book Collection of blank and/or image-bearing sheets usually fastened together along one edge and trimmed at the other edges to form a single series of uniform leaves.

art book Book of which art or an artist is the subject.

artist’s book Book of which an artist is the author.


bookwork Artwork dependent upon the structure of a book.

book object Art object which alludes to the form of a book.
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AN ABC OF ARTISTS' BOOKS COLLECTIONS

Clive Phillpot, Editor

INTRODUCTION

Art librarians would seem to be more aware of the phenomenon of artists’ books today than in the past. While professional literature has not ignored the subject, there has not been much published in the way of surveys. It is hoped that this collection of articles will be of assistance to those who wish to find out more about artists’ books in the context of the art library.

One reason for an increased awareness of these publications is simply numbers. Artists’ books have been published for around twenty years, and although many titles go out of print quickly on account of small print runs, there has been an inevitable accumulation of titles. It is also likely that each year sees a greater number of books published.

Reactions of art librarians to artists’ books are mixed. Some are enthusiastic, perhaps for two reasons: a delight in the new, and the satisfaction of promoting the use of a multiple primary source. Some are bemused, perhaps on account of the range and apparent numbers of books, and the difficulty of evaluating and obtaining them.

The brief definitions on the cover of this issue may help to chart a course through the various terms applied to this area of publishing, but the very phrase ‘artist’s book’ is still of wide compass. Popularly, it does indeed refer to a “book of which an artist is the author” (or even the owner), but in the present context it clearly excludes the conventional autobiographies, collections of letters, and other familiar literary forms.

Artists’ books do not have any constant form or content; indeed, they sometimes mimic other types of publication, and can therefore be difficult to disentangle from regular exhibition catalogs or books on photography, literature, and many other subjects. I will not try to proffer quick answers on how to identify an artist’s book; it would take too long, and, besides, it would be an inevitably subjective answer. Like most areas of knowledge, contrary opinions exist within an apparently stable area of discourse.

Needless to say, such flux does not, and cannot, deter classifiers in their search for order. Quite early on the Library of Congress began to award certain publications the heading ‘artists’ books.’ It would be interesting to line up all the books given this accolade and try to determine how or why they were so designated—and why other books were not. I say this not just to have sport with the Library of Congress, which has the perennially difficult task of trying to find terms to plug every new leak from the barrel of knowledge, but to suggest that in this case they are indeed attempting the impossible. Determining the extent of an artist is not a simple matter, and it is extremely difficult when one is operating in a virtual vacuum.

But one can also overstress problems of categorization. The easiest and simplest—maybe the best—approach is to treat artists’ books as artist monographs, where possible, and integrate them with the main collection. If some books stray outside the confines of the art book collection, they may do some useful work elsewhere. They are, after all, easily retrieved once cataloged and classified.

One of the aims of this collection of articles is to provide accounts of problems, and to record attempts at their solutions, by a number of librarians with different perspectives. It is hoped that art librarians who may have been holding back from getting involved will take the plunge after realizing that while artists’ books might seem to generate a whole new cluster of problems, these problems taken singly are in fact quite familiar to the experienced librarian, whether they relate to cataloging, preservation, acquisition or whatever.

Finally, I would encourage you to regard these articles as no more than what they set out to be: notes about work in progress. As with any article in a magazine, some details are out of date even by the time of publication—this is inevitable when one discusses current practice. As you read through, note the overlapping and repetition of different writers; here may be the beginning of a consensus on the subject. And please heed Janet Dalberro’s appeal for more information. Librarian-ship is a profession where cooperation is paramount. Help enrich the pool of knowledge on this subject.

Clive Phillpot
Museum of Modern Art

ACQUISITION OF ARTISTS’ BOOKS

Multiple edition artists’ books are increasingly a subject of interest to art libraries which are looking to develop a special collection. Artists’ books have been recognized as a primary source of contemporary art and documentation, but have often been difficult to evaluate and acquire. Their selection and acquisition in Britain was systematically treated in 1977 by Clive Phillpot; however, since his text was published, information about artists’ books has increased tremendously. As well as numerous exhibitions and articles, there have been three conferences on artists’ books in the United States alone.

There are also many more artists’ books on the market. According to a major distributor’s catalog published in 1980, over 2,000 artists’ books were published in the 1970s. A 1982/83 addenda from the same distributor lists an additional 400 works. The quantity of material is staggering and there is a corresponding need for more discussion of evaluation and selection of individual works.

Although the problems of selection as discussed by Phillpot remain the same, there are now more outlets for distribution and acquisition. The following introduction will attempt to provide a more detailed analysis of today’s market.

EVALUATION


Recent checklists from exhibitions such as Franklin Furnace Archive’s The Page as Alternative Space (1969–1981) and Vigilance: Artists’ Books Exploring Strategies for Social Concern, note that the publications exhibited are available from Printed Matter distributors. Art In Form, another distributor, also published a checklist, Oppo- sitions, classified by subject, whose materials also are available for purchase.

More recent exhibition catalogs, such as Tim Guest’s Books By Artists (1979), Künstlerbücher (1979–81) and especially Re:Pages (1981) are sources of excellent illustrations of some of the books in the
shows. The 1982 International Artists’ Book show catalog from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago has black-and-white illustrations of the catalog, as well as a set of approximately 40 accompanying color slides which can be purchased.

In addition to catalogs and checklists, several magazine issues have provided a complete forum for artists’ books, for example: Artery (April 1982), Art-Rite (Winter 1976/77), Dumb Ox (1977) and TriQuarterly (1975). Current reviews as well as past reviews should provide a good source of evaluation of books. The New Yorker (January 1982) and Art News (December 1981) both surveyed the field, while reviews of individual books are found in a number of contemporary art journals.

Several periodicals treat artists’ books consistently. Umbrella has the largest section listing artists’ books, as well as extensive information on exhibitions and catalogs. The listings are mainly descriptive with as much information as the artists have provided, sometimes with a price. There is no critical evaluation of the book listed, since its inclusion in the publication is an indication the editor thinks well of it.10 Most of the books reviewed in Umbrella are either available directly from the artist or from Artbooks bookstore in Los Angeles. Afterimage alternates short synopses with long reviews which generally are more critical of the artists’ intent and the scope of artists’ books. A good example of this criticism is Martha Gever’s analysis of the Synapse Press publications, 11 “Artists’ Books: Alternative Space or Precarious Object?” (1983). Art Commentary, which is generally, Flash Art, Rolling Stone, and The Village Voice sometimes look at artists’ books. Flu, the publication of Franklin Furnace Archive, generally does not review works, even though they receive copies of works for donation.

The best way to evaluate artists’ books is to see them before purchase. There are a few bookstores across the country which sell artists’ books (list follows). Phillpot stressed that “(the) passive acquisition of information should ideally be augmented by the active foraging of the librarian … instead of buying blind, relying solely on a blurb or buying second-hand by recommendation.” However, it is not always possible to see the books, so the librarian has to rely on buying some material sight unseen by catalog. Here the criteria of the author’s reputation, quality of the press, reviews or exhibitions, and general knowledge of artists’ books are called into play.

ACQUISITION

The current Printed Matter Catalog 1981 runs 150 pages and has an Addenda for 1982/83 with 400 entries. The catalog is extremely large because Printed Matter follows a policy of accepting any artist’s book for distribution.11 In the catalog, author, title and publisher’s information, as well as a brief description and sometimes a quote from a review may be included. The printed information is computer generated and tightly fit, interspersed with illustrations from the pages of the books, giving an idea of content, but not the format or sequence of the book. For initial purchasers of artists’ books this may be a difficult catalog to use without prior evaluation. However, it is the most wide ranging and comprehensive review.

