





**Altering Catalogues**  
The reclaim of an exhibition medium

**In your hands you hold the Thesis *Altering Catalogues (the reclaim of an exhibition medium)*, achieved at the Art Academy of Geneva (Head) in the context of the Master Spaces & Communication. *Altering Catalogues* presents a personal reflection on the position of exhibition catalogues in the whole of spatial exhibitions.**

Rob van Leijssen  
Master Design Spaces & Communication  
academic year 2011/2012  
Head Geneva (Haute École d'Art et de Design)

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# Introduction

## FORMULATING THE RESEARCH QUESTION

My personal library is one of the few possessions I treasure a lot. The books it contains mainly serve as my source of inspiration and design reference. I keep on collecting because I'm simply addicted to these objects, and as the archive grows, it puts in context a subjective evolution of the graphic design profession. They also form a resume of exhibitions, cities and their bookshops I visited. In search of my Master Thesis subject, I wandered through my library and opened up some catalogues that accompanied exhibitions I visited. I imagined myself the exhibitions, and was quite disappointed by the representations the catalogues gave me at this point. But why did I buy them at that moment? Was it my enthusiasm after the visit that convinced me to buy the catalogue? In the particular case of the show *Alberto Giacometti* in the *Kunsthal* in Rotterdam,<sup>1</sup> the exhibition catalogue was not reflecting my experience at all. The show was astonishing and passionate in its pureness, but the catalogue was rather 'flat' and 'unemotional'.

I continued and questioned other catalogues that turned out rather disappointing. I started to see these objects in a general perspective and asked myself questions about their purpose and their role according to the exhibitions. Are exhibitions not convincing enough in themselves? And when produced, do catalogues occupy other positions than only archiving spatial counterparts? While I focused on the possible collaboration between the two media in the beginning, I became more and more interested in the autonomy of the exhibition catalogue afterwards. Therefore I formulate my research question as following: *How can the exhibition catalogue exist as an autonomous object, containing an exhibition in itself?*

It is remarkable that the majority of catalogues accompanying exhibitions of artistic institutes (museums and art galleries), usually aim to apply the exhibition's content in a literal way. There are political and economical reasons to consider that influence the production process of exhibition catalogues. These constraints have to do with the lurking issue of authorship and territory that lies behind the main question of autonomy. Which actors will form a team together and what are their tasks according the design of the exhibition catalogue? Who has the conceptual and creative predominance in this process? Is it the curator of the show? The editors who write texts for the publication? The artist who contributes his works? The graphic designer who is most experienced in designing the catalogue? Or the publisher who takes financial risks in terms of distribution and advanced payments? A lot of interests emerge and blend when a composed team of creative minds works on the production of an exhibition catalogue. It is therefore useful to set out their roles concerning the production of the exhibition and exhibition catalogue.

1—Ansenk, Emily  
Braschi, Cecilia  
Tilanus, Louk  
Wiesinger, Véronique  
*Alberto Giacometti*  
d'jongeHond, Zwolle,  
2008

## The different actors involved in the production of exhibition catalogues

Traditionally, the curator is a manager or overseer that has the responsibility for the collection of a cultural heritage institution (museum, library, gallery).<sup>2</sup> As the keeper of a collection, either temporary or permanent, the curator uses the exhibition format to reflect his art knowledge upon. *Seth Siegelaub* describes the role of the curator in the 1970's as following: 'Before, the curator was someone, somehow, who determined and rewarded artistic genius. He (or she) may have been a great writer, catalogue maker or builder of great collections, but this role was never asserted as a clear force. They were certainly powerful - but only within the context of some greater institutional power - and their job was to select 'great artists' and be the voice of the gods, or of 'quality' and correct art values.'<sup>3</sup> When working for art institutes, it is thus imaginable that curators work under the supervision of the institute's direction. Simultaneously, the curator himself supervises an editorial team around him that produces an exhibition. The curator has creative and management tasks concerning an exhibition, and is therefore normally the main responsible for the visual end result of the exhibition. The curator used to be firmly associated with one museum, until the notion of the independent curator came into play through the activities of *Harald Szeeman* in the 1960's.<sup>4</sup> Regarding the exhibition's catalogue, the curator is often the main editor of the object, and signs it via an introducing essay on the subject.

'The editing process often begins with the author's idea for the work itself, continuing as a collaboration between the author and the editor as the work is created. As such, editing is a practice that includes creative skills, human relations, and a precise set of methods.'<sup>5</sup> Concerning exhibitions and their catalogues, the author is comparable to either the curator of the show, or the editor of the catalogue. The role of editor is a diverse one and overlaps in certain cases the role of the curator. Overlapping occurs when the editor takes conceptual responsibility upon him. When it comes to book publishing, the editor has creative responsibilities as well and occupies the role of author. Their task is then to initiate the concept of the publication, invite and manage supplementary authors, and work together with the graphic designer on the layout. When occupying this role, it is imaginable that there is a close collaboration between editor and curator to conceptually parallel both media. When the editor does not have conceptual responsibilities he or she is either invited to write texts – what makes him or her 'author' at the same time – or to edit the essays of other invited authors. In this case the editor is probably acquainted with in the artist, designer, or art movement treated by the catalogue.

The artist who contributes work to the exhibition, subsequently prefers to see his work reproduced as highly realistic as possible in the catalogue. This means in a representative size, in the right proportions, printed in colour, and with the biggest possible photographic quality. Artists obviously see the catalogue

as a tool that can recommend their work to a larger public and increase their external visibility. Consecutive to this vision, some artists even prefer to take over editorial tasks and design the catalogue that accompanies their retrospective show. In this case the artist considers the catalogue as an oeuvre in itself, resulting in an artist's book. In the second chapter these appearances will be discussed extensively.

It depends on the intentions of the author at which point the graphic designer enters the catalogue's production process. The task of the graphic designer is to develop a visual concept and design the layout of the catalogue. It is his effort that turns the representation of texts and images in an accurate – or preferable – passionate manner. When the graphic designer is introduced at the start of the process, and thus considered as a fellow editor, he can excel the upmost. The latter situation is preferable for graphic designers, as it contributes to a greater creative freedom.

When the catalogue is edited and designed, it has to be produced and distributed. 'Publishing is the process of production and dissemination of literature or information – the activity of making information available to the general public.'<sup>6</sup> The publisher has a number of sales points and distributes the catalogue throughout this network. The publisher has logistic tasks of shipment and diffusion of the catalogue from the printer to the reader. This concerns also online activities when the publisher sells the catalogues in an online shop.

Furthermore, the publisher also recommends the catalogue through advertisements in magazines, and they take financial risks upon them by financing the production process. It is the publisher that pays printing and binding costs, and invests in the distribution of the catalogues.<sup>7</sup> The publishers' concerns for the end product result from these financial risks. Situations in which the publisher is the author or co-editor are therefore more present. The Amsterdam based publishers *Valiz* and *Roma*, and the Birmingham based *Eastside Projects* are examples of such publishers, and will be discussed later on in this research.

It is obvious that all parties have a reputation to maintain, and that interests between collaborators are extremely high. They even lead to imaginable tension when several actors profoundly disagree about the preferred direction for the catalogue to follow. Because there is a direct link between the autonomy of exhibition catalogues and the territorial positions of the actors, these two issues will appear woven together throughout the research. Starting with a description of the catalogue's distinctive qualities, the examples afterwards will show an increasing detachment of their spatial counterpart. Eventually the research arrives at the independent and autonomous catalogues later in the research. The pertinence of the research question lies in the fact that territorial issues around the production process of exhibition catalogues indicate the narrow position the

2—'Wikipedia/Curator' <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Curator>> 21 January 2011

3—Ulrich Obrist, Hans, 'A conversation between Seth Siegelaub and Hans Ulrich Obrist', *TRANS*, 6 (1999), 51 – 63

4—Ulrich Obrist, Hans / Elizabeth Lamm, April *Everything you always wanted to know about curating\** Sternberg Press, Berlin, 2011 Pages 36 – 37

5—'Wikipedia/Editing' <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Editing>> 24 January 2011

6/7—'Wikipedia/Publishing' <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Publishing>> 24 January 2011

graphic designer finds himself concerning creative freedom and direction from other actors. My research aims to offer a guideline, or 'way out' for the graphic designer in reclaiming territory among actors working on exhibition catalogues.

### **The influence of artists' books**

My short historical overview of exhibition catalogues starts at the beginning of the 1960's, when *Ed Ruscha* launched the idea of the 'artists' book'<sup>8</sup> with his publication *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*. Although the overall recognition for being the first modern artists' book came afterwards in the 1980's,<sup>9</sup> *Ruscha's* publication served as a model for artists as *Sol Lewitt* and *Lawrence Weiner* to start considering the book as a medium for free artistic expression.

Subsequently in the late 1960's it was *Seth Siegel* who shook up the art world and changed the perception of the exhibition catalogue in a radical way. *Siegel* produced a series of independent catalogues, containing group shows of artists for which he was the author and publisher. Publications as *The Xerox Book* (1968) and *July/August* (1970) showed that the catalogue could be more experimental than only the archiving instrument it had been until then, and that it could operate as an independent object.

In a way, the book exhibitions of *Seth Siegel* resulted directly the emerging culture of artists' books in America. His exhibition series projected the principals of artist's books onto the catalogue, offering invited artists full freedom for the creation of new works.

These two arising phenomena continued to influence each other from the early 1970's to the present day. During this evolution, exhibition catalogues often tended to artists' books because their content simply concerned artists and their work. In the meanwhile, artists' books often tend to exhibition catalogues, because this medium helps to structure the artistic content and makes the artists' book 'marketable' when supporting a spatial exhibition. It is precisely this ongoing mutual influential relation that is frequently returning in this research through chosen examples, and that illustrates the merged and urgent interests between actors producing those objects.

8—Printed Matter, Inc. 'The Artist Book and Printed Matter in Context' <<http://www.printedmatter.org/about/books.cfm>> 23 January 2011

9—'Wikipedia/Twentysix Gasoline Stations' <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twentysix\\_Gasoline\\_Stations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twentysix_Gasoline_Stations)> 23 January 2011

# Chapter One

## The exhibition catalogue as a tool for reproduction

### THE DISTINCTIVE QUALITIES OF THE EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

‘The emergence of relations among things, more than the things themselves, always gives rise to new meanings.’ – *Aldo Rossi, A scientific Autobiography*<sup>10</sup>

Curators often work within structural frameworks given by the art institutes, galleries or biennales they are working for. The design of the exhibition has to consider architectural restrictions and spatial conditions present in the occupied space. Temporary interventions, like walls and screens, are useful display tools to hide architectural obstacles and influence the design of the exhibition. Still, the appearance of architectural structures behind these ‘displays’ will stay visible, and confront the designers with spatial limitations.

At first sight it seems difficult to compare spatial exhibitions with exhibition catalogues. Both media to some extent deal differently with content and social conditions. Still, there are enough common structural elements as size, volume, images, typography, etc, which are applied to both spatial and editorial design processes. These common characteristics show that both media are excellent carriers for exhibitions, but that they always retain specific qualities that make either the spatial version, or the catalogue, the best way to exhibit content. In the following paragraphs I will concentrate on the distinctive qualities of the catalogue and zoom in on this exhibition medium.

The design for the exhibition catalogue starts from an almost predetermined framework of a sequence of pages. The catalogue’s appearance in terms of material and size are conventional and even predictable. The catalogue will contain a certain number of printed pages that are probably tied together by a cover. Paper and ink are basic constructive elements of the catalogue, and images and text are there to communicate the story. The potential readers of the catalogue are familiar with the format, and they understand the usage through recognition and past experiences. Nevertheless, graphic designers continue exploring these fixed boundaries and succeed in producing sophisticated exhibition objects, as we will see later on in this research.

#### The architecture of the catalogue

The catalogue is a three-dimensional object with a height, width and depth. Although catalogues are designed on a two-dimensional screen, they should be considered as three-dimensional volumes from their first sketch. The object catalogue is in itself an “exhibition space”, exhibiting its content through a sequence of pages, or, as *Ulises Carrión* notes: ‘A book is a sequence of spaces. Each of these spaces is perceived at a different moment - a book is also a sequence of moments.’<sup>11</sup> Exhibition spaces thus help to create a structure for the catalogue in which content is presented. The catalogue can be considered as an architectural object that contains a structure of exhibition spaces, which, in their way, separate the exhibition’s content. Furthermore these

10—Rossi, Aldo  
*A Scientific Autobiography*  
The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1984

11—Langdon, James  
‘Carrión, Ulises, The new art of making books’  
*Book*  
Eastside projects, Birmingham, 2010

exhibition spaces stretch out a certain time span. Compared to spatial exhibitions, the distinctive architecture of the catalogue can offer a longer time span, and thereby a sequence of moments through which the time span is spread. As pointed out by *Carrión*, the consulting time of an exhibition catalogue can be spread out of several moments, and is thus adjustable for every single reader.

### Scale or size

When we observe the catalogue and its exhibition spaces, we pass several stages of reading. Size, volume, the cover, binding methods, the choice of paper, text and images together form the catalogue. Size might be the most distinguishable element of reflection when comparing the catalogue with the spatial exhibition. The term size has a limitation in itself. The size of the exhibition is the measurable frame in which the exhibition takes place. The exhibition space of a local gallery in Geneva might fit, for example, fifty times the exhibition space at the *MoMa* in New York. And the 1367 pages thick book *S,M,L,X,L* by *OMA* and *Bruce Mau*<sup>12</sup> is much bigger than the ordinary size of a catalogue. The size of an exhibition refers to the amount of information we get to see as a visitor. Or otherwise, how much space does the exhibition need in terms of square meters or pages? The question of expansion regarding the size of an exhibition seems to be better manageable in a catalogue. A booklet is easily added or removed, and content can be spread out or reduced by modifying images and typography.

Apart from small modifications through booklets, the number of pages determines the size of a catalogue, just as the architecture of a museum limits the spatial size of the exhibition. Nevertheless, the size of a catalogue won't quickly impede someone to carry the object with him, as *Adam Szumczyk*, Director of the *Kunsthalle Basel* quotes: 'Books, on the contrary, rarely exceed the format that makes them portable, and are thus, to a degree, autonomous things that can be exchanged and carried, kept and lost.'<sup>13</sup>

### The catalogue as a volume

'A book is a volume in the space. It is the true ground of the communication that takes place through words - it's here and now.' – *Ulises Carrión*<sup>14</sup>

Catalogues are volumes that occupy a certain amount of space. Collected they resemble brick specimens, ready to be arranged into a certain order. You can make a pile out of the catalogues, put them on a bookshelf alongside others, or exhibit single examples onto a specifically designed display. No matter the reason or manner in which the catalogues are sorted, their occupied space arises out of design based purposive decisions, instead of being accidental. Individually, each catalogue stresses its appearance by its volume and material, and simultaneously exemplifies its identity. The catalogue for the exhibition 'Other voices, other rooms'<sup>15</sup>, which highlighted the video work of

*Andy Warhol* in *The Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam* (2008), did physically take more space than the miniature catalogue *Irma Boom: Biography in Books*, for *Boom's* retrospective exhibition at the special collections of *The University of Amsterdam Library* (2010).<sup>16</sup>

*Szumczyk* stresses the relation between 'occupied space' and 'free space', and how they are inseparably depending on each other. He states: 'The space available around the books – those too tightly packed on shelves, piled up on one's working table, forgotten on the sofa, towering or scattered over the floor – can be compared to the space between the lines of a poem, between the signs within the line and even to the spaces enclosed inside the letters themselves.'<sup>17</sup> When returning to the similarities between catalogues and exhibition spaces, we can consider the occupied space around catalogues, as free spaces in which the visitor, or reader, is able to fully indulge in the artistic experience. This 'free space' will navigate visitors through the exhibition, enabling them to discover links between exhibited artworks. This free space is necessary in catalogues to distinguish texts from and images. This so called 'white space' guides the optical engagement with the text and supports the reading progress. White space on a page layout as well as free space in a spatial exhibition, are therefore essential for the continuation of the narrative.

### The cover

The cover gives us a first tangible impression of the catalogue. The cover embraces the content and thereby holds the pages in place. It has thus a fundamental protective function. When the materials are well-chosen, the cover can be of distinctive quality to the content of the catalogue.

The cover of an exhibition catalogue functions as a reference to the exterior world. Either connected to a spatial exhibition or not, the cover will be the eye catchers where publishers, booksellers and potential buyers will refer to. When there is no spatial counterpart to fulfil a promotional task to the exterior world, the cover of the exhibition catalogue plays a key role in terms of promotion. It's the cover, or a photographic reproduction of it, which has to 'sell' itself.

Furthermore, the cover is a surface to interfere upon by the designer. The resulting dialogue between the cover's surface and the content inside the catalogue has to be intriguing, revealing and communicative. Its design attracts the eye for further reading as well-designed displays add value to exhibited works. A cover has an iconic quality that can be compared to those of exhibition posters. The facial of both catalogues and posters have the task to attract the readers' eye in a glimpse. But the cover of the catalogue exist of two more sides. First, the spine connects the information posed on the front with the backside of the catalogue. When arranged together on a bookshelf, or piled on a table, the spines attract the buyers' attention at first. Second, the back cover provides a secondary impression, winning over

12—Mau, Bruce / Koolhaas, Rem / Werlemann, Hans *S,M,L,X,L*, The Monacelli Press, New York, 1994 (2nd edition 1997)

13—Szumczyk, Adam 'Jan Tschichold Award 2011: Julia Born' *The most beautiful Swiss books 2010*, p.7 The Swiss Federal Office of Culture, Bern, 2011

14—Langdon, James 'Carrión, Ulises, The new art of making books' *Book* Eastside projects, Birmingham, 2010

15—Meyer-Hermann, Eva / Warhol, Andy / Wrbcian, Matt *Andy Warhol: Other Voices, Other Rooms* NAI Publishers, Rotterdam, 2008

16—Boom, Irma *Irma Boom, Biography in Books* University of Amsterdam, 2010

17—Szumczyk, Adam 'Jan Tschichold Award 2011: Julia Born' *The most beautiful Swiss books 2010*, p.7 The Swiss Federal Office of Culture, Bern, 2011

potential readers. Taken together, the front cover, spine and back cover make up the overall impression and request at the same time an action of movement, emphasising the catalogue as a specific narrative object.

### **Narrative and layout: a contextual architecture**

‘If two subjects communicate in the space, then space is an element of this communication. Space modifies this communication. Space imposes its own laws on this communication. Printed words are imprisoned in the matter of the book.’

– *Ulises Carrión*<sup>18</sup>

As we turn the cover we zoom further into the catalogue. The pages inside the exhibition catalogue, sometimes structured in chapters, together carry the narrative of the exhibition. A narrative can be explained as ‘structured experiences along the same line that stories are structured. The story, or experience, can have myriad internal linkages and thus considerable overall organisational complexity’<sup>19</sup>. The narrative is as a collective noun for experiences (chapters, statements) that can take the form of, for example, a manifest, a critique, or a documentary. The internal linkages function in this model as the elements with which the experiences are substantiated, as there are photos, movie stills, texts, illustration, quotes etc.

Linkages and organisational complexity make the catalogue very well suitable as an exhibition medium. Each single page has a direct relation to the preceding, and successive pages. We wander through a catalogue, page after page, similar to how we navigate a spatial exhibition, room after room. Besides the treatment of linkages through a linear sequence of pages, the catalogue also allows a further contextual treatment of links that are non-linear. Content can be arranged through pages in a way the reader discovers additional information on a later moment, or in another part of the catalogue. Within a catalogue you can simply switch between different parts than in a spatial surrounding. With an easy hand movement, you suddenly end up in a different part of the exhibition. Image descriptions are for example arranged in an appendix, far away from their actual source. Every time the reader searches for content relations, he or she will learn more about the exhibition. These inter-structural relations between content, layout and position make the catalogue an exciting medium to experiment with. Catalogues mould content into a complex structure, without losing grip of the narrative. These narratives are constructed out of layers of content, which reveal themselves depending on the number of times they are read.

### **The touch of paper**

The way we perceive an object is highly dependent on touch. The character of a printed object is obviously transmitted through tangible contact with the object. When we are allowed to touch an object we physically experience its character. We become simply more familiar with the object, which is necessary

to establish a personal relation with it. Being not allowed to touch exhibited objects oftentimes results in a sense of disappointment among visitors of museums and galleries. To make sure, I am not comparing the touch of a catalogue with the touch of objects on display. Those are two different levels of perception. The printed reproductions in catalogues are much more abstract in terms of spatial perception than their counterparts on display in the spatial exhibition. However, the point I want to stress here is the distinctive tangible quality of the object catalogue, and the sense of intimacy this establishes between reader and object. An intimacy I often miss during shared museum visits.

### **Reproduction**

The catalogue embodies an object of multiple-layered reproduction. Firstly, the object is usually printed in editions. The number of copies depends on the publisher’s expectations, budget or technical constraints. *Irma Boom* notes in an interview for *Dutch Profiles*: ‘books have to be industrially made. Books are made to spread information. They’re reproductions, so they should be distributed around the world in multiples.’<sup>20</sup> The Internet, catalyst of worldwide shipments and delivery, makes catalogues much more accessible. Within one click you can purchase an exhibition catalogue online, delivered perfectly at home a few days later.

Secondly, there is the print run. A succeeding print run is necessary when, for example, the catalogue is out of stock. The publisher can decide to answer the demand and make a second edition, or stick to the first edition. In the last case the catalogue will gain in value and becomes scarcer, detriment of the true interested buyer, but advantageous for the art collector. To refer to Irma Boom, I think it is this multiplication of copies that is one of the core tasks of the catalogue. Regarding the content, the succeeding print run of a catalogue can also be modified and thus re-edited. Possible errors or shortfalls of the preceding edition are reopened to improve. In this case each edition becomes a review of itself. The object catalogue, when printed in several runs, is therefore an object in continuous evolution.

Finally, there is the reproduction of images, and to a lesser extent, of texts. This might be one of the biggest advantages of a printed catalogue, the possibility to combine and reproduce each object or artwork desired for the exhibition. There are no limitations in distance; costs; size or safety, which make it impossible to reach a foreseen exhibition.

### **Written texts**

In spatial exhibitions, the physical appearance of written text is secondary to that of images and objects. Long texts do not work very well on exhibition walls either. When entering an exhibition there are the artworks that attract the attention of the visitor at first, often resulting in passing the introductory text without taking note of it. Furthermore other visitors often hinder the view, so continuing with the artworks becomes an easy choice.

18—Langdon, James  
‘Carrión, Ulises, The new  
art of making books’  
*Book*  
Eastside projects,  
Birmingham, 2010

19—‘Narrative’,  
<<http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Narrative.aspx#2>>  
16 November 2011

20—Dutch Profiles:  
Irma Boom, <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FzeBk-GnE1g>>,  
0’38”  
10 December 2011

Furthermore, a wall is just horrible for reading. I often lose grip of texts on walls because of bad spacing, too long sentences and text sizes that correspond badly to the available reading space and foreseen distance. I rather concentrate on the handout, if available. While this takes effort too for the same reason as the text on the wall, the paper facilitates reading as it suits the eye better, and can be easily adjusted in distance. Therefore, exhibition catalogues handle texts much better than their spatial counterparts. Unlike introductory texts, quotes can be impressive on walls. It is mostly through their explicit nature in combination with their unusual proportion that we encounter the illustrative qualities of a typeface. This makes a sentence, applied on a wall, an attractive element in spatial environments. Well-chosen quotes can strongly affect the atmosphere of a space, and mark the transition from one area to the other. In catalogues, quotes are a helpful tool to imbed 'voices' of participating artists.

### The signature

All previously defined elements together are the consequences of design choices made by the actors responsible of the exhibition. The creatively responsible, also called 'author', is often the curator of the show. The author might not work on the exhibition alone. A team of designers, constructed around the author, is there to fulfil the tasks for which he does not have the skills. Furthermore, the author of the exhibition manages the design team working on the exhibition. This task of 'creative management' makes the author a conductor, and the connected designers his 'employees'.

The question of authorship is a territorial one. Who, in the end, signs the concept of the exhibition and the catalogue? Do all actors receive the deserved recognition? And is it possible for several actors to share responsibilities? Following examples will show multiple situations in which the graphic designer totally gains or loses the creative liberty for the design of the exhibition catalogue. I will describe the 'opponents' who the graphic designer has to deal with, and how they work together to achieve a common goal.

## AUTHOR POLITICS, THE GRAPHIC DESIGNER AND HIS OPPONENTS

Different actors are involved in the design processes of an exhibition catalogue. They more or less work together, depending on the size and of the connected exhibition and the intentions of the author(s). Consulting the credits of each catalogue, there is an hierarchy notable in the production process of catalogues; the museum director, curator, editors, designer, photographer, translator, proof-readers, publisher, printer and finally the binder. They are all involved and bring, more or less, their own contribution to the actual creative labour.

The main actors in the conceptual process are probably the curator, editor and designer. These actors together are aiming to 'sign' the catalogue. In the following situations interpersonal relations between these actors are described from the perspective of the graphic designer. His position is set out in relation to his opponents, his liberties and constraints, and how his opponents influence the professional field. In some cases the choice for a graphic designer isn't evident. The infringement on the graphic designers' working field concerning exhibition catalogues will be continuously illustrated in the next chapter. The catalogues mentioned below are all 'illustrations' or 'reproductions' of their spatial counterparts.

### Collaborating with a curator

The graphic designer usually enters the exhibitions' design process in a later stadium than the curator or editor. When working under the supervision of a curator, the graphic designer might not have the creative freedom he would like to have. In the case of *Radical Nature, Art and Architecture for a Changing Planet 1969–2009*,<sup>A</sup> the studio of Sara de Bondt is responsible for the exhibition graphics and the catalogue. It seems that the studio got involved quite early in the conception of this exhibition at the Barbican Art Gallery (London), and that they had the possibilities to put their mark on the exhibition and the catalogue. For the show, they designed furniture, introduction panels, exterior way finding for off-site projects and an exhibition guide. The exhibition, which is described as the first major exhibition to trace the post-war history of artists' engagement with ecology and environmentalism,<sup>21</sup> gives an overview of mostly fictive projects between 1969 and 2009. The show, curated by Francesco Manacorda, reflects our ever changing planet and the natural subjects in the work of participating architects, engineers and artists such as; Richard Buckminster Fuller, Agnes Denes, Diller Scofidio+Renfro, Philippe Rahm architects and R&Sie(n).

As this exhibition observes nature, the designers decided to use as much recycled materials as possible for the show and the catalogue. It was an opportunity to embed natural resources in the design process, and rethink the consuming exhibition apparatus in a more sustainable way. The statement is embodied in the exhibition by the reuse of resources from earlier exhibitions. The designers used MDF wood from the previous *Le Corbusier* show for the introduction panel. Other MDF displays from other shows were stripped and were reassembled into furniture for the *Radical Nature* exhibition, but still communicating their original information. For the exhibition guide the designers used a second hand stencil duplicator with which they could 'print on demand' the guides. In this way, no quantity from an estimated print run would remain.

For the design of the catalogue the designers set up a few 'ecological parameters': 100% recycled paper and board, uncoated, unbleached paper, no full bleed images, reduced ink usage on

21—Sheffield, Graham / Bush, Kate, 'Preface' *Radical Nature, Art and Architecture for a Changing Planet 1969–2009*, p.7 Barbican Art Gallery/ Koenig Books, London, 2009

title pages, and no foil blocking. This almost dogmatic way of designing has a doubtful link with the organic of nature, attempting to reduce resources and structure the pages. The rules, positioned prominently next to the foreword, seem rather rigid. While they are appropriate to the subject, it should be self-evident that reduction of ink and recycled paper is taken into account, and not applied to the catalogue as an appointed concept. The design of the catalogue is quite modest. The material and format give the object its character, and the design facilitates this substantive gesture. Text and images are carefully positioned, and the rhythm in which artists pass is very monotone.

The exhibition was heavily criticized. Among others, *Chris Fremantle* – a researcher working in the visual arts – wrote: ‘The exhibition feels like its driven by a curatorial focus on artwork as object, rather than artwork as question or consideration of context’.<sup>22</sup> He continues: ‘The off-site project ‘Dalston Mill’, is a more interesting work than some in the exhibition, precisely because it was not curated, but rather made.’<sup>23</sup> His criticism concerns a certain direction of the curating team that might have been too strict and superficial. The *Dalston Mill*, designed by the experimental architecture collective *EXYZT*, shows a better integration of the exhibition theme. The architects constructed a working mill out of a temporary structure, functioning as a rural retreat in the middle of the urban landscape in London. This design intervention gives citizens the opportunity to reflect the input of natural resources on their vicinity. Oddly, this project is missing in the catalogue. Due to political decisions – The catalogue should be available at the opening evening – the *Dalston Mill* wasn’t included. It came simply too late.

Cultural commentator *Stephen Bayley* goes even further in his critics on the site of *The Guardian*: ‘With magnificent piety and pathos, (to save the planet) the sheets of text in the exhibition are printed on the back of old posters. Meanwhile, as I watched the exhibition going up, contractors made merry with energy-sucking power tools in an environment lit almost entirely artificially. Exhibits have been shipped, bashing and burning molecules of air, by truck and plane from Europe and America.’<sup>24</sup> The necessity of shipping exhibits overseas is a crucial rationale for many exhibitions. But Bayley is right when he signals a contradiction between the exhibition guide, printed on used sheets, and the shipped exhibits that are transported from all over the world.

The radical intentions of *Sara De Bondt* studio were present in the exhibition supports and exhibition guide, but the same principle seemed to be discarded in the design of the catalogue. Why didn’t the curator choose for several external projects implemented in the neighbourhood around the museum? Why didn’t he publish an exhibition catalogue that showed the intentions of the subject and documented the external sites? This exhibition could be a major opportunity to say: ‘We leave the works where they are, and we search for other exhibition

forms.’ Like that we do not waste lots of energy in displacing the works. The catalogue could become an exhibition that would travel around the world, reaching an even bigger potential audience.

