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Artists' Recordworks in the Early Twenty-First Century

Susan E. Thomas, *Long Island University Brooklyn*

Abstract—Despite the rise of digital downloads and streaming music, contemporary artists and musicians are creating analog objects that combine audio recordings—vinyl record, cassette, CD—with printed matter. These artists' recordworks are a type of artist's book; they are also alternative publications released in editions or as multiples. The author defines artists' recordworks and provides some background in order to establish a historical precedent for recordworks in art library collections. A brief history of album cover art is included as well because it links graphic and package design to fine art.

All Art constantly aspires towards the condition of Music.
—Walter Pater

INTRODUCTION

In the early twenty-first century, music is widely available in many digital formats. Sources include the iTunes Store, eMusic, BitTorrent, SoundCloud, and various websites such as Pitchfork and Insound. Indeed, the rise of Spotify and RDIO, which stream music and pay record labels, could signal the end of paying for music at all. Why, then, would a library purchase hard copies of music when it can be streamed on demand? The question has many possible answers, among them persistent availability of the analog form, collection development policies (acquiring work by certain artists, publishers, or galleries), and the need to develop collections that reflect contemporary art and design practices. Library patrons themselves may respond positively to physical artifacts in the age of digital reproduction.

It may seem cost prohibitive for music labels, artists, or art galleries to produce non-digital music objects—what will be referred to as “artists' recordworks”¹ in this

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1. The author chose the established term “artists' recordworks,” used in *Broken Music: Artists' Recordworks*, ed. Ursula Block and Michael Glasmeier (Berlin: Berliner Künstlerprogramm des DAAD, 1989), despite the fact that musicians and designers feature

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article—in the twenty-first century, yet such objects are indeed being issued in fairly inexpensive small runs for a specialized audience. Although costs may be high, recordwork production is part of the practice of many creatives. Art networks may be formed to enable production and distribution.

Writers and scholars place recordworks in the realms of private presses and artists' books. Their interdisciplinary status appeals to many patrons, and they provide unique teaching and learning opportunities in contemporary art, graphic design, package design, communication, and music. The author's argument, therefore, is that recordworks belong in art libraries rather than music library collections.

OVERVIEW OF ARTISTS' RECORDWORKS

Contemporary artists' recordworks often include a combination of vinyl records, flexi discs,² cassettes, and CDs³ with jackets or sleeves of various sizes. Package design includes screen printing, risograph, and letter-pressed covers. Design exploits "all the [design] delights of industrial printing"⁴ such as die cuts, embossing, and double-pocket gatefold sleeves. For example, the covers of both the album and CD of Beach House's recording *Bloom* are embossed and covered with six coats of glow-in-the-dark ink.⁵ Accompanying printed matter, which often provides conceptual content, may be inserted in the sleeves; this can include booklets, prints, posters, zines, photographs, download codes, or lyric sheets. The resulting object is an artist's recordwork; it is also an alternative publication. For example, the band Sun Foot's *Purple and Orange Memorial Album*, a 12-inch vinyl record with paper inserts, was produced in an edition of 300 with an ISBN number.

Artists' recordworks are frequently described using terms associated with artists' publications—"edition," "limited," "numbered," and "signed." Artists producing recordworks in the 1960s and 1970s were, in general, more interested in deconstructing vinyl records (actually marring or marking them) as symbols of mass media and commercialization of music. Contemporary artists seem more interested in reviving vinyl records as playable objects and enclosing them in printed matter. Artists and musicians are also reviving cassette tapes⁶ and continuing to utilize CDs.

In 1989, Michael Glasmeier wrote in his contribution to the seminal exhibition catalog *Broken Music: Artists' Recordworks* that records created by artists "with their

prominently in the contemporary world of alternative publications that combine hard media and printed matter and that the media may be in the form of cassettes or CDs as well as vinyl records. *Broken Music* is a catalog for the exhibition of the same name held in Berlin in 1988. Art forms included were various and larger than the scope of this article: unique records, sound sculptures, installations, performances, record covers as original art works, recorded sound made by visual artists, as well as art publications containing records. The scope of this article includes the last three forms.

2. "Flexi discs are made from metal, shellac, celluloid, or flexible materials like plastic or cardboard." Definition from Michael Cumella, "Flexi Spending," *Print* 63, no. 3 (June 2009): 34. Flexi discs first appeared in the early 1900s, before vinyl records, and were not limited to music recordings.

3. CD releases may be CD-ROM, the standard for most CD releases, or CD-R—the latter released by micro-labels and "burned to order," often with handmade or laser-printed covers. See Adrian Shaughnessy, *Cover Art By: New Music Graphics* (London: Laurence King, 2008), 8.

4. Kenneth Fitzgerald, *Volume: Writings on Graphic Design, Music, Art, and Culture* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2010), 110.

5. Douglas Wolk, "Review of Beach House/*Bloom*," *Print* 66, no. 4 (August 2012): 84.

6. Matthew Moyer, "Cassette Culture," *Library Journal* 137, no. 12 (July 21, 2012): 54.

accompanying info, action photos, graphic inspirations and outcomes, numberings and signatures . . . are small, exquisite objects, comparable to artists' books."⁷ Twenty years later, after the so-called death of vinyl records, music writer Adrian Shaughnessy and design writer Andrew Robertson both commented that contemporary record releases or limited-edition "artefacts" by independent "micro-labels" are closer to the output of private presses and artists' books than to the output of record labels.⁸ Ian Ilavsky, co-founder of the label Constellation, emphasizes that the label does not create limited editions, which would "serve a collector's market that would see our records trade privately for higher than retail price"; the label instead keeps everything in print.⁹ This is similar to an artist producing an open edition or a reproducible zine. On the other hand, Julian House, owner of Ghost Box records, describes the "bookish feel" of Ghost Box releases resulting from their collectability as well as their graphical "strange allusions and hints of arcane backgrounds."¹⁰ Jon Wozencroft of Touch Records states that their releases provide a needed "editorial aspect that functions as a gentle storytelling device alongside the invisible force of music."¹¹ Chris Johanson's Awesome Vistas label, which had a table at the inaugural LA Art Book Fair 2013, publishes artists' recordworks that Johanson describes as alternative exhibition catalogs.¹²

