

Re-Reading the Artist's Book

**Tracing the Publishing Practices of Ruth Buchanan, Michael
Stevenson and Frances Stark**

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Abstract

Focusing on a small group of publications by Ruth Buchanan, Michael Stevenson and Frances Stark, this thesis explores a space of practice around the contemporary artist's book. Since the term 'artist's book' emerged in the late 1960s, critics and practitioners have emphasised the fraught, in-between nature of the medium. Despite its continuing appeal, there has been little critical discussion that considers how the idea and legacy of the artist's book manifests in the work of specific artists in the early twenty-first century, and, in turn, what this can articulate about contemporary art publishing culture. Produced between 2003-2013, the works examined provide insight into a period where there has been an unprecedented resurgence of print-based artworks and independent publishing projects. By examining the books of these three artists, the thesis charts an area of shared interest, discussing some recent modes of enquiry at the margins of different fields, disciplines and knowledge economies. It positions the artist's book as an even more difficult and expansive concept than it once was. The thesis locates the objects in question within a broader field of practice, excavating the politics and momentum of their production, dissemination and the way they address future readers. In doing so, it reflects on how publishing is playing a more discursive role in a global, digital art landscape, and is intertwined with the complexities and ambiguities of contemporary practice itself.

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Introduction

In the early 1990s, Clive Phillpot, former bibliographer at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, produced several diagrams attempting to come to terms with the artist's book. One version, designed to instruct his fellow librarians, was a Venn diagram of an apple, pear and lemon (fig. I). The apple was used by Phillpot to represent art, the pear to represent literature and the lemon—situated in the area where the regions overlapped—to represent artists' books.¹ Rather than establishing any concrete parameters for the medium, the diagram highlighted an inability to give language to an idea that is simple yet slippery. While it may have been purely incidental, Phillpot's choice of a sour fruit seems significant. 'A lemon' also refers to something faulty or defective, the typical example being a second-hand car that breaks down shortly after it is driven off the lot.

The term 'artist's book' is a bit of a lemon in this sense. Since the late 1960s, critics have spent a great deal of time trying to articulate what is, and what is not, an artist's book—or attacking the term itself for being too broad, too narrow or too confusing. Efforts to define this medium often slip into the murky territory of trying to articulate what makes something art or non-art.

Lawrence Weiner, perhaps one of the most well known artists associated with the genre, has questioned what is to be gained from the label in the first place. In a 2003 interview, he stated: 'artist book is a misnomer. I don't know what an artist book is; a book is a conclusive question.'² The currency of the term is even more ambiguous these days as art-world publishing formats such as the monograph, exhibition catalogue, theoretical text and artist's book often sample the conventions and material expectations of one another.

Both the struggle with a shared vocabulary for the artist's book—and its peculiar appeal—are due to its inherent difficulties and ambivalences. As Phillpot argued in a later essay, these works are 'distinguished by the fact that they sit provocatively at the juncture where art, documentation

¹ This diagram first appeared accompanying Phillpot's essay "Twenty-six Gasoline Stations that Shook the World: the rise and fall of cheap booklets as art," *Art Libraries Journal*, vol. 18, no. 1, 1993, 4-13.

² Judith Hoffberg, "Lawrence Weiner in Conversation with Umbrella on Books," *Umbrella* 26, no. 1, May 2003, 4.

and literature all come together.’³ This sentiment is echoed by art historian Johanna Drucker, who describes the idea and form as ‘a zone of activity ... made at the intersection of a number of fields, disciplines and ideas—rather than at their limits.’⁴ In 2004, critic Lucy Lippard was more critical about why the artist’s book is as difficult to pin down as ever. She argued that ‘the artist’s book now seems less adventurous, more like other art books—inevitable when some are the products of commercial publishing.’⁵ Embracing the shortcomings and fumbblings of the ‘artist’s book’, the term itself seems to present a stand-in or question mark, gesturing towards a field of tension and potential rather than a rigid or outmoded concept.

This thesis considers this field of potential, exploring the idea and legacy of the artist’s book in relation to selected publications by Ruth Buchanan, Frances Stark and Michael Stevenson. Currently based in Berlin, Buchanan (b. 1980, Te Ati Awa) and Stevenson (b. 1964) were both born in Aotearoa New Zealand. Stark (b. 1967) is an American artist and writer who lives in Los Angeles. Each of these artists are working in recognised centres for contemporary art and their books operate within similar international networks and communities. In this case, this shared context is more significant to understanding their respective publishing practices than their nationalities or where they are originally from. The publishing projects of Buchanan, Stark and Stevenson employ some of the dominant modes of enquiry of the artists’ book while presenting material from larger research projects or extending installation or performance-based work.

Through the work of these three artists, this thesis explores how publishing is playing a more discursive role within contemporary practice. It challenges the notion that bookmaking should, or can, be considered in isolation from an artist’s broader practice, or from the practices of independent publishing, graphic design, research, writing and exhibition-making today. Exploring the ‘in-between’ nature of the artist’s book, I consider its creative and emancipatory potential within a more complex field. I propose that the contemporary legacy of this medium is the idea of a space for practitioners to work between and beyond established disciplines and

³ Cornelia Lauf and Clive Phillpot, *Artist/Author: Contemporary Artists’ Books* (New York: American Federation of Arts, 1998), 32.

⁴ Johanna Drucker, *The Century of Artists’ Books* (1995), rev. ed. (New York City: Granary Books, 2004), 1.