### **The graphic designer is the author of both the exhibition and the supporting catalogue**

Rarely the graphic designer gets the chance to demonstrate his creative experience in both the catalogue and the scenography of an exhibition. Eastside Projects in Birmingham is such an art space where they mix space and program, and where they provide the space for creative practices to merge into one exhibition or artistic statement. In 2010, *James Langdon* co-curated the exhibition *Book Show* with *Gavin Wade*, director of *Eastside Projects* in Birmingham. *Langdon* worked simultaneously on the catalogue *Book*<sup>B</sup>, which functions as a mobile extension to the exhibition. *Book Show* is subscribed as: ‘an exhibition of artworks, objects and structures that address the physical form of the book. The starting point for the exhibition is *Ulises Carrións’* provocative series of aphorisms ‘The New Art of Making Books’ (1975).’<sup>25</sup>

Book was published by *Eastside Projects*, which means they alone controlled the creative direction without having obligations towards external parties. It has been possible to do so because the scale of practices of *Eastside Projects* is much smaller than those of the big art institutes. Furthermore, they are a non-profit company supported by several institutes from Birmingham. *Langdon* initiated the publication of *Book Show*. The result is a very well designed archive of projects that participated in the show. The catalogue represents all participating artists through ‘spaces’, or chapters of unequal pages. By using different reading directions, layout and paper, all ‘exhibition spaces’ have their own distinctive character. The projects form a narrative, bounded together for the occasion, and they contribute to the same subject. *Langdon* shows with *Book* that the order inside the catalogue does not have to follow a linear standard. The foreword by is placed somewhere halfway the catalogue. Set in a different layout, this key text is underlined as an important editorial introduction.

*Julia Born* entered a similar editorial position as *James Langdon* when she was invited to design a retrospective exhibition in *The Museum of Contemporary Art Leipzig*. The exhibition and supporting catalogue were made possible by the *INFORM* prize that *Born* won in 2008. She invited *Laurenz Brunner* to participate in the design of *Title of the Show*.<sup>C</sup> Together they interpreted the structure of the museum similar to that of a book. They literally designed pages on the museum walls, showing pieces of work supported by descriptions and arranged by page numbers. Afterwards, *Johannes Schwartz* photographed the museum rooms in the most realistic way. These photographic reproductions constituted directly, without any modifications, the spreads of the catalogue. The whole exudes a creative freedom for the designers and their team.

22/23—Fremantle, Chris  
‘Too Many Objects. Not  
Enough Radical Nature’  
(31 August 2009)  
<[http://www.artcornwall.org/features/Chris\\_Fremantle.htm](http://www.artcornwall.org/features/Chris_Fremantle.htm)>  
11 December 2011

24—Bayley, Stephen  
‘Nature seen in a bilious  
shade of green’. *The  
Guardian* (21 June 2009)  
<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2009/jun/21/radical-nature-art-architecture-barbican>>  
11 December 2011

25—‘Book show’  
<<http://eastsideprojects.org/future/book-show/>>  
20 December 2011

At first sight the effect of spatial reproduction is surprising. When wandering through the first pages, we see an exhibition that is still under construction. A scaffold blocks the sight on the German introduction, and texts are taped to the walls. Although charming, the construction scratches seem the result of a bad time schedule rather than a conscious design choice. Further on the pictures show more perspective and we get a glimpse of what is coming up in the future pages. But after a few more pages the photographic reproductions become inevitably predictable. It is an interesting attempt to integrate spatial parameters like depth and perspective on the paper, but the fact that other areas regularly penetrate the current frame works rather distractive than complementary.

Apart from subjective design criticism, the two catalogues breath conceptual design freedom for the graphic designers. The designers alone are responsible for the end result and its success, and they have thus the right to sign both the spatial and printed exhibition. Most noteworthy is that these designers, from the moment they are given full artistic freedom, start to examine other functions for the exhibition catalogue. Their dedication to their practice makes graphic designers question and aim to reinvent the medium catalogue when possible. The extension *Book* addresses additional information to the exhibition and doesn't seem to maintain an essential relationship with the exhibits on show, while *Title of the Show* is completely dependent – or even replaces – its spatial counterpart. Still, they could both function independent because they either ignore or embody the exhibition they refer to. When the exhibition is ignored by the catalogue, the reader might not know that there even was a spatial counterpart. And when embodied, like *Title of the Show*, the spatial show becomes the catalogue. There is simply not more to see than the catalogue offers.

### The exhibition catalogue designed by the curator

Exhibition catalogues designed by curators are quite rare. The tasks of the curator have become more complex and varied, due to the interference of galleries in the work area of museums, budget cuts within the cultural sector, and the Internet as an artistic catalyst where everybody has the right to publish his work. The curator has increasingly become an artistic manager who is primarily responsible for the exhibition. Furthermore, the artistic institutes might not even allow the curator to design the catalogue because of relational interests concerning befriended designers.

Yet, there are examples of curators who are simultaneously in charge of the exhibition and its catalogue. *Guy Schraenen* is one of those multi-talented curators. In 1974 he founded, together with *Anne Marsily*, the *Archive for Small Press & Communication* (A.S.P.C.) in Antwerp. The goal of the A.S.P.C. was to 'make its collection accessible to the public through the organisation of exhibitions, lectures, radio programs and publications.'<sup>26</sup>

26—Schraenen, Guy  
*Out of Print, an archive as artistic concept*, p.19  
Neues Museum Weserburg Bremen, 2001

Their retrospective exhibition *Out of Print, An archive as artistic concept*<sup>D</sup> from 2001, showcases the enormous archive of activities they got involved between 1974 until 2001. Accompanied with the exhibition that traveled between Chatou, Barcelona, Ljubljana, Zagreb, Porto and Erlangen, the A.S.P.C. produced an eponymous catalogue with *The Neues Museum Wesenburg Bremen*. *Guy Schraenen* developed both the concept for the retrospective exhibition as well as the design for the catalogue. In addition, there was group of 'collaborators' who worked on the exhibition and catalogue, though the precise division of labour was largely unclear.

Whether *Schraenen* really did the layout of the pages or not, he claims he designed both the exhibition and the catalogue. The catalogue publishes a passage in which *Schraenens'* position as creator of all projects of A.S.P.C. is stated: 'From the first exhibition onwards, it was decided that any printed matter regarding the events organised by the A.S.P.C. in its own spaces or in collaboration with other institutions would be conceived by Guy Schraenen. Thus all the invitation cards, posters, catalogues and texts were conceived by him.' The statement continues: 'On certain very rare occasions, for example in the case of a one-man exhibition, he asked the artist whose work was being shown to collaborate with him.'<sup>27</sup> *Guy Schraenen* thus kept full supervision over all publications published by the A.S.P.C. Even in the case of an artists' book, the concerned artist had rarely the opportunity to 'collaborate' with *Schraenen*.

The catalogue *Out of Print* is a properly filled object, which sets out a list of A.S.P.C. activities in chronological order. The story of their emergence is woven alongside a list of produced exhibitions, publications, catalogues and radio programs. The second part is less rigid in its layout and starts with a blank spread noting 'Some out of many'. This second part takes by far the most space, but it turns out to be disjointed after turning several pages. Coherence between the images is missing. Where the first part has a necessity to communicate the emergence of the A.S.P.C., the second part is incoherent in the way the consecutive placement of fragments originating the A.S.P.C. archive.

The A.S.P.C. did not commission graphic designers for the layout of their publications. Contrary, *Guy Schraenen* himself entered the position of graphic designer, rarely occupied by curators. It seems unlikely that *Schraenen's* main interest was to operate as a graphic designer, witnessing his dutifully catalogues.

His concentration rather lies with publishing, seen the enormous list of activities he undertook as editor of the A.S.P.C. His point of view on publishing tends to be an artistic approach, and his self-reflecting catalogues are obvious platforms for experimentation.

Independent curator *Mathieu Copeland* frequently enters the position of graphic designer as well. He argues that graphic designers charge too much for their services, and that their costs never fit the disposable budget.<sup>28</sup> For his 'bootleg' *Reprise #1* –

27—Schraenen, Guy  
*Out of Print, an archive as artistic concept*, p.30  
Neues Museum Weserburg Bremen, 2001

28—Interview with  
Mathieu Copeland during  
the cours *Design Project Room* at Head Geneva,  
13 December 2011,  
22 rue de Lyon

*Studies for a catalogue / a study for an exhibition of violence in contemporary art (1964/2011)*,<sup>E</sup> Copeland resuscitated the catalogue accompanying the exhibition *A Study for an Exhibition of Violence in Contemporary Art*, originally initiated by Roland Penrose at the ICA Philadelphia in 1964. The original catalogue was a slim volume with a list of artworks and a foreword by Penrose. The reprise, born out of a lack of an extensive catalogue of the original show, is a visionary version of what that catalogue from 1964 might have been; and also of what the exhibition might be, if curated anew in 2011. It comprises photocopied reproductions of all the works from the show; a text by artist Warren Neidich; and pages specially produced for the catalogue in the summer of 2011 by several artists.<sup>29</sup> The catalogue is downloadable from the web in high or low resolution, fostering diffusion and generating many 'unique' copies.

The layout of the catalogue originates out of a kind of non-design in which the titles of the artworks in the original catalogue are simply replaced by their visual reproductions. Each image is centred in the middle of an A4 size page with the images obtained by downloads or photocopies. The only narrative element is the chapter indication, which is placed consistently in the upper left corner. The catalogue obviously misses craftsmanship to become more subtle and sophisticated than a visual reproduction of a list. By merely reproducing the preceding catalogue, the authors have failed to place it within a contemporary contrast. Supplementing artworks, produced between 1964 and 2011, could have emerged an act of evolution within the catalogue.

On his website Copeland publishes an interesting reflection about Reprise: 'Catalogues are at best the memory of an exhibition, at worst its checklist. To reprise an exhibition can be seen as an attempt to envisage its memory, to re-insert it in reality, by using its catalogue as a score for another exhibition to be.'<sup>30</sup> Copeland sketches, maybe unintended, two interesting phenomena with regard to his own exhibition that may also be applicable to exhibition catalogues in general; the re-insertion of historical events into the present, and the task for a catalogue to be initiator of an exhibition, and not only act as the memory that rests afterwards. Both options will be discussed later on this study, when the habitat and form of the autonomous exhibition catalogue will be discussed.

29—Copeland, Mathieu *Reprise #1 – Studies for a catalogue / a study for an exhibition of violence in contemporary art (1964/2011)* Self-published, 2011 ([www.reprise.me](http://www.reprise.me))

30—Copeland, Mathieu, July 2011, <<http://www.mathieucopeland.net/>> 16 December 2011

A

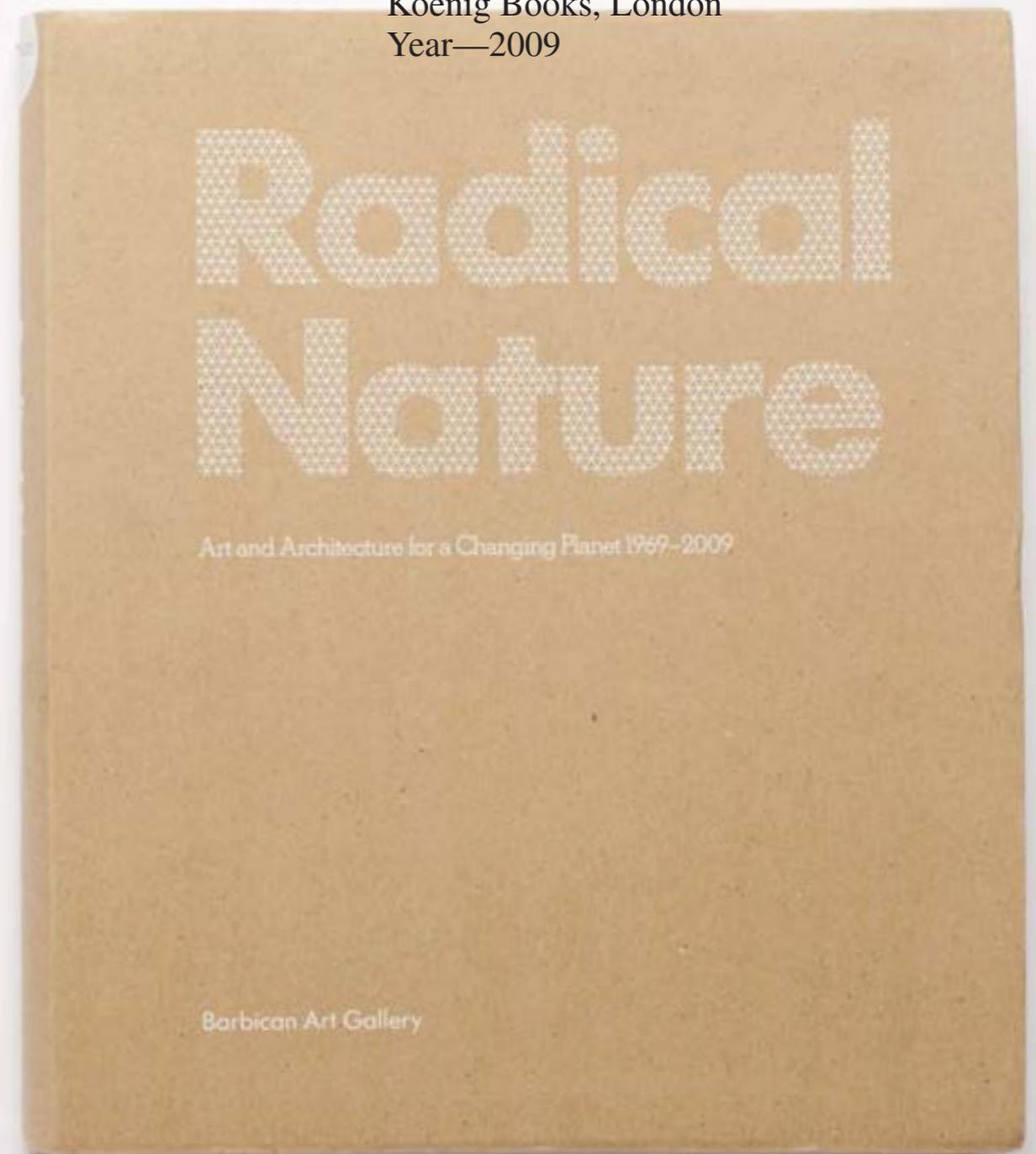
**RADICAL NATURE**

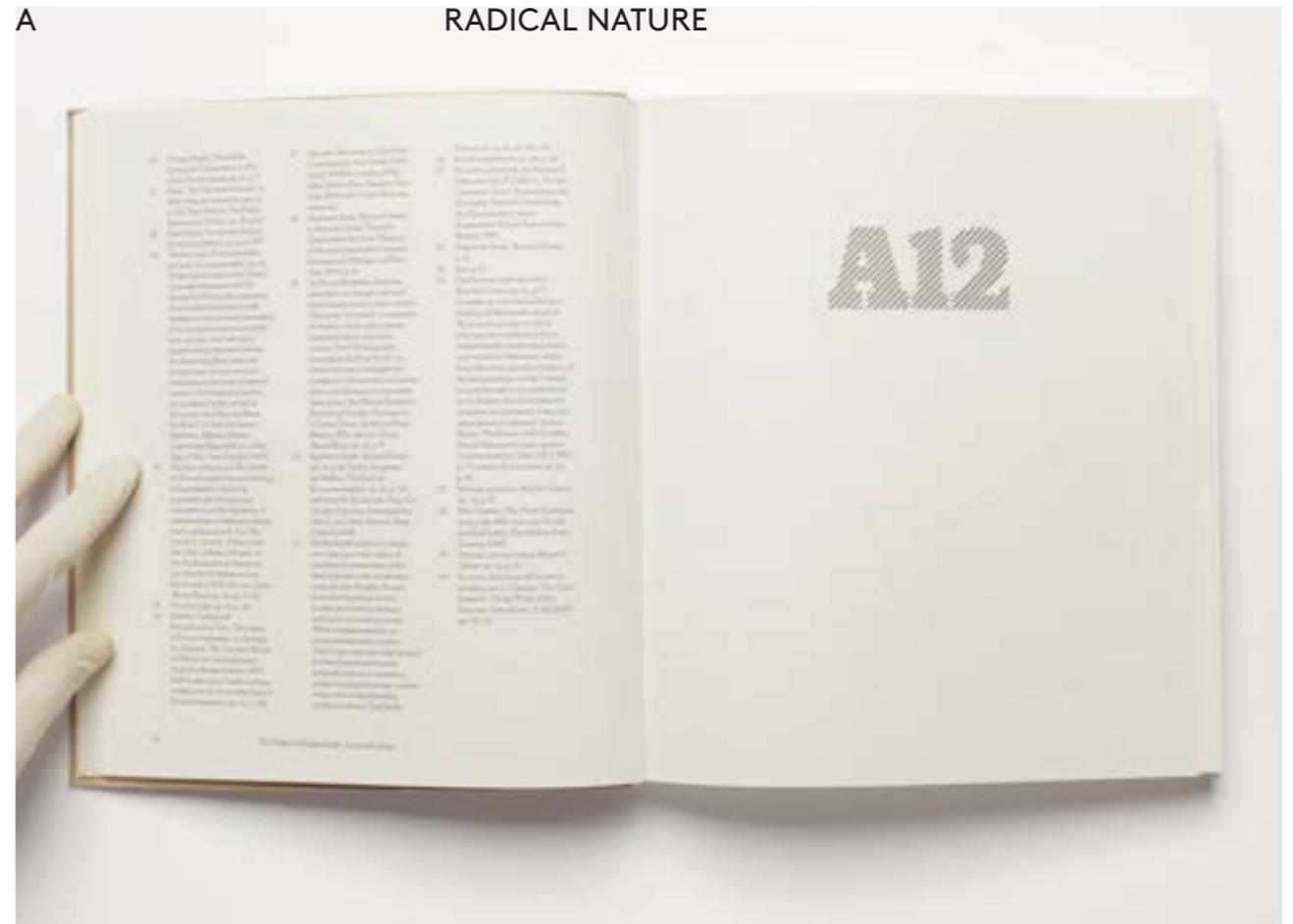
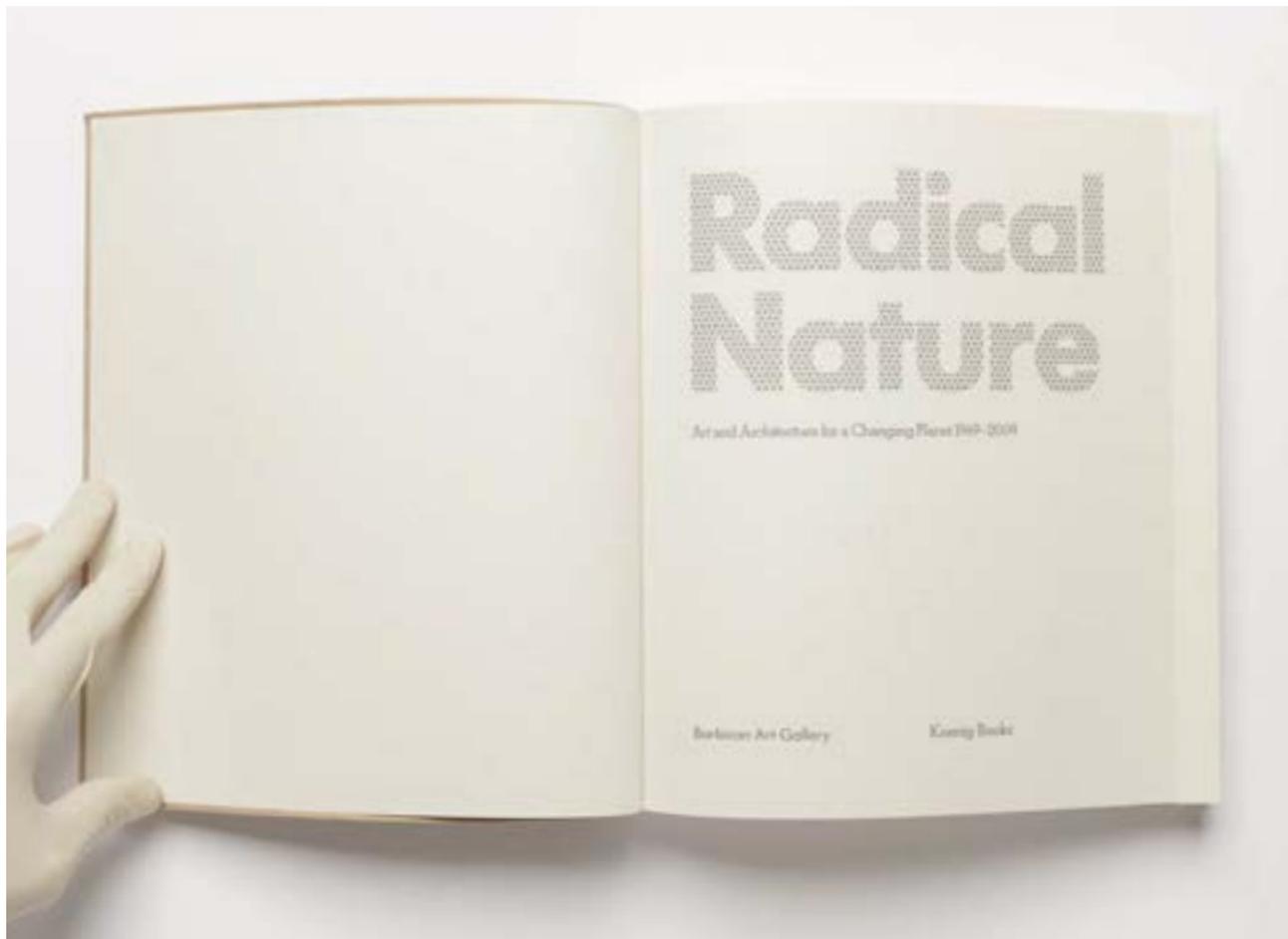
Design—Sara de Bondt studio

Editors—Francesco Manacorda,  
Ariella Yedgar

Publishers—Barbican Art Gallery/  
Koenig Books, London

Year—2009





**R&Siefel**

*Founded 1997 in Paris (Francine Koehn and Stephane Lemaire) Live and work in Paris.*

Subverting the established order seems to be a mission for R&Siefel. The studio's name is itself a revolutionary statement: read in French the letters produce the exact initial meaning: honey. One starting point for R&Siefel's designs is the conception of a building in close relationship to its environment. Furthermore, they incorporate installability, entropy and the hybridization of the vegetal and biological into their practice. For example, the terraced-shaped building *Symbiosetown* (2007), borrows its appearance from the topography of its site, a former marketplace on the border between North and South Korea. The exterior will be covered with kudzu, an invasive native plant, which will slowly colonize it, incorporating plants into their architecture in the way reflects R&Siefel's desire to make buildings that evolve and grow in response to a given site.

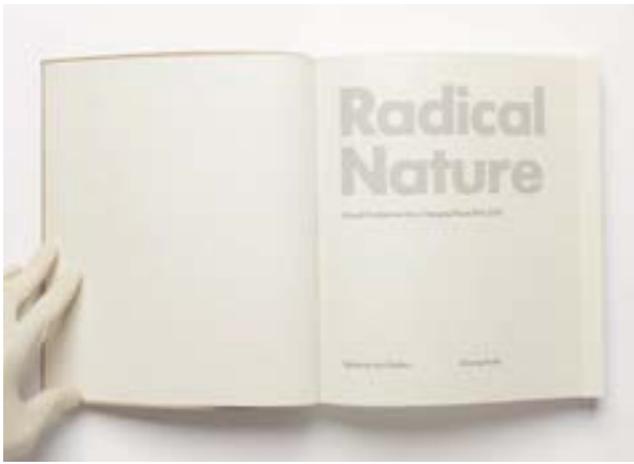
Seeking a synthesis between design and structure, R&Siefel bases their practice on geographical, botanical, topographic and climatic data. For example, *Water Flux* is a project for an art museum and glaciology research station due to open in 2010. Built entirely from wood and other organic materials, the building is reminiscent of an ice cube and can even produce artificial snow. The building's facade is designed to change appearance with the seasons: dry in winter, it will melt and form a pond in warmer weather.

An ecological brief informed R&Siefel's *Living* (2008), an office building intended to generate all of its energy from the sun. The plan included solar panels and thermal masses, which were incorporated into the overall design and gave the building its

irregular exterior. Similarly, *7 minutes Paris* (2008) is a small retreat built in a Parisian courtyard, its architecture invisible because it is covered by a thick layer of ferns. Specially designed bottles run along the surface, supplying the plants with a nutritious liquid on which they can survive without soil. In R&Siefel's visionary projects, buildings – like chameleons – acquire the ability to change and blend with the territory they occupy.



R&Siefel and Philippe Perrotin  
**Hybrid Muscle** (2010)  
Sulfate-powered electric power station



A

RADICAL NATURE



B

**BOOK**

Editor/Designer—James Langdon

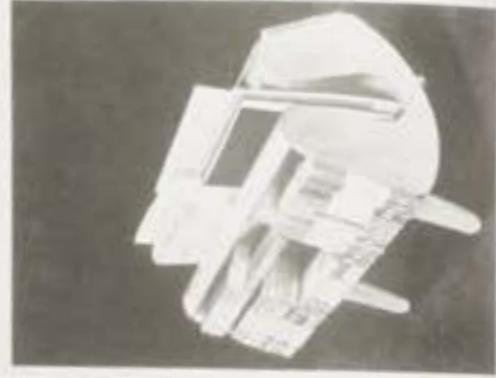
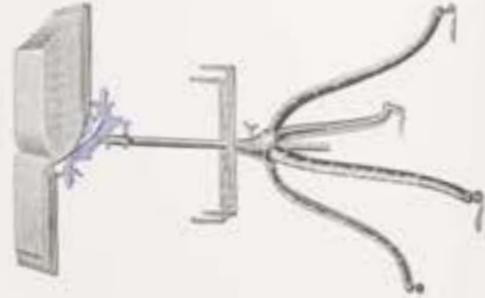
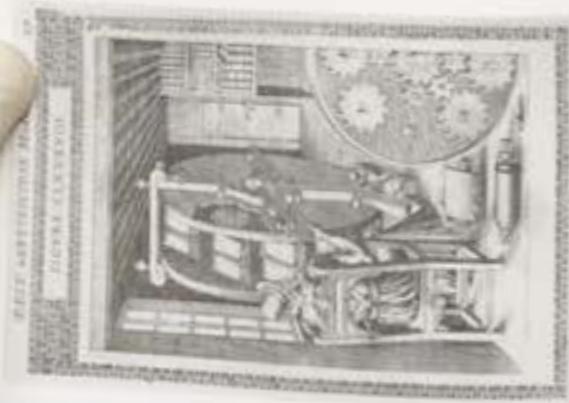
Publisher—Eastside Projects, Birmingham

Edition—1,000 copies

Year—2010







### Object Books

A book is a three-dimensional extension of a message sent through a visual support.  
 Ulises Carrion, *Bookmarks* (Buenos Aires) 1978

Carrion's writing treats the book as an object. He presents the book as a material object, not the reader's text, but an object that can be touched, held, and used. He presents the book as a material object, not the reader's text, but an object that can be touched, held, and used. He presents the book as a material object, not the reader's text, but an object that can be touched, held, and used.

In Carrion's writing, the book is a material object, not the reader's text, but an object that can be touched, held, and used. He presents the book as a material object, not the reader's text, but an object that can be touched, held, and used. He presents the book as a material object, not the reader's text, but an object that can be touched, held, and used.

By S. MacGregor with an bibliography also containing the contributions from the contributors of the book, it is a book that is a book. It is a book that is a book.

This system, as the impact of the book is the primary concern, the book is a book. It is a book that is a book.