The Art Metropole Catalog #9 has fewer entries but somewhat more evaluative features. According to the catalog introduction, it “... presents a more informative and selective body of work.” The catalog features both artists’ books and documentation of artists’ books like Printed Matter, but the former are targeted by a dot in front of the entry. Items of special note, according to the Art Metropole staff, are placed in boxes on the page, with evaluative notes which simplify catalog skimming as well as putting Art Metropole staff recommendations in context for the reader. There appears to be little duplication between the Art Metropole catalog and Printed Matter’s.

Writers & Books (formerly the Book Bus) has a wide ranging catalog for 1982, which lists literary works not found in the other catalogs but artists’ books which are. Their Fall 1982 Complete Book List, however, is arranged by publisher, which allows selection by press, or a quick check to see if there is anything new from a publisher.

For beginning a collection, three distributors offer “starter” collection probes which is based upon staff knowledge and selection. Printed Matter’s Board of Directors selected books for Heart: A Collection of Artists’ Books for Libraries, Museums and Collections, “... many of which will become classics of contemporary art. The sheer volume of work, however, makes it difficult to grasp the genre in its entirety.”12 Heart has 200 books which sell for $1,300 plus $50 shipping. As a “seed collection” it encompasses the many facets of artists’ books, such as pop, pop, conceptual, feminist, photography, etc. Anything in the brochure (first printed in 1980) which has gone out of print is replaced by another item. According to Nancy Linn, Printed Matter’s director, two libraries have purchased the complete Heart collection, while others have selected individual items.13 There is also a small collection of ten books available for $50, which is a sampler of the range of artists’ books. While the Heart collection seems to be a bit large, this sampler collection of ten works is perhaps a bit too small and wide ranging.

Art Metropole doesn’t have a pre-set list, but will work with libraries to determine a basic list. Like Printed Matter, Art Metropole offers an exhibition, “Books by Artists,” which allows institutions to rent the show then keep the copies of the multiple edition artists’ books for the collection.

The Visual Studies Workshop Book Service will also work with libraries to build a “seed collection.” According to their 1982 pamphlet, the collection would be approximately 15–30 books (three to five per category). These can be purchased as a collection, or rented as an exhibition (approximate prices are $75 to rent, $200 to purchase.) In addition to “starter” collections, all three distributors have specialized lists of books which tend to target titles in categories better than general catalog lists, and all can provide staff consultation and standing order service for institutions which have collections started and need continuation. Printed Matter’s specialized bibliographies include: Speaking Volumes: Modern Women’s Artists’ Books; and the previously mentioned, Vigilance: Artists’ Books Exploring Strategies for Social Concern, as well as specialized lists on Fluxus, flip books and photography. Art Metropole will develop lists specifically for clients. Samples of lists on performance and video art are included in their Catalog #9. Visual Studies Workshop Book Service’s specialized collection lists which are in development, include Language and Image, Visual Sequence, Documentation, Diaries/ Journals/Correspondence/Notebooks.

There are other smaller distributors which are excellent sources for artists’ books. Umbrella publishes lists of these catalogs and addresses as they become available. One of the best sources of quality materials for collections are books which come from artists’ presses, from persons involved with the presses or workshops on a regular basis, as well as persons who pay or have grants to use them. Many of the books produced in this way are also available from distributors; some presses will make arrangements directly with institutions.

INFORMATION

The process of building artists’ book collections necessitates more cooperative sharing of information. Umbrella is already the publication which lists the most information on artists’ books, and Judy Hoffberg, Umbrella editor, has indicated an interest in expanding this forum. Additionally, Afterimage has also indicated an interest in providing more space for the review of artists’ books and publications. The Visual Studies Workshop Press is planning a book on the history and criticism of artists’ books by Helen Brunner, which will also include information on collections. This article and the following lists and bibliography are steps toward sharing information about artists’ books. Your help would be appreciated in expanding the information available on all aspects of artists’ books: bibliographies, bookstores, presses, collections, etc., for compilation into a working manual/ directory. Send information to: Janet Dalberto Collection Management, Library, Virginia Commonwealth University, 901 Park Ave, Richmond, VA 23284.

Janet Dalberto
Virginia Commonwealth University

FOOTNOTES

4. “‘Artwork in Bookform’ pamphlet (Heart collection), Printed Matter (1980).

Germano Celant, Book as Artwork 1960/72, (London: Nigel Greenwood, 1972); Interfunktionen, no. 11, 1974; VH 101, no. 9, (Autumn 1972); and Data, 1, no. 1 (Sept. 1971).

6. This excludes periodicals which are in themselves anthologies of artists’ productions, such as Art Journal, Summer 1982; Obscura: The Journal of the Los Angeles Center for the Photographic Arts, September-October, 1981; Washington Review, vol. 7, no. 2, etc.


10. “‘Artwork in Bookform’ pamphlet.

11. Linn, see note 9.


ARTISTS’ PRESSES

Chicago Books
144 Franklin St.
New York, NY
212-226-8456

Coach House Press
401 (Rear) Huron St.
Toronto, Canada MSS 2G5
416-979-2217

Nexus Press
360 Fortune St. NE
Atlanta, GA 30312
404-577-3579

Open Studio
187 E. Market St.
Rhinebeck, NY 12572
914-876-6776

Tyler Offset Workshop
Temple University
Beech and Penrose
Elkins Park, PA 19126
215-224-7575

Visual Studies Workshop Press
31 Prince St.
Rochester, NY 14607
716-442-8766

Women’s Graphic Center
Women’s Building
1727 N. Spring St.
Los Angeles, CA 213-221-6161

Women’s Studio Workshop
PO Box 5
Rosedale, NY 11247
914-658-9133

Writer’s Center Offset Press
4800 Sangamore Rd.
Bethesda, MD 20816
301-299-0930

**MAJOR DISTRIBUTORS (and their catalogs)**

**ART METROPOLE**
217 Richmond Street West
Toronto, Canada M5V 1W2
416-977-1685

Book Service: Ann McFarland
Current catalog is Catalog #9
Services: archive, publisher, bookstore, distributor, exhibitions, consultants

**PRINTED MATTER**
7–9 Lispenard St.
New York, NY 10013
212-925-0325

**VISUAL STUDIES WORKSHOP BOOK SERVICE**
31 Prince St.
Rochester, NY 14607
716-442-8766

**WRITERS & BOOKS** (formerly Book Bus)
892 S. Clinton Ave.
Rochester, NY 14620
716-473-2590

**SELECTED ADDITIONAL SOURCES**

Art In Form
PO Box 2567
Seattle, WA 98111
206-623-6381

Artists’ Publications in Print

Umbrella Associates
PO Box 3692
Glendale, CA 91201

Backworks
325 Spring St.
New York, NY 10813
212-989-3356

Nigel Greenwood, Ltd.
41 Sloane Gardens
London, England SW1W 8EB

Wedgepress and Cheese
Leifs VAG I 2-237 00

**BOOKSTORES**

Contemporary Media Study Center
Mid-City Box 651
Dayton OH 45402

The Greatest Little Bookshop
in the World
3412 22nd St.
San Francisco, CA
415-282-5666

Nexus Bookshop
360 Fortune St. NE
Atlanta GA 30312

Printed Matter
7–9 Lispenard St.
New York, NY 10013
212-925-0325

Jaap Reitman
167 Spring St.
New York, NY 10013
212-966-7044

Visual Studies Workshop Book Service
31 Prince St.
Rochester, NY 14607
716-442-8766

