

*jab*⁸

BURNING

BLOWING

HOT AND COLD

after your head, mmmmm, you never want to quit, many people, mmmmm, don't understand, no no no, mmmmm, is strange.

ARS COMBINATORIA AND THE BOOK

BY JANET ZWEIG

In mathematics, combinatorics is defined as "the art of counting." The devices of this art are permutation, combination, and variation. For permutation, all of the elements within a set are reshuffled, as in an anagram. For combination, some of the elements of the set are taken out to form a subset. Variations are permutations with repetitions allowed, opening the possibility of infinite incarnations. Outside of the realm of mathematics, there has always been something creatively compelling about combinatorics.

Combinatorial systems for mystical and creative purposes have a long history reaching back to antiquity. (i) One early system is described in the *Sefer Yetzirah*, a mystical Hebrew text that dates somewhere between the first and sixth centuries A.D. According to the creation myth of the *Sefer Yetzirah*, "the Infinite One" created the world by permuting letters and numbers to fabricate being from nothing. The Kabbalah or "tradition" arose from these ideas, the medieval practice that included, among other things, permutation and combination of letters, numbers, and texts as a meditative tool, to create robots called golems, or to achieve mystical ecstasy. The *I Ching* is an even older combinatorial system, an oracular book from China where configurations of broken and unbroken lines are placed in every variation of six places and are then coded to match specific texts. Jumping ahead two thousand years, we find the composer and artist John Cage using permutation, combination, and variation to determine the structure of almost all of his works. Other procedural artists from the 1960's and later explored combinatorics in their work, and some of them made this work in the form of books.

The book is an especially good form for permutational procedures. Its discrete parts, its interactive potential, its narrative and sequential possibilities of pages and texts — all of these elements make it useful for combinatorial experiments that can operate in a number of different ways. It can be the site for placing previously derived permutations or combinations of text and/or images. Like hypertext pages, the book itself can suggest permutations of reading order to the viewer who can read it interac-

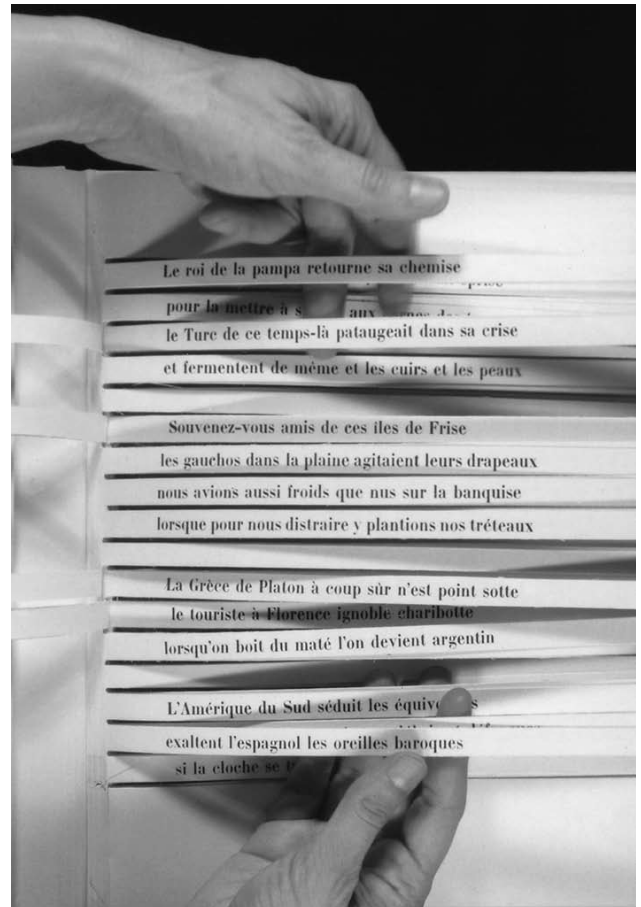


Fig. 1 Raymond Queneau, **Cent mille milliards de poèmes** (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1961).

tively by jumping from place to place within the book. Finally, it can be physically manipulated to reorder its pages or parts into all possible permutations of positions and readings. There are a number of books that use combinatorics as their structuring principle.

In the 1960's, the French literary group known as Oulipo played with devising procedural rules for generating poetry. One of Oulipo's members, Raymond Queneau, working with the designer Massin, made an unusual book that operates as a permutational machine. The book, titled *Cent mille milliards de poèmes* (Fig. 1), consists of 10 rhyming sonnets, one per page. All of the lines in the same position from poem to poem rhyme with each other. Each page is cut between all the lines, allowing the reader to lift lines away to reveal any of the

guaranteed to change your consciousness

I



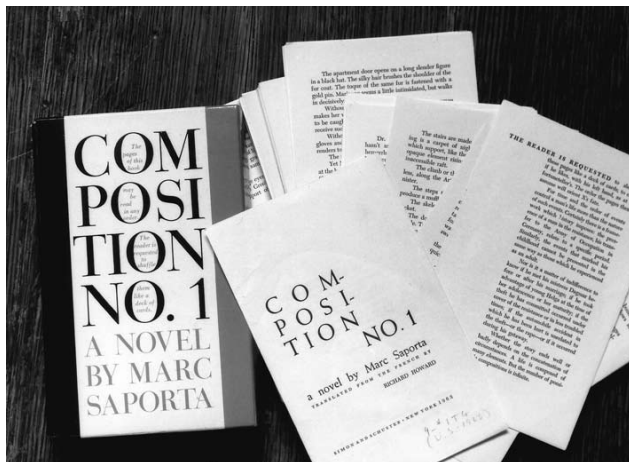


Fig. 2 Marc Saporta, **Composition No. 1** (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963. Original French language edition published by Éditions du Seuil, 1962). Courtesy of NYPL.

layers beneath, and to create new rhyming sonnets. One can therefore choose from 100,000,000,000,000 possible sonnets.

Marc Saporta, also a French writer, published a permutational novel in 1962. The instructions for *Composition No. 1* (Fig. 2) suggest that the reader can shuffle the loose pages of the novel and read the story in any order s/he chooses. Saporta writes: "For time and the order of events control a man's life more than the nature of such events... Whether the story ends well or badly depends on the concatenation of circumstances. A life is composed of many elements. But the number of possible compositions is infinite." (But the number of concatenations of Saporta's *Composition No. 1* is not infinite; it is the factorial of the number of pages, a very, very large number.)

Much has been made of the connection between these two permutational books and hypertext on the computer. The Queneau book is invariably referred to as the paradigm of current interactivity. I think the Saporta book is more closely analogous because the pages, when reordered, do not generate something new; they are simply placed in a new order. After all, this is what is often disappointing about hypertext — there is nothing transformative about the new and possible reordering of the pages, just a positional change. The Queneau book is more generative; each new configuration provides a new sonnet with a new meaning.

The Fluxus artist and poet Emmett Williams used combinatorial procedures in many of his performances and texts. He published the artist's book *Sweethearts* in 1967 (Fig. 3). On each page, an invisible grid of letters that spell the word "sweethearts" seven times on seven lines forms the structure from which Williams chooses combinations of letters, always in their original positions, to find words and sentences that form this narrative poem.

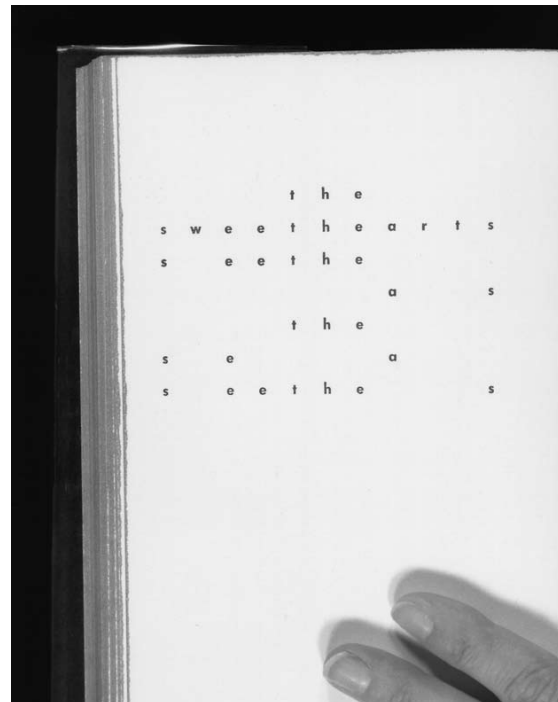


Fig. 3 Emmett Williams, **Sweethearts** (New York: Something Else Press, 1967). Courtesy of Granary Books.

Given these tight constraints, the poem is amazingly coherent and sequential. Sentences like: "the sweethearts hear the sea," and "'he eats her wee sweet ears" link together to form the whimsical story of the sweethearts.

Kickshaws Press in Paris, run by John Crombie and Sheila Bourne, has published many permutational books. One of their earliest achievements was the translation into English and re-publication of Queneau's *Cent mille milliards de poèmes*. This was followed by the translation and original design of another permutational text by Queneau, *Un conte à votre façon*, translated by Crombie as *Yours for the Telling* (Fig. 4). Though Queneau wrote only text, Bourne has illustrated it, and the book works as a three-dimensional hypertext. Like Julio Cortazar's experimental novel *Hopscotch*, it sends the reader to different places within the physical book to read it in a different order than the pagination. In *Yours for the Telling*, Queneau offers the reader a choice of paths, for example: "Their sleep was dreamless. The fact is these little creatures never do dream. If you'd rather they did dream, proceed to page 6; if not, turn to page 7." Like *Hopscotch*, this work is often cited in discussions of computer interactivity.

Kickshaws Press has published several more permutational books with original text by John Crombie, using a variety of methods to let the reader choose a path. Only *Connect* (Fig 5) is a mystery story with pages printed on four gatherings that open up in a clover-leaf arrangement so that they can be interleaved in many different sequences. Similar to Saporta's *Composition No. 1*, Only

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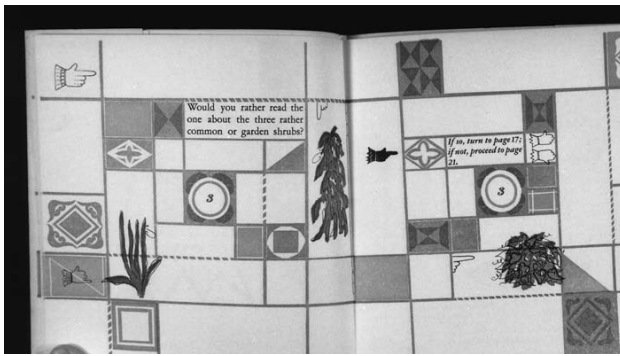


Fig. 4 Raymond Queneau, *Yours for the Telling*, translated and designed by John Crombie, graphics by Sheila Bourne (Paris: Kickshaws Press, 1982). Courtesy of Granary Books.

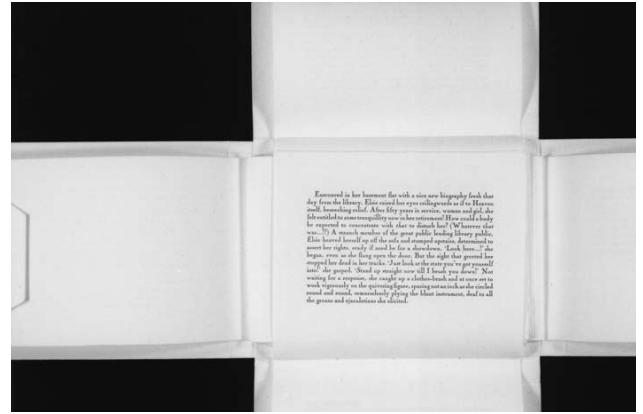


Fig. 5 John Crombie, *Only Connect* (Paris: Kickshaws Press, 1984).

Connect lets the reader define the plot of the story by rearranging the pages. Kickshaws has produced other clover-leaf books that work in a similar way, including *Womb To Tomb* (Fig. 6), *Fancy That*, *Too Too True*, and *Whereof... Thereof....*

Crombie's marvelous book *SO* employs a different strategy (Fig 7). The book is bound on the left edge but the text runs through it like a maze travelling left to right and then vertically stacking words that rhyme or free-associate with the ones above or below. The reader can choose either to go forward or to take a quantum leap to another line and then travel forward again. The text is wickedly funny and really does make you want to try it in as many different routes as possible; it's always changing depending on where you pick up the thread. On reading Crombie's introduction, one finds that the narrative structure is even more complex. He says (this is edited from two pages),

SO is designed in the form of a maze; a maze composed of ten romances. These run round and round the book, interlinking in a given order to form a complete, closed cycle... Once embarked on a story line, the reader should follow it longitudinally from page topage until a hiatus is reached, and a choice must be made between the two alternative openings at hand. Fine judgement will be exercised in order to make the right connection on the basis solely of the first few words visible on the same page... Readers who have once successfully threaded the maze may take advantage of its multiple options in order to weave new, quite different circuits through it, both by permuting the order of the romances with the cycle and by recombining sections thereof to create entirely novel, and rather more unorthodox romances... Readers will find their freedom of movement within the maze, and hence their combinatorial scope, are greatly enhanced by the network of vertical ladders. Alternately encapsulating the events immediately following, and recapping those directly preceding, each point of intersection, these streams of microcouplets provide... poetic shortcuts between and through the horizontal storylines...

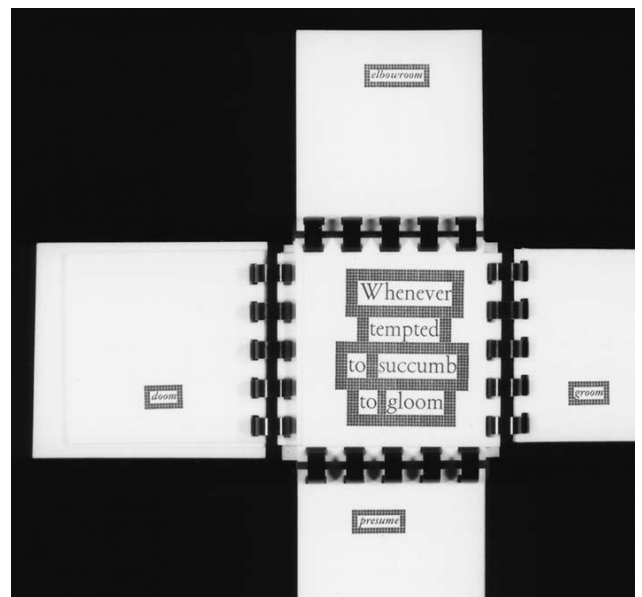


Fig. 6 John Crombie, *Womb to Tomb* (Paris: Kickshaws Press, 1986). Courtesy of Granary Books.

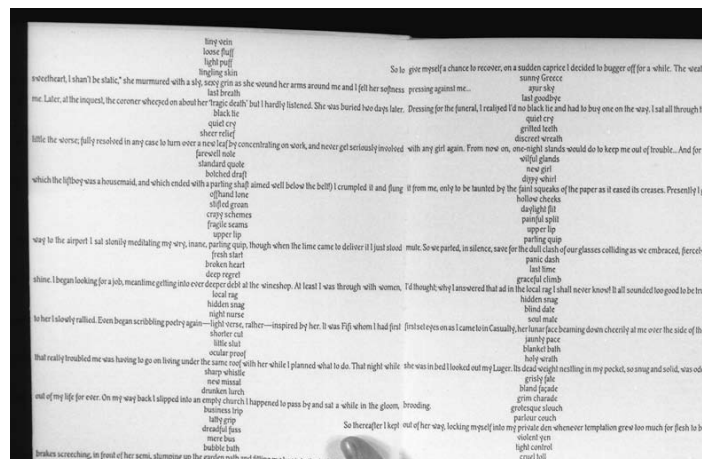
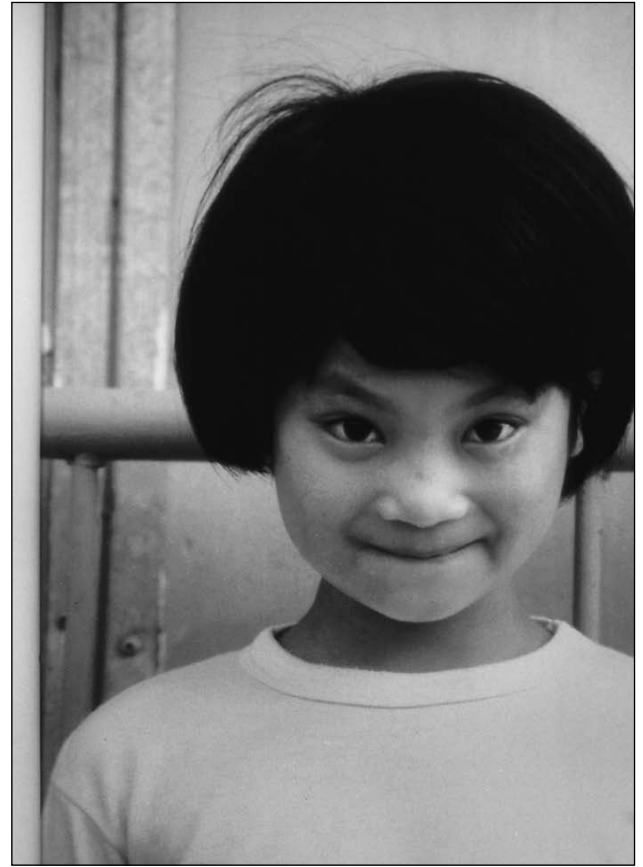


Fig. 7 John Crombie, *SO*, (Paris: Kickshaws Press, 1988).



contd., from page 3

In 1994, the installation artist Alfredo Jaar produced an extraordinary book titled *A Hundred Times Nguyen* (Fig 8). Jaar writes in his postscript,

I traveled to Hong Kong in the Fall of 1991 to investigate the living conditions of Vietnamese asylum seekers incarcerated there and being threatened with repatriation... During the course of one of my visits to the Pillar Point Refugee Centre, I was followed by a little girl. She would not speak to me but only followed. At one point I asked for permission to photograph her. She agreed... Of the 1378 images I took in Hong Kong, the images of Nguyen are the ones that have remained in my mind. Forever.

