is the fact you all are**

**artists and publishers, working on their own, that also gather and work with other people from time to time.**

Sure, though we are not just a random collection either. There's an integrity to the group that may not be so simple to pin down. The origins of book fairs had something to do with their convenience as means of dissemination, and a way artists could relate to each other directly, without the institutional barriers. With the internet emerging in the 1990s that logic became superfluous but the fairs continued regardless. There's a danger that the organisations involved come to represent a new orthodoxy. To some degree that has indeed happened. There's an important tension within ABC between that respect for the traditions that emerged and our continuing arseyness and interest in "institutional critique." We are not for too much salivating over the qualities of paper, of stylised book production, or adhering to yesterday's design principles and so on. The same tension or contradiction was technological-

ly palpable with the emergence of Print-on-Demand referred to already. Also a group of us met via our interest in appropriation, the use of online imagery, hacking of a sort, and creating PoD books, at around the time of *Les Recontres d'Arles 2011*. The show a number of us were part of, From Here On, had faults, it was curated by five prominent male practitioners, and, arguably, that imbalance was reflected in what resulted, but it remains an important historical event, if not a groundbreaking one. Sean O'Hagan was foolish to dismiss its significance as he did at the time, which is ironic because he lauds street photography which broke the rules of the game at another point in time. The possibility of Print-on-Demand meant that anyone could publish easily but ironically this served also to keep old formats, and hardcopy book production, alive at a time when everything was meant to be going digital. Anyway, that was long ago, and who knows what will determine our next turn?

# DANIEL GUSTAV CRAMER

interview realised in autumn 2021

**Your work is composed of multiple forms, mainly photographs, but also sculptures and texts. The narrative dimension is very important in your work and it is especially through edition that we can notice it. Working with edition is always specific, how does artists' publications arrived in your work?**

As a kid, my mom used to read books to my brother and me. We were cuddled next to her, one on the left, one on the right. This way I consumed hundreds, probably thousands of books while falling asleep. In my youth, I dived into the world of comic books - *Spirou*, *Lucky Luke*, *Bone*, *Clever & Smart*, Spiegelman's *Maus*. My path led me to more abstracted ways writing story books, like Neil Gaiman's, Dave McKean's and Alejandro Jodorowky's experimental deconstructions. Around that time I decided to become a cartoon artist. After finishing school, I had to do a social year, in which I was helping elderly people in Düsseldorf.

Often I was sitting with them, they were telling stories of their past, of the Second World War or their childhood, while I was drawing quick sketches. I began studying at the university in Münster that was known for its focus on drawing. In the first year of my studies, I focussed on photography and bookmaking. In those years in Münster, I discovered ways to express my passion for story telling, well, for suggesting stories without really telling them...

**Story telling is indeed an important part of your work, either it is through the work on images, or text. There is something interesting in your work, besides the content I mean, it is its formal aspect; there is something very systematic in your layouts. In the mid 1960's, Marshall McLuhan wrote "the medium is the message," which, on some point, reminds me of your work. Could you please tell us more about your editorial work? Does the layout contri-**

**bute to the way you approach the content of your work?**

You are right. The placement of images and text, the material of the publication itself, it all contributes to the experience. I guess the process of finding a form for a story to exist, shaping a work, is exactly that, the details one emphasises and leaves out, the means by which a story is told. It might take weeks for me to test different visual edits. I can feel how the emotional approach to a story changes with the graphic framework. In the process I am printing out and building several dummies, sometimes fifty or more for a publication of 8 pages, and leaf through the pages over and over; to experience the size, the position of images, the proportions of the text. And the typeface, however it is used, exists in a space of its own references. The shape of the letters speak their own language. A text written in a classic monotype, like Courier for example, evokes images of early Hollywood script-writing, Hitchcock, Welles - and this visual image colours the story told and enters

into a conversation with it. When you tell a story in a restaurant - you can sit still and tell it in a restraint manner, so the listeners ears grow, longing for each word - or you can get up, raise your arms, gesture, in a way that the story becomes animated and event-like. When it comes to books and works of art, I personally feel deeply moved by stories being suggested rather than told. In Yasunari Kawabata's *Thousand Cranes* for example, a drama unfolds without it ever being directly named. The story exists in the book, but seems hardly touched by the writer, it lingers between the lines and pages, palpable for the reader, distant and intimate at the same time. A publication can operate in a similar manner. It is a physical object that carries the story, open and expressive - or suggestive and obscured.

When I make a work, I am almost always thinking of it sculpturally. I don't see myself as a storyteller, but rather use a specific material, story-telling, to create a work. A story has a beginning and an end, you

can leave things out and tell of others in great detail. Think of it like a large stone, an object in itself, that can be chiseled in parts, and left as is in another.

**I like that idea of approaching publications as sculpture works, it leads us to something I'd like us to talk about. Not only you are publishing editions, but you are also exhibiting them. Generally, we are used to see artists' publications and editions in display cases, because of the nature of those works (they indeed can be fragile, rare, etc.). On the contrary, you are making stacks, sometimes libraries, inviting the viewer to manipulate and experience your work, which is, in some way, more "democratic." What does exhibiting publications mean to you?**

At times I am exhibiting books as part of installations. The books, on plinths, shelves or small tables, are works contributing to the reading of the show - the visitor is invited to

take them and look at them, as objects. These books are produced in small editions, 3 or 5 - plus the exhibition copies. The books change the mode of an exhibition, a kind of zooming in.

Frequently I have shown text works on the floor. These are short texts, printed on an A4 sheet and then stacked. Visitors can take the texts, read them in the exhibition space or take them home. There are several things happening to those stacks when installed. For one, they create a kind of landscape, they connect in the space and create a horizontal plain. Then, there is something about the fact that visitors can take them home with them. These texts are works, in a sense gifts, but the gift, if one looks at it in this way, is the space created with the words. The paper I use for the texts is wood based, impermanent; it yellows over time, deteriorates like a tale that slowly disappears in our memory.

The sculptural bodies these texts create are not visible in

the space, but part of the experience and narrative unfolding in the exhibition. When I walk along the aisle in a supermarket, stand in line at the cashier, I am captured by my own thoughts, what to cook for my son, my parents' health, a work in progress, a friend's situation. I then remind myself that every single shopper around me has a similar experience. It's the fabric of life, the way we live and experience being in a place. In a way the texts do something similar. There are physical, visual works, sculptures or photographs in the space - and a second realm, as present, intertwined. The entrance doors to this realm is through the stacks. Sometimes I have added a publication to an exhibition, for example at Grey Noise in Dubai or La Kunsthalle Mulhouse. In both cases, one of the works of the show was a publication that was not inside the exhibition space, but rather a celestial body, an afterthought.

**Also, how would you define the place of publications in your practice?**

When I think of a song - a musician may perform live, produce a record or has the composition and lyrics written down on paper. When approaching a musical piece in one or the other way, the song, the work, is the same. Certain attributes might stand out in different situations, but the space created through this piece remains untouched. No one described it better than David Berman in *Snow is falling in Manhattan*: "Songs build little rooms in time / and housed within the song's design / is the ghost the host has left behind / to greet and sweep the guest inside / stoke the fire and sing his lines." I am intending to make such rooms, invite friends to come inside and share a moment of joy or reflection. There is no room more important than another and, to continue this analogy, all the rooms combined create a house, a humble castle, in which all these spaces connect to and create a singular, large home. The rooms connect by the equal attitude and care they have been treated with. The publications are an integral part of my practice, like the sculptural

works, films or photographs.

**We can also see the links between all of those practices and the place that publications take in your work in your photographs for example, as in the series *Tales*, where the margins are important and could be seen as torn out pages from a potential book. Apart from the publications you are producing for installations and exhibitions, there also is a part of your work that exists, as you said earlier, outside of the show, due to a collaboration with a publisher. How do you approach those works? And how is the collaboration working?**

It is different each time. In most cases though, a publisher contacts me, for one reason or another, and proposes to do something together. I have shelves, drawers, notebooks and folders of unrealised works. I propose one or more. Once we settle on a work, I dive into the details - nuances in every respect - image selection, type-

face, an infinite edit of the text. When this is solved, we print it and... publish the book.

**Since a couple of years now, you are collaborating with Haris Epaminonda on an ongoing project called *The Infinite Library*. Could you tell us more about this project?**

*The Infinite Library* had its starting point in 2007. Few years after my grandfather has passed away, I was asked to take all the books I wanted from his library. I found several beautiful picture books of a range of subjects - the Balaton, photographs of Iceland, animal hunting in Africa. Back in the studio, I was living together with Haris at the time, we looked through the books, opened them, placed them next to each other and somehow, the idea came up, to take the books apart, deconstruct them into individual pages, and then merge two or more books together, really just as an experiment. The outcome was incredible, we were really moved by the result. We realised that when you com-

bine a book of precious stones with another of typical German family homes of the 50's and look at them as one entity, the houses become object-like, the precious stones gain an architectural quality. Well, this was *Book #1* of the library, and from there we continued. The project has been a loose conversation all the way through by the means of books, images, pages - Haris using found book pages in her work as material, while I work with books as sculptural spaces. We have now neared a hundred books. And finally, after 10 years in the making, a book documenting the first fifty books will be published in mid December by New Documents.