Woodland Pattern
PO Box 92081
Milwaukee, WI 53202

President: Nancy Linn
Current catalog is Printed Matter 1981 and Addenda 1982/83
Services: bookstore, distributor, publisher, exhibitions consultants

Executive Director: Joseph Flaherty
Current catalog is Bookworks 1982 with addenda Fall 1982 Complete Book List.
ARTISTS’ BOOKS—ACCESS AND PUBLICITY

The Atlanta College of Art is a four-year, degree-granting institution with a working library that circulates to many factions. The faculty, staff, students, curatorial staff of the High Museum, alumni, Associates of the College, and Atlanta Arts Alliance employees all enjoy circulation privileges in the 15,000-volume ACA Library. All these factions are considered during the collectin building process, but most decisions for the selection of materials center around one category, my first allegiance—artists. It is obvious, considering this orientation, that one of the most important and popular collections in the ACA Library is the Artists’ Book Collection. In addition to circulating and reference collections, others actively developed include videotapes, audio/sound recordings, a small rare books collection, and artist files/exhibition catalogs.

At ACA, the title “Artists’ Book Collection” is actually a misnomer. It should really be called the “Artists’ Publication Collection.” Librarians tend to get caught up in semantic play and this is a case in point. I have problems with the title “Artists’ Book Collection” because there are many categories of information and materials included in the collection that aren’t actually artists’ books at all. To explain further, I’ll list what is found in the ACA collection:

- Artists’ Books
- Books that are objects and unique
- Exhibition Catalogs
- Books of Documentation
- Artists’ Periodicals
- Artworks/sound recordings
- Various collections of books from small presses (accessed by press)

The collection is not therefore comprised purely of artists’ books, but since the title “Artists’ Book Collection” is much more enticing to the student artist, it is used anyway. Presently there are approximately 500 books in the Artists’ Book Collection, representing various artists and genres. The collection holds approximately 1,000 pieces.

Earliest available records reveal that artists’ books were purchased from Art Metropole as early as 1975.

The collection began to develop rapidly during the tenure of Gary Sipe, who was head librarian from 1977-1979. I am now in my fourth year as librarian at ACA and I inherited a collection of approximately 250 books. Selection in the early days was a bit easier, due to the small numbers available in print and poor accessibility and distribution. Now, with the proliferation of the artists’ book phenomenon, actual selection is much more involved.

While researching old records for the Bookworks Conference in Philadelphia this past October, I studied old invoices and was dismayed to discover how much of what was once purchased, purchased, and part of the ACA collection, was no longer to be found. Theft was a bad problem when I first came to ACA, but the tightening up of circulation and many other services in the library has helped reduce the problem. One reason that the artists’ books were a target for thieves in the past was the lack of proper accessionsing. No formal cataloging or classification system was used for them either. The collection was put in vertical files, in alphabetical order. It was obvious to the former librarian that this wasn’t working, so the artists’ books were moved several times before I inherited them, in boxes, ready for a new spot in the library.

Consideration of the theft problem led me to reduce what was once a large office to a small centrally located “nook” surrounded by the rare books to the left, the sound recordings and listening area to the front, and to the right along a long counter, the artists’ books. These collections can now be used and monitored at the same time, the only drawback being lack of privacy for the head librarian. I can cope with the loss of privacy more effectively than with the loss of library materials.

The artists’ books are in acid-free folders, placed in archival boxes. Folios, oversize books and objects/bookworks are on shelves above the counter as are the collections of small press publications. Students spend long, leisurely afternoons at that counter exploring the contents of each box. Cataloging and classification are in process and should be completed this school year. Temporarily, cross references have been placed in the card catalog to access artists represented in the collection, but since our students are basically browsers, they generally go directly to the collection to pull boxes at random.

A stereo unit and headphones are available in the same room to listen to the soundworks, and a selection of relevant periodical articles is on file by subject as resource material. If a student happens upon an example of correspondence art and needs back-up information or clarification, the Mail Art file has many articles right there on the same subject as the book he or she is reading. I found at least 172 cases that were actually resource books were included in the Artists’ Book Collection. They are now cataloged into the circulating collection. A bibliography of such titles is available in the Resource file.

While capitalizing on the visual orientation and browsing nature of artists I try to maintain sound librarianship with proper cataloging and classification of all materials for the specific searches of patrons as well. But, measures still need to be taken to publicize the Artists’ Book Collection in order to reach all possible patrons, especially when one considers that the location of the collection is outside the mainstream of normal library activity. A number of publicity methods employed at the ACA Library include:

1) Monthly exhibitions in the library proper, with books housed in secured glass cabinets. Students can request to see and handle a book on display at any time.

2) Bibliographic instruction lectures are required for all students through the academic program of the college. During these lectures I discuss the Artists’ Book Collection and share my enthusiasm with the students directly. This is often their first introduction to the art of the book.

3) ‘Mini-lectures’ given through-out the year at lunch time, which spot-light books or artists in the collection, are delivered in conjunction with the monthly exhibits.

4) An attempt is made to include in the college Visiting Artists Program those working in some capacity in this field. Last year David Buchan from Art Metropole spent a week in the library giving lectures on the collection, as well as several performances. I also worked closely with him in developing a strategy for the future of the collection.

5) Weekly visits into the studios to see individual students’ work (usually upper level) so that I can recognize whether certain students need to spend more time with a particular artist’s book, perhaps dealing with the same issue, or a book that could help a student develop an emerging idea. This placed my librarianship into the highly desirable mode that individualizes the librarian-patron relationship.

Although the Artists’ Book Collection is my favorite in the library, I unfortunately get to spend the least amount of my work week with it. I must carefully budget my time on the job in order to fulfill the multiple responsibilities of a one-librarian library. But I remain committed to the future development of the ACA Artists’ Book Collection, and as long as I can manage, in spite of inflation and the publication boom, I hope to devote a sizable measure of my budget to this important collection.

Jo Anne Paschall
Atlanta College of Art

ARTISTS’ BOOKS: FROM THE TRADITIONAL TO THE AVANT-GARDE

What do two years, building renovations, and lack of staff and funding have in common? They are all obstacles which the Artists’ Books committee (at Rutgers University) had to overcome in order to arrange the 1982 exhibition and symposium, “Artists’ Books: From the Traditional to the Avant-Garde.” Evelyn Appar, Judith Brodsky, Lynn Miller, Ann Montanaro, Ferris Olin, and Edward Pason creatively and patiently coped with each of these crises. The exhibition was the first “art” exhibit in recent times to be held at the Alexander Library, the research library of Rutgers.

The Committee examined artists’ books from all over the United States, and selected 40 artists, whose unique book objects would be featured in our display cases. In addition, we were fortunate to receive assistance from Franklin Furnace Archive and the International Paper Company. They provided us with copies of artists’ books produced in multiple editions, which could be displayed and examined by visitors to the exhibit. The Newark Public Library co-sponsored the exhibit. The New Jersey Committee for the Humanities came to our rescue financially by providing money for a symposium on the subject. It also proved helpful that we had the complete support of the University Librarian, Hendrik Edelman.
The exhibit was on display from February 16 to April 16, 1982. Since that time it has traveled to the State Library, the Newark Public Library, and other public libraries in New Jersey.