At first glance the book is deceptively simple; it seems to be 100 pages each with an identical photograph printed on the right of each page spread. On closer examination, one notices that the pictures of a child's face are slightly different. Selecting four sequential photographs of the girl's face, Jaar printed them in every possible permutation of sequence, arriving at 24 different sequences, or 96 pages. He repeated the original sequence at the end, coming full circle to make 100 pages.

The interesting difference between this project and those previously mentioned is that Jaar uses the pro-

cedural device of permutation to express a compelling social message and as a comment on the print media itself. Permutation serves the content of the work in that it insists that the viewer perceive the subject, the changing face of the young girl, in as many subtly expressive sequences as possible. Jaar is, in effect, buying time to allow the child to enter our consciousness in the hope that she will be experienced more as a real person than as a momentary symbolic media image among the many fleeting images we are bombarded with daily. By creating narrative complexity and change, permutation serves Jaar's purposes more fully than mere repetition would.

All of these combinatorial books, though differing in intention, content, and structure, extend our notions of how books can be experienced and provide us with new and conceptually challenging approaches to reading.

1. For a more extensive description of these historical systems, please see: Janet Zweig, "Ars Combinatoria: Mystical Systems, Procedural Art, and the Computer" in *Art Journal* (New York: College Art Association, Fall, 1997).

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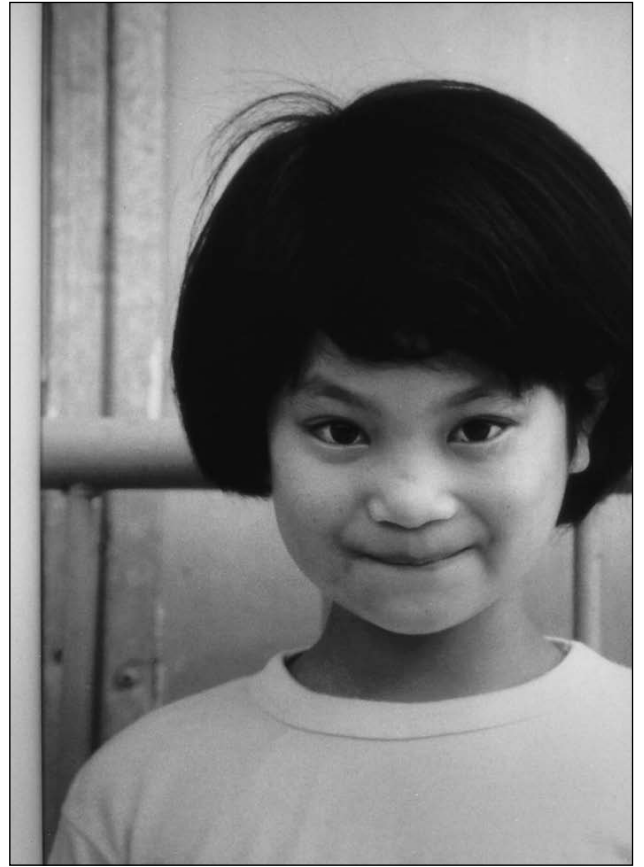


Fig. 8 The four photographs from: Alfredo Jaar, **A Hundred Times Nguyen** (Stockholm: Fotografiska Museet in Moderna Museet, 1994).



FLAGRANT DÉLIT:
THE BOOKS OF BERNARD VILLERS
EDITION REMORQUEUR
 BY DIDIER MATHIEU

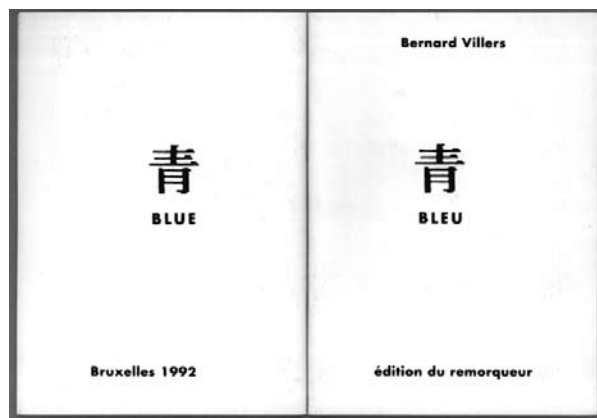
Colorage. A title, a book (Collection du commerce, éditions Walrus, 1979. 16 fastened pages, in a format 7.5 by 10.5 cm. — the result of folding a standard A4 offset sheet.) This book unites the names of the colors (black, green, red, violet) and drawing strokes printed in that color in a variety of ways. Echos. The word "nuage" on the left page is face to face with a drawing in yellow on the right.¹ Double pages: on the left page the word "outré" ["over"] followed by a trace of the color of "outremer" ["ultramarine blue"]. This stroke is leaning on the fold. On the opposite page, also leaning on the fold, is a stroke of the "outremer" color followed by the word "mer" ["sea"]. Four possible readings can be obtained by the addition or subtraction of these four signs: the word "outré" plus the stroke (implying "mer"); the stroke (suggesting "outré") plus the word "mer"; the word "outré" and the word "mer"; the stroke (understood as "outré") and the stroke (understood as "mer"). The last two pages of the book are a variation in the sequence: ba be bi bo bu blue bleu blau blaw. A game of letters, babble,² stammering. To stammer³ is to name, as a way of knowing. The word "blue" is expressed in four languages. Learn. Know.

Born in 1939, Bernard Villers lives and works in Brussels. Villers likes to make associations, links, and to take shortcuts: in 1991 for a catalogue of an exhibition in Japan he composed the following biography: "1939 the war, 1949 the forest, 1959 poetry, 1969 politics, 1979 transparency, 1989 painting."⁴

A *noir*,⁵ the books of Bernard Villers are books of beginning. Obvious books which upset all commentary, impossible to reduce to a critical discussion (because everything is said?). Eloquent books. Presences. Books you knock up against. Which stop you. *La foudre comme la rosée est un météore*.⁶ (Joseph de Maistre). Books fraught with tension, dry and rigorous. Meteoric.

Bernard Villers restricts his choices (checking, verifying) in order to compose, comprise an alphabet, a vocabulary, before beginning to speak: the use of silkscreen, the selection of paper, and format are all pre-set. This restriction of means leads to a rare focus.

The formats (height by width by thickness) of these books depart from the 14 x 18 cm norm, becoming either smaller or bigger, sometimes suggesting the notebook of an herbologist or a



Bernard Villers, *Bleu*, 1992

philatelist — emphasizing **collecting** rather than the **collection** (*Pliage*,⁷ — *Mikado* — *En Filigrane*,⁸ — *Portraits de Papiers* ⁹), and at others a notepad, an instruction book, a users manual (*Bleu*, — *Ode/Edo* — *Nara* — *Fenetre*¹⁰ — *Tokyo*).¹¹

Though short, even laconic, the texts are always present. There **is** a text. Some of these are extracts chosen from literary works (David Goodis in *La nuit tombe*¹² or Leonardo Sciascia in *En Filigrane*,). Reduced to a phrase (by Micheline Créteur in *Un peu/Beaucoup* ¹³ or by Robert Musil in *d'ou*¹⁴) or even to a word (*Mikado* — *Trace*). Each entire book seems to be provoked by its text. Generally situated near the beginning of the book, the text opens the work. Serves as an announcement (as in a game of cards, a declaration). The text is never intermingled, never integrated with the drawings, even when a phrase unrolls in the interior pages — with the exception of *Colorage* and *Couleur*, books in which proximity is the rule. Texts and images are localized, fixed in their defined places. This localization is pushed even to the point of using two different kinds of paper, one for the text and another for the image (*En Filigrane*, — *Ode/Edo* — *Pliage*,¹⁵). The rapport of text and image is thus a rapport of mutual contamination, of a tenuous continuity.

The text modifies, orients. And more. A significant part of Bernard Villers' work is a work of orientation. Vertical and horizontal (*Bleu* — *pente douce*¹⁶ — *Fenetre*), high/low, rising/falling (*Trace*), direction, N.S.E.W. Crossings, intersections: orthogonally the folds make the book (*Mal-larmé 1897*. Collection du commerce, éditions Walrus, 1979, format 7.5 x 10.5 cm. One sheet of A4 folded and fastened to made a section of 16 uncut pages.) This closed book opens and begins in its middle with the first words of a phrase of Mallarmé: "Now — the fold is,".¹⁷ From one part to the other of this double page, before and after, the cut-

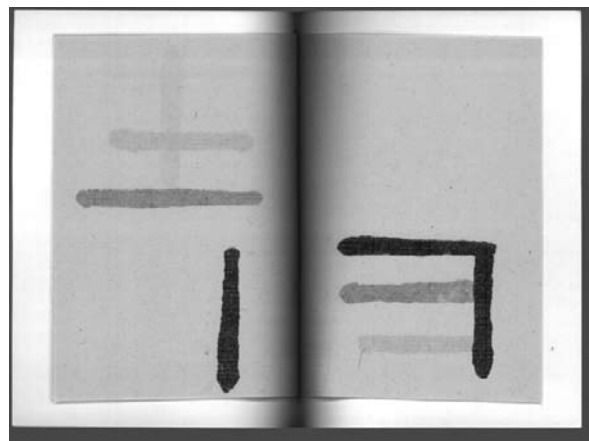
ting up of the text bears no relation to the layout of a standard printed book (for example, page 9 is next to page 12). The phrase can't be read in the way in which it was written until the fastening is removed and the sheet is unfolded. The phrase, lodged in the center of the book, links the words "Mallarmé 1897" (printed on the first page) to "Bernard Villers 1979" (printed on the fourth page).

There is one word which is emblematic of the work of Bernard Villers: "almost" (whether by too little or too much, in a mathematical sense). The book *pente douce*¹⁸ is practically titled by a line. In the linen of the pages of this book (Collection du commerce, 1979) there is an almost horizontal line traced in blue on very thin paper. The minor discrepancies in the inclination of the line page to page show through the sheets.

Not seen, not grasped. To a casual reader, these books are all the same (they can be "gotten" in a single glance). Similar/dissimilar, resemblance, barely any difference — but still for one who wants to look, there is some difference — which can be read as a slight variation or as a huge distinction, as a gap.¹⁹ (Any face, cut in half, and looked at independently, will offer two unequal parts). False symmetry, broken.

In *Pliage*, edited in 1996, the first page has an identity photo of Bernard Villers. From a textual declaration we have passed to an image declaration. This declaration serves as a sign, a bit of information. But does it inform? The page on which it is located is generally designated as the "half title" page. On the inside the book (16 pages of a fairly ample format, 22.5 cm x 33.5 cm) contains this same photograph blown up and thus fragmented by the folding, page by page. The part for the whole (*Bleu*). And at the same time, a resonance from book to book.

Folding, partition, distribution, response, (repartée). Where are we? The word "locus" (loquacious) is placed beneath the photograph on the first page (...d'ou, ...). In this book the citation of the author, the title, and the publisher are shifted so that they appear astride the first four pages of the cover. Thus the title, *Pliage*,²⁰ is cut into two words "PLI" and "AGE".²¹ This break also fragments the name of the publisher (Remorquer) into two words which resonate phonetically with other French words. The cover has almost become a double center page. VILLERS BERNARD, with the first name printed on page 1 and the surname on page 4, obliges the reader to go backward, to look at what has preceded. Synclinal et anticlinal.²² *Pli* and *age* [fold and age]. Hercynian, Pliocène.²³ In other books by Bernard Villers, the quality of the



Bernard Villers, *Bleu*, 1992

papers used indicates the various strata.

A delicate balance is central to these books. And upheavals of recto and verso, of folding and unfolding, from cover to cover. From the first page to the last page, the reader and the thing read, seen, known are not the same. Something has happened, precisely. Books of shifts, alterations, warping. Spiralled up and outward.

Such transformations are also manifest typographically. Anagrams, palindromes, mirror writing, repetitions, and false-mirrors (*Mikado* — *Nara*).

The cunning relief, the guile, the mechanism which makes these books work becomes a language. An unsuspecting reader can be trapped. Unlimited mechanisms, like traps, increase endlessly (cruel variations).

Bernard Villers' books speak intimately of books (the relation of foundation/form). They use the familiar form in addressing the "volumen" with the beginning and end written in a sort of round. Contained, in spite of angular appearances, within the book's parallelogrammatical rectangle. Between the rind and the unpeeling, the unfolded and the closed, there is development, unfolding, laid flat. And by these books one is reminded that lightness has substance.

The editions are usually set at 100 examples. But it's an arbitrary number. These books could exist in 2, 10, 2000, or 10,000 examples and it wouldn't change their identity a single bit.

Bernard Villers is a painter, and his books are (hypothetically) moments of repose or pauses, crossroads. In long run (31 publications between 1975 and 1996, according to the catalogue established by Johan Deumens), these books seem to me to be points of reference, bitter landmarks of a personal history. When offered to be read, looked at, flipped through, this history seems obsessive

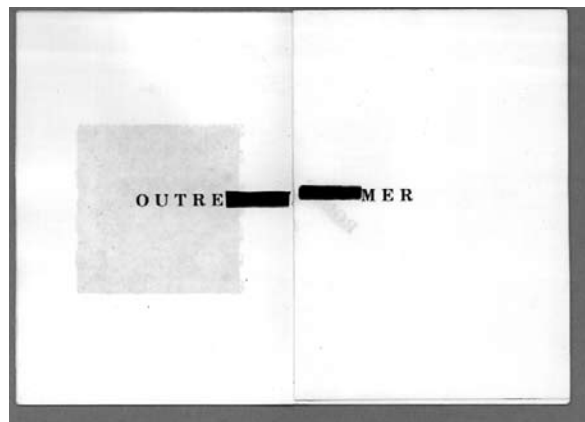
and continually renewed, step by step, turn by turn, sleight-of-hand. A Japanese path through the garden — not ahead, not behind, not better, not beside, not more or less. Permanence, recurrence (recursiveness), a leitmotif. The content of the colophons is reduced to a place and date expressed in years. Beneath the deceptive appearance of a process the book is a work of method, an ensemble of phenomena conceived of as active and organized in time. A "poesis" of rhythmic images and language.

To conceive of a book (in the sense of its technical realisation) is to organize the disparate, the scattered. To come and go between the construction and deconstruction. To reorganize in order to lead to the indissociable. (*Nara — Tokyo — Fenetre — Bleu*). On each interior page of *Mikado* (published in 1994; 38 pages of airmail paper in an almost square format 21 x 23 cm in a grey cardboard cover) a leaf of eucalyptus is printed in yellow, red, blue, or black. The translucence of the paper and the piling up of the pages evokes the entangled confusion of the sticks of the game of mikado. To lift the pages, to pull out the sticks, requires the same gesture. And this game of mikado recalls an even older game — the game of canes or rushes. To litter: covering the ground with rushes, vegetable debris.

Every book plunges us into a temporal duration and the brevity of these books is their appropriate duration. Brevity and immediacy: taken as a fact. The weight of time takes refuge here in a true thinness. Each book provokes our capacity to apprehend a time and a space. Bernard Villers invents a striking, sonorous whisper.

These books, which have precisely the same number of pages as their content, are made as a whole, and are right there — beginning with the cover one is in the book, or **almost** in the book (on the threshold) - and thus many of the titles are actually single words followed by a comma d'ouï, — *Pliage*, , or *En Filigrane*, .