**As we said earlier, publications occupy an important place in your practice, you multiply the format of publications (books, stacks, folders with images, etc.), but also, because you work with publications in a unique way, I was wondering how are you seeing yourself in the contemporary editorial**

**landscape? Also, I would have been curious to know what were your thoughts on the actual scene?**

I studied printmaking at the Royal College in London. I felt drawn to the power of the image, its immediacy, the way it manipulates us, cigarette advertisements for example. At the time, the Americans morally lost the war against Iraq. The reason was the leak of images depicting American soldiers posing with Iraqi prisoners - photographic images, such as dangerous weapons. I read somewhere that 85% of all images in the internet are pornographic - can you imagine? At the Royal College I learnt a lot about these issues, especially from Jonathan Miles and John Stezaker, who were both teaching in the humanities department. At the same time, I felt uncomfortable to define myself by a technique - etching, screen printing or photography. I love, I have an infinite passion for books, booklets, texts, publications: the metaverse the human race is built upon. Yet, when it comes to identifying myself as

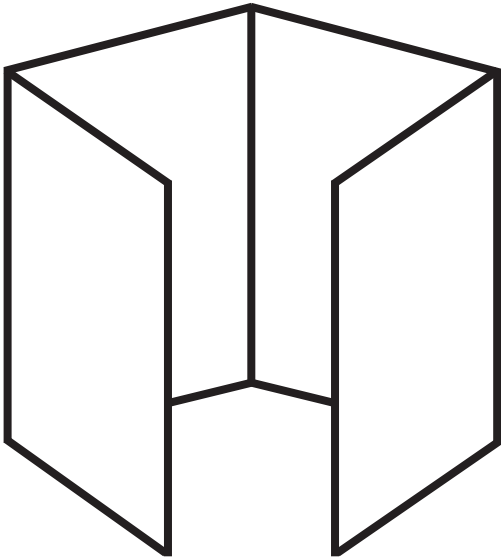
a part of a group of publishers, book makers or editors... I tend to withdraw silently. I have never shown myself at book fairs - although I always go and visit. There are artists that publish amazing material. I am trying to get hold of everything I find from Yutaka Matsuzawa, Douglas Huebler, Stanley Brown, Ian Wilson, Yoshihiko Ueda, as well as Jason Dodge, Alejandro Cesarco, Florence Jung, Gareth Brookes, Jochen Lempert, Yann Serandour, Nicolas Giraud, Mora Davey, Thomas Geiger, Eva Barto, Stefan Sulzer, Roni Horn and so many others... but in a way, what I like about all those works is independent from the fact that these are publications. They used the medium in a decisive moment, for a reason, and express an issue close to their heart that on another day they'll might express in some other form. Looking from outside onto the scene, I think it is beautiful to see that the relationship to the world through the book, pages, a physical object, has relevance even today.

**“To publish” comes from the latin word *publicare*, to make public, which, in some point, could be compared with the fact of exhibiting. In the late 1960’s and early 1970’s, artists were also using books (mostly) in what they thought was a more democratic way to share their work with the audience. I’ve mentioned it a bit earlier, but I’d like to know if this aspect of the work is something you take into consideration?**

There have been some fundamental shifts in the way we live and the way we access art. Most importantly, the Internet has done in a large scale what artists did in a much humbler way in the mid 20th century by making books and publications in larger editions. Youtube, Spotify, Google. It feels to me that today, in a world where millions of “users” are potentially, instantly connected, a booklet in an edition of 50 or 100, even of 500, can be sold out in months or a few years and is then a somewhat rare and elusive work. Perhaps, because of its silent existence, a publication

has a subtlety, in opposition to a work of art on a wall in a museum, claiming its space, demanding to be looked at as art. Publications exist like stories told from one to the other, and might eventually be forgotten, it is part of their nature.

After all, isn't the crucial moment the one where we are confronted with a work of art, be it as a live event, a concert or a novel, read from beginning to end – a sculpture seen, even if only on a pdf or in the web, or... a publication? At the end of the day, all works of art confront us with ourselves, with the fragile, finite time we spend together - and to see all this through the eyes of someone else, to see urges and struggles another person faced and resolved at some point in the past, and are able to relate – and to momentarily question ourselves, perhaps even opening up to the simplicity and complexity of it all.



# DAVID SENIOR

interview realised in winter 2023

**David, you used to work at the Museum of Modern Art Library (MoMA) where you were in charge of the Library collection, you have been curating multiple shows on and around artists' publications, you write, and you now are the Director of the Library and Archives of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Maybe the first question I'd like to ask you is how did you come to work with artists' books?**

As I got out of school, I sought out work in libraries as a safe space to have a job. My first job was at the Newberry Library in Chicago where I worked with old books, early printed books and maps. I was interested in bookish things - philosophy, media studies and the history of technology as a student and young adult. The Newberry Library had an interesting history of printing collection that was a real foundation for later work. A lot of my friends were artists, and I did make art in college, but my reference would

have been punk zines and that kind of DIY photocopy publications in terms of early personal connections with "artists publications" or self-publishing.

I fell into a job at MoMA as a library assistant when my girlfriend and I moved to New York in 2002. It was very lucky. From that point, my surroundings at the library were a constant education and I never stopped learning from the collection at MoMA. Working there combined this experience of library work with a growing interest of mine to engage with contemporary art in my new context in NYC. I was also learning from friends. Artist friends in New York made books and magazines as part of their practice and I learned from them how this medium could be utilized by artists to produce work on their own terms and connect with others through dispersing their printed materials. After a few years at MoMA, I was given more responsibility to grow the collection and I connected closely with Printed Matter to acquire new things, but generally

also, through my job, I became part of the community around Printed Matter. It was around this time too that The New York Art Book Fair was starting and that had a big influence on how you could connect with the local community of publishers in New York, but also a broader international community as well that came for the fair. There were other projects happening that I noticed like Publish and Be Damned in London and Christoph Keller's Kiosk project/archive that were working towards contemporary models of promoting and disseminating artists' publications.

So, to answer your question – I learned on the job at MoMA about the historical legacy of artists' publishing in the 20th century and then was engaged with friends and a growing international network of artists/publishers in the aughts (2000s) to learn and document how artists and designers were still using the space of books and other printed matter to make new work.

**When it comes to curate shows with and on books, there is always a trick as those works were first made to be manipulated, but because of their rareness and history, we are used to show them under a glass. How are you dealing with this question?**

Usually, if I am dealing with contemporary materials, I try to find a way for the materials to be available for touching. I generally find that people are respectful of materials that you leave out and it is a matter of working with publishers to get handling copies of the books or magazines. With historical stuff, it needs to be in cabinets and vitrines for obvious preservation reasons. I have always liked the design challenge of finding the right opening and combination of openings and covers of books and magazines together to tell a good graphic story on a given subject. I am not that distracted by what is not shown, though obviously the best way to engage with the materials is to handle and page through the materials first-hand. In some

cases, we have made facsimile copies of works in exhibition to give a better understanding of handling the displayed work. At MoMA, there were display screens in the exhibition space for the library that could be used to run slideshows or videos of materials in the exhibition. Exhibitions of posters, invitation cards and flyers are fun because you do not have to choose an opening the same way you do with a book show.

**What does it mean to be the Director of the Library and Archives department of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art? What is your role?**

Modern art museums like SFMOMA conceived of their libraries as public education spaces for learning about the new art practices of the 20th century. SFMOMA was founded in 1935 and the library collection was started then. They were information services for national and international happenings in modern art and design. So, a big part of my job is working with my team to care for and make

accessible the historical collection of books, magazines and ephemera in the collection. The collection is used for research, and we work with museum staff and public patrons to help them find what they need for their research.

Like the collection at MoMA in New York, SFMOMA's library documented the different ways that artists have used publishing as part of their work and there is a very rich collection of artists' books, magazines and artists' ephemera in the special collections. It specializes in avant garde activity from the west coast of the United States, particularly in the Bay Area, but also has a great international collection of experimental publication from the last 50 – 60 years. I have learned a lot from the collection in the last 5 years since I arrived. The job now involves adding to the historical collection of materials through new acquisitions as well as engaging with contemporary artists, designers and publishers to document what is happening now in the field. I work with curators at the museum to support

their work and often new acquisitions are guided by exhibition projects and collection research in the different curatorial areas. I really like to teach with the materials from the library. We regularly host classes and other groups in our reading room, and we take this aspect of our work very seriously. That was one of the hard parts about the pandemic, the stopping of our program of class visits. The work we do make most sense when we are finding creative ways for students and other audiences to encounter the special things on our collection. Similarly, opportunities to exhibit materials from the library in the galleries of the museum is another kind of outreach to try to engage with new audiences.

So, the job is to care for the existing collection, grow it in interesting ways and to strategize new ways that people can connect with the materials in the collection.

**How do you manage an artist's publication collection?**

In these kinds of libraries, you inherit the structure given to collections by your predecessors. Managing a collection often involves revisiting previous decisions and making sure they are still working for the books and for the researchers. So that is part of process – working with your staff to figure out cataloging, preservation for the materials and selection of new materials. There was not a distinct artists' books collection at SFMOMA when I arrived, so we made one in the last few years. There were a lot of artists' books already in the collection, but we just grouped them together physically in this specific collection in our stacks and made sure they were properly described in our catalog. In terms of selection, I use a broad network of booksellers, artists, publishers and professional colleagues to learn about new projects and follow along with projects I am already familiar. This is the fun part of my job, and I am always grateful to connect with the people in the book community.

**The definition of what makes an artists' publication has moved a lot, or let say there are multiple schools and point of view on that subject. How do you approach this question? Has your point of view on that question evolved with the time?**

I generally rely on what the artist says the object is in terms of identification. If they tell me it's an artist book or if some descriptive text in the publisher's catalog describes it as an artist publication, I am good with that. At MoMA, there was a librarian named Clive Philpot that sought to define clearly what it was he called artists' books and created graphs and visual aids to support his thinking. I learned from those cues in my early work at MoMA, but I also quickly learned to listen to the producers of the stuff.

Decisions that we make when processing new materials in terms of this category are often pragmatic decisions regarding how a book needs to be stored or whether it should circulate. When we classify something as

an artist book, it gets a special housing, and it does not circulate out of the library.

**Working at SFMOMA includes you are dealing with history, and, in the mean time, with the most recent artworks. I know you also are in the Printed Matter Inc. Advisory Council and were a Board Member of Primary Information. Since a couple of years now, we see more and more articles, shows and books claiming a "rebirth" of publishing practices into the contemporary art field. I would be curious to know what are your thoughts about it? And how do you see those new editorial practices?**

I am excited by new projects and am always curious to learn about an artist, designer or art worker's trajectory that led them to begin publishing, to work in this way. The stories I hear are often related to a motivation to get their ideas and work out into the world without having to ask anyone else's permission, or to go through the normal

gatekeepers of institutions, bigger publishers or academic reviewers to realize a project. I think this spirit of publishing, of taking things literally into your own hands, is what we see in various ways in the field and what I am excited to support through my work. My work with organizations like Printed Matter and Primary Information are part of my interest in supporting this spirit and energy. One example in that regard, for the last 13 years, I have organized a program of talks for Printed Matter's New York Art Book Fair called the Classroom. The program gives participants a chance to introduce new publications that they are bringing to the fair. There have been over 500 talks, performances, screenings and readings during this time, and I am constantly impressed by the continued (and perhaps growing energy) in the field and how it connects across a lot of different communities of art, design, photography, film, poetry, activism, feminist and queer critical thinking, etc. Over the pandemic, it was hard to get a sense of anything thriving, but with the return of the fair this

last year in New York, we could really feel the excitement and productivity through publishers at the fair, the crowds that packed the space and people that attended the programs. I can say for sure that people were ready to return to meeting at book fairs. I also helped with programming at the San Francisco Art Book Fair this last summer and felt the same energy and we gathered local publishers in the Bay Area for a small fair at SFMOMA this December. All these experiences were reminders that these gatherings of people in real life are essential parts of what I understand as the vibrancy of the publishing community in my current home in the Bay Area, but also around the world at various fairs, book shops and collecting institutions.