INFLUENCES: LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY ARTISTS' RECORDWORKS AND THE VINYL OBJECT

Art, design, and music have been informing each other for almost a century. Starting with Marcel Duchamp's Rotoreliefs—a series of lithographs that gave an optical illusion of movement when played on a phonograph turntable—artists from Yves Klein to Jim Lambie have incorporated turntables, records, and the subject of albums into their art. For example, Carrie Mae Weems's 1989 *Ode to Affirmative Action* consists of a framed photograph and record,¹³ while Christian Marclay's multiple *Footsteps*, from the same year, is a boxed 12-inch record with a poster in an edition of 1,000 (100 signed and numbered).¹⁴ Stephen Bury considers "multiple" shorthand for various objects made by artists, sometimes including vinyl records, and he indicates that a multiple's number or edition size is irrelevant. The multiple is about intention, and an idea may be executed in any medium or number suitable to the artist.¹⁵ Between 1964 and 1967, pop artists created multiples in the form of prints, artists' books, wallpaper, clothing, jewelry, and china, while other artists created provocative multiples consisting of the artist's breath or excrement.¹⁶

7. Michael Glasmeier, "Music of the Angels," in *Broken Music*, 34.

8. Shaughnessy, *Cover Art By*, 7, and Andrew Robertson, "Packshots," *Eye* 76 (Summer 2010): 58.

9. Ian Ilavsky, quoted in Shaughnessy, *Cover Art By*, 11.

10. Julian House, quoted in Shaughnessy, *Cover Art By*, 7.

11. Jon Wozencroft, quoted in Shaughnessy, *Cover Art By*, 7.

12. Chris Johanson (owner of Awesome Vistas), in discussion with the author, February 1, 2013.

13. From the website for the exhibition *The Record: Contemporary Art and Vinyl*, <http://www.nasher.duke.edu/therecord/weems-carrie-mae.php>.

14. Gregory Elgstrand and Dave Dymant, *One for Me and One to Share: Artists' Multiples and Editions* (Toronto: YYZBooks, 2012), 38–39.

15. Stephen Bury, *Artists' Multiples: 1935–2000* (London: Ashgate, 2001).

16. Mark M. Johnson, "The Great American Pop Art Store: Multiples of the '60s," *Arts & Activities* 123 (March 1998): 39; Julia

Many records released by artists starting in the 1950s (after the paperboard LP record sleeve was introduced by Alex Steinweiss¹⁷) are regarded as artists' multiples. Fluxus is the direct line to artists' recordworks from artists' multiples since it "developed out of 'experimental music,' importing the indeterminate score into the context of art."¹⁸ Fluxus artists also put on concerts in Europe. Unlike popular music released on major labels, artists' recordworks were produced by micro-labels, often run by artists and designers. Many were based in Europe. The Guy Schraenen Collection in Paris¹⁹ includes recordworks by Yoko Ono, Joseph Beuys, Jean Tinguely, Lawrence Weiner, and many others.²⁰ In theory, the multiple is affordable so that it may be widely dispersed. Recordworks were indeed affordable; however, they were never widely dispersed in general as they appealed solely to art intelligentsia. An unusually popular artist's recordwork is the Talking Heads's 1983 album *Speaking in Tongues*, designed by Robert Rauschenberg and published in a limited edition by Sire Records. The album won a Grammy award for Best Album Design.

Album covers, like book covers, have always featured art and design. Kenneth Fitzgerald claims that by the late 1960s, album art had become more culturally relevant and influential than painting, arguing that the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* album cover "murdered painting" and so changed the way artists painted: they "frantically modified its materials, surfaces, and shapes."²¹ At the same time, innovative artists working in album design elevated it to album art. Glasmeir asserts that "record sleeves . . . themselves form a sort of sub-history of Modern Art."²² Artists like Andy Warhol, Peter Blake, Richard Hamilton, Barbara Nessim, and Hipgnosis brought conceptual art to the music stores by designing iconic covers for the Beatles, Pink Floyd, and Genesis. Twelve-inch album covers offer a large "canvas" on which to work, so they became a site for artistic intervention. One could argue that album covers of the late 1960s and early 1970s were the most successful democratic multiples because they reached a mass audience.²³ Inexpensive at the time, such albums

Robinson, "Multiple Manifestations: Nouveau Réalisme and Fluxus," in *The Small Utopia: Ars Multiplicata* (Milan: Progetto Prada Arte, 2012), 142–45.

17. Steven Heller, "Interview with Alex Steinweiss," *Eye* 76 (Summer 2010): 49–50.

18. Robinson, "Multiple Manifestations," 145.

19. The collection was recently featured in the exhibition *Vinyl: Records and Covers by Artists, the Guy Schraenen Collection Exhibition*, February 19–May 16, 2010, La Maison Rouge, Paris, France. In addition, The Research Centre for Artists' Publications at the Weserburg Museum of Modern Art includes The Archive for Small Press & Communication (ASPC), which was founded by Anne and Guy Schraenen in 1974, <http://www.artists-pub.eu/presentations/archives-collections/research-centre-for-artists-publications/>.