Bleu — Ode/Edo — Nara — Fenetre — Tokyo form an ensemble of five pamphlets published in 1992. They share the same format. The covers are all 10 cm x 14 cm, and made of heavy paper. The interior pages are of smaller format; a section of 8 pages in lighter paper serves as a support for drawings mounted on very thin paper (airmail sheets, rice paper, onionskin). Towards the center of the binding, the pages get thinner. On the first page, a dedication, followed on the third page by a poem (Basho, Buson, Ryokan, Saigyô, and an anonymous 8th century poem). The typography of the titles is bicephalic, going forwards and back-



Bernard Villers, *Bleu*, 1992

wards. Coming and going the displacements are not only typographic — left/right, but extend to the sense of reading (from culture to culture). There is thus an evocation of another culture, in no sense a borrowing or a plagiarism. A complicity. Not a form of "japonisme".

The thin papers which Bernard Villers uses aren't entirely transparent. Transparency is too easy, too facile. Transparency shows the fullness of things, translucency shows the empty spaces within things. These translucent sheets make the verso and recto of the page into a unity, a whole. (*Tokyo*).

Bleu — this word, printed in red on the cover is both title and sub-title since above it is the kanji character for the word "blue". The inside pages, printed in blue, show and separate the strokes of the character. Each stroke is isolated on a single page, and only the accumulation of them all makes any sense. Thus, to follow the course of the book is to recover the gesture and time of the strokes which trace the character.

Poplar leaves are printed in the pages of the first half of the book *Ode/Edo*; in the second half, ginkgo leaves. The veins of the leaves are printed once, in black (the empty space). Then the full leaf is printed several times, in red. Two seasons. The use of silkscreen, as in all the books Bernard Villers prints himself, is particularly vigorous here. The quality and thickness of the silkscreen ink produces colors and forms which seem to have landed on the paper. The thinness of the paper reinforces the sense of a drawing attached to the sheet (*Mikado*). This "leaf to leaf"²⁴ approach also shows up in the 1992 book, *Portraits de Papiers*, though used rather differently. The book is a collection of various papers in divers colors on which are imprinted other sheets of paper.

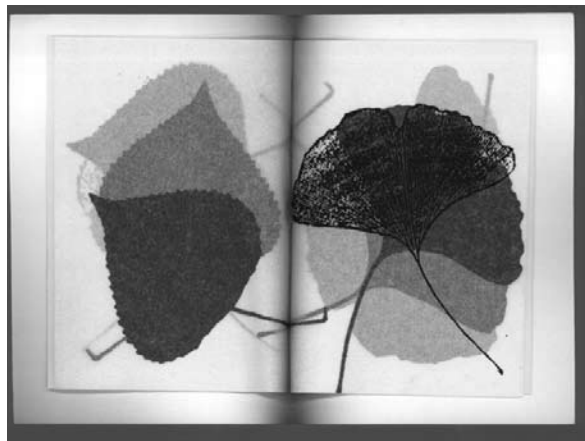
*La nuit tombe*²⁵ was published in 1978. The

text is by David Goodis. This short text, a single page, is punctuated by a rhythmic naming of the colors: "...pale blue car, the black of the revolver, the orange rug..." (série noire, as the typography on the cover makes clear.) Following the text there is a recapitulation of the colors, each as a single long vertical stroke from a large brush, in the sequence elaborated in the text — the first time in chronological order, then in reverse order, a comeback to the text as a visual palindrome. One has no idea if the text has created the colors or vice versa. Everything in the book is linked. The binding: fold, connection, transition. From one page to the next, from word to word, from text to text to margin, from text to image to a blank space. From a page to the memory of the page which preceded.

Trace (Published by Guy Schraenen in 1977, No.14 of the *colleXtion*). Of all of these books, the most trenchant manifestation. A condenser. A sheet of onion skin is folded, divided into four equal parts. Each part, a rectangle "à l'italienne", can potentially be divided vertically into four paired rectangles. The same drawing is visible in each of the four parts of the strip of paper. In the two rectangles situated at the extremes of the strip, the drawing is placed in the vertical rectangle which is furthest to the right. In the two rectangles in the middle of the strip, the design is placed in the second rectangle on the left. The drawing is made of two parallel vertical strokes (strips of torn paper printed in black). The stroke on the left is printed on the recto, the one on the right on the verso and thus becomes a dull grey on account of the translucence of the paper. The strip of paper is folded in accordion style and thus first page of the book shows all eight strokes, in an effect of gradual diminishment from an intense, black stroke to a very pale grey, from one side to the other. On the cover, the title is set vertically.

The conjunction of paper/fold/impression and recto/verso is what makes this book. Everything is in its place, nothing can be removed. Every bit of material (paper, color, text, image) is present and serves a purpose in its material form — like a puzzle made entirely of key pieces.

En Filigrane, (published in 1996, 48 pages of airmail paper in a format 22cm x 28.5 cm). The watermark "AVONEG" of Leonardo Sciascia's text is what brings forth the book. In his books, Bernard Villers multiplies and unmultiplies his sites. But the associations are always different. Here the filigrees/filaments are printed, offering themselves to view, to touch, to respond to the eye. Usually, an embossed line, made by difference of thickness



Bernard Villers, *Ode / Edo*, 1992

created in the paper paste. In this book, the paper doesn't contain the line, but makes it. A game of foreground and background.

Coincidence: events which occur together by accident, correspondence, encounter, simultaneity, a coming together (of circumstances). Coincide: arrive, produce at the same time, from the medieval Latin "coincidere" — to fall together. [R(e) m R k oe R]²⁶

My thanks to Johan Deumens (Artistsbooks — An Heerlen) who introduced me to the work of Bernard Villers (in a water tower) and who kindly let me borrow the documents relevant to this project.

(The excess of parentheses in this article might remind Bernard Villers of a book by Raymond Roussel.)

Bernard Villers' books are available through Johan Deumens, ArtistsBooks, P.O.Box 599, 6400 An Heerlen, The Netherlands; prices are in the \$80 to \$100 range.

Translated by Johanna Drucker; many thanks to Didier Mathieu for his assistance.

Notes:

¹ "nuaje" is the anagram of the word "jaune" [yellow]. The misspelling of the word [normally "nuage" meaning cloud] is deliberate.

² [Tr.: in French, "babil"]

³ [Tr.: in French, "balbutier"]

⁴ Text cited by Bregtje van der Haak in the catalogue *un peu, beaucoup...* published in 1992 by Het Apollohuis, Eindhoven.

⁵ "A noir" are the first words of the poem "Voy-

contd., from page 9

elles" by Arthur Rimbaud, the 19th century French symbolist poet.

6 [Tr.: *The thunder like the dew is a meteor*]

7 [Tr.: *Folding*]

8 [Tr.: *In Filigree*,]

9 [Tr.: *Portraits of Papers*]

10 [Tr.: *Window*]

11 [Tr.: A number of these titles contain commas, therefore, when they are cited in a list, a dash is used to separate the items, not a comma, in order to avoid confusion.]

12 [Tr.: *Night Falls*]

13 [Tr.: *A little/ A lot*]

14 [Tr.: *From Where*,]

15 [Tr.: *Folding*]

16 [Tr.: *Gentle Slope*]

17 [Tr.: The French original is "Or — le pliage est,"]

18 [Tr.: *Gentle Slope*]

19 The word "gap" can be translated in French by the word "écart" which is the palidrome of the word "trace", a word used as a title by B.V.

20 [Tr.: *Folding*]

21 [Tr.: *Fold and Age*]

22 These two terms are used in geology to indicate a convex and concave fold respectively.

23 Pleistocene, the most recent of the tertiary geological periods. Hercynian is a geological term which designates a type of fold of the primary geological period. [Tr.: in French, the "pli" of "Pliocène" emphasizes the pun linking the geological term with the book's form.]

24 [Tr.: or "sheet to sheet"]

25 [Tr.: *Night Falls*]

26 [Tr.: DM has indicated to me that this is the phonetic spelling of REMORQUER, but as I don't have the IPA on my keyboard, the orthography is not perfectly correct.]

COSMOLOGICAL WIT:

THE BOOKS OF RUTH LAXSON AND PRESS 63+

by Pattie Belle Hastings



Ruth Laxson at her studio, Atlanta, 1997. Photo by PB Hastings.

Ruth Laxson has been living and working in Atlanta, Georgia since 1953. After years of print-making, drawing and performing, she began making artist's books in 1980. In 1987, at the age of 63 Laxson founded Press 63+.

Italic sections of type are taken from conversations and correspondence with Ruth Laxson during the first six months of 1997. Plain text is commentary written by Pattie Belle Hastings.

WORDS AND PICTURES

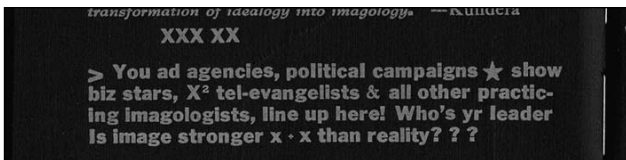
Ruth Laxson uses language as her visual medium, pushing letters and thoughts around like so much paint on a brush, not only stretching the meaning, but twisting, tumbling and transforming the letters, words and sentences into images themselves.

I always imagined myself as a purely visual artist so I was not aware of my capacity for deep listening until I started making artists books. Deep listening, which reveals the music of speech and the power of the word

IO

as sound, generates a rich reserve of images. These images, combined with little human dramas and imaginary theories and equations, become a matrix of ideas for my artist's book works.

As a child I thought of the alphabet and words as little pictures. So I tell the tale in a more pictorial and circumspect way than practitioners of "pure" writing. If I claim to foster the survival of the beautifully printed and hand written page, I also admit to an irresistible urge to tamper with the formally aligned block of type on the page, at the risk perhaps of, diffusing the intellectual impact of the ideas within.

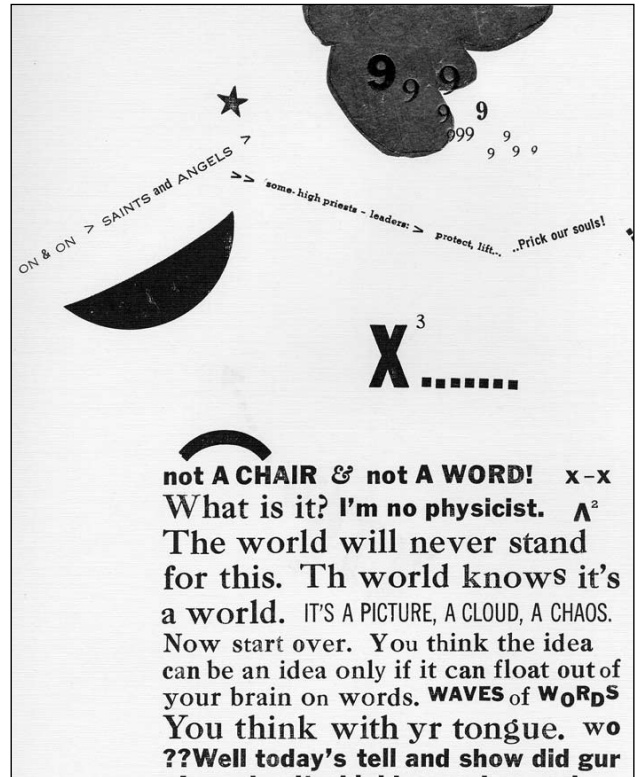


Ruth Laxson, **Imaging**, 1992

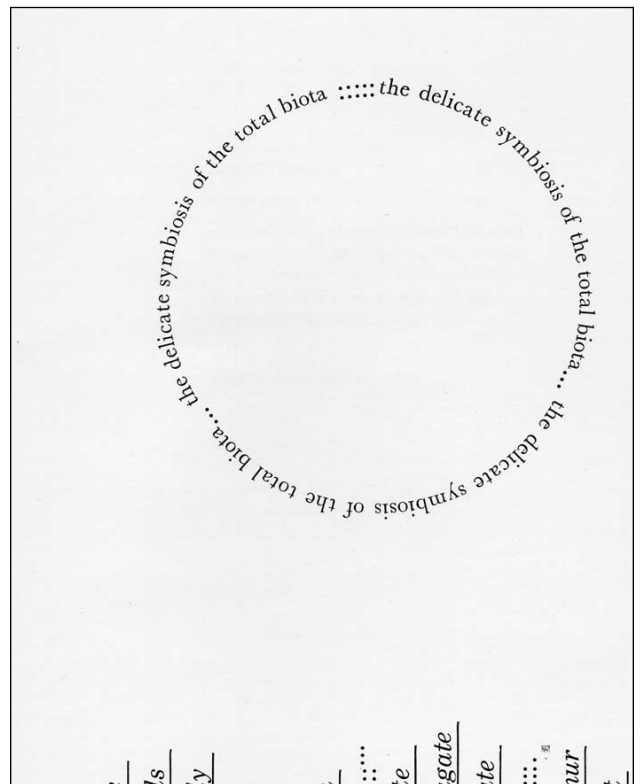
Laxson has an ear for the peculiar and mundane phrases of our everyday lives, taking seemingly innocuous banter from TV, radio, or casual conversation and transforming it into a stream-of-consciousness commentary about contemporary American culture. Her books are at once familiar, humorous, and sharp. What passes most peoples ears with little notice is crafted into a perceptive portrait of our culture – the war between the sexes, the tyranny of technology, the frontiers of science and the dogma of religion.

Her texts are not only the articulation of pattern, but an ingenious imagining of ourselves through words, in a way that the words themselves attain power, complexity, interaction and a mischievous quality that they might not ordinarily possess.

When people ask me how I go about the writing and where it comes from, I say "It wells up from somewhere inside me." I guess that's truly how it happens with most people who are writing in any form. The material gets there somehow, obviously, from your responses to the world. There is some note making. Scratchy notes. It's a very organic process, the way it comes out. I start with a general idea and then sit in front of the type cabinet and hand set the type and stand over the press bed, more or less writing as I set the type. Its not a story kind of process. It is often stream of consciousness. Composing the text takes place at all stages. The writing, type setting, arrangement and locking on the press bed are all chances to shape the work.



Ruth Laxson, **Some Things Are Sacred**, 1992



Ruth Laxson, **Earth Score**, 1983

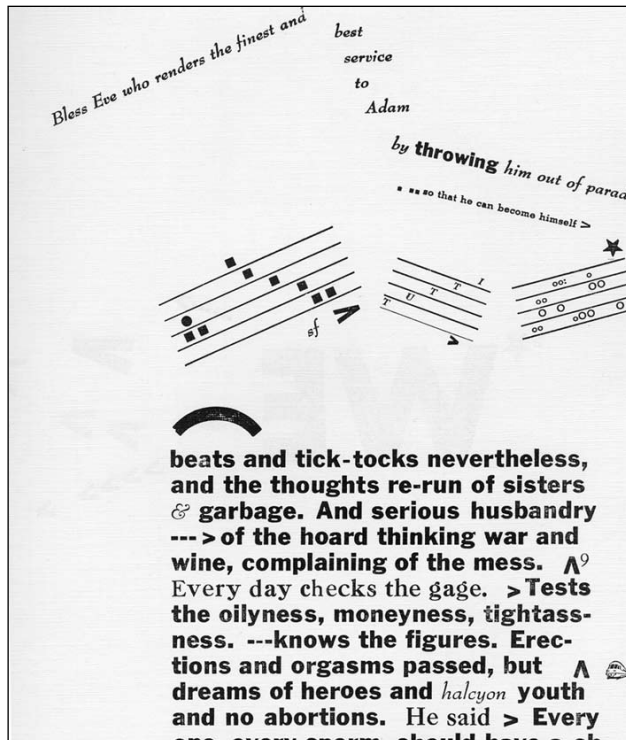
OUT LOUD

The page is an opportunity to do a little stage.

Laxson's books are best experienced when read out loud – performed even. Considering her work as a performance artist, this would be to her delight and give fuller experience of her words, language, speech and utterance. Her writing is about the oral/aural nature of words and speech as well as the markings on the page. Dialogue flows between men and women, humans and machines, the mortal and the divine. Conversations begin in the middle, digress to obscurity and end abruptly.

Laxson's keen sense of the relationships between men and women – the love, the sex, the conflict, the struggles for power – fuels these dialogues with the combustible material we humans create out of the friction among us. "He" characters and "She" characters discuss sex, politics, war, religion, science, and the environment in the disjointed structure of a real conversation. Unfinished sentences and thoughts commingle on the page to produce layers of meaning as varied and complex as a live conversation with your own nemesis.

