

ART Documentation

Bulletin of the Art Libraries Society of North America

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.

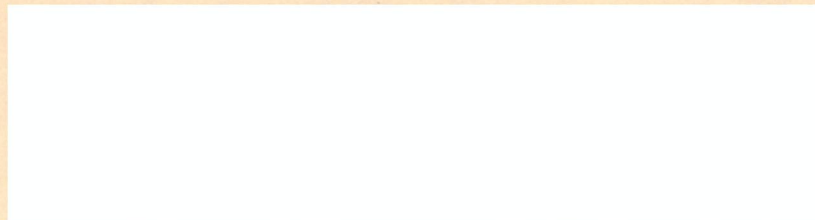
art book Book of which art or an artist is the subject.


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

book art Art which employs the book form.

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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ART Documentation

Bulletin of the Art Libraries Society of North America

Volume 1 **December 1982**
Number 6

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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. The outlets for artists' books have increased in number as well, though not dramatically, and they have improved their publicity and distribution. There are also substantial and increasing numbers of exhibitions of artists' books, and some consequent coverage in the art press.

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 intent 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 Dalberto's appeal for more information. Librarianship is a profession where cooperation is paramount. Help enrich the pool of knowledge on this subject.

Clive Phillpot
Museum of Modern Art

In the spirit of the above, here is a reassuring word not from our sponsor, but from the Senior Cataloger at the Museum of Modern Art, who has probably cataloged as many artists' books as anyone:

Cataloging artists' books should not be a problem. Realize that the rules for regular books will not always neatly apply to works that are art as well as books. Be as creative and whimsical as the artists who make them. Assign whatever headings are appropriate within the wider scheme of things; sometimes "ridiculous" headings such as "Parking lots—California—Los Angeles" might provide valuable access points (readers sometimes do forget the author and title) or might actually be useful to someone outside the art world. Finally, remember that the primary goal of cataloging artists' books is to provide access to them, not to analyze the artistic content or the artists' intent—that work can be left to the bibliographers and critics.

Daniel Starr
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,¹ but have often been difficult to evaluate and acquire. Their selection and acquisition in Britain was systematically treated in 1977 by Clive Phillpot;² 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' books³ 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.⁴ 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

The best overviews of the nature of artists' books remain exhibition catalogs which contain essays and bibliographies. Germano Celant's catalog, *Book As Artwork 1960/72*, in its various manifestations⁵ is an annotated essay followed by an extensive booklist, a few titles of which may still be obtainable. Other seminal exhibition catalogs include *Artists' Books* (1973) from Moore College of Art, *Artists' Bookworks* (1975) from the British Council, London, *Artists' Books . . .* (1976) from the Arts Council of Great Britain and *Artwords and Bookworks*, LAICA (1978). Most of the books included, though not all, are out-of-print. Additional information on artists' books in bibliographic form is available from the *Franklin Furnace Archive Artists' Book Bibliography* published in three sets of loose index cards between 1977 and 1979.

Recent checklists from exhibitions such as Franklin Furnace Archive's *The Page as Alternative Space c1969–c1981* 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, *Oppositions*, classed 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 in 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 *Tri-Quarterly* (1975).⁶ 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.⁷ Most of the books reviewed in *Umbrella* are either available directly from the artist or from Artworks 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 Gevers' analysis of the Synapse Press publications, "'Artists' Books: Alternative Space or Precious Object?'" (1982). *Art Com*, *Void Magazine* and, occasionally, *Flash Art*, *Rolling Stone*, and *The Village Voice* sometimes look at artists' books. *Flue*, the publication of Franklin Furnace Archive, generally does not review works, even though they receive copies of works by 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."⁸ 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 artists' book for distribution.⁹ 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 listing.

The *Art Metropole Catalog #9* has fewer entries but somewhat more evaluative features. According to the catalog introduction, it "... present(s) 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 on the line. 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 two 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" collections, whose selection 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."¹⁰ 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, minimal, 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.¹¹ 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.¹² 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

1. Beth Houghton, "The Documentation of Contemporary Art," *Art Libraries Journal* 5 (Autumn 1980), p. 16.
2. Clive Phillpot, "Artists' Books and Book Art" in Philip Pacey, *Art Libraries Manual: A Guide to Resources and Practice*, pp. 335-363.