C

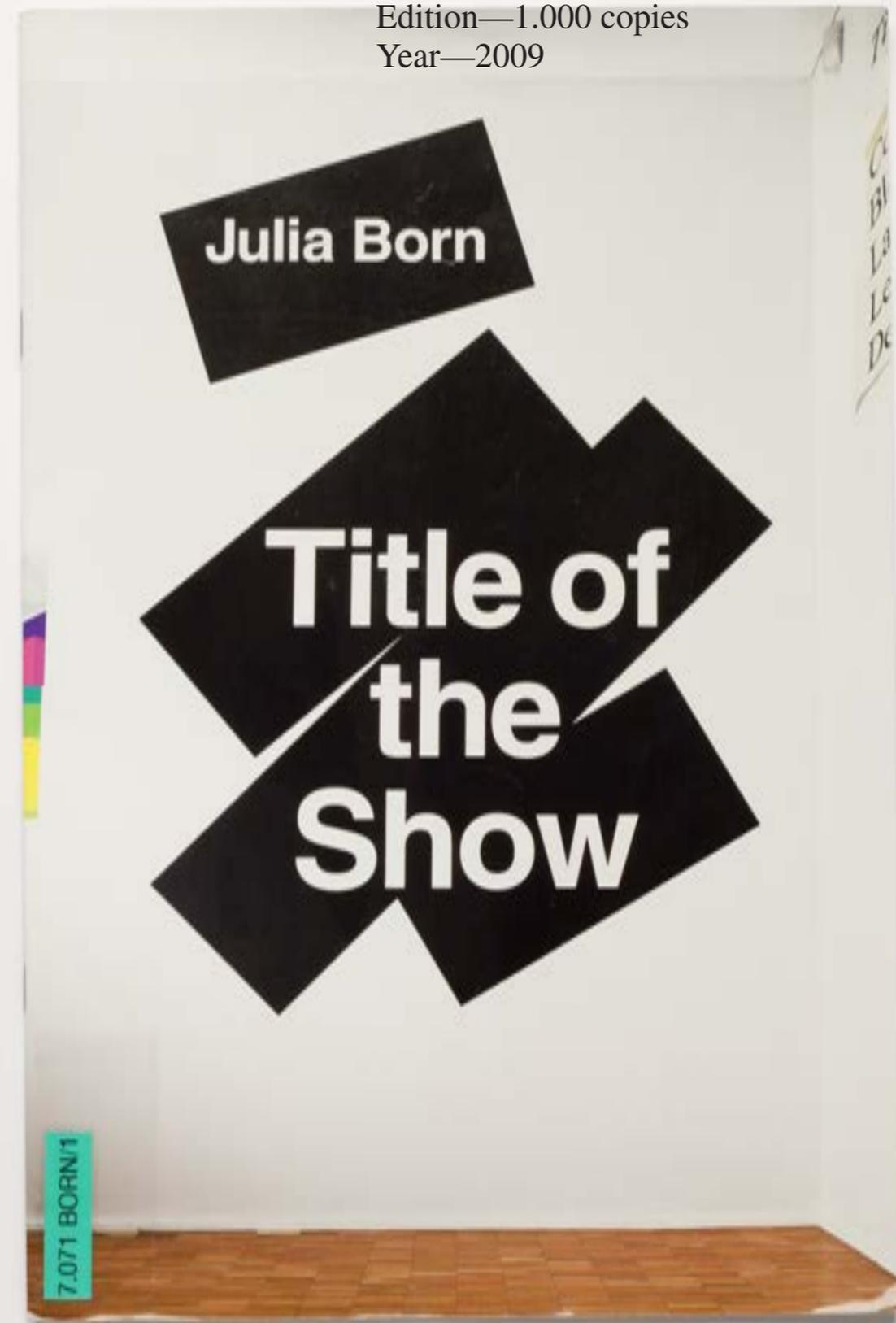
**TITLE OF THE SHOW**

Design—Julia Born, Laurenz Brunner

Publisher—Jovis Verlag, Berlin

Edition—1.000 copies

Year—2009





6

**NEIN**

*JA/NEIN*, 2004  
 Shopping bag, 36 x 40 cm  
 Silkscreen print on cotton  
 In collaboration with Alon Levin

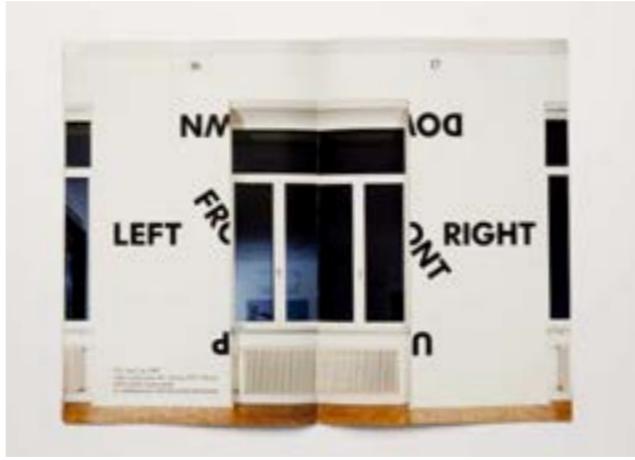


7

*Multiplex 1-12*, 2009  
 Poster, 84 x 120 cm  
 Silkscreen print



TITLE OF THE SHOW





*This Side Up*, 2007  
 Video and poster, 84 × 119 cm / 29.7 × 42 cm  
 Offset print / stencil print  
 In collaboration with Alexandra Bachzetsis

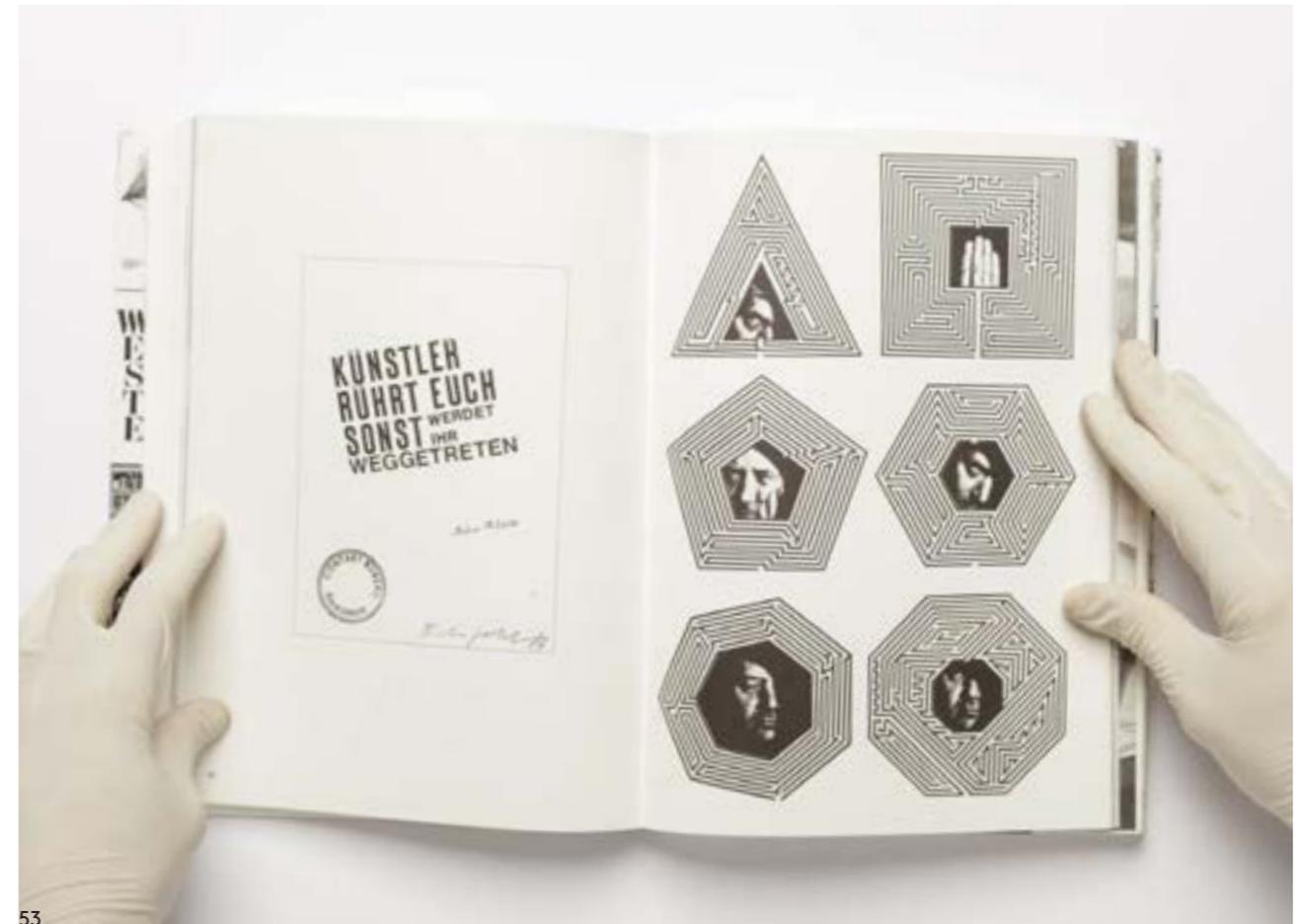
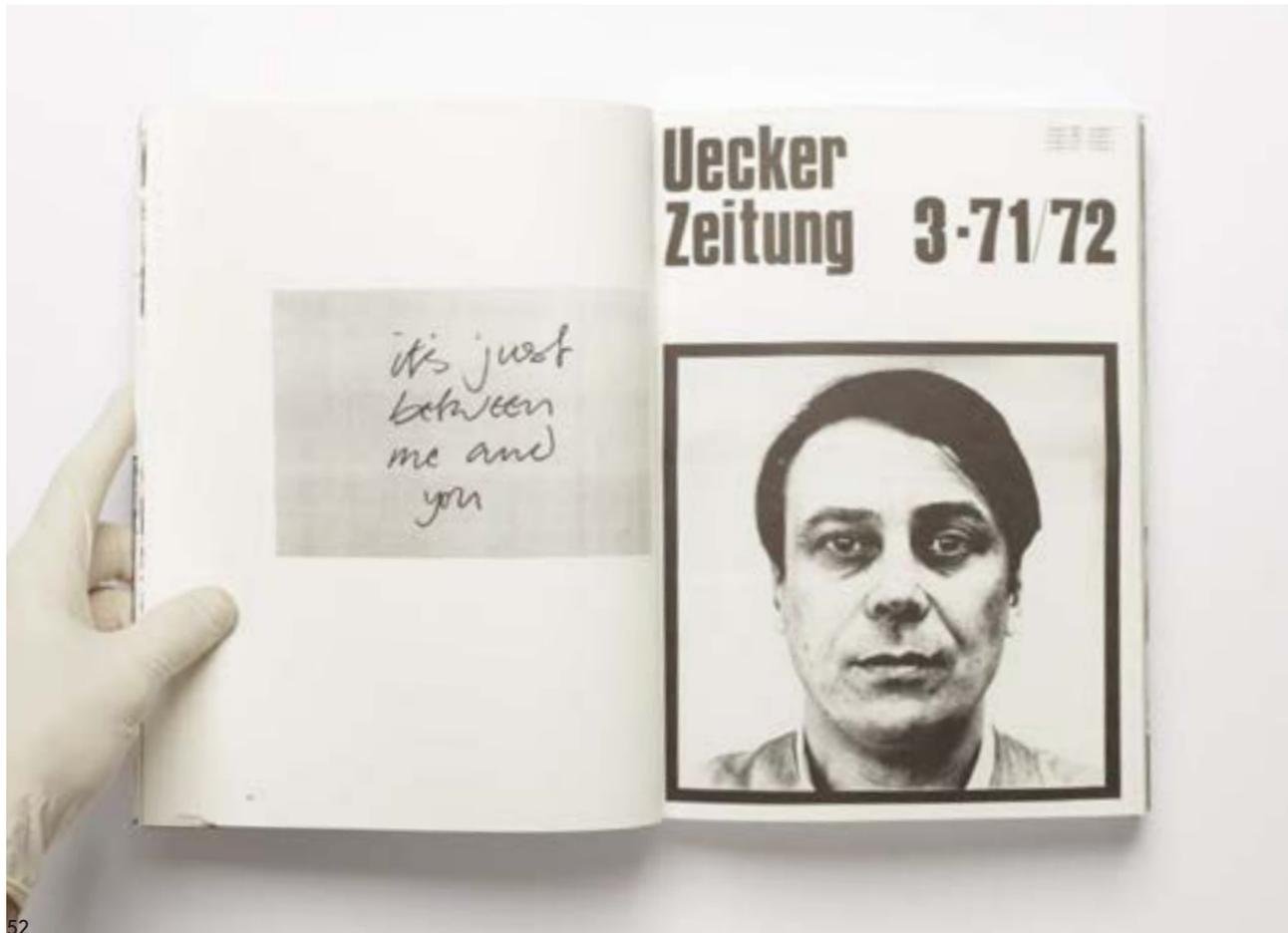
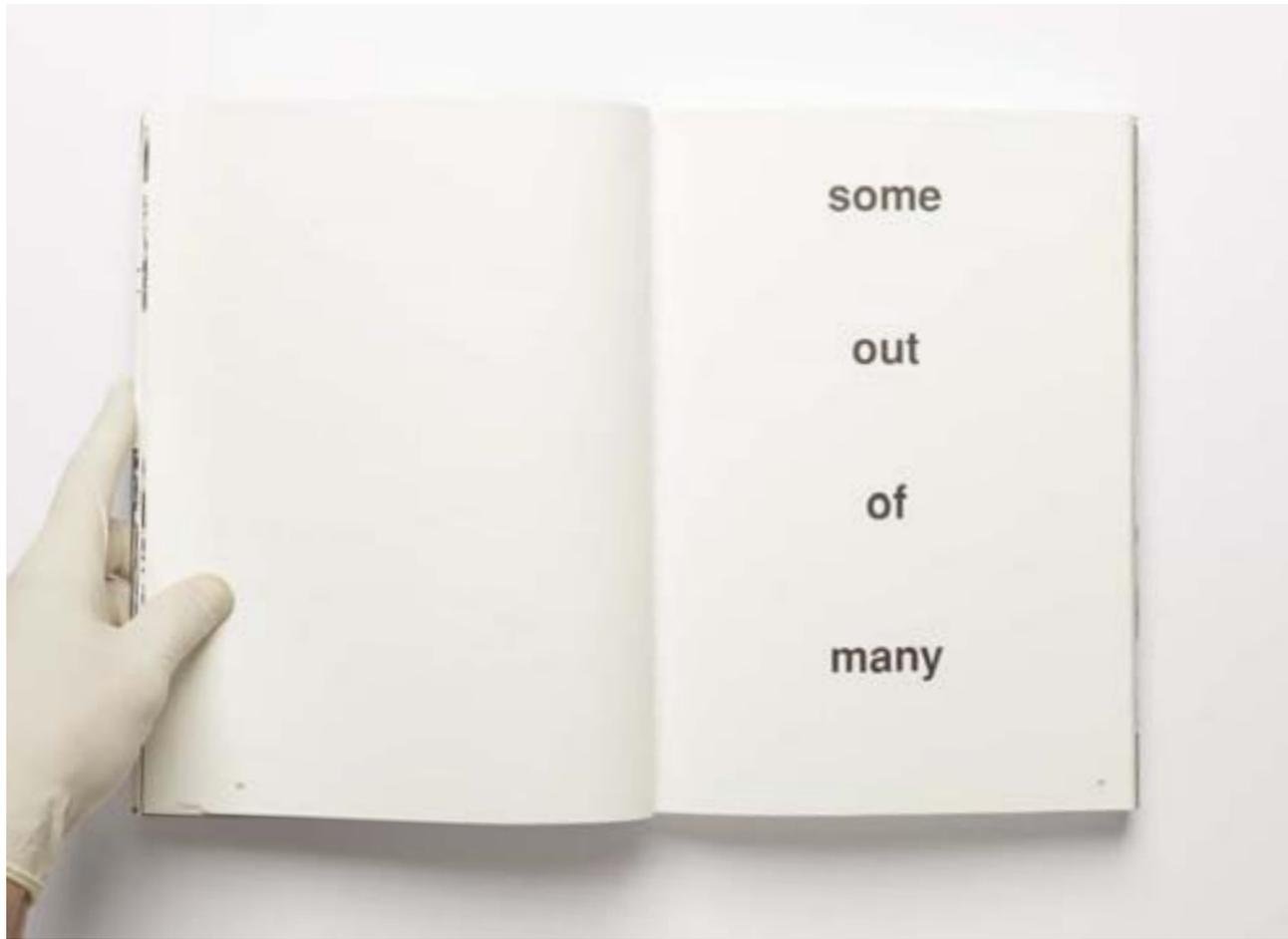


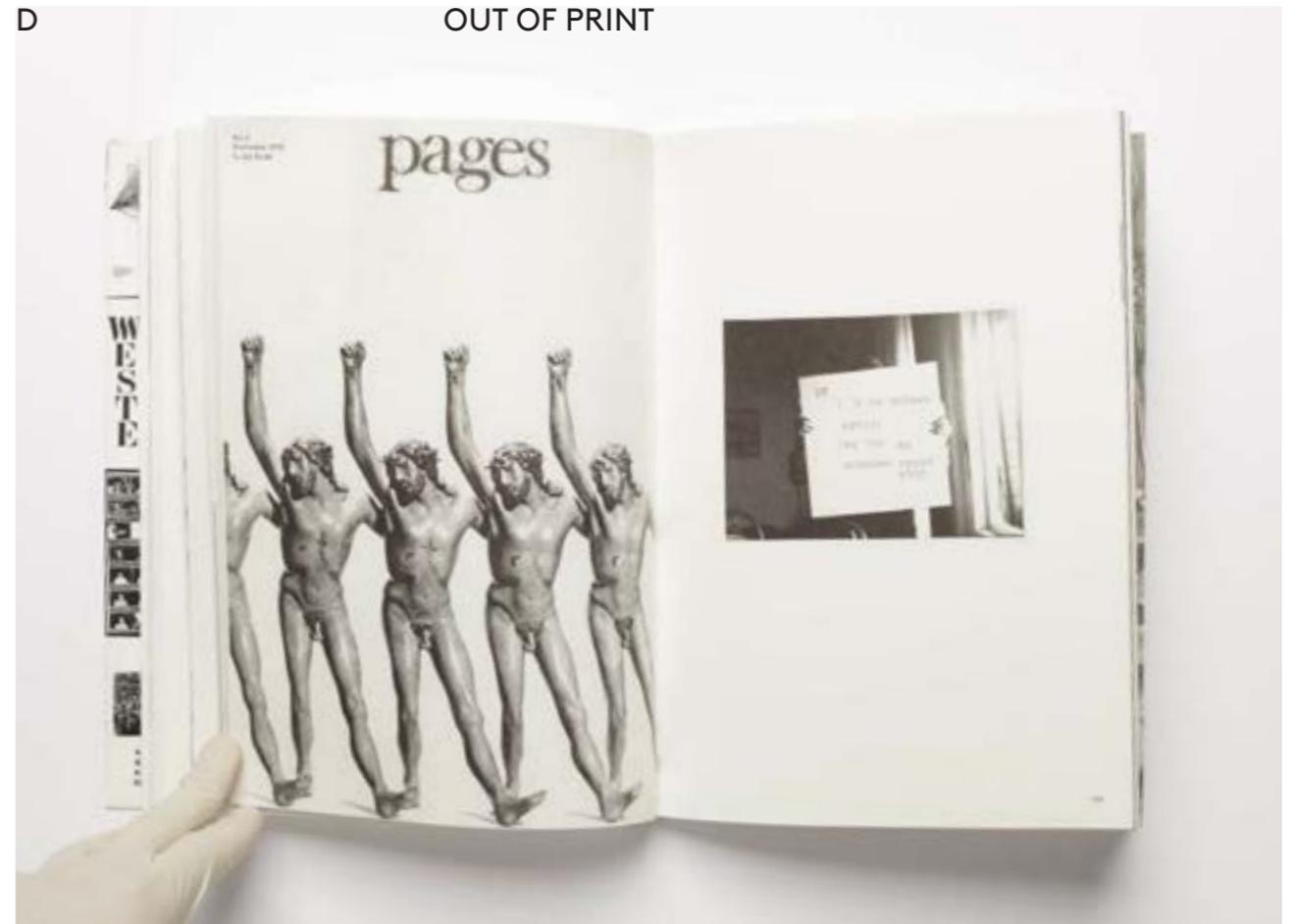
D

OUT OF PRINT  
 Concept—Guy Schraenen  
 Publisher—Neues Museum Weserburg, Bremen  
 Edition—2.000 copies  
 Year—2001



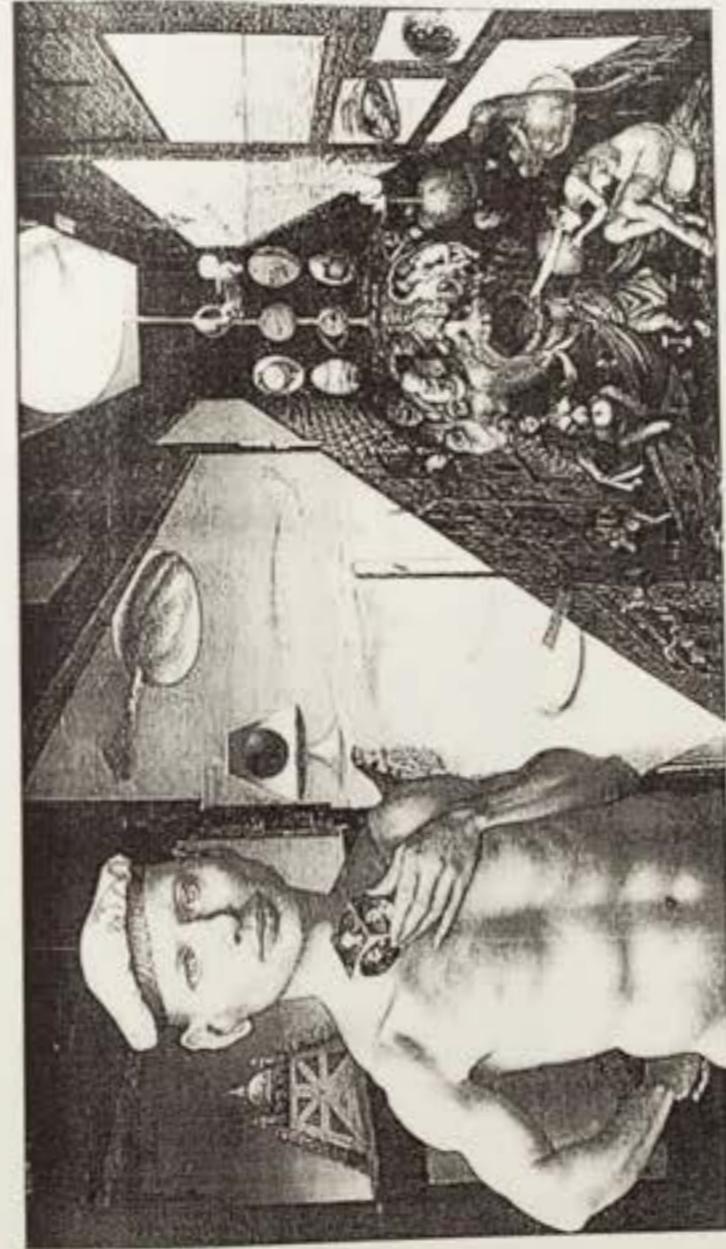


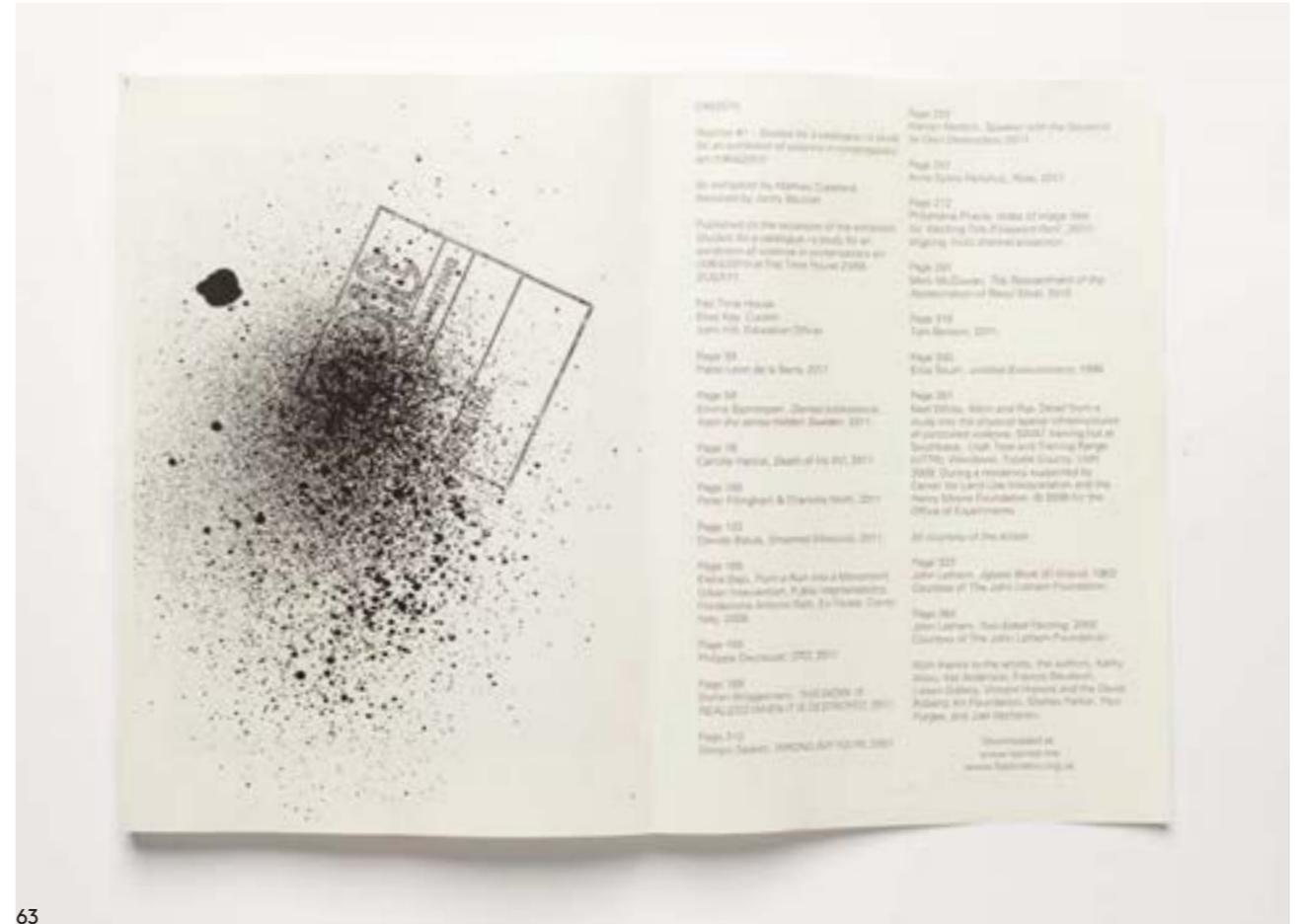














F

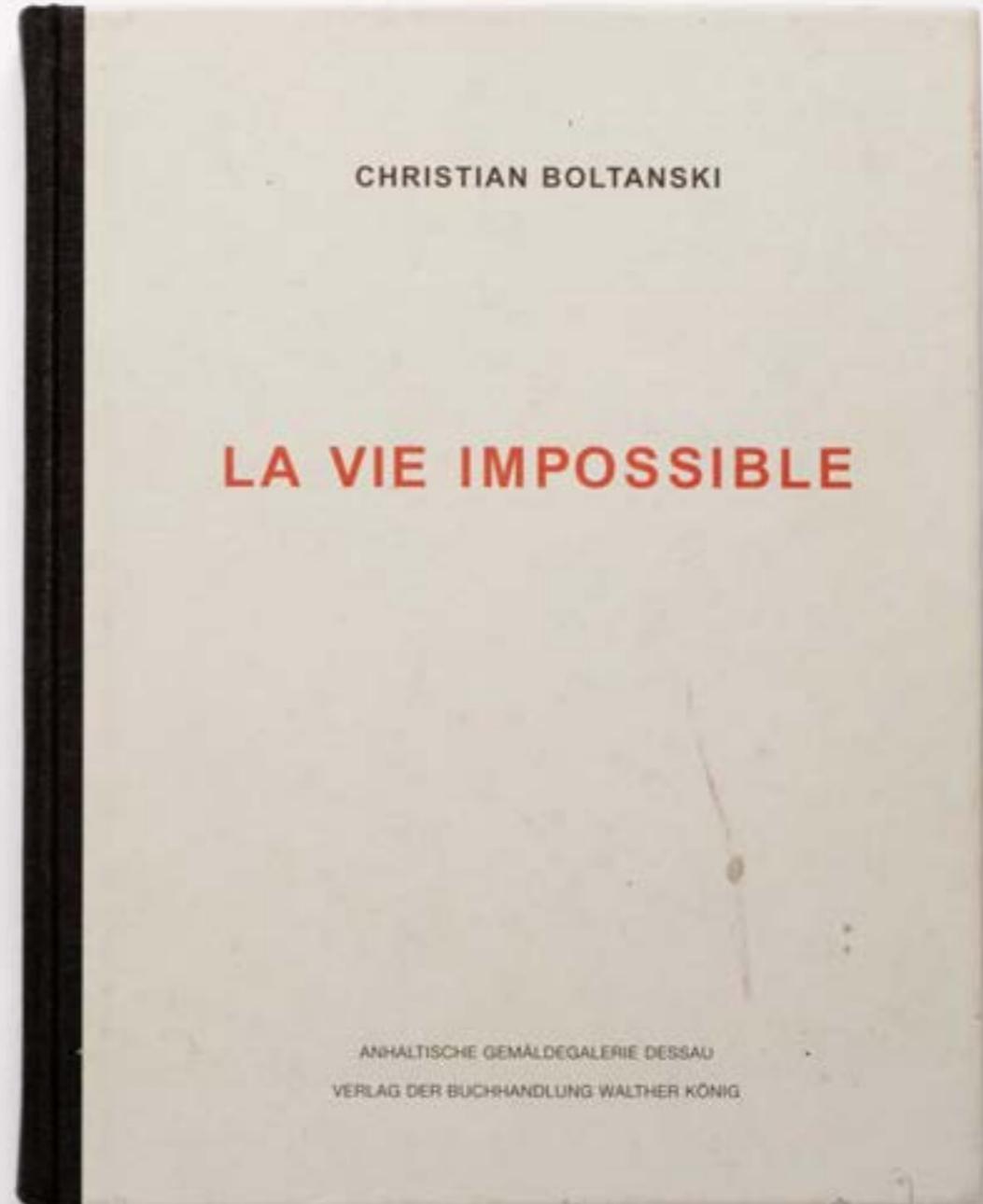
**LA VIE IMPOSSIBLE**

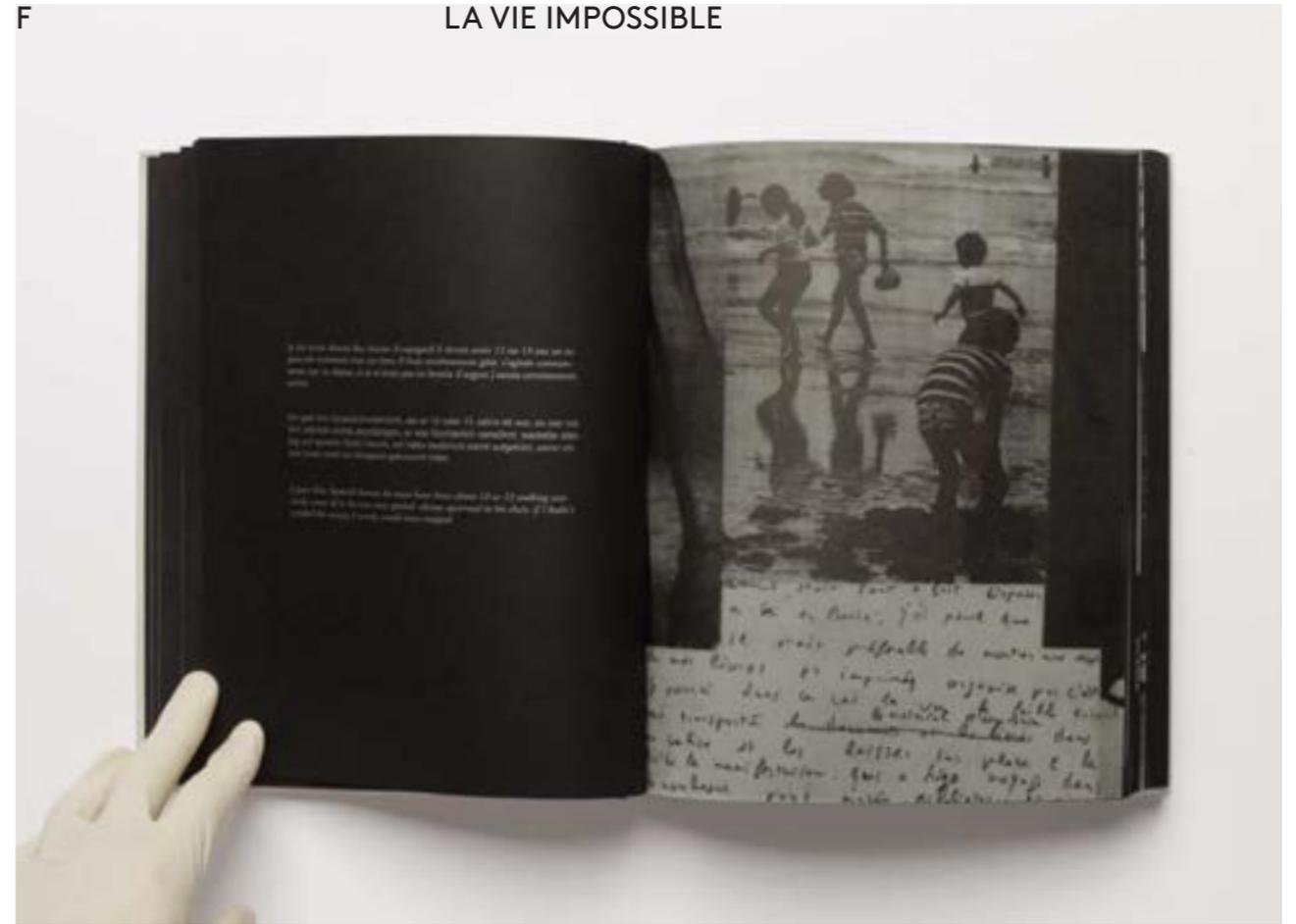
Concept/Author—Christian Boltanski

Publisher—Walther König, Köln

Editors—Norbert Michels, Brigitte Thee

Year—2001





Il avait beau se plaindre tout le temps, je n'aurais jamais pensé que cela se terminerait comme le dit plus ou moins Michel Simon dans «Drôle de drame» : à force de raconter des histoires horribles il vous arrive des histoires horribles.