20. Most of the artists' recordworks documented in the book *The Small Utopia: Ars Multiplicata* are from the Guy Schraenen Collection. In the book, artists' recordworks are described in book terms as "published by" galleries such as Yvon Lambert in Paris, Galleria Blu in Milan, and Galerie Klewan in Vienna, as well as by labels like Apple Records. See also Germano Celant, *Record as Artwork: 1959–73* (London: Royal College of Art, 1973) and Germano Celant, *The Record as Artwork: From Futurism to Conceptual Art* (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1977), whose list of included works is found online at <http://www.discogs.com/lists/The-Record-as-Artwork-list-of-works/163795>. In addition, see Giorgio Maffei and Franco Mello, *Sound of Silence: Arte vs. Musica*, http://www.giorgiomaffei.it/materiali_per_l_arte/pdf/Materiali%20oper%20l'arte%202.pdf. The print version includes a paperback book, a cover poster, and a 7-inch vinyl record all housed in a silk-screened cardboard box.

21. Fitzgerald, *Volume*, 110.

22. Glasmeir, "Music of the Angels," 33.

23. *Ibid.* Glasmeir poses the question regarding Hamilton's design of the Beatles' eponymous album (a.k.a. "The White Album") in which each record sleeve had a unique stamped serial number. Which is meant to be the "easily attainable multiple": the album sleeve by the artist or the record by the Beatles? The album became collectible because of both and introduced millions of people to conceptual art.

are now highly collectible. The Rolling Stones' *Sticky Fingers* featured a working zipper, and The Velvet Underground's 1967 *The Velvet Underground and Nico* album included a banana sticker that peeled off (both designed by Andy Warhol). The first "edition" of The Who's 1970 *Live at Leeds* contained thirteen different inserts in its left side pocket, all different sizes and printed on different paper stocks.²⁴ In less popular genres of music, artists like Raymond Pettibon (Black Flag records 1978–1986), Lawrence Weiner (Love of Life Orchestra, *Genève, Geneva, Ginevra, Genf*, 1980), and Sol LeWitt (Phillip Glass, *Music in Twelve Parts*, 1988) designed album covers for avant-garde or punk musicians.²⁵ Richard Prince and Raymond Pettibon designed Sonic Youth album covers.

EXPLORING CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS' RECORDWORKS

In 1995, David S. Rubin wrote that "the extinction of vinyl records" had turned artists' recordworks—both unique and multiple—into commemorations. He cites Christian Marclay's *Recycled Records* (collaged records) series from the early 1980s as having become "unexpectedly symbolic of the medium's demise."²⁶ In 2013, recordworks are charged with new meaning and no longer symbolize demise. Many contemporary bands and musicians regularly produce recordworks, and they—and the record labels and art galleries that publish them—represent many genres of alternative music and sound experiments. Gang Gang Dance, Swans, Animal Collective, Japanther, Black Dice, New Villager, The Babies, Uninhabitable Mansions, No Age, Wolf Eyes, Forcefield, Soft Circle, Thanksgiving, Regal Degal, Odd Future, and Lucky Dragons²⁷ have all released recordworks over the last several years. Many of these bands also identify as art collectives or have artist members.²⁸ As such, they explore and realize the "objectness" of their music releases. Solo musicians and artists creating recordworks include Billy Childish, Rodney Graham, Peter King, Kathy Slade, Genesis P-Orridge, Devendra Banhart, Rita Ackermann, Terence Hannum, Brendan Fowler, Andy Dixon, Jim Houser (Figure 1), Gary Panter, Richard Kern, and Chris Johanson. At the same time, musicians continue to collaborate with visual artists and graphic designers. For instance, Peter Doig designed the album art for the Billy Childish record *Musicians of the British Empire* (edition of 1,000) produced to coincide with an exhibition at White Columns in 2010. In 2009, designer Brian Roettinger won a Grammy for Best Recording Package for No Age's album *Nouns*. Adam Michaels, co-principal of the design firm Project Projects, co-wrote and designed *The Electric Information Age Book* (Princeton Architectural Press, 2012) about pop media paperbacks of the late 1960s, mainly Marshall McLuhan's *The Medium is the Massage*. Just as Columbia

24. Temporary Services (Group of Artists), *Records as Portable Exhibitions and Interactive, Participatory Objects* (Chicago: Half Life Press, 2013), 18.

25. Francis Baudevin, *Hello Spiral* (Zurich: JPR/Ringier, 2008), 12–22; Raphael Rubinstein, "Portrait of the Artist as Young Punk: Pettibon," *Art in America* 96, no. 11 (December 2008): 142–45.

26. David S. Rubin, *It's Only Rock and Roll: Rock and Roll Currents in Contemporary Art* (Munich: Prestel, 1995), 104.

27. Some of these bands may dissolve, but at time of publication, the author believes they are still together.

28. See *Modern Painters* 16, no. 2 (Summer 2003), a special issue on music and art; Alan Licht, "Art School of Rock," *Modern Painters* (December 2004/January 2005): 94–97; Andrew Wilson, "Band Art," *Art Monthly* no. 210 (October 1997): 13–17; and "Art Rocks! The Group Show," *Art Review* 53 (May 2002): 32–37.



Figure 1. Untitled recordwork by Jim Houser. Photograph by author, used with permission. Please see the online edition of *Art Documentation* for a color version of this image.

Records issued an LP “version” of McLuhan’s book in 1967, Project Projects has also issued an LP version of its paperback, released by Inventory Records.