3. Conferences have been held in Chicago (1978), Visual Studies Workshop, "Options in Independent Art Publishing" (1979), and Philadelphia, "Bookworks: 1982."
4. "Artwork in Bookform" pamphlet (Heart collection), Printed Matter (1980).
5. 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.
7. Judith Hoffberg, discussion at Bookworks: 1982.
8. Phillpot, op. cit., p. 360.
9. Nancy Linn, discussion at Bookworks: 1982.
10. "Artwork in Bookform" pamphlet.
11. Linn, see note 9.
12. Telephone interviews with Ann McFarland, Art Metropole, and Don Russell, Visual Studies Workshop Book Service.

ARTISTS' PRESSES

- | | |
|--|---|
| Chicago Books
144 Franklin St.
New York, NY
212-226-8456 | Conrad Gleber.
Publications include: <i>Sweet Junk</i> ,
<i>Chicago Skyline</i> , <i>Seeing Egypt</i> , etc. |
| Coach House Press
401 (Rear) Huron St.
Toronto, Canada M5S 2G5
416-979-2217 | Stan Bevington.
Literary as well as visual books.
Publications include: <i>Salvage</i> , <i>The Browser's Opal L. Nations</i> , <i>A Trip Around Lake Huron</i> . |
| Nexus Press
360 Fortune St. NE
Atlanta, GA 30312
404-577-3579 | Michael Goodman and Gary Super.
Publications include: <i>Ten Photographs with Instructions</i> , <i>Musical Book</i> , <i>Messages from Beyond</i> , <i>Parallel</i> . |
| Open Studio
187 E. Market St.
Rhinebeck, NY 12572
914-876-6776 | George Quasha.
Literary as well as visual books. |
| Tyler Offset Workshop
Temple University
Beech and Penrose
Elkins Park, PA 19126
215-224-7575 | Michael Becotte, Assoc. Professor.
Student press. |
| Visual Studies Workshop
Press
31 Prince St.
Rochester, NY 14607
716-442-8676 | Joan Lyons.
Publications include: <i>Map Projections</i> ,
<i>Nurse Duck Takes a Walk</i> , <i>When I Was Two</i> ,
<i>The Horsefetter</i> , etc. |
| Women's Graphic Center
Women's Building
1727 N. Spring St.
Los Angeles, CA
213-221-6161 | Sheila de Brettville.
Printings include: <i>Passport</i> , <i>Always a Bride</i> , <i>maid</i> . |
| Women's Studio Workshop
PO Box 5
Rosedale, NY 12472
914-658-9133 | Ann Kalmbach.
Publications include: <i>Sea Ribbons</i> ,
<i>Empress Bullet: an Allegory</i> . |
| Writer's Center Offset
Press
4800 Sangamore Rd.
Bethesda, MD 20816
301-299-0930 | Kevin Osborn.
Publications include: <i>Real Lush</i> , <i>Rope Trick</i> , <i>Blue Silk Silo</i> . |

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 <i>Catalog #9</i>
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
716-442-8676

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

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

Director: Don Russell
Current pamphlet is *Visual Studies Workshop 1982*
Services: bookstore, distributor,
publisher, consultants

Executive Director: Joseph Flaherty
Current catalog is 1982 with
addenda *Fall 1982 Complete Book List*.

SELECTED ADDITIONAL SOURCES

- | | |
|---|---|
| Art In Form
PO Box 2567
Seattle, WA 98111
206-623-6381 | Laura Millin.
Booklists on contemporary art. |
| Artists' Publications
in Print
Umbrella Associates
PO Box 3692
Glendale, CA 91201 | Catalog 1981.
Paid advertisements by artists. |
| Backworks
325 Spring St.
New York, NY 10813
212-989-3356 | Barbara Moore, Jon Hendricks.
"Documents of experimental art of the
50's and 60's." |
| Nigel Greenwood, Ltd.
41 Sloane Gardens
London, England SW1W 8EB | Booklists |
| Wedgepress and Cheese
Leifs VAG 11 2-237 00
Bjarred, Sweden | Leif Eriksson. |

