

Clive Phillpot's Artists' Books "Fruit Salad" Diagram, 1982

# The Future of the Book

El Lissitzky 1926

Every artistic innovation is unique, it has no development. In time different variations on the same theme grow up around innovation, maybe higher, maybe lower, but they will rarely reach the original power of the first. This goes on until long familiarity has made the effect of the work of art so automatic that the senses no longer react to the worn means and the time is ripe for a further technical innovation. However, the "technical" and the "artistic" (so-called) are inseparable, so we must not lightly dispose of a profound relationship by means of a few slogans. At any rate, the first few books printed by Gutenberg with the system of movable type which he invented remain the finest examples of the art of book production.

The next few hundred years saw no basic innovations (until photography) in this field. In typography there are just more or less successful variations accompanying technical improvements in the manufacturing apparatus. The same happened with a second discovery in the visual field—with photography. As soon as we give up assuming a complacent superiority over everything else, we must admit that the first Daguerro-types are not primitive artifacts needing improvements, but the finest photographic art. It is short-sighted to suppose that machines, i.e., the displacement of manual by mechanical processes, are basic to the development of the form and figure of an artifact. In the first place, the consumer's demand determines the development, i.e., the demand of the social strata that provide the "commissions." Today this is not a narrow circle, a thin cream, but "everybody," the masses. The idea moving the masses today is called materialism, but dematerialization is the characteristic of the epoch. For example, correspondence grows, so the number of letters, the quantity of writing paper, the mass of material consumed expand, until relieved by the telephone. Again, the network and material of supply grow until they are relieved by the radio. Matter diminishes, we dematerialize, sluggish masses of matter are replaced by liberated energy. This is the mark of our epoch.

What conclusions does this imply in our field?

I draw the following analogy:

Inventions in the field of verbal traffic	Inventions in the field of general traffic
Articulated language.....	Upright gait
Writing.....	The wheel
Gutenberg's printing-press .....	Carts drawn by animal power
? .....	The automobile
? .....	The airplane

I have produced this analogy to prove that so long as the book remains a palpable object, i.e., so long as it is not replaced by auto-vocalizing and kino-vocalizing representations, we must look to the field of the manufacture of books for new basic innovations in the near future, so that the general level of the epoch can be reached in this field.

There are signs to hand suggesting that this basic innovation is likely to come from the neighborhood of the colotype. Here we have a machine which captures the subject matter on a film and a press which copies the negative of the material on to sensitive paper. Thus the frightful weight of the subject matter and the bucket of dye is omitted, so that once again we have dematerialization. The most important thing here is that the mode of production of words and pictures is included in the same process: photography. Up till now photography is that mode of expression which is most comprehensible. We have before us the prospect of a book in which exposition has priority over letters.

We know of two kinds of writing: one sign for each concept—hieroglyphic (modern Chinese); and one sign for each sound—alphabetic. The progress of the alphabetic over the hieroglyphic mode is only relative. Hieroglyphics are international. This means that if a Russian, a German, or an American fixes the sign (picture) of a concept in his mind he can read Chinese or Egyptian (soundlessly), without learning the language, for language and writing are always one creation as far as he is concerned.

We may conclude that:

- 1 the hieroglyphic book is international (at least potentially)
- 2 the alphabetic book is national, and
- 3 the book of the future will be non-national; for it needs the least education to understand it.

There are today two dimensions to the word. As sound it is a function of time; as exposition, of space. The book of the future must be both. This is how to overcome the automatism of the contemporary book. A world-view which has become automatic ceases to exist in our senses, so we are left drowning in a void. The dynamic achievement of art is to transform the void into space, i.e., into a unity conceivable for our senses.

An alteration in the structure and mode of language implies a change in the usual appearance of the book. Before the War, printed matter in Europe was appropriately enough converging in appearance in every country. A new optimistic mentality laying stress on immediate events and the fleeting moment underlay the origins in America of a new form of printing. They began to modify the relation of word and illustration in exposition into the direct opposite of the

European style. The highly developed technique of facsimile-electrotype (half-tone blocks) was especially important for this development; thus photomontage was born.

After the War, skeptical and stunned Europe marshaled a screaming, burning language: all means must be used to maintain and assert oneself. The catchwords of the epoch were "attraction" and "trick." The new appearance of the book was characterized by:

### 1 broken-up setting    2 photomontage and typomontage

These facts, which are the basis for our predictions, were already foreshadowed before the War and our Revolution. Marinetti, the siren of Futurism, also dealt with typography in his masterly manifestos. In 1909 he wrote:

The book will be the futurist expression of our futurist consciousness. I am against what is known as the harmony of a setting. When necessary we will use three or four colours to a page, and 20 different typefaces. E.g. we shall represent a series of uniform, hasty *perceptions* with *cursive*, a **scream** will be expressed in bold type and so on. So a new painterly typographic representation will be born on the printed page.

Many of today's creations do not go beyond this demand. I should like to stress that Marinetti does not call for playing with form as form, but asks rather that the action of a new content should be intensified by the form.

Before the War the notion of the simultaneous book was also proposed and, in a sense, realized. This was in the Poem of Blaise Cendrars, typographically conceived by Sonia Delaunay-Terk. It is a foldable strip of paper 5 feet long—an attempt at a new book-form for poetry. The lines of poetry are printed in color, with colors always discontinued in the content and changed into others.

In England during the War the Vortex group published their magazine *Blast!* in a crude, elementary style, using almost only unrelieved capitals, a style which has become the token of all modern international printing.

In Germany, the 1917 Prospectus of the little *Neue Jugend* Portfolio is an important document of the new typography.

The new movement which began in Russia in 1908 bound painter and poet together from the very first day; hardly a poetry book has appeared since then without the collaboration of a painter. Poems have been written with the lithographic crayon and signed. They have been cut in wood. Poets themselves have set whole pages. Thus the poets Khlebnikov, Kruchenykh, Mayakovski, Aseev have worked with the painters Rosanova, Goncharova, Malevich, Popova, Burlyuk, etc. They did not produce select, numbered, deluxe editions, but cheap unlimited volumes, which today we must treat as popular art despite their sophistication.

In the Revolutionary period a latent energy has concentrated in the younger generation of our artists, which can

only find release in large-scale popular commissions. The audience has become the masses, the semi-literate masses. With our work the Revolution has achieved a colossal labor of propaganda and enlightenment. We ripped up the traditional book into single pages, magnified these a hundred times, printed them in color and stuck them up as posters in the streets. Unlike American posters, ours were not designed for rapid perception from a passing motor-car, but to be read and to enlighten from a short distance. If a series of these posters were today to be set in the size of a manageable book, in an order corresponding to some theme, the result would be most curious. Our lack of printing equipment and the necessity for speed meant that, though the best work was hand-printed, the most rewarding was standardized, lapidary and adapted to the simplest mechanical form of reproduction. Thus State Decrees were printed as rolled-up illustrated leaflets, and Army Orders as illustrated pamphlets.

At the end of the Civil War (1920), we had the opportunity to realize our aims in the field of the creation of new books, in spite of the primitiveness of the mechanical means at our disposal. In Vitebsk, we brought out five issues of a magazine called *Unovis*, printed by typewriter, lithography, etching and linocut.

As I have already written: "Gutenberg's Bible was only printed with letters. But letters alone will not suffice for the handing down of today's Bible. The book finds its way to the brain through the eyes, not through the ears; light waves travel much faster and more intensely than sound waves. But humans can only speak to each other with their mouths, whereas the possibilities of the book are multi-form."