⁵ Lucy Lippard, “Double Spread” in Maria Fusco and Ian Hunt, eds. *Put About: A Critical Anthology on Independent Publishing* (London: Bookworks, 2004), 84.

forms of commerce. Furthermore, I argue that these artists are interested in this form precisely because of its frustrations, intersections and uncertainties that mirror the nature of contemporary practice itself.

Focusing on a small group of works produced between 2003-2013, my discussion does not attempt to chart a decade of activity within the increasingly complex field of artists' publishing, nor does it provide an authority on the activities and back catalogues of these artists.⁶ As such, it represents a partial, incomplete picture of a larger area of activity. The specific books examined in this thesis demonstrate an area of shared interest between these artists; however, they do not have one dominant thematic connection. Upon close examination, their practices build up a network of related concerns, yet they are still quite distinct from one another. It is not my intention to pigeonhole Stark, Buchanan and Stevenson as 'book artists' per se, as publishing is simply one of the many threads or concerns that are interwoven through their practices. Rather, my intention is to employ some of their books as case studies in order to explore the relationship between the artist's book and the politics and momentum of the art publishing culture of the early 21st century.

The Artists

Buchanan's publishing practice exploits the archival and literary functions of the book, its material structure and its ability to link different narratives or episodes together. Since completing a research residency at the Jan van Eyck Academy, Maastricht, in 2008, she has regularly exhibited throughout Europe and Australasia while initiating and contributing to print-based projects with other practitioners.⁷ Her work questions how to navigate the legacies of the past as an artist working today, exploring the systems and spaces that manage cultural artefacts

⁶ A 'complete' list of publishing projects included in the CV of each artist follows the bibliography, however I also acknowledge that there may be other self-published and more informal publications that are not listed.

⁷ Recent contributions include "Sculptor" in Katja Gretzinger, ed. *The Blind Spot: In a Manner of Reading Design* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012), 53-160; "The Rimutaka Gorge" in Christoph Keller and Hinrich Sachs, eds. *Lost once more* (Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2010), 10-21; "Poems About Nature Documentaries" in *Kate Newby: Holding onto it only makes you sick* (Auckland: Gambia Castle Press, 2008), 11-14; and "More on Renovating" in Corinn Gerber, Lucie Kolb, Romy Rügger, eds. *This Book is a Classroom*, (Passenger Books, 2012), 28-32.

and construct histories. Buchanan draws upon a diverse range of media such as text, sculpture, film, photography, 35mm slides, drawing, ceramics, textiles, sound and graphics. She reconfigures these elements in gallery installations, performances and printed spaces. Archival collections and figures or locations of historical significance often serve as points of departure in her projects. In 2010, Buchanan published her first artist's book *Lying Freely* and in 2012 she produced a second, titled *The Weather, A Building*. Each brings together fragments from larger research projects, and extend ideas that have been tested inside and outside of gallery spaces.

A concern with language, writing and voice recurs throughout Stark's artistic practice. The artist's work spans a wide range of media, including collage, carbon drawing, performance, powerpoint presentations, film and animated video. She is perhaps best known for her collages that physically reuse existing printed material and her semi-autobiographical writing that draws upon an eclectic foundation of influences. Stark's relationship with publishing revolves around reworking existing genres and publishing formats that usually serve to document, collate or explore an artist's work in a particular way. Since the 1990s, she has been producing texts and artworks that explore the relationship between the material and the literary, and has been heavily involved in the production of catalogues and monographs about her work.⁸ Stark has produced two publications she identifies as artists' books: the homemade, limited edition booklet "*The Unspeakable Compromise of the Portable Work of Art*" #16 in a series of 16, *THIS WHOLE THING, or, a Bird's Eye View* (2002) and her *Collected Works* (2007).⁹ Yet she often plays with the expectations of the genre in publications such as *A Torment of Follies* (2008), which accompanied a gallery exhibition of the same title and is described as 'an exhibition catalogue disguised as an artist's book.'¹⁰ Stark has exhibited widely throughout North America and

⁸ Stark has written about her life, artistic practice and the work of others—often all at the same time—in published works such as *The Architect and the Housewife* (London: Bookworks, 1999). She has also been heavily involved in the production of publications about her own work, including Alex Farquharson and Jim Waters et al, eds. *But what of Frances Stark, standing by itself, a naked name, bare as a ghost to whom one would like to lend a sheet?* (Nottingham: Nottingham Contemporary, 2009); João Ribas and Frances Stark, eds. *This could become a gimick [sic] or an honest articulation of the workings of the mind* (Cambridge: MIT List Visual Arts Centre, 2010); *My Best Thing* (Cologne: Buchhandlung Walther König, 2012) and Ali Subotnick, ed. *UH-OH: Frances Stark 1991-2015* (Munich: Prestel in association with the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, 2015).

⁹ These may not be the only artists' books produced by Stark during this time, yet they are the only two works that are documented through her publications and website, and are identified as such.

¹⁰ Description from the artist's website, <http://francesstark.com/wp/publications/>, accessed 03/10/15.

Europe,¹¹ participating in events such as the Carnegie International and the Venice Biennale. In late 2015, the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, presented *UH-OH: Frances Stark 1991-2015*, a comprehensive mid-career survey of her work.