Er beklagte sich ständig vergebens, ich hätte nie gedacht, daß das in etwa so enden würde, wie es Michel Simon in «Drôle de drame» gesagt hat, daß, wenn man unheimliche Geschichten herbeiredet, sie auch so eintreffen.

*He could complain and complain all he wanted, I never would have thought it would end up the way Michel Simon says or has said in «Drôle de drame», if you keep telling horrible stories, horrible stories will happen to you.*

moments terrible, adreionent et qu'il  
 terminer, la plus part d'entre nous n'y  
 put. Nous ne pouvons dire y le craint

Meditasjoner over et liv og dø  
 u rent d'entre nous n'aurions pas été

Plotter et Lesene de se sentir  
 un voisin sans histoire en

Christian Skjolden fortæller  
 for til å skape julestemning  
 med (Folk Trond Borge)

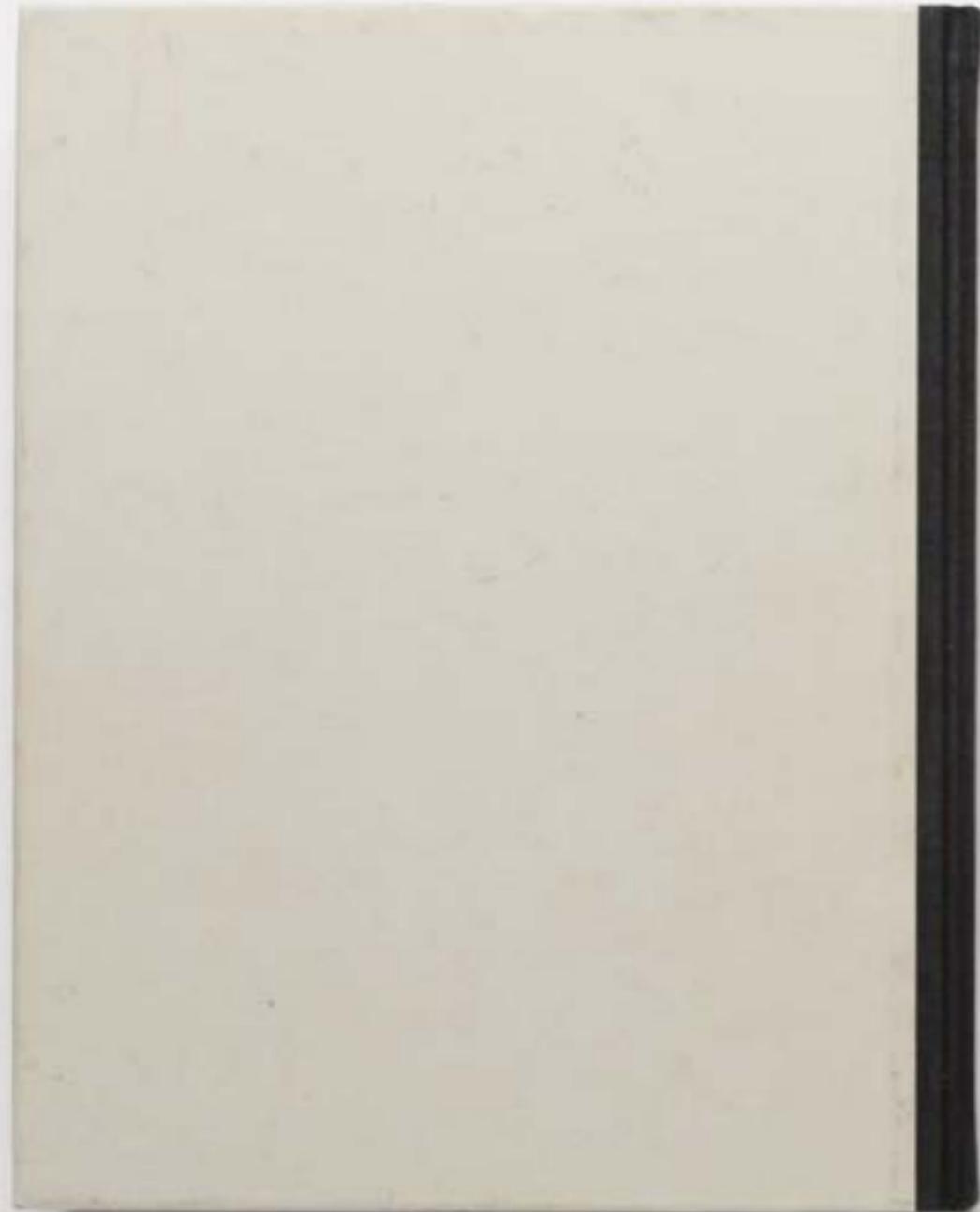
stemning i et utrolig  
 med julestemning og den drukk

Je lui ai organisé une exposition personnelle en 1970 puis un an après il est parti chez Sonnabend je pense que pour sa carrière il a eu tort mais il a été attiré par le prestige qu'avait alors cette galerie américaine, nous sommes restés en bons termes et je le considère toujours comme un artiste intéressant.

Ich habe 1970 eine Einzelausstellung für ihn organisiert, ein Jahr später ist er dann zu Sonnabend gegangen, für seine Karriere war das meiner Meinung nach falsch, aber er hat sich von dem Prestige anlocken lassen, das diese amerikanische Galerie damals besaß, wir sind auch später noch gut miteinander ausgekommen und ich halte ihn immer noch für einen interessanten Künstler.

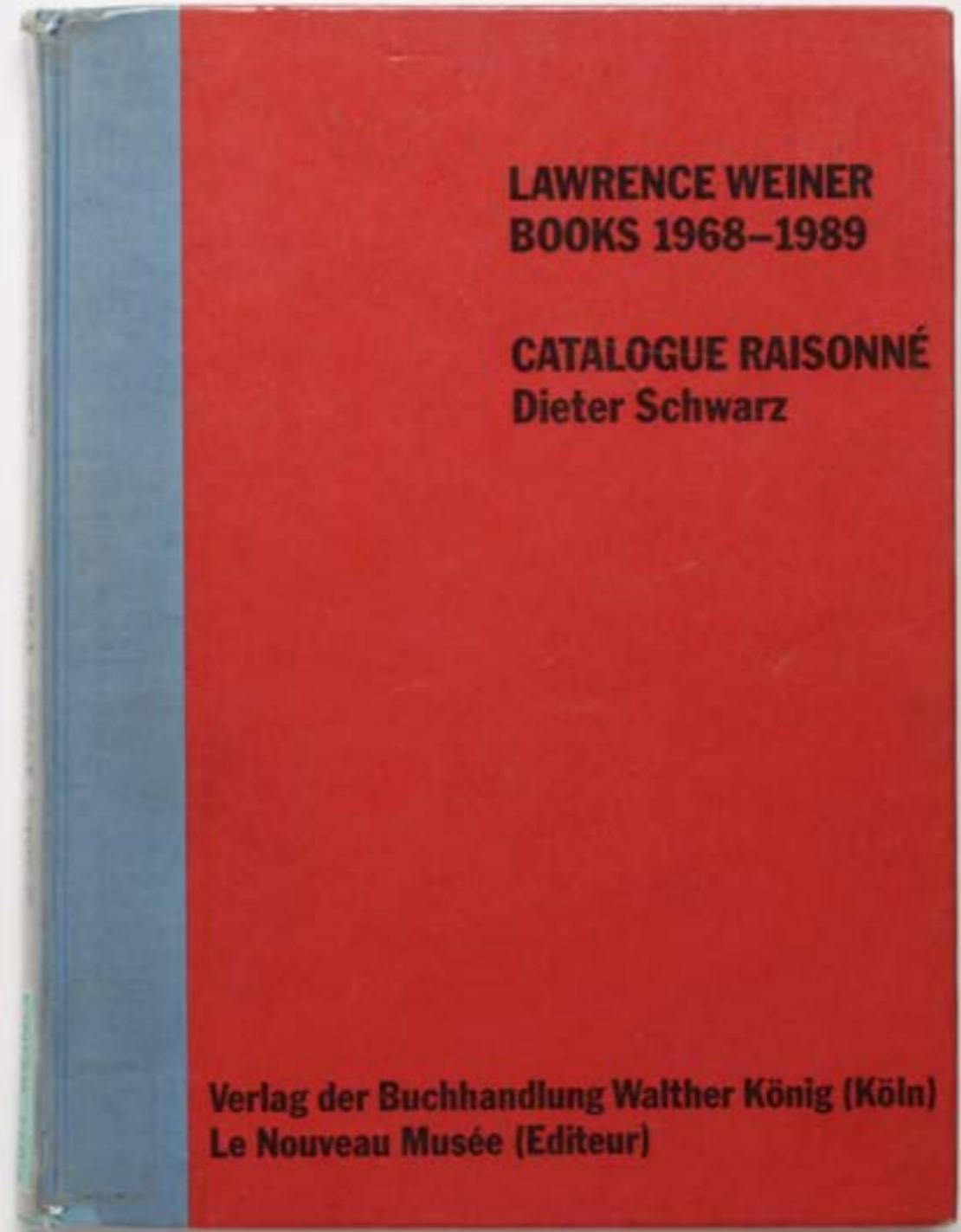
*I organized a one-man show for him in 1970 then a year later he went with Sonnabend, I think that in terms of his career he was wrong but he was attracted by the prestige that this American gallery had at the time, we remained on good terms and I still consider him an interesting artist.*





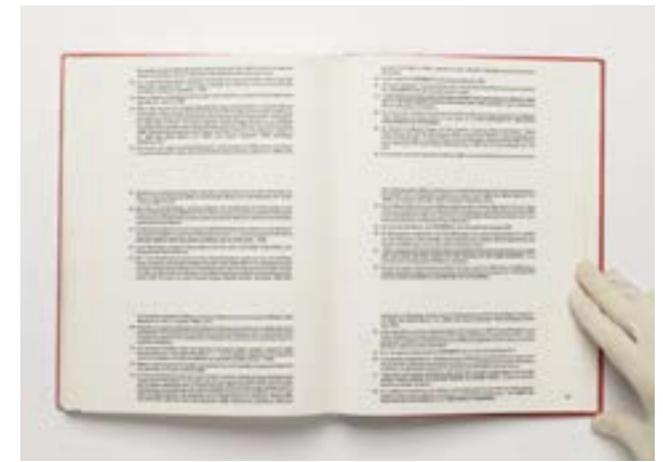
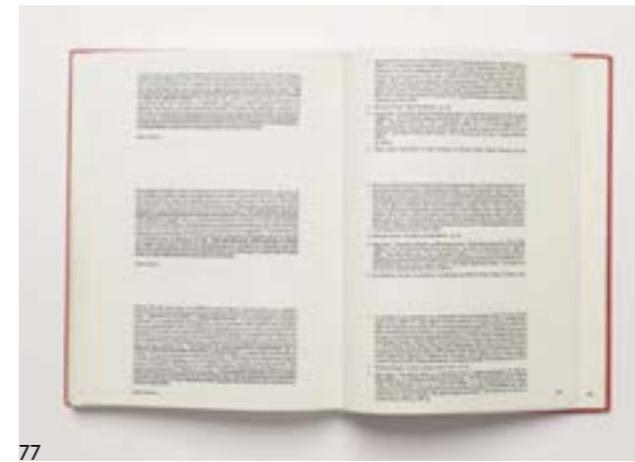
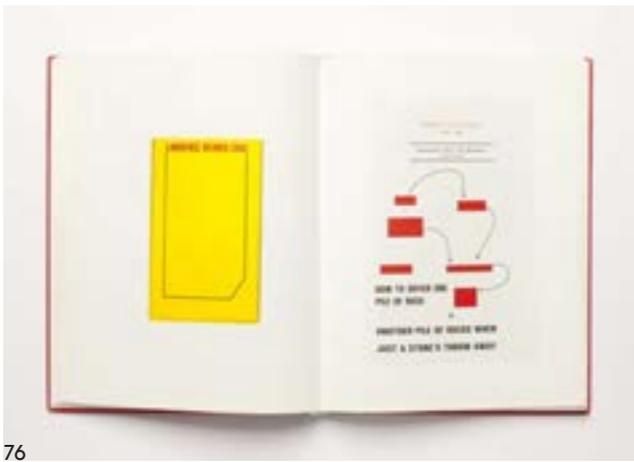
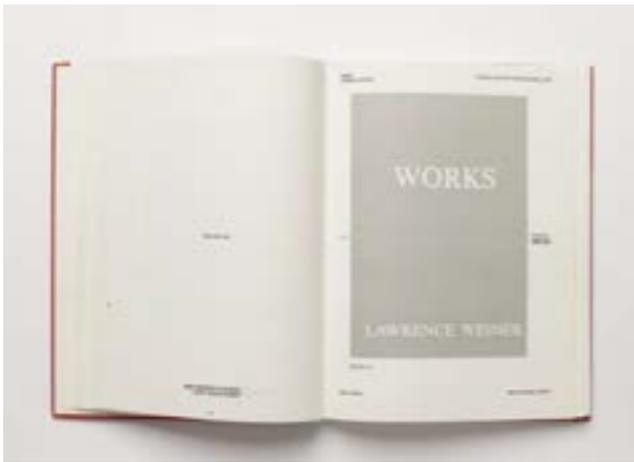
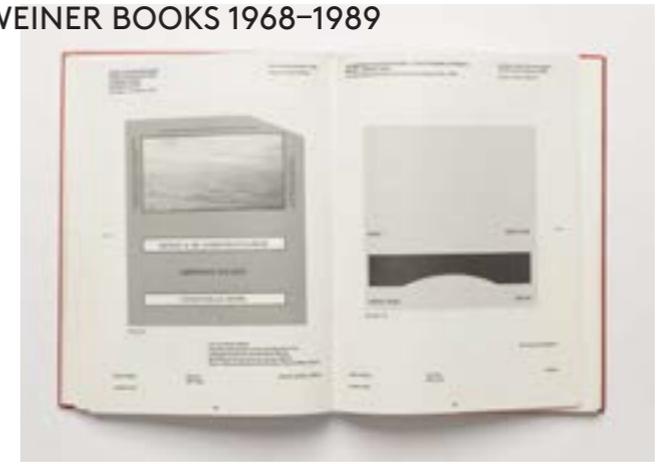
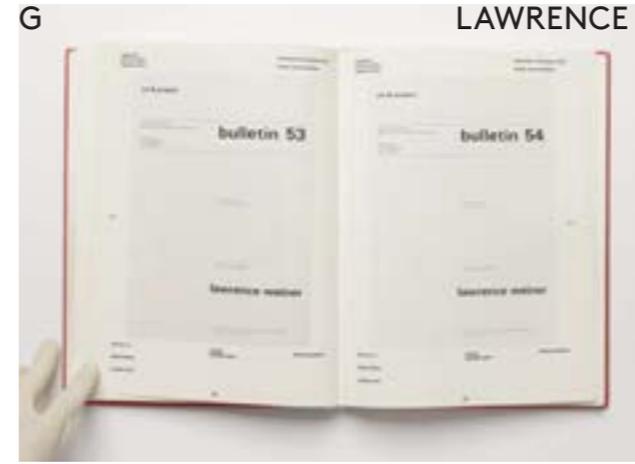
G

**LAWRENCE WEINER BOOKS 1968–1989**  
Design/Layout—Lawrence Weiner  
Editor—Dieter Schwarz  
Publisher—Walther König, Köln  
Year—1989



**CONTENTS**

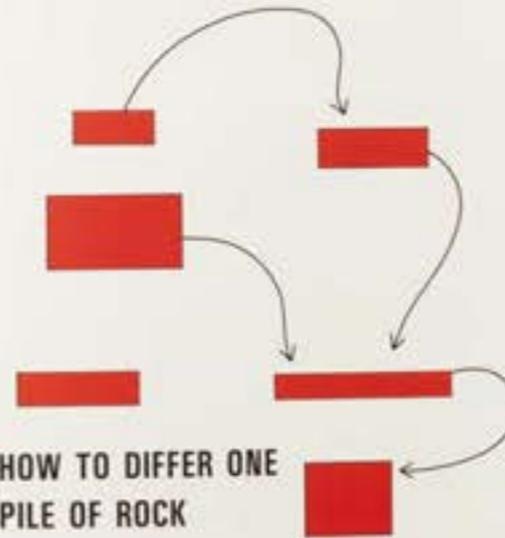
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*Delhyd-Cell Essays*  
No. 2 1979

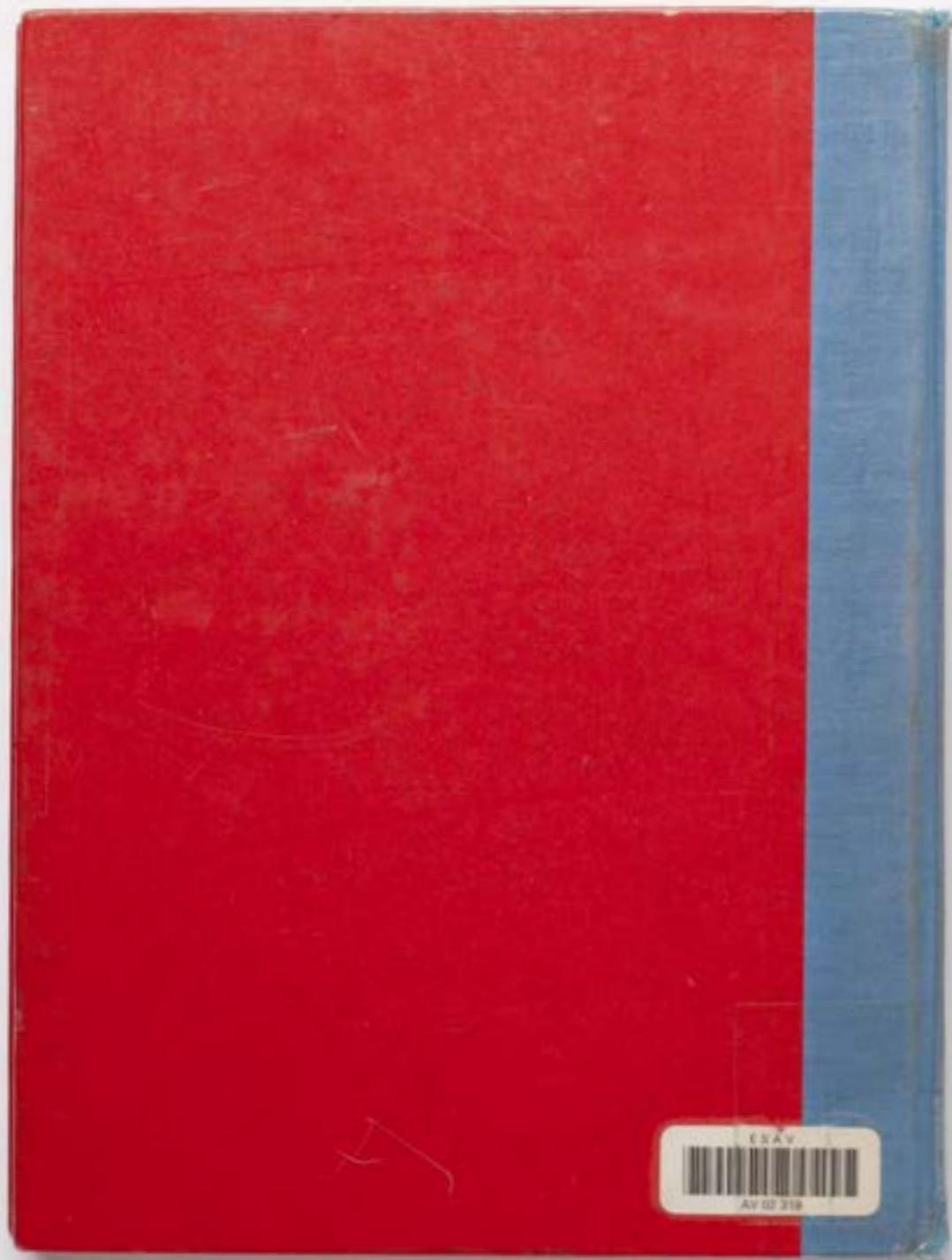
—————  
*Somewhere Over The Rainbow*  
—————  
*Lawrence Weiner*



HOW TO DIFFER ONE  
PILE OF ROCK

+

ANOTHER PILE OF ROCKS WHEN  
JUST A STONE'S THROW AWAY



## Chapter Two

# The exhibition catalogue as an extension

### A CHANGE OF INTENTION: THE ARTISTS' BOOK

Graphic design practices of curators generally lack quality. It's simply not a job they have been trained for. Their interference in the exhibition catalogues does question the intentions of the catalogues' author. Previously discussed catalogues designed by *Schraenen* and *Copeland* balance between artists' books and catalogues. Artist's books are generally considered individual pieces of art, using the book as a medium. The artist considers the book as the equivalent of the pencil or the camera. Artists' books are often well crafted, and printed in limited editions. The small edition makes the artist's book a collectable item, and fosters the scarcity of the object. A selective audience of art collectors frequently buys artists' books. The founders of *Printed Matter*, the world's largest non-profit organisation dedicated to the promotion of publications made by artists, subscribed the idea of the artist's book as: 'artwork for the page,' focusing particularly on those publications produced in editions of one hundred or more. They envisioned these publications as democratizing artworks – inexpensive artworks – that could be consumed alongside the more traditional output of paintings, drawings, sculptures or photography. These books were not simply catalogues of pre-existing artworks, but rather works in their own right, 'narratives' intended to be seen in a printed, bound, and widely disseminated format.'<sup>31</sup>

To accompany a monographic exhibition, artists' books rarely substitute the exhibition catalogue. *Printed Matter* looks at exhibition catalogues as 'promotional' objects, and exploits the format to diffuse artworks among a public initially expecting a catalogue. *Printed Matter* writes in their statement: 'One strategy that *Printed Matter*'s founders – and LeWitt in particular – used to promote artists' books was to produce them in lieu of exhibition catalogues. These books created literally thousands of venues for art work as they made their way onto coffee tables, collectors' bookshelves, and into museum libraries and students' backpacks. They were meant to be kept, discarded or casually circulated among friends like pulp paperbacks.'<sup>32</sup>

For *Printed Matter*, the artist's book can easily 'settle' itself in any possible environment and transform this place in a 'venue for art work'. This point of view is rather idealistic though. It means that whatever the public is, you can serve them any artists' book, and the unprepared public will accept it immediately. Further on, they instantly pass on the artwork to people in their direct surrounding, creating free publicity for the artist and the publisher. This situation is rather 'idealistic' and pushes the exhibition catalogue in the role of a 'promotion' tool for the artists' work. The interference of artists' books in monographic exhibitions feed again the discussion of authorship. In upcoming examples I develop the position of the artist regarding the retrospective catalogue. In all situations the artist is involved in the design of the catalogue, and visions change from introverted to open-minded.

31/32—Printed Matter  
'The Artist Book and  
Printed Matter in  
Context'  
<<http://www.printedmatter.org/about/books.cfm>>  
8 January 2012

### The 'artist's book' in lieu of the exhibition catalogue

Some artists who are invited for a solo exhibition also desire to be involved in the production of the exhibition catalogue. This 'participation' can manifest a position among the editorial team. When entering this position, the artist probably has to make concessions and – at least partly – put aside his personal ideals to have a constructive discussion with the editors and curators. I'll come back to this situation later as I first describe out the second position, in which the artist alone takes over the editorial responsibility of the catalogue. The artist takes the opportunity to create a new piece of art. The catalogue, or artist's book, serves as a new 'canvas' for the artist.

*Christian Boltanski* (1944, Paris), an artist who preferably uses the catalogue as an artist book, comments the medium catalogue in an interview with *AnneDorothee Böhme*: 'Whenever it's possible (and what I like best) is to use the money and to make an artists' book. But that's not so easy. [...] Each time I'm making a show, I say that I want to have an artist's book. But very often they say, 'no, it's difficult,' or 'no, we can't,' and the curators always want to make the preface, an article about you—they love that.' *Boltanski* continues: 'In any case, it's always difficult to arrive in a museum and say, 'no text. No biography. Only images in the book. And I will do it completely.'<sup>33</sup>

For the exhibition *La Vie Impossible*<sup>F</sup>, which was the result of the *Kunstpreis der Nord/LB* that *Boltanski* received in 2001, the artist had the possibility to make a new book that would be published on the occasion of the show. The resulting artists' book and the exhibition only resemble through the title. Autobiographic statements in German, French and English reconstruct the life of the artist *Boltanski*. The texts are printed in silver on black pages, and are accompanied by archive images printed on alternating vellum. The black ink used on each vellum page merge with the reverse of the subsequent black page, and when turned the page, the silver texts shines through the transparent parts of the vellum. The vellum gives the book different levels of lecture within a repetitive structure of text succeeded by images. The texts are dejectedly written, and together with the predominant black they give the book a dejected feeling.

Either the reader is affected by his statement or not, it is inescapable that the book spreads a one-sided reflection of the artist. By doing so it does not leave the reader much room for personal reflection. Although individualism is a strong characteristic of an artists' book, this method exclude some characteristics that lie at the heart of the contemporary exhibition catalogue. Catalogues provide insight in creative processes or treat actual questions of art, politics and environment that are of concern to designers and artists nowadays. The artistic statement usually fits the museum and the artists' book very well, but the catalogue is more a format that is proper to discussions and in which different reflections cross.

33—  
Böhme, AnneDorothee  
'Revised excerpts from  
a videotaped conversation  
between Christian  
Boltanski (CB) and  
AnneDorothee Böhme  
(DB), Malakof (Paris),  
July 24, 2002'  
*The Consistency of  
Shadows: Exhibition  
Catalogs as Autonomous  
Works of Art*  
Betty Rymer Gallery,  
2003

### Lawrence Weiner: the artist in the role of designer

'Artist book is a misnomer. I don't know what an artist book is - a book is a conclusive question. Reading is a real time experience - looking is a real time experience' – *Lawrence Weiner*<sup>34</sup>

The position of *Boltanski* shows an empty territory in catalogue production in which artists mostly not emerge. This area occurs when the artist is not allowed to produce the catalogue alone. Where *Boltanski* makes a choice between either producing the catalogue alone, or not participating in the design of the object at all, *Lawrence Weiner* (1942, New York) puts himself precisely in this empty territory between the artist and the designer. For example, *Weiner* was solely responsible for the design of 24 out of 31 catalogues that appeared about his work between 1968 and 1989.<sup>G/35</sup> Apparently, *Weiner* is very well capable of convincing the museum direction in working on the catalogue. *Weiner* does not hesitate to obtain an editorial position in the production of catalogues and books and successfully succeeds in adapting to a role that is normally predestined for the graphic designer. His design of books and catalogues do not fundamentally differ from one another. About the classification of artists' books *Weiner* says: 'I think books are books - and I don't think there is an 'artists' book'. How do you know if the author is an artist if it's a book? Why make something that you didn't want to make? You make a catalog when you make a show because you're asking people to take the car or the subway someplace and when they walk in – that is something that's there to take home. If there's someone there to explain it – or you are there – they can accept it or reject it. But a book is something that requires nothing except that someone finds it.'<sup>36</sup>

So books stay books, but catalogues, according to *Weiner*, are different from books, and have the function to 'explain' the show. This plea for an educational function for the catalogue from *Weiners'* side, but what does this mean for some of the catalogues made by artists themselves, as the abovementioned example of *Boltanski*? Those catalogues that have a strong retrospective, individual character that is not always accessible for a larger public? Of course, the visitor can accept or reject a catalogue like that, but the curator of the exhibition has a certain task to fulfil too. He or she has a responsibility to 'explain' his or her vision on the artist's work. This objective might be achieved through a cleverly made catalogue. And when curator and artist cannot fulfil this task, the graphic designer should interfere and occupy this 'empty territory'. The fact that a catalogue is essential to accompany a show – The show has to be archived in the end, not least for educational reasons – does not mean that there is no space left for artists' books to accompany the show. But a difference should be communicated towards the visitor. The artists' book accompanying the show might not get the title 'catalogue' because it is in a way misleading to visitors.

Distinctions and cross-fertilisations between artists' books and catalogues are both necessary. The catalogue embodies the existence of an archive, and is thus related with content outside

34/36—Hoffberg, Judith  
'Lawrence Weiner in  
conversation with Judith  
Hoffberg on books'  
Umbrella, 26, May 2003  
< [http://colophon.com/  
umbrella/LAWRENCE\\_  
WEINER.pdf](http://colophon.com/umbrella/LAWRENCE_WEINER.pdf) >  
20 December 2012

35—Schwarz, Dieter/  
Weiner, Lawrence  
*Lawrence Weiner Books  
1968–1989*  
Walter König, Köln, 1989

itself. Another difference with the artists' book is the designer of the object. The artists' book rather bases itself on a newly developed work, or source, developed by the artist for the particular occasion, while the graphic designer searches for new narratives between the works of an artist. In a later stadium, examples of cross-fertilisations between the two types pass by, confirming fruitful collaboration between artists and graphic designers.