With the advent of the period of reconstruction in 1922, the production of books also rose rapidly. Our best artists seized on the problem of book production. At the beginning of 1922 I and the writer Ilya Ehrenburg edited the periodical *Veshch-Gegenstand-Objet*, which was printed in Berlin. Access to the most developed German printing techniques enabled us to realize some of our ideas about the book. Thus we printed a picture-book, *The Story of Two Squares*, which we had finished in our productive period of 1920, and the *Mayakovski-Book*, which made even the form of the book corresponding to the particular edition a functional structure. At the same time our artists were exploring the technical possibilities of printing. The State Publishing House and other printing establishments put out books which were shown, and appreciated, at several international exhibitions in Europe. Comrades Popova, Rodchenko, Klutskis, Stepanova, and Gan devoted themselves to book design. Some worked directly in the printshop with the compositors and presses (Gan, et al.). The growing esteem in which book design is held is indicated by the practice of listing on a special page the names of all the compositors and finishers concerned with the book. This means that there has grown up in the printshops a stratum of workers who have developed a conscious relation to their craft.

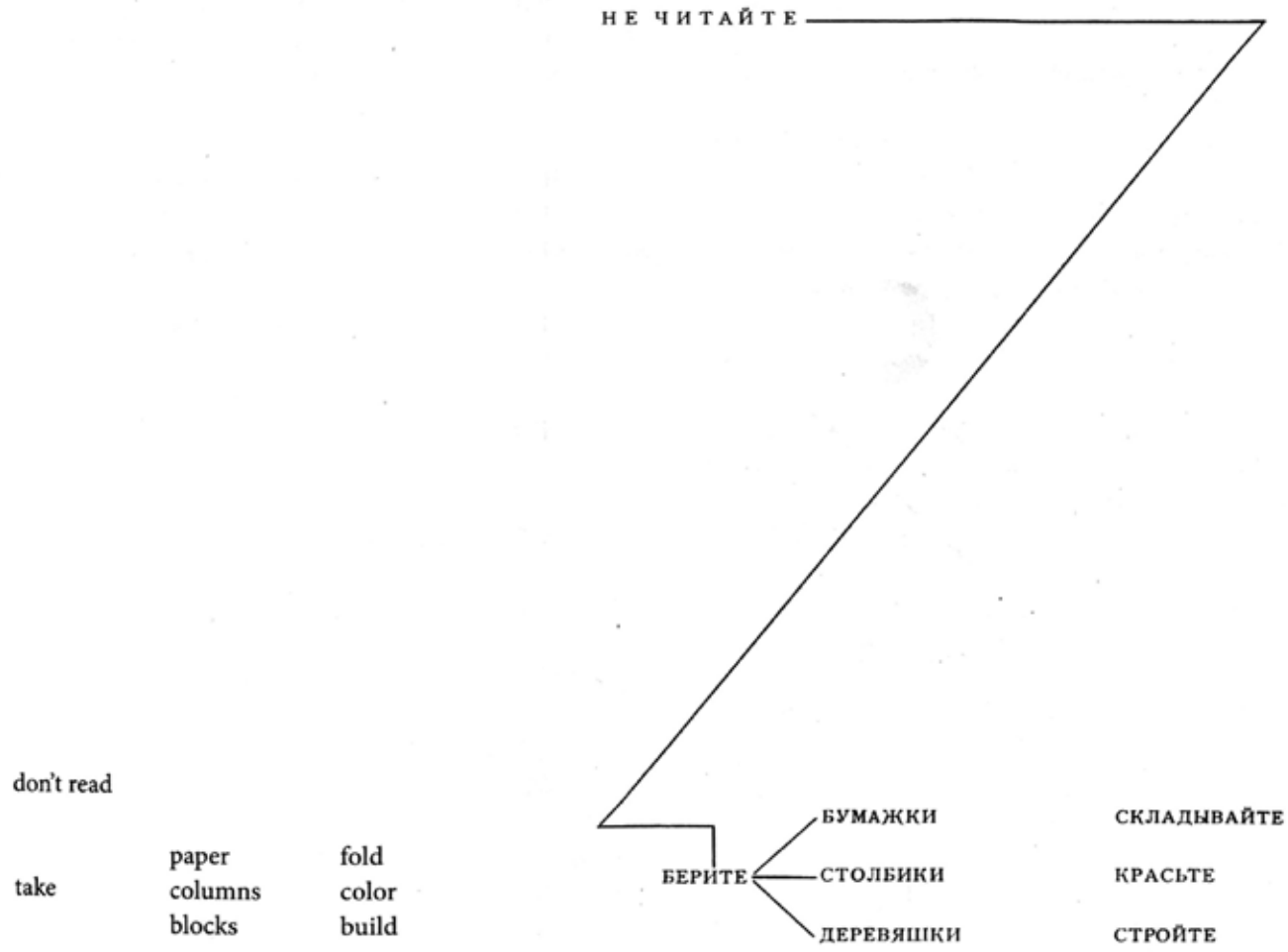
Most of the artists produce montages, that is, lay out photographs and suitable captions together on a page which is then made into a block for printing. Thus is conceived a form of undeniable power, apparently very simple to handle and therefore easily diverted into banality, but in skillful hands extremely fruitful as a means to visual poetry.

At the outset we said that the expressive power of each artistic innovation is unique and has no development. The innovation of easel-painting made great works of art possible, but it has now lost this power. The cinema and the illustrated weekly have succeeded it. We rejoice in the new means which technique has put into our hands. We know that a close relation with the actuality of general events, the continuing heightening of the sensitivity of our optic nerves, the record-breaking speed of social development, our command over plastic material, the reconstruction of the plane and its space, and the simmering force of innovation have enabled us to give the book new power as a work of art.

Of course, today's book has not found a new overall structure, it is still a single volume with a cover, a back and pages 1, 2, 3, ... The same is true of the theater. Even our most modern drama plays in a theater-like a peepshow,

with the public in the stalls, in boxes and in rows in front of the curtain. But the stage has been cleared of all the paraphernalia of painted scenery, the stage-space as a painted perspective has perished. A three-dimensional physical space has been born in the same peepshow, allowing maximal unfolding of the fourth dimension, living movement. Within the book modernism may not yet have gone so far, but we must learn to see the tendency.

Notwithstanding the crisis which book production, like every other area of production, is undergoing, the avalanche of books grows with every passing year. The book is the most monumental art form today; no longer is it fondled by the delicate hands of a bibliophile, but seized by a hundred thousand hands. This illuminates the hegemony of the illustrated weekly in this transition period. We should add to the number of illustrated weeklies the flood of children's picture books. Our children's reading teaches them a new plastic language; they grow up with a different relation to the world and space, to image and color, so they are preparing for a new kind of book. But we shall be satisfied if we can conceptualize the epic and lyric developments of our times in our form of book.



# On the Cult of Books

Jorge Luis Borges 1946

In Book VIII of the *Odyssey*, we read that the gods weave misfortunes so that future generations will have something to sing about; Mallarmé's statement, "The world exists to end up in a book," seems to repeat, some thirty centuries later, the same concept of an aesthetic justification for evils.

These two teleologies, however, do not entirely coincide; the former belongs to the era of the spoken word, and the latter to an era of the written word. One speaks of telling the story and the other of books.

A book, any book, is for us a sacred object: Cervantes, who probably did not listen to everything that everyone said, read even "the torn scraps of paper in the streets." Fire, in one of Bernard Shaw's comedies, threatens the library at Alexandria; someone exclaims that the memory of mankind will burn, and Caesar replies: "A shameful memory. Let it burn." The historical Caesar, in my opinion, might have approved or condemned the command the author attributes to him, but he would not have considered it, as we do, a sacrilegious joke. The reason is clear: for the ancients the written word was nothing more than a substitute for the spoken word.