On Saturday, April 3, approximately 60 artists, librarians, book lovers, and interested people gathered to mark the exhibit. Clive Phillpot, Director of the Library of the Museum of Modern Art and author of the introduction to the catalog which accompanied the display, gave the keynote address. Although he took exception to the title of the exhibit, his illustrated talk gave an excellent overview of the topic and complemented the remarks of the other speakers. Clive essentially felt that book art was a more accurate term to apply to this art form. He strongly believes that multiple artists’ books have the greatest potential to help art reach the largest audience. Book art is a democratic art which needs neither galleries nor critics for its dissemination.

(Former) Exhibit Coordinator of Franklin Furnace, Howard Goldstein, discussed unique and sculptural artists' books. He described the work of Franklin Furnace and his personal affinity towards books.

Kathryn Markel, owner of Kathryn Markel Fine Arts Ltd., a mid-Manhattan gallery, spoke of her experiences with artists and collectors. Her gallery provides exhibition space for works on paper by contemporary American artists. She got into exhibiting artists' books through the back door, when her artists introduced her to the format. She will soon be publishing the work of Ros Chast, the New Yorker cartoonist, but sees the need for someone to found a business to distribute this type of work.

The last speaker of the day was William Dane, Supervising Librarian and Curator of Prints in the Art and Music Department of Newark Public Library. His edited remarks follow this report.

Lynn Miller, Project Director of the Artists' Books Committee, summarized the day's activities with the word "fun"—and that they were. Anyone interested in receiving a copy of the exhibition catalog should contact Ann Montanaro, Alexander Library, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ 08902. We ask that you pay in advance for the catalog which costs $5.00.

Ferris Olin
Rutgers University

Remarks:
To begin with the answer is "yes." You might well ask "What's the question?" It runs something like this: "Are artists' books and public library collections compatible?" The same positive answer can be extended to university and college libraries, special libraries, and museum libraries.

I propose to describe my experience with artists' books and their antecedents in the collections I have worked with over the last 20 years. The route has been a wandering one, characterized by a fascination with unusual forms and/or avant-garde content, and the voyage has only just begun.

The marriage of traditional library materials to the newer art form of artists' books is important, and is part and parcel of the few remaining vestiges of a true avant-garde spirit in the 1980s.

First of all, I'd like to give a little definition of mine which I think is good for artists' books. It is simply: book-like works by artists. These days, they come in two basic formats—those unique or very limited edition publications which are usually custom-made delicate works; or the mass-produced items which are turned out quickly and cheaply.

For individuals, the prerequisite for purchase is chiefly interest in the item. For libraries, however, more reasons than that are needed. These extra factors may be found in content of the work, in the format, in the materials used for production, or in a combination of all three.

Let's consider content first. What do you get for your money in the content of the current crop of book-like works by artists? The answer is a variety of topics and themes, many of which are extremely self-centered and highly subjective. Examples of such themes are love, politics, music, pornography, philosophy, food, photography, travel, art, human relationships, poetry, humor, mystery, and some surprises. As librarians, I don't think we should be too concerned about classification schemes. Place the works in one or two categories, allowing the artists' book format to take precedence in classifying.

Format and materials are two of the most intriguing aspects of the artists' book movement. Except for the unique item, artists' books utilize mass-production techniques and the large commercial printing and reproduction processes, which are done with vivacious abandon. Sample formats would include: loose-leaf, folded leaflets, printed messages strung together on hangers, videotapes, boxes with printing on the outside, and even printed matter inserted into the middle of the back of a blue denim jacket. One book by Diderot is described thusly: "Cut up books and newspapers were mixed with water and poured on the table and stuffed into sausage skins, probably stored in the refrigerator."

Samples of materials would include rubber-stamped images, Xeroxed sheets, metal, sandpaper and decals, photographs, ballowns. Musical notations, mimeography, and gorgeously decorated neckties pasted down on pages in a scrapbook format. Printed format and materials often give clear evidence of an amazingly high degree of originality and inventiveness.

It is especially in the format area of originality and inventiveness that the prototypes of artists' books began to appear with greater frequency in our various collections. These prototypes include fold-out books, books with spiral binding, shopping bags, pop-up books, and unusual magazines.

You might well ask "What are these doing in a public library that takes itself seriously?" There we have an outstanding artist; there we have a book designer or a production designer who understand what you can do with books; and, of course, there we have an author. These talents are the beginning, in a way, of what we understand today as artists' books.

We began to acquire some of these books, by chance, as gifts. For instance, we received the 20-volume Dieter Rot opus as a donation. A friend in this institution who has the series of books at his institution and didn't fit in their collection. They called to offer us a long series of books by Diderot (thinking they were his encyclopedia). We accepted, and when it came, it was Dieter Rot's magnum opus—his Collected Works. Afterwards, more genuine artists' books came into the collection.

Now that artists' books are firmly entrenched as a reality in the art world, they are being written about more in the contemporary art literature. It is time to think a little about why and how artists' books developed. About 15 years ago, many artists, including a great many women artists, began to seek ways to circumvent the art-world establishment, which they sometimes regarded as unproductive and hostile. Many artists with a message, either visual or ideological, could not bear to go through the rituals of acceptance at gallery shows and the resulting printed reviews. The burning question was "What to do with their talent and training?" Artists' books were the answer for some. Artists' books stressed ideas, not objects, and were inexpensive, at least in the mass-produced category. Artists' books were a natural outgrowth of the rise and progress of multiple reproduction techniques.

The modern art movement is dead, except for electronic music, art by computer, and video. The great intellectual movement started in 1905 with Picasso and Braque with Cubism has literally run its course. Architects now talk much of the post-modern movement. However, artists' books are a definite area for a genuine and pure avant-garde spirit in the 1980s. Many artists' books are modest in their production costs, and the whole enterprise, with the possible exception of distribution, can be kept under the artist's tight control.

Lastly, the modern movement grew up in a time when the rise of a particularly pervasive technology, the technology of mass production, coincided with a prolonged economic downturn. More and more hardware was clattering up the world. The job was to make the world less cluttered, and the tool for the job was functionalist aesthetics. Today, however, the situation is slightly different. Once again we have the rise of a particularly pervasive technology coinciding with a prolonged economic downturn. The result is information and technology. Like mass production, information technology is a mixed blessing. I feel that many artists turned to the mass produced artist's book as a way to make a personal statement, to counteract the vast amount of stuff which gets churned out by computers.

Finally, I would like to comment on particular aspects of the processing of artists' books in libraries and the philosophical justification for purchase or for accessioning from gifts. First, for smaller, more ephemeral items, establish a vertical file heading, label the items, and file along with your usual vertical file material. For larger, more substantial, book-like works, establish in cooperation with your catalogers a practical and workable classification arrangement, and place the works in reference in Princeton files or other standard shelving arrangements. By the process it is not what they are. We have used the umbrella number of 700.92 for the cover number for the artist or title. Exploit the collection by showing

Art Documentation, December, 1982

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the works in your exhibition spaces and make them easily accessible to all staff and visitors who show the slightest interest.

There are several positive points for acquisition by all humanities-oriented libraries. Artists' books cost relatively little. In many instances, the creators are part of a genuine avant-garde movement. Your collection can thus reflect the current art world, as evidenced by your artists' books. Your library instantly becomes a sort of art museum or art gallery, and becomes involved with dissemination of art, not just its documentation.

As Clive Phillpot wrote in the 1977 Art Library Manual, "There is no reason why books of visual artists might not eventually become a recognizable element in any library collection." That is certainly even more true now than in 1977. One note of caution: many of the works are terribly personal, and for some libraries, it may be better to acquire the less subjective materials, those which have more universal themes.