In their recordworks, artists continue to investigate the form and packaging of vinyl records. Rita Ackerman released the album *GA’Z HEART* in 2004, featuring a vinyl record with an illustration etched onto one side of it. *The Sound of Paper* by Chris Duncan is a double LP with hand-built gatefold packaging, released in a small edition. The record is not vinyl, “but [a] piece of heavy-weight paper with embossed lines that serve as grooves for the record player needle to follow.”²⁹ There are notable periodicals or series that are recordworks. *The Journal of Popular Noise* (Figure 2) has a uniform yet elaborate format that includes a clamshell box and three 7-inch records. *Artist Music Journals* (Figure 3), a defunct series published by Soundscreen Design, also has a standard design—hand-numbered copies packaged in a 10-inch jacket and

29. “The Sound of Paper with Chris Duncan,” Will Brown Gallery blog (May 2012), <http://www.wearewillbrown.com/project/the-sound-of-paper-with-chris-duncan/>.



Figure 2. *Journal of Popular Noise*, three 7-inch vinyl records held by folded, letter-pressed poster. Photograph by Byron Kalet, used with permission. Please see the online edition of *Art Documentation* for a color version of this image.

sealed with a letter-pressed sticker, which features a replication of the artist's signature and the volume, installment number, and edition. Only one issue has a vinyl record in it; the rest contain lavish booklets. *Artist Music Journals* features the work of graphic designers and illustrators. *EN/OF* is a collaborative series of editions by contemporary visual artists with experimental musicians, published in Germany. So far, forty editions, each packaged in a double-LP gatefold jacket, holding a 12-inch vinyl record in one pocket and an artwork in the other, have been produced.³⁰ They are signed and numbered by both artist and musician, typically in an edition of 100. Many assemblages such as issues of *North Drive Press* and *Arkitip* and kits such as Chicks on Speed's *It's A Project*, consist of numerous objects, including vinyl records, cassettes, or CDs, but the multiplicity of objects other than print and media—such as buttons, apparel, and toys—places these titles in the larger category of artists' multiples. Such assemblages or kits are multiples that themselves consist of multiples.

Artists' recordworks are typically inexpensive, produced in large editions or pressings, portable, and playable.³¹ Conventional playback equipment (e.g., turntable, cas-

30. "Artists Books News," *Umbrella* 24, no. 2–3 (2004): 59.

31. In the chapter "The Needle and the Damage Done: Artists' Records as Multiples," in *One for Me and One to Share: Artists' Multiples and Editions*, 130–35, Dave Dymant defines the most successful "artists' records" as those that artists have manipulated to alter playback. Some are not technically "playable" while others degrade upon play.



Figure 3. *The Artist Music Journals*, several issues, with three booklets depicted. Photograph by author, used with permission. Please see the online edition of *Art Documentation* for a color version of this image.

sette player, or CD player) is needed in order to listen to the incorporated media since audio playback is not built in to artists' recordworks via sensors or built-in players, as it may be in other artists' books.³² The audio portions of artists' recordworks may document studio or live music performances or sound investigations. Audio ranges from palatable rock to atonal experiments or compositions and generally reflects experimental or "alternative" music and sound.³³ The music or sound sometimes engages directly with art subjects or concepts. For example, the album *Songs on Conceptual Art* (Figure 4) is a compilation album of original songs based on Sol LeWitt's *Sentences on Conceptual Art*. *SOCA* comes with a letter-pressed poster of

32. Isobel Anderson, "The Shell: Incorporating Sound-Art Practices Within Book Art," *Journal of Artists Books (JAB)* 33 (Spring 2013): 38–41 is an explication of the author's own artist book, *The Shell*, which incorporates a built-in audio player. The author also describes other electronically augmented artists' books that influenced her work.

33. There are at least two design-centric hip hop labels releasing deluxe music packages: Stone's Throw (<http://www.stonethrow.com>) and Get On Down (<http://www.getondown.com>). The latter label recently released rapper Raekwon's *Only Built 4 Cuban Linx*, a.k.a. the "Purple Tape," the original release of which had become a cult classic. See Oliver Wang, "The Purple Take: Only Built 4 Collectors," *The Record: Music News from NPR*, <http://www.npr.org/blogs/therecord/2012/09/19/161403938/the-purple-tape-only-built-4-collectors>.



Figure 4. *Songs on Conceptual Art* album for sale in 2012 at Holocene, a music and art venue in Portland, Oregon. Photograph by Marriage Records, used with permission. Please see the online edition of *Art Documentation* for a color version of this image.

LeWitt's *Sentences*,³⁴ and it references *Baldessari Sings LeWitt*, John Baldessari's 1972 video in which he sang LeWitt's *Sentences*.³⁵ Unlike unique sculptural art about vinyl records, whose materials include vinyl or album sleeves,³⁶ media and printmaking or publishing have a symbiotic relationship in contemporary artists' recordworks,³⁷ which are ultimately bookish. Recent exhibitions at The Center for Book Arts in New York City have featured recordworks and situated them in book arts.³⁸

WHERE DO ARTISTS' RECORDWORKS BELONG?

One could argue that artists' recordworks belong in a music library; after all, the center of any such object seems to be music. However, artists' recordworks are often for sale in art galleries and art book stores. Those record stores and record labels that

34. The recordwork is a two-disc 12-inch vinyl LP featuring hand-silk-screened jackets and comes with a free online download. It is jointly released by Teenage Teardrops, Awesome Vistas, and the Marriage labels.

35. "John Baldessari Sings Sol LeWitt," *San Francisco Museum of Modern Art*, <http://www.sfmoma.org/explore/multimedia/videos/92>.

36. Trevor Schoonmaker, ed., *The Record: Contemporary Art and Vinyl* (Durham, NC: Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, 2010) and David S. Rubin, *It's Only Rock and Roll* document numerous unique art works.