In terms of your question of rebirth, I think the tool set for publishers and designers is certainly different, but I also see connecting threads and similarities across avant garde art and design from the early 20th century into the present where innovative minds continue to

use publishing, printing and creative distribution strategies of printed work to get new ideas out into the world and to help form new communities through this communication tool of a book, magazine or printed ephemera. I like being surprised by things that arrive in the mail and that continues to happen. Thanks to all the colleagues around the world that continue to work hard to make our mail interesting!

# CLAUDIA DE LA TORRE

interview realised in autumn 2021

**Claudia, there is something interesting in your position and that's why I wanted to do this interview with you, not only you are an artist who does books, but you also publish other artists books. If I could sum up, and correct me if I am wrong, but publishing is your artistic practice. Also, to begin this conversation, could you please introduce yourself, your background?**

That is true. I do consider publishing in the wider sense of the term as my practice. To make something public, ideas public. I create concept based publications. It has always been hard to define myself, but I'll give it a try. I am a Mexican artist, publisher and thinker living in Germany (Berlin) since thirteen years. In 2011 I started backbonebooks not really knowing what I was getting myself to and with the need of finding a way to distribute the books I was creating at that time. In this ten years it has grown into a platform that allows me not only to self-publish

myself but also to work with friends, or artists whose work I find relevant. This has nothing to do with being a known, or unknown artist, but rather an appreciation towards their work. A labor that grows out of interest and curiosity.

**How do you come with this idea of working with books? Were they already part of your work at the time?**

When I was a student, my body of work developed around the concepts of memory, repetition and difference. I was constantly re-arranging found material, using archival strategies such as keeping things inside binders, categorizing and trying to understand new ways of working with order. Books are naturally objects in which material is already ordered (either in volumes, pages, in a shelf, beside other books, in libraries, lists, from A to Z, from 1 to 100). Books and libraries were spaces in which I always felt safe in. Before even knowing what an artist-book

was. This organically came into the surface in 2010. Back then (and still having in mind how materials have a memory of its own) I made my first “book work.” *Black Snow* consisted of a simple rule: starting with an A4 page, to make as many photocopies needed in order to go back to a white page. This way the toner of the printer would be finished and so the work. A photocopy is never just a copy, but always an original. I divided the work into days, each day perfect-bound containing 100 copies each. One volume a day. From that moment on, I wanted to explore all the possibilities the book as a medium has to offer. I was officially an obsessed book maker.

**In 2011, you created backbonebooks, a way for you to officialize, or formalize your own practice and support other’s work. A part of your work, which deals with image and a reflection on the space you show it, used to be exhibited in art spaces. How do you come to this desire to develop your own publishing house?**

In 2011 I was about to finish my art studies in the Adbk Karlsruhe. At that time, in the same Academy I met Thomas Geiger. He was the only book interested person I knew back then, and he was starting a self-publishing house himself (Mark Pezinger Books). I had recently made a book *Twenty Six (unknown) Gasoline Stations* a homage to Ed Ruscha, before even knowing about this remake hype. So I came to Thomas and asked if he would be interested in publishing the book. He turned to me and with the honesty that characterizes him told me that he was not really interested because the book didn’t fit his program. To be honest with you I felt super disappointed at the moment. I couldn’t understand what he was saying! - but ten years after, with 77 books behind me, now I do. That moment pushed me. It made me realize that you don’t have to wait for others to open you a door. That actually you can create your own way and follow it. The next day after the rejection I officially created backbonebooks. I had a lucid dream in which that name ap-

peared out of the nothing. In the middle of my dream I woke up, made a quick note and when I woke up there it was. A yellow post-it with the note “backbone-books” a column that holds pages.

**When checking at your website, there is something that intrigued me a lot, you wrote “A book is also a sculpture, an object.” Could you tell us more about that idea?**

I like to understand a book in all its qualities. To take in account its physical aspect but also its conceptual. If I say a book is an object, then I can deconstruct the idea. An object can be understood in many ways - an object is a volume that occupies space, that relates to the body.

As a pile of layering pages. As a block, as a piece of paper. The form is then expanded. A book doesn't necessarily has to have a bound spine. It can exist in many other ways. When I think about this, then my way of making books is also expanded. It opens a new field of understand-

ing. I am able to move within a flexible frame.

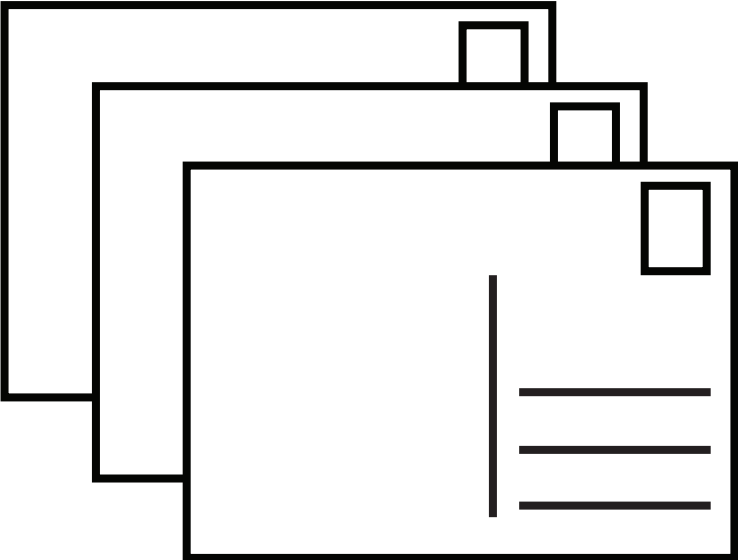
**Collaboration, apart from the books of other artists you publish is also part of your work. In *Books are Bridges*, to take as an example one of your recent projects, you sent postcards to invite more than 150 people (artists, publishers, friends, colleagues, visitors, etc.) to ask for their opinion on the following question: “Books are bridges between ... and ...” From this show at A-Z, Berlin, you created a book where the content doesn't depend on you but on the public and answers you will have. How do you come to this type of project? And more especially, what role collaboration plays in your practice?**

Collaboration is key. A book has to be activated in order to exist. So it asks for a collaboration between the work and the user. For the project *Books are Bridges* I wanted to create a new work for the space. It was in the middle of the pandemic

and so I thought that I needed to engage the public. If they couldn't make it to the space, then they should become part of the work. Mail art also asks for collaboration. If I send a postcard, the person has to send it back to me. It asks to not just write something, but to take time and actually send it back.

their eventual 'aesthetic' quality, become formal elements of a new art-work."

Bridges are structures to cross from one side to another. I came up with the concept but the book then built itself. This is a work that functions as a bridge that connects people and ideas. Ulises Carrión couldn't have said it better in a text he wrote for a show in the Print Gallery (Amsterdam 1981) where he exhibited the work *Feedback pieces*: "A Mail-Art project is a research on concepts such as individual/group, meaning/interpretation, input/output, creation/destruction (plural authorship). The participation of the public represents a collective re-enactment of a main problem in contemporary art 'how does art come into existence?' In Mail-Art the question as well as the answer, regardless of



# VALENTINO TONINI

interview realised in summer 2021

**Created in the early 1980's by Bruno and Paolo Tonini, with the intention to focus on rare or out of print books and other documents, L'Arengario Studio Bibliografico is a family story! Valentino, my first question is about the catalogue you created through the years; is it only focusing on avant-garde movements, or are you also working with contemporary artists' books and documents?**

We started focusing on historical avant-gardes, collecting through the time one of the most important group of Futurist materials in the world for example. But everything change, and we also did a few times in our history. Almost 15 years ago we started to sell neo avant-gardes like conceptual art, fluxus, minimal art, and actually these are the main paths of our archive. The approach to the strictly contemporary art is a bit careful, because we think that in our stock should be only historicized documents and books. We released on September 4 a

list dedicated to invitation cards from 1990 to 2021, but it was an attempt.

At the moment, I am personally researching contemporary artists' books for our collection, looking at the productions of the newest publishing houses.

**That is an interesting point! Since a couple of years now, we see lot of articles nowadays talking about a certain "rebirth" of artists' editions, I would be curious to know what are your thoughts about it? And how do you see those new editorial practices?**

Since I'm starting Tonini Editore, it's pretty obvious what I think. Jokes apart, this field could be explored again and again, both for the variety of the "book" medium and the infinite numbers of way to read it, but we could keep in mind that this could take us to a kind of "saturation" of publications.

**For a few years now, you and your brother has joined the adventure, how does it work? Each of you has a specific mission and interest for a specific field, or is it more open?**

I joined the group a couple of years ago, while my brother (he is 17 right now) is not part of the Studio officially, but sometimes he helps us, especially during the fairs all around the Europe. As I said before, my interests are in contemporary art publications and books, but of course I work on different fields for catalogs and lists.

**Working as a book shop, one of your main mission is to find and sell books, but for a short period you also had been collaborating with 17.2 Art Gallery, which is specialized in artists' books, posters and other ephemera. You now are organizing exhibitions in your space, you even publish catalogs from them. Do you think, that exhibiting books is also now part of your job? Plus, there**

**is something very challenging when exhibiting artists' books because of their nature, how are you approaching those questions?**

We used to exhibit books - not only artists' books, but also avant-gardes and gastronomy for example - in our space many years ago, but we decided to stop for a period because it was so stressful and complicated.

During our collaboration with 17.2 Art Gallery, the gallery owned by my mum, we were experimenting exhibitions dedicated to artist's books in a window in the city center; it was very exciting and funny studying new ways to exhibit those materials.

We consider the exhibitions an important part of our job, both for the importance of these events and because we really enjoy the time doing them. Actually we are collaborating with Edoardo Monti, founder and owner of Palazzo Monti in Brescia, for an exhibition on view from 2nd October 2021

dedicated to a small selection from our private collection of artists' invitations; the most challenging part was the display, because as you were saying of their nature. We should keep in our mind that these objects was born with a purpose, so we like to not "deform" them.

**That is indeed the tricking question, keeping in mind the nature of these objects, they are books. How do you deal with the fact that their first purpose was to be read, and manipulated?**

Looking through the history of curating, Germano Celant in 1972 for the great exhibition *Book as artwork 1960-1972* choose transparent display cases for the books, and from then, in the following different exhibitions, it didn't changed so much.

There are many factors that contribute to that choice, one of them probably was the chance of a robbery or the fact that when you manipulate them you

could ruin the pages. So we came up with the idea that the best thing (but sometimes very difficult) is to have multiple copies of each book, so you can show different pages and give a better idea of the work.