BOOKSTORES*

- | | |
|--|--|
| Art In Form
2237 Second Ave.
Seattle, WA 98121
206-623-6381 | Contemporary Media Study
Center
Mid-City Box 651
Dayton OH 45402 |
| Art Metropole
217 Richmond St. West
Toronto, Canada M5V 1W2
416-977-1685 | The Greatest Little Bookshop
in the World
3412 22nd St.
San Francisco, CA
415-282-5666 |
| Art Research Center
922 E. 48th St.
Kansas City, MO 64110 | Nexus Bookshop
360 Fortune St. NE
Atlanta GA 30312 |
| Artex
3575 St. Laurent
Salle 303
Montreal, Canada H2X 2T7 | Printed Matter
7–9 Lispenard St.
New York, NY 10013
212-925-0325 |
| Artworks
170 S. Labrea
Los Angeles, CA 90036
213-934-2205 | Jaap Reitman
167 Spring St.
New York, NY 10013
212-966-7044 |
| Book Space
703 Dearborn
Chicago, IL 60605
312-663-4243 | Visual Studies Workshop Book
Service
31 Prince St.
Rochester, NY 14607
716-442-8676 |
| Bookworks
Washington Project for the Arts
400 7th St. NW
Washington, DC 20004
202-347-8304 | Woodland Pattern
PO Box 92081
Milwaukee, WI 53202 |

*Compiled by Don Russell for "Bookworks: 1982" and Judith Hoffberg in *Umbrella*, Dec. 1981.

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 collection 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 so 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
- Audioworks/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, another 125 books representing small presses, and, with the periodicals and soundworks, the overall collection holdings exceed 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 selected, 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 theft in the past was the lack of proper accessioning. 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, oversized 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 counter as the books for quick answers. In the past, many books 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 see 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 symposiums, "Artists' Books: From the Traditional to the Avant-Garde." Evelyn Appgar, 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 08903. 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 formats 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 deluxe 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 are largely the products of 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 Dieter Rot is described thusly: "Cut up books and newspapers were mixed with water and gelatin or lard and spices 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, balloons, 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. Another institution was given the series but didn't want it because it 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 in succession.

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 by 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 cluttering 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, but that technology is information 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 aids. Be certain to leave the odd formats, unique covers, etc., just as 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

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

Die Wiener Werkstätte 1903–1928. *Modernes Kunstgewerbe und sein Weg*. Vienna, 1929. (embossed cover)

Le Corbusier. *Des canons des munitions? Merci: des logis... s.v.p.* Paris, 1937.

Warja Honegger. *Folded Story, Wilhelm Tell*. Basle, 1962. (fold-out)

Edward Ruscha. *Every Building on the Sunset Strip*. Los Angeles, 1966. (fold-out)

Claes Oldenburg. *Store Days*. New York, 1967.

Los Angeles County Museum. *Billy Al Bengston*. Los Angeles, 1968. (sandpaper cover)

S.M.S. (magazine), no. 1–6. New York, 1968.

Dieter Rot. *Collected Works*. Stuttgart, 1969–

Studio Scarabee. *Poppetgom*. 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. (fur music with samples and directions)

Karl Gunnar Pontus Hulten. *Jean Tinguely "Meta."* New York, 1975. (book with snap-shut case and carrying handle)

Gilbert and George. *Dark Shadow 1974*. London 1976.

Tom Phillips. *A Humument: a Treated Victorian Novel*. London, 1980. (special edition with print, and 50-minute videotape)

Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (Lewis Carroll). *Alice in Wonderland*. New York n.d. ("Pop-up Classic")

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.

(*Artists' Books, Booklets*, London, 1976)

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 cooks. The flavor of a gumbo 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 I am 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 journal about the early works of Edward 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.*, be it 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 257, *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 NX? 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 material on a preconceived concept of library method!

The idea grows, the interest expands, and agencies begin to crop up which are concerned with making these works available, and those

pulpy 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 wonderful folk in technical processing. One of the great benefits to art 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 foolhardy 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? Archival document? Could we ever 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 all 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 objects of cotton wool, crepe paper, twigs 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, openhandedly 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 acquired the LAICA *Art Words & Bookworks* 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 so desire, you can take 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 *really* be filing all those catalog cards? Once again, it is impossible to resist that carnival barker's urge. If librarians, even those behind the scenes never seen by the human eye, are not primarily resources for learning, then we may as well become ribbon clerks...

Harlan 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, Franklin Furnace has acquired approximately 3,500 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 installations 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 book 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. We ask artists to submit three copies of their books 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 statement by the artist on his or her intent. 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), South America (especially Brazil and Argentina), Japan and Australia. Not surprisingly, these works reflect their respective cultural and political environments. 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'être* 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 Cantsin's (Istvan Dantor) two books, *Red Passport for East Europe* and *Blue Passport for West Europe* (no date). Cantsin'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 have 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 books. In the United States, the variety and locations of artists' 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, letter press, Xerox, hand stamping, painting 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 newsprint 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 together, 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, by the way).