### The artist as a participating editor

A more democratic situation, of which I spoke earlier, emerges when the artist collaborates in the production of the catalogue for his monographic exhibition. In a multi-personal situation, an artist's book is very unlikely as an outcome. The product of collaboration between artist and editor will return slightly to the initial form of the catalogue, a listed archive of artworks, according to the influence of the artist and intentions of the editor.

In 1994, German artist *Martin Kippenberger* (1953 – 1997) collaborated with *Karel Schampers* and *Dingenus van de Vrie* on the editorial and design of the exhibition catalogue for *The Happy End of Franz Kafka's 'Amerika'*.<sup>H</sup> The exhibition – first held in *Museum Boijmans van Beuningen* (Rotterdam) between February 27th and April 24th – was the artist's completion of the unfinished novel *Amerika* (or *The Man Who Disappeared*), by *Franz Kafka*. "The installation re-imagines a section of the book when the protagonist Karl Rossmann, having travelled across America, applies for a job at the 'biggest theatre in the world'. 'Everybody is welcome!' proclaims the call for employment, 'Whoever wants to become an artist should sign up!'<sup>37</sup> When the young man is heading for the interview in Oklahoma, the corporation he is attending turns out to be highly bureaucratic and corrupt. The unfinished novel left *Kippenberger* the possibility to create his version of the end.

With an installation of objects, primarily chairs and tables, *Kippenberger* creates a gigantic simulation of an interview fair in which objects prepare themselves for upcoming conversations. The floor beneath the installation is covered with a drawing of a football field, indicating the competitive element of job interviews, and the notion of a two-sided challenge. The catalogue shows the same situations and objects, but this time there is more human interference. The catalogue is almost the human completion of the items in the show. Where the installation in the museum allows no human interference with the objects, the catalogue amplifies all kind of characters who 'could fit' the cautious solicitation area in the museum. The visitor first encounters the setting of the interview through the exhibition, and thereafter meets the characters, when reading the catalogue. It is interesting how exhibition and catalogue are in dialogue with each other, particularly since quite some corresponding objects appear in both media. Nevertheless, the exhibition and its catalogue are not depending on each other. The catalogue can very well function on its own because of its narrative qualities. It communicates a story of psychological attitudes between men and object. The catalogue

37—Tate Modern, 'The Happy End of Franz Kafka's 'Amerika' < <http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/kippenberger/rooms/room7.shtm> > 4 January 2012

## INDEX

*published on the occasion of*

BOOK SHOW  
Eastside Projects, Birmingham  
3 July – 4 September 2010  
Curators—James Langdon,  
Gavin Wade

Photos—Archive ASPC, Bettina Brack,  
Jörg Michaelis  
Print—EPO, Antwerp  
Publisher—Neues Museum Weserburg,  
Bremen  
Edition—2.000 copies  
Year—2001

*published on the occasion of*

OUT OF PRINT  
NMWB, Bremen  
(also shown at: Cneai, Chatou/Paris;  
MACBA, Barcelona; MGLC Ljubljana;  
Museu Serralves, Porto; Städtische  
Galerie, Erlangen; MSU, Zagreb)  
2001  
Curator—Guy Schraenen i.c.w.  
Bettina Brack  
Production—Archive for Small Press &  
Communication (A.S.P.C.)

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RADICAL NATURE  
Design—Sara de Bondt studio  
Editors—Francesco Manacorda,  
Atiella Yedgar  
Publishers—Barbican Art Gallery/  
Koenig Books, London  
Proof-reading—Ben Fergusson,  
Hella Neukötter  
Year—2009

*published on the occasion of*

RADICAL NATURE, ART AND  
ARCHITECTURE FOR A CHANGING  
PLANET 1969–2009  
Barbican Art Gallery, London  
19 June – 18 October 2009  
Curator—Francesco Manacorda  
Assistant Curator—Ariella Yedgar  
Exhibition Assistant—  
Dominik Czechowski  
Events Coordinator—Jesse McKee  
Exhibition Graphics—  
Sara de Bondt studio

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BOOK  
Editor/Designer—James Langdon  
Publisher—Eastside Projects,  
Birmingham  
Edition—1.000 copies  
Year—2010

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TITLE OF THE SHOW  
Concept/Editing/Design—  
Julia Born, Laurenz Brunner  
Assistance—Ian Brown  
Photography—Johannes Schwartz  
Organization—Ilina Korolova  
Text—Barbara Steiner  
Publisher—Jovis Verlag, Berlin  
Printing—Pöge Druck, Leipzig  
Edition—1.000 copies  
Year—2009

*published on the occasion of*

TITLE OF THE SHOW  
Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst,  
Leipzig  
8 October – 29 November 2009

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OUT OF PRINT  
Concept—Guy Schraenen  
Collaborators—Bettina Brack,  
Nina Marquardt, Anne Marsily

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REPRISE #1 – STUDIES FOR A CATA-  
LOGUE / A STUDY FOR AN EXHIBI-  
TION OF VIOLENCE IN  
CONTEMPORARY ART (1964/2011)  
Concept—Mathieu Copeland  
Assistance—Jenny Baumat  
Year—2011

*published on the occasion of*

STUDIES FOR A CATALOGUE / A  
STUDY FOR AN EXHIBITION OF  
VIOLENCE IN CONTEMPORARY ART  
(1964/2011)  
Flat Time House, London  
23 June – 31 July 2011  
Curator—Mathieu Copeland

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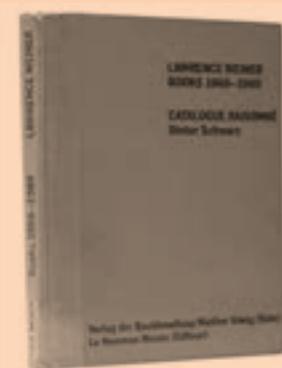


**LA VIE IMPOSSIBLE**  
Concept/Author—Christian Boltanski  
Publisher—Walther König, Köln  
Editors—Norbert Michels, Brigitte Thee  
Year—2001

*published on the occasion of*

**LA VIE IMPOSSIBLE DE  
CHRISTIAN BOLTANSKI**  
Anhaltischen Gemäldegalerie, Dessau  
18 November 2001 – 6 January 2002

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**LAWRENCE WEINER BOOKS  
1968-1989**  
Design/Layout—Lawrence Weiner  
Editor—Dieter Schwarz  
Publisher—Walther König, Köln  
Year—1989

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**THE HAPPY END OF FRANZ  
KAFKA'S 'AMERIKA'**  
Designers/Editors—  
Martin Kippenberger, Karel Schampers,  
Dingenus van de Vrie  
Publisher—Museum Boijmans van  
Beuningen, Rotterdam  
Edition—1.500  
Year—1994

*published on the occasion of*

**THE HAPPY END OF FRANZ  
KAFKA'S 'AMERIKA'**  
Museum Boijmans van Beuningen,  
Rotterdam, 1994  
Curators—Martin Kippenberger,  
Karel Schampers,

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**HELLA JONGERIUS: MISFIT**  
Design—Irma Boom Office  
Concept—Irma Boom, Louise  
Schouwenberg  
Authors—Louise Schouwenberg,  
Alice Rawsthorn, Paola Antonelli  
Editorial Advice—Eric Mol  
Publisher—Phaidon, London  
Year—2010

*published on the occasion of*

**HELLA JONGERIUS: MISFIT**  
Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam  
13 November 2010 – 13 February 2011  
Curator—Louise Schouwenberg

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**EXTENDED CAPTION (DDD)**  
Design/Conception—Roger Willems,  
Sam de Groot  
Idea—Stuart Baily  
Publishers—Roma Publications,  
Amsterdam. Culturgest, Lisbon  
Printer—Drukkerij Wilco, Amersfoort  
Year—2009

*published on the occasion of*

**EXTENDED CAPTION (DDD)**  
Culturgest, Porto  
25 April – 27 June 2009

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**A NOT B**  
Design—Julia Born  
Author—Uta Eisenreich  
Publisher—Roma Publications,  
Amsterdam  
Year—2010

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**GRAPHIC DESIGN:  
NOW IN PRODUCTION**  
Design—Michael Aberman  
Concept—Andrew Blauvelt,  
Emmet Byrne  
Editors—Andrew Blauvelt,  
Pamela Johnson, Ellen Lupton,  
Kathleen McLean  
Publisher—Walker Art Center,  
Minneapolis  
Year—2011

*published on the occasion of*

**GRAPHIC DESIGN:  
NOW IN PRODUCTION**  
Walker Art Center, Minneapolis  
22 October 2011 – 22 January 2012  
Curators—Ian Albinson, Andrew  
Blauvelt, Jeremy Leslie, Ellen Lupton,  
Armin Vit, Bryony Gomez-Palacio  
Exhibition Design/Graphics—Andrew  
Blauvelt, Dylan Cole, Matthew Rezac

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**PRÉDICTIONS**  
Design—Delphine Delastre

Editors—Boris Achour, Guillaume  
Désanges, Émilie Renard  
Publisher—Trouble, Paris  
Year—2007

N p.161



**STANLEY KUBRICK'S NAPOLEON:  
THE GREATEST MOVIE NEVER MADE**  
Design—M/M Paris  
Editor—Alison Castle  
Publisher—Taschen, Köln  
Edition—1.000 copies  
Year—2008

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**LE CORBUSIER,  
ARCHITECT OF BOOKS**  
Concept—Lars Müller,  
Catherine de Smet  
Designer/Publisher—  
Lars Müller, Zürich  
Author—Catherine de Smet  
Year—2007

*published on the occasion of*

**LE CORBUSIER, THE ARCHITECT AND  
HIS BOOKS**  
Centro per l'Arte Contemporanea Luigi  
Pecci, Prato, Italy  
Museo d'Arte Moderna e Contempera-  
nea—MART, Trento e Rovereto, Italy  
Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain,  
Strasbourg, France  
Between 2005 and 2006  
Curator—Catherine de Smet

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**CRACK**  
Design—Metahaven  
Authors—Bik van der Pol, Koen van  
den Broek, Wouter Davidts, Dirk  
Lauwaert, Andrew Renton, Merel van  
Tilburg, John C. Welchman  
Editor—Wouter Davidts  
Publisher—Valiz, Amsterdam  
Year—2010

*published on the occasion of*

**KOEN VAN DEN BROEK, CURBS AND  
CRACKS PAINTING**  
Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst  
(SMAK), Ghent  
28 January – 16 May 2010  
Curators—Andrew Renton,  
Thibaut Verhoeven

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SERENDIPITY  
Designer/Author—Hans Gremmen  
Publisher—Roma Publications,  
Amsterdam  
Year—2008

R p.167



JULY/AUGUST EXHIBITION BOOK  
Design/Concept—Seth Siegelaub  
Editors—David Antin, Charles  
Harrison, Lucy Lippard, Michel Claura,  
Germano Celant, Hans Strelow  
Year—1970

provides no texts or descriptions next to the pictures. Only the title provides textual guidance to the reader, and works stimulating enough to create a narrative only out of the images. Images on the pages tenaciously interact with each other. It has the same strong, unexpected narrative swings that *Franz Kafka* uses in his stories.

All images in the catalogue are numbered. The images create a list that could be supplemented with descriptions somewhere else in the catalogue. Remarkable is that precisely this list is missing in the catalogue. The missing descriptions seem a conscious design decision taken by the authors. It is neither disappointing nor disturbing at all. On the contrary, it fosters curiosity. The descriptions exist probably somewhere else outside the catalogue, collected or not. Otherwise the authors hinted its existence. In the catalogue *The Happy End of Franz Kafka's 'Amerkia'*, this 'relative' connection is cleverly used as an element of fiction. The numbers are directing the readers' thoughts to an external place or list, and conceive fictive connections in the readers' perception of the story. The authors succeeded with their design to utilise the preeminent narrative qualities the catalogue has. The fact that this catalogue only exists out of images is a statement for the non-repeating of the main source (the *Kafka* novel), and offers new narratives in acting so.

The ideal situation for the artist would be that they themselves design the exhibition catalogue for their retrospective exhibition. Examples as *La Vie Impossible* by *Christian Boltanski* indicate unilateral artistic visions towards the exhibition's subject. These 'objects' have the tendency to be understood as artworks in themselves. They are doubtful substitutes for the exhibition catalogue and are almost too autonomous. Originally, catalogues functioned as lists with artworks that accompanied visitors during a museum visit. The catalogue is thus a guiding tool. It aims to establish a relation with objects located elsewhere. This relationship disappears when the catalogue becomes an artwork. Therefore even the autonomous exhibition catalogue, should refer to external sources. On the other hand, the influence of artists contributes a certain form of fiction that, as seen in the catalogue of *Martin Kippenberger*, works stimulating in pushing catalogues towards autonomy and self-sufficiency.

**Monographs by Irma Boom**

In the previous examples of artist's books, I outlined the position of the graphic designer as rather overshadowed by the artist. In the next section, I point out how graphic designers can reclaim their position, and how they succeed in approaching exhibition catalogues as almost autonomous objects. What is noteworthy is that independent catalogues arise because publishers, curators and artists determine the qualities of the graphic designer. The graphic designer is commissioned to design independent catalogues because the responsible editorial team recognises the value these items add to an exhibition in terms of visibility and publicity.

*Irma Boom* is an eminent example of a graphic designer who works on book design projects in close collaboration with involved artists, designers and publishers. In 2007, the monograph *Weaving as a metaphor*, which *Boom* designed for *Sheila Hicks*, was elected *The most beautiful book in the world*. For the design of *Hicks*' monograph, the artist herself contacted *Irma Boom*. Later on in the process they searched for a publisher, and more importantly, an occasion to published the book for. *Boom* noted: 'If a book has no deadline, there's no book.'<sup>38</sup> So although this book has a very autonomous character, the exhibition at the *Bard Graduate Center*<sup>39</sup> was necessary to give the designer a context and a deadline for the book. Another notable fact is that the *Irma Boom* classifies the object a book, and the *Bard Graduate Center* notes the object a catalogue. For *Boom* a book is a very personal exercise, as she states in another interview: 'Making a book has in fact become a status symbol. It's a very slow and still medium. The types of books I make tend to have an object-like quality. I think that's important both to me and to the book's existence.'<sup>40</sup> The museum defends a more commercial point of view, while *Boom* stresses the object quality of the book. For *Boom*, the exhibition is almost an external artefact, there to give her a strict deadline. In her design she hardly refers to this artefact.

For another book, *Irma Boom* was invited directly by the artist. This time it was *Hella Jongerius* who commissioned *Boom*, which resulted in the monograph *Hella Jongerius: Misfit*<sup>1</sup>, accompanying the highly acclaimed exhibition in *Museum Boijmans van Beuningen*, Rotterdam (November 13th 2010 – February 13th 2011). The consistency with the actual exhibition is again very limited. The book organised the work of *Jongerius* on colour, allowing projects to interfere and mix. Beginning with white objects, the catalogue is increasingly coloured towards the centre. *Boom* notes: 'It's always a sort of voyage, a travel through the book and finding why combinations were made. The more you look in the book, the more you see, and the better it becomes'<sup>41</sup>. This catalogue becomes that interesting because of this travel. Texts are inserted as intermediate stations where the reader can pause and read. Images create a never changing landscape between end products and ongoing processes.

About the photography *Boom* notes: 'The images are sometimes extremely perfect, but sometimes it's just a snapshot. But that doesn't matter because we want to tell a story, and the storytelling is more important than the quality of the specific image.'<sup>42</sup> Neither the curator of the show nor the artist herself initially composed the catalogue. It was the graphic designer who, in collaboration with writer and curator *Louise Schouwenberg*, had a free hand in the 'storytelling'. The catalogue breathes the spirit of the graphic designer, but the design does not feel forced or compromised.

Although the subject is the work of one single designer, the structure of the catalogue encourages the story of a multi-layered design process. But can we see this catalogue as an autonomous object? The fact that *Phaidon* published the catalogue is noteworthy. *Phaidon* publishes many books about art and design. Within their practice they mainly focus on 'best-sellers' and exhibition titles of renowned artists that definitely generate sales. This means that *Hella Jongerius: Misfit* will achieve a high circulation and thus many readers. In addition, the show in the *Museum Boijmans van Beuningen* only lasted for three months, and involved one room. Although it is impossible to measure the importance of the artist through the size of the exhibition space he or she occupies, the catalogue will likely generate more impact on a global level. A catalogue is neither 'autonomous' when it is published on the occasion of an exhibition, but this design of *Irma Boom* has a strong autonomous structure. In this situation, the role of the catalogue almost reverts with that of the exhibition. It can act as a vivid catalogue of objects and spread its content worldwide through newly initiated exhibitions.

**Where do exhibitions end and catalogues start?**

Temporality gives an exhibition a clear start and end. Reinforced by 'vernissages' and 'finissages', these time-marks are often the best visited moments of the exhibition. Temporality gives the exhibition its romanticism as well. When you missed the show, there is no chance to visit than through the catalogue. The conception of the exhibition and the catalogue runs almost simultaneously, there points of depart are similar. The separation between both media starts at the end of the exhibition, at the moment where the head of the shuttle (the catalogue) drops its engines (exhibition) and carries on to infinity by itself. The catalogue is there to exist, maintain and travel. In a way, the catalogue of a certain show has always been around. The artworks the catalogue refers to have existed all along, but were, until the moment of publishing, never gathered for an occasion. By doing so, the catalogue becomes a mark in time. And from there its existence takes shape through the people who will own it, read it, and pass it through.

When questioning benchmarks of both exhibitions and catalogues – like start and finish points are – questions about their mutual relations arise as well. How do catalogue and exhibition relate to each other, and how is this relation

38—D&AD President's Lectures, 'Irma Boom on 'The Most Beautiful Book in the World', (18 February 2008), <<http://vimeo.com/703587>>, 1'32", 3 January 2012

39—Sheila Hicks: Weaving as a metaphor 12 July – 15 October 2006, Bard Graduate Center, New York Curator—Nina Stritzler-Levine

40—Dutch Profiles: Irma Boom, <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FzeBk-GnE1g>>, 0'38", 10 December 2011

41—Phaidon Press 'Irma Boom on designing Hella Jongerius' latest book, Misfit', (10 February 2011), <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gg8K5n6G6ow&feature=related>>, 3'33", 11 January 2012

42—Phaidon Press 'Irma Boom on designing Hella Jongerius' latest book, Misfit', (10 February 2011), <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gg8K5n6G6ow&feature=related>>, 2'06", 11 January 2012

established? Is this necessarily guaranteed by exhibiting similar artworks? And if not, what other possible relations are achievable?

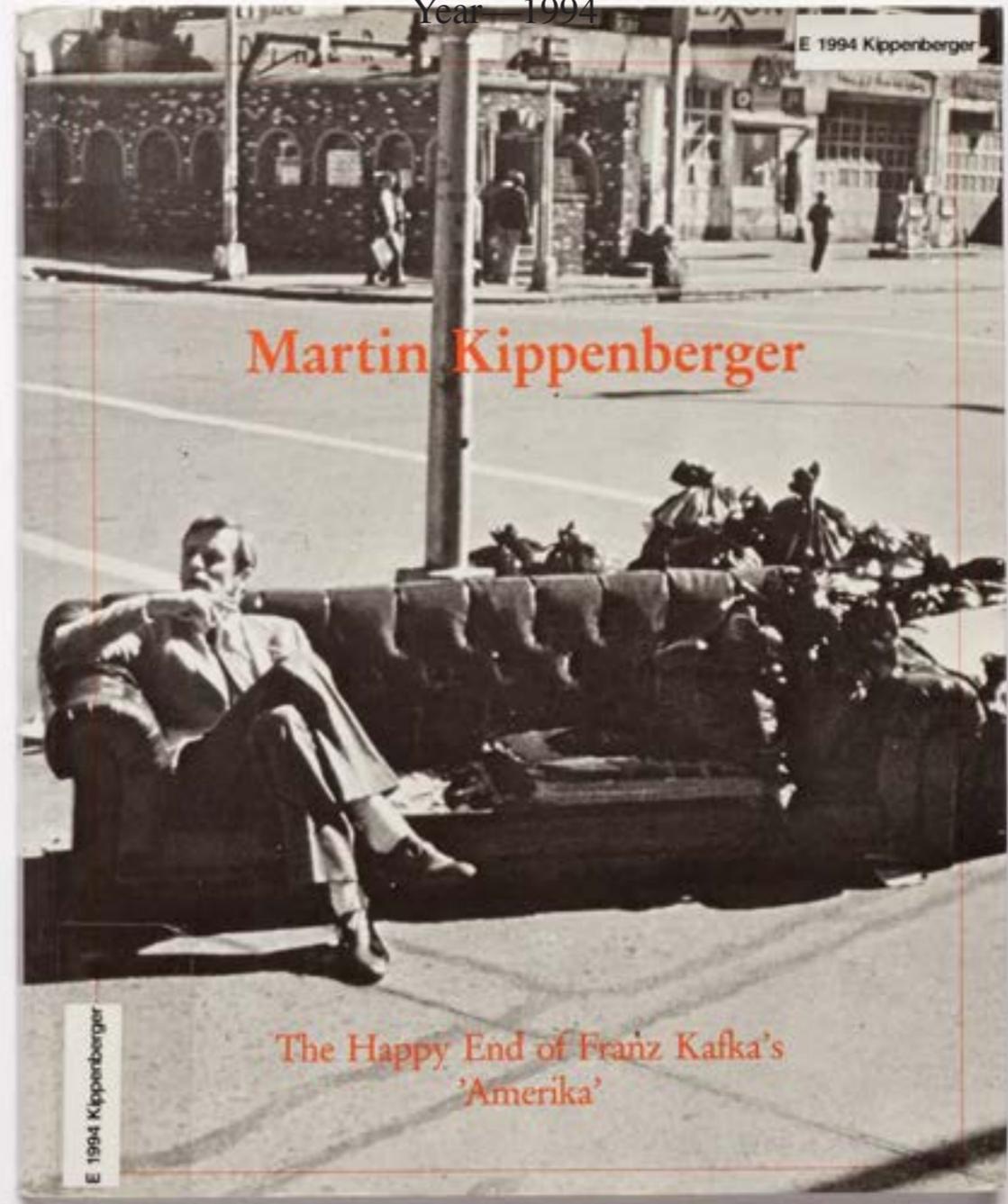
*Dot Dot Dot* is a magazine that frequently reflected on relations between 'real' objects and their reproductions. The magazine has been edited by *Stuart Bailey* (Dexter Sinister) between 2000 and 2010, and reached a number of twenty editions. During this period, *Dot Dot Dot* created a series of exhibitions that presented artefacts whose only connection was their appearance in any *Dot Dot Dot* edition. The exhibition *Extended Caption (DDDG)*<sup>43</sup> was the last exhibition in this series. Exhibited at *Culturgest* in Porto in 2009, the 43 artefacts – The original versions, varying from A4 size to posters of environ 100x70 cm – were framed and suspended on a big wall. Their descriptions appeared in the form of 43 articles, which are published in an eponymous catalogue for this occasion. Originating from the entire *Dot Dot Dot* archive, all articles in the publication together compose a redefinition of the magazine. The catalogue<sup>J</sup> reproduces the articles through images of their original appearance in the pages of *Dot Dot Dot*. Remarkable is the reduction of the pages to a quarter of their original size. This means that texts are greatly reduced as well, and this does not benefit readability. The reduction even questions the importance of texts in the original magazine. Was *Dot Dot Dot* an artistic look-book? Are mere images on an exhibition wall satisfying enough? And do we really want to read that much background information? In this context, the catalogue takes a critical attitude, a role little assumed by the majority of exhibition catalogues. By using reproductions to set out text, and reducing them on top of that, this catalogue experiments the iconic value of earlier published texts.

*Extended Caption* has always subliminally existed since the foundation of *Dot Dot Dot*, because they are both caption of the same archiving apparatus. To answer questions of begin and end points, we should see the exhibition catalogue as a benchmark in time. The catalogue, from a particular moment in history, is redefining an already existing archive through a storytelling structure. It is there to endure. It has therefore substantially different objectives than the temporary exhibition. The way for a catalogue to survive and remain reviewed over time is to aim for individuality. Therefore, the end point of an exhibition launches the catalogue to an individual existence, but is not the main reason how the catalogue achieves independency.

43—Extended Caption (DDDG), *Culturgest*, Porto, 25 April – 27 June 2009  
Curator—Stuart Bailey

H

THE HAPPY END OF FRANZ KAFKA'S 'AMERIKA'  
Designers/Editors—Martin Kippenberger,  
Karel Schampers, Dingenus van de Vrie  
Publisher—Museum Boymans van Beuningen,  
Rotterdam  
Edition—1.500 copies  
Year—1994







100-101



100-102



100-104



100-105



100-107

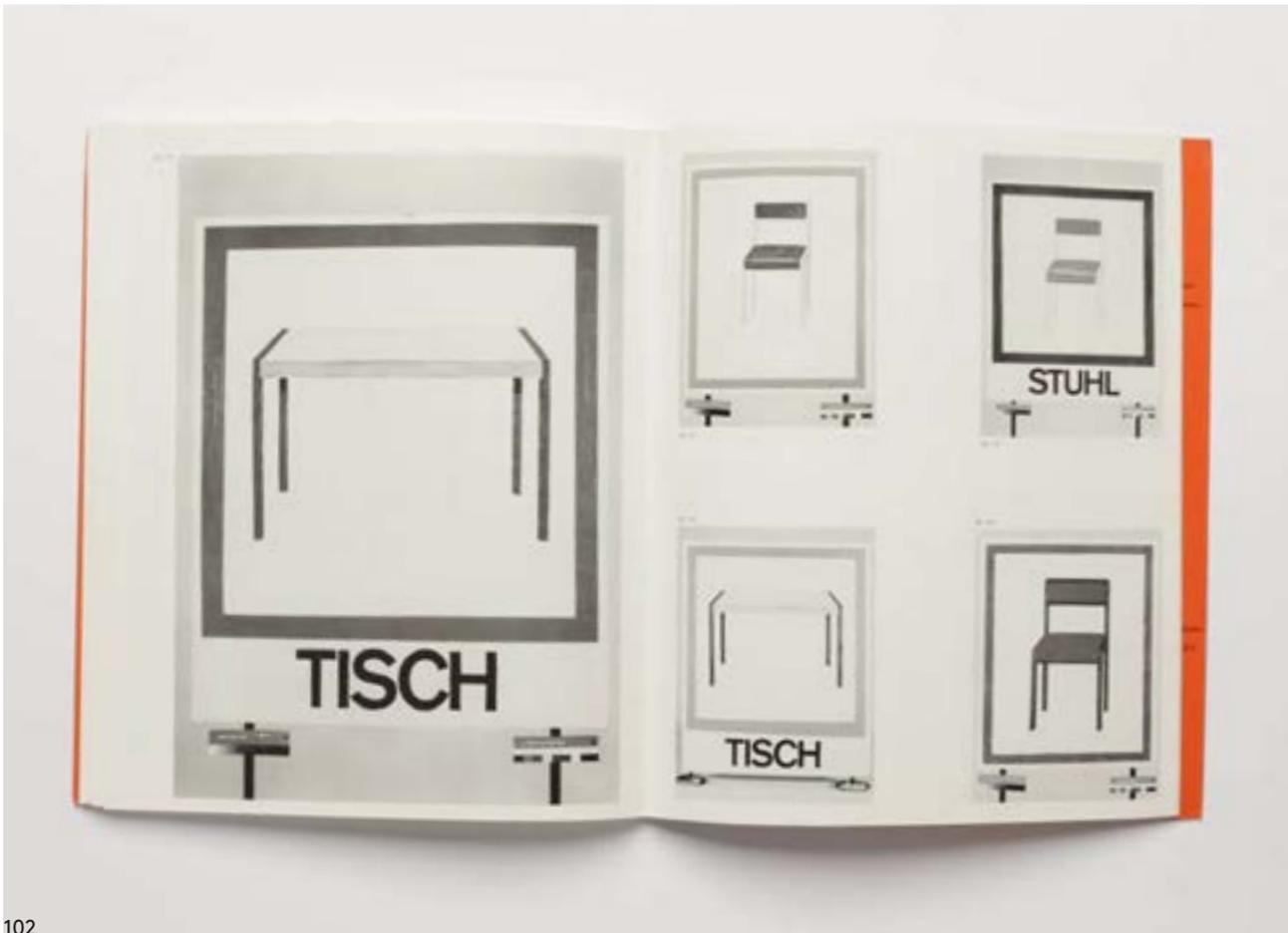
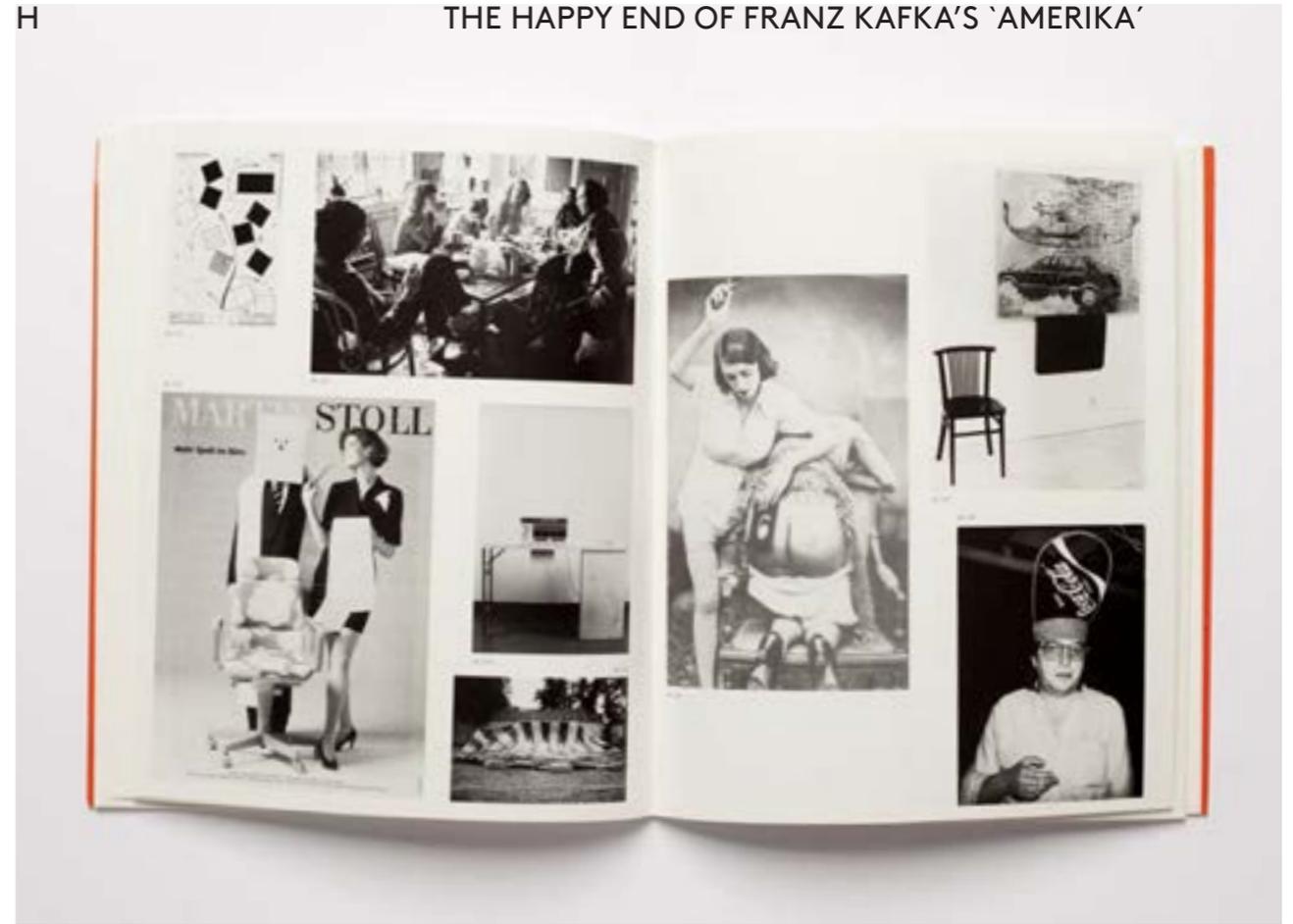