Books were born to be read, but artists' books were born to be seen.

**Does L'Arengario Studio Bibliografico welcome researchers, Phd students, curators, artists, critics, etc.?**

Sometimes it happens, but usually with friends or strict collaborators or curators and critics

**In 2021, you decided to take a new path, the Bibliographic Studio remains, but you also are developing an editorial adventure, you just have created Tonini Studio. How does it come to your mind to develop this activity? And, even though it is maybe too soon to talk about it, what will be the main lead you'd like to follow (if there is one)?**

Yes, I am now taking a parallel way with Tonini Editore, a publishing house that will be focused on contemporary art - in the sense of production of artist's books, posters, editions and bibliographic books on artists and documents.

This come up to my mind talking with my parents during a lunch, as we always do.

The main series will be *Autobiography*, from an idea of my father inspired by the famous book by Sol Lewitt with the same name, which consists in a monthly publications of artists' books each time by different artists selected in company with a scientific committee of six people + me. *Autobiography* will have the same size, 17x12 cm, and graphic layout for the cover; is printed in 500 copies and the first number will be presented in november. In the meantime we are presenting a poster by Peter Downsbrough made with Loom Gallery in Milan and a series of three postcards by french artist Loubé Bertrand.

# CORINA REYNOLDS

interview realised in winter 2024

**Founded in 1974, Center for Book Arts (CBA) is the oldest nonprofit organization dedicated to artists' books. Could we please go back in history and talk a bit about CBA's origins? I was curious to know a little more about who created CBA? How? Why?**

Center for Book Arts was founded by the artist Richard Minsky in the early 1970's—a time when many artists were beginning to take an interest in the book as an artistic medium. The idea for a book art center came to Minsky after a conversation with the then Director of the Hirschhorn Museum in Washington D.C., Abram Lerner. In 1970, Minsky had been hired to photograph artworks in the Museum's collections and, after documenting more than 2000 works, he asked why there were no artists' books included among them and how that could be changed. Lerner suggested that an organization promoting the book as art was the only way to gain the attention of museum curators and validation for the

medium.

When Minsky returned to New York, he saw the need for a space where artists, bookbinders, designers, printers, and writers could share studios and equipment, collaborate, and exhibit books as art and, in 1974 he started the first Center for Book Arts on Bleeker Street in New York City. Almost 50 years later, artists continue to find support in this center through access to specialized studios and equipment, artist residencies, exhibitions of artists' books, a collection of reference books and artworks, a diverse array of workshops promoting a broader understanding of the medium, and a community.

**At CBA, one of your missions is to collect and preserve artists' books, but also to make exhibitions of them. To me, there is always something tricky about showing books as they have been made in a way that requires the viewer to open and manipulate them,**

**but at the same time, as they are art works, part of your responsibility is also to preserve them, to create a sort of memory or repertoire of the different forms that have been created. How do you deal with those questions in the way you curate shows? Is the public allowed to manipulate books?**

This is one of the most important and interesting aspects of the book as an artistic medium. On the one hand, they are meant to be intimately experienced—touched, smelled, listened to—and on the other they are meant for a public—publication means to make public which implies that they are intended to be passed from person to person, sold in shops, and discussed by the masses. Book art exists all along this spectrum from the unique object to the multiple which is one of the reasons it has captivated my attention. In a way, book art is one of the most accessible mediums an artist can participate in. An artists' book could be made out of almost anything (ex. Dieter Roth's *daily mirror*

book, 1961 an edition of 220 books made completely out of used newspapers), in any quantity (ex. *Pet Book*, 1988 by James Prez which is a hand drawn unique book, approximately one centimeter squared, bound with a single staple), and can communicate through a multitude of languages, be completely visual, or even be completely devoid of visual or linguistic content (our collection even includes an edition that communicates completely through scent, *ind.must.y*, 2021 by Augustine Zegers).

The broad range of formats and editions does present a unique challenge for exhibiting book art. Nearly everyone has heard the phrase, 'you can't judge a book by its cover,' but with artists' books that is often the case. Artists that work in the book form often pay special attention to pacing, the visual relationship of image to text which requires the viewer to turn through the whole book before fully understanding the artwork. Yet many of the museum exhibitions we see of artists' books don't do the

medium justice because of the need to protect rare and limited editions. It is not uncommon to be presented with only the cover or one spread of an open book. Even further, they are often presented in vitrines among archival ephemera including correspondence, ticket stubs, or newspaper clippings which further diminishes the viewer's ability to understand the book as a work of art. Back in 2020, I had a conversation with the then Chief Curator of Photography at MoMA, Clément Chéroux, about ideas of how to present photobooks at the museum to an audience so large (each day MoMA commands an audience of nearly 4,000 people). Since turning the pages of a book 4000 times a day would surely ruin it, one of our ideas was to either commission a special in-museum handling edition that could accommodate the large number of readers (museums often pay photographers to make exhibition prints, so why should a photobook be any different?)

At Center for Book Arts our audience is much more mana-

geable. For durable or easily replaced artists' books we encourage handling the way the artist originally intended. And for items that are rare or too delicate to handle we often make a handling facsimile. Our recent exhibition *Off-Register: Publishing Experiments by Women in Latin American, 1960-1990* curated by Méla Davila Freire, offered visitors the opportunity to turn the pages of facsimiles of artists' publications from the early 1960's—a rare opportunity for the public to be able to read the entirety of some of these books.

Because not all museums are able to be as accommodating as Center for Book Arts is with its collections, we are excited to be convening a workshop this year (2024) for early and mid-career Drawings and Prints Curators, generously funded by The Getty Foundation's Paper Project, that will develop new best practices for exhibiting artists' books in the museum context. The week-long event will provide curators with the opportunity to make, handle, and discuss a variety of book

forms while also involving senior professionals from art museums in New York to look back into the history of how this medium has been exhibited and develop something that better meets the needs of the viewing public.

**One aspect of Center for Book Arts is that you provide a space dedicated to production for bookbinding and printing, you have a Riso printer, letterpress, etc. Is this also part of your educational program?**

Yes! Since its founding, studio access and education have been core to the mission of Center for Book Arts. We have a roster of about 55 Artist Instructors who teach specialized techniques in book making and printing. These workshops often take place in our Manhattan studios, but certain classes are also offered online so that a broader range of people can learn from these incredible artists and scholars. One of my favorite workshops is taught by our Founder Richard

Minsky—a Book Art Critique Workshop that is focused on helping participants learn how to develop a critical framework for speaking about a piece of book art (whether their own or someone else's). These types of courses that aim to expand the participant's understanding of the book art landscape are just as important as the technique based workshops that are offered in our studios because they aim to balance the weight of process/material and concept/metaphor.

**Center for Book Arts collection is very large, either it is in terms of time range, or in terms of forms. The collection is indeed made of what we call artists editions, but also art books about books, ephemera, posters, etc. How would you describe your collection and what would be the guiding lines?**

That is a great question! Because of how our collection developed, the collecting guidelines and priorities have changed over the years. In the early

years, many of the items in our collection were practical. Books about bookbinding and printing processes were an important resource for artists who were developing the field. Today we have over 2,400 reference books cataloged ranging from how-to books, to book art exhibition catalogues, to artists monographs focused on the book form, critical source books, and of my favorite collecting areas right now is around the theory of artists' publishing. Our fine art collection developed out of our exhibitions program and the artists who have made work in our studios. We have books from our early exhibitions like *Stories your Mother Never Told You* which included the 1979 artwork *A Modern-Day Cowboy* by Stephanie Brody Lederman (CBA Collections Identifier FA.B20.0092) and *It's a Dog Eat Dog World* made in 1982 by Karen Fredericks (CBA Collections Identifier FA.SA3.0038).

Today we grow our Fine Art and Reference collections through donations from private collectors and artists—we maintain a wish list of items that instructors

and artists who use our studios request in case a special angel wants to support by donating an item we have already identified for acquisition. Our Librarian Gillian Lee describes our collections as “the best ever” and constantly emphasizes that, “we are proudly open to the public for walk-in research in our Reference Collection and flexible with research appointments that use our Fine Art Collection.” They are always very happy to consult with researchers about their fields of interest and to help with navigating the collections beyond the scope of our fully illustrated online database.

**I would also like to talk about you and your experience, as you ran, with Kimberly McClure, Small Editions, a publishing house with which you sought to bring book arts into the realm of contemporary. You produced many programs, workshops, exhibitions, and other projects through Small Editions. Then in 2018 you became the Executive Director of Center**

**for Book Arts. How did you come to working with artists' books / book arts?**

Artists' books found me at a young age. In college I audited a letterpress class as a way to avoid taking a textile arts class with a syllabus focused on potholders. The course was with a book maker named Bill Kelly and quickly became involved with Brighton Press of San Diego. Bill and his partner Michele Burges (another undergraduate teacher of mine) ran the press with a group of artists and poets and I became their print devil. They introduced me to the idea of artists' publishing, bookbinding, and printing which led me to where I am now. It wasn't until shortly after moving to New York that books really became a part of my professional career.

In 2012 Kimberly and I started Small Editions as a way to support ourselves as artists and to have access to the tools and equipment we wanted to use. Kimberly had just finished a residency at Center for Book Arts and we started Small Editions by volunteering in exchange for

studio access as we picked up odd bookbinding jobs. Within a year we were able to afford to start our own book studio which quickly also allowed us to start publishing and use the studio as an exhibition space. It was exciting to be able to introduce emerging artists to the medium of the book for art. One of my favorite publications was *Please Enjoy*, 2017 by the artist Sun You in which Sun used her sculpey sculptures directly on the scanner bed of our risograph printer in order to create colorful flower-like print arrangements. The book pokes fun at the miss-identification of people from the greater Asian diaspora as being from China or Japan through color and form. Not only is the book beautiful and witty, it was also incredibly fun to work with Sun throughout the project.

Around 2014 we began hosting contemporary art exhibitions in the studio. It was a lot of work because we wanted to present the artworks professionally but had limited space. So, before every event, we moved all the furniture and bookmaking

equipment into the closet (shout out to Sarah Smith for all the tetris work) which turned the space into a slightly more traditional artist run gallery space. We showed the artists' books we published alongside other artforms (painting, sculpture, video etc.) as a way of connecting more people to the idea that books could be art too.

That entire time, Small Editions became my artistic practice—I stopped making installation and video in favor of building the community of artists and publishers in New York. I think that's what lead me to take on my current role at Center for Book Arts.