It is well known that Pythagoras did not write; Gomperz (*Griechische Denker* I, 3) maintains that it was because he had more faith in the virtues of spoken instruction. More forceful than Pythagoras' mere abstention is Plato's unequivocal testimony. In the *Timaeus* he stated: "It is an arduous task to discover the maker and father of this universe, and, having discovered him, it is impossible to tell it to all men"; and in the *Phaedrus* he recounted an Egyptian fable against writing (the practice of which causes people to neglect the exercise of memory and to depend on symbols), and said that books are like the painted figures "that seem to be alive, but do not answer a word to the questions they are asked." To alleviate or eliminate that difficulty, he created the philosophical dialogue.

A teacher selects a pupil, but a book does not select its readers, who may be wicked or stupid; this Platonic mistrust persists in the words of Clement of Alexandria, a man of pagan culture: "The most prudent course is not to write but to learn and teach by word of mouth, because what is written remains" (*Stromateis*), and in the same treatise: "To write all things in a book is to put a sword in the hands of a child," which derives from the Gospels: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." That sentence is from Jesus, the greatest of the oral teachers, who only once wrote a few words on the ground, and no man read what He had written (John 8:6).

Clement of Alexandria wrote about his distrust of writing at the end of the second century; the end of the fourth century saw the beginning of the mental process that would culminate, after many generations, in the predominance of

the written word over the spoken one, of the pen over the voice. A remarkable stroke of fortune determined that a writer would establish the exact instant (and I am not exaggerating) when this vast process began. St. Augustine tells it in Book VI of the *Confessions*:

When he [Ambrose] was reading, his eyes ran over the page and his heart perceived the sense, but his voice and tongue were silent. He did not restrict access to anyone coming in, nor was it customary even for a visitor to be announced. Very often when we were there, we saw him silently reading and never otherwise. After sitting for a long time in silence (for who would dare to burden him in such intent concentration?) we used to go away. We supposed that in the hubbub of other people's troubles, he would not want to be invited to consider another problem. We wondered if he read silently perhaps to protect himself in case he had a hearer interested and intent on the matter, to whom he might have to expound the text being read if it contained difficulties, or who might wish to debate some difficult questions. If his time were used up in that way, he would get through fewer books than he wished. Besides, the need to preserve his voice, which used easily to become hoarse, could have been a very fair reason for silent reading. Whatever motive he had for his habit, this man had a good reason for what he did.

St. Augustine was a disciple of St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, around the year 384; thirteen years later, in Numidia, he wrote his *Confessions* and was still troubled by that extraordinary sight: a man in a room, with a book, reading without saying the words.<sup>1</sup>

That man passed directly from the written symbol to intuition, omitting sound; the strange art he initiated, the art of silent reading, would lead to marvelous consequences. It would lead, many years later, to the concept of the book as an end in itself, not as a means to an end. (This mystical concept, transferred to profane literature, would produce the unique destinies of Flaubert and Mallarmé, of Henry James and James Joyce.) Superimposed on the notion of a God who speaks with men in order to command them to do something or to forbid them to do something was that of the Absolute Book, of a Sacred Scripture.

For Muslims, the Koran (also called "The Book," *al-Kitab*) is not merely a work of God, like men's souls or the universe; it is one of the attributes of God, like His eternity or His rage. In chapter XIII we read that the original text, the Mother of the Book, is deposited in Heaven. Muhammad al-Ghazali, the Algazel of the scholastics, declared: "The Koran is copied in a book, is pronounced with the tongue, is remembered in the heart and, even so, continues to persist in the center of God and is not altered by its passage

through written pages and human understanding." George Sale observes that this uncreated Koran is nothing but its idea or Platonic archetype; it is likely that al-Ghazali used the idea of archetypes, communicated to Islam by the *Encyclopedia of the Brethren of Purity* and by Avicenna, to justify the notion of the Mother of the Book.

Even more extravagant than the Muslims were the Jews. The first chapter of the Jewish Bible contains the famous sentence: "And God said, 'Let there be light', and there was light"; the Kabbalists argued that the virtue of that command from the Lord came from the letters of the words. The *Sepher Yetzirah* (Book of the Formation), written in Syria or Palestine around the sixth century, reveals that Jehovah of the Armies, God of Israel and God Omnipotent, created the universe by means of the cardinal numbers from one to ten and the twenty-two letters of the alphabet. That numbers may be instruments or elements of the Creation is the dogma of Pythagoras and Iamblichus; that letters also are is a clear indication of the new cult of writing. The second paragraph of the second chapter reads: "Twenty-two fundamental letters: God drew them, engraved them, combined them, weighed them, permutated them, and with them produced everything that is and everything that will be." Then the book reveals which letter has power over air, and which over water, and which over fire, and which over wisdom, and which over peace, and which over grace, and which over sleep, and which over anger, and how (for example) the letter *kaf*, which has power over life, served to form the sun in the world, the day Wednesday in the week, and the left ear on the body.

The Christians went even further. The thought that the divinity had written a book moved them to imagine that he had written two, and that the other one was the universe. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Francis Bacon declared in his *Advancement of Learning* that God offered us two books so that we would not fall into error: the first, the volume of the Scriptures, reveals His will; the

second, the volume of the creatures, reveals His power and is the key to the former. Bacon intended much more than the making of a metaphor; he believed that the world was reducible to essential forms (temperatures, densities, weights, colors), which formed, in limited number, an *abecedarium naturae* or series of letters with which the universal text is written.<sup>2</sup>

Sir Thomas Browne, around 1642, confirmed that "Thus there are two Books from whence I collected my Divinity; besides that written one of God, another of His servant Nature, that universal and publick Manuscript, that lies expans'd unto the Eyes of all: those that never saw Him in the one, have discover'd Him in the other" (*Religio Medici* I, 16). In the same paragraph we read: "In brief, all things are artificial; for Nature is the Art of God." Two hundred years passed, and the Scot Carlyle, in various places in his books, particularly in the essay on Cagliostro, went beyond Bacon's hypothesis; he said that universal history was a Sacred Scripture that we decipher and write uncertainly, and in which we too are written. Later, Léon Bloy would write:

There is no human being on earth who is capable of declaring who he is. No one knows what he has come to this world to do, to what his acts, feelings, ideas correspond, or what his real name is, his imperishable Name in the registry of Light ... History is an immense liturgical text, where the i's and the periods are not worth less than the versicles or whole chapters, but the importance of both is undeterminable and is profoundly hidden. (*L'Âme de Napoleon*, 1912)

The world, according to Mallarmé, exists for a book: according to Bloy, we are the versicles or words or letters of a magic book, and that incessant book is the only thing in the world: more exactly, it is the world.

1 The commentators have noted that it was customary at that time to read out loud in order to grasp the meaning better, for there were no punctuation marks, nor even a division of words, and to read in common because there was a scarcity of manuscripts. The dialogue of Lucian of Samosata, *Against an Ignorant Buyer of Books*, includes an account of that custom in the second century.

2 Galileo's works abound with the concept of the universe as a book. The second section of Favaro's anthology (*Galileo Galilei: Pensieri, moti e sentenze*, Florence, 1949) is entitled "Il libro della Natura." I quote the following paragraph: "Philosophy is written in that very large book that is continually opened before our eyes (I mean the universe), but which is not understood unless first one studies the language and knows the characters in which it is written. The language of that book is mathematical and the characters are triangles, circles, and other geometric figures."



# X Marks the Bökship

Eleanor Vonne Brown 2014

The bookshop is a space for interaction.  
 The gallery is a space for introspection.  
 The work outside of the gallery is interchangeable.  
 The work inside the gallery is fixed.  
 The art is in the gallery.  
 The books are outside of the gallery.  
 The work framed by the gallery is art.  
 The work outside is ambiguous.  
 Is the coffee "real"?  
 Are the books for sale?