To conclude, artists' books are a legitimate art movement of the 1980s. These book-like works are of considerable interest to librarians and library users. They can go together just as naturally as bees and honey, or ink and paper. One can be part of the movement simply for the fun of it, or to share in the larger contemporary world of ideas.

William Dane
Newark Public Library

SOME OF THE BOOKS PRESENTED AT THE SYMPOSIUM BY WILLIAM DANE

Los Angeles County Museum. Billy Al Bengston. Los Angeles, 1968. (sandpaper cover)
Studio Scarabee. Poppegon. Deventer, 1970. (tin box, opened with can opener; cover—paper wrapper pasted on can; contents include air cushion)
Source (music magazine, issue number nine (vol. 5, no. 1) Sacramento, 1971. (for music with samples and directions)

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ARTIST BOOK COLLECTING AND OTHER MYTHS OF ART LIBRARIANSHIP

Quotation: Books originating on the other side of the world are accessible through the postal services, through book shops, or through libraries.


Apology:

Most of us are not, by nature, inclination nor intent, writers. Not even by virtue of being born and bred in the Southland where one really learns to talk, can this stubborn inability be overcome. I was asked to produce this article on The University of Iowa Art Library's collection of artists' books, documenting the how, why and what-for of the collection and its history. The bewildering uncertainty of the purpose of an artist's book provoked similar uncertainty in my purpose till insight was triggered by the request that the piece be a conversation. That same talk-awareness of the native southerner can never resist a soap box, thus we make excellent politicians, carnival barkers and coaches. The flavor of this gambo is not the result of carefully followed amounts, but by the cook's ability to evaluate and combine the qualities of a day's produce. Non-cooks can make a similar comparison to a politician's ability to work a crowd, and with this apology I begin.

It is impossible for me to write (talk) about an art library collecting and keeping artists' books without at the same time exposing some most personal evaluations of art librarians and art library collections. There is yet another Frank Lloyd Wright myth, and if you search long enough you are sure you will find it documented. Mr. Wright was asked by an all too innocent owner of a house not designed by Wright for his opinion on the structure. Wright's response, since it was asked and not volunteered, held no compunction imposed by his ego nor affronted aesthetic sensibility. In this nature, I provide no footnotes. Bibliographic references will be clearly enough defined to be located by any reader who should so wish. This discussion is not as rewarding as was the initial rush of rough thought—how perfectly in keeping with the aesthetic of artists' books.

Article:

Artists' books. Where did it all begin? How did the Art Library get involved? The beginning occurred long before the descriptive term appeared. A notice in a 1967 journal about the early work of some of the artists concerned Ruscha was followed closely by the comments of a student assistant who had seen Twenty-six Gas Stations (Los Angeles, 1962) and Various Small Fires (Los Angeles, 1964) and thought these efforts worthy of attention. All good librarians must be voyeurs, keeping an eye concentrated on those dark edges of activity where a spark just might be igniting a new flame.

Awareness was again triggered by the announcement of the publication S.M.S. (New York, Letter Edged in Black Press, 1968). S.M.S. is said to be a real partner of artists' book activity or not, is a similar library concern. The first issues of this startling innovation in printing triggered excited giggles from an alert and aware graphics instructor. On the other end of the spectrum, the Dean of Libraries showed alarmed concern when he discovered an issue spread across a book cart in the serials department where a totally baffled serials librarian was trying to decide if the broken plate was damaged in transit or, even more confounding, whether it was an actual part of the publication and not merely some bizarre hazard of packaging. The Dean's concern was calmed temporarily by a letter from the delighted graphics instructor as to the worthiness of our excessive expenditure for this title. His doubts were laid to rest forever shortly thereafter, when, at its early demise, the monetary value of S.M.S. almost doubled. The serials librarian was relieved of all responsibility by an agreement with the art librarian to accept the pieces uninspected.

What of the Ruscha pieces? We—smugly in the know—have chuckled over the early classification numbers of his titles—Dutch Details, NA 2835: HD 2571, Real Estate Opportunities; at the same time, was some of the sting of Ed Ruscha lost when he was relegated to that area of social significance N/X? Surely his patina of cynical preciousness was tarnished by automatic binding procedures which resulted in securely encased "books" in motel-colored plastic covers. Here it is necessary to pause and reflect on intention: was this work—a-day tampering really wrong? Edward Ruscha might find it a rightful continuing of his aesthetic process.

With more questions than answers, the library was unknowingly involved in collecting and living with artists' books. Some 12–15 years later LC would add the heading to its subject list. There soon was interest by the teaching staff for examples to show classes which were involved in making books. Other than Edward Ruscha, however, names were scarce and muddled. The nature of many books format made it necessary to put them into vertical file folders often uncataloged. Modest as they were in price, they initially demanded little concern about their protection. When a special piece became known, however, or when new editions appeared, it became another matter indeed. More often than not, the question at first was, "Do you have any artists' books?" Rather than "Do you have any artists' books by __________?" Librarians should listen to their patrons' questions as a beginning, rather than trying to evaluate materials on a preconceived method of library materials.

The idea grows, the interest expands, and agencies begin to crop up which are concerned with making these works available, and those
pulp catalogs start arriving on the desk. There is no attempt here at being historically accurate except in the awareness of The University of Iowa’s collection. Our first dealings were with Art Metropole, the Canadian dealers, and as I remember there was a problem regarding duty fees—books or art objects? Under such circumstances it was necessary to make some reasonable arrangements with those wondrous folk in technical processing. One of the great benefits to academic librarianship in a large university system is the magnificent service and consideration received from those departments where routine is paramount. The delight generated by a shipment of artists’ books with their incessant bafflement may be reward enough, but bafflement must still be faced after passing fancy falls away. The final response to artists’ books will most probably be that of the librarians foolishly and wise enough to collect them. Thus to that first question which, if answered correctly, gives direction to the total situation…What is this object we are confronting and is it possible to fit it into the library concept of a book? Author, title, etc. Actually, this is not too difficult. A few gaps here and there, but you really can give it the thorough formal descriptive cataloging treatment:

Yampolsky, Michael A. Dinosaurs on Fire, Los Angeles, Calif. (? the Author, 1977.
6 Disposable objects. 4 match-books whose covers are film “contact sheets” in plastic container with removable cover. 4 × 4 × 7 cm. (The catalog entry for Dinosaurs written by an intern at The University of Iowa, 1980–81.)
The collation is somewhat richer than usually found and the information is not gathered from the usual sources.
To this point all is smooth as silk, but then the troubles begin. The physical presence looms. We have a pink plastic box filled with match books. It won’t fit on the book shelf. It cannot be pressed into a folder for the vertical file. We do not have a book according to standard library definition. An object? An artifact? Can we convince that armor-plated guardian of treasures, the art museum, to squeeze together Chinese jades and 18th-century English silver plate to give room to this not even semi-precious object? NO WAY!! Is it worth any of this fuss? The matter of value other than monetary will be looked at a bit later.
We have to act now and I can give only partial answers since we are still learning to cope. At the moment, some adaptation on the early collector’s curio cabinet seems to be an answer. (A possible area of aesthetic investigation should be the wandering likeness between the artist’s book and the 18th-century pamphlet and equally so to the Victorian ladies’ craft of cotton work, or similar slide cards, and beads.) Some unused glass case, a lot of ingenuity and, even more, a few dabs of Elmer’s glue, could provide storage space and allow for display. Even classification numbers, if they insist, can be applied, similar to acquisition numbers in museums. If you can badger a storage closet and some shelving—Eureka—you are in business!
Conservation will be added to the unsolved problems in due course.
Why bother? If we wait a few years longer many artists’ books will have wheezed wearily away; some may already have. If money is available, there is no problem in acquiring material of earlier art activity and movements: Dada, for example. You take whatever is left. Time, chance, wear (perhaps even more than critical judgement) have made all the choices for you. Very devastating to your budget, but you can hardly go wrong.
Artists’ books, like all ephemera, ophenhandedly give the librarian an opportunity to be a librarian rather than a storekeeper. Why resist? For very little money, you can acquire a modest collection of works. The University of Iowa has acquired the LAICA Art Books & Booksworks for transportation cost as it was a problem for LAICA to store. Someone at Iowa had caught this information in a conversation and wrote a letter. Fortunately for all concerned, there is rarely a need for immediate action beyond this point. If you do so desire, you can come up with this idea. If the creators at their word, toss the works into a tray, put them on a reader table, and let them fulfill their brief moment of consumption. There is some conflict, however, when these same creators love and demand that these items, however ephemeral, be thoroughly and accurately cataloged and documented, photographed and tagged. One is amazed at the quantity of material one can obtain gratis for the promise of documentation. What librarian can resist making order out of this chaos? Again, time here is your friend, for user interest is most often general rather than particular, and if you can come up with one cardboard box, you can label it “artists’ books,” and you can always store it under your desk. How much of this material will be worth further consideration? After several spaced studies, let your eye and your intelligence make some choices about cataloging, acid free tissue and the curio cabinet. Dare to be wrong. You have offended no one, not even the budget committee.
What of the future? At The University of Iowa, I have been fortunate to profit from the spin-off from the Dada Archives located here. The governing scholars of this archive have received numerous inquiries from purveyors and collectors, for lack of a better word, of neo-dada materials. The archive, having realistically defined its purposes, could not expand to include this avalanche of peripheral material, and so the library has consented without further obligation to receive it. We have cartons and cartons of stuff, everything from 1960 protest comic books to artists’ books. This material will be processed when possible. It is first sorted, identified and described by students in intern positions and then decisions about its destiny are made by all concerned. Again, the hard part: what is it, and where should it be kept?
The unforeseen and exciting part of the venture (and at the moment it is little more than a gesture) is student involvement. An example: A graduate student, who has probably never used a library catalog, much less an index, has been struggling for months in his desultory way to fathom the mysteries of librarians’ methods. When he personally, and in the privacy of his own thought, starts with an object, an artist’s book, to which he has a definite response, and is faced with the task of describing the subject—“YUK!” may be his most adequate production. He must code/abstract this information into a usable, transferable format. WOW! Sensation becomes perception! The ever modest librarian is queried about all those divinely descriptive details which are the glue that holds everything together and which gives access to that treasury of human effort we expectantly guard. Enough said. At this time, this is all in delicate balance, but it is a beginning.
In conclusion, can the librarian add yet another responsibility to the agenda when he should already be filing all those catalog cards? Once again, it is impossible to resist that carnival barker’s urge. If librarians, even those beyond the scenes never seen by the human eye, are not primarily resources for learning, then we may as well become ribbon clerks.

Haran L. Sifford
The University of Iowa

SOURCEBOOK ON ARTISTS’ BOOKS

The Visual Studies Workshop is seeking information on artists’ book collections to include in its upcoming publication, Artists’ Books—A Critical and Historical Sourcebook. This book, scheduled to be published in the winter of 1984, will contain original articles; reprints of significant articles; an annotated bibliography of critical writing; a descriptive list of stores and distributors; and a survey of artists’ book collections.
If you or your institution has a collection of artists’ books or if you have information on the location of other collections, please contact Helen Brunner, Visual Studies Workshop, 31 Prince St., Rochester, NY 14607, 716-442-8676, for a copy of the survey or further information on the project. All those who participate will receive a copy of the survey results. Thank you in advance for your help on this project.
FRANKLIN FURNACE

Franklin Furnace is an archive of artist-made printed matter, especially artists’ books. Six years after its founding by Martha Wilson, its current director, several exhibitions at Franklin Furnace have included over 400 titles and a total of about 10,000 other items which include, besides duplicate titles: artists’ periodicals, mail art and ephemera, catalogs, assorted reference materials, posters, and audio work (both records and tapes). Besides functioning as a book archive, Franklin Furnace also sponsors programs which promote other text-related forms. There is a regular performance art series, as well as changing installa-
tions within the gallery space. Franklin Furnace originated as a space where artists choosing to work in media not comfortably shown in traditional galleries and museums could find an outlet for their work. As a part of this effort, we have also developed traveling book exhibitions and an internship program.

Since its inception in 1976, Franklin Furnace has followed its original policy of accepting any artist’s work sent to it (by artist and donor). There are no qualitative, aesthetic, or political judgements made. There is no formal budget for purchasing books at Franklin Furnace, so we rely on donations, primarily from the artists themselves. The first step is to ask artists to submit three copies of each title to us, if they can afford to. One is available for traveling shows, the other for in-house use, and the last left unused for the archives. Artists are asked to fill out bibliography sheets; of special concern is data on the number of copies printed, printer and method of printing when not obvious, and a signed statement by the artist. We then store these documents, most written in the artist’s own hand, which give us an original source for our catalog information. In addition, we have begun a project to collect resumes from those artists in our collection for whom we have little or no biographical data.

The collection is thoroughly international. We have an especially large collection of work from Western Europe (mainly England, France, Iceland, the Netherlands and Italy), Eastern Europe (Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Poland and Hungary, and some to mean self-
cially Brazil and Argentina), Japan and Australia. Not surprisingly, these works reflect their respective cultural and political environ-
ments. Most Eastern European, South American and Russian work is political; its media (carbons, handwork Xerox) reflect the exigencies of societies which discourage open individual communication. Bookmaking as a subversive act, as underground communication, is the raison d’etre of the majority of the books the archive receives from these countries. The Russian books that we have collected are “samizdat” publishing, a term which has come to mean self-
published work which is sent surreptitiously through the mail or is delivered by hand to avoid the censorship of official culture. Much of the work we receive from Eastern Europe and South America is best categorized as mail art; as such, it may be no more than a broadside, a picture, a postcard or a slip of paper. Franklin Furnace has over 100 books, and at least that many pieces of mail art, from Eastern Europe. One revealing work, which utilizes both handwork and a found printed object is Monty Cantins’s (Istvan Dantor) two books, Red Passport for East Europe and Blue Passport for West Europe (no date). Cantins’s books are nothing more than his own passports, on which he has drawn, colored, typed and collaged. Although this work, and the mail art we receive, are not books in a usual sense, they are collected and exhibited at Franklin Furnace and recognized to be historically significant work.

The books that a country becomes best known for abroad can be the result of the prolific activity of a single artist, organization, or group of artists. In the Netherlands, since the mid-’60s, over a hundred bulletins have been published by the gallery, “Art and Project.” Their belief that concepts are art forms, and their disavowal of art objects, are reflected in the austere white books which they have also published. Similar works has also been supported more recently by the Amsterdam gallery/printer/archive/bookstore, De Appel, with the result that most of the Dutch books in our collection are by conceptual artists. In Iceland, the presence of Dieter Rot, who has been working there on and off since the late 1950s, has stimulated a whole crop of young artists to creative book printing and design. A high percentage of the artists’ books which we have received from Australia have been published by the active artist center, “A Media Space.” A less formally institutional group of bookmakers is General Idea, a group of Canadian artists, from whom we have received five titles. In the United States, the proliferation and locations of artists who are involved in bookmaking are too diverse for any generalizations, although most of our books come from cities or from regions near schools, as might perhaps be expected.