One main reason I'm drawn to artists' books is the interactive nature of the medium. Hopefully all art will have this beyond aesthetics (so it doesn't just serve the ego of the artist). I



Ruth Laxson, *Some Things Are Sacred*, 1991

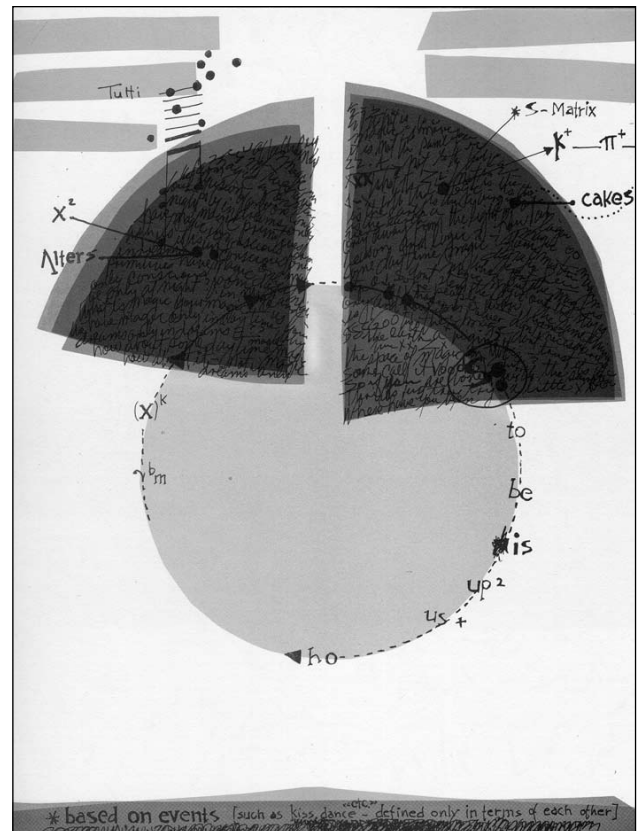
hope the books will evoke performance in the reader and even pass the words into the void to become the instrument of poesis – getting at deeper worlds of truth than the linear language of conventional prose.

If by writing the word we initiated the logical (logos), I subconsciously aim to bring writing back into the mythos. By invoking dance and performance of the page, we create a little daytime magic.

Laxson's characters put voice to thought, openly expressing what some people dare only to think. A single page is capable of evoking the variety of emotional experience – humor, anger, sadness, confusion, recognition. You can easily imagine the translation of these characters and ideas to stage in something that would resemble a conglomeration of Alfred Jarry, Hugo Ball and a Happening. Her theatre is the book, where drama and comedy brilliantly act out the poignant and petty details of our lives.

2 LETTER WORDS

Two letter word sentences are a phonemic game of breaking the language down into



Ruth Laxson, *[Ho+Co] - It*, 1986

the smallest units – a reductive exercise sort of like rebus, to test the limits of what can be comprehensible. They risk being silly. I want my books to be playful but not silly. There is the sense in which the clown can be neutral and poignant while sometimes silly – but that takes a special theatrical sensibility. “My id is up – so it is no go if he is in it. Hi is to Pi is Ho is to Go – So hi de ho. If it is up, I’m to be on go to do it.” Making books is a way of testing the language for meanings. A two letter word sentence is one of the best tests I know of.



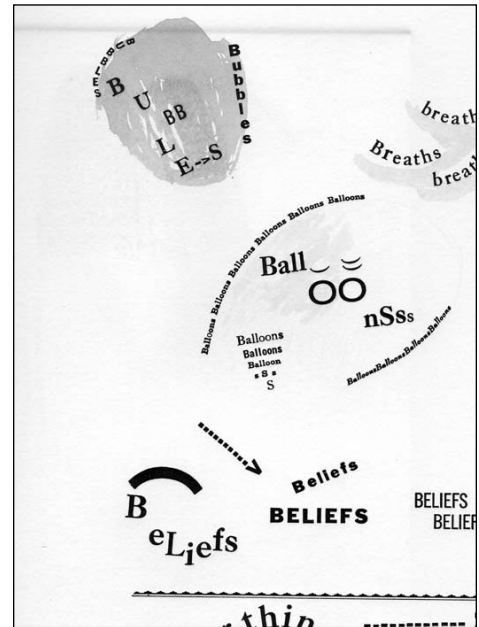
Ruth Laxson, *II By II*, 1991

Sentences composed of two letter words appear repeatedly on Laxson’s pages. And in the case of *II By II* the entire book is created from pages containing a two letter word that are bound by a corner grommet so that you can fan the pages and choose among the words to create your own sentences. The whimsical nature of Laxson’s constructions often disguises the deeper meanings of the work.

An idea of the kind of wordplay and levels of alternate meaning in the work, is apparent in the seemingly obscure title of her book [*Ho+Go*] = *It*. The words “Ho” (to stop) and “Go” (to move forward) are opposites. “Go” becomes its opposite (Ho) when replaced by the next letter of the alphabet. If we consider the words “Go” and “Ho” to represent the beginning and end of the story of life, they translate to birth and death and the word “It” becomes the answer. In Laxson’s work, “It”, in fact, often becomes the representation of the universe itself. The sign of the divine. The word “Ho” also represents laughter, so the title can also mean “Laugh and Go Equals Life.”

THE UNIVERSE

The themes of science and universality reflect



Ruth Laxson, *Retell the Tale*, 1997

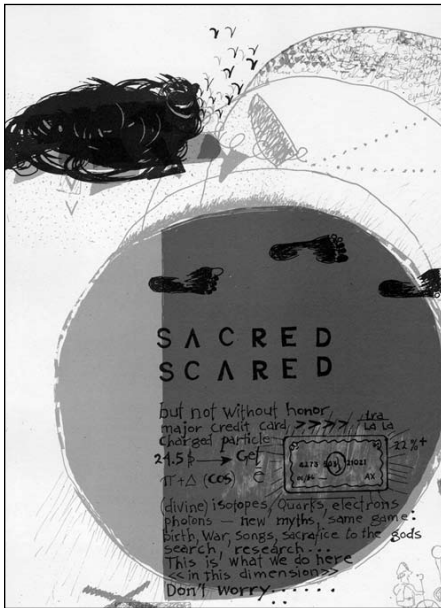
my attitudes about religion. I grew up being saturated in fundamentalist thinking and religion, so that, forever, is something I have to deal with. Books are a good place to put that. I think that we are all bound together, but various things have separated us like religion. I have this idea that church pews should face each other, instead of facing east. We could look into each others eyes.

Research is Laxson’s form of search – deep as the soul or the surface of the page – splicing words and splitting atoms in her lab. Her markings resemble a constellation of thoughts spun out from the big bang. Macrocosm vs. Microcosm. Her work incorporates universal ideas in a number of ways; there is the repeating theme of universal or natural law; the questioning of scientific and spiritual meaning; but the impressive aspect of universality in her work is the ability to reach and touch so many readers. Beyond the personal code of words and images, the content is universally identifiable, accessible.

In a Laxson book, science is invoked as a creative act, a part of everyday life, less solution to cosmic mystery than the visual expression of the big unanswerable questions themselves.

I don’t know why physics affects me so much, except that new physics has a aspect of faith that I think is similar to my own approach to books. I recently read something that was interesting. A physicist said that he thought that physicists come up with the theories and the ideas – the process, and that artists come

contd., from previous page



Ruth Laxson, [Ho + Go] = It, 1986

up with the finished product. Others have said that artists and physicists arrive at the same point by different means. I thought that this was a wonderful way to look at it. The creative process is very similar for each.

Mathematics is elegant. I love the way it looks on a page. A handwritten page is beautiful, too. I have been asked if I know physics and I don't, but I think all playful theories are invented. I think can take the liberty to invent a theory.



Ruth Laxson, About Change About, 1989

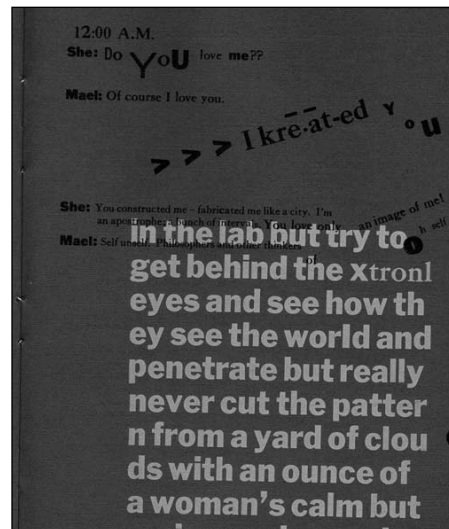
THE ART OF THE BOOK

I'm very attached to black on black. Because it depends totally on a certain angle of light to be read.

Laxson's books are created with a combination of letterpress, silk-screen, embossing, chine colle, intaglio, aquatint, handwriting, drawing, off-set, rubber stamps, hand tinting, puncturing and

cutting. The notations evoke every known form of mark making from musical scores and algebraic formulas to road maps and constellation charts. Handwriting vs. typesetting. The delicate scrawl of pen and ink battles it out on the page with the punch of bold metal type. Layers of marking reveal and obscure layers of meaning. No cleverly crafted computer manipulation can compete with the originality and density of one finely printed Laxson page.

Black on black, layers of gray and the reflective nature of silver are the basis of her palette. Silver has the ability to appear opaque over blacks and grays and can be read in the dark. Laxson limits her choice of colors and then proceeds to push them to where no ink has gone before – an alchemy of blacks and silvers reveals and conceals. Spots and splashes of blue, red, and colorful illumination appear and disappear like quarks and novas throughout her body of work.

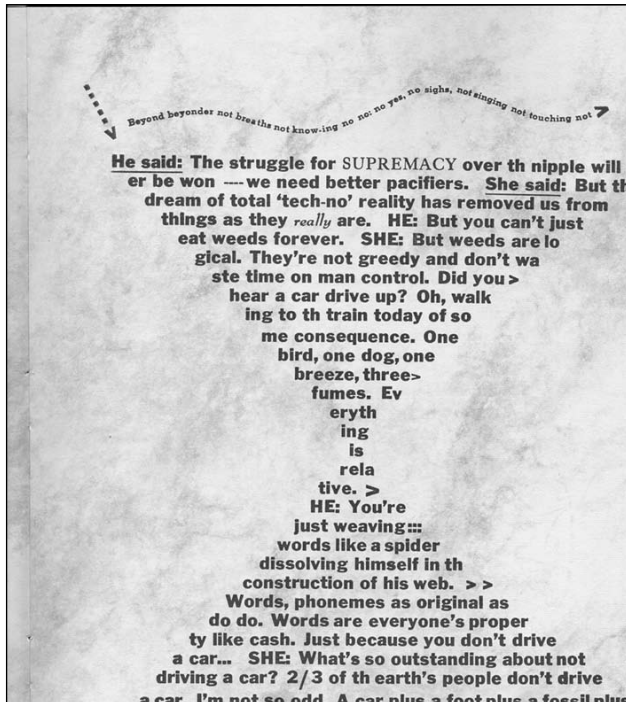


Ruth Laxson, Measure Cut Stitch, 1987

Artists' books are intimate, portable, affordable. They can wrestle with ideas in a more profound way than most other art. They seem to be a natural process for me. I'm able to deal with the obsessive compulsive process - for example the stitching. I guess as a Southern woman I have the capacity for the obsessive/compulsive. Stitch after stitch. I keep thinking I'll give up books. They are too labor intensive and you never get paid what they are truly worth. A book has to fall in a certain category of price. That money monster. Its kind of an insanity. There is a certain masochism to doing artists books. Since I have this print-makers sensibility, its a natural process. If you have the facility for printmaking, its the kind

of thing you fall into.

I love the sequential nature of books and the way they are like little packages of information. They can be theatre-like. It just seems like my thought processes work that way now. Sometimes I wish they didn't, I wish I could get around book making so I wouldn't work as hard.



Ruth Laxson, *Wheeling*, 1993

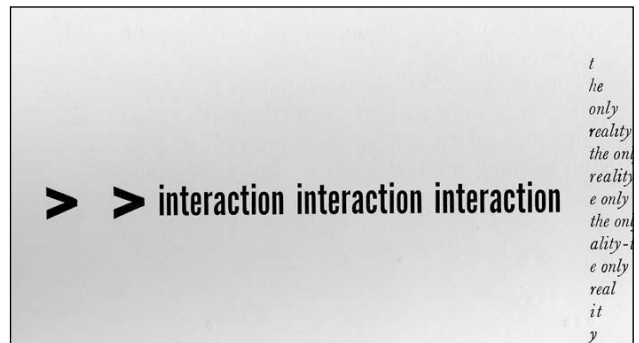
TWO WORLDS

As the world becomes more dependent on computers for information, assistance, and now personal relationships, Laxson's firm voice is there to remind us of the world inhabited by bodies. Reality is defined by human contact.

The electronic world has changed the book and is changing the relationship of our bodies to the material world. It sort of vaporizes the book into thin air. I think one main reason for making books – physical, tactile books – is to restore some of the grain of life. It seems like cyberspace has a leveling effect. I guess I make books to foster the survival of the beautifully printed or hand written page. We need/ have to live with both. The electronic world offers us a different version of the aesthetic, visual, and aural. It has wonderful uses. I think book artists have this responsibility to retrieve the book. One day, maybe, books will need to be art in order to hold our interest.

The book is an object designed to be held in the hand, close to our body, resting on our belly or propped on a leg. They accompany us into the most intimate of places; the bed; the bath; the toilet. Laxson's books are made by hands for hands.

I really think artists books have the potential to condense and decipher some of the glut of information that besets us and to turn it into a more manageable essence. I know this is a big abstract idea, but I think its really possible and something to think about.



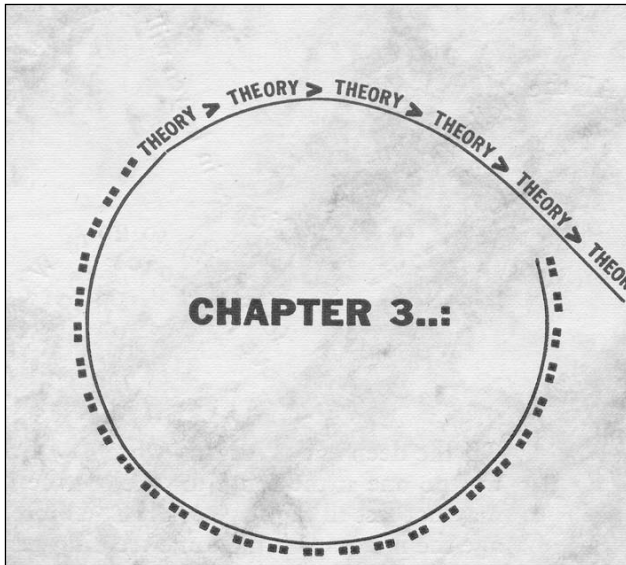
Ruth Laxson, *Earth Score*, 1983

CONTINUED ON BACK FLAP...

Focus. To keep focused is as about as essential a thing as I have learned...I have a big work ethic. I learned to work hard very early in my life. And to be playful, which is very important because it involves risk. We hold so tight to what we want to do or think that it locks us up. You just have to plunge in. The creative process stands us off sometimes unless we just plunge right in. As I get older, I am able to be more playful, which I am very proud of.2

Ruth Laxson can be found in a lush, dense green garden with paths leading to two "shacks" – this is where it all takes place – the writing, inking, and printing. Off the beaten track. You would never stumble upon this laboratory without a map. Unassuming.

I require chunks of deep solitude to deal with the ideas and get them off the ground. It takes a lot of what I call dream time to pull it up from inside myself. If there is such a thing as original thought, I don't know how one arrives at it without being totally alone. I always imagined that Einstein just sat in a room totally alone and brainstormed – just threw ideas out there and let them bounce around the



Ruth Laxson, **Wheeling**, 1993

*room. I think you can have flashes of ideas while you're talking to somebody, but to be an artist and put it down in some form you need lots of solitude.*³

To come into contact with these books or the artist is to risk being changed – like the philosopher's stone. Powerful substance.

The germ of the next work is formed in the process of the present work. There is no such thing as the Masterpiece that we all pursue, because we would quit. It has to fail a little.

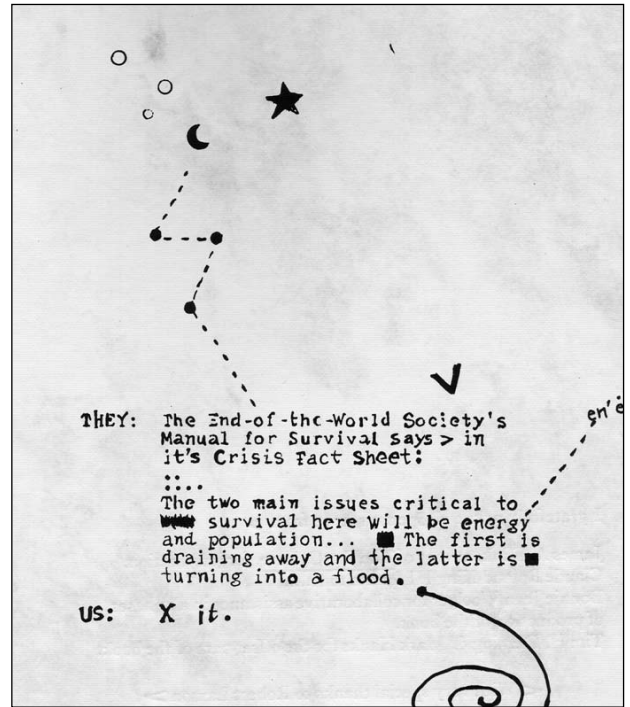
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Pattie Belle Hastings is an artist living in New Haven. She sits her ass daily upon a pillow that says "Be It".