This *intervention* happens outside of the gallery.  
 This page pinched between your thumb and forefinger,  
 This piece of paper, this page,  
 This generic, unassuming piece of A4 rectangular copy  
 paper,  
 This interchangeable commentary,  
 Is the supporting material to the exhibition.  
 Read this reading material after seeing the exhibition  
 It is called a spoiler.  
 Does it spoil a work to include documentation with it?  
 Like in a publication?  
 It is spoiler distributed to everyone before they enter the  
 gallery.  
 Before the experience.  
 It is not the experience.  
 It is not in the gallery.  
 It is in the bookshop.  
 It can be taken into the gallery.  
 It can be removed from the gallery  
 It can be taken home.  
 Or distributed to a place of your choosing.  
 Place it on the floor of the gallery.  
 Place it on the wall of the gallery.  
 Place it on a shelf in the bookshop.  
 Place it in the vitrine of the bookshop.  
 Ask the bookseller "How much it this?"  
 Ask the invigilator if it is a piece of work.  
 Tear this page away from the staple.  
 Throw the rest away.  
 Dispose of this page and only keep the original.  
 Roll it lengthways.  
 Leave it on the bus.  
 I can make another one.  
 It can be reproduced the same.  
 It can be reproduced differently.  
 Is this an intervention?  
 Is this a publication?  
 Is this a work?  
 I have publications that look like this spoiler.  
 I have works that look like this spoiler.  
 I have recycling that looks like this spoiler.

The publications are outside of the gallery.  
 Patrick Goddard's book launch happened outside of the  
 gallery.  
 Deirdre O'Dwyer's publication is not in the gallery  
 Joëlle Tuerlinckx books are not in the gallery  
 Instead, perched metaphorically just outside of the  
 exhibition  
 There are no publications in the exhibition.  
 I mean in the exhibition.  
 The display of Jarosław Kozłowski's books is in the book-  
 shop.  
 They are under glass, framed, fixed, removed from use.  
 They earn an exhibition note in the spoiler.  
 The publication is a space for introspection.  
 The publication is a space for interaction.  
 A publication can be documentation.  
 A publication can be artwork.  
 Can a bookshop be an artwork?

The bookshop a set up shop.  
 It is like a bookshop but not.  
 It is a library, which is also a theater  
 A context for conversations,  
 about writing and publishing.  
 The bookshop is not a fixed space.  
 It is constantly changing.  
 The bookshop is a discursive space.  
 The bookshop is a space for interaction.  
 Each new book adds an extra voice to the discussion;  
 each new event changes the configuration of the space.  
 The bookshop is a place for distribution.  
 The books here are for sale.

The bookshop is the setting for book launches, reading  
 groups, performances, exhibitions, and talks on publishing.

In the bookshop is a table for reading and for social activity.  
 A sofa, a coffee machine, reading material, somebody to  
 talk to.

In the bookshop is a small rowing boat that is occasion-  
 ally used on the canal to interview artists about their books.  
 In the bookshop are concrete shelves. It had already been a  
 challenge to create a hospitable space for reading and dis-  
 cussion in a concrete room. I thought, "Why struggle to  
 make it warmer, let's make it colder." The concrete shelves  
 create potentially perilous conditions for the books; they  
 are auto-destructive like Asger Jorn and Guy Debord's  
 sandpaper-cover book *Mémoires*. This is an artist's book-  
 shop after all, and there are risks, to run a space like this you  
 have to live on the edge, you need a community to survive.

# The New Art of Making Books

Ulises Carrión 1975

### What a Book Is

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. A book is not a case of words, nor a bag of words, nor a bearer of words.

A writer, contrary to the popular opinion, does not write books. A writer writes texts. The fact, that a text is contained in a book, comes only from the dimensions of such a text; or, in the case of a series of short texts (poems, for instance), from their number.

A literary (prose) text contained in a book ignores the fact that the book is an autonomous space-time sequence. A series of more or less short texts (poems or other) distributed through a book following any particular ordering reveals the sequential nature of the book.

It reveals it, perhaps uses it; but it does not incorporate it or assimilate it.

Written language is a sequence of signs expanding within the space; the reading of which occurs in the time. A book is a space-time sequence.

Books existed originally as containers of (literary) texts. But books, seen as autonomous realities, can contain any (written) language, not only literary language, or even any other system of signs.

Among languages, literary language (prose and poetry) is not the best fitted to the nature of books.

A book may be the accidental container of a text, the structure of which is irrelevant to the book: these are the books of bookshops and libraries. A book can also exist as an autonomous and self-sufficient form, including perhaps a text that emphasizes that form, a text that is an organic part of that form: here begins the new art of making books.

In the old art the writer judges himself as being not responsible for the real book. He writes the text. The rest is done by the servants, the artisans, the workers, the others. In the new art writing a text is only the first link in the chain going from the writer to the reader. In the new art the writer assumes the responsibility for the whole process.

In the old art the writer writes texts. In the new art the writer makes books. To make a book is to actualize its ideal space-time sequence by means of the creation of a parallel sequence of signs, be it linguistic or other.

### Prose and poetry

In an old book all the pages are the same. When writing the text, the writer followed only the sequential laws of language, which are not the sequential laws of books. Words might be different on every page; but every page is, as such, identical with the preceding ones and with those that follow. In the new art every page is different; every page is an individualized element of a structure (the book) wherein it has a particular function to fulfill.

In spoken and written language pronouns substitute for nouns, so to avoid tiresome, superfluous repetitions. In the book, composed of various elements, of signs, such as language, what is it that plays the role of pronouns, so to avoid tiresome, superfluous repetitions? This is a problem for the new art; the old one does not even suspect its existence.

A book of five hundred pages, or of one hundred pages, or even of twenty-five, wherein all the pages are similar, is a boring book considered as a book, no matter how thrilling the content of the words of the text printed on the pages might be.

A novel, by a writer of genius or by a third-rate author, is a book where nothing happens.

There are still, and always will be, people who like reading novels. There will also always be people who like playing chess, gossiping, dancing the mambo, or eating strawberries with cream.

In comparison with novels, where nothing happens, in poetry books something happens sometimes, although very little.

A novel with no capital letters, or with different letter types, or with chemical formulae interspersed here and there etc., is still a novel, that is to say, a boring book pretending not to be such.

A book of poems contains as many words as, or more than, a novel, but it uses ultimately the real, physical space whereon these words appear, in a more intentional, more evident, deeper way. This is so because in order to transcribe poetical language onto paper it is necessary to translate typographically the conventions proper to poetic language.

The transcription of prose needs few things: punctuation, capitals, various margins, etc. All these conventions are original and extremely beautiful discoveries, but we don't notice them anymore because we use them daily. Transcription of poetry, a more elaborate language, uses less common

signs. The mere need to create the signs fitting the transcription of poetic language, calls our attention to this very simple fact: to write a poem on paper is a different action from writing it on our mind.

Poems are songs, the poets repeat. But they don't sing them. They write them. Poetry is to be said aloud, they repeat. But they don't say it aloud. They publish it. The fact is, that poetry, as it occurs normally, is written and printed, not sung and spoken, poetry. And with this, poetry has lost nothing.

On the contrary, poetry has gained something: a spatial reality that the so loudly lamented sung and spoken poetries lacked.

### The Space

For years, many years, poets have intensively and efficiently exploited the spatial possibilities of poetry. But only the so-called concrete or, later, visual poetry, has openly declared this.