The only generalization one can make about the format of the books at Franklin Furnace is that they defy description. They employ offset, letterpress, Xerox, handstitching, printing and drawing, and mixtures of these techniques. They may include photographs and collage. Today, as copying techniques become more diverse and sophisticated (color Xerox, transfers, transparencies) more artists take advantage of their peculiar visual characteristics and their cheapness (as was seen in the juried exhibition held at Franklin Furnace in winter 1982, “Copy Cat Show”). Also, in the last year, we have received a number of books which utilize computer imagery and word processing.

Artists’ books are printed on anything from fine rag paper to newspaper to tissue paper. Many of our artists purposefully choose the most ephemeral of paper to print on; a high percentage of these books are a conscious rejection of the livre de luxe which has for so long found a home in galleries and museums. Many times they are hand bound, with consummate craftsmanship; but they are just as often stapled to-
gether, put in “found” plastic binders, bound with metal rings, stitched or perfect bound, or spiral bound at a copy shop. Many, perhaps most, of our books challenge the parameters of book form. They may be boxes containing loose pages (like Dieter Rot’s Copley Buch #12, 1965); they may be scrolls, accordion-folded books, round books, cloth books, books in every conceivable container and material. We also have pop-up books, like John Pfahl’s 1974 Piles (appropriately titled, self-published).

Many of our artists strive to make the book form itself express an idea or feeling. Suzanne Lacy has made a book, Rape, which the reader has to violate symbolically in order to read by breaking its shiny seal. Marta Vanagi, a Canadian artist who also works in France, has made two evocative books in which the form acts as metaphor. In the first, Geographical Despair, a single sheet of paper is folded so that the text, composed of spare and seemingly emotionless words, continues around and around until the reader is caught in his or her own particular “geographic despair.” In Intolerable, by Abella, has made a book much like the paper creations that little girls make, those notes/hand puppets/omens which open petals by petal to ask “Does he love me, does he not?” In this way of a book, unlike the children’s game, provides no answers; on each petal is only a single word, read in random order, depending on how one opens the book.

We have books of every size, as well as every medium and format. One book may measure 20” x 24” (like Joan Lyons and Philip Zimmerman’s Prom, 1979) and one, for example, has a page size of 1” x 1” (like Suzanne Horvitz’s Sick of Love, 1979). We are planning to purchase, or ob-
tain by other means, more storage equipment to better house our collection of more than 100 oversized books and periodicals.

Although there is no ‘typical’ artists book, one can learn much by looking at a recent entry into our collection. This spring we re-
ceived Guide to Coloring Hair by Ann Fessler. It is offset and, like most books in our collection, it was printed at a small press (Magnolia Press) with the close involvement of the artist. It was printed in an edition of 400, and is unsigned and unnumbered. This is typical, for many artists choose print bookmaking to avoid the preciousness of unique art objects. Most of all, it is the tone of this book which is so representative of much contemporary artists’ bookmaking, as documented at Franklin Furnace. It incorporates found photographs (guiding women in coloring hair) with original writing, which ironi-

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PRINTED MATTER

Over the past few years, as the cultural focus of New York’s Soho has shifted from galleries and alternative spaces for the investigating avant-garde, to art emporiums and funky boutiques, the Printed Matter organization has maintained its commitment to expanding the audience and the power of contemporary art. That organization is Printed Matter, and it is none of the phenomena cited above.

Printed Matter was established in 1976 as a publisher and distributor of books by artists. Its intention was to create a medium that would, ideally, circumvent the commercial and critical high art establishment while delivering primary work to the average home. A pretty wild idea! In addition, the conceptual basis on which these works take their stance is fragile. They are inexpensive, unnumbered, unsigned, and to be produced in unlimited printings. They are not editions de luxe nor are they the “multiples” of the `60s which aped unique objects. These works are made for print media, not as an illustration or the second-best of anything, but artworks on their own terms.

One of those terms was the achievement of a populist art form through this medium. After publishing nearly a dozen titles Printed Matter reassessed its goals and methods. While producing PM Books had been a valuable activity, it was clear from the sheer number of works that were being consigned to Printed Matter for distribution that the most urgent demands of artists’ books were for marketing strategies and dissemination channels. At that point Printed Matter recognized and directed all of its energies into distribution, as a not-for-profit organization. Since that time Printed Matter has made its sole business assistance to the field of artists’ publications. Essentially, that has meant providing a service that would increase the accessibility of these works to the broadest possible audience. Here is where you and I come in; after all, we are that audience.

The most exciting avenue of introduction to artists’ books, records and periodicals is through direct contact with the works at Printed Matter’s bookstore. Located at 7 Lippencourt Street, just off West Broadway, a block south of Canal Street, it is, if nothing else, a welcome change from the spectacle of neighboring Soho. Simply furnished with display racks, chairs and a large table, this is a comfortable place to sit and become intimately involved with the works of artists’ publications. Printed Matter’s inventory of nearly 2,000 titles runs the gamut. It is the most comprehensive collection of available titles in print today. As the only distributor devoted solely to this material, its consignment policy is truly democratic—if it is original art conceived for the page, Printed Matter will carry it. As a result, its inventory mirrors every aspect of the medium. From International General’s early publication of works by conceptual artists to performance documentation by Mary Beth Edelson in Seven Cycles, Public Rituals; from Malevich’s book Suprematism to Tony Shafrazi’s lush and decadent document, Moomago; from Wally Depew’s plastic bag of soil entitled Earthbookword to Dick Higgins’ fwaur&kmbwhh which resembles a Book of Common Prayer; from back issues of the infamous Art-Rite to the audial edition of the equally notorious magazine, Just Another A$$hole—the comparisons are endless.

Areas of the store itself are set up to suggest comparisons and to lead from one work to another. On one wall, books are arranged under the headings of “oversized books,” “new titles” and “exhibitions.” The latter section changes every few weeks and has featured such selections of available titles as drawings, xerography, periodicals, performance-related books, feminism, the photographic image, classic artists’ books, color, flip books, etc. The range of artistic expression in any mini-show is startling. It will often cover the spectrum from Pop to Minimalism, from pure text to abstract image, from hand-made to hard-bound. In addition, about half of Printed Matter’s inventory is available for leisurely perusal. They are arranged on shelves alphabetically by author’s last name. (Sample copies of the remaining works may be seen upon request.) If you have a group of artists who always manage to pique your imagination, chances are you will find works by them here. It is also rather likely that these works will be somewhat surprising. Many artists approach the book form as a vehicle for stylistic departures on conceptual expansions. Consequently, many artists’ books provide hitherto unarticulated statements that provide insights into previously “well-known” bodies of work. A perfect example of such an occasion would be Ad Reinhardt’s Art Comics and Satire.

One of Printed Matter’s greatest assets is its staff. Accomplished artists in their own right, Director Nancy Linn, Nan Becker and Mike Glier know these books like the backs of their hands. Having dealt with these publications for several years, they have an understanding of the medium that is shared by very few other people in the world. Their knowledge of the thematic, aesthetic and practical vagaries of not only individual works, but specific artists and artist books presses the world over, makes these three people Printed Matter’s invaluable resource. They are as adept at supplying bibliographic information as they are capable of (and experienced at) ghost-curating innumerable artists’ books exhibitions and collections. For any library interested in acquiring a selection of these publications, Ms. Linn is happy to assist in initial selections, as well as suggesting arrangements for regular updating and enlarging of collections.