37. Commercially published art books that include a CD are not typically artists' recordworks. Such a publication is common, and there is no real investigation or concept explored. In addition, the length of the book overshadows the CD, which is reduced to an auxiliary or supplementary role.

38. The exhibition catalog *Ear to the Page* (New York: Center for Book Arts, 2010) documents historical and contemporary recordworks, while *Peace, Love and Rockets: An Exhibition* (New York: Center for Book Arts, 2011) focuses more on the overlap between graphic design and fine art in the package and graphic design of international alternative music releases from the 1970s to the present.

do sell recordworks are usually, by definition, closely aligned with art and design. To collectors and library patrons, there is no need to choose between art/design and music as the defining feature. Librarians, however, must make choices about their collections. The author found that when historical artists' recordworks are present in libraries, they are found in artists' books collections, most likely because they were acquired from art vendors or donors.

To learn more about library acquisitions of contemporary recordworks, the author queried both the Music Library Association (MLA) and Art Libraries Society of North America (ARLIS/NA) listservs to find out if librarians from either association are purchasing contemporary artists' recordworks. Responses from both lists were few. Two MLA listserv members suggested that music librarians are not collecting contemporary music in aesthetic packaging, but a few MLA respondents reported that they themselves collected such works. There was more response and interest in recordworks from art librarians, but no one indicated that he or she was deliberately or systematically purchasing contemporary artists' recordworks.

To further the inquiry, the author searched for recordworks in the ARTBOOK | D.A.P. print catalogs and online³⁹ and then checked the OCLC WorldCat database for matches. Only one was found in WorldCat as of June 2013.⁴⁰ Not only are North American art librarians not purchasing artists' recordworks advertised in D.A.P., but D.A.P. is not advertising or distributing many of these publications. The author also searched WorldCat for all of the recordworks mentioned by title in this paper and found very few hits.⁴¹ The National Gallery of Canada Library (NGCL) has some contemporary recordworks, including most of the items in the *EN/OF* series, but these were selected by the gallery director, not a librarian.⁴² NGCL also owns the Art Metropole collection, which includes many historical artists' recordworks that were collected by General Idea. Other art libraries that own contemporary recordworks include The Joan Flasch Artists' Book Collection at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago's John M. Flaxman Library (*Songs on Conceptual Art*), Emily Carr University of Art + Design Library (Cranfield and Slade, *12 Sun Songs*), Princeton University (*Journal of Popular Noise*), California Institute of the Arts (David Shrigley, *Brain Activity*), Stanford University (Chris Duncan, *The Sound of Paper*), Pratt Institute (Geneviève Castrée, *Pamplemoussi*), and Minneapolis College of Art and Design (Wilber H. Schilling and David Pitman, *Agents of Change: What Goes Around Comes Around: Cull-arbor-ation: Culling the Urban Forest*).

39. Multiples found on the ARTBOOK | D.A.P. website include *Cranfield and Slade: 12 Sun Songs* (Zurich: JRP/Ringier, 2010), *Cranfield and Slade: 10 Riot Songs* (North Vancouver, BC: Presentation House Gallery, 2012), *Gavin Turk & Hussein Chalayan: 4 Minute Mile* (London: Vinyl Factory, 2012), *Jeremy Deller & Chuck Limited Edition Vinyl* (London: Vinyl Factory, 2012), *Sorrow/Jubilance Pt. 2* (Brooklyn, NY: Swill Children, n.d.), *Hunters/Dead Wife Split 7"* (Brooklyn, NY: Swill Children, n.d.), *David Shrigley: Brain Activity* (London: Hayward Gallery, 2012), *John Cage Shock 2LP* (Osaka, Japan: EM Records, n.d.), and *Matthew Ritchie: The Morning Line* (Nuremberg: Moderne Kunst Nürnberg, 2012). Recordworks over \$200, most of which are part of the larger category of artists' multiples, were excluded.

40. *Cranfield and Slade: 12 Sun Songs* is held by two libraries in Switzerland. Emily Carr University of Art + Design Library in Vancouver owns it as well, but the library does not contribute records to OCLC WorldCat.

41. WorldCat does not contain bibliographic records for every special collection item in North America (or the world), but the holdings of many significant artists' books collections are included. Also, ordinary CD versions of some titles, such as *Clare Denis Film Scores 1996–2009*, are held by libraries, but not the deluxe versions which usually include a vinyl LP. The recordwork *Clare Denis* was limited to 1,000 copies and is already sold out.

42. Peter Trepanier (head, reader services, National Gallery of Canada Library), e-mail message to the author, March 15, 2013.

ARTISTS' RECORDWORKS IN ACADEMIC SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

There is the question of whether or not libraries have appropriate playback equipment available on which to listen to vinyl records and cassettes. Turntables are currently for sale at stores such as Amazon.com, Urban Outfitters, and Best Buy.⁴³ Cassette players are fewer but still available from companies such as Grace Digital. Used, portable “boom boxes” are available on eBay. Turntables and cassette players that convert music to digital files could be utilized in order to make preservation copy CDs for the future as well as to increase listening opportunities.

Without playback equipment, however, it is impossible to fully experience the artist's recordwork. Small audio and visual clips may be scanned on a website like Printed Matter or Insound, and patrons may be directed to such websites. Nevertheless, accessing such visual and audio clips is similar to accessing abstracts or bibliographic records: it is no substitute for interacting with the entire work. Artists' recordworks provide an outstanding opportunity to attract students to the library. Art libraries can—and some already have—established programs utilizing recordworks. Page K. Johnson, manager of special collections at the John M. Flaxman Library at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, describes how the library promotes artists' recordworks by sponsoring collaborative, thematic sound events for listening to historical examples and by inviting the graduate Sound Department faculty to bring classes into the library.⁴⁴ The Emily Carr University of Art + Design Library recently exhibited both historical and contemporary artists' recordworks (Figure 5). Libraries could publish Facebook and website invitations to listen to recordworks such as the *Songs on Conceptual Art* album, a new cassette release by the band All Tiny Creatures, or the new 7-inch single by Animal Collective.⁴⁵ Such bands already perform in spaces like museums, art galleries, and art book fairs. The micro-labels that publish recordworks, many run by artists themselves, will likely grant permission for public playback.