Formed through a difficult relationship with text and reading, Stevenson's interest in the book form stems from its role as a physical realisation of history and its ability to tell stories without words. A kind of 'plot twist' enacted by partially reprinting, reproducing or imitating existing objects is one of the defining characteristics of his relationship to publishing. Stevenson has consistently produced artists' books and worked on print projects since the early 1990s. His publications *Art of the Eighties and Seventies* (2006); *Celebration at Persepolis* (2008); *Teoria del Vuelo: José de Jesús Martínez* (2012); and *Animal Spirits: fables in the parlance of our times* (2013) all relate to research projects and sculptural installations that deal with bizarre, maverick histories, delving into the realms of geopolitics, current affairs, myths, legends and science fiction. Each of these books impersonate volumes encountered during the artist's research process. Elements such as their titles, dimensions, typography and materials are derived from existing publications. Stevenson represented New Zealand at the Venice Biennale in 2003, and his work has been exhibited throughout Europe and Australasia in major institutions such as the Tate Modern. In 2013, *Michael Stevenson: An Introduction/Una introducción*, a major monograph edited by curator Laura Preston was published, tracing the artist's practice over twenty-five years.

Struggle for Language: Describing and Historicising the Artist's Book

Despite its many origins and precedents, the artist's book is generally considered to have first emerged in the late 1960s; however the term itself did not appear until 1973 in the title of an exhibition at the Moore College of Art in Philadelphia.¹² Since then, as artist Arnaud Desjardin pointed out in 2011, 'the debates regarding the definition of the term artists' books often only

¹¹ While Stark primarily exhibits in these areas, she also participated in *Working on Talking* (2007) a group exhibition at the Auckland artist-run space Gambia Castle that also featured the work of Buchanan.

¹² Stefan Klima identifies the exhibition *Artists Books* (Moore College of Art, 23 March-20 April 1973), curated by Diane Perry Vanderlip, as the earliest instance of this term in art historical discourse. See *Artists Books: A Critical Survey of the Literature* (New York, Granary Books, 1998), 12.

reinforced the visibility of known and acknowledged practitioners associated with the canonical against the still invisible and obscure.¹³ Discussion about the medium typically concentrates on the books of North American, male, conceptual artists. This is perhaps symptomatic of this field being a somewhat peripheral area of enquiry, which, until very recently, has been preoccupied with establishing its own history and parameters. In their research project *A Manifesto for the Book* (2010), Sarah Bodman and Tom Sowden decided against using the term ‘artist’s book’ for these very reasons. The authors introduce their project by posing the problem of terminology in this area: ‘book—artist’s book—artist’s publication [or] book art?’¹⁴ By recounting the confusions and shortcomings of different descriptors that are often used interchangeably, they highlight a greater issue around the language and toolset used to discuss this field of practice.

The 1960s and 1970s are generally upheld as a watershed moment when the artist’s book emerged and reached its peak in North American conceptual art. Despite historians such as Drucker delving into the many precedents of the artist’s book in the early avant-garde of the 20th century—and further back into the history of the idea and form of the book itself—this canon continues to dominate the field.¹⁵ My discussion examines the figures, practices and institutions that have been used to construct this narrative. This thesis does not suggest that the works produced in the 1960s and 1970s are necessarily a definitive benchmark, but acknowledges that the atmosphere of experimentation and critical exchange during this period laid the groundwork for a critical discourse around contemporary artist’s publishing. Lucy Lippard is an important figure in this thesis as one of the first critics who started to advocate for artists’ books and discuss emerging relationships between printed matter, artist practice and exhibition culture. Artists such as Lawrence Weiner who were outwardly vocal and opinionated about their use of the book during this time also provide important perspectives, as do figures like the New York art dealer Seth Siegelaub, who became well-known for employing the book as a curatorial space.

Today, the climate of bookmaking has shifted significantly. The objects discussed in this thesis have been produced within a period of rapid technological change where new economies, public

¹³ Arnaud Desjardin, *The Book on Books on Artist Books* (London: The Everyday Press, 2011), 5.

¹⁴ Sarah Bodman and Tom Sowden, *A Manifesto for the Book* (Bristol: Impact Press, 2010), 6.

¹⁵ Drucker dedicates the first three chapters of *The Century of Artists’ Books* to exploring the precedents and poetics of the book and the origins of the contemporary artist’s book. See pages 1-68.

platforms and professional contexts have changed the way cultural practitioners make work, self-promote and interact with their audiences. Accordingly, they are considered within the cultural context of a digital, networked society where the book has come under greater scrutiny as a medium.¹⁶ An enquiry into the status of print publishing in the post-internet era is beyond the scope of this thesis and there is already an emerging field of discussion in this area.¹⁷ The digital is a backdrop, condition, or presence—but not a subject or explicit concern—in the publishing practices of Buchanan, Stark and Stevenson. Conversely, it is also worth emphasising that these artists are all of a generation who experienced many of their formative years without the presence of the Internet or the proliferation of digital technologies that have become part of our everyday lives over the past decade. This is not to say that they are not interested in the digital or do not use digital media in their work—simply that their early relationships with books, printed matter and alternative culture were developed in a pre-digital environment.