Verses ending halfway on the page, verses having a wider or a narrower margin, verses being separated from the following one by a bigger or smaller space—all this is exploitation of space.

This is not to say that a text is poetry because it uses space in this or that way, but that using space is a characteristic of written poetry.

The space is the music of the unsung poetry

The introduction of space into poetry (or rather of poetry into space) is an enormous event of literally incalculable consequences. One of these consequences is concrete and/or visual poetry. Its birth is not an extravagant event in the history of literature, but the natural, unavoidable development of the spatial reality gained by language since the moment writing was invented.

The poetry of the old art does use space, albeit bashfully. This poetry establishes an inter-subjective communication. Inter-subjective communication occurs in an abstract, ideal, impalpable space.

In the new art (of which concrete poetry is only an example) communication is still inter-subjective, but it occurs in a concrete, real, physical space—the page.

A book is a volume in the space. It is the true ground of the communication that takes place through words—its here and now.

Concrete poetry represents an alternative to poetry. Books, regarded as autonomous space-time sequences offer an alternative to all existent literary genres.

Space exists outside subjectivity. 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.

What is more meaningful: the book or the text it contains?  
What was first: the chicken or the egg?

The old art assumes that printed words are printed on an ideal space. The new art knows that books exist as objects in an exterior reality, subject to concrete conditions of perception, existence, exchange, consumption, use, etc.

The objective manifestation of language can be experienced in an isolated moment and space—the page; or in a sequence of spaces and moments—the book.

There is not and will not be new literature anymore. There will be, perhaps, new ways to communicate that will include language or will use language as a basis. As a medium of communication, literature will always be old literature.

### The Language

Language transmits ideas, i.e., mental images. The starting point of the transmission of mental images is always an intention: we speak to transmit a particular image. The everyday language and the old art language have this in common: both are intentional, both want to transmit certain mental images.

In the old art the meanings of the words are the bearers of the author's intentions. Just as the ultimate meaning of words is indefinable, so the author's intention is unfathomable.

Every intention presupposes a purpose, a utility. Everyday language is intentional, that is, utilitarian; its function is to transmit ideas and feelings, to explain, to declare, to convince, to invoke, to accuse, etc. Old art's language is intentional as well, i.e., utilitarian. Both languages differ from one another only in their exterior form.

New art's language is radically different from daily language. It neglects intentions and utility, and it returns to itself, it investigates itself, looking for forms, for series of forms that give birth to, couple with, unfold into, space-time sequences.

The words in a new book are not the bearers of the message, nor the mouthpieces of the soul, nor the currency of communication. Those were already named by Hamlet, an avid reader of books: words, words, words.

The words of the new book are there not to transmit certain mental images with a certain intention. They are there to

form, together with other signs, a space-time sequence that we identify with the name "book."

The words in a new book might be the author's own words or someone else's words. A writer of the new art writes very little or does not write at all.

The most beautiful and perfect book in the world is a book with only blank pages, in the same way that the most complete language is that which lies beyond all that the words of a man can say.

Every book of the new art is searching after that book of absolute whiteness, in the same way that every poem searches for silence.

Intention is the mother of rhetoric.

Words cannot avoid meaning something, but they can be divested of intentionality

A non-intentional language is an abstract language: it doesn't refer to any concrete reality. Paradox: in order to be able to manifest itself concretely, language must first become abstract.

Abstract language means that words are not bound to any particular intention; that the word "rose" is neither the rose that I see nor the rose that a more or less fictional character claims to see. In the abstract language of the new art the word "rose" is the word "rose." It means all the roses and it means none of them.

How to succeed in making a rose that is not my rose, nor his rose, but everybody's rose, i.e., nobody's rose? By placing it within a sequential structure (for example a book), so that it momentarily ceases being a rose and becomes essentially an element of the structure.

### Structures

Every word exists as an element of a structure—a phrase, a novel, a telegram. Or: every word is part of a text.

Nobody or nothing exists in isolation: everything is an element of a structure. Every structure is in its turn an element of another structure. Everything that exists is a structure. To understand something, is to understand the structure of which it is a part and/or the elements forming the structure that that something is.

A book consists of various elements, one of which might be a text. A text that is part of a book isn't necessarily the most essential or important part of that book.

A person may go to the bookshop to buy ten red books because this color harmonizes with the other colors in his sitting room, or for any other reason, thereby revealing the irrefutable fact, that books have a color.

In a book of the old art words transmit the author's intention. That's why he chooses them carefully. In a book of the new art words don't transmit any intention; they're used to form a text which is an element of a book, and it is this book, as a totality, that transmits the author's intention.

Plagiarism is the starting point of the creative activity in the new art.

Whenever the new art uses an isolated word, then it is in an absolute isolation: books of one single word.

Old art's authors have the gift for language, the talent for language, the ease for language. For new art's authors language is an enigma, a problem; the book hints at ways to solve it.

In the old art you write "I love you" thinking that this phrase means "I love you." (But: what does "I love you" mean?).

In the new art you write "I love you" being aware that we don't know what this means. You write this phrase as part of a text wherein to write "I hate you" would come to the same thing. The important thing is, that this phrase, "I love you" or "I hate you," performs a certain function as a text within the structure of the book,

In the new art you don't love anybody. The old art claims to love. In art you can love nobody. Only in real life can you love someone.

Not that the new art lacks passions. All of it is blood flowing out of the wound that language has inflicted on men. And it is also the joy of being able to express something with everything, with anything, with almost nothing, with nothing.

The old art chooses, among the literary genres and forms, that one which best fits the author's intention. The new art uses any manifestation of language, since the author has no other intention than to test the language's ability to mean something.

The text of a book in the new art can be a novel as well as a single word, sonnets as well as jokes, love- letters as well as weather reports.

In the old art, just as the author's intention is ultimately unfathomable and the sense of his words indefinable, so the understanding of the reader is unquantifiable. In the new art the reading itself proves that the reader understands.

## The Reading

In order to read the old art, knowing the alphabet is enough. In order to read the new art one must apprehend the book as a structure, identifying its elements and understanding their function.

One might read old art in the belief that one understands it, and be wrong. Such a misunderstanding is impossible in the new art. You can read only if you understand.

In the old art all books are read in the same way. In the new art every book requires a different reading.

In the old art, to read the last page takes as much time as to read the first one. In the new art the reading rhythm changes, quickens, speeds up.

In order to understand and to appreciate a book of the old art, it is necessary to read it thoroughly. In the new art you often do NOT need to read the whole book. The reading may stop at the very moment you have understood the total structure of the book,

The new art makes it possible to read faster than the fast-reading methods.

There are fast-reading methods because writing methods are too slow. To read a book, is to perceive sequentially its structure.

The old art takes no heed of reading. The new art creates specific reading conditions.

The farthest the old art has come to, is to bring into account the readers, which is going too far.

The new art doesn't discriminate between its readers; it does not address itself to the book-addicts or try to steal its public away from tv.

In order to be able to read the new art, and to understand it, you don't need to spend five years in a Faculty of English.

In order to be appreciated, the books of the new art don't need the sentimental and/or intellectual complicity of the readers in matters of love, politics, psychology, geography, etc.

The new art appeals to the ability every man possesses for understanding and creating signs and systems of signs.

# **Black Phoenix**

Rasheed Araeen, Mahmood Jamal 1978



*Black Phoenix* is the result of a realization that we who are concerned with the cultural predicament of the Third World must stand on our own feet and speak with a unified voice, that we must collectively confront, on an international level, those forces which in the name of "universal freedom of man" are actually causing enslavement of men and women. No matter how inarticulate some of our first attempts may appear, this should not prevent us from speaking up. We can only learn from our own efforts and develop the precision of thought and action.