Artists' recordworks also provide opportunities for collaboration. Students can be invited to provide input regarding collection development, and art librarians and music librarians could work together to create finding aids, to identify teaching and learning opportunities, and to promote the collection. Such collaboration mirrors the synergistic nature of artists' recordworks. Musicians, artists, and designers work together, and boundaries between record labels and art galleries, as well as musician and artist, are blurred, often resulting in unique alternative publications. Collabora-

43. Vinyl album sales have risen every year over the last five years—sales in 2012 were up 18 percent from 2011. See “The Nielsen Company & Billboard's 2012 Music Industry Report,” January 04, 2013, *Business Wire*, <http://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20130104005149/en/Nielsen-Company-Billboard%E2%80%99s-2012-Music-Industry-Report>. In addition, 24 was the average age of the vinyl record buyer at the 6th annual Record Store Day in 2013, as reported in *Entertainment Weekly* magazine, May 10, 2013, <http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,20700456,00.html>.

44. Page K. Johnson (manager of special collections at the John M. Flaxman Library, School of the Art Institute of Chicago), e-mail message to the author, June 10, 2013.

45. Brian Roettinger and Mark Owens, “Accessibility, Aesthetics, Materials, and the Production of the 7-inch Record,” in *Touchable Sound: A Collection of 7-inch Records from the USA*, ed. Brian Roettinger, Mike Treff, and Diego Hadis (New York: Soundscreen Design, 2010), 75. The authors describe how, as a teaching and learning tool, following Bauhaus design principles of the square, “The 7-inch format is a perfect opportunity to investigate all of those dimensions of design . . . contrast, scale, texture, color, etc.”



Figure 5. Library exhibition at Emily Carr University of Art + Design, featuring historical (Cranfield and Slade) and contemporary (Rodney Graham and Jack Goldstein) recordworks. Image used with permission of ECUAD Library. Please see the online edition of *Art Documentation* for a color version of this image.

tion often increases audience as well. Artists' recordworks will likely attract art, design, or music students to the library, as well as those studying film, sociology, gender studies, media, and technology.

CONCLUSION: CREATIVES AND TECHNOLOGIES

The persistent announcements of the death of the print book and the vinyl record—as well as cassettes and CDs—are being ignored by both the many creatives who continue to produce them and the enthusiastic consumers who buy them. Vinyl sales continue to increase every year, but CD sales are declining. Cassette sales remain few, but the form endures, most likely due to its inexpensive production costs. The future of vinyl is uncertain, however. Josh Bonati, a mastering engineer, speculates that vinyl may not exist at all in the near future even though it is enjoying mass popularity right now. This moment in time could be that of vinyl's death throes since repairing a vinyl lathe, the machine necessary to produce vinyl recordings, is increasingly difficult. Few people know how to repair them, and many lathes were thrown away during the ascent of the CD. There are economic challenges to vinyl production, too, including the high cost of the plating process and of operating pressing plants.⁴⁶ Other engineers are more optimistic while acknowledging the challenges of both replacing and

46. Josh Bonati (engineer, Bonati Mastering NYC), in discussion with the author, January 7, 2013.

repairing parts.⁴⁷ If vinyl will soon be history, collecting artists' recordworks and documenting this moment in music, design, and art is even more important, especially now, a time of keen interest in technology in all its forms and contradictions.

Librarians interested in purchasing artists' recordworks may find it difficult to locate information on the Internet. While artists' book conversations are fairly public, artists' recordwork conversations are not. There is no single place where the conversation is currently happening. The annual NY Art Book Fair is a good event at which to encounter recordworks, as is the new annual LA Art Book Fair. The chart in the Appendix gathers together many additional North American sources and a sampling of their respective publications.

There are certainly challenges to collecting. Increasingly limited library funding makes unfamiliar publications vulnerable to being overlooked or ignored. In addition, recordworks occupy an interdisciplinary position, which can lead to marginalization rather than collaboration. Still, there are strong arguments for collecting artists' recordworks. Although unique in form and usually limited in edition, they are typically affordable: the average price the author has paid has been around \$25.00. Recordworks may also fall under established collection development policies, especially among libraries that collect work by regional artists, galleries, and publishers.

Artists' recordworks reveal additional intersections: art and design, recording and performance, art and commerce, analog and digital, and education and entertainment. The form of artists' recordworks provides a great opportunity to discuss technology as well as graphic and package design. For example, the UK studio Big Active designed Beck Hansen's popular record *The Information* (2006) so that the buyer could make his or her own cover with provided stickers. Twenty different artists were commissioned to create the stickers. The recordwork was the result of Beck's own intellectual interest in the "dematerialisation of [the product of] music"⁴⁸ and is a strong example of the intersection of art and design.⁴⁹

There is little doubt that more library materials will be purchased in digital form than in print in the future. However, this fact only strengthens the argument that special collections, which typically consist of rare primary sources and unique print materials, should be a priority for continued development and management. Libraries need to digitize images and provide audio clips from recordworks, but also market and feature the works themselves and make them available to patrons. Recordworks deepen the discovery and learning experiences of art, design, and music students in particular as well as all researchers, artists, and musicians who rely on libraries to preserve and make available these important cultural artifacts.