The artists considered in this thesis have a different frame of cultural reference to those who are ‘born digital.’ They have experienced an era where physical distribution systems—not digital ones—were the primary ways of accessing alternative culture. For example, Stark has explained her own orientation as a writer, artist and thinker was shaped by the ‘form of direct address’ offered by books and records when she was a teenager.¹⁸ In a 2015 interview, she described her interest in the alternative music scene in LA during the 1980s, where ‘the visual and the literary were conjoined somehow through this subcultural platform.’¹⁹ Stevenson, who studied at Elam School of Fine Arts in Auckland in the late 1970s, acknowledges that his own early engagement with art practices outside of New Zealand was reliant on books and reproductions—a context that was explored in the art practices of his peers such as Julian Dashper.²⁰ Buchanan, who is

¹⁶ The idea that books are suddenly on the brink of obsolescence or radical reinvention due to digital technologies may be the dominant narrative. Yet, as many writers have already pointed out, our relationships with print and other ‘old media’ have never been static; they have always been undergoing renegotiation. Critic Alessandro Ludovico explores this phenomenon in his book *Post-Digital Print: The Mutation of Publishing Since 1894* (Eindhoven: Onomatopoe, 2012).

¹⁷ See Ludovico’s *Post-Digital Print* and the activities of publishers such as Badlands Press <http://badlandsunlimited.com/>, accessed 15/02/16.

¹⁸ Frances Stark in conversation with Tyler Green, Modern Art Notes Podcast, no. 215, <http://manpodcast.com/portfolio/no-215-frances-stark-2015-top-ten/>, accessed 07/01/16.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Dashper became known for exploring these themes during 1980s and 1990s. See Francis Pound, “Dashper and Distance” in *Julian Dashper* (Auckland: Sue Crockford Gallery, 1991), unpaginated.

significantly younger, would have no doubt experienced some degree of this effect before the Internet became one of the primary ways of accessing and experiencing culture.

Some Notes on My Approach

Rather than policing the borders of the artist's book or trying to deal with the entire field of discussion surrounding the medium (which would be a futile exercise anyway), this thesis considers how the underlying ideas of this form manifest in the work of Buchanan, Stark and Stevenson, and, in turn, how they can be used to articulate and explore new forms of agency in contemporary art publishing. The term 'artist's book' is employed to refer to a discursive space or an area of practice, yet my discussion also draws upon a broader conversation that includes contemporary artistic practice and exhibition culture. The writing of independent publishers and designers such as Christoph Keller provide important points of reference. This thesis examines specific publications and publishing projects that are not necessarily identified as artist's books, but embody sensibilities and modes of practice that shed light on the legacies and current concerns of artists' publishing. Indeed, many of the works discussed are characterised by they way they resist easy categorisation, playing between the multiple identities of the book in our material culture.

The slippery nature of the practices and objects in question create some productive challenges. In general, writing this thesis has highlighted many of the ways that artists' publications do not sit comfortably within traditional academic frameworks for writing about art. The process of writing about these works has stirred up questions such as how to go about referencing them—should they be footnoted as books following the academic convention for secondary sources, listing all the relevant publishing information which, I argue, is essential to understanding them; or should they be treated as art objects or primary sources with information about their materials, binding and dimensions stated in a list of figures? Accordingly, my methodology acknowledges the complexities of this subject by demonstrating multiple ways of approaching these questions. Rather than privileging one way over the other, quotes from books by artists are footnoted in the main body of the thesis and the materials, dimensions and other information about each object is

provided in the list of figures. Full publishing information for each volume appears in the general bibliography, followed by a more specialised publishing CV for each artist. As it is often useful to look at the objects in question while reading them, I have tried, wherever possible, to include images of artists' publications in the appendix—despite the fact that they cannot tell the full story or reproduce the embodied experience of handling these publications.

Outline of Chapters

I have modelled the structure of the thesis around the specific kind of opening up that takes place through the process of publishing. Challenging the art-world idea of bookmaking as the final act after a project has been completed, this method implicates the publications of Buchanan, Stark and Stevenson within an extended process that continues to appropriate more readers, participants or collaborators into their work. Accordingly, this thesis does not limit the discussion of particular books to separate chapters. While each chapter discusses a particular set of works, specific publications often resurface at different points throughout the thesis, where they are appropriated into new and more expansive discussions.

The opening chapter considers how publishing is intertwined with contemporary artistic practice. Introducing several key publications by Stark, Stevenson and Buchanan, I explore how they fit into broader approaches to making and presenting work. Rather than discussing bookmaking as an isolated activity, the chapter develops the idea of publishing *within and through* artistic practice, tracing connections with installations, performances and larger research projects. It positions the book as an idea, material proposition and structure for reflection in these artists' work. The chapter locates the publishing strategies of Stark, Stevenson and Buchanan within some recent tropes and modes of practice in the field of contemporary art, demonstrating how the idea of the artists' book has developed into a more complex and hybrid area of activity. While my discussion specifically examines the last decade or so in art publishing, it is grounded in a more expansive history. I acknowledge the broader cultural and historical value of the book, and a long-established practice of employing the medium as an artistic tool, object and idea. I argue that the book is not simply a vehicle for documenting projects by each of these artists, but an important point of intersection between making, thinking, research and practice.

In the second chapter I focus on the networks and collaborative models employed by these artists' publications. I explore how their books generate value and dialogue by overlapping with the activities of other practitioners within an increasingly complex and global art publishing scene. Revisiting the egalitarian ambitions of the artist's book in the 1960s and 1970s, I frame this discussion within a broader field of enquiry around independent publishing and the emancipatory potential of distributed media. Although the chapter revolves around collaborative relationships between artists and writers, publishers and graphic designers; it also explores tensions between collectivity and the notion of 'independence' in the field today. Mapping systems of currency and exchange that involve alternative spaces, institutions, publishers and other practitioners; I reflect on some of the ways books facilitate alternative models of artistic production and distribution. In particular, I demonstrate how artists' publishing consistently critiques the knowledge economies and dominant modes of spectatorship in contemporary art, highlighting the tensions and politics inherent in the development and dissemination of all artistic work.