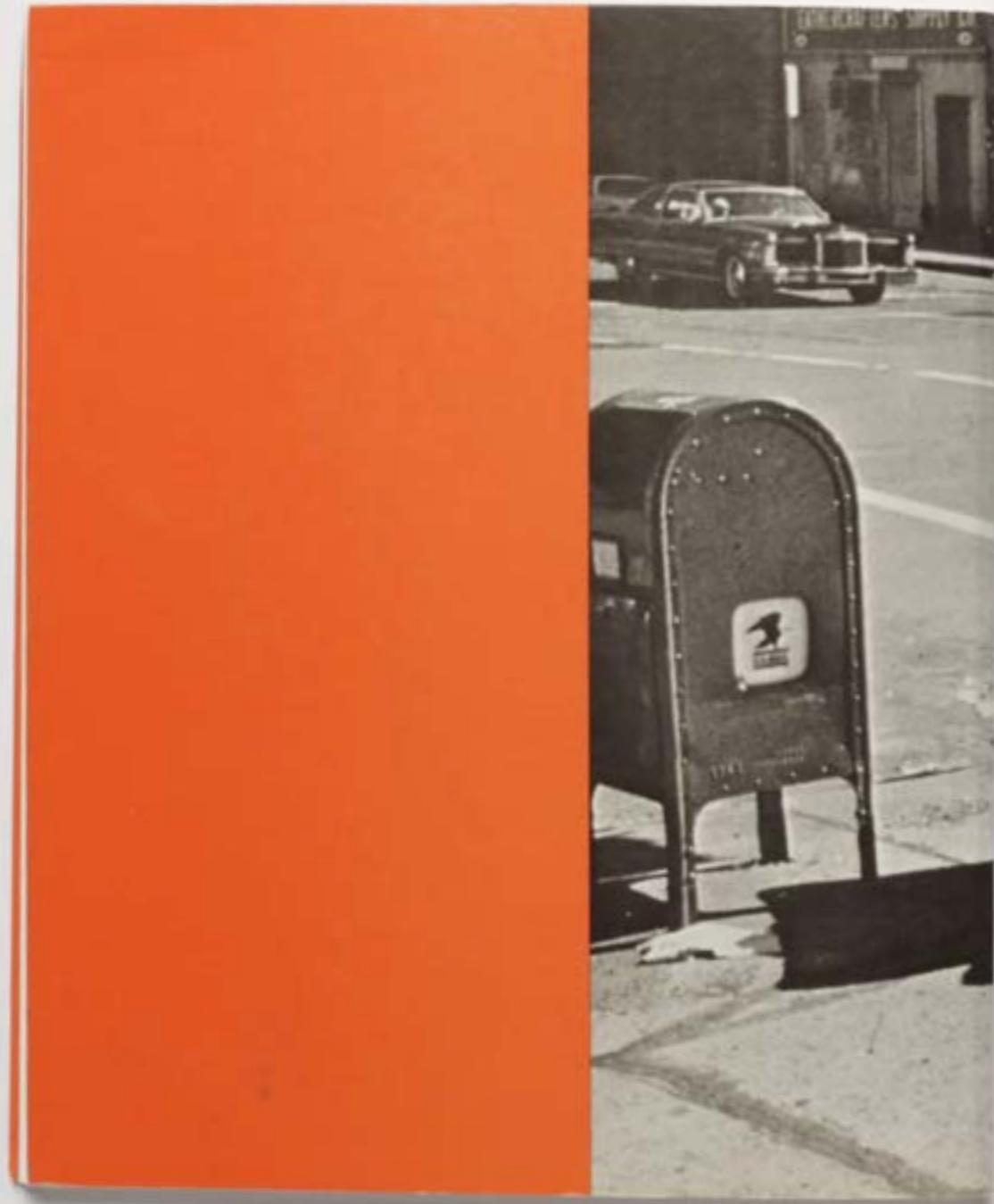
100-109



H

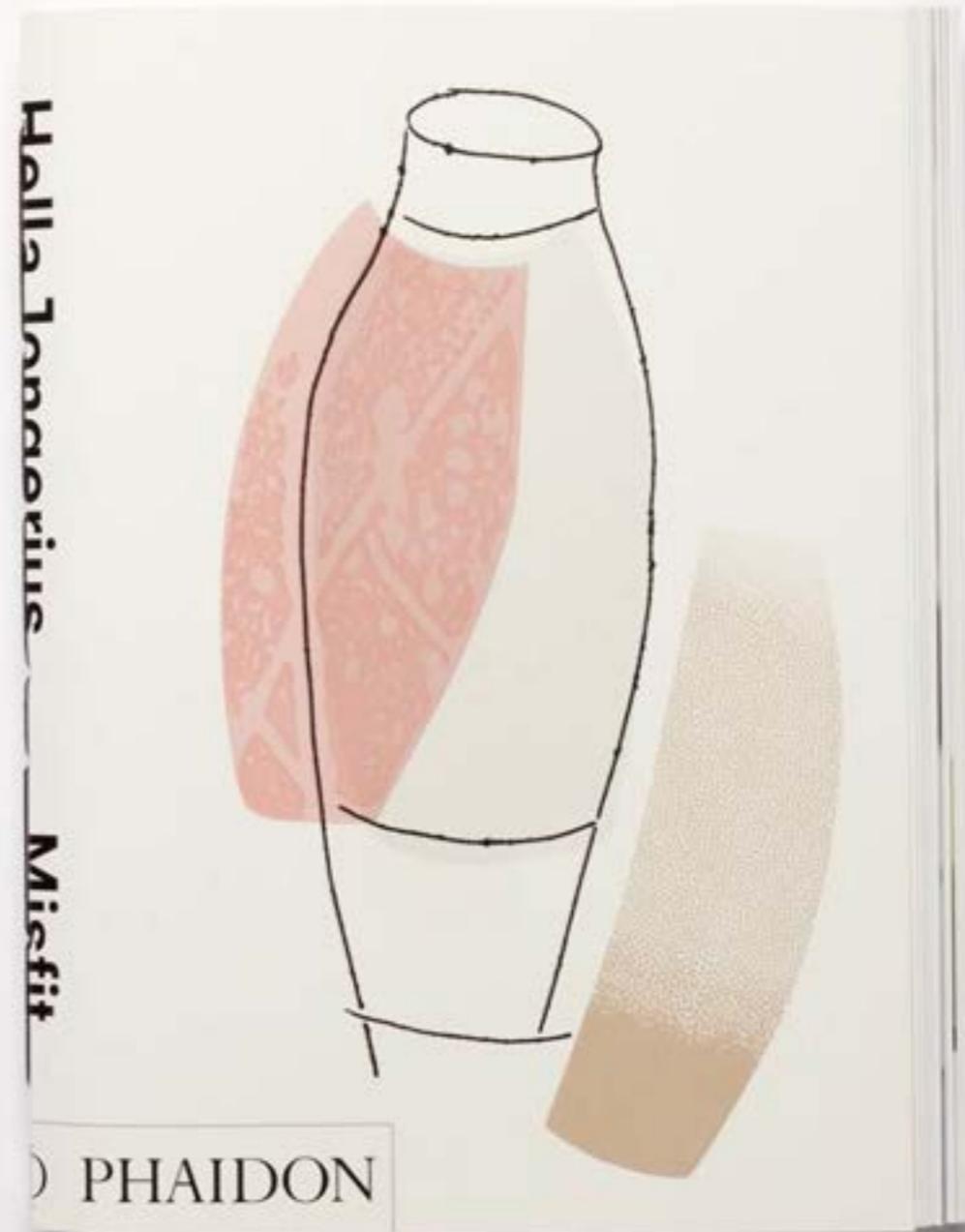
THE HAPPY END OF FRANZ KAFKA'S 'AMERIKA'

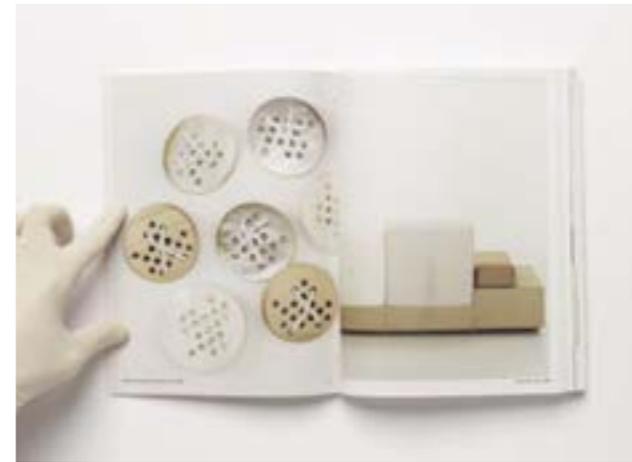




I

**HELLA JONGERIUS: MISFIT**  
Designer—Irma Boom  
Editors—Louise Schouwenberg,  
Alice Rawsthorn, Paola Antonelli  
Publisher—Phaidon, London  
Year—2010









Misfit Mug, limited edition, Jongeriuslab, 2022

15 - 10

← continuation of page 128

You opposed the human perfection of craftsmanship to the anonymous perfection of industry. It is human because it bears a signature, both of the craftsman and of the designer.

Misfits are my perfection.

Of course professional craftsmen have always aimed at perfection. Look at the precision and the care with which they blow glass, throw ceramic pots and meticulously apply glazes. The fact that their striving for perfection was overtaken by industry at the beginning of the twentieth century meant that the craftsmen had to redefine their specialism. But that's not what they did. They developed a defensive attitude in relation to industrial design and art, and withdrew behind their specialized bulwarks full of secret recipes and technical sophistication. They had their own courses and their own presentation platforms. In the meantime, their products became even more characterized by virtuosity but less interesting, the so-called autonomous handcrafted products. There is practically no relation with the era in which they are made.

The Industrial Revolution took the bread out of the craftsmen's mouths, so it is hardly surprising that they felt threatened and closed ranks – wrongly, of course, because it's better to look the enemy in the face and draw your lessons from that. You have to move with the times.

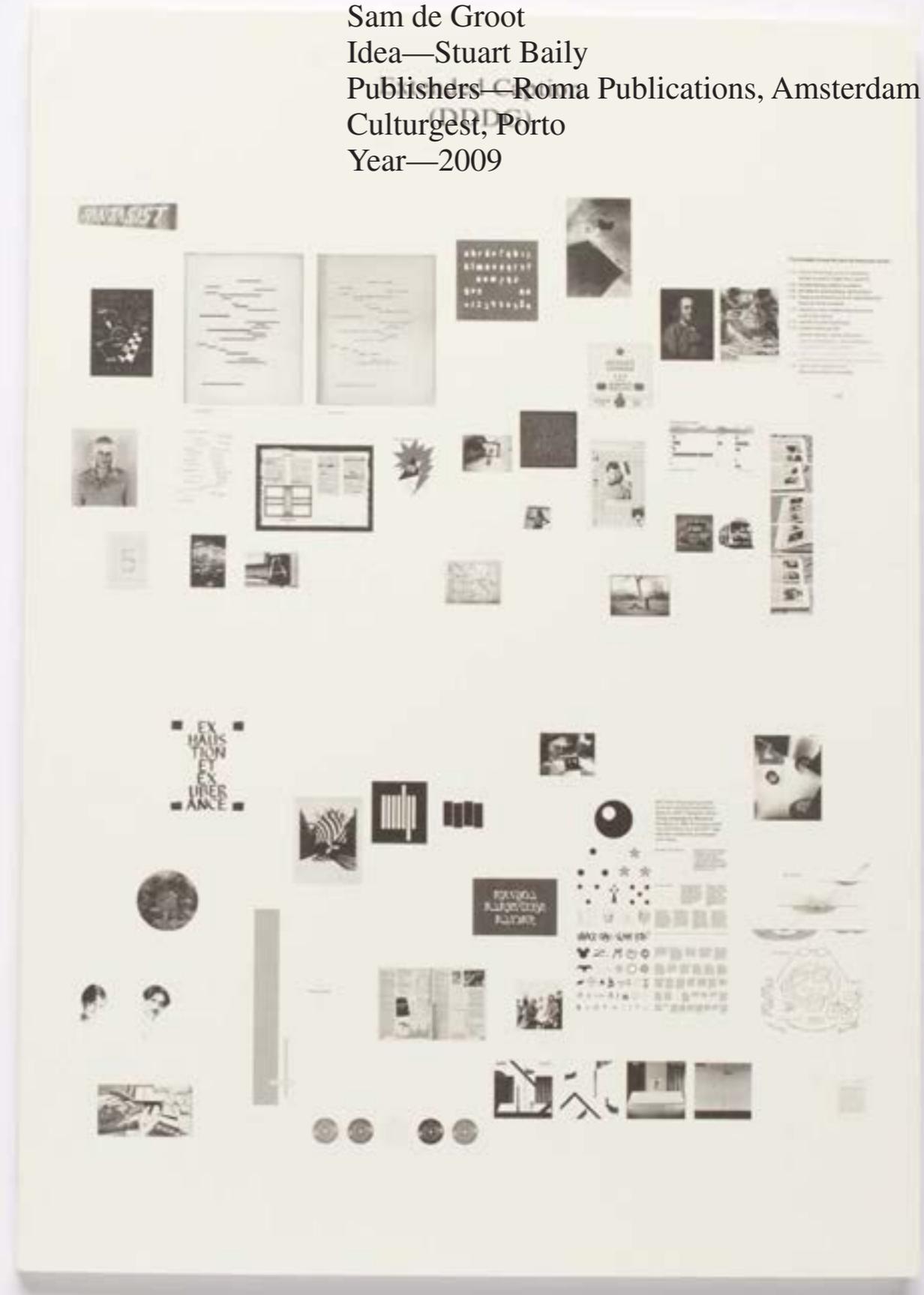
Craftsmen can compete with industry if they highlight their quality of care. The user needs to see, feel, experience that quality. The visible signs of handcraft, of inevitable imperfection, bear witness to the care with which the works are made. That insight has brought about a revival of the handicrafts. You have been one of the first to bridge the deep gap that arose between handicrafts and design after the Industrial Revolution. An institute such as the European Ceramic Work Centre has also played a role in that process by making difficult techniques accessible to unpractised artists and later also to designers and architects. It was primarily from these newcomers that renewal was introduced into the

Craft & Industry



J

EXTENDED CAPTION (DDD)  
 Design/Conception—Roger Willems,  
 Sam de Groot  
 Idea—Stuart Baily  
 Publishers—Roma Publications, Amsterdam  
 Culturgest, Porto  
 Year—2009

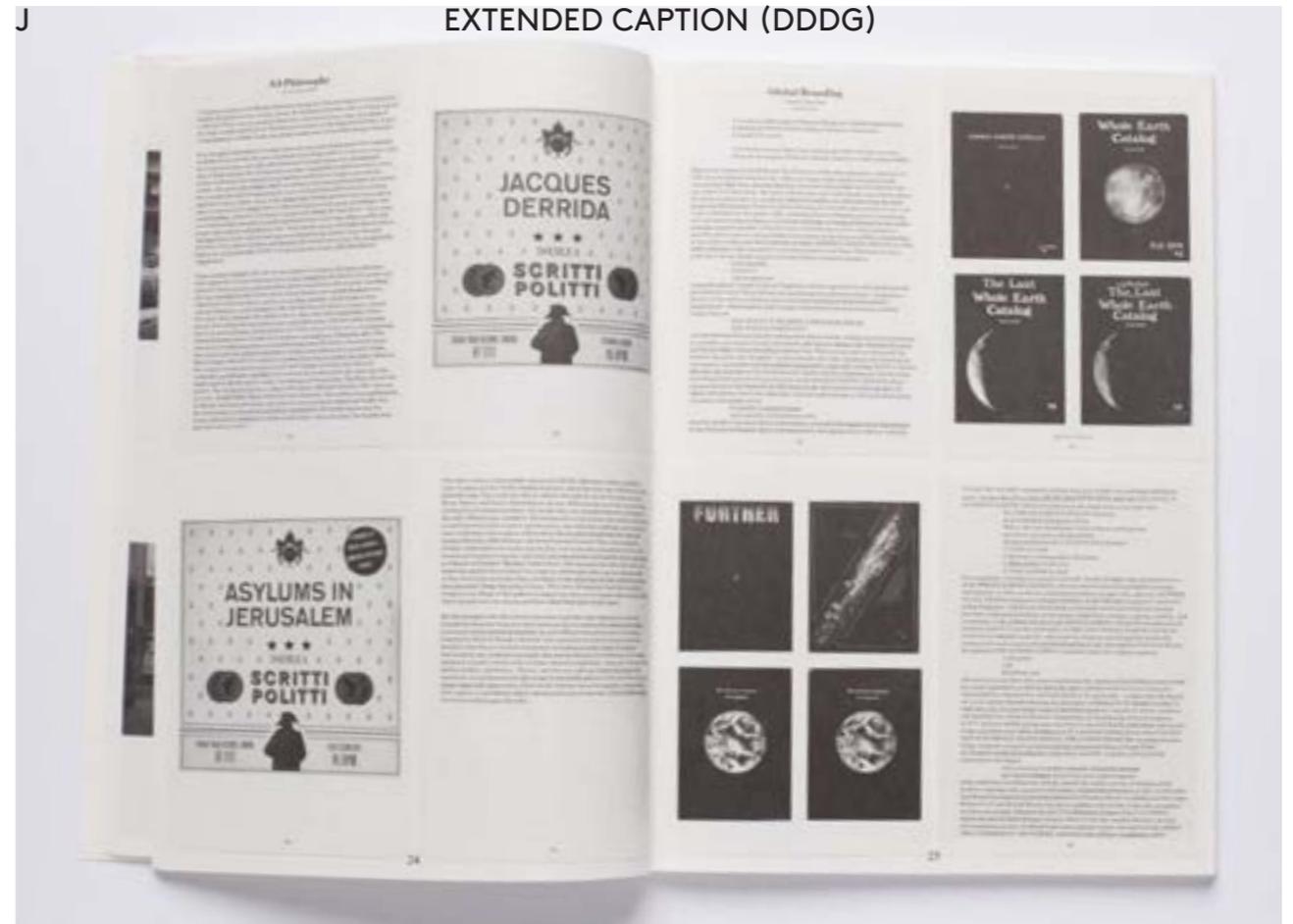


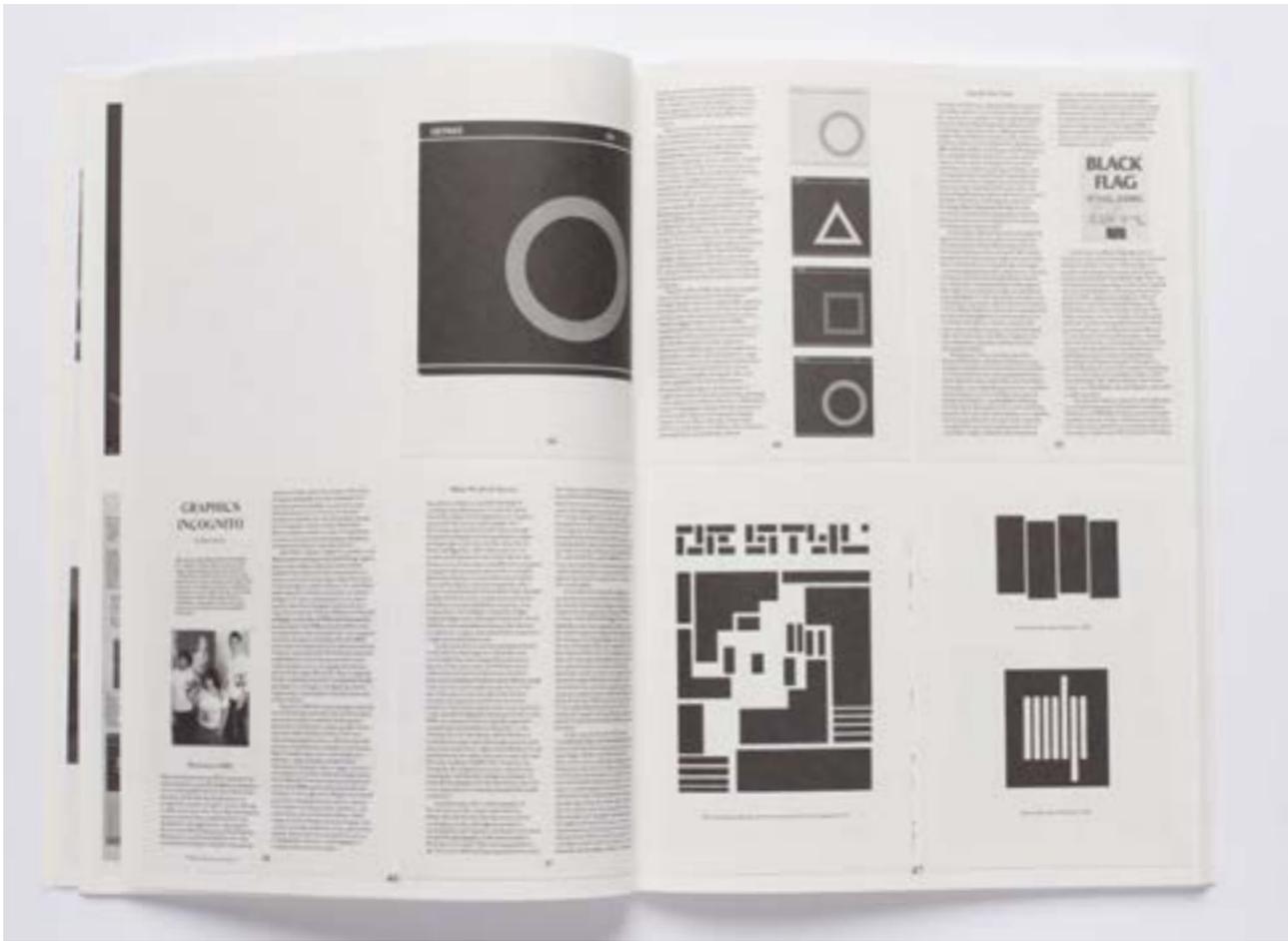
Extended Caption  
(DDDGG)

Compiled by Stuart Bailey



Culturgest  
Roma Publications





Modernism never really failed, it just became hermetic. To initiate oneself into the experience that avantgarde works offer takes time, and initiating oneself is a labour of love.

Here's the problem: given that the creation of a revolutionary artistic language designed to appeal to – and change the minds of – anyone anywhere was the stated objective of many an avantgardist's attempt to radicalize the project of enlightenment, the crude fact that the world didn't listen would seem to imply total failure. This might be true if we judge those avantgardists by their intentions and success, but is it not rather their *idea* and work that concern us? In which case, the question becomes: how can we address – engage with, speak about and do justice to – work that originally intended to talk straight, but now, hermetically, only speaks in code? We have to know how to decipher the code, and, at the same time, talk straight enough to allow others to share the secret.

The continued insistence on sharing the secret of avantgardism is vital, not least because keeping the secret safe only confirms the status quo. It's what all conformists do: competitive academics and market players alike avidly protect their secret, i.e. the exclusive rarified knowledge (of what is 'true' and 'good' and what is not) they supposedly already possess. They must, as it is their capital and the foundation of their power position. On the other hand, struggling to share what remains difficult to share – the experience that underlies all good avantgarde work – means to squander that capital, irreverently, through art, pedagogy and publishing. There is a madness to the insistence on speaking about hermetic things. But it is precisely through this mad anticapitalist stance of insistently sharing secrets (rather than banking them) that such an irreverent artistic, pedagogical and publishing practice puts its avantgarde inheritance to use: the mad belief that the secret of something good could be shared with anyone willing to experience it.

So, if modernism never really failed and just became hermetic, the labour of love of initiating oneself and others into its experience involves sharing the secret of something good by speaking in code while talking straight, i.e. in a language that might at first seem completely unbinged.

Jan Verwoert, April 2009

O modernismo nunca chegou realmente a falhar, apenas se tornou hermético. A iniciação de uma pessoa na experiência que as obras de vanguarda proporcionam exige tempo – e a iniciação é um trabalho de amor.

O problema está aqui: uma vez que a criação de uma linguagem artística revolucionária visando atrair (e mudar as mentes de) qualquer pessoa em qualquer lugar foi o objetivo declarado de muitos vanguardistas; na tentativa de radicalizarem o projeto do iluminismo, o simples facto de o mundo não ter escutado parece implicar um falhanço total. Isto poderá ser verdade se julgarmos esses vanguardistas pelas suas intenções e êxito, mas não serão estes os seus ideais e o seu trabalho o que nos interessa? E nesse caso, a questão passa a ser: como podemos abordar – comprometermo-nos, pronunciar-nos e fazermos justiça relativamente a – trabalhos que pretendiam falar de forma directa, mas que agora, hermeticamente, só falam em código? Temos de saber decifrar o código e ao mesmo tempo falar de forma suficientemente directa para permitir que outros partilhem o segredo.

A continua insistência em partilhar o segredo do vanguardismo é vital, quanto mais não seja porque manter o segredo seguro apenas confirma o status quo. É o que todos os conformistas fazem: académicos competitivos, do mesmo modo que agentes do mercado, protegem avidamente o seu segredo, isto é, o conhecimento elitista exclusivo (do que é "verdadeiro" e "bom" e do que não é) que supostamente possuem. Têm de fazê-lo, pois é esse o seu capital e o alicerce da sua posição de poder. Por outro lado, lutar por partilhar aquilo que permanece difícil de partilhar – a experiência que está subjacente a todo o trabalho vanguardista – significa esbanjar esse capital, de forma irreverente, através da arte, da pedagogia e da actividade editorial. Há uma certa loucura na insistência em falar sobre coisas herméticas. Mas é precisamente através desta louca posição anticapitalista de insistir em partilhar segredos (em vez de os capitalizar) que uma tal prática artística, pedagógica e editorial irreverente dá sentido à sua herança vanguardista: a crença louca de que o segredo de algo bom poderá ser partilhado com qualquer pessoa que esteja disposta a experienciá-lo.

Assim, se o modernismo nunca chegou realmente a falhar, se apenas se tornou hermético, o trabalho de amor que é iniciar-se a si e aos outros nessa experiência envolve a partilha do segredo de algo bom, falando em código, embora de uma forma directa, isto é, numa linguagem que poderá, num primeiro momento, parecer completamente desorientada.