Also of particular interest to librarians and anyone contemplating building a collection of artists’ publications is the Printed Matter catalog. Full of illustrations and replete with lively descriptions (often from the artists themselves) it is the definitive bibliographic listing of these works. For four dollars one receives the major book catalog plus its subsequent addenda, listing new titles and a special section on artists’ periodicals. All works in Printed Matter’s inventory are available by mail order, as are a number of specialized bibliographies. Among them: “Heart: A Collection of Artists’ Books for Librarians, Museums and Collectors”; “Speaking Volumes: Women Artists’ Books” (selected by Lucy Lippard); “Vigilance: Artists’ Books Exploring Strategies for Social Concern” (selected by Lippard and Mike Glier). Catalog descriptions are produced with the aid of the artists themselves, collections are tailored to the clients’ needs, and distribution strategies are even debated with equal respect for the political underpinning of artists’ bookmaking as a creative practice as for the desire to bring in hard cold cash. A recent innovation is the temporary expansion of PM’s distribution channels to accommodate objects produced for direct mail ordering by Collaborative Projects, Inc., a group of artists who have worked in cahoots for a number of years as a corporation/alternative arts organization.

Engaging yet another dialogue, Printed Matter’s “window shows” have sought response from the neighboring community. Every month the bookstore puts on a new face that in no way resembles the kind of window dressing one would expect to find at Rizzoli’s. These windows are not promotional displays. Critic Lucy Lippard chooses, from proposals by book artists, installations that, to her mind, best utilize the “double page format” of Printed Matter’s two large windows as a forum for interaction with its audience of random passersby. These shows have focused on topics ranging from the arrival of spring to sterilization to police brutality. More often than not, artists’ explorations of these subjects have been provocative enough to draw the uninstructed into Printed Matter, where they will risk incurable addiction.

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Whether one comes in contact with the pleasures of Printed Matter through a window show, its catalog, or works taken from its shelves, the best way to use it is directly. Drop in, browse, buy a few books. The rewards will be endless. Take it from one who can't kick the habit.

Tony Whitfield

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CONTEMPORARY MULTIPLE EDITION ARTISTS’ BOOKS
A Bibliography of Information Sources**

1982


Includes Clive Phillpot, “Recent Art and the Book Form.”


Review of Kevin Osborn’s Real Lush.


Books about performance and bookworks.

School of the Art Institute of Chicago. *International Artists’ Books* Show. Chicago, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, c1982.

Catalog with illustrations; accompanying slide set also available.


Bibliography in progress; multiple and limited edition books included (watch main entries and duplicates); no annotations.


1981


Interview done in 1978, just published.


*Book review.*


Essays by Guest and Celant (*Book as Artwork* bibliography omitted); illus.


Review of Heineken’s HeeHee.


Review of NW Artists’ Workshop; includes artists’ books as documentation, statements of intention and artworks.


*Oppositions.* Seattle: Art In Form, 1981.

*Checklist of political works, also available for sale.*


Introduction by Peter Frank, exhibition catalog designed by Kevin Oshorn of the Writer’s Center Offset Press.


Overview of many artists’ books.


Part I, 1979 has multiple editions; Pts. II (1980) and III (1981) are limited editions. Illustrations in black and white.


Multiple and limited edition books with illustrations and artists’ statements.


*Review.*


Includes: *Courtship Patterns of Chairs: Seeing Egypt and Dick Higgins*.

1980


Includes “Bookworks Revisited” (see above) and “The New Art of Making Books” (see 1975).


Introduction is wordwork by Davi Det Thompson, checklists are of multiples and unique books.

**Help for this bibliography came initially from Judy Hoffberg’s photocopy files in 1979, and more recently from Clive Phillpot, MOMA catalog, and *Umbrella.*
Art Documentation, December, 1982 179


Swedish artists’ books, illustrated and described.


Illustrated but mainly deals with distribution problems.


Books by Lew Thomas.


Includes Buren’s Reboundings, GAAG, Apple’s Trunk Pieces, Acconci’s Think/Leap/Rethink/Pall.


1979


Checklist of exhibition of books in the collection.


3 sets of loose index cards to be interfiled; the intent was to document works even after the edition is out of print. No illustrations.


Review of exhibition about the nature of artists’ books.


Illustrates and describes books, including Ruscha Celender, Something Else Press.


“Fluxus.” Lightworks, no. 11/12 (Fall 1979).

Entire issue.


Deals with Baldessari, LeWitt, Ruscha.

Murray, Joan. “Two Exhibitions, Two Books.” Artweek, April 21, 1979, p. 15.

Books from NFS Press.


Checklist of an exhibition.


For Part 1, see 1972.

Ruhé, Henry. Fluxus, the Most Radical and Experimental Art Movement of the 60s. Amsterdam, A., 1979.

Loose-leaf documentation of artists involved in Fluxus.


Weese, Kate. Book. (s.l., s.n.)

History of books and description of trends in artist’s books, based on a master’s project.


Introduction by Robert Morgan; checklist of exhibition.

1978


Checklist 2.


Illustrations and good checklist of books.


Guest curators Peter Frank and Martha Wilson.


Printed Matter publications which include Trunk Piece, Childlike Life of the Black Tarantula, etc.


Includes mail art and stamp art in addition to bookworks. Good listing, no illustrations.


Includes Martha Wilson’s ‘Artists’ Books as Alternative Space.’


On Morgan’s ‘swimming’ books by New Welsh Press.


1977


Entire issue.


Entire issue.


Checklist 1.


Thoughts about the MoMA show.


Review of MoMA show.


Printed Matter editions.


Reviews Gilbert and George’s *Dark Shadows*.


Checklist of the exhibition. Introduction by Barbara London.


Overview of artists’ books, acquisition, cataloging, housing, etc.


Includes Judith Hoffberg bibliography; Lippard introductory essay.

1976


Catalog compiled by Martin Atwood. Texts by Richard Francis, Clive Phillipot, Brandon Taylor. Extensive listing of books; essays, illustrations.


Printed Matter packages of books including feminism, politics, land art, nature.


Franklin Furnace and Printed Matter blurb.


Strictly a visual survey.


Review of *Chinese Whispers*.


Introduction by Stephen Moore, essay by Carl Loeffler.

1975


Includes essays by Attwood, Clive Phillipot; bibliography, list of distributors.


1974


Special issue.


Documentation books.


1973


Few artists’ books mentioned in short analysis.


Essays by Lynn Hershman, “‘Slices of Silence, Parcels of Time’” and John Perrault.

Interview with Ed Ruscha.

1972

Bourdon, David. "Ruscha As Publisher/(or All Booked Up)." *Art News* 71 (April 1972).
List of books compiled by Celant and Lynda Morris.

1971


1970

Organized by Kynaston McShine.

1968


1964

Chapter on "Art Books, Book Art, Art."

Periodicals which consistently review artists’ books:

Long reviews, short synopses interspersed with other photography books.
*Art Com*, Contemporary Arts Press, La Mamelle, PO Box 3123 Rincon Annex, San Francisco, CA 94119.
Performance books especially reviewed.
New publication. Copy not seen but flyer indicates "reviews of xerographic books and publications."
*Umbrella*, PO Box 3692, Glendale, CA 91201.
The most comprehensive listing of artists’ publications; most books listed available from Artworks Bookstore, Los Angeles.

Janet Dalberto
Virginia Commonwealth University