**In 2021, with two collaborators you founded *Book Art Review*, a series of publication that propose a new critical discourse in the field, could you please tell us a bit more about this new project and its origins?**

*Book Art Review (BAR)* was founded during the pandemic with two close friends and colla-

borators Megan N. Liberty and David Solo, but the conversations that led to the publication started way before that. It was really born out of conversations during the New York Art Book Fair about how there didn't seem to be any real critical dialogue happening in and around the community. Each year we would come to the fair, see hundreds of new books, talk to new and old friends, but no one was really talking about why they were making or buying these artists' books. It seemed like a market for artists' books had been created without any criticism to support it. As collectors of books about artists' books, the three of us knew this wasn't the case, but many of our peers seemed to lack a framework needed for assessing what they were seeing and doing.

This same problem can be endemic throughout the arts writing sphere. Reviewers are underpaid or not paid at all. Many writers err on the side of promotional positivity leaving artists, collectors, and scholars in a critical vacuum. *BAR* sets out to raise the bar for book

art criticism. We called for new writing that considers the artists' book's bookness (asked how the paper, binding, printing, and design affected the artwork), that connected the work to a larger history of artists' books, art, and culture, and that was easy to read.

Today we are working on our third issue (when we launched, we had ambitions of two issues per year, it's really turned out to be closer to one) as volunteer editors. We are always looking for new writers (we pay!) and people interested in getting involved in an editorial capacity. We are also always looking for new book recommendations.

**You have been publishing books, you lead workshops and talks, you are now executive director of CBA, you founded Book Art Review, I was curious to know your thoughts on contemporary publishing practices.**

I think artists have it tough right now—materials and shipping are getting more expensive,

normal people are spending less on art, and book stores continue to take a 50% consignment fee. To me this points to a greater need for collective resource sharing, alternative distribution models, and some serious creative thinking. Not surprisingly this is exactly what we are seeing. Artists are forming collectives to publish and support their communities. A great example of this is Black Mass who uses their publishing as a platform for collaboration community uplifting. We can expect to see more and more focus on collective publishing models as artistic practice instead of a focus on the individual artist publisher. Also, as in previous generations, we are seeing artistic publishing being used in service of the artists' goals for social and environmental change. Just as artists of the 1960's used zines to spread ideas of radical feminism, today we see a focus on transgender rights among many other causes.

# MARK PEZINGER

interview realised in winter 2022

**Mark Pezinger Books was founded in 2009 by two artists, Karsten Födinger and Thomas Geiger two artists, and since 2015, it is run by Astrid Seme and Thomas Geiger. How do you come to this desire to develop your own publishing house?**

I (Thomas Geiger) was already very involved with publications and printed matter during my studies, as I found this an ideal space to document and distribute my performances. Together with Karsten we made the plan to create a platform for like-minded artists who share this passion. One of the first artists we met was Astrid Seme, with whom we realized a publication (*Urbirds singing the Sonata*). The collaboration developed much more intensively than expected and Astrid became a part of the team. Her approach as a graphic designer and her interest in the relationship between spoken and written language gave the publishing house a new dimension.

**As a publishing structure, you are exploring a lot of different forms, from booklet to sound work, prints and books from other artists. What does it mean as artists to publish other artists work?**

First and foremost, it means being curious and empathetic about the work of other artists and how they see things. But it also means trusting each other. We trust the artist we work with, and on the other hand, we also expect artists to trust us with our experience in editing and publishing.

**Collaboration is key in your approach, how would you define this aspect of your work, and how important is it to you?**

Maybe this question has already been answered, but perhaps we can briefly tell you about our general way of working: we do not accept finished proposals of publications. Each publication is based on a raw

editorial idea that we develop and design (Astrid) together in a dialogue between the artist and us. This close collaboration is extremely important to us and gives us a deep relation with each publication and its contents.

**Also, since your beginnings you had participated and curated exhibitions. Is this something important to you, to not only think and publish books but show them? And how do you deal with some curatorial issues?**

In the beginning, these exhibitions were very important, because many of our publications have very small print runs, and exhibitions are a way to make them available to a larger audience. But that has shifted in recent years. On the one hand, because we've started to publish in larger print runs. On the other hand we organise presentations and enjoy the exchange and the discussions with other people involved in (artist's) books. For us, these are like a "condensed exhibition," where

we spotlight a selection of publications under a particular theme, which we can talk about and discuss with the audience. We really enjoy the energy of such events.

**You also developed a specific project that is intriguing, "Adoptives" which are books that have already been published, and even self-published you decided to adopt and distribute them as if you published them. How does it work? and how do you came with that idea?**

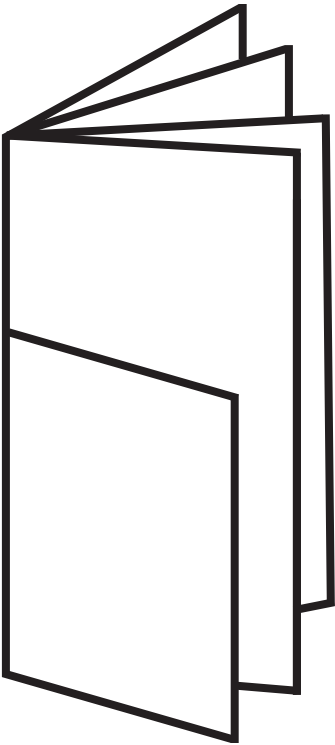
Actually, it was an idea that one of the artists we worked with, Eric Hattan, suggested to us. So the Adoptives are based on an adopted idea. The idea is pretty simple: many artists publish without a publisher. Many artists are lacking a network of distribution and it's a great pity if their publications end up in a drawer. So when we find one of these hidden or forgotten publications that interests us, we propose to the artist to adopt it. That is, we include the remaining issues in our program and

distribute them through our network.

**We recently noticed a proper development of the editorial works, more and more artists and publishers are working with artists editions today, also, I was wondering what were your thoughts on this growth of interest for these practices? And what was your point of view on these contemporary editorial practices?**

We think it's fantastic that interest in this medium is growing – on the part of producers (artists, publishers). But we all need to find solutions to reach the interest of a wider audience. We experience ourselves how difficult the distribution of artists' books is, and from our point of view it has become even more difficult in recent years. Recently, our German distributor also filed for insolvency. The main question we all face is how can we manage to make this medium, which we all call "democratic" become truly democratic, in a sense that

there is a growing awareness and willingness to buy in society for artists' books. Or to make a long story short: How can we get out of the bubble?



# ARNAUD DESJARDINS

interview realised in spring 2023

**Arnaud, you're an artist and a publisher, you lead workshops, curate shows, write books on books... The book is at the center of your practice. How did you come working with artist's publications?**

Books were always part of my interests and ways to understand art but it took me a while to find myself on the publishing side.

I originally trained in sculpture at the École des Beaux Arts in Paris in the early 1990s and moved to London in 1995 after getting my diploma. I then got an MA in Visual Culture at Middlesex university in the UK in the late 1990s. I started working part-time in a second hand art bookshop and got to handle and learn about a lot books by artists, in particular the productions of the 1960s onward. I also got involved in book fairs and the general distribution of art publications so from the start I should have known better than to start

publishing my own books, from an economic perspective it's a sure way of losing money rather than make a living. There were also many encounters with artists, collectors, dealers involved in books and their passion proved communicative.

**Since 2007, you run The Everyday Press, a publishing house through which you publish multiple kind of works, and most of it, different formats. All of this is possible thanks to your appetite to work with new peoples. As an artist, how did you decide to create your own structure and publish other artists' works?**

While teaching at Kingston University in the mid 2000 I got an opportunity to do a Doctorate focused on artists' books production and distribution, I suggested starting an experimental imprint in that context and that's how The Everyday Press was initiated. The original funding for the research provi-

ded the necessary finance and it grew from there. There wasn't an intention to have an identity from the start but rather to create a new channel alongside existing publishers, bookshops, archives and collections and the networks that had been built from the 1960s onward.

**Collaboration seems important to your ethic, for example, when we check at your website, we can see the name of the former editorial and design collaborators you worked with under the name of The Everyday Press, your publishing house. The latest is also the opportunity for you to work with various artists, graphic designers and authors. Would you say collaboration is an important thing to you? How would you define your relation to collaboration?**

Publishing is essentially the result of a series of interactions, first between skilled individuals (artist, designer, printer, author, whatever) organised towards the production of an object in

multiple copies, a book, and then of exchanges (intellectual, economic, etc.) with literate individuals who receive the books and participate in their distribution and dissemination. The process of editing a book at The Everyday Press is mostly slow, concerned with finding an adequate form to the ideas in the knowledge of a particular context and the need to find funds for the production outlays (paying the designer, finding the right printing quote). Graphic designers play an important role in the editorial and production process, defining the roles of each participant isn't really a concern of mine though giving credit where it is due is. I'm personally quite useless with digital layout tools like InDesign, it isn't part of my skill sets but I understand enough to have a conversation about why something should be laid out in a particular way for a particular purpose.

**Since a couple of years now, you also run another project called Bunker Basement which is visible through its**

**Instagram account. Could you please tell us a bit more about this project? Its origins, its form, etc.**

This started almost as a joke, the bunker is a real space: an underground storage unit in the center of London under the Barbican. Originally taken on to store the everyday press stock it developed into a sort of dealership for rare books and an archive of sort. The public face of the bunker on social media is the least satisfying aspect of it as I'd rather meet people and talk in the way it happens at book fairs. Digital technologies have been devastating to the ecology of book distribution, I can't stand the fact that Amazon is a de-facto monopoly that actually doesn't care if it sales books or cabbages. For now we are still captive individuals in systems that would be much better off expropriated from the Tech Barons but that is another story.

In some ways the Bunker is an act of tactical retreat from the current book distribution situation, the pressure on real

estate, bookshops closing, etc. it is a contradiction that it is getting most of its visibility through a platform that is manipulating its users. Do get in touch for a visit in the real bunker.

**You also had the occasion to curate shows, when it comes to show books, there is this question that comes again and again, do we put them under a glass, making he manipulation of the object impossible, or do we allow the public to manipulate the object, taking the risk of damaging the work. I would have been curious to know your post of view on this question.**

There are many inventive solutions to this problem. Books exist in multiple copies of the same and I like to have the ability to handle and "read" books in the context of exhibition even if it means having some used/damaged copies at the end of the process. these is also the possibility to make new "fac-simile" copies or systems of display where the books are

actually accessible but the emphasis is on the fragility of the object and the need for care in handling. The best book show is a shelf full of books one can pick from but i also understand the display tropes that project the object into its “thingness” in order to turn it into an example, an idea, an artwork.