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 red seal. Martine Aballea, a Canadian artist who also works in France, has made two evocative books in which the form acts as metaphor. In the first, *Geographic 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*, Aballea has made a book much like the paper creations that little girls make, those notes/hand puppets/omens which open petal by petal to ask "Does he love me, does he not?" But Aballea's 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 Phillip Zimmerman's *Prom*, 1979) and another, 1" x 1" (like Suzanne Horvitz's *Sick of Love*, 1979). We are planning to purchase, or obtain 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 received *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 printed 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 ironically subverts the apparent purpose of the book; it is definitely *not* a manual for coloring hair. To classify this book solely under the subject heading "hair" would be misleading, but finding an appropriate classification is a real problem.

If artists' books discourage facile categorization, so too do the artists who make them. They are often artists who work, or have worked, in many media. They are painters, printmakers, sculptors, filmmakers, conceptual and performance artists. Many artists choose to continue to work in various media, from video and soundwork to painting and photography. Other artists devote themselves solely to the craft and art of printing books. This pluralism and diversity is the very heart of artists' bookmaking. Whether artists make books to entertain, to puzzle, or to convince, whether they make them large or small, in offset or Xerox, with much care or great abandonment, the central aspect of this work is an assertion of the power of an individual's voice. As an institution, Franklin Furnace strives both to protect that spirit of freedom and to provide useful organization. It's an old and delicate struggle.

Anne Edgar

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 fashion thoroughfares, at least one 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 nurture an aesthetic 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 renegade. They are inexpensive, unnumbered, unsigned, and to be produced in unlimited printings. They are not *éditions 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 reorganized 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 Lispenard 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 genre 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 Malevitch's book *Suprematism* to Tony Shafrazi's lush and decadent document, *Moogambo*; from Wally Depew's plastic bag of soil entitled *Earthbookword* to Dick Higgins' *foew&ombwhnw* which resembles a *Book of Common Prayer*; from back issues of the infamous *Art-Rite* to the aural edition of the equally notorious magazine, *Just Another Asshole*—the comparisons are endless.

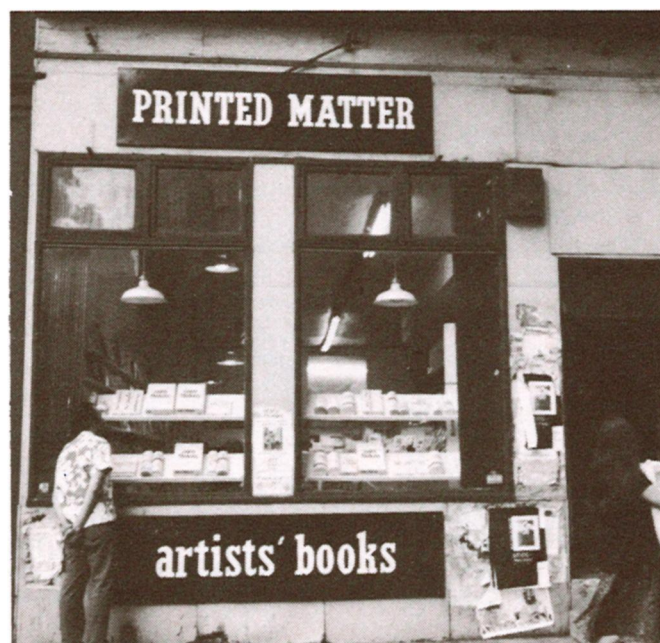
Areas of the store itself are set up to suggest comparisons and to lead from one work to another. On one wall, books are arranged under the headings of "oversized books," "new titles" and "exhibitions." The latter section changes every few weeks and has featured such selections of available titles as 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 book 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 uninitiated into Printed Matter, where they will risk incurable addiction.



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

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

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Periodicals which consistently review artists' books:

Afterimage, Visual Studies Workshop, 31 Prince St., Rochester, NY 14607.
Long reviews, short synopses interspersed with other photography books.
Art Com, Contemporary Arts Press, La Mamelie, PO Box 3123 Rincon Annex, San Francisco, CA 94119.
Performance books especially reviewed.
Electrographics: the Copy Art Magazine, 158 Valley Rd., Princeton, NJ 08540.
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.

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