Notes:

The title for this article was taken from a review of [Ho+Go]=It written by a professor of physics, David Finkelstein. "There is a school of cosmological wit just as there is one of metaphysical verse, and it seems to consist of Ruth Laxson." – "Cosmictrip Comicstrip," Art Papers, May/June 1985.

1. David Finkelstein, "Cosmictrip Comicstrip," Art Papers, May/June 1985.
2. Virginia Warren Smith, "Interview with Ruth Laxson," Art Papers, March/April 1992.
3. Ibid.



Ruth Laxson, **Wheeling**, 1993

Artist's Books By Ruth Laxson

- POWER POEM, 1980 – edition 100
- Playfulness Works, 1982 – edition 12
- Earth Score, 1983 – edition 50
- Two Letter Antic, started in 1985 – ongoing series
- Secret Messenger, 1985 – series of 3
- (Ho+Go)=It, 1986 – edition 500
- Measure Cut Stitch, 1987 – edition 75
- About Change About, 1989 – edition 25
- Little Tyrannies, 1990 – edition 150
- Some Things Are Sacred, 1991 – edition 50
- II By II, 1991 – edition 60
- Where Is Everybody, 1991 – edition 20
- Imaging, 1992 – edition 35
- The Power Plan, 1993 – edition 125
- Wheeling, 1993 – edition 200
- Measureup, 1994 – edition 10
- Letters to the Ether/Other, 1995 – edition 10
- Measurism, 1996 – edition 10
- Retell the Tale, 1997 – edition 15

ESSENTIAL ASPECTS OF SUBCULTURE PERIODICALS IN THE GDR AND THEIR PLACE IN CULTURAL HISTORY

BY THOMAS GÜNTHER

1) Emptiness and the Search for Identity

If we ask today what a generation of nonconforming poets, painters, and musicians concerned themselves with for a decade, the focus is on those magazines with original graphic art that played little role in public awareness. Public awareness here means the state-sanctioned reality that affected and overarched all areas of life. It seems paradoxical: precisely these tiniest magazines, known to next to no one except their producers and the producers' friends, were to become the banner of identity for a generation of artists! Despite all their differences, these magazines, with provocative titles like "Entwerter-Oder" (1), "Schaden" ("Damage"), and "Herzattacke" ("Heart Attack") in Berlin, "Anschlag" ("Attack" or "Posted Notice") in Leipzig, "Und" ("And") and "Spinne" ("Spider") in Dresden, or "Reizwolf" (2) in Thuringia, all had at least one thing in common: their press run ranged from a single-digit figure to a maximum of 100 copies (Berlin's "Mikado", whose title is the German name for the children's game of pick-up-sticks, had an edition of precisely 100). The original intention of these periodicals was communication among each other. But soon they increasingly put forward a claim to a degree of autonomy beyond the confines of the social system of the GDR. The latter aspect is meanwhile often vehemently denied, because many primary figures of this scene had dealings with the GDR State Security Service. My introductory claim is that the sins of individuals need not besmirch the entire movement. The "scene subculture" was a system of roots whose plants did indeed bear genuine grapes of wrath.

Again, the strongest desire was initially toward community, to overcome the isolation of creative individuals. After Wolf Biermann lost his GDR citizenship, the situation in East Germany was more difficult than ever. Extreme frustration, resignation, and social paralysis reigned. Direct political resistance seemed hopeless. Prominent authors like Günther Kunert, Jurek Becker, Sarah Kirsch, and Klaus Schlesinger emigrated in the wake of the repression following the petition to rescind Biermann's expulsion. These authors had provided moral moorings, and they left us (whose view of cooperation with the official literature system was even more abstruse than that of the established authors) with the discouraging recognition that poetic camouflage could no longer provide a niche. Perhaps a pact of solidarity among intellectuals could have led to a consciousness of resistance, or at least of the possibility of discussing changes. But everyone thought of himself first, seeking to escape to western Germany — a different system, but with the same language. Thus, the concept of "exile" carried no weight in discussion at the time, turning up only among openly-

professed dissidents. The 20- to 30-year-old authors were isolated: they were alienated from the system, and even their German language had been taken from them and rendered threadbare and fraudulent in the society as a whole. This explains the linguistic approach to a new, unspent poetics, which necessarily seemed a cathartic purification of East German officialese. Beyond that, these writers had already had concrete experience with publishing houses constantly refusing to print the "new-toners", as Volker Braun termed them in his Rimbaud essay. But in that early phase around 1980, there were still efforts towards integration in the realm of state-sanctioned culture. Uwe Warnke, the publisher of "Entwerter-Oder", worked briefly as press contact at the Neues Leben publishing house, before he secured his living as a coal-shoveller and later in a so-called "reduced work situation" at a Lutheran cemetery. Leonhard Lorek and Egmont Hesse, the publishers of "Schaden", were exmatriculated students of library science before beginning their independent editorial work. As a director's assistant at the Berliner Staatstheater, I myself had seen how little room the apparatus left for creativity. Intellectual crampedness between naked censorship and self-censorship was the common experience of us all. In the end, our only response to the existing structures was a cynically jocular "forget it". But dropping out meant uncertainty. East German law did not allow one to claim the status of artist on one's own authority, nor to perform experiments outside mandated permit procedures. Those who published works in the West without informing the ominous "Office for Copyright Matters" could be criminalized. But most weren't primarily interested in rapid recognition as free-lance writers. It was a matter of ending the agonizing, paralyzing situation, and to do so, one came up with the idea of producing handmade booklets and circulating them in the scene. The artistic *samisdat* — though this term was so unambiguous it was never used — was the bridge connecting the "underground". Every participating writer was called on to type copies of his works himself. Original artwork and home-developed photos were simply a necessity, given the lack of copy machines. With initial editions of fifteen copies ("Und", "Entwerter-Oder"), this was hardly a problem. But with prose or manifestos, sometimes the result was maimed or almost illegible carbon copies. In the middle of the 1980s, when this anarchic production increased in general and extended to the production of portfolios, art scholar Christoph Tannert coined the term "graphic art/poetry unicum"; strictly speaking inaccurate, it consciously sought to divert attention from the stigma of the copying techniques.

2) Setting Out in Half-Page Format

Perhaps it was the series "POE-SIE-ALL-BEN" produced in the circle around Sascha Anderson, Cornelia Schleime, and Ralf Kerbach that gave the community spirit its first

and most decisive generational stamp. Here I refrain from any moral judgment of Anderson's dubious connections with the Ministry for State Security. At the time, no one else could know about them, and the fact that the producers lived together intermittently in order to work indicates, first of all, nothing else than the close connection between everyday life and creative energy. When one painted, a second copied out poems, and a third glued the pages together. The booklets in school notebook format, each with a unique, pull-out original graphic, were usually shown around and sold at the conclusion of readings held in apartments. Anyone who wanted to could purchase a — this time truly— unique piece of work for thirty to fifty Marks. Even if our knowledge today indicates we can assume that the State Security Service knew about this method of artistic production and distribution and secretly tolerated it, the effect on outsiders was astounding and by no means calculable. It was often possible to obtain these handmade poetry booklets immediately and to read difficult texts that no publisher would print. This was new, the idea of implementation fascinating. To this day (and less now than ever before), no one knows exactly how many of these booklets were circulated or into whose hands they fell. But the decisive question is what thoughts the owners had when they leafed through the booklets. The existence of such works was a signal for all who were serious about writing but who were repelled by the idea of writing for their own desk drawer or of ingratiating themselves with the official publishing houses.

In about 1984, Anderson ended this series of "Albums" (that could bear titles like "-all-peng", "Dolorosa Überhaupt", or "Flucht nach vorn") to begin an edition of artists' books. For each of these large-format, Japan-bound silk screen printed books in editions of thirty on expensive agate paper, he brought together a poet and a painter. This book production claimed an entirely professional status and had nothing more to do with the sporadically-appearing, spontaneously thrown-together booklets. This mirrored the growth and establishment of structure within the scene; Anderson was recognized as the organizational head. His position was one of power. But those who weren't willing to be shunted here and there in his "switchyard" (as it was called on-site in Prenzlauer Berg district), were ignored, put down, or at best polarized into antagonists, as was the case with Gabi Kachold and Lutz Rathenow. The artists' books seemed elitist and exclusive as soon as they were produced. One copy cost three hundred Marks (to put this in scale: in the GDR, an average skilled laborer earned six hundred Marks a month). Those really interested in the scene were out of the question as purchasers. But the target audience was another, anyway. Bored diplomats and professionally curious journalists could not only convince themselves of the actual existence of a "second culture" in the GDR, they were also harnessed for distribution in the West, since it was easy



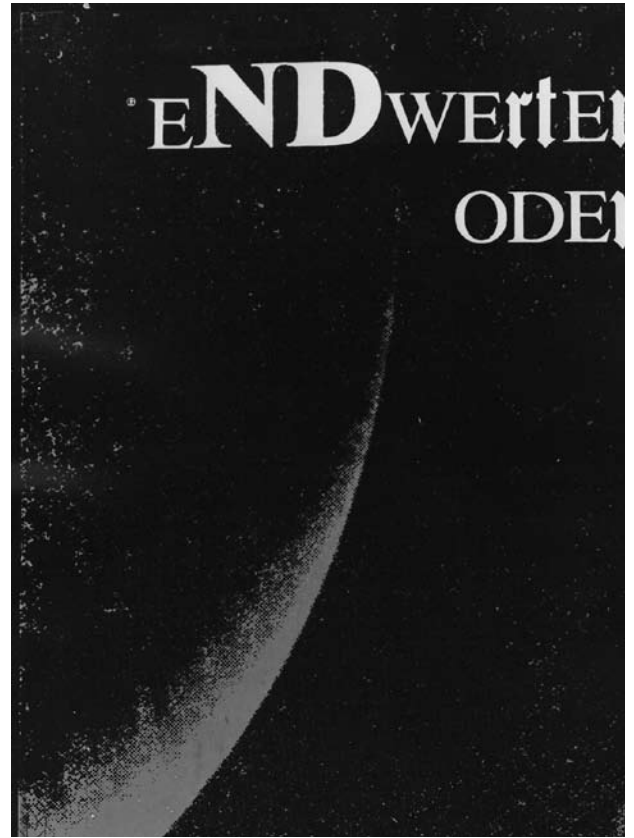
Claus Bach, *Entwerter Oder* Nr. 26, 1980s

to smuggle the expensive bibliophile wares as diplomatic baggage. The 1:4 to 1:6 exchange rate meant a book could turn a profit many times its original price. The broad mass of the scene observed this commercialization of identity with fascination, envy, and nausea; it had nothing to do with the desire for communication.

The formal principle applied to circumvent the barbed hooks of the "Printing Permit Procedure" was for the painter to inscribe the text by hand or to integrate it in some other way in the graphics. The argument that the text was itself visual art was certainly a brilliant and pioneering idea and would today stand in immaculate light, if Anderson's hanky-panky with the state didn't raise justified doubts about the authenticity of his brinkmanship. Nonetheless, at the time he sought theoretical underpinnings for his work: "the reasons for the constant phenomenon of script in image are as innumerable as the loopholes in the law", he wrote in his essay "Die Zusammenhänge sind einfach..." ("The Contexts are Simple..." — but apparently the contexts must have been more complicated than the words in the image could depict.) Be that as it may: in their results, it is precisely the artists' books that display the expressive and anarchic gesture of a younger generation of artists. In my view, Wolfram Adalbert Scheffler, Kaus-Hähner Springmühl, and Angela Hampel contributed unmistakable esthetic originality.



Thomas Günther, **Entwerter Oder Nr. 29**, 1988



Sabine Jahn, **Entwerter Oder Nr. 38**, 1989

3) "Entwerter und so weiter..."

The periodicals began in 1982. Uwe Warnke and a friend, the puppeteer Siegmund Körner, founded "Entwerter-Oder". The first issue was an edition of four and consisted of a grand total of twelve pages. It contained poems and a short prose text. Like the poetry albums, the booklet was in half-page format, with a brilliant red line drawing on the cover. The authors published under pseudonym, since no one knew how the authorities would react if word of the existence of the booklet got around. This may seem ridiculous in view of the size of the "edition", but declared intention of starting a magazine was a risk; let us recall that, in the early 1980s, the GDR was considered absolutely stable, and most serious confrontations with the omnipotent State Security meant prison or forced emigration. But the pseudonyms chosen clearly show the field from which one chose associations in this game of hide-and-go-seek: German Deutscher, francois mühselig, Grotteskev Satyr, and Ivon Zynitzki, were the names borrowed from the imagination of dada.

Warnke presented his first issue to friends in Dresden, receiving encouragement from the poet and musician Lothar Fiedler, who found it extremely exciting. In a March 30, 1982 letter to Warnke, he wrote: "I know you are already working on a similar undertaking — nonetheless: more is still not enough".

At almost the same time, "Und" was founded with an initial edition of fifteen copies. But since it is incor-

rectly stated in all bibliographies and essays, let it be noted once more here: it wasn't "Und" but "Entwerter" that made the beginning. As is known, authors wrote for "Und" under their real names: only "Uwe Fritz" was a pseudonym. In Dresden, where the art college was the fertile ground for a relatively large scene at the time, these activities didn't remain hidden for long. And so the editors were soon repeatedly summoned before the authorities, warned against continuing their work, and even threatened with prison sentences. Finally they were given the suggestion of applying to emigrate. The GDR's perfect and perfidious network of legal clauses ended the publishing of "Und" after fifteen issues, in January 1984.

But the spark had been kindled and could no longer be blown out. In the same year, the photographer and performance artist Michael Brende continued his work with "Und so weiter" ("And So On"). This magazine operated in essentially the same way. The core of participants was a circle of friends in Dresden, with the addition of a changing cast of poets, painters, and artists not limited to a single medium. The character as [graphic art/poetry] unicum, especially visible in the variations in the cover of a single issue, was retained. The deep relationship among primary participants stabilized in the circle and the intention. In his essay "Möglichkeitsräume" ("Spaces of Possibility"), literary scholar Peter Böthig wrote: "Dialogue, intensive reference and communication among



Thomas Günther, **Entwerter Oder Nr. 31, 1988**

people with similar ideas about practical life and art within a 'closed society' were addressed as the participants' goal (and simultaneously as a proposal opposing a political and aesthetic isolation increasingly experienced as constraining). Accordingly, "USW" worked out primarily image- and documentation-oriented conceptual issues providing information on the practice of common production." After eleven issues, Brendel ended his work as editor to devote himself to other projects (this time, Stasi intervention played no role). Another Dresden resident, the editor and silk-screener Thomas Haufe continued the "Und" tradition under the title "Und so fort" ("And So Forth"). But here the concept was more stringent again, oriented more toward artists' books than toward unruly group work. An artist chose a selection of poems and produced text-graphic works to accompany them. These were reproduced in silk-screen and then bound.

4) The Culture of "Schaden"

In East Berlin, the two magazines "Entwerter-Oder" and "Schaden" operated concurrently for many years. Since 1983, there was also "Mikado", edited by Lothar Trolle, Uwe Kolbe, and Bernd Wagner, but its concept was strictly text-oriented and literary. Since it was among the unofficial publications, its edition was necessarily limited, and the covers with silk-screen graphics were one of a kind. "Schaden" arose out of vexation at the demise of "Und". The title ("Damage") and idea were symptomatic. In an interim self-review in Issue 11, Kurt Rat (a pseudonym I cannot tie to a real name) wrote: "Damage — the word is well chosen. It contains an entire program for a literary direction. Doing damage, but also 'being damaged' in the sense of psychological or mental injury. Damage as an error in the system, as something generally regarded as something to be avoided, the crack in the wall of an anx-

iously sheltered living-room society."

Leonhard Lorek, an "Und" author, is considered the real initiator of "Schaden". His original principle was that the publications should be stapled shut, glued, and bagged. To reach the contents, one had to tear the booklet open, and thus had "damage". A peripheral irony is that reams of paper for the copies, typewriter ribbons, and diverse other utensils, came from the GDR's highest judicial office, the High Court on Littenstraße, where a friend of Lorek worked...