# MARTHA WILSON

interview realised in winter 2022

**We know the 1970's were an important period for publications and artists' books, and maybe, 1976 was one of the years we will remember as it was, one one side the year Printed Matter, Inc was founded and defined as a distributor and publisher of artists' books, and the very same year, in the same district, TriBeCa, NYC, you founded Franklin Furnace, which, at first, was created as a storefront, which quickly became an 'alternate' space for artists to find an audience outside of the market. At the time, for at least a decade, a lot of artists were publishing as their artistic practice. Would you say there was a lack of interest for editorial practices? How did you come with the idea of founding Franklin Furnace?**

I became an artist early in the 1970s through my exposure to Conceptual artists visiting the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD). After graduation from college in 1969, my boyfriend didn't want to get

drafted into the Vietnam War, and I had been raised a Quaker, who are pacifists, so we moved to Canada. I enrolled in the graduate English program at Dalhousie University, which was across the street from NSCAD. When I discovered WORDS could be VISUAL ART, I became an artist. When my boyfriend and I split up in 1974, I moved to New York to find out if I really was an artist or not; and found lots of others who were publishing their work in book form, or as posters, or broadsides, which were sent through the mail and posted on the street. I published a book version of a piece I did at 112 Greene Street Workshop entitled *1. Truck 2. Fuck 3. Muck* and I knew about 30 other artists who were publishing their work in book form, so I decided to open a bookstore for artists' books and one-of-a-kind book-objects in the storefront where I was living in TriBeCa.

At the same time that this was happening, the founders of Printed Matter, Inc. (PMI) (about

a dozen people) were meeting to discuss what the community of artists' book makers needed. We thought it would be a great idea for Printed Matter to move into Franklin Furnace's storefront; but Willoughby Sharp, who lived on the top floor of 112 Franklin Street, came downstairs with his attorney and yelled, THIS WILL NEVER BE KNOWN AS THE PRINTED MATTER BUILDING! This frightened the founders of PMI who established their business a block away on Hudson Street before finding a storefront on Lispenard Street. But during our meetings we decided to divide the job of aiding this new field, with Franklin Furnace taking the not-for-profit purpose of exhibition and preservation, while PMI took the for-profit jobs of publication and distribution.

**Until 1993, in approximately 15 years, Franklin Furnace gathered the most important collection of artists' books. This year, the collection has been acquired by the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA, NY), did it change the way**

**you were working with artists' books? Did you continue to collect material until nowadays?**

Between opening day on April 3rd, 1976 and 1993, Franklin Furnace gathered the largest collection of artists' books in the United States. At some point in the early 1990s, the Board discussed how the books were made of paper, and the loft was made of wood; so maybe Franklin Furnace was not the best guardian of this material. The Board reached out to major institutions that also had collections of artists' books, and Clive Phillpot at MoMA won the collection. We had asked the artists for 3 copies of their books (the archival standard) so MoMA kept all the first copies; sold the second copies to pay for the acquisition; and (eventually) returned the 3rd copies to us. We continue to collect artists' books, and consider it to be a teaching collection that may be handled by researchers and students at Pratt Institute where Franklin Furnace is now an Organization-in-Residence.

**What is your role in Franklin Furnace? And what does it imply?**

My role at Franklin Furnace (FF) is Founding Director Emerita. This means that Harley Spiller, the Ken Dewey Director of FF, does the day-to-day administration and fundraising, along with the staff; but I am available to provide institutional memory and advice. The way this works in practice is that I am a participant in events in FF's digital LOFT, which FF's Program Director built as the COVID era closed art spaces where FF Fund grant recipients were supposed to have presented their performance work. Along with five other organizations, we just celebrated Linda Mary Montano's 80th birthday with a 21-hour online celebration in the LOFT.

**Also, in 1997, the board of Franklin Furnace decided to create franklinfurnace.org to pursue its mission, helping emerging artists to reach a broader audience through specific medias. You were**

**ahead of your time! How has this new support and space impacted the role of Franklin Furnace?**

On February 1st, 1997, FF "went virtual" in the wake of the Culture Wars in the U.S. in order to ensure that the artists it presented would have freedom of expression. At first we presented artists "in exile," in other organizations' spaces: Judson Memorial Church, Cooper Union, the New School, P.S. 122, but eventually we considered the entire city of New York to be available, and to find the right venue for each artist's concept. At the same time, we were building a relational database in FileMaker Pro to catalog our artists, their events, exhibitions, performances, artists' books, and reference collection. We were pretty proud of this work; of course now, our system is "old fashioned," such that if you Google Ana Mendieta, her FF event record does not appear in your search. Consequently our Senior Archivist made the decision to migrate everything to CONTENTdm; this years-long

effort is now underway.

**Your support to publications and artists was not only founded on the collection work, but also, you are allowing grants every year. Could you please tell us more about those grants and how you now are supporting artists?**

Franklin Furnace Fund grants to performance artists were initiated in 1985 with the support of Jerome Foundation. Over the years, other foundations and agencies have come and gone with their support; this past summer, FF had \$40,000 from Jerome Foundation, The SHS Foundation, and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs to distribute to artists who are selected annually by a peer review panel. This panel changes every year, and in so doing, it remains responsive to the social, political and spiritual changes taking place in the performance art community. Fund performances must take place in New York City, or now that the COVID era is upon us, in the FF digital LOFT.

**Franklin Furnace was build on this idea of democratizing some 'alternate' art forms, as artists' books, but also you said earlier, performances. This idea of democratizing art has been criticized and attacked by art historians as it didn't work as planed. Still, through the work you are realizing at FF, especially with the grants, the multiple events, meetings, shows, Sequential Art For Kids, etc. you are always looking for a broader audience, in this idea of democratizing avant-gardes. Is it something important to you?**

In the 1970s New York was an abandoned city so the artists moved into vacant loft spaces and started doing their work in every available form, including playing music, making films, artists' books, photography, street actions, video. One democratizing impulse was to create works that could NOT be bought and sold by galleries and museums - or were too cheap to produce a profit. Of course the galleries and museums figured out ways to sell

it anyway, presenting temporary installations (like the alternative spaces) in the front but selling the prints, photos and paintings in the back. Still later, the museums started collecting artists' books and performance art documentation. Nowadays, it's sometimes hard to tell which spaces are not-for-profit and which ones are commercial! And finally, the Internet has done more to democratize the art world and the rest of the world than any technology before, except perhaps printing. Social movements like Arab Spring were made possible by electronic connections. It is interesting to watch how new generations of artists and non-artists operate in our connected world!

**Over the last decade or so, we noticed a proper development of artists' editions; more and more artists are publishing their work as a practice. Active for almost 45 years in contemporary art and artist's editions, creating and publishing your own editions but also as a former**

**director of Franklin Furnace, I would be curious to know your point of view and thoughts regarding contemporary editorial practices.**

Artists' books became a preoccupation of mine about half a century ago, when I was in graduate school in English Literature but hanging out at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design where Conceptual visiting artists from Vito Acconci to Lawrence Weiner were using language as a visual art medium and producing publications to hold these ideas. The first work of art I ever made was a 1971 text, *A Short Story About Nova Scotia*, which is really about getting itself written and not about Nova Scotia at all. By 1975 I had moved to New York and discovered that there was a whole community of downtown folks who were making photo-text works, doing performance art and street actions, publishing posters, books, broadsides, Mail Art, shooting film, video and building temporary installations-time-based practice. I was invited to produce an

installation at 112 Greene Street Workshop and when the show was over, I decided to make an artists' book out of the text. This was 1. *Truck* 2. *Fuck* 3. *Muck*, the same story told three times but from different levels of consciousness. The first telling appeared on the right hand page of the book; the second telling was on the left hand page; and the third telling was upside-down, such that the reader had to turn the book 180 degrees, becoming aware of the vehicle provided by the book form itself.

On April 3rd, 1976 Franklin Furnace Archive, Inc. opened in my storefront loft on Franklin Street in TriBeCa with 200 titles. WOW! Who knew there were so many artists doing this kind of work? As time went by, more artists contributed their work, and I heard about other efforts around the country in Rochester, Chicago, and Seattle, and around the world in Amsterdam, Japan and South America. By 1980, the history of artists' books had become a fascination so Franklin Furnace engaged Clive Phillpot to curate

1909-1929; Charles Henri Ford to curate 1930-1949; Jon Hendricks and Barbara Moore to curate 1950-1969; and Ingrid Sischy and Richard Flood to curate 1970-1980 of *The Page as Alternative Space*.

Meanwhile, the collection of artists' books continued to grow and evolve such that early off-set-printed and xeroxed pages became more and more highly produced with photography and professional binding. Now I think it is safe to say that the artists' book field encompasses the complete range of possibility, from scruffy to slick, and is being produced on every continent except perhaps Antarctica.

# MICAH LEXIER

interview realised in summer 2023

**Micah, your practice includes a bunch of forms, and correct me if I am wrong, but I think we could say that your work is mainly on and around language questions and space. Either it takes place in/on a building wall, in a gallery space or a book (including cards, posters...), there is always something dealing with how the space drives the work. The question may sound a little direct, but how did you come out working with artists edition?**

When I started, I didn't really have any manual skills, so I had to figure out a way to make art that didn't have anything do with my ability to physically make things. Every early on, while I was still in art school, I realized that I could do the things that I could do well to make money and then use this money to hire people to make things for me that I couldn't make myself. In many cases, that meant getting items commercially printed or fabricated. And many of these processes

resulted in multiple copies being made, which naturally lent themselves to being (called) multiples or editions. That worked for me, so I just kept making work that way. Now, more than 40 years later, that's still the way I work.

**How would you define the place of publications in your practice?**

There's a great quote by Dieter Roth that has so much resonance for me – "I make art only to support my habit which is to write and publish books." I get that. It's gotten to the stage where I only want to do an exhibition if there's also an opportunity to publish something to go along with it. Multiples and small editioned printed objects are the purest expression of my ideas. I wish I could make a living just making these kinds of items. I'm working towards that.

**I know you also collect artists editions and artists prints.**

**You even created with some other collectors a “secret” group, that regularly gathers to talk about your latest works you all bought. Once a year, you all invite an artist to propose a work and publish it as a small print run. Could you please tell us more about that circle you are in? Its origins, its purpose, etc.**

Well, it's not a secret group, but it is an exclusive group, as once we reached ten members, we decided not to let any more in the group as it would become too unruly and/or bureaucratic. Ten is just the right number of people. We are called “Book Club” and are a group of artists and writers and curators that all share a love of artists' books and multiples. We don't have a fixed number of meetings each year but meet up when someone feels like hosting or when enough time has passed that a meet-up is over-due. We have meet up two or three times a year since 2009 and have also had guest visitors and guest hosts who have shown us their collections. Starting in 2012 and for the next

four years, we commissioned an artist to design a “Book Club” book bag that we published in a small edition for the members to disperse as they pleased. There's a nice online article about us that can be found<sup>1</sup>.