Having established how these works are produced and circulated, the third and final chapter of this thesis explores how the books of Stark, Buchanan and Stevenson open themselves up to future readers. I shift my attention towards the open-ended processes of reception and reinterpretation that books invite. Specifically, I consider the institutions in which books have an afterlife—the archive, library, and academy—and examine their role in canonising and shaping the reader's experience of these works beyond an initial moment of dissemination. After outlining how books continue to generate new meaning through these particular avenues, I argue that Stark, Stevenson and Buchanan are actively interested in the political and metaphorical implications of book collections. My discussion positions the book as a locus of tension between artistic intent, the embodied experience of the viewer or reader and the social life of the text or object. Rather than presenting a neat conclusion or final authority on their projects, this chapter considers how these artists leverage the material and archival nature of the book to acknowledge new possibilities and new discourses, engaging the medium as a site where histories and canons are continually reinscribed and reimagined.

The books of Buchanan, Stark and Stevenson point towards a larger field of potential around the contemporary artist's book and exemplify some of the current complexities of art-world publishing. These artists explore the form, function and idea of the book, traversing the curious space it occupies between high and low culture, elitism and egalitarianism, mass media and counterculture; interrogating structural relationships between power and knowledge production.

Chapter 1: Publishing as Process

Books are a neutral source. In this sense, film is not quite neutral. It is an art medium in its own right. Books are containers of information. They are unresponsive to the environment—a good way of getting information into the world.²¹

— Seth Siegelau interviewed by Ursula Meyer (1969)

Look at the 1920s or the late nineteenth century or the late 1800s. People who made their living as artists also published books, it's not that odd. I don't know how to pop from the late 19th century to visual art of the 20th century...it had been done for decades before: the medium *book* already existed.²²

— Lawrence Weiner in conversation with *Umbrella* (2003)

Every book is a metaphor, an object of associations and history, cultural meanings and production values, spiritual possibilities and poetic spaces, and all of these are a part of the field from which the artist's book derives its identity.²³

— Johanna Drucker, *The Century of Artists' Books* (1995)

Placed side-by-side, the observations of Seth Siegelau, Lawrence Weiner and Johanna Drucker begin to elaborate on the specific and often conflicting appeals of the book as a space for art. At its broadest, the book is a kind of communication technology, an idea that extends back into and beyond twentieth century art history. As Siegelau's quote demonstrates, artists have often used the book in a very strategic manner, recognising its potential as a practical and democratic medium that is not tethered solely to an art context. Yet, as Drucker and Weiner suggest, the book is not simply a 'neutral' medium for artists to use that is disconnected from social and political life, or from artistic practice itself. The book—as an object and an idea—brings broader histories and narratives into play, and, like works of art, holds intangible cultural meaning that is deeply embedded within human history.

²¹ Seth Siegelau interviewed by Ursula Meyer (1969) in Lucy Lippard, ed. *Six Years: The dematerialization of the art object from 1966-1972* (London: Studio Vista, 1973), 126.

²² Hoffberg, "Lawrence Weiner in Conversation with Umbrella on Books," 4.

²³ Drucker, *The Century of Artists' Books*, 42.

Today, a proliferation of different technologies has placed further emphasis on the means and mediums artists use to communicate with their audiences and present work in the digital age. As contemporary artistic practice now tends to revolve around cycles of different activities such as research, writing, installation, performance and documentation; the relationship between artistic practice and publishing has become more important and more ambiguous. In this context, the book is not just a vehicle for documenting projects or disseminating information; it is a form or tool that *does something different* to other media—whether artists are producing books primarily for vanity or self promotion, or whether they have deeper or more subversive ambitions.

For Buchanan, Stark and Stevenson, the book is not merely a ‘container’ for documenting and expanding on past work, but a medium that feeds into and out of their projects. Their publishing practices engage the book as an object, thing and form that is a locus of meaning, exemplifying the interconnected nature of artistic production and presentation strategies in the twenty-first century. These artists use the book form to present work, link different parts of their production together and to develop new ideas. Their publishing projects respond to certain parameters dictated by the physical attributes and conventions of the book (binding, margins, dust jacket, cover, materials, codex, contents page, chapters etc.), and its multiple identities in our material culture—including its place within the art-world. Responding to recent production contexts and the attributes and potentials of the book form, these artists begin to point towards a new culture and politics of publishing that employs the book as a pragmatic and poetic vehicle.

Dematerialisation and Rematerialisation

Print publishing has long played an important role in the business of art production, exhibition, documentation and discussion; yet the idea of a reciprocal relationship between publishing and artistic practice gained particular currency during the late 1960s and early 1970s. During this time (primarily North American) conceptual artists began using books, pamphlets and other materials in order to document ‘dematerialised’, ephemeral or site-specific work. As these practices began to take shape, critics such as Lippard pointed out that they were relying on printed matter for art-world validation in new ways. In the preface to her famous book *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972*, Lippard includes the disclaimer: ‘it

has often been pointed out to me that dematerialization is an inaccurate term' to describe the effects and motives of Conceptual art practice, as 'a piece of paper or a monograph is as much an object, or as "material" as a ton of lead.'²⁴ Her statement reinstates the idea of the book as an anchor in the material world, an idea that artist and bookmaker Ulises Carrión was pursuing at a similar time. In his 1975 essay *The New Art of Making Books*, Carrión argued that 'the book is not a case of words, nor a bag of words, nor a bearer of words', but a thing or object.²⁵