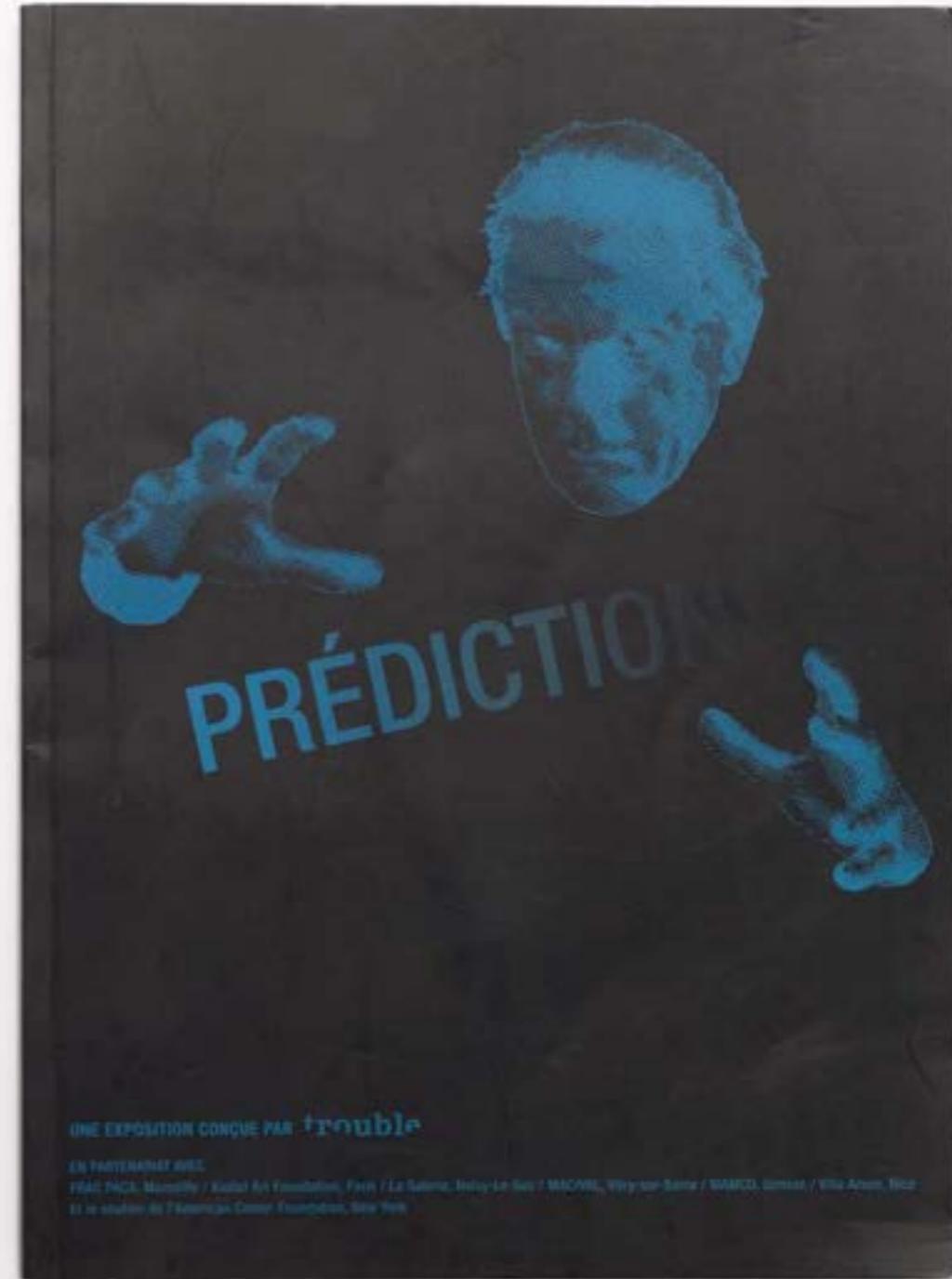
Jan Verwoert, Abril 2009



M

## PRÉDICTIONS

Design—Delphine Delastre  
Editors—Boris Achour, Guillaume Désanges, Émilie Renard  
Publisher—Trouble, Paris  
Year—2007











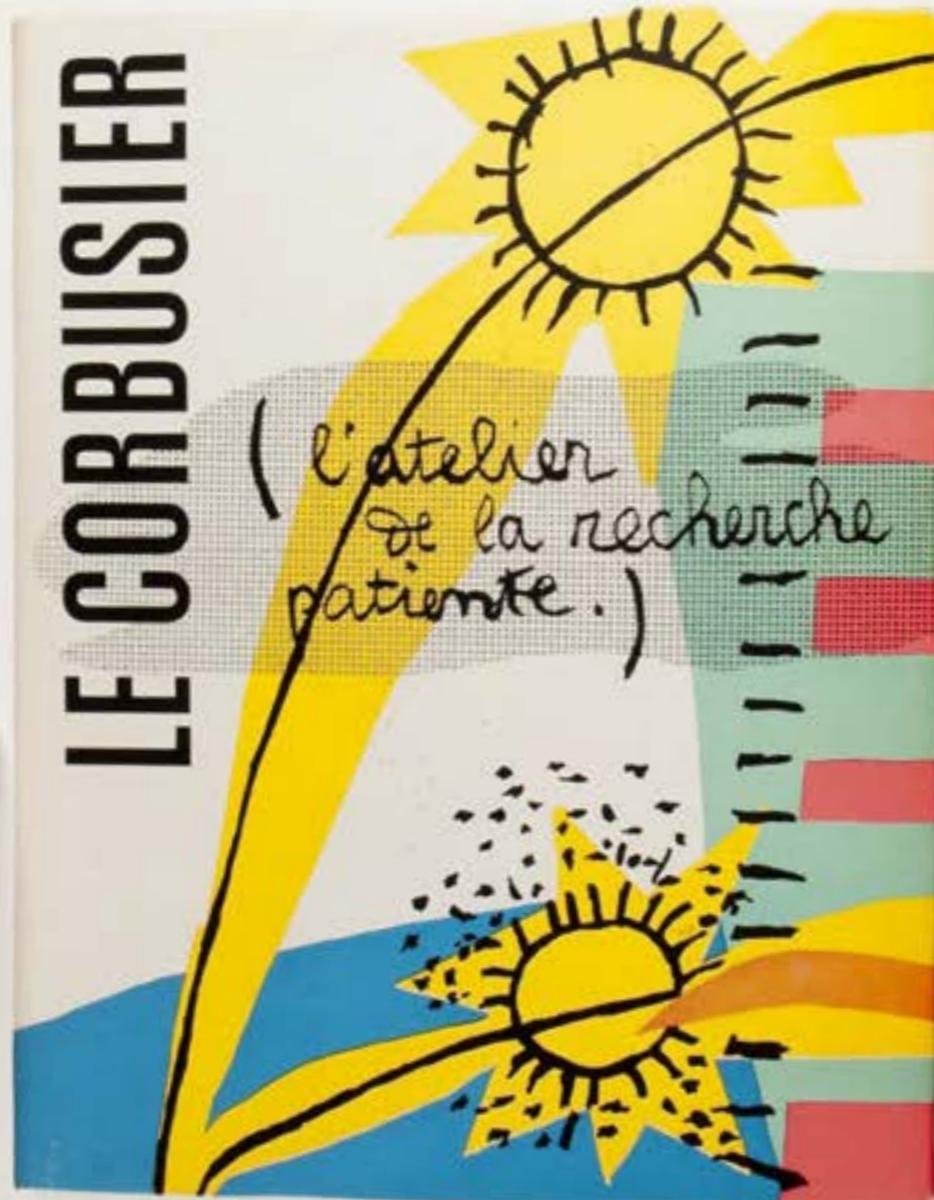


O

LE CORBUSIER, ARCHITECT OF BOOKS



The cover (back jacket) of *Mon Werk* (L'Atelier de la recherche patiente), 1939  
290 x 220 mm



## AUTHOR AND PARTNERS— UNDER TIGHT SUPERVISION

### PUBLISHING HOUSES, LTD.

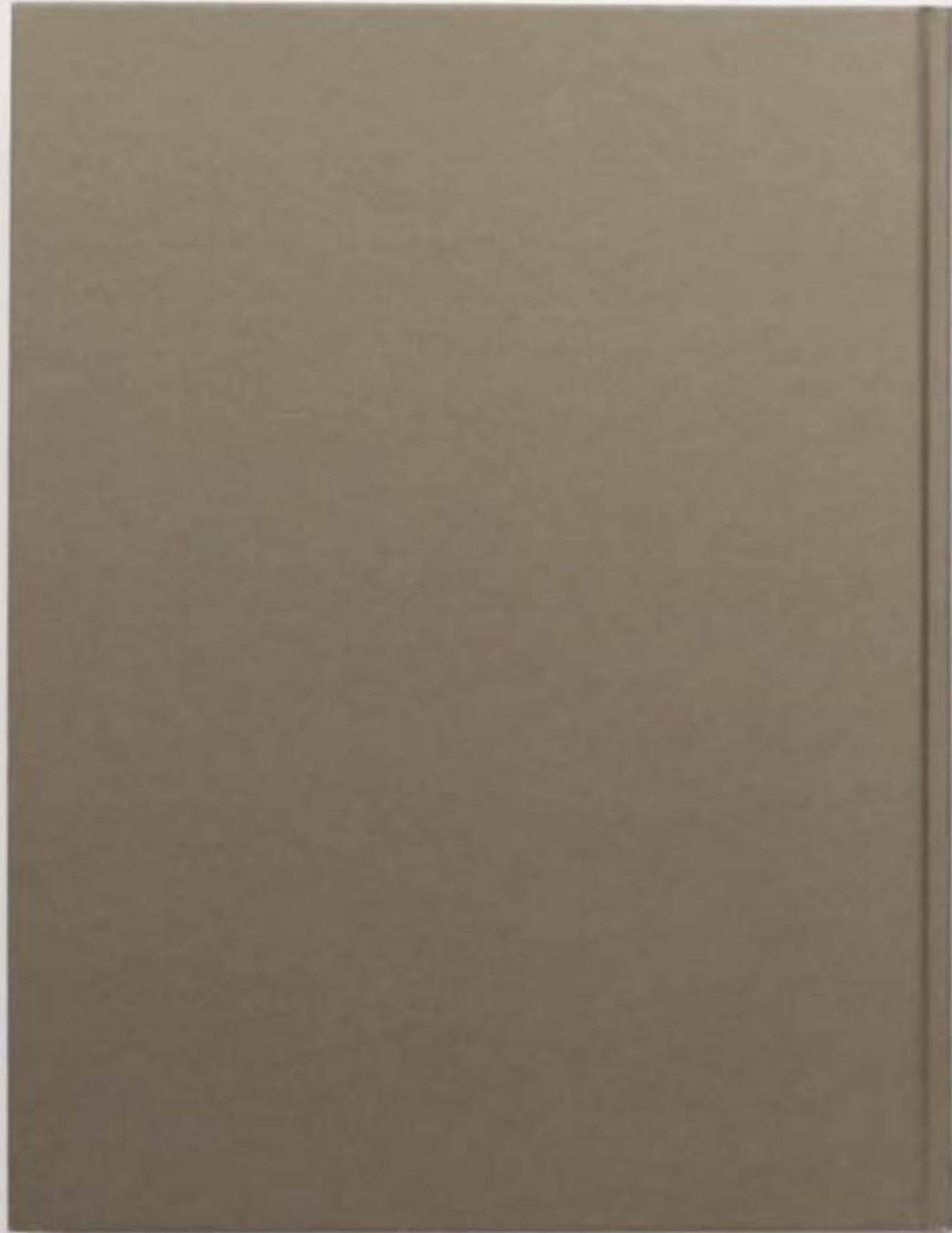
A book is never an entirely solitary venture. It is necessarily the fruit of a collective effort—not unlike architecture—which calls on a variety of skills. Le Corbusier was careful to determine personally the amount of responsibility delegated to each member of the publishing chain—editor, layout artist, printer—and to maintain control over the publishing process.

Le Corbusier's relationships with his publishers oscillated between open friendliness and outright hostility. The same individual would often be the target of both attitudes. These swings can be detected in Le Corbusier's correspondence, and would seem to mirror his relationships with his architectural clients.<sup>14</sup> Hence he could alternately flatter Giesberger in order to convince him to publish ("I felt you were at the heart of this international trend and could therefore handle this publication"<sup>15</sup>) and then become aggressive when things didn't go his way ("You managed to obtain subsidies from Swiss industrialists, but only to bail out your own business while LC always remains outside the money. Which is often tragic, yet which you don't want to admit. I was not in the least moved by the personal sentiments expressed in your letters."<sup>16</sup>).

Publishers, meanwhile, often had a hard time making the case for their own various obligations when faced with the demands of Le Corbusier, who throughout his life generally treated his publishers as service providers required to execute a task according to his own desires. He rarely granted them any critical role. An exception to this rule was his relationship with Gallimard; Jean Paulhan was allowed to express serious reservations on reading the first manuscript of *Sur les quatre routes in March 1939*—"the tone is always interesting: enthusiastic, hurried. Some fine pages on Vézelay. But how jumbled, incoherent, haphazard, careless, and unbearable it all is."<sup>17</sup> Paulhan followed up with several salvos of corrections and suggested restructuring the manuscript. The text went through at least two different versions in 1940, followed by a last campaign of corrections in 1941.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup> René Lévesque Cohen described a scenario of "seduction" followed by "strident differences" in "Le Corbusier: la relation de l'architecte," *Culture* 476-477 (January 1987), 50-52.  
<sup>15</sup> Letter from Le Corbusier to Hans Giesberger, *Architectural Record* (February 7, 1939) FLC, F2-25-151.  
<sup>16</sup> Letter from Le Corbusier to Hans Giesberger, March 25, 1939 (FLC, G2-14-286).  
<sup>17</sup> FLC, G2-25-178 (March 1939).  
<sup>18</sup> See various pieces of correspondence in FLC, M-52 and FLC, E2-16.





P

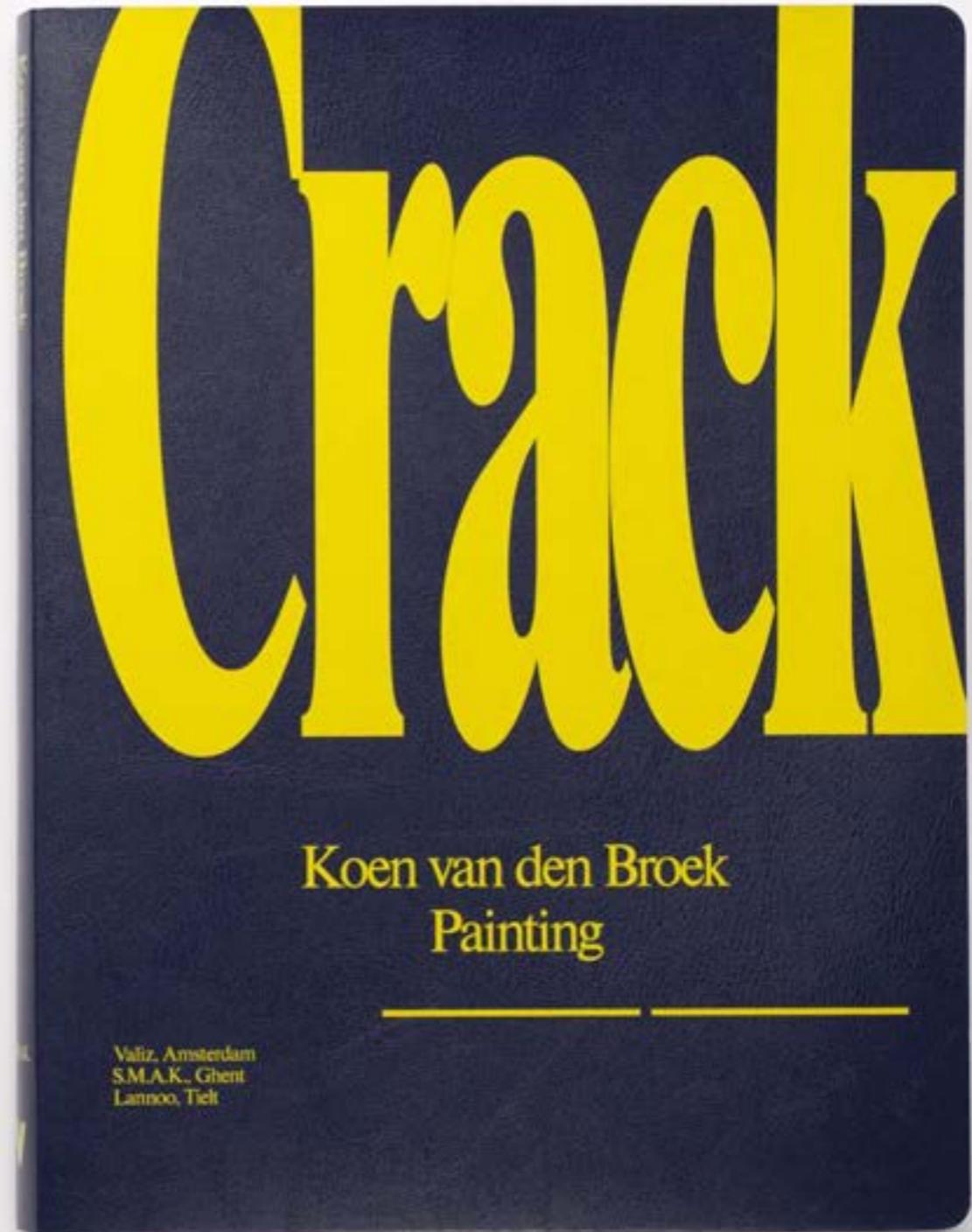
CRACK

Design—Metahaven

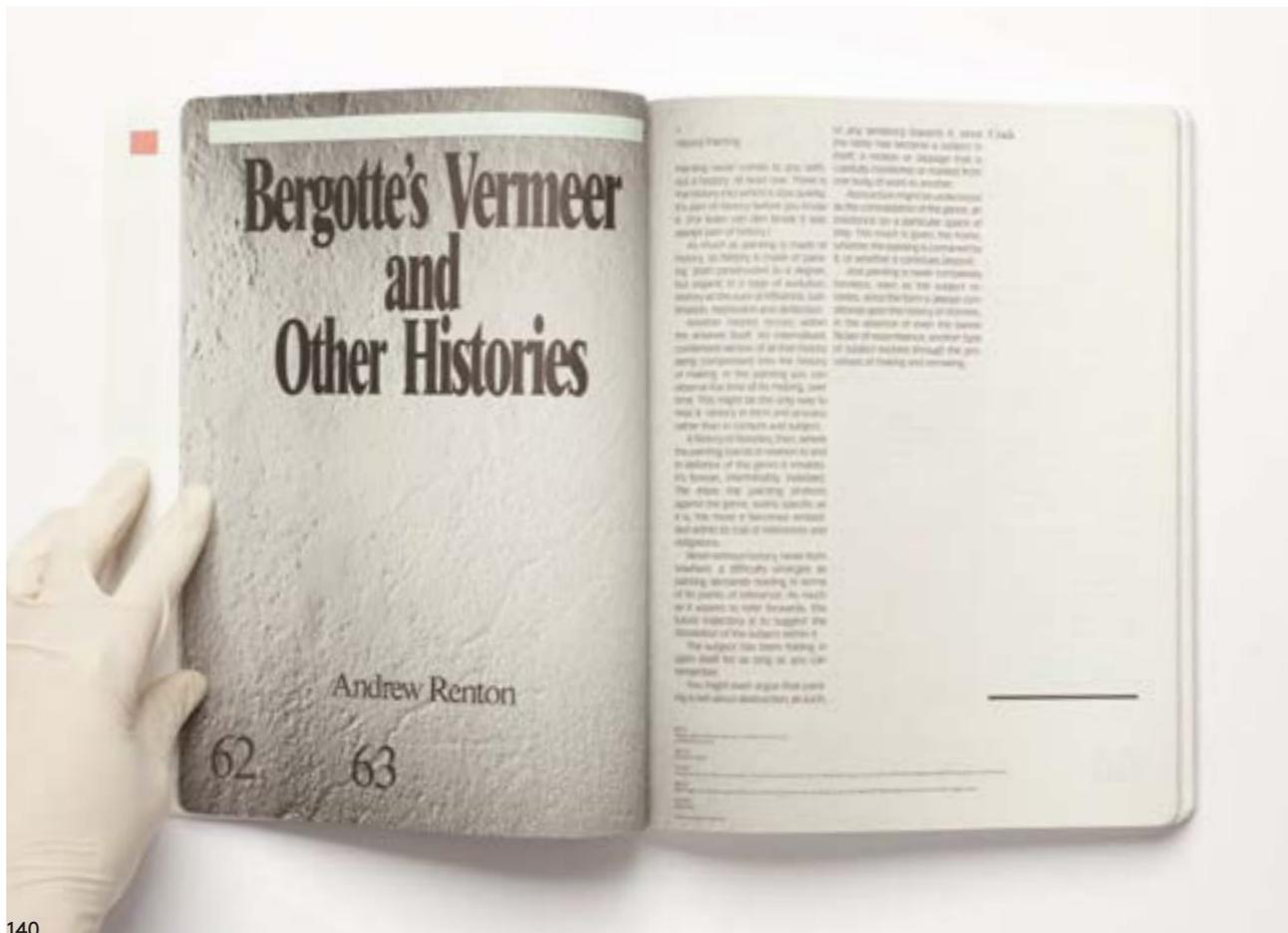
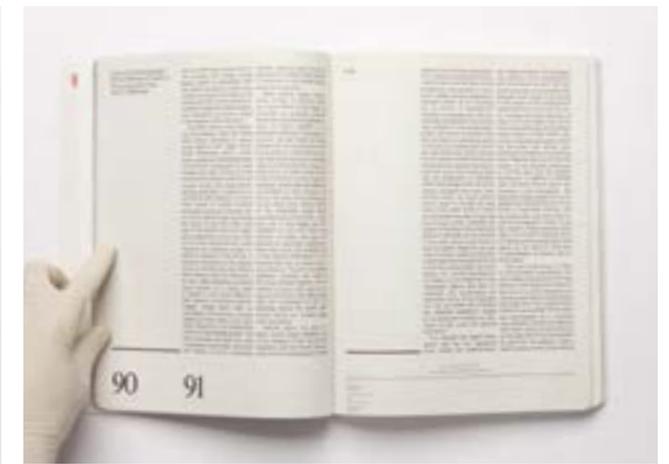
Editor—Wouter Davidts

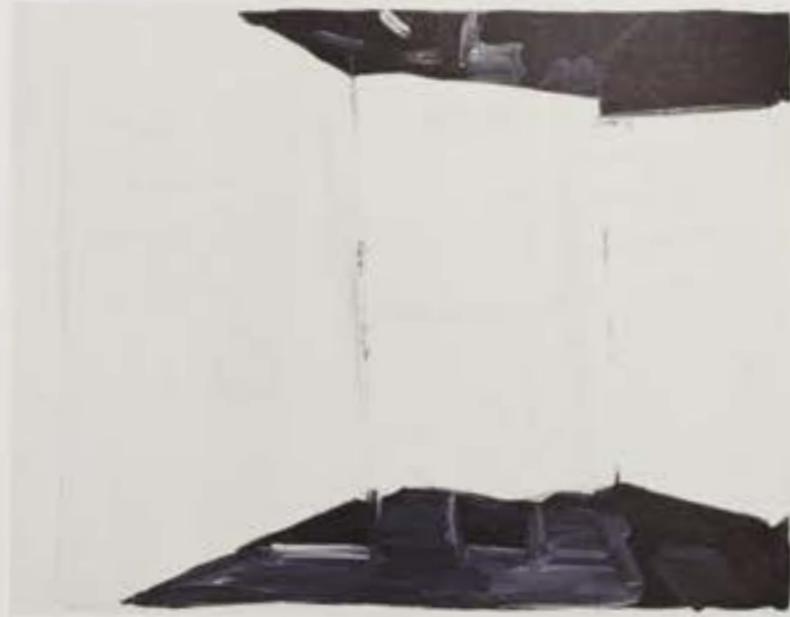
Publisher—Valiz, Amsterdam

Year—2010









*Out of Space* | 2008 | 73 x 95 cm

284

285



*Out of Space?* | 2008 | 200 x 300 cm

**Koen van den Broek (°1973) paints 'landscapes' on the boundary of abstraction and realism: urban outskirts, architectural details, cracks in asphalt, kerbstones, a straight road in perspective. In creating his works van den Broek draws on the photographs he took during his travels through the United States, Japan, Latin America, and Europe. Other sources of inspiration are the history of film and modern and contemporary architecture. *Crack* presents the first comprehensive selection of van den Broek's work over the last ten years and explores his diverse references and methods. Lavishly illustrated and with essays focusing on specific aspects, *Crack* gives a nuanced, stimulating view of the work of one of Belgium's most important young artists.●**

Edited by  
Wouter Davidts

With contributions by  
Bik Van der Pol  
Wouter Davidts  
Dirk Lauwaert  
Metahaven  
Andrew Repton  
Mervel van Tilburg  
John C. Welchman

Valliz, Amsterdam  
S.M.A.K., Gent  
Lannoo, Tiel

ISBN Valliz / S.M.A.K.  
978-90-78088-41-7

ISBN Lannoo  
978-90-209-8857-4

Q

SERENDIPITY

Design/Concept—Hans Gremmen

Publisher—Roma Publications, Amsterdam

Year—2008





Q

SERENDIPITY





Q

SERENDIPITY







# Chapter Three

## A required autonomy for the exhibition catalogue

### TOWARDS AUTONOMY

#### The catalogue's method

When the catalogue distances itself from its exhibition by treating supplementary or deviating content, does it need to distance itself from its initial design methods as well? Is the design method of an autonomous catalogue similar to those depending on exhibitions?

Exhibition catalogues are structured storytelling devices. They use a design method based on mostly visual narratives. Consisting of a series of properly described reproduced art works and accompanied by editorial writing, this method does not only suit the exhibition catalogue. Contemporary artists' publications successively apply the 'illustrated list' of art works as a methodology to structure content. The catalogue's method can basically serve as the archetype of any exhibition presented through printed matter.

The publication *A not B*<sup>K</sup> about the photographic work of *Uta Eisenreich* resembles an exhibition catalogue at first, but is rather a self-reliant photographic publication, devotedly designed by *Julia Born*. Although *A not B* ran as solo exhibition in *Ellen de Bruins'* gallery booth as part of *Art Amsterdam* in June 2010, the publication is not labelled as 'published on the occasion of'. The catalogue shows contemporary photographic stills, carefully spread out throughout the pages. Using repetition, the objects in the stills are explored as representations of either the written, visual or contextual condition. A composition of apples, for example, appears four times in a different condition on the same spread, balancing between similarities and differences. Inspired by scientific experiments, children's rhymes and optic illusions, the stills induce mutual relationships between the photographed objects. They mislead the reader frequently through their childlike simplicity. Furthermore, a page of supplementary text follows each cluster of stills, leaving the actual images untouched by descriptions. Some of the installations were exhibited during *Art Amsterdam*. Although their strength is still visible, it is rather the distracting surrounding that is cleverly avoided by the framing of the installations. It is an essential interference to be able to focus entirely on the stills. Therefore a sequence of pages is the right editorial form of presenting these stills.

The publication was elected one of *The Most Beautiful Swiss Books of 2010*. About the collaboration between artist and designer the jury of *The Most Beautiful Swiss Books* wrote: 'The close collaboration between the artist and the graphic designer makes the work, which is concerned with perception an interpretation, open to new readings.'<sup>44</sup> New perception of content can thus be achieved when a close collaboration between artist and designer is possible. Designed with a catalogue methodology, *A not B* displays the author's intentions freely. Autonomy is thus achieved through the undisturbed collaboration between artist and designer, but subsequently through the use of a convincing educational and scientific approach, which, together with

44—Szymczyk, Adam / Imhasly, Anisha  
*The Most Beautiful Swiss Books 2010*  
The Swiss Federal Office  
of Culture, Bern, 2010

the title pages, add necessary narratives to the photographic compositions.

Considering the books of *Irma Boom*, there is an arising recognition in artistic publishing that collaborations with graphic designers are fruitful to achieve independent publications. For the moment, these collaborations mainly start through the support of individual publishers. The art institutes appear to lag behind, and are not yet convinced of the autonomous position of their exhibition catalogues.

### The superfluous exhibition

Throughout this research, the spatial exhibition is pushed more and more to the background. Although this study is not a plea to abolish spatial exhibitions, graphic designers do not necessarily need them as a design guide for the catalogue. The superfluous exhibition is interpreted from the point of view of the graphic designer, and the exhibition catalogues he or she creates.

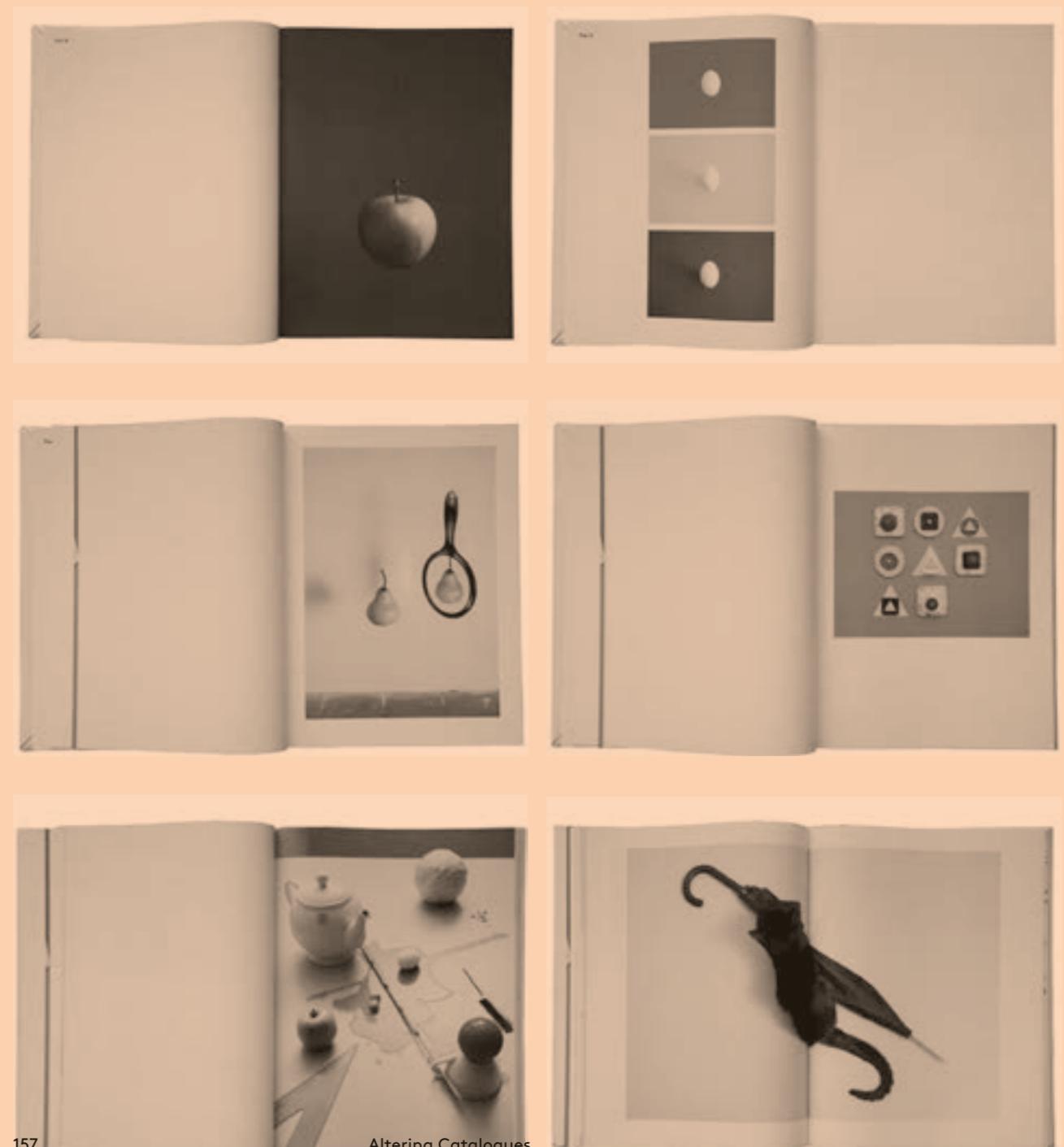
Derek Allan, researcher at the *Australian National University*, and author of the book *Art and the Human Adventure*, *André Malraux's Theory of Art*, reflected on *Malraux's* theory: 'Now, many of the objects in our new universal world of art are also readily transportable – such as African masks or Buddhist heads – but there are also large numbers that are not. We can hardly think, for example, of detaching the sculptures at Chartres, or removing Giotto's frescos at Assisi, the mosaics at Ravenna, or the frescos at Ajanta. Thus, our new universal world of art is not only more diverse than its predecessor but in many cases less adaptable to the art museum.'<sup>45</sup> When the world of art is less adaptable to the art museum, the value and task of reproduction tools become more pressing, and with them the exhibition catalogue as a medium to unfold hidden objects of art. *Allan* continues: 'And even when they are moveable, the objects we now include under the heading "art" are usually not found in any single art museum but are scattered across the world in museums in countries in which they originated, or which could more easily afford to purchase them.'<sup>46</sup> The displacement of artworks inextricably linked to their place of origin forms thus sometimes an obstruction when organising spatial exhibitions. The choice in these cases is either to avoid those artworks, or to consider the catalogue as a platform that joins impossible displaceable artworks.