**Dealing with artists publications as a curator is always kind of tricky as it is a form that we usually show under glasses. Keeping in mind the nature of these objects, they are books. How do you deal with the fact that their first purpose was to be read, and manipulated?**

I get really frustrated looking at things under glass, but I completely understand. But, I think I prefer the original object under glass to a replica that I can touch.

**Checking at your instagram is really interesting as it looks like a display used to share what you are looking at and what passes through your hands. What role would**

**you say Instagram plays for you?**

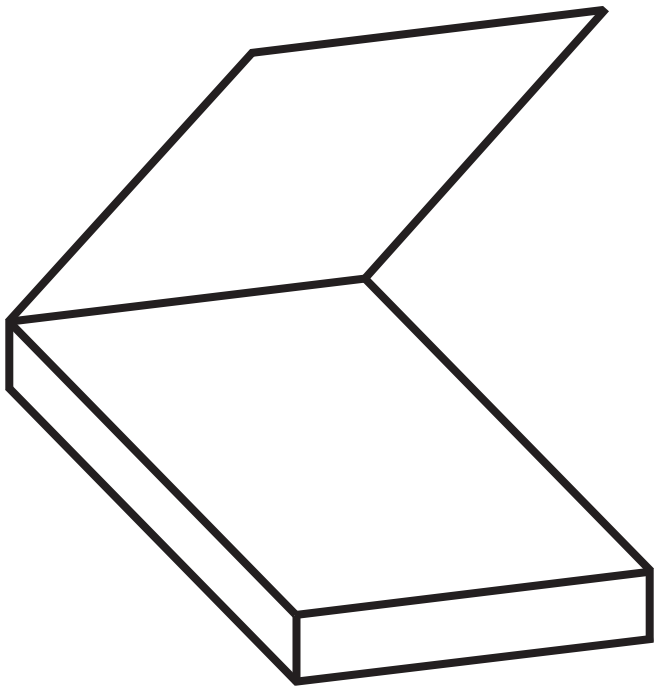
I know that people like to complain about Instagram but it's been a positive platform for me. My posts take several different forms, and I think it's this combination of content that makes it of value for the viewers. Some posts are about promoting something I have made, either a multiple, zine or an exhibition, or something that someone else has made that I want to bring a little attention to. Other posts are about sharing things that inspire me, including any number of found items. And still other posts are more personal, either paying homage to an artist who died or reaching out to help me solve a mystery, for instance helping me identify the name of an anonymous artist's multiple. This is something that happened recently, and I was able to identify the maker because of a tip from a follower.

**As a collector, a curator, but most of it an artist who works with that format, I was wondering what were your**

**thoughts on the contemporary publishing practices?**

I'm thrilled by the proliferation of smaller publishers and how accessible everything and everyone has become because of Instagram. I've been invited to create projects with a few publishers I previously didn't know. And each has been a very positive experience. There have been a range of business practices with some publishers paying an artist fee upfront, others sending copies of the zine as payment, and others who pay once a certain number of copies have been sold. I am fine with all these models, as long as the publisher is up front about it from the very beginning. I think the proliferation of Artist Book Fairs combined with Instagram has created a very exciting moment for contemporary publishing.

(1) See <https://torontostandard.com/culture/shelf-life/>



# MARC FISCHER

interview realised in autumn 2021

**Marc, since 1998, you've been involved in a group called Temporary Services (a group you created with Brett Bloom and others that have since left the group, based at the time, in Chicago). Ten years after, in 2008, both of you created Half Letter Press, an online library and publishing house. In 2007, you started Public Collectors, your own publishing house and project. Can you please tell us more about the beginnings of this project of yours?**

For all of my adult life I've been involved in creative work that produces publications and other printed things. When I was a teenager I published seven issues of a 'zine called *Primary Concern* that was mostly focused on underground hardcore and metal, with some political writing. During that time (about 1988-1991) I was networked with similar publishers all over the world and constantly trading my 'zines with others and collaborating with other publishers.

I primarily made paintings and drawings in college and grad school but abandoned that kind of art practice by around 1996 and started becoming more interested in publishing and projects that had a strong social dimension and could live outside of the gallery world.

Temporary Services began publishing right from the beginning of our work in 1998 and we quickly networked with other artist groups who were often also publishing. Museums and galleries are largely disinterested in the work of artist groups (and the feeling is often mutual) so the best way to learn about a lot of this kind of work was to reach out to the people who were making it. As in my youth, exchanging publications became a way of life and we quickly became repositories of each other's printed matter. As my personal archives and collections grew, it began to weigh on me that the only person looking at this stuff was usually myself. When I teach, a lot of my students don't make art that is anything like

my own so they aren't necessarily an ideal audience for many of these things either.

Around the time that I started Public Collectors, I was having extremely positive interactions with people like Stephen Perkins and the late collector, dealer, and scholar Steven Leiber, who would always generously share their primary documents and knowledge any time I had the pleasure of visiting them. I was also seeing a lot of expertise happening on discussion forums—like forums for record collecting, where people would help each other understand things more deeply, constantly, as a way of life. Those experiences were influential and made me want to formalize a project that encouraged people to share their personal knowledge and resources outside of an institutional framework, where there could be less gatekeeping, and more basic generosity with no expectation of financial reward.

Convincing people to inventory their collections and open their homes to strangers proved

difficult and when people were willing to do this, not many people took advantage of what was offered. Gradually Public Collectors shifted toward other kinds of creative projects and collaborations and the publishing activity increased as well.

**Even though we already could feel that spirit in the first projects, Do It Yourself (DIY) is part of how you work, it almost defines your work. From the form (mainly pamphlets and booklets) to the way you produce them, you are involved in every step, from the conception to the realization, to the distribution. Is it important to you? What does it represent?**

For some projects a DIY approach is just the most efficient way and it's unnecessary to do things in a manner that is less direct. DIY for me often means working within your own means. It's nice to dream big but I love being able to afford to make and do things when inspiration strikes without having to wait for funding and outside sup-

port, even if it means a smaller project. When possible, I love printing at home on a Risograph or even a desktop black and white laser copier and it can be a great way to bang out a hundred copies of something very quickly without ever leaving the house. Other projects are larger and demand different forms of printing and paying for other kinds of production and assembly. Through working with other kinds of printers, I learn more about their processes, papers, inks, and machines that are otherwise foreign to me. I don't have to do all of the labor, but I like to be part of the process and have the experiences that come with that.

I like sending out mail orders and seeing the people at the post office. I like working with the stores that sell my publications. I like standing at a table at book fairs and talking to people who are interested in this work. That direct connection matters to me and becomes interactions with many thousands of people over decades. Being directly available and accountable to the people that care about what

I do feels no different than when I was 17 years old, mailing people copies of my 'zine to readers or selling copies out of a backpack at hardcore shows. Using distributors is helpful but generally I would rather do less and be directly involved, than do much more but in an impersonal way where someone else always does all of the labor. In my experience, staying directly involved with how my art goes out into the world creates more opportunities for collaboration, as well as life-sustaining friendships that evolve alongside the creative work.

### **What role does archive play in your process?**

Much of what I do does not feel formalized or collective enough to be fairly called an archive. My collections are more like labeled files devoted to individual artists and groups and publishers, or boxes labeled with the kind of things they contain (like music-related 'zines, flyers, booklet-format publications created for all kinds of subjects, religious or political

paraphernalia, found writings and photos, etc.). I dip into these collections for inspiration, to share with others who visit, sometimes to share with my students, or to simply revisit the printed or recorded work of my peers and add new things as they give them to me. There are collections and files that are the result of friendships, and then I also buy or find other things I'm interested in through the usual secondary channels. Some of my interests and collections get turned into publications. Other things just sit around because I like returning to them and may one day find a way to share them in a project like an exhibit or book. I might also return to them when I'm inspired to do more scholarship and share the collections in a more thoughtful way.

**Since the beginning of your activity (and I'm not only referring to Public Collectors, but also to Temporary Services, but also Half Letter Press), collaboration has been an important part of your work. Public Collectors**

**is even built on this idea of collaboration. I'm thinking about the *Joong Boo Residency* for which you shared a meal and a conversation with your guest, or more recently your *Quaranzine project*, a daily one page publication that ran for 100 issues for which you collaborated with almost 90 different persons. Could you please tell us more about the importance of collaboration in your process and what does that mean to you?**

For me, an important part of collaboration is spending time with another person and their ideas and thinking. If I value what someone does, I want to work with them in some way, and do something that advances their work. Making a publication with someone is committing to spend time with each other, listen to each other, try different things, and then celebrate when you complete something. That's such a great pleasure—even when it's challenging and there are disagreements. *The Quaranzine project*—where I made a publi-

cation that consisted of a single sheet of paper printed on both sides, every day, for 100 days straight—was an incredible immersion in that process. Some people gave me work that hardly needed any editing or designing. Other collaborations required many emails back and forth until we both felt satisfied with the publication. The project deepened my relationships with so many contributors, introduced me to new people who submitted work—people I’ve never met in person and may never meet—and it opened the doors for lots of future collaborations.

*The Joong Boo Residency* was a project where artists living outside of Chicago could apply simply by contacting me, and I would buy them lunch at a Korean market (named Joong Boo) in my neighborhood and we would have a conversation. That was the residency! After our meal I’d post a little report on social media and write a little about each person’s work. Usually the residency lasted only about a hour or so, but it was a shared commitment to

make focused time with each other to have an exchange. Sometimes this included book exchanges when the resident was also an artist publisher. Other times it was just a great conversation and a delicious meal.

I realized in this project how infrequently I sit with just one other artist and have a real conversation. Some residents were people I have known for ten years who have moved away, but that hour-long conversation was the longest we’d ever spoken to one another. In the past we might have mainly seen each other at events or art openings or parties where there are lots of other people and distractions. While it seems strange to have to schedule time with another person in this formal way, I think it’s a reality of adult life that sometimes this might be what it takes to actually commit to a conversation. It was fun to turn that into a project and the whole thing was a fantastic experience.