*Black Phoenix* is not a journal merely for professional writers or critics (to perpetuate their self-interests) but a platform for discussion, a channel for the exchange of ideas relating to the cultural predicament of mankind in the era of advanced capitalism and imperialism. It represents a commitment to the struggle against cultural domination and hegemony; and all those who are engaged in this struggle—irrespective of their race, color or creed—are invited to participate in this dialogue.

The Third World is the world of the oppressed. It is the world which was plundered by colonialism and is now being robbed of its remaining resources, natural as well as human. The underlying factor that unifies today all the people of the Third World is that they are subjected, or liable to be subjected, to imperialist domination. While the native bourgeoisie is collaborating unashamedly with international monopoly capital in perpetuating Western domination and in doing so is suppressing the productive and creative potential of its people, there is a growing awareness among the people themselves about their predicament and its causes, and they are in fact struggling for self-determination not only in political and economic fields but in the creation of their own art and culture as well.

Needless to say that present-day cultural imperialism has its roots in the Western bourgeois ideology and the concept of white superiority. The cancerous growth of imperialist ideology in the body of the Third World is, on the one hand, progressively destroying the SELF of the Third World, its human identity and dignity, and, on the other, there is a constantly developing antibody to get rid of the foreign matter. The dialectic of this struggle must lead to the emergence of the Third World from neo-colonial wilderness; a black phoenix rising from white ashes.

It is not a sentimental proclamation but an identification of/with the force which can and shall transform the world; it is the recognition of the power of the oppressed to liberate themselves and the oppressor at the same time.

We reject the widespread and mistaken idea that the technological culture which has been developing in the West is universal and that all people will eventually have to adapt to Western values as part of their modern industrial developments. The emergence of an industrial society in the Third World with its own cultural forms and values is possible only if it develops independently.

It would be naive to think that art or cultural activity alone can change the world or that in our cultural struggle we can ignore socio-economic and political forces. However, the struggle within the domain of art/culture against domination can strengthen the overall struggle. And therefore art must play its own due role in human struggle. No matter how small or marginal its contributions may look, it must not be substituted by anything else. It is imperative to recognize the limitation of art. Beyond or below its inherent social function it becomes a mere propaganda or decoration. However, art must constantly stretch its boundaries beyond the academic/bourgeois limits to reflect upon the changing human condition.

We recognize that cultural struggle is part of class struggle. We do not, however, prescribe to any dogmatic or/and sectarian line. Nor do we accept the primacy of one particular style of art activity over the rest. Our position is clearly expressed by Eduardo Galeano: "The culture of resistance uses all the media at its disposal and does not allow itself the luxury of wasting any means or opportunity of expression."

We do not accept the romanticized necessity of material poverty for the artist. To demand for the recognition of one's art activity and to accept money for one's work is not careerism.

*Black Phoenix* does not constitute a corporate body. The various opinions expressed in the journal are those of the contributors and we do not necessarily agree with all of them.

We have started this magazine in very difficult conditions. Everything seemed to be against us: lack of proper expertise, lack of experience of professional writing, lack of material resources and money, etc. It was only the will to survive and struggle that enabled us to take the plunge. We now need your help to continue this struggle. We need your contributions (statements, articles, etc.) and material support (subscriptions, donations, etc.) as soon as possible as to enable us to bring out the next issue in time.

## Adrian Piper

### Cheap Art Utopia

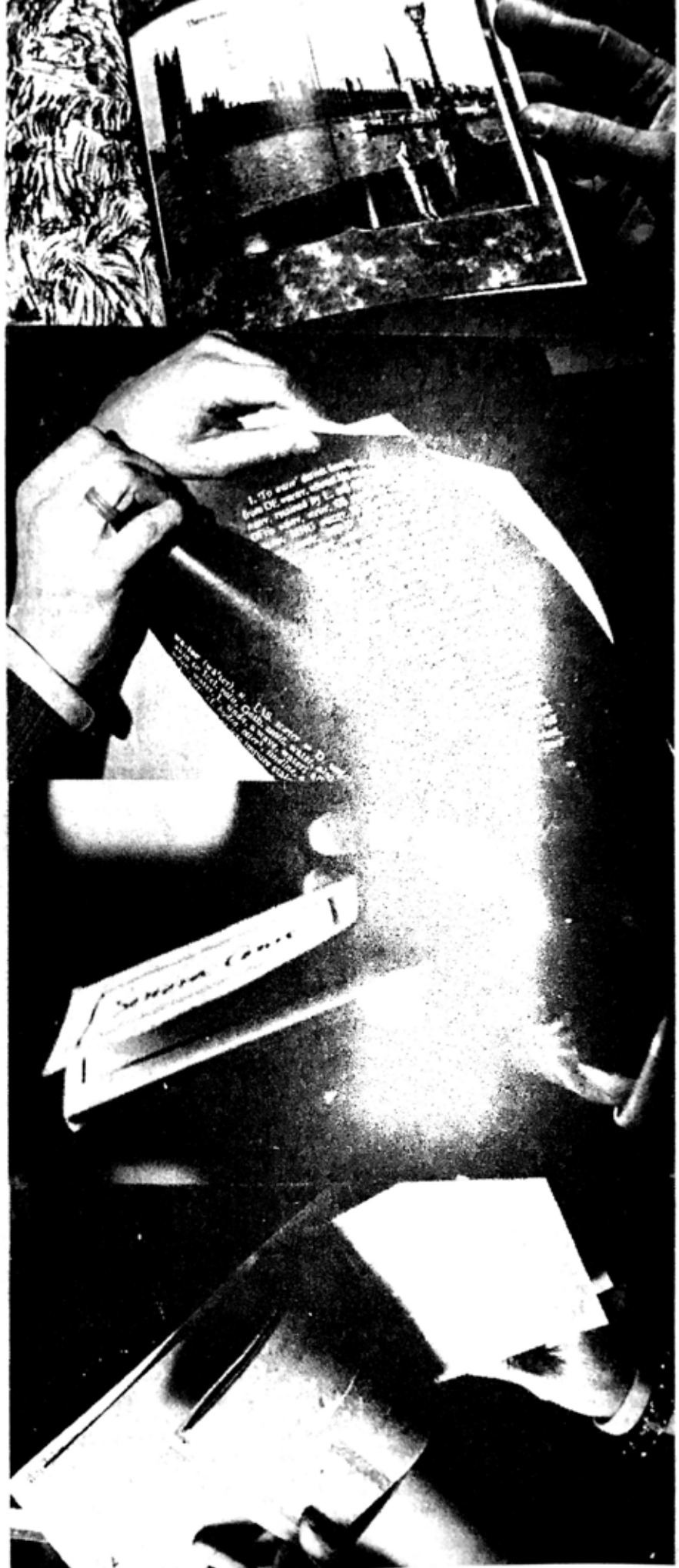
Suppose art was as accessible to everyone as comic books? as cheap and as available? What social and economic conditions would this state of things presuppose?

(1) It would presuppose a conception of art that didn't equate spatiotemporal uniqueness with aesthetic quality. People would have to be able to discriminate quality in art without the trappings of preciousness, e.g. the gilt frame, the six-figure price tag, the plexiglass case, the roped-off area around the work, etc.

(2) It would presuppose a different economic status for artists. Since art would be cheap and accessible, artists could no longer support themselves by receiving high prices for their work. Their situation would be comparable to that of writers, for whom first editions, original manuscripts and the like play virtually no economic role during their own lifetime.

(3) Therefore art dealers would bear much the same sort of economic relationship to artists that agents bear to writers: perhaps just as symbiotic (we should no longer fool ourselves into thinking of the relationship as parasitic), but not nearly as lucrative an enterprise as art dealing is now. Economically, artists' and art dealers' profits would diminish proportionally.