Lorek's associate, Frank Lanzendörfer, who led an unstable gypsy life, painting, writing poetry, and drawing (in 1988, the 25-year-old jumped from a tower in Bernau), designed the logo. But the imprint lacked any expressed reference to editorship. Instead, the names of those who had publicized the "notice of damage" appeared in disguise: lorek/flanzendörfer/bernd/janowski/wolfgang schulz were listed in issue 1. Some issues contained tape cassettes with music by avant-garde rock bands; the table of contents then referred to "tape damage". The periodical began with an edition of fifteen and ended, after seventeen issues, with an edition of forty. They contained what is probably the most essential part of the literary history of Prenzlauer Berg. The magazine's producers initially resorted only to a narrow, familiar circle of authors; most were, again, those who had been rejected by the official publishing houses, who met in Café Mosaik on Schöhauser Alle for endless discussions of their life situation, and who felt they were smothering under societal constrictions. Adolf Endler and Elke Erb were welcomed and integrated as sympathizing representatives of another generation. The texts were usually collated in Lorek's apartment. In the early issues, when Egmont Hesse and Joannes Jansen were still part of the editorial term, this was carried out in an easy-going manner. But Issue 12 was accompanied by an "editorial" announcing weighty changes: "this is intended to document the consensus of the varying opinions of a constant grouping without the character of a group, which does not exist as an editorial board, but which still wants to allow a mutually supportable periodical to emerge... we pride ourselves on having different opinions. the point is not the production of loaves of bread but of plenties. trains of ideas can produce openness." Decoded, this meant that including new editorial members — among them Peter Böhlig and Christoph Tannert; Sascha Anderson, too, "involved himself" (Egmont Hesse) — resulted in diverging ideas. The divergence escalated until, in November 1987, no "notice of damage" could be given any longer. In a concluding statement, this was diplomatically justified with the "often unclear expectations regarding the realization of terms like communication and creative atmosphere" (editorial, Issue 17). The emigration of steady staff members to the West (P. Böhlig, L. Lorek) played the major role in the end of "Schaden". But those who remained developed new

ideas. To fulfill the expectations that had congealed and the wish for greater differentiation, Rainer Schedlinkski founded "Ariadnefabrik" ("Ariadne Factory"), which published primarily essayistic texts in an edition of sixty, while Egmont Hesse edited "Verwendung" ("Use" or "Application") with poetry, prose, and original graphics in an edition of fifty.

With the fall of the Wall, the editors believed the necessity and demand for magazines of this kind had vanished. "Entwerter-Oder" remains, the fossil from the earliest days and the only periodical living from the original intention and still appearing, and in which originals, copies, the banal, and the deep all appear beside each other. "Entwerter" works with a core circle of authors. That it has survived certainly has to do with the fact that its editor takes sole responsibility and thus disputes never arose. Nor have the size of the edition and the form of contribution ever changed. The authors must prepare all examples of their work (Warnke admonishes: more originals than copies!) and payment is still the highly-desired author's copy; it fulfills not only the demand for artistic communication, but meanwhile also for fetishes. Those who don't like the conditions don't have to contribute. With open borders and "international networking" (Warnke), there are always enough waiting for a chance. But I nonetheless think "Entwerter" is stuck in an undecided transitional stage and will have no choice but to consider the question of a larger edition.

5) Disentangling Relationships

Until the mid-1980s, when a large, comprehensive exhibition on the unofficial magazines was held in Berlin's Samariterkirche, the producers and authors in different circles knew little about each other. At least in the scene in Berlin, this was due to an almost neurotic lack of interest in anything other than one's own aesthetic self-contemplation. At the same time, this was accompanied by justified fears that the creation of contacts too broad, open, and public could destroy the extremely fragile structures. But aspects of content and substance were also behind the lack of communication. Uwe Warnke put photos, texts, collages, graphics, and occasionally musical scores together as equal partners, while "Schaden" clearly proceeded from the intentions of writers. And if "entwerter" gathered authors who saw themselves in the tradition of visual and concrete poetry, the Prenzlauer Berg circle published those whose orientation, despite all their individual differences, was postmodern and who presented themselves as language experimenters. Stances toward the reality of the GDR also varied greatly and gave rise to forces of repulsion: esoteric drawing in "Schaden" stood in contrast to the often direct and aggressive plasticity with which "Entwerter" artists engaged themselves. Harald Hauswalk photographed the dull and sinister glances of members of the communist youth organization,

while Thomas Florschütz examined the fragmented self with posed photos. And while some felt it important to preserve traces of artistic performances (Heike Stephan's photo-documentation "Gallows Hill" in "Schaden 12" can stand for many), Warnke collected materials on the demolition of Berlin's Gasometer for a special issue of his magazine. These activities continued concurrently without influencing each other. Only a few, like Detlef Opitz, managed to publish everywhere at once.

All in all, there was little felt need for critical reflection from outsiders. One followed autonomously one's own undefined by constantly present program. One of the few critical voices was heard in Issue 15 of "Entwerter-Oder". The German literature student Katrin Rohnstock expressed friendly concern, warning, "What are the goals of "Entwerter" ["devaluer"] when the methods of re-, de-, higher, or lower valuing always remain the same? With what content does the "Oder" ["Or"] fill itself? Here lie, for me, the tension, my uncertainty, my questions." Issue 20 provided the occasion for a first party in an empty apartment, a kind of literary salon with a reading and a one-night exhibition. A lot of people came, but in the final analysis they were all from the familiar circle of insiders. The editor had shied away from effective media publicity after an unsuspecting talk with a journalist resulted in the West Berlin program magazine "zitty" claiming that in "Entwerter" one "...could look up how to build a little bomb at home" (and claiming this in the repressive times of the GDR!). Fortunately, this had no consequences: quiet continuity secured the periodical's survival. In this way, the circle was constantly widened, so that, by Issue 40, the editor could look back on more than 100 contributors. And how many more knew of the magazine? "Entwerter" presented itself especially well in its special photography issues, edited together with photographer Kurt Buchwald. They presented a generation of photographers that had gone almost unnoticed. Original photo prints stood beside essays by art scholars, some of whom were able to republish their texts in the official magazines. (Let me note here that, from the mid-1980s on, the boundaries between official and unofficial art increasingly blurred.) For of course they wanted to exert influence on the state's doctrine of art, and the original-graphics samisdat could not do this on their own.

From 1985 on, official collection sites had turned their attention to the now firmly-rooted magazine culture. An employee of the Saxony Regional Library made "house calls" to the editors and, in friendly, reserved talks, offered to subscribe, with the assurance that the copies would not disappear in the "poison cupboard", but would be accessible for anyone interested. This news spread like wildfire and was discussed exhaustively in the scene. Distrust was great; there were fears not only of constant observation, but also of an end to everything — which the Stasi could have staged at any time. It was a dilemma.

Refusal might have attracted even more attention, since the security fanatics reacted more allergically to the suspicion of conspiracy than to anything else. So the risk was taken. The subscriptions changed nothing in the content and substance. On the contrary: in the absence of repercussions, one felt encouraged to continue and accepted the illusion that one had wrested expanded possibilities from the situation. Not until the fall of the Wall did I learn from an employee of the Saxony Regional Library that library visitors always had to present an acceptable reason for looking at the magazines — and this had nothing to do with any expressed concern about the value of the originals. Almost simultaneously, there were also interested people in the West who heard true and unmistakable voices of an authentic structure in the magazines. For their own varying reasons, the Marback Literature Archive and the Free University's Eastern Europe Institute purchased copies of "Anschlag", "Entwerter", "Schaden", and later "Ariadnefabrik" and "Liane". From 1988 on, the Frankfurt am Main City and University Library regularly bought "Entwerter-Oder" and whatever else was available. Collectors, too, had meanwhile pounced on the bibliophile rarities. Frankfurt collected not only for its archives, but with the declared intent of exhibiting these testimonies to autonomous creativity. The exhibition, title "Aussichten 90" ("Outlooks 90"), was indeed held, in November 1990. The Wall had long since fallen. In GDR times the exhibition would have produced a scandal, because the Stasi culture-guards would have paid no attention to the substance, but only have raged about the "illegal" channels used to smuggle this "trade ware" out of East Germany in such completeness. Now it stood in a purely retrospective light. An epoch could be viewed in glass showcases. On top of this, it no longer had to be kept secret that, without the help of accredited "Zeit" and "Spiegel" correspondents, it would hardly have been possible to maneuver the successive issues past the customs organs of the German Democratic Republic... Alliances of this kind have turned to history. Today, a handsome price has brought a complete collection of "Schaden" to the Getty Museum in Los Angeles. Fortunately, the money has flowed back to where everything once began. In the cultural recycling of the "Brotfabrik" ("Bread Factory") in Berlin's Weißensee district, the "damage sum" has permanently taken on another form.

6) The Ungathered Top-of-the-World Underground

I myself joined the circle of participants quite early. With Sabine Jahn and Claus Bach, I first contributed to a magazine, Issue 9 of "Und", in 1984. Our motivation grew from general frustration about our lack of possibilities to publish. Our form of participation was typical. We entered the scene as a group, without defining ourselves as such. But the result was less than satisfying. We never received an author's copy for our aggregation of text,

silk-screen print, and photo print, of which one page was also sprayed. (To this day, it is still unclear whether we were deprived due to "underground" confusion — the often chaotic communication with Dresden — or whether our copies were "lost" in the mail or retained by the State Security Service. Perhaps the Stasi file will clear this up once and for all.) So we had little motivation to continue contributing. Also, our work together as a group demanded much internal effort from the early to mid-1980s, since we wanted to explore our possibilities.

The regular and increasingly intensive readings in the apartment of the translator and singer Ekkehard Maaß, where Sascha Anderson also lived from 1982 on, led to a wealth of personal contacts. The scene had shifted from Dresden to Berlin. Every four weeks, unpublished authors read from their work to an audience of from seventy to one hundred and thirty listeners, followed by talks, noodle salad, and Bulgarian red wine. The apartment was open to all. In this period — 1982 to 1983 — the anthology "Berührung is nur eine Randerscheinung" ("Touching is Only a Marginal Phenomenon") was put together. In it, the so very disparate voices of my generation would find publication in book form for the first time. Elke Erb intensively discussed texts and their poetic-biographical backgrounds with many contributors. She painstakingly discussed with each what he or she was willing to release to an anthology appearing in the West, for which, it was clear, there would be no permit from the "Office for Copyright Matters". In her foreword, Elke Erb expressly mentioned the intermediary cooperation of most of the authors as the most innovative aspect of the young generation. In my opinion, this period was indeed the most intensive working phase of a scene that journalists were increasingly conjuring into existence as a unified phenomenon. Despite catastrophic typographical errors, the "Berührung" ("Touching") anthology, with its so telling title, became the most important point of orientation produced by the post-Biermann generation. But a whole year passed between completion of the manuscript and publication, and in this time many had already submitted applications to emigrate, no longer able to tolerate society's paralysis.

In March 1984, another event took place whose intent was to bring writers together for communicative dialogue, but which in fact increased the distance between them. For one week, the painter Uta Hünninger, a contributor to "Verwendung" and creator of artist's books of her own, provided her studio in the third courtyard of the Lychener Straße for what was called the Zersammlung. (3) One afternoon I found in my mailbox a painted-over postcard inviting me to participate in a 1-week reading scenario. "Come alone with your poetry and provisions," was the mysterious message, signed "Your Harry". Who would this Harry be? It was a cover name for the Prenzauer Berg circle poets who had organized the whole thing. Their selection

itself seemed arbitrary and led to the first conflicts. Lutz Rathenow was not invited, for example, though he had also edited an important anthology in a small publishing house ("Einst war ich Fänger im Schnee" = "Once I was the Catcher in the Snow"). The reading marathon turned out to be very problematical; it assumed a fundamental consensus that did not in fact exist. Formally, the marathon was carried through, with three authors each evening, but unspoken aggressions, aesthetic oppositions, fear of Stasi observation, and the feeling of a gulf of socially isolated speechlessness that could no longer be bridged emptied the event of meaning more each day. The last evening turned into an almost iconic fiasco. I happened to bring along an acquaintance who was on weekend leave from psychiatric treatment. She was to be a quiet listener, and although I expressly asked her — whom I didn't really know — to maintain reserve in the debates and toward the often hypersensitive writers, she suddenly wanted to read aloud her own poems. There was no place for this in the rigidified structures, nor was there any confidence in the response. The general paranoia made her act seem a provocation to final deterioration. (In fact, my friend Christine S. was fired solely by uninhibited longing for communication, while we poets were driven by a cramped, sublimated silence.) After the desolate event, the individuals shut themselves off in their homemade groups even more.

Two years later, the Samariterkirche in Berlin's Freidrichshain district staged an event presenting some of the publishing efforts of these officially still unrecognized poets and publishers. The presentation was based on a good idea: the publications hung on threads from the ceiling. Whoever wanted to leaf through them could grasp them for inspection at eye level. This time, the selection was not limited to the Berlin circle, but also integrated the short-lived "Galeere" ("Galleon") from Hall, Leipzig's "Anschlag" ("Attack" and/or "Posted Notice"), and "A3" from Karl-Marx-Stadt, today Chemnitz again. "Schaden" number 12 dominated among the photos of the authors and the readings. All in all, the event could be seen as successful, since it drew a large audience that had no prior knowledge of the various activities. Sascha Anderson, the undisputed and completely unsuspected promoter of the underground, emigrated immediately thereafter, in July 1986, and the bohemian and highly notorious scene meeting place, the "Wiener Café", closed with the excuse that it was being renovated to meet "Price Class S" (Special Class), which would drive off precisely this scene.

After the summer vacation, Sabine Jahn, Claus Bach, and I staged an exhibition in the Samariterkirche. We did so as a group, again without expressly defining ourselves as such. The temporal distance to the "Wort & Werk" show was coincidental, since the internal conflicts in the congregation meant that it was no longer Pastor Eppelmann,

but another clergyman, who organized exhibitions. Indirectly, however, this expressed our relation to the pulsing core of subcultural activity: we were part of it, but did our own thing. This ambivalence seemed to me the most productive possibility for us.

7) Our Own Current

My cooperation with the photographer Claus Bach and the painter Sabine Jahn mirrored much of what characterized other groups: the close connection between personal relationships and the work (we three all came from a small town in the western Erz mountains), mutual interest in each other's medium (painting, silk-screen graphics, photography, photo-collage, literature, collage), and the desire to keep as much distance from the state as possible (which led to the odd "seeming" work situations in cemeteries or private companies, or for hourly wages). Since we were serious about our creativity and artistic claims, there is early documentation that we created a kind of publicity. This included not only mutual informing about exhibitions and readings, but also participation in mail-art activities with Dresden's Jürgen Gottschalk and Berlin's Robert Rehfeldt, as well as the delicate blossoms of the periodicals. But the dilemma and the necessity to come up with ideas was pre-programmed. The galleries of the GDR artists' organizations arranged exhibitions only for their own members or candidates for membership. Communal galleries had the responsibility of giving "hobby" artists a chance. But anything daring or experimental was almost always rejected there; the cultural apparatus who were the civil servants blocked everything with the mentality of housewives. So we began looking for other possibilities early on and took advantage of almost every opportunity that arose. We availed ourselves of private cafes, twice a boutique, church rooms, apartments, and once even a movie theater. Between 1982 and 1989, we organized at least one such exhibition a year; the living quarters of the BahBs family in Magdeburg, the artists' cafe "Vis-a-Vis" in Leipzig, and the church at the Tierpark in Berlin's Friedrichsfelde district became familiar to the scene and thus essential stations. We attached enormous importance to advertising with postcards we designed and reproduced ourselves. Since photo paper was dirt cheap and we had a provisional silk-screen workshop in our cellar, we made one to two hundred prints and sent them as "messages". On principle, our address list also included persons we could assume would never visit the respective exhibitions, often for reasons of geographic distance. But our position was that the card was the medium and mosaic tile standing for the entirety. Once we even permitted ourselves the gag of mailing a green hemp leaf, which we declared a chestnut flower when asked. And we often saw our message pinned to a friend's wall ... and thus fulfilling its true purpose. With this background of experience and the simultaneous knowledge that others were similarly doing

what they wanted without asking, the production of artistic publications and books developed. It also represented a jump in quality. From 1985 to 1989, there was a common edition each year that, along with the priority of concrete intentions, we also considered an authentic documentation of artistic self-assertion. Beyond this, its publication was accompanied by an exhibition and reading, once, in 1986, together with a punk band in the aforementioned church in Friedrichsfelde, and one year later in the Environmental Library on Zionskirchplatz, which was not yet in the headlines. I was open about using this second event on March 20, 1987 to present the Edition we had produced in common, "Die NotNadel" ("The Emergency Needle"), in which we concerned ourselves primarily with the dying forests in the Erz Mountains. I read from it, then promoted it for sale, naming a price of 100 Marks. As expected, we sold a few copies from the edition of 25; one went to someone we didn't know, who introduced himself as a member of the Pankow District Literature Club. A few weeks later Sabine Jahn and I were served a summons from the Magistrate of the City of Berlin, Printing Permit Division. "Die NotNadel", the product of our self-proclaimed artists' group "Krücke" ("Crutch"), was presented to us in the form of a gray xerox copy; the precaution had been taken to remove the copy number (?/25). Even more unsettling: beside it lay an original from the prior Edition "Derwisch" ("Dervish"), which had disappeared from our apartment. The two female officers refused to tell us how it got there; instead they informed us that a state permit must be obtained for every kind of printed matter. This informing was put on file and we had to sign it. I insisted that the stolen goods be returned, but of course we did not receive the copy of "Derwisch". This situation was depressing. It was typical of all those moments in the closed society of East Germany in which one was subjected to the deepest existential anxiety. It was clear that the Magistrate's office was merely sent ahead, and that the Stasi that stood behind it knew much more about us and our doings. And one constantly wondered: How much do they really know and what will happen if... (We meanwhile bore the responsibility not only for our artistic products, but for two children.)