While those like Lippard may have acknowledged this relationship in the early 70s, this does not mean it has necessarily remained a given in the discourse around site-specific and ephemeral work since. In her essay *The Architect and the Housewife* (1999), Stark discusses the role of the art catalogue in order to critique the accepted discourse around so-called 'post-studio' practices that she and her peers had come to be associated with during the 1990s. Ruminating on Daniel Buren's well-known *October* magazine essay entitled *The Function of the Studio* (1979), and what he terms 'the unspeakable compromise of the portable work of art', she writes:

The compromise Buren finds unacceptable is that if a [portable] work is produced in the studio it is automatically wedded to that space, somehow it lives perfectly in that space, yet its portability is some kind of breach in integrity, meaning that it compromises itself by having to leave its home and go to a supposedly neutral gallery space...despite the fact that Buren's critique is now pretty much the dominant ideology, there surely is no shortage of the most portable object of all time, the book, and here I refer specifically to the art catalogue, which ensures that a work – no matter how problematic or ephemeral, no matter how casual or whimsical – remains a work of art, and a portable one at that.²⁶

As Stark suggests, accompanying publications have consistently provided an element of stability for site-specific practices. Inherent in her critique of Buren's 'post-studio' rhetoric is the comparison between the book and the studio as a physical space of activity and construction. Furthermore, as critic Jan Verwoert points out in his essay *School's Out? -!* (2007), 'when "dematerialised" or conceptual practices employ ephemeral gestures, projects or propositions, the primary mode of their existence may in fact be their discussion and documentation in

²⁴ Lippard, *Six Years*, 5.

²⁵ Ulises Carrión, "The New Art of Making Books" (1975) in Joan Lyons, ed. *Artists' Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook*, (New York: Peregrine Smith Books and Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1985), 31

²⁶ Stark, *The Architect and the Housewife*, 14-15.

contemporary academic discourse,’ meaning that they are frequently just as institutionalised as more traditional art objects.²⁷

Critics and art historians have recently critiqued the myth that the conceptual practices that developed in mid-twentieth century were not concerned with materials in the first place.²⁸ Weiner, who was making books and became deeply associated with the idea of ‘dematerialisation’ during this time, described materials as ‘the subject matter’ of his work. In an interview with critic Arthur Rose in 1969, he stated: ‘Materialist involves a primary involvement with materials, but I am primarily concerned with art. One could say the subject matter is materials, but its reason to be goes way beyond materials to something else, that something else being art.’²⁹ More recently, the relationship between art, publishing and materiality has shifted into focus in the digital era. As art historian Gwen Allen points out, the ‘objecthood and temporality [of books] has been thrown into high relief by the flatness and instantaneity of the virtual world.’³⁰ Reflecting on this climate in his essay *Art Books Now* (2006), critic and theorist Dieter Roelstraete suggests that ‘the true mystery of the book’s enduring success’ in an era that prides itself on dematerialization, dissolution and virtualisation ‘lies in its menial modus operandi, its crude “manuality.”’³¹ He describes the book ‘as something that, like the wheel, “makes sense”—literally so, as in: “produces meaning” ’ and, furthermore, that in ‘this “production” and enabling of meaning, the book of course touches upon the fleeting essence that lies at the heart of the riddle that is art.’³² Despite being made nearly four decades apart, Weiner and Roelstrate’s comments both emphasise that artists often choose to publish books precisely because of their materiality.

²⁷ Jan Verwoert, “School’s Out!-? Arguments to Challenge or Defend the Institutional Boundaries of the Academy” in Frances Stark, ed. *Primer: On the Future of Art School* (New York City: Dexter Sinister, 2007), 61-62.

²⁸ A growing field of scholarship is challenging the notion of ‘dematerialisation’ as it relates to conceptual artwork. Many of these discussions draw on New Materialist perspectives (and the work of authors such as Rosi Braidotti), proposing ways of thinking about art in more material and corporeal terms. See, for instance, Sven Lütticken’s three-part series “Art and Thingness,” *e-flux*, no. 13-15, 2010.

²⁹ Lippard, *Six Years*, 73.

³⁰ Gwen Allen, “The Artist as Bookmaker” in *The Thing the Book: A Monument to the Book as Object*, eds. Jonn Herschend and Will Rogan (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2014), 22.

³¹ Dieter Roelstraete, “Art Books Now: Seven Theses (from the Accomplice’s Point-of-View)” in *Books Make Friends* (Culturgest: Roma Publications, 2006), 99.