47. Keith Spencer-Allen, "Vinyl: Still at the Cutting Edge," *Resolution* (November/December 2003): 44–48, <http://www.resolutionmag.com/pdfs/KNOWHOW/VINYLA~1.PDF>.

48. Beck Hansen, quoted in John L. Walters, "Make Music Visible," *Eye* (Summer 2010): 35.

49. More recently, Beck Hansen released a recordwork, *Song Reader* (San Francisco: McSweeney's Books, 2012) that consists of unbound, illustrated sheet music in a hardcover carrying case. The music exists only when the buyer performs it.

APPENDIX: SOURCES FOR ARTISTS' RECORDWORKS

SOURCE

<p>"Project" indicates various output and activity. "Gallery" in this context is essentially a publisher.</p>	<p>Notable Artists' Recordworks from Each Source</p>
<p>Audio Visual Arts gallery (NY), http://audiovisualarts.org/information</p>	<p>Seth Price, <i>Honesty</i>, 12-inch vinyl record (swirled vinyl), ed. of 300.</p>
<p>Awesome Vistas label, Chris Johanson (San Francisco), http://www.awesomevistas.com. Produces limited-edition vinyl with hand-silkscreened record sleeves in collaboration with musicians and artists.</p>	<p><i>Alright Alright</i> by IS, music for Chris Johanson exhibition at Malmo Konsthall, 10 September–24 November 2011, consists of a 12-inch vinyl record with recorded music and several print inserts, including a critical essay, an interview with Johanson, and a poster (Figure 6).</p>
<p>Boo Hooray Gallery (NY) http://store.boohooray.com/products</p>	<p>Reissues historical recordworks and publishes new ones, such as a limited edition 12-inch vinyl record by Bud Benderbe to commemorate the Boo-Hooray/Milk exhibit <i>Enjoy The Experience - Homemade Records 1958–1992</i></p>
<p>Collection of: project http://www.collectionof.net/index.php online store, can limit search by category: audio and multimedia.</p>	<p>Cory Arcangel, <i>Bronzer Flash</i> CD http://www.collectionof.net/detail/42/bronzer-flash! (sold directly by Arcangel)</p>
<p>Constellation Records label (Montreal), www.cstrecords.com</p>	<p><i>Musique Fragile 02</i>—three 12-inch vinyl record box set: Each album comes in its own 2–3 color screen-printed jacket accompanied by a screen-printed poster.</p>

(Continued)

APPENDIX: SOURCES FOR ARTISTS' RECORDWORKS

(Continued)

SOURCE

"Project" indicates various output and activity.
 "Gallery" in this context is essentially a publisher.

Notable Artists' Recordworks from Each Source

Death Watch Recording Company label (London) boutique soundtrack label releasing vinyl, CD & digital, <http://deathwartzrecordingcompany.com/about/> Commissions artwork from artists including Dinos Chapman, Jay Shaw, Graham Humphreys, & Candice Tripp to create exclusive artwork for each project.

Reissue of *The Fog* soundtrack by John Carpenter, new cover art by Dinos Chapman, ed. of 700. 12-inch clear vinyl with random green, white, and blue effects, gatefold sleeve, and art card of the cover image, housed in a screen-printed plastic bag.

EN/OF series, label, Robert Meijer (Germany), <http://www.bottrop-boy.com/?page=842496>

Recent recordworks: Richard Hawkins / Heatsick; Seth Price / Bill Kouligas; Lothar Hempel / Wolfgang Voigt.

Gavin Brown's Enterprise gallery (NY), <http://www.gavinbrown.biz/home/exhibitions.html>

Arcade Field Recordings 12-inch vinyl record by Oliver Payne and Brian DeGraw (of the band Gang Gang Dance). Payne recorded sound in classic arcade games and DeGraw remixed it.

Ghost Box label, Julian House (London), www.ghostbox.co.uk. "A record label for a group of artists who find inspiration in folklore, vintage electronics, library music, and haunted television soundtracks" (from website).

The Belbury Tales' 12-inch vinyl record *Belbury Poly*.

Land and Sea project, Chris Duncan (San Francisco, CA), <http://landandseelandandsea.blogspot.com/>. "Land and Sea is a sonic and visual project. Land and Sea will make records . . ." (from Land and Sea blog).

Silo: Sun/Luna 12-inch vinyl record with print inserts, edition of 100. Purple marbled vinyl. Recorded performances by Duncan and print inserts.

(Continued)

APPENDIX: SOURCES FOR ARTISTS' RECORDWORKS (Continued)

SOURCE

"Project" indicates various output and activity.
"Gallery" in this context is essentially a publisher.

Notable Artists' Recordworks from Each Source

Marriage Records label (Portland, OR),
www.marriagerecs.com

Caspar Sonnet's *Identify* 12-inch vinyl record with print inserts.

PAN Records label (Berlin),
<http://www.pan-act.com/>. "Somewhere between an art project and a record label," PAN had a booth at Art Berlin Contemporary in 2012, curated by Artists' Space (NY), (Geeta Dayal, "Surround Sound," *Frieze* 9 (April–May 2013), online).

James Hoff, *How Wheeling Feels When the Ground Walks Away* 12-inch vinyl record (commissioned by Performan, NY). Sleeve design by Kathryn Politis.

Pork Salad Press publisher (Copenhagen), <http://www.porksaladpress.org/>

Jakob Boeskov, Timothy DeWit, & Matthew Morandi, *T 7: I Think I Scan* 12-inch vinyl record with gatefold sleeve and 16-page booklet.

Primary Information publisher (NY), <http://primaryinformation.org/>. One of three published goals of P.I.: "The publication of editions that function as publications, though may take the shape of say a record or poster" (from website).