An exhibition encounters another sense of superfluity when its catalogue is much better appreciated. A well-designed catalogue that earns good acknowledgement questions the pertinence of that particular exhibition at the same time. Besides that, when the exhibition is heavily criticized, the superiority of the exhibition and the responsibility of the curatorial team are doubtful. *Eye magazine* recently published an exhibition review of the exhibition *Graphic Design, now in production*<sup>L/47</sup> in the *Walker Art Center, Minneapolis* (October 2011 - January 2012). In this article – the author is not mentioned – the exhibition is defined as

K

A NOT B

Design—Julia Born  
 Author—Uta Eisenreich  
 Publisher—Roma Publications,  
 Amsterdam  
 Year—2010



45/46—Allan, Derek  
 'André Malraux, the art  
 museum, and the digital  
 musée imaginaire'  
 (15-17 July 2010)  
 <<http://home.netspeed.com.au/derek.allan/musee%20imaginaire.htm>>, 11 January 2012

47—Graphic Design:  
 Now in Production,  
 Walker Art Center,  
 Minneapolis,  
 22 October 2011 – 22  
 January 2012  
 Curators—Ian Albinson,  
 Andrew Blauvelt, Jeremy  
 Leslie, Ellen Lupton,  
 Armin Vit, Bryony  
 Gomez-Palacio

a rather mediocre entity in which the ‘and/or nature of graphic design permeates: ‘While the individual works in each category are exemplary of the discipline’s most creative and celebrated producers, the division of works into such standard conventions – reinforced by chambers in the gallery – represents a missed opportunity, one actually advocated for in the *Graphic Design: Now in Production* catalogue.’<sup>48</sup> The writer’s suggestion to keep standard chapter divisions for the catalogue medium is understandable, but a bit short-sighted as well. It is precisely the catalogue that is able to offer unconventional classifications. On the other hand, I do agree that standard divisions in the exhibition don’t boost imagination, especially when the subject crosses all possible boundaries of design. Instead of criticising the exhibition – he had not visited it yet – *Rick Poynor* drew attention to the exhibition catalogue in an article on his blog. *Poynor* notes: ‘As public events, exhibitions tend to be the immediate focus and even the most impressive catalogues are referred to only in passing or overlooked. It would be a shame if that were to happen here because the book is an exceptional effort in its own right, and it’s the place where lead curators Andrew Blauvelt and Ellen Lupton and their team are best able to articulate their view of graphic design today.’<sup>49</sup> Particularly his last sentence – a sincere compliment for the catalogue – is a statement rarely distinct. With a side note that *Poynor* didn’t visit the show yet, he clearly does recognize the qualities of the exhibition catalogue in general.

Let’s get back to the superfluous exhibition. When a deliberate choice is made for the catalogue, or when the authors consciously avoid the exhibition format, the exhibition seems less pertinent and loses territory. In the case of *Prédications*<sup>M</sup> – the successor of the French magazine *Trouble* – the authors chose oddly to apply curatorial practices to a series of exhibitions, presented through printed matter. The introduction is quite promising: ‘This book is the culmination of a conventional curatorial process, which would have simply skipped the stage of actual production, and of which the catalogue will be the final formalized form.’<sup>50</sup> The tone is set, but after turning the first pages, a major disappointment unfolds. Gloomy designed pages succeed one another. Typefaces suddenly change, or vary in weight, and texts do not invite to read at all. The dutiful layout does not produce any coherence with the content. Additionally, the catalogue is printed in a poor quality, which might make sense because of its free distribution, but by asking a small contribution from the reader, the paper and printing quality could turn out – at least – modest. Further on in the introduction statement the authors describe some basic rules they imposed on themselves: ‘At first we should envisage a “real” fictive exhibition, that is to say possibly foldable into a physical space, and not only in the pages of the book ; therefore we should avoid impossible layouts, protocols essentially virtual, or technically unfeasible’<sup>51</sup> Although I do not believe it is even possible to simply apply the structure and content of a catalogue to a physical space – because of differences described

48—‘Blurred boundaries. The hybrid state of ‘Graphic Design: Now in Production’ (1 November 2011) <<http://blog.eyemagazine.com/?p=9138>> 11 January 2012

49—Poynor, Rick ‘Read All That? You Must be Kidding Me’ (9 January 2012) <<http://observersroom.designobserver.com/rickpoynor/post/read-all-that-you-must-be-kidding-me/32128/>> 11 January 2012

50/51—Achour, Boris / Désanges, Guillaume / Renard, Émilie *Prédications* Trouble, Paris, 2007 p.5

L

**GRAPHIC DESIGN: NOW IN PRODUCTION**  
 Design—Michael Aberman  
 Concept—Andrew Blauvelt, Emmet Byrne  
 Editors—Andrew Blauvelt, Pamela Johnson,  
 Ellen Lupton, Kathleen McLean  
 Publisher—Walker Art Center, Minneapolis  
 Year—2011



earlier in the first chapter – it is also remarkable that the layout of this catalogue do not primarily adapt a structure fitting a sequence of pages, but rather envisions a physical appearance as the base for the concept. It is a missed chance when the catalogue’s specific qualities of classification are neglected. The result is rather a pile of bound descriptions than a coherent exhibition. The aim of an exhibition should be to address a point of view or statement, but the wish to ‘apply’ the catalogue directly onto a spatial exhibition declines this possibility. A catalogue with such a bold opening statement requires an influential editorial position of the graphic designer, which seems lacking in *Prédications*.

Furthermore, in some situations it is simply impossible to collect art works for a show, because of loss or theft, to vulnerable or expensive transport costs, or destruction during a flood or earthquake. Reproductions, descriptions and testimonies then form the preserved traces that represent the originals. The catalogue is thereby the most suitable instrument to dive into history and resuscitate the event and its art works. By doing so, the catalogue is obliged to take in account the event’s context that describes or explains the arisen void in art history. The latter is mostly missing in the previous discussed example *Reprise* by *Mathieu Copeland*, but his attempt is still an example of re-injecting art works in a present context.

A much more sophisticated example is the huge catalogue *Stanley Kubrick’s Napoleon: The Greatest Movie Never Made*<sup>N</sup>, designed by *M/M Paris* and published by *Taschen*. It documents a full research for a masterpiece – drafts of the script, notes, landscape photographs, costumes, etc. – that *Kubrick* never made. This collector’s item consists out of ten smaller books that fit into a bigger one. Revealed as Russian Matryoshka dolls, the ten books each treat material from a specific aspect of the film. *Alison Castle* writes in her preface: ‘We have on our hands a set of clues to a mystery that can never be solved, and what is incontestable is that these clues – Kubrick’s Napoleon archives – are endlessly fascinating.’<sup>52</sup> It points out the pertinence for this archive to be published, not in the last place for all impatient *Kubrick* fans. *Castle* continues: ‘Depending on how one looks at it, this is either unrealistic or just plain blasphemous. Yet in the opinion of many, present company included, it would be bordering on criminal not to share this treasure trove with the world; it is with this in mind that I present you this attempt to do justice to Kubrick’s Napoleon.’<sup>53</sup> The choice for the catalogue as the medium is passionate and remarkable at the same time. The object is only printed in a run of 1.000 copies, with a price of 3.000 dollars per copy, and thus creating immediate scarcity after publication, and was sold out in no time, leaving behind many disappointed fans. But luckily *Castle* was influenced by *Kubrick’s* enormous dedication towards his archive, and the wish not to be separated from all his gathered information. The filmmaker was that attached to his unfinished work, that a major exhibition wouldn’t do justice to his archive. An exhibition generated

52/53—Castle, Alison  
*Stanley Kubrick’s  
 Napoleon: The Greatest  
 Movie Never Made*  
 Taschen, Köln, 2009  
 <[http://www.taschen.com/pages/en/catalogue/film/reading\\_room/290.stanley\\_kubricks\\_napoleon\\_the\\_greatest\\_movie\\_never\\_made.1.htm](http://www.taschen.com/pages/en/catalogue/film/reading_room/290.stanley_kubricks_napoleon_the_greatest_movie_never_made.1.htm)>  
 15 January 2012

N

STANLEY KUBRICK’S NAPOLEON:  
 THE GREATEST MOVIE NEVER MADE

Design—M/M Paris  
 Editor—Alison Castle  
 Publisher—Taschen, Köln  
 Edition—1.000 copies  
 Year—2008



probably a catalogue that lapsed into conventions and could become the victim of many concerning parties. About the structure proposed by *M/M Paris* the preface mentions: ‘This ingenious solution to a most peculiar challenge, that is to say a most uncommon synthesis of the historical testimony and the art object, was the brainchild of the French design team M/M Paris.’<sup>54</sup> With their contribution *M/M Paris* created a keen autonomous object that is an exhibition in its essence. Such an object does not need a spatial exhibition to succeed.

As the autonomous exhibition catalogue can dive into history, it can have engaging visions on the future as well, either compiled of already existing art works, or by proposing art works that can be added to museum collections in the future. Taking on this role, the autonomous catalogue justifies its existence by being an encouraging object for future discussion.

### The catalogue as catalyst

When the autonomous catalogue embodies a future or fictive statement, it can obtain an initiating function, and serve as an ‘exhibition guide’ for eventual eponymous exhibitions after publication. In the late 1920’s, photographer and publisher *Walker Evans* already pronounced pointed reflections on the position of the catalogue. In *Le style documentaire, d’August Sander à Walker Evans*, writer *Olivier Lugon* comments as following on *Evans*’ thoughts: ‘The latter, far from being a simple memory, a documentary or advertising support, becomes, in the spirit of *Evans*, a book in itself, which - even more - determines the exhibition.’<sup>55</sup> From the editorial position of the photographer in the late 1920’s on, there were already attempts of switching roles between exhibitions and catalogues. In 1966, *Houghton Mifflin* published *Evans*’ photographs of unconscious New York City subway passengers – which were already shot between 1938 and 1941 – for the first time under the title *Many are Called*.<sup>56</sup> In 1982, the *Fraenkel Gallery* in San Francisco organised a show out of this archive. Subsequently, the first edition of 1966 was re-issued by *Yale University Press* in 2004. The subway series of *Evans* thus assume several editorial formats, each time re-directed by different curators and authors.

Based on *Evans*’ thoughts, *Olivier Lugon* proposed the catalogue as an element that rather ‘determines an exhibition, instead of following it’. It means that the catalogue is produced beforehand, and adopts a role as a catalyst for future exhibitions. The catalogue guards its documentation value, but has, in addition, a leading position regarding potential spatial exhibition in the future. The follow up’s in the form of lectures, course material, forums and discussion use the catalogue’s content to draw from. This change of order does not mean that the role of the graphic designer changes into that of a curator. Both media tell their own version of the story, but the graphic designer is at least considered as the ‘curator’ of the exhibition catalogue, in pursuit of an independent production process. This editorial position, which remarkably enough was already covered by early

photographers as *Evans*, is essential and should be regained by the graphic designer.

## THE AUTONOMOUS OBJECT

### Possible collaborators for the graphic designer

Visually expressive as they are, graphic designers are most of all visual problem solvers who normally work on commissioned projects. Working together with clients, photographers, printers, publishers, etc., graphic designers are originally strong collaborators. Concerning the autonomous catalogue, the graphic designer has both an initiating and collaborating role to fulfil. Besides that he should be capable to survey a project and create a team around him.

Graphic designers have this initiating role because it is precisely their working field that is entered by other creative minds. Initiating an autonomous exhibition catalogue demands historical reflection, knowledge of art history, or otherwise a very strong reflection that can be projected onto historical facts. In the early phase, where the concept for the catalogue is defined, the graphic designer can use a collaborator for two reasons. The collaborator brings in historical and artistic knowledge and functions as a conceptual sparring partner for the graphic designer. Although client/designer roles will constantly change during the design process, this same process is much more driven when there is someone next to the graphic designer who asks questions of why, what, when, how, etc. Furthermore, the collaborator has an equal position and functions as equipose for the graphic designer. Collaboration should be considered as the starting point from where the autonomous catalogue is developed.

But do all collaborations work well? The graphic designer should know where the core of the collaboration lies. What kind of collaboration is fruitful? What are the collaborator’s strengths and tasks? Collaborating with some actors previously discussed to which the catalogue is an almost daily routine in their artistic practice seems ‘undesirable’, and to whom a redefinition of the medium might not be the first priority. Their reflection on exhibition catalogues is probably too conventional, and their interests in terms of institutional politics too high. Examples in the research have also shown that curators and artist are sometimes difficult professions to collaborate with.

For the design of the envisioned independent operating catalogue, the graphic designer needs someone next to him who expresses his ideas to the extreme. Photographers, cinematographers or writers can be conceivable collaborators. They have an individual and accountable profession. They are narrators in the first place, owning a substantially different manner of creation than that of artists. They are capable to debate design choices and make concessions where needed. The exchange between the graphic designer and his collaborator(s) will be fruitful according

54—Castle, Alison  
*Stanley Kubrick's  
Napoleon: The Greatest  
Movie Never Made*  
Preface  
Taschen, Köln, 2009  
<[http://www.taschen.com/pages/en/catalogue/film/reading\\_room/290.stanley\\_kubricks\\_napoleon\\_the\\_greatest\\_movie\\_never\\_made.1.htm](http://www.taschen.com/pages/en/catalogue/film/reading_room/290.stanley_kubricks_napoleon_the_greatest_movie_never_made.1.htm)>  
15 January 2012

55—Lugon, Olivier  
*Le style documentaire -  
d’August Sander à Walker  
Evans*. p.262  
Éditions Macula, 2001,  
Paris

56—Agee, James /  
Mifflin, Houghton  
*Many are called*  
Octavo, Boston, 1966

the level of acquaintance of one another's qualities, beforehand and during the process.

The publisher is not mentioned yet as a collaborating party, but he certainly has a role to play. As the autonomous catalogue is not strictly connected to an art institute, it is the smaller, more independent publisher to whom the graphic designers can rely on. When a publisher believes in the proposed catalogue, and he is willing to invest time and money, he becomes a collaborator as well. He will automatically bring in personal interests that should be taken in consideration by the editorial team. In the end the publisher takes the biggest financial risk when it comes to the publication of the autonomous exhibition catalogue.

And what is the significant role in this process for museums? In essence, museums are not publishers. But why can't they expand their practises? Is there a risk for museums when entering publishing activities? *The Museum für Moderne Kunst* in Frankfurt am Main (Germany) organised a public talk on the subject and described it as following: 'Recent changes in society, globalization, and the increasing significance of the media are a mix that presents the museum of the twenty-first century with new challenges. The museum's role as a public space demands redefinition. In this context, more and more importance is being attached to communication and mediation.'<sup>57</sup> It seems though that museums apprehend the pertinence of in-house publishing activities. Hopefully museums will start to develop autonomous catalogues alongside their regular publishing activities as well.

### A topology for the autonomous exhibition catalogue

Before determining the autonomous exhibition catalogue, I need to define the difference between the 'independent' and 'autonomous' characteristics of exhibition catalogues. With 'independent' I consider catalogues for which the graphic designer is 'not influenced or controlled by others during its production in matters of opinion, conduct, etc.', and that are objects able to 'act for oneself'.<sup>58</sup> The 'acting for oneself' concerns thus both the graphic designer and the catalogue.

'Autonomy' is based on independence, and simply means: 'self-governing'.<sup>59</sup> The main difference between independent and autonomous exhibition catalogues is their possible relation with a spatial exhibition. I see the 'independent' catalogue as an object that is, despite its individual character, still connected to a spatial exhibition. The 'autonomous' catalogue makes up its own rules without any interference of a spatial counterpart. Following I'll define a classification in which different forms and justifications for the autonomous exhibition catalogue are set out.

Firstly there's the independent exhibition catalogue. This catalogue is published 'on the occasion of', and uses the catalogue's method to structure content. It devotedly communicates the exhibition content and explores supplementary narratives on top of that. *Le Corbusier, Architect of Books*,<sup>60</sup> written by *Catherine de*

*Smet* and published and designed by *Lars Müller* (Zürich) is an example of such a catalogue. The publisher, a graphic designer of origin, succeeds in merging an extremely vivid archive of book designs by *Le Corbusier*, with a devoted written pleading about the book design and publishing practices of *Le Corbusier*. *Catherine de Smet* is simultaneously the author of the catalogue and the curator of the coinciding exhibition.<sup>60</sup> She is emphatically involved in the conception of both exhibition formats, and is able to define different goals for each of them.

An example that stresses the importance of a good relation between publisher and designer when aiming for independence is *Crack*,<sup>61</sup> which shows paintings of Belgium artist *Koen van den Broek*. Designed by *Metahaven* and published by *Valiz* (Amsterdam), this large catalogue exhibits paintings based on architectural photographs made by the artist during trips in the United States. The paintings succeed one another, arranged chronologically per year. Together the paintings constitute an artistic road-trip, accompanied by huge page numbers that functioning as road signs throughout the catalogue. In the alternating textual parts, the designers merged the screenplay of *True Romance*, written by *Quintin Tarantino*, as a supplementary narrative layer next to numerous texts about the art of reproduction. This object really invites to take an evening off, and dive into the artists' surrealistic world.

Secondly, there is the autonomous exhibition catalogue that distances itself, at least until the production has finished, from any spatial counterpart. I distinguish two major types of autonomous exhibition catalogues, which can cross and interfere each other: First, the catalogue based on historical facts or existing archives of art works, used as a source of inspiration for contemporary reflection. As there are reconstructions of 'what has happened', or a vision of 'what could have happened if'. The autonomous catalogue often contains a fictional story compiled by the authors. The used art works either represent an event or a concept, and amplifying initial ideas of the author. The catalogue is an excellent exposure medium to, for example, reveal a hidden archive.

This was the case for the publication *Serendipity*,<sup>61</sup> compiled out of the silkscreen archives of *Wieber Zeefdruk* (Amsterdam) by Amsterdam based graphic designer *Hans Gremmen*. Each time a new print run starts for any particular poster, leftovers of previous ones are used as test-sheets to adjust colour. All these test-sheets become multi-layered reproductions of multiple originals. The author assembled these 'tests' into a catalogue that existed out of serendipity, which is briefly described as 'happy accident' or 'pleasant surprise'.<sup>61</sup> The catalogue shows that 'what is happening' inside the walls of a silkscreen workshop, but remained hidden because the test-prints gained no particular interest. Reproduced in the catalogue, these multi-layered posters give an instant overview of influential Dutch designers and some of the iconic posters they designed. They exemplify a recent part

57—MMK Talks: Museum Public <<http://www.mmk-frankfurt.de/en/vermittlung/mmk-talks/>> 15 January 2012

58—Dictionary.com/Independent <<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/independent>> 18 January 2012

59—Dictionary.com/Autonomous <<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/autonomous>> 18 January 2012

60—Smet, Catherine de *Le Corbusier, architect of books – second edition* p.128 Lars Müller publishers, Zürich, 2007

61—Wikipedia/Serendipity <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serendipity>> 17 January 2012

of Dutch graphic design history in a subjective and brief manner. The author's choice for the catalogue becomes specifically evident in the last booklet, where the original silk-screen prints are cut to sew them into the catalogue, offering the reader a tangible, one on one experience with the objects. The objects have evolved alongside the production of the catalogue from found objects, to photographic reproductions, to real size specimen. Although this object does not represent the 'ideal collaboration' for the autonomous catalogue as proposed before – it was an individual initiative – it is an excellent example of an archive made accessible by a personal initiative that convinces through a narrative that goes beyond the archive itself. The content of *Serendipity* can be imagined on display in a spatial context, but the choice for the catalogue as a medium turned out to be much more evident.

The second type of autonomous catalogues use fiction (compiled or made for the occasion) as a method and justification to state the author's infinite vicious, revolutionary or sophisticated reflections. Build on a similar structure as the previous discussed type; they rather give a visionary reflection on the future. It can be an envisioning of 'what is about to happen', 'can happen', or 'will happen'. It asks questions of what lies ahead of us. Operating between a novel and a movie, these catalogues are extremely narrative, and dissociate itself from its primary documenting function. Examples are rare, but in a way the previously discussed publication *A not B* approaches this type of 'fictive catalogues' very well.

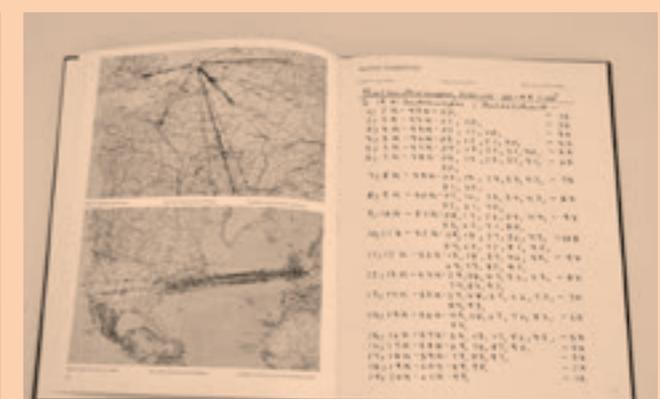
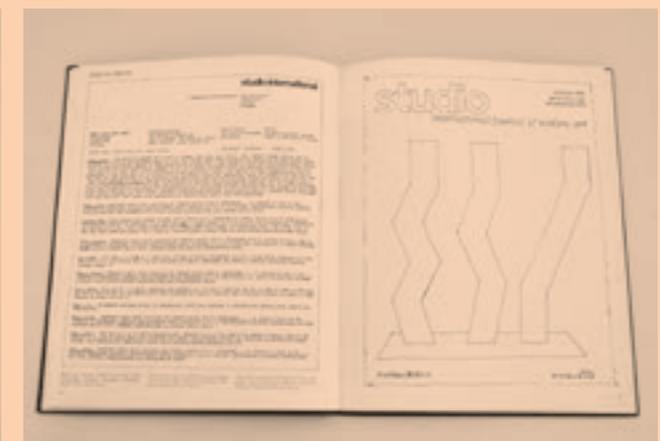
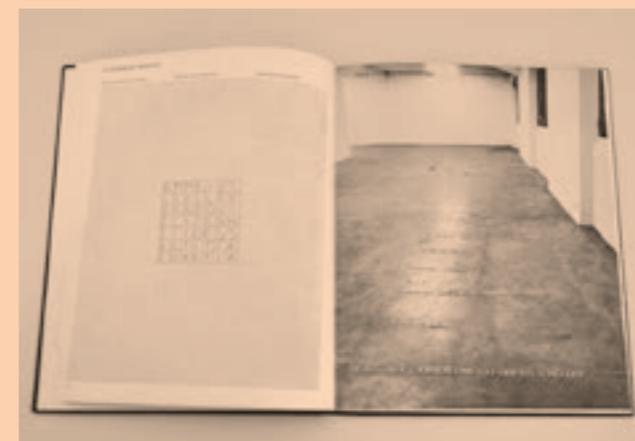
The catalogues of gallery owner and editor *Seth Siegel* fits this type of autonomous exhibition catalogues as well. *Siegel* started experimenting in 1968 with group exhibitions that only existed in catalogues. In an interview with *Hans Ulrich Obrist* he explains his escape from the spatial exhibition: 'The rhythm of production, the art exhibition assembly line so to speak, was much too fast an regular. Hardly anytime to think and play, which for me is very very important. It seemed there must be a better way of doing exhibitions when you wanted to do it, without having all the continuing overheads, such as rents, lights, telephones, secretary; all the fixed expenses needed to maintain a permanent space.'<sup>62</sup> For the group exhibition *July/August Exhibition Book* in 1970, *Siegel* invited 6 art critics (*David Antin, Charles Harrison, Lucy Lippard, Michel Claura, Germano Celant and Hans Strelow*) to take each responsibility for an eight pages counting section, and to invite between one and eight preferred artist to occupy this space. The catalogue switched subjects many times because of its six guest editors and their personal ideas. This did not enhance a coherent subject for the catalogue, but pushed numerous cross-fertilisations between artists and editors, generating autonomy for the object entirely.

*Siegel's* exhibition catalogues were, and still are, entirely autonomous, printed in usual small editions of 1000 copies, and spread out over the world. Autonomous exhibition catalogues nowadays can again offer time to think and play as

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JULY/AUGUST

Design/Concept—Seth Siegel  
 Editors—David Antin, Charles Harrison,  
 Lucy Lippard, Michel Claura,  
 Germano Celant, Hans Strelow  
 Year—1970



62—Ulrich Obrist, Hans, 'A conversation between Seth Siegel and Hans Ulrich Obrist', TRANS>, 6 (1999), 51 – 63

they offered *Siegelaub* in the 1970's. But where the autonomous catalogues of *Siegelaub* mainly promoted the artists' work in a literal way, and resembled almost a real museum, the contemporary autonomous catalogue rather wants to question a disturbed society, and propose us multilayered futuristic visions that could become reality one day. By then, they will stimulate art institutes to organise cutting exhibitions in their footsteps, and this topology probably needs to be redefined as numerous examples of autonomous catalogues will follow.

*Siegelaubs'* act as an independent editor was highly revolutionary in his time, giving the artist the possibility to develop visionary reflection through his catalogues. Together with artists as *Ed Ruscha* and *Lawrence Weiner* he contributed to the development of artists' books as the format we know nowadays. These contemporary artists' book – where *A not B* is a representative of – originate *Siegelaubs'* experiments from the 1970's, and will develop further to the autonomous exhibition catalogue of tomorrow. These items preferably emerge out of close collaborations between a graphic designer on one side, and an artist, photographer, filmmaker, writer or art critic on the other side.

# Conclusion

## POSSIBLE DIRECTIONS FOR THE AUTONOMOUS EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

This research shows an evolution from catalogues that are inseparably rooted to exhibitions, to independent catalogues that ignore their spatial counterpart, and aim for supplementary narratives. Alongside this journey, several situations are discussed in which multiple actors purposefully entered the field of the graphic designer. There are consecutive the curator and artist who are the biggest 'intruders' when it comes to the design of exhibition catalogues. The object of *Mathieu Copeland* is a significant example of a catalogue that is not very well designed, demonstrates an introverted vision, but nevertheless offers new perspectives for the catalogue medium. So did the artists' book of *Martin Kippenberger*. With his attempt to regenerate an unfinished novel of *Franz Kafka*, the artist shows how to master the exhibition catalogue as a narrative instrument, embodying the necessary 'visual script' that accompanies his show *The Happy End of Franz Kafka's 'Amerkia'*.

In some of the named situations, the graphic designer had to deal with other actors and their opinions, limiting the execution what the graphic designer is most capable of; designing clever catalogues that aim further than simply documenting an exhibitions' content. I therefore stress an urgent and initiating role for the graphic designer when aiming for an independent existence of the catalogue. Examples of *James Langdon*, *Irma Boom*, *Roma Publications* and *Metahaven* show graphic designers who occupy that preferred editorial position, not least encouraged by their collaborating publishers. The objects these designers generate are essential evidence that exhibition catalogues are very well able to function independent. These objects rather offer imaginable spatial arrangements that arise from the catalogue, and illustrate the increasing superfluity of exhibitions.

The autonomous exhibition catalogue doesn't refer to a spatial counterpart; neither owes its existence to any external activities. Nevertheless, even when a catalogue is perceived autonomous, it has to refer to an external source or archive that is either collected or found by the authors. The autonomous catalogue especially arises from situations in which it is difficult, or even impossible, to organise a tangible show. Either the foreseen artworks are immovable, to vulnerable or strongly attached to their cultural heritage. Or artworks simply don't exist anymore because of damage, destruction or loss. In these situations, the catalogue is one of the few accurate exhibition possibilities left. Being foremost a format to exhibit reproductions, the catalogue has an extreme affinity with the presentation of an archive. Furthermore in the conception process there are the size, form and origin of the archive that determine the historical, scientific or even futuristic approach of the catalogue.

The autonomous catalogue will be an object somewhere between a novel and a movie, diffusing well founded writing and emerging visuals. The autonomous catalogue expresses itself as an object in which the 'iconic value' of text is as important as the 'textual value' of the images. The content is arranged in compositions that construct relations between pieces of content, and generate supplementary linear or non-linear narratives. The outcome is imaginable as a visual script, manifest or printed documentary, loaded with dialogues, and paving a path for what is 'about to happen' in the near future. Besides that, the catalogue is capable of filling gaps in art history in exhibiting an archive 'that should have been exhibited once, but never was'.

Eventually, autonomy doesn't only concern the chosen subject, but also the freedom with which the initiating author acts. Autonomy originates from the ability of the graphic designer to shape the catalogue to its best possible form while occupying an initiating role in the design process. Especially the graphic designer has the qualities to shape the layout for the autonomous catalogue, and knows best with whom to collaborate for the conceptual part.

The graphic designer should thus consider collaboration as a possible starting point for the autonomous catalogue. In the envisioned collaboration – that should not contain too many collaborators – all co-editors should have more or less equal control to foster fruitful discussion. The editorial team has the choice to publish the catalogue themselves, as an independent activity, or collaborate with a pioneering publisher willing to invest in the initiative. Among publishers I also count museums that consider autonomous catalogues as an important eye-catcher in their publishing activities.

When finished, the autonomous exhibition catalogue serves as catalyst for future exhibitions. As an archive containing entity it serves as a future guide or instruction model for spatial arrangements or exhibitions. In this way, the catalogue becomes the determining source of several spatial counterparts, each conceived by a curator according to propositions in the catalogue.

### **A practical application**

A redefinition and reclaiming act – as suits this research – is in need of propositions and practical applications to justify its statements. Therefore the discussed examples – considered 'research objects', and originating from different owners – together form a temporary exhibition of catalogues, which is archived for the purpose of this research. It was necessary to keep at least little distance to these objects and not to lapse into a tentative treatment of the subject matter. Therefore the catalogues stay precious objects in their manner of reproduction, but they are not treated with velvet gloves. And although they are not treated with bare hands, there still exists a sensible personal relation between the catalogues and the researcher.

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## COLOPHON

Author/Designer—Rob van Leijsen

Tutor—Alexandra Midal

Proof-Reading—Pauwke Berkers, Cyril Chermin

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