(4) Since artists' revenue would depend more on volume of sales than on making a killing on the yearly masterpiece, artists would gradually feel increasingly disposed to make their work palatable or relevant to a larger segment of society than that which now constitutes the art world. Some would equate this increased popularity (literally) with a decline in aesthetic quality; these individuals would become bitter, dogmatically elitist, and comfort themselves with the thought that their work represented the last bastion of aesthetic integrity. Others would find that this state of things no longer fueled their images of themselves as rare and special persons, and so would



dessert art for flagpole-sitting.

(5) Artists would get feedback on their work from this larger segment of society, and no longer just from the relatively small, highly-educated percentage of the population that have the leisure and developed aesthetic inclination to frequent museums and galleries and read art magazines. This would be a particularly unpleasant experience for those artists whose work requires for its appreciation the advanced cultural education on which it currently feeds.

(6) The social role of art critics would be invested with greater responsibility because they would be legislating aesthetic standards (as they always do in fact) for a much larger audience, the political and economic orientation of which would be very different from that of the current art audience.

(7) It would be easier for more artists to publicize their work without going through the political process of selection now required (i.e. where you went to art school, who you know, where you live, whether you've gotten "written up" and by whom and where, who you've slept with, where you hang out, etc.). So new, *aesthetic* standards would have to evolve in order to discriminate mediocre from first-rate work, rather than the standard of simply having been sifted through this process itself. Also, people would actually have to develop these new standards themselves instead of leaving all the hard work to critics, since there would not be enough famous critics to pass judgement on all the work.

(8) The social responsibility of artists would increase proportionally with that percentage of the population her or his work affected. Some artists would meet this challenge by becoming more conscious of, and exerting more control over, the social implications of their work. Others would get scared and retreat to the old "Don't-ask-me - I - just - make - the - stuff - God - works-through-me" routine. Still others would run for President.

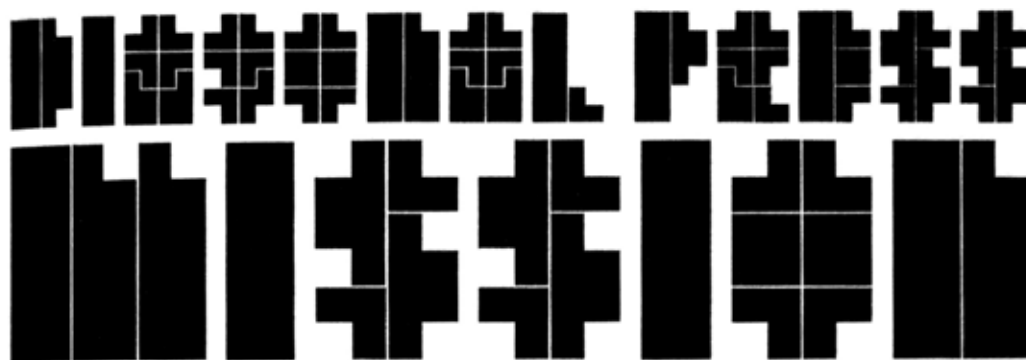
Distributing art in books would make it as cheap and accessible as comic books. And that would change a lot of things.



from Learning to Swim (Le Style Français) by Robert Morraan

# Diagonal Press Mission

Tauba Auerbach 2013



EST. 2013 TAUBA AUERBACH  
PUBLICATIONS IN OPEN EDITIONS  
NOTHING SIGNED OR NUMBERED

.TO MAKE ART IN THE FORM OF PUBLICATIONS.

.TO PUBLISH REFERENCE MATERIALS THAT SUPPORT  
EXHIBITIONS, EXPERIMENTS AND OTHER PEOPLE.

.TO DEVISE A BUSINESS STRUCTURE IN WHICH THE PUBLICA-  
TIONS ARE AFFORDABLE AND THEIR VALUE DETERMINED BY  
WHAT ONE MIGHT GET OUT OF OWNING THEM, RATHER THAN  
FROM RESELLING THEM.

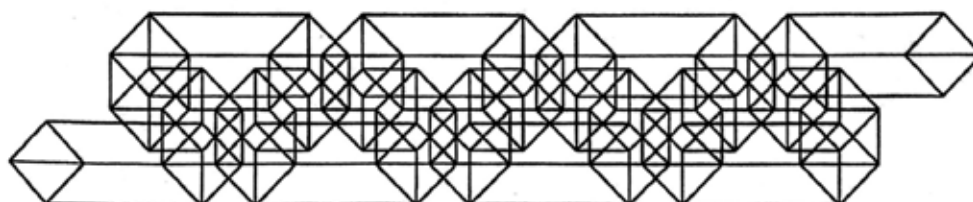
.TO EXPLOIT THE PHYSICAL POSSIBILITIES OF CONSUMER  
LEVEL PRINTING AND BINDING PROCESSES, SUCH AS COMB  
BINDING, COILBINDING, PHOTOCOPYING AND RUBBER STAMP-  
ING, AND TO USE THESE TECHNOLOGIES IN INVENTIVE WAYS.

.TO EXECUTE PRODUCTION IN-HOUSE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.

.TO OPERATE WITH AUTONOMY AND INTEGRITY.

.TO AVOID CONFUSING INTEGRITY WITH RIGIDITY.

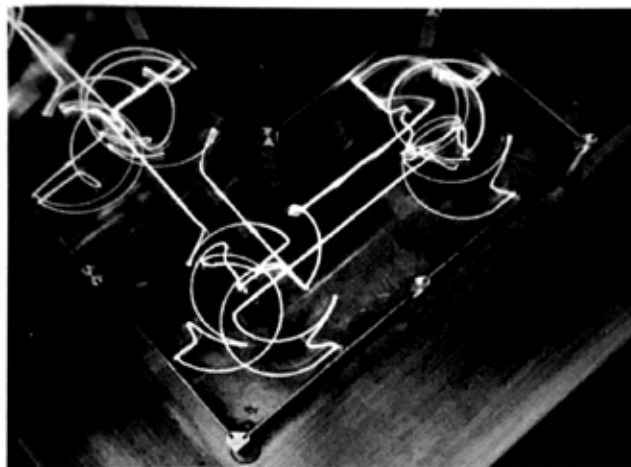
.TO PARTICIPATE MEANINGFULLY IN THE PRESENT AND  
NECESSARY PSYCHIC SHIFT.



# The Twelve Tasks of the Publisher

Jan Wenzel 2014

Jan Wenzel, "The Twelve Tasks of the Publisher," trans. Kathleen Reinhardt and Jesi Khadivi, *Graphic 30* (Summer 2014).  
Translation revised and adapted in 2018 by Alexander Zondervan and Raúl Fernández Gil.



### The First Task of the Publisher: Circle Around the Present

First of all, the work of a publisher is a quest; were one to look at one's actions from the outside, one would describe a scheme of movements similar to that of Claude Shannon's mouse "Theseus" executed in the maze. The publisher's strongest impulse is the desire to make the fleeting present visible and legible. Now and now and now. Books are traces of this exploratory movement.



### The Second Task of the Publisher: Organize the Community of Producers

According to Jean-Luc Godard, "If you want to make a film, you need two people." The same goes for books. This means that one absolutely cannot work on a book alone.

Books derive from a collective process, in cooperation with others—just like a film or a play. Organizing the community of producers is the task of the publisher. It is he who brings the different actors together; he ensures that everyone involved in a book's production enters into a cooperative process of exchange. To do so, the publisher needs ingenuity, intuition, and cunning. A feel for chances as well as the ability to deal with uncertainties.