Reissued Allan Kaprow's *How to Make a Happening* on CD (previously available only on vinyl record) in a hand-silkscreened jewel case that replicates the laminated edition by Alison Knowles and Something Else Press while preserving the original artwork carried out by Mass Art (from website).

Required Wreckers (imprint of Amish Records) label (NY), <http://www.amishrecords.com/>. Each release is a one-time vinyl pressing (housed in a letterpress band) that includes artwork and assorted ephemera (from website).

Ben Vida and Keith Fullerton Whitman, *Aggregatepulseripper (Damaged IIII)*. Cover art and 16-page booklet by artist Meredyth Spark.

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APPENDIX: SOURCES FOR ARTISTS' RECORDWORKS (Continued)

SOURCE "Project" indicates various output and activity. "Gallery" in this context is essentially a publisher.	Notable Artists' Recordworks from Each Source
RVNG, Intl. label (NY), http://igetrvng.com/	Pink Skull <i>Endless Bummers</i> 12-inch vinyl record: 1,000 unique letter-pressed record covers, each featuring a unique "bummer" (Figure 7)
Secret 7" label (London), http://secret-7.com/ . For each series, artist designs one (of seven) 7-inch vinyl records in edition of 100 (buyer does not know which record is being purchased).	Ai Weiwei and Gilbert & George among recent artists involved. Proceeds go to charitable causes (each record costs \$60).
Smallville Records label (Hamburg, Germany), http://shop.smallville-records.com/category/records . Artist Stefan Marx is the in-house designer for the vinyl label.	<i>The Dead Sea</i> 12-inch "album" with gatefold sleeve includes 3 posters by Stefan Marx, in the "record sleeve" with no vinyl record.
Soundscreen Design publisher, Michael Treff (NY), no current website.	<i>Artist Music Journals</i> . SSD is defunct, but <i>AMJ</i> still available at http://www.insound.com/promos/soundscreen-design
Swill Children publisher (Brooklyn), http://store.swillchildren.org/	<i>Sorrow/Jubilance</i> Series: Curated by Jesse Hlebo, three 7-inch vinyl records, each unique record in an edition of 333, on cyan-colored vinyl with custom-printed covers
Teenage Teardrops label (Los Angeles), http://teenageteardrops.com/	<i>GGA</i> by John Weise: stereo mix of a 4-channel installation by Wiese. Clear vinyl with insert.

(Continued)

APPENDIX: SOURCES FOR ARTISTS' RECORDWORKS (Continued)

SOURCE "Project" indicates various output and activity. "Gallery" in this context is essentially a publisher.	Notable Artists' Recordworks from Each Source
Touch project (London), www.touchshop.org . Distributes a huge number of releases by Touch label and others.	Ray Gallon and Nam June Paik, <i>A Work for Radio</i> , cassette only, 250 copies, on Tapeworm label (http://www.tapeworm.org.uk/). The Wormhole releases vinyl records, both distributed by Touch.
White Columns Gallery (NY), The Sound of White Columns, (TSoWC) http://www.whitecolumns.org/sections/tsowc.php	Billy Childish 2-sided, double 7-inch vinyl record, ed. of 250, 200 are numbered and wrapped in a hand stamped gatefold sleeve with insert. Fifty feature a unique drawing by Childish and are signed and numbered. For a similar Childish recordwork, see Figure 8.
The Vinyl Factory project (London), http://www.vfedititions.com/ . Publishes limited-edition vinyl recordworks (approx. \$50) as well as costlier artists' editions recordworks (approx. \$180).	Christian Marclay, <i>Groove</i> , 12-inch vinyl record, ed. of 300 (first 100 hand signed and numbered—and sold out). "Marclay's debut professional solo recording on vinyl for the first time" (from website).



Figure 6. *Alright Alright* by IS (2012, Awesome Vistas). Photograph by author, used with permission. Please see the online edition of *Art Documentation* for a color version of this image.



Figure 7. Silk-screened and unique letter-pressed album sleeves for Pink Skull's album *Endless Bummer*. Photograph by RVNG, Intl., used with permission. Please see the online edition of *Art Documentation* for a color version of this image.



Figure 8. Billy Childish, 7-inch vinyl with inserts. Photograph by Gregory La Rico, used with permission, courtesy of artist and Lehman Maupin Gallery, New York and Hong Kong. Please see the online edition of *Art Documentation* for a color version of this image.

ADDITIONAL SOURCES

Online and brick-and-mortar stores for purchase include Printed Matter (www.printedmatter.com) and Art Metropole (<http://www.artmetropole.com>), both of which have long histories of selling artists' recordworks and multiples. Ooga Booga, (<http://www.oogaaboogastore.com/shop/music/index.html>) is an additional store.

Record Labels of interest include Sacred Bones (www.sacredbones.com), P.W. Elverum & Sun label (<http://www.pwilverumandsun.com/store>), Ghostly International (<http://ghostly.com/releases>), Hometapes (<http://home-tapes.com>), Domino Records (<http://www.dominorecordco.us/>), Modern Love (<http://www.modern-love.co.uk/>), Ecstatic Peace (<http://www.ecstaticpeace.com>), and Federal Prism (<http://federalprism.com>).

Distributors include Boomkat (ww.boomkat.com) and Forced Exposure (<http://www.forcedexposure.com/>).

Sources for reissues of historical artists' recordworks include Gelbe Musik (no website but information and some works available here): <http://www.discogs.com/label/Gelbe%20Musik>, Alga Marghen (<http://www.forcedexposure.com/labels/alga.marghen.italy.html>), Tochnit Aleph (<http://www.tochnit-aleph.com/>), and Slowscan (<http://www.discogs.com/label/Slowscan>).

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