In the shadow of this Kafkaesque reality we nevertheless continued. In 1988, we released our "Berlin Booklet", with enough pages to justify calling it a book. Internal complications resulted in the cancellation of a firmly-planned exhibition in the gallery "eigen+art", so that the "Discoveries in Twilight" — our subtitle — haunted scene gossip like a bibliophile undercover story. The last exhibition of the last original-graphic book in GDR times opened precisely on the day the Wall was opened; typically, it was held in the rooms of the art service of the Lutheran Church. "Autumn Stone in Green Walls" was a book taking my personal experience in a Berlin cemetery as a metaphor for society. At the same time, it was intended to

contain that aspect of anarchic identity we had wrested away not only from conformist everyday life under socialism, but also from clerical closedmindedness. We strewed sacks of old leaves across the parquet floor of the exhibition room and hung strips cut from the party newspaper "Neues Deutschland" like garlands from the ceiling. We had a printed quote from Marcel Duchamp on the "ND" strips. A large "AND" was followed by a colon and the words: "Incidentally, it's always the others who die." It was the apt commentary at precisely the right time.

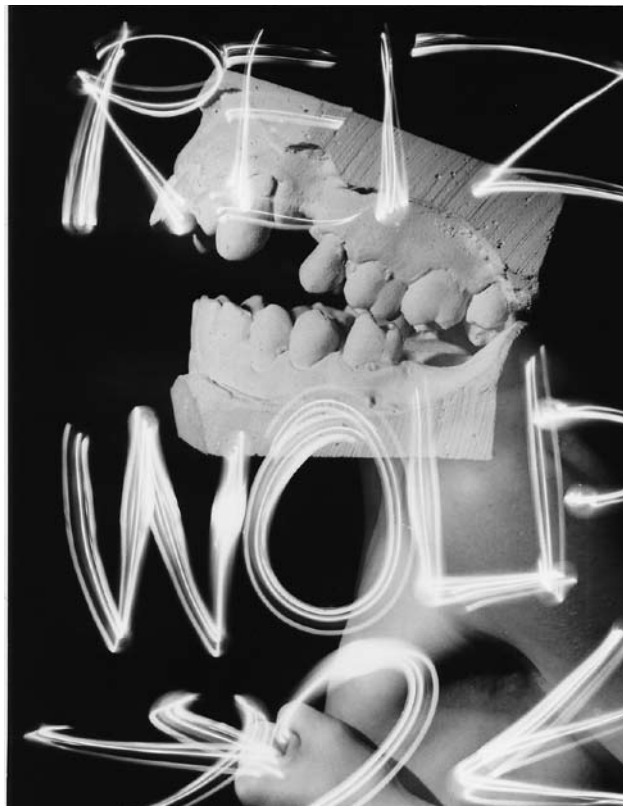
8) Descendants and Branches

The photographer Claus Bach, my associate from the very beginning, who not only was a part of our group Editions but also contributed to "Entwerter", lived in Weimar, which we jocularly called our "outpost". Without a doubt, Berlin was a center, and one felt little motivation to look around in the "provinces". Perhaps this lack of interest was one reason to begin a magazine in and for Thuringia. On the other hand, unrest had increased so much since Gorbachev appeared that society pressure would have to be released one way or another. So the magazine "Reizwolf" was founded. Claus Bach alternated with the paleontologist John Keiler as editor of this bimonthly periodical, whose first issue was released in January 1988. The periodical operated in a manner similar to "Entwerter-Oder" and comparable magazines. Contributors had to reproduce their copies themselves. Like the other periodicals, it never exercised any censoring pre-selection, but neither did it shy from refusing a wooden or banal contribution. Starting with Issue Five, it was decided to improve the magazine's quality, taking beyond merely general reactions to societal conditions, by devoting each issue to a particular topic. Astoundingly and inspiringly, the communicative structure among the participants developed more intensely and openly than in the Berlin teams, so that the periodical in fact fulfilled a "purpose". It put societal frustration to use. But since the literary and art critical reflections were as lacking as the essays, after the fall of communism there was also no basic conceptual consensus that could have pointed the way beyond the satirizing of the daily events. So interest in "Reizwolf" waned. The things that had interested young photographers and differentiating graphic artists now appeared in the newspapers. And the poets could test their quality by submitting to reputable literary magazines.

Another project that grew out of "Entwerter" is "Spinne", initiated by Dirk Fröhlich and still published in Dresden. "Die erste Spinne" ("The First Spider") with the subtitle "Verschiedenes im Netz" ("Various Things in the Net") appeared in June 1989. Concentration on text-experimental, artistically eccentric, and sometimes fragmentary works has ensured that the network of authors remained interested in this "web" to this day.

The biblically-titled magazine "1. Mose 2,25" appeared in Schwerin. The booklets — bound as simply as can be imagined, with staples, but with original graphics and hand-printed photos — attempted to address the socio-psychological crises of our society. This was already apparent in the titles of the individual issues: "Fear of Intimacy", "Boredom", "Civil Courage". In 1986, leftists had already begun a project named "Offnungszeit" ("Opening Hours"). Along with unpublished authors, it also included writers who had emigrated and whose texts, unpublished in the GDR, enjoyed great sympathy (Günter Kunert and Erich Loest). As an incomparable exception, even Johann Wolfgang Goethe was given the floor. The publisher's attempt to put "Offnungszeit" under the protection of the Church failed. Everything with even a hint of subversiveness found no support from the defenders of the faith, concerned as they were with "balance" and adaptive adjustment.

One of the youngest and, in my opinion, currently most vital periodical projects is "Herzattacke" ("Heart Attack"). If its issues were relatively thin before the fall of the Wall, afterward there was a consistent effort to get a textual discourse going. An even younger generation entered the stage here, with the "intuitive attempt to spin two (invisible?) threads, which occasionally — very rarely and then only briefly — touch each other, almost uniting, only to repel each other again immediately... concretely: POETRY/ TEXTS/ PICTURES /SNAPSHOTS, whereby neither of the threads will lose its SUBJECTIVE SOVEREIGNTY". Of course it saw itself as being "beyond Stalinist cultural doctrine" and set itself the declared goal of "granting the poetic and philosophical works of GEORGES BATAILLE, LAUTRÉAMONT, and FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE the homage and importance they deserve" — so the publisher, Max Barck. One sought to fulfill the radical poetic ambition with "ARCHAIC SUBJECTIVE SOVEREIGNTY". Like all these magazines, its work is based on a loose group of interested painters, poets, and photographers. The painter Mikos Meininger is responsible for the silk-screen covers. The continuing project "Herzattacke" accompanies and intensifies the edition of artists' books also edited by Max Barck, MALDOROR, which always brings together a poet and a visual artist. Despite the expressed intention of preventing anything politically tendentious from seeping into the desired world of art and of eschewing the didactics of enlightenment, the texts of the younger poets are infiltrated with states of mind clearly tied to the period before or after the fall of the Wall. Does a strength lie precisely in the seismographic detection of these states of mind — as unconscious and opposed to the impetus as this display may be? In the final analysis, this answers the question of the objectifiable sense, the need for such undertakings. The inclusion of original graphics in an edition of 95, beckoning collectors and rendering the magazines expensive on the West-Eastern market, cannot



Sabine Jahn, *Entwerter Oder* Nr. 38, 1985

be the point. The graphics are firm in implementing the postulated ambition, but only the turn toward our world with our problems can make it all interesting and lead to a meaningful whole. That a poetic dimension here overcomes the gridlock of everyday political concerns seems self-evident to me.

Until the mid-1980s, one was always beset with problems when trying to exhibit literary texts lacking the official stamp of approval in connection with graphic or photographic art; later, under the influence of Gorbachev's policies, even state-employed gallerists took greater liberties (though this did not mean the laws were softened). So it's no wonder that, in May 1989, the artists' group "Herzattacke" no longer had any difficulties presenting their project in the Gallery in the Treptow District Culture House, an important site for many artists in limbo between the unofficial and the Artists Association. The poets read from the Edition and afterward — more or less officially — offered copies for sale.

The historical events that led to the tectonic collapse of the GDR had rendered paper rebellions of little importance to the Stasi.

9) What Remains?

I beg forgiveness that I have not listed all the magazines here, but have picked out names and aspects important to me subjectively. This has nothing to do with likes and dislikes, but with the fact that a communicative net of magazines was lacking and the groups worked mostly on

their own. I hope it has become clear that this was due to the nature of the East German system. I have thus limited my description to what touched my own person.

The phenomenon of these magazines as a whole, however greatly they varied, testifies not only to a generation that did not conform, but also to something that never existed in this form before. Avant-gardistic, experimental art journals already existed in the Expressionist period and in the revolutionary spirit of Surrealism, but never did such an important, integrating, and existential aura of communication grow from them. This made the magazines a kind of life preserver for a generation condemned to silence. The existential aspect of inner urgency gives this movement its lasting significance. That the Stasi knew about or even knowingly tolerated this or that project cannot change this.

Without the prologue of the editions of original graphics that the participants chose as the testing ground of their creativity, in the part of Germany marked by the dictatorship we would today look back on a lost generation. But precisely because they quietly did this preparatory work, artists and writers can now step out of the shadows, rather than starting from the beginning. We shall see who will have something to say in and for the future and who enters the virgin terrain of creative development. If we then trace the paths back, we will find the tender and robust roots in these magazines.

Thomas Günther, February-March 1992

translated by Mitch Cohen

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- Katrin Rohnstock, "Entwerter-Oder" Nr. 15
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(1) Translator's note: The cover of "Entwerter-Oder", which immediately associates the pair of terms "Either-Or", displayed a public transport ticket cancelled (entwerter) in Frankfurt am Oder.

(2) Translator's note: "Reizwolf" is a play on words. "Reißwolf", literally "tearing wolf", is the term for a paper-shredding machine. "Reiz" is stimulation, sometimes provocation or teasing.

(3) Translator's note: "Versammlung" = "gathering". "Zersammlung" is a neologism. The prefix "Zer-" generally indicates that the stem verb following is or was performed to the point of destruction. The most obvious example is the word for "destruction": "Zerstörung". "Störung" along means "disturbance". I've translated "Zersammlung" as "ungathering". "Degathering" or even "sgathering", reminiscent of "scattering", might also be possible. But like most, this example of word play is more elegant in the original language.

PROFILE / INTERVIEW: CATHY COURTNEY

BY JOHANNA DRUCKER

I met Cathy Courtney at the Camberwell School of Art in London July, 1997, and she shared some of her thoughts on current artists' books activity and the British scene from the perspective of her many years of critical work in the field.

Cathy Courtney has written about artists' books for over fifteen years for the British publication, *Art Monthly* (a selection of these writings has been collected and republished). Courtney works as an archivist as well as a critic, and is an (unofficial) advisor in the Camberwell School of Art's masters' program in artists' books. She came to artists' books through a combination of interests in the history of art, literature, and theater in the 20th century. She developed an enthusiasm for the early 20th century French poet Guillaume Apollinaire during her undergraduate years at the University of York in the Department of English. Particularly inspired by the crossover in his work between visual and literary worlds, she wrote a play about Apollinaire (based on a dream), and later composed a personal response to his work in an unpublished collaborative work with theater designer Charlotte Goodfield. This combination of interests is evident in her early career: though the first artist's book she wrote about was Liliane Lijn's *Crossing Map*, (in a review for a short-lived journal titled *Art Book Review*) she became involved in a project on the work of Jocelyn Herbert, (theater designer for the Royal Court Theater from the 1950s through the 1970s, and still actively working with Tony Harrison). Herbert had worked with Samuel Beckett, and like Apollinaire, had succeeded in forging a complete crossover between text and image, a fact which had a strong impact on Courtney. This synthetic sensibility continues to inform her assessment of artists' books and their place within contemporary arts.

In the early 1980s she began writing regularly about artists' books for *Art Monthly* after becoming aware of the range of work being done in the field during a visit to New York. There she met the late Bruce Bacon, an American artist who was making books in plaster with Magritte-like cloud images, and through him Courtney met the dealer Tony Zwicker — who in turn introduced her to Stephanie Brody Lederman, Lois Polansky, Norman Colp, and others. Work by two of these artists, Lederman and Colp, particularly caught her critical imagination. Lederman's tale of two powder-puffs, about the life of a lonely socialite in Manhattan and a work by Norman Colp, *Ten Small Paintings* (a flip book of nail polish being applied), epitomized the imaginative potential of the form. Another book by Colp was based on a brief statement by Sigmund Freud linking physical make-up with destiny. The Colp book is an accordion fold, with one word per panel, and the image of a roasted chicken on the final page. Courtney originally perceived the book as an amusing work of dark humor. But her friend, the writer Penelope Giliatt, burst into tears when she read it, seeing the book as an

image of the Holocaust. Courtney realized that the impact of these small books was enormous. On her next trip to New York she went to Printed Matter, revisited Tony Zwicker, met Warja Lavater, and Paula Hocks. Determined to call attention to the existence of these books, Courtney described some of them to the editor of *Art Monthly*, Peter Townsend, who encouraged her to write about them on a regular basis.

Courtney's enthusiasm for the works she had encountered in New York caused her to be curious about the existence of similar work in England. She found that there was a considerably smaller arena of activity, lacking the networks (such as Printed Matter Bookstore) which existed in the US. Coracle, Circle Press, a number of other presses and individuals were in existence and actively producing work, but there was nothing uniting these disparate loci of production. In about 1984, BookWorks was established and initiated a program of mixed exhibitions and debates over a productive five year period, which Courtney senses was crucial in bringing more public attention to the field. When BookWorks lost their exhibition space, they briefly became more focused on publishing, gradually expanding into installations arranged in other spaces, integrating films, video, and other arts in a way which allows books to function within a larger, more integrated multi-media context, rather than within an isolated domain. Courtney is optimistic about this direction, and sees it reflected as well in other areas. She was just back from the "Women and Text Conference" in Leeds when I spoke with her and had sensed an atmosphere of crossover and fertilization among women there who were involved in distinctly different pursuits — concrete poetry, literary academic writing, movement work and so forth. Her sense is that in such crossover situations, artists' books might find a wider arena within which to circulate and communicate effectively.

From that point fifteen years ago when she first became aware of artists' books, when there was no real network within Britain, Courtney has seen many changes — some of which inspire her with caution and with some optimism. Her sense is that during the early period of isolation, in which people were working independently and on the margin, artists were using the book because that was the form that certain work needed to take. Much of this work (she felt happily) was "incidental," it was work which had a life "out there." As people became aware of each other, she noted an increasing sense of jealousy for the little bit of attention paid to artists' books. This generated contention about the very definition of the term, a competition to claim one's own work as definitive. Courtney characterizes much of what occurred in this phase as less than "informed debate" — in many cases, people dismissed each other's work without really becoming acquainted with it. She senses that this period of defensiveness and negativity seems to be passing as more large institutions are beginning to show an interest in artists' books such (she cited Gay Smith at Manchester, the Victoria & Albert, and the Tate). In addition, a number of London galleries, such as Nigel Greenwood's gallery, the Eagle Gallery, and the Hardware Gallery were showing book

art, sometimes being the catalyst for its production and for sale. There is also a healthy amount of activity in Scotland and Sheffield, and in the last three or four years, there's been an annual Artist Book Fair in London. An exhibition at the Tate, curated by Courtney and Maria White (August 1995 — January 1996), and accompanied by a public forum and conference, gave a significant boost to the artist book community's morale. The idea that the Tate would not only collect artists' books, but see them as worthy of exhibition, was a major breakthrough.