When I got tired of *the Joong Boo Residency*, I turned it into

with me observing criminal court in Chicago, followed by a meal at a nearby taqueria. Usually the day lasted at least five or six hours. In one case the day lasted over nine hours, as the artist and I spent all day in court observing a historic sentencing hearing for a Chicago police officer that was convicted of second-degree murder. For these residencies I would record the conversation during the meal, we would edit it together, sometimes the artist would write something additional, and then I'd publish the results as a series of booklets titled *The Courtroom Artist Residency Report*. There were 16 of those residencies and four booklets. The project was ended by the Covid-19 epidemic when it became impossible to observe court directly and I stopped dining indoors. I would like to start another meal-based artist residency but with Covid and the Delta variant still a great threat, now is not the time.

# JAE KYUNG KIM

interview realised in winter 2022

**einBuch.haus is a very unique place, as it is not a library, it is not a publishing house or a place where books are produced, it is an exhibition space dedicated to books. Can you please tell us more about your activities and how did you came up with the idea of this project?**

einBuch.haus is an artist book platform where the book is the main character. Following the name of “einBuch.haus (in En: house for one book),” I always show only one book to each exhibition. Think from the standpoint of the book and consider how the material and content of the book should be delivered to the reader. In the beginning, when I developed the current concept “ein Buch in Form einer Ausstellung” in 2018, I tried to start it in a small atelier space, where only one room was. It was a perfect condition to transform the book into the white cube.

After maternity leave, I decided to expand the space to

consist of a book shop and an exhibition space. Together with an exhibition, I'm showing & distributing selected artist books or references that relate to the main artist book which is presented in the exhibition space. There is also a collection called “Books on Books” at the shop. If someone wants to know the artist book, I would say einBuch.haus is a good place to start and discover all about artist books.

All these activities come from my personal background. I studied visual communication design at Hongik University, Seoul and also information experience design at RCA, London. During the MA program in London, there were lots of opportunities to work and involve in exhibition-making at museums and historical places. At that time, I learned how to transform information like texts and images to visitors using interactive tools.

As I used to design books and taught design in Seoul, all my experience has ended up with

the interest of making exhibitions with artist books. That's how einBuch.haus invites artist books not only from visual artists but also graphic designers. The book objects, indeed, are good materials to present their own concepts and I'm interested in taking these contents out of the book into the physical space so that people can feel and experience by entering the exhibition space.

**In the history of artist's edition, and in regard to your activity, I'm thinking about some of Seth Siegelaub projects and especially *January 5-31*, which was a publication realised before the show of the same name and from which the exhibition was build. As a space dedicated to books related exhibitions, how are you working?**

Most of the artist books exhibited at einBuch.haus are already published before the exhibition planned. But sometimes, I am also involved in the artist bookmaking, when the artist asked my advice (ex. *Fictive*

*Appearance* and *SEL2020HEL Diary*). To be honest, I prefer to have the book before the exhibition plan so I can imagine how I will present the book at einBuch.haus.

**On your website, you write something about books that is very interesting: "einBuch.haus considers books as art objects which can be curated and presented in exhibition formats, providing immersive experience between people, objects and spaces." Do you consider yourself as a curator?**

I don't see myself as a curator. I only give a place where artist books meet people. I don't feel confident if I introduce myself as a curator. Personally, I think the term "curation" is overused without consideration and has lost its meaning. I would say, I'm an organiser and a book collector who loves artist books and gives a space for them.

Everyone sees me differently, some call me a gallerist, while others see me as an exhibition

planner, or simply as a director at einBuch.haus. I have to say I'm wearing many hats. I also translate artist books or their theory into Korean and publish them- the publishing house called ENKR. The new book *NO ISBN on self-publishing* edited by Bernhard Cella, Leo Findeisn and Agnes Blaha has recently been released in Korea and is selected as one of the one hundred books for the art book fair *Unlimited Edition 100* this year.

**Also, when exhibiting books, there is something tricky : how to show artists' editions books, especially when we think about their nature and the fact they were originally made to be manipulated. How do you deal with those curatorial questions?**

There is a rule at einBuch.haus. All the books at the shop and exhibition space are to be sampled, read and touched without any restrictions.

Of course, there are also unique artist books or valuable ones, which I can't afford to pay.

Until now, artists didn't want to show their works with white gloves or inside the vitrine as it distracts from the tactile interactions. Thankfully, there was no problem showing the artist book as it is. I guess the artists who showcase their works at einBuch.haus and also visitors respect our concept.

Furthermore, we also offer workshops to get to know more about artist books. Taking the *Timaios 1-6* by Katharina Kamph for example, her artist book is a Do It Yourself (DIY) kit to make a small size sculpture inspired by her previous big paper sculpture project. For this, we needed to offer a workshop so the reader can "read" and make a sculpture out of the book together with Kamph or the artist book *Bookface* by Yan Gi Cheng is to be worn on their face as part of the performance. If the artists were afraid of any possible damages by reading, they wouldn't think about these kinds of ideas.

At einBuch.haus, we are encouraging people to grab books and read or even to mark on the

books. One day, each book will be unique with many traces.

**This is an interesting point as you consider artists' publications as art objects that are meant to be manipulated, and not only as books made to be seen. Maybe there also is the fact that you are working with contemporary artists, I mean, I guess it would be different with historical publications. Also, is it important to you to work only with contemporary artists? What are your thoughts on the recent editorial practices?**

Yes, I focus more on the contemporary art scenes and try to support the artists. At the same time, I encourage contemporary artists to continue working in this field. Compared to contemporary artist books, I think historical publications have enough chances to be exhibited and operated in institutions and museums.

Artist books published in the 1960-70s are, of course, good references for me and some-

times, those books could be a starting point to curate a show. Many examples of exhibiting publications are also my curatorial references, for example, Alison Knowles's *Big Book* at Something Else Gallery in 1967.

Back to the last questions, I also enjoy being part of the publication by inviting artists. In this pandemic time, I've got requests to respond to their mail art and later, it turned out an artist book and exhibition; Claudia de la Torre's *Books are Bridge*, 2021. I like this kind of circulation of the creative process.

Recently, there are many attempts to broaden the form of the book within the material and immaterial spaces. Communication tools have become an indispensable part of our lives and the way of exchanging information has been changed by the device from analogue to digital. But, this transition goes not one way from another way, rather in both directions. The recent editorial practices seek a possibility to represent the main elements of books such

as word and image in both ways. Using the digital method, the book itself transforms and reconfigures the dynamic relationship between word and image.

In 2022, einBuch.haus will focus the artist books representing works in these different 'spaces'. There are three spaces; book, E-pub or VR space and gallery space to experience, perceive and interact with its contents. How information is performed in various mediums will be the key point to see our exhibition this year.



*Interviews on publishing - volume 2, 2026*  
Alex Chevalier Éditions, Aubervilliers  
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Acknowledgements:

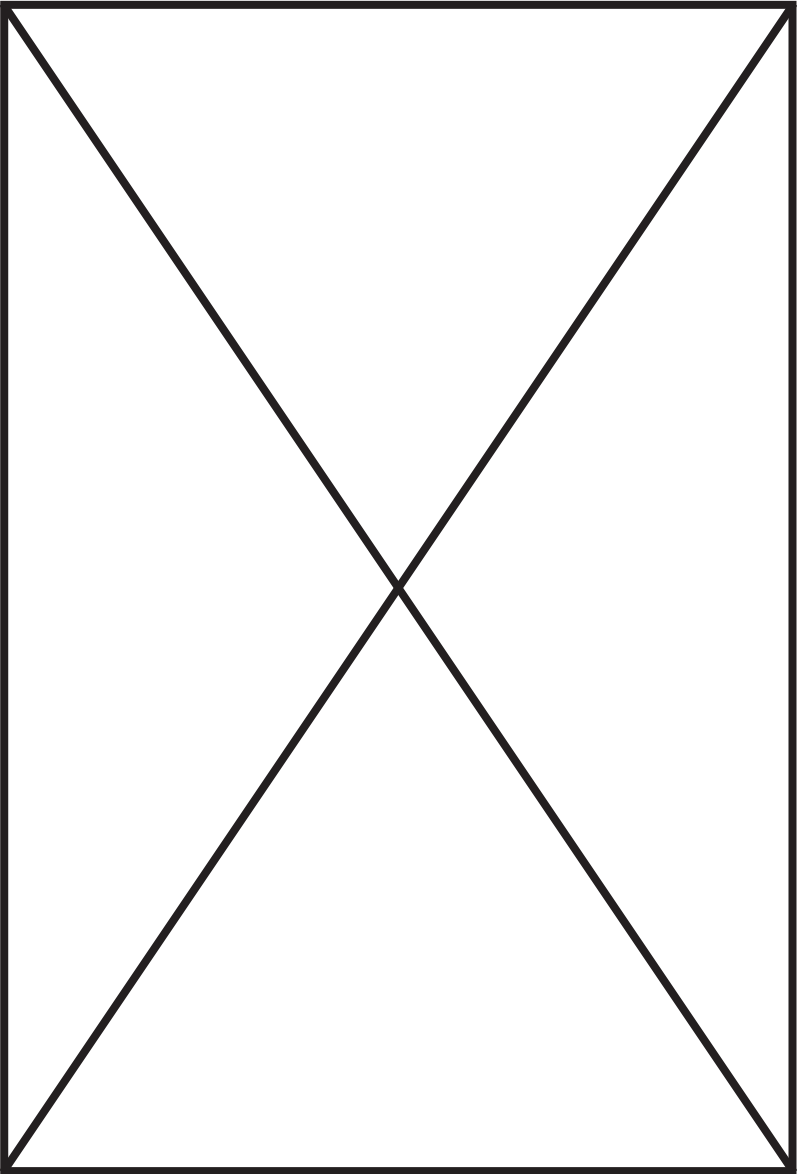
Marie Cantos, for her unfailing support, her proofreading, her daily accompaniment and her sights.

Guillaume Perez, for his support, his advices and his friendship.

Revue Point Contemporain, for its support and the publication of some of the interviews reproduced here.

The artists, publishers, curators, collectors, booksellers and other librarians who have lent themselves to the game of interview, despite busy schedules, but also for their support, since day one.

My parents, for their love and support but also for putting fanzines in my hands at a very young age and allowing me to discover a part of this great history of publishing.



NG  
volume 2

INTERVIEWS  
ON  
PUBLISHING  
volume 2

Since 2021, Alex Chevalier leads a series of interviews about artists' edition, its collection, its economy, how it is made or how it is shown. This second volume gathers interviews made with :

Artists' Book Cooperative, Arnaud Desjardins, Claudia de la Torre, Corina Reynolds, Daniel Gustav Cramer, David Senior, Jae Kyung Kim, Valentino Tonini, Marc Fischer, Mark Pezinger, Martha Wilson and Micah Lexier.

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