³² *Ibid.*

As Michael Taussig observes, Stevenson's artwork moves 'back and forth between history and its embodiment in things', or 'dematerialisation and rematerialisation.'³³ One of the more recent examples of this approach is *Teoria del Vuelo (Theory of Flight)* (2012) (fig. 1.1), an A5-sized softcover leaflet that is an exact reprint of a document by playwright, mathematician and bodyguard José de Jesús Martínez (also known as Chuchú). Stevenson became interested in Martínez's life and work around 2008.³⁴ First published in Panama, 1979, *Teoria del Vuelo* is both a poetic and theoretical text that ruminates on the act of flying. Stevenson reproduced Chuchú's original Spanish text, layout and illustration verbatim to accompany an exhibition at Portikus, Frankfurt, adding an accompanying English translation. To offset the extra weight of using twice as much paper as the original text, the artist selected the lightest paper stock possible—paper that was designed to 'fly', or to make airfreight as economic as possible. It is delicate and semi-transparent, so that when readers look inside the booklet they do not just see one page, but pages of text piled up on top of each other (fig. 1.2). The booklet's thin dust jacket is covered with illustrations of orange aeroplanes and the underside, printed with the same inky blue pattern as the interior of a postal envelope, shows through on the cover. As the reader opens the book, which is about the same weight as a mailed letter, they are reminded of the postage systems and aeroplane travel that were likely required to deliver the object into their own hands. Inside, the English translation of Chuchú's text notes that as a plane takes off 'it quickly loses its heft, but it never dematerializes,'³⁵ and in a similar manner, the lightness and transparency of the paper stock has the peculiar effect of emphasising both the materiality and weightlessness of the resulting volume.

Stark's work similarly explores the different functions and material aspects of print, challenging conventional distinctions between text and object. Her innuendo-filled collages *Push* (2006), *Push in and in* (2005) and *Box* (2004), made with materials she received in the mail such as exhibition invites, all depict streams of multi-coloured paper streaming in through the door of the artist's studio. In a 2010 interview with curator Christophe Gallois, she comments that there 'is

³³ Michael Taussig, "A Short History of Flight" in Laura Preston, ed. *Michael Stevenson: An Introduction* (Frankfurt am Main: Portikus, 2013), 170.

³⁴ During this time Stevenson was working towards an film essay entitled *Introduction a la Teoria de la Probabilidad* (2008), which makes reference to Chuchú.

³⁵ Michael Stevenson, *Teoria del Vuelo: José de Jesús Martínez*, reprint of the original Spanish document compiled with a new English translation (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walter König, 2012), 30.

something passive aggressive about the way I have used collage and the way I work with fugitive materials in the past. I have simultaneously always dealt with paper's fragility and its durability. That's the whole thing about paper. It's a flexible material, but it's also the most delicate.'³⁶ The publication *A Torment of Follies* (2008), published to accompany Stark's gallery show at the Vienna Secession, brings together a series of text-based collages made with linen tape or vinyl and inlaid printed matter on rice paper. These colourful works appear somewhat graphic and flattened through the reproduction process, taking on a cartoon-like quality that gives the publication the initial appearance of a children's picture book. Yet self-portraits such as *I must explain, rationalize, classify etc.* (2007) (fig. 1.3) and *By way of digression* (2007-2008) (fig. 1.4) still emphasise the materiality of printed text itself. Stark depicts herself measuring physical pieces of Witold Gombrowicz's novel *Ferdydurke* (1937) that have been typed up and printed out on a computer, cut out as individual words and stuck onto the paper one by one—recalling a fridge magnet poetry set or a children's game. The outlines or edges of each piece of paper are just visible in the reproduction, reminding the reader of the physicality of printed text.

In today's digital, globalised, and increasingly competitive art world, the physicality of the book is also being exploited as a promotional strategy. As contemporary art and social media have become more professionalised, practitioners are taking a particularly active role in dictating how their work is represented on and offline. While digital photographs of various exhibitions, performances or other work by Buchanan, Stevenson and Stark are readily available online through galleries, dealers and websites like Contemporary Art Daily;³⁷ they are publishing books for different and more complex reasons. Laura Preston explores some of these nuances in her 2012 essay titled *The Book as Scripted Space*, where she compares Buchanan's *Lying Freely* with a book by the New Zealand artist Simon Denny. She writes:

I am reading Denny and Buchanan's exhibited objects from a collection of downloaded digital images. Their books I hold in front of me. For any consumer of art today, this is a familiar scenario, except that in this case both artists' books pre-empt this situation by presenting themselves as reproductions (that is, as publications) and as components of an exhibition. They

³⁶ Christophe Gallois, "Performing Texts: Interview with Frances Stark" in *The Space of Words* (Luxembourg: Mudam éditions, 2010), 155.

³⁷ Contemporary Art Daily is a popular website that publishes photographic documentation of exhibitions at major international contemporary art venues, <http://www.contemporaryartdaily.com/>, accessed 27/01/16.

are savvy promotional instruments in which a critique of the production of knowledge is implicit, extending the exhibition frame and allowing the project to take up a new network of readers.³⁸

Rather than relying on digital images, Preston suggests that these artists are publishing books in order to create carefully choreographed environments for the reader. She also highlights the role of publishing within career making and the art market. Unlike digital documentation, artists' books can be sent to the right people and places as gifts or tokens. Opening a physical parcel with a book inside is more memorable and gratifying than receiving an unsolicited email, and even if an artist's publication merely sits on a shelf in a curator or art historian's office for years, it is still there in plain sight. In other words, books continue to be a sophisticated—and perhaps more subtle or conventionally acceptable—way for practitioners to market themselves.

Print publications can also provide a tangible, tactile piece of an exhibition or project that extends an artist's work into a more private, durational and contemplative space. Writing about her handmade artist's book "*The Unspeakable Compromise of the Portable Work of Art*" #16 (2002) (fig. 1.5), Stark describes that '#16, writing wise, is not something I would expect you to stand in a gallery reading. That doesn't seem enjoyable. It's better if you take it home (or wherever) and read it where & when you feel like reading it—that is if you have any interest in doing so.'³⁹ This strategy is not a new idea. In 1976, Sol LeWitt wrote a brief article for *Art-Rite* magazine where he described the benefits of presenting language-based work in this way. He writes: 'books are the best medium for artists working today. The material seen on the walls of galleries in many cases cannot be easily read/seen on the walls but can be read at home under less intimidating conditions.'⁴⁰ Unlike an exhibition, which may only be experienced in the flesh within a certain window in a certain location, books can be carried around, opened and re-read an unlimited amount of times, creating opportunities for prolonged, primary engagement.