Courtney says she feels a new sense of confidence for artists making books. It seems that the field is expanding which allows various areas of activity to develop simultaneously, though for artists who have been working for a long time in isolation, it seems to take some time to let go of a sense of fragility, of marginality, and to believe that the bit of success they have started to experience might continue.

Another new development she remarked on is that artists' books have begun to be institutionalized and taught, a situation which is new in England. There is now a generation of artists who are making books because they have seen book art or studied it — sometimes with mixed results. A portion of such work seems to be more the outcome of an interest in the form than the expression of a compelling content, and this results in much weak work. But she feels there is a proper critical debate starting to take shape as the field matures and the community begins to perceive itself more coherently. At Camberwell, she has been instrumental in helping generate internal exhibitions and convening a small seminar of people who have been writing about books for awhile, are buying for national institutions, are studying books, or are long-term collectors. She is convinced that book arts are on the brink of a new phase, if the current energy can be sustained.

Courtney says that every time she starts to feel jaded about the possibility of continuing to write about artists' books, she encounters new books which motivate her to go on. But in spite of her commitment to critical debate, her stronger wish is for artists' books to find their full effect in the wider world, circulating more freely. She said that she had just had the experience of reading *Diary of a Steak*, BookWorks' most recent publication, while on the train. The cover of the book features a color image of raw steak, and where the price tag would be on a real piece of meat, the book bears a label saying, "Hear my erotic music." She happened to glance across the aisle. There sat a very upright man reading a book on bible study — and she realized that he was very discomforted by the cover. The book was acting in real life, which gave it its power. That, she said, was a moment in which she saw again the way that books can function when they are in the world, when they really come alive, rather than when they are in glass cases in institutions. It's not that she feels that the glass cases and institutions stop them from being in the world, but that it is important to shift the ones in the world around as well —

- end

**THE PROBLEM WITH ROLE MODELS:
CONTEXTUALIZING SO CAL 1970'S FEMARTBOOKS AND
THE MATTER WITH CONTEMPORARY PRACTICE**

BY LAUREL BECKMAN

THEN

As a decade, it's easy to identify the 1970's as one of innovation in the visual arts. New ideas about form, value, and a heightened awareness of art's place in society (if never found, certainly looked for), are signature aspects of that time. Bathing in the afterglow of sloppy but sincere counter-cultures while ushering in the first popular examples of the trickle-up theory of trends (disco, flannel, surfer), the 70's were an apt moment for time-based art forms to assume their slippery position. Of course I'm talking about the (then) new art forms of performance, video and artists' books; and though all are locatable on the continuum of modern art, they nonetheless provided a breath of fresh air.

Nowhere was that air so fresh as in California. Rich, warm, sun-drenched California, with its queer relationship to tradition, has long attracted a populace whose sense of entitlement highlights the idiosyncratic in realms both material and spiritual. It is in Los Angeles where we see this phenomenon take a dreamy turn towards the visual. Hollywood, Disneyland, and the national defense/space industries anoint Southern California as the home of the spectacle, a place where we can navigate or ignore the shift between real and imagined. With its encouragement to project via imagination and technology, it comes as no surprise that Southern California has played host to some of our most interesting art and artists.

The land of light, it so happens, really does nurture the material and immaterial in equal measure. At approximately the same moment that California gave us the lovingly finessed meta-surfaces of the Light and Space movement - slick, theatrical "objects" who's meaning counted on literal *and* psychic reflection - artifacts on the other side of sexy were proffering an alternate meditation on the concrete and ephemeral. Early performance, video and artist book work shared not just a reliance on the elapse of time, but linked with Conceptualism, favored the everyday in experience and expression. This marked a critical and pioneering pivot from previous forms. But it is important to note that while the process was often the art, it's dusty trail couldn't help but account for some mighty dry products. Full of expansive attention spans and intimate positions, much of this work's kick came from an intellectualization of the (pointedly subjective) mundane. We may have noticed how the stuff looked, but our viscera was reserved as source material, available primarily for translation into a referring object. (This is less true for performance and installation - which did see some messy, immediate work - than it is for video and artists' books, which, with

one eye on the machine and the other on what it can document, produced a lot of cool [removed] work that more suggested an experience than was one.)

The convergence of broader cultural currents and the acceptance of theory's role in art conspired to make the 70s the birth of Identity art as we know it. Exploration of individual consciousness, social relations and personal growth - thin clichés by now - at the time presented a powerful if homely force of friction to an otherwise smooth scene. The (also homely) Conceptualists were predominately pale guys, so they had on the whole a conflicted investment in disrupting the status-quo. They may have been oblivious or comfortable with the quick assimilation (\$) of their contrary art, but there is little doubt that (by virtue of gender and race) they saw themselves as players. It would take another ten years for artists formerly known as women artists and artists of color to realize their own value.

A who's-who of influences taking hold in Southern California in the 70s would include the newly integrated schools forming the California Institute of the Arts (1970-), and the early "alternative" artist-run spaces such as Self-Help Graphics (1972-), Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art (1973-1987), Los Angeles Center For Photographic Studies (1974-), Social and Public Art Resources (1976-), Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (1977-), Espace DBD (1978-1983), Foundation For Art Resources (1978-), and the Woman's Building (1973-1991). What they had in common was an environment of intoxicating abandon and serious experimentation, the combination of which would ensure a generation of young artists striking new ground with the confidence of self-defined success. A dissatisfaction with stodgy art making/exhibiting practices of the (?) past - enacting sexist, classist, racist, regionalist and mediumist assumptions concerning quality - along with an excitement for new media, and a (sweetly naive) vision of art behaving actively in the world, would propel the artists to attack form, content, display and distribution all at once. Nowhere is this more present than in the artists' books produced by the women working at the Woman's Building.

While the doors of the Woman's Building did close in 1991, the board of directors has been in continuous operation, overseeing the placement of their archives (paper at the Smithsonian, video at the Long Beach Museum of Art, slides at the Otis School of Art and Design), and planning a 1998 multi-venue exhibit marking their 25th anniversary. Throughout the life span of the Woman's Building, and emblematic of its spirit, were the classes in printing and the book arts, including those offered through the Feminist Studio Workshop, 1973-81, and the Women's Graphic Center, 1981-1985 (which also offered professional graphic design and printing services). Notable are the many women who facilitated the creative growth of scores of women + some men. I note here only the founders - Sheila de Bretteville, Arlene Raven and Judy Chicago

- and the WB's first artist/printer/teachers - Helen Alm and Susan King.

- This piece is fundamentally about context, and a pre-occupation with identity, which of course, is dependent on context. The above is context for the below, and the time is right to do some contextualizing of my self.

I was an art student at Cal Arts during (not in) the Feminist Art Program. The FAP, acting within the Art and Design Schools at Cal Arts, was the direct precursor to the Woman's Building, its founders and key participants refugees from Cal Arts. Cal Arts at the time (1971-3, and again during the later half of the 80s) was a hot bed of feminist action and thought. There was, as you can imagine, plenty of tension all the way around, but what was important was the permission to link ideological and formal approaches from a feminist point of view, and some encouragement to construct what that perspective might be; later, as my young artist lesbian feminist self was building an adult life, I frequented the offerings of the Woman's Building - exhibits, performances, lectures; and somewhere around 1982, having become an artist/printer myself, I was invited to shack-up with the Women's Graphic Center as their in-house small offset printer, where I worked, produced my own projects and (occasionally) taught for 2-3 years.

NOW

As someone with a keen personal and professional interest in artists' publishing, I have to say that it is not always true that all publicity is good publicity. After a good deal of reading, looking, publishing and teaching, I must articulate an unsavory position: too many artists' books are insipid. You might say, all right, but what does that have to do with the publishing efforts of the feminists working around the Woman's Building in the 70s? Let me tell you. Most of the scholarship and classroom use of this work has presented it through the milky veil of nostalgia, that is to say, with selective amnesia towards the circumstances of the time in which it was made, and conversely, with an ignorance of how it has made the time we're in now. With serious respect for the artists and the moment their work was produced in, I feel that as a sub-genre without contextualization, the work proves to be an unfortunate model for contemporary practice.

FLASH... As a young woman in 1970, coming in to my own sexually and artistically, I can tell you that being overtly sexy was not ok: My flesh (and yours) was too scarred with objectification to be appropriate material for representation. Instead, we developed codified strategies and baggy clothes to contend with subjective pleasures. This was a feminist issue, specific to the moment, not to be taken issue with now. It made sense; if we were to discover and distinguish ourselves we had to form our own verbal and visual vocabulary. There was an issue of taking ourselves

seriously, without being taken, yielding the well documented and (ironically) spectacular vulvic aesthetic - associated with essentialism - as one specific response. A deeper look reveals an art methodology distinguished by its consideration of personal motivation and education. When else, before or since, have we (really) cared how an artist's personal growth was evidenced in the work? ...**BACK**

to the books in particular. The 70's femartbooks serve as some of the clearest examples of the art object as utility. Charged with the burden of proof, their construction and analysis featured a notion of growth that collapsed personal, creative, and technical accomplishment. Ambitious, even brave within social context, the books (largely) used catharsis and illustration as a way to manifest that accomplishment. And as any young adult can tell you, early stages of personal/sexual/intellectual growth are pretty gangly. That's the fun and terror of it. Likewise, most printers will offer their own version of unbelievable frustration (you remember) leading to an eventual love for the means. Add distribution issues on top of that, and you have a picture of the process, and the artist's relationship to it, in danger of overwhelming the art. And in retrospect, overwhelm it it did. The work, largely cathartic and illustrative, cries out for a proper framing.

Instead of pretending these works are still fresh, let's look again and see the strong ties to their Conceptualist predecessors and peers. Let our evaluation of them as art consider the temperature of the time. Without the mystification of nostalgia, we can understand the Feminist artists (& art workers) of the 70s as critical contributors to our re-evaluation of "importance", and amongst the pioneers of "contemporary art". Idea based, experience centered, language fixated, the import of this work is in its content as played out through form, display and distribution. You don't have to look very far to see the ripples of influence- much of the (out of favor) 1980's text-image action, for example, offering more sophisticated ruminations on subjectivity, personal/political spheres, and mediated imagery. The 1990's re-view of the domestic and decorative. Scrutiny of boundaries. Etc.

The femartbooks as typically presented though, emphasize reaction, catharsis and process as conditions for art; a prescriptive, dangerous and ultimately not very interesting formula. This criteria assumes, or forces, all the work to be considered as good. An "A" for effort. This does disservice to work that succeeds on the basis of its own efficacy, and ignores the powerful challenge to traditional hierarchical form those graphic feminists mounted and continue to ride. Their use as role models for contemporary practice doesn't work fundamentally because actions will not translate over time. Conditions change, and unlike fractals, do not replicate faithfully.

The cyclical process begins with some initiation: usually in a classroom. You may appreciate my obser-

vation that a disproportionate number of artist book students are female, on the timid side, and ready to embrace any encouragement to make intimate work of their own identity/social issues. (Boxes indeed.) As long as hardly anyone sees it - and that's guaranteed by self (artist and institution) marginalization strategies that foreground or forgive 1) the process, 2) cathartic, illustrative or trivial content, 3) diminutive scale and ambition, 4) a relentlessly self-reflexive curriculum. Artists' books pedagogy is in danger of solidifying a reactive position by offering students and professionals refuge from the rigor of contemporary art discourse and practice.

Let me be clear, building community is no mean feat. The Woman's Building deserves our attention, and a generous bow, for the exchange of energy they successfully facilitated. However, making art in the service of, or in the name of a community seldom leads to wonderful art. The fact that the work is construed to "lead" anywhere is precisely the problem. It is not art's job to have a job. And even though artists' books are curious mutants on our category loving planet, they (as objects of thought and action) need to have more faith in their intrinsic performative nature, and care less about performing (a role). I would say the same about a good deal of the discourse surrounding contemporary book arts, bi-polarly preoccupied with either validating a place in art, or claiming unique status.

They're not called artists' books for nothin'. If you're not comfortable with the term, and its assumption, then move on. There is plenty of room for disparate intentions in the world. Better yet, use the term referentially, not qualitatively. Art-book folks have for too long been milking a perceived identity crisis (book arts/printing arts/artists' books/fine print/visual books, what have you), nay, cultivating the crisis, to effectively forgive a lot of bad work. Our only affiliation issue should be the affiliation with excellence. Here's a good one: I recently came across an exhibit entitled, "Artists and Books". OK, now imagine this, "Artists and Painting", "Artists and Installation". The unimaginative title (and it was hard to pick from such a plentiful field) unfortunately sets the work up to prove a point, to "lead" somewhere; linguistically feigning surprise then revelation at the "phenomenon" of artists making book-like things. Talk about a bad narrative. With circumscription like this, it's no wonder so much work gets done that is coy, insecure, and underachieved.

The partner problem to identity is the question of status. To consider artists' books as a unique class of objects effectively produces a conundrum: exemption from the purview of art assures an outsider status to the very arena that claims visuality and language as its instruments and attractions. (Of course, capitalism insists that the center and margins stay in cahoots.) The snake eating its own tail here wields two heads: one with a taste for the exclusive, the other poised against rejection. Art culture has for some time under-

stood the notion of pacing and the visuality of text, so in lieu of an impossible private property approach, why not concentrate energies on the fantastic potential for elaboration: pagination, volume, fluidity of visual material - images and substrates, editions, and notably, the ability to scrutinize, reinvent, and manifest the experience of reading and looking.

The historicism necessary to rescue the 70's femart-books from being weak examples of design, technique and content, is conversely the exact gesture we need to avoid with regard to contemporary artists' books. The above mentioned identity crisis harbors an additional danger: inhabiting a space of ambiguity construed as negative carries with it the imperative to historicise. Immediately, if not sooner. The acute anxiety that can accompany not knowing your place, where you belong, propels one to grab on to pas(t)ing examples. Of course, the other motivation for doing so would be to validate a practice with the substantiation found in lineage. My argument here, coming at the end rather than the beginning, is simply that historicising work done now, the preoccupation with establishing its context, precludes any possibility for risk. For excitement. For the unexpected. All parties - including the art, artist, chronicler, educator and viewer - suffer the consequences; and while they may bicker they in fact operate as co-dependents, keeping the same questions alive that assure the insecure and welcome the weak.

That space of ambiguity is better seen as a positively charged one. Let's face it, static art is in trouble. Companionate time-based forms and discourses are (perceived as) the competition. There can be no doubt that we are a population that likes to look, but the real issue here is not the simplistic static>images>versus >motion>images argument - bait for the tradition vs. anarchy scare (yawn) - the real meat concerns the marketplace, and who will participate in what capacity. Not necessarily about money - which functions as transport or a container - rather, about the contents. Static art's own problematic relationship to money keeps it locked in position, functioning primarily as a container, albeit one with a past. Time-based forms, on the other hand, are in position to make the most of the ride; unlikely when preoccupied with getting a fix on location. Understanding uncertainty as positive takes us out of the shadows and presents an active (instead of reactive) potential. -end

This was written as a response to and a clarification of the issues raised in Alisa Scudamore's article *Feminism and the Book Arts at the Woman's Building, LA* in JAB7, p.24 - 29.

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Phil Zimmermann looking at his book-in-progress, **Long Story Short**, Aug. 97, Purchase College, SUNY, School of Art & Design Mac lab.

photo by BF

Phil Zimmermann designed the JAB8 cover in the style of his new book-in-progress which has the working title *Long Story Short*. He used hands as a unifying motif throughout the book because of their evocative qualities. Visually we know that the hands are part of a bigger image, thus they become a metaphor suggesting little pieces of people's lives. Although the source material is from magazines printed in the 1950s when Zimmermann was growing up the book is not primarily about his childhood. For him echoes of memory are activated from the look and feel of the "dirty color" of the 50s printing.

So, how did he make the pictures? First he figured out all the technical problems before going on to the computer. Then he made a tiny .5" x .75" cardboard window with which he searched for hands in thousands of magazines. The hands were scanned at a very high resolution of 2400 dpi so that the integrity of the detail in the halftone dots could be maintained as the images were enlarged.

Eventually he had around 400 images stored on 2 JAZ drives (equal to about 2 gigabytes of memory). The images were then printed out on paper by an Epson color printer. Zimmermann then arranged and edited the book by cutting and pasting the color prints into a book dummy which was bound using wire-o.

For Zimmermann it is very important that he uses a physical paper dummy during the creative process rather than only working with the images on the computer screen. The advantage of this method is that the artist sees and feels the turning of the pages. The literal unfolding of the pages as one progresses through the book and the making of the book conjoin to become an essential aspect of the creative process. The images are seen and experienced in the dummy in a form closer to the final book. Only after the book was edited and re-edited in its physical form does he return to the computer for final compositing and digital output.