In 1970, the designer Hans Peter Willberg emphasized the importance of cooperation to a book's success. He said then: "If we want to make books which accommodate the reader by being more alive, more fluid, more intensive and more informative, a fundamentally different path has to be taken right from the outset: The book must be conceived as a film script, which is then realized down to the smallest detail by the text authors—be they typographer, designer, photographer, illustrator, or all of them together—working equals in the closest possible collaboration. The great creative individual cannot meet the new demands—only the team can do it."



### The Third Task of the Publisher: Study the Medium

A library is for a publisher what a dictionary is for a translator—an opportunity to understand even the smallest conceptual differences and to ascertain variations and possibilities of linguistic expression. When he grabs particular books from the shelf, it's often not to read them, but rather to study how they were made. This kind of research has multiple stages: at the beginning the pure materiality of the books concerns him first and foremost. Perhaps he wonders in the back of his mind how a certain book, one that's already in production, should be designed. What is the proper format? Should it be thick or thin, big or small? What kind of binding should it have? What type of paper? To reach these decisions, it's helpful to look at several different books at once, to page through them and to lay them next to one another on a table. Another question is how certain content can be organized on the page of a book. How can the book's contents be organized to compel the reader? In what way can the different parts be placed into a context; how can they be arranged in order to guide the eye across the leaf? The larger the format, the more complex the relations between the main body of text, footnotes, translation, illustrations, and captions can be. And last but not least, other books offer helpful visual aids for the choice of font and questions of typographical detail. The publisher carries his library in his head. He knows his toolbox. He knows that books are always made from other books and that the book's use-value lies not least in delivering ideas for new books.



### The Fourth Task of the Publisher: Continue to Tinker with the Medium

Continuing to develop the book medium possibilities for expression is among the tasks of the publisher. The hype surrounding the e-book since its emergence a few years ago can be interpreted as a symptom of a crisis. A task remained unsolved. Not that the book as a medium has become outmoded, but that the possibilities for us to articulate ourselves in its form are not limited to texts, but also include images and typography, as well as the book's materiality and format. The movement in-between images and programs that configure pictures and text, the intersection of objects and data, have become a practice of its own. This doesn't mean that text processors make paper obsolete but that we have to reformulate our approach to the old medium of the book. An approach to bookmaking not bound to text exclusively, but now opening onto the possibility to actively involve images and typography in the materiality and format of the book.



### The Fifth Task of the Publisher: Say No

The most important and most difficult aspect in publishing is to say "no," writes Christoph Keller. Saying "yes" is the easiest thing in the world, and will make you loved by everybody. Saying "no" is essential to a mission. If you want to say one single thing, you will need to say "no" to one hundred other things. The work of a publisher is critique in its most elementary form. He is like a doorman and whoever would like to enter the space of the book first needs to get past him.



Nach Korrektur

# gut zum druck

## The Sixth Task of the Publisher: Say Yes

Editing ... Layout drafts ... The first phase of editing, the second phase of editing ... Image proofs ... The dummy ... The "Print-ready" ... the second "Print-ready" ... The final print approval ... The notices ... The unbound edition ... The finished book.



## The Seventh Task of the Publisher: Printing

Printing is the performance of a book. Similar to the performance of a composition, the printing of a book is also a process that never leads to the same result twice. Each repetition has slight deviations. The printing process depends on too many intertwining factors: the printing press, the expertise of the printer, the paper quality, the temperature in the printing room, etc. Printing was attributed to the magical arts for a long time.

A work in the moment. And everyone who knows how much can go wrong with printing has great respect for the days when something goes to press.



## The Eighth Task of the Publisher: Distribution

Producing books is only half of the job; to bring these books into the world and to distribute them is the other. What is a book then? Is it the object that one can take into his or her hands? Or does this object only first become a book once it surfaces in many places and can be appreciated by different people—as an articulation that exists in a specific number of identical copies: in bookshelves, on desks, on night-tables, in public libraries. The publisher is responsible for the book coming into the world. Only through his distribution does it really become a book, beforehand it is only its shadow.



## The Ninth Task of the Publisher: Stand in the Market

To stay at the book fair stand for four days, and talk through all of them from morning 'til night with many different people, about many different topics: authors, designers, exhibitions, circulation figures, discounts, future plans, and political disputes; about temporary injunctions, reprints, paper varieties, and review copies. This is the market: a large self-manifestation of society. A place of exchange. And the publisher stands in the center.



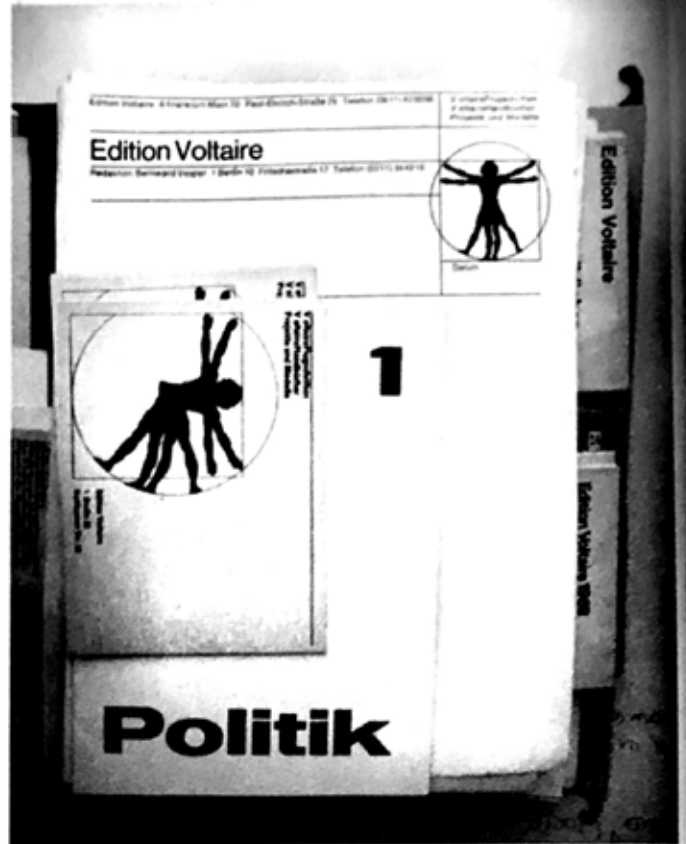
### The Tenth Task of the Publisher: Sustain Yourself

A publishing house is unlike any other business. It is intellectual labor and an entrepreneurial game. Profit and squander. A press has a self-imposed mandate to sustain itself. This means to be profitable enough to newly finance its highly complex program every year. That's difficult enough. The goal is: economic sustainability, intellectual expansion.



### The Eleventh Task of the Publisher: New Reception

If books are more than containers for text, if they articulate themselves through their design and their materiality, if complex constellations of texts, images, and typography are formulated within them, then this also means that we should re-interrogate what reading means. The publisher is a mediator of these new forms of reading: he reflects the products that he distributes. He is a teacher who introduces a new form of reading; a reading that no longer progresses linearly, but quickly skips to-and-fro between its pages, images, and texts. A reading from body to body, through which the hand understands the materiality of the book and grazes its surfaces; a reading that is more than information consumption; an open exchange with the world and an echo of one's own existence.



### The Twelfth Task of the Publisher: The Press

A press is more than the sum of its books. It is a space where a variety of ideas and characters come together and form a new context. To design this force field is the publisher's actual mission. Henri Lefebvre solidified the formal distinctions of publishing processes by using the analogy of cities. And although every publisher produces books, publishers differentiate themselves from one another as strongly as cities do: in the atmosphere, the size, the liveliness, and the pace that they produce according to, as well as what is possible in a place—now and in the future.