³⁸ Laura Preston, "The Book as a Scripted Space: Alterations, Ruth Buchanan and Simon Denny," *Reading Room*, no. 5, 2012, 120.

³⁹ Frances Stark, "The Unspeakable Compromise of the Portable Work of Art: #16 in a Series of 16, THIS WHOLE THING, or A Bird's Eye View" (2002). Reproduced in Frances Stark, *Collected Writing 1993-2003*, London, Bookworks, 2003, 125.

⁴⁰ Sol LeWitt, "Untitled Statement," *Art-Rite Magazine*, no. 14, Winter 1976-1977.

Action and Thought: Publishing Within a Research Project

LeWitt's *Art-Rite* article took the firm position that artists' books 'are works themselves, not reproductions of works.'⁴¹ Today, the situation is significantly more complicated. As Phillipot noted in the 1990s, the artist's book overlaps with the long established, widespread convention of documenting and writing about exhibitions in print. As recent artistic practice has oriented itself around processes of collecting, researching and exhibiting existing objects and historical contexts—or exposing and intervening in the conventional 'language' of the exhibition—new relationships with print media have emerged again.⁴² Practitioners such as Janneke Wesseling have already observed that research often becomes the work of art itself these days, with the subject matter and medium serving as instruments in a thought process. In her book *See it Again, Say It Again* (2011), Wesseling notes that 'the exceptional thing about research in and through art is that practical action (the making) and theoretical reflection (the thinking) go hand in hand. The one cannot exist without the other, in the same way action and thought are inextricably linked in artistic practice.'⁴³ In a 2011 lecture, graphic designer and independent publisher Christoph Keller discussed the links between recent shifts in artistic practice and the trend towards artist-driven publishing. Similarly to Wesseling, he emphasised that publishing no longer simply follows the presentation of work, but is often considered throughout the entire development of a project:

30 years ago, an artist would do work, exhibit it, and send a photographer to the exhibition who would shoot photographs, have an academic write an explanatory text and publish the whole thing. So the book would be a documentation tool. Today if I'm teaching young students, they already know how to integrate published media *into* their work, in the working process. Publishing—like doing something printed—is already part of the process in many cases.⁴⁴

The observations of Keller and Wesseling both highlight a shift in the attitude towards publishing amongst artists more generally: from an entirely retroactive activity that is intended to

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² These shifts are related to the recent phenomenon of 'the artist as researcher.' See, for example, Janneke Wesseling, *See it Again, Say it Again: The Artist as Researcher* (Amsterdam: Valiz 2011).

⁴³ Ibid, 3.

⁴⁴ Christoph Keller, "A Perisher's Nostalgia: Books And Art," video recording of a lecture delivered at the 2010-2011 Bedford Lecture Series, AA School of Architecture, London, 4 March, 2011, <http://www.aaschool.ac.uk/VIDEO/lecture.php?ID=1375>, accessed 03/10/15.

document, legitimise and promote academic discourse around an artist's work, to an activity that may still fulfil many of these functions, but operates in a more discursive manner. It is not simply something that happens following the presentation of work, but a creative activity that takes place within and through artistic practice.

Stevenson's 2011 retrospective at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) Sydney is a particularly significant example of this strategy. While the artist has consistently incorporated printed matter into his installations since the 2000s,⁴⁵ for this exhibition Stevenson worked with curator Glenn Barkley to present an entire room filled with research materials and other curiosities related to his past projects (fig. 1.6). These objects were not arranged into different projects or eras, but all mixed in together, inviting viewers to unravel several interconnected stories, figures and objects that reappear throughout his work. Two glass display cabinets and a wooden workbench displayed maps, photographs, documents, textiles and other objects including empty bottle of Dom Pérignon Champagne and toy-sized model raft. Books were stacked in piles and propped up in display cabinets. In one cabinet, Stevenson's artist's book *Celebration at Persepolis* (2008), a miniature, facsimile version of an existing commemorative publication, was displayed next to the curled up, disintegrating dust jacket of the original volume (fig. 1.7). By displaying a collection of other books on the paint-splattered workbench—which looked as if it would be at home in a suburban garage—Stevenson and Barkley emphasised that they were not simply keepsakes from past projects, but raw materials for new ones.

While the installation the MCA emphasised the sheer variety of material that informs Stevenson's practice, specific books often serve as guides or foundations for his projects. One of the most significant examples of this strategy is the close relationship between his project *Art of the Eighties and Seventies* and the volume *Art of the Sixties and Seventies* (1987). Part of a popular and well-distributed series published by The Museum of Contemporary Art (MoCA), Los Angeles, this book provided a starting point in a project concerning the early history, planning and construction of the Museum Abteiberg, built in the German city of Mönchengladbach between 1972-1982. The artist describes having encountered the book 'years

⁴⁵ Such as *Genealogy* (2000) at The Govett Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth; *The Gift* (2004) at Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane; and *A Life of Crudity, Vulgarity and Blindness* (2011) at Portikus, Frankfurt.

ago as a battered copy in an academic library in Melbourne' prior to beginning work on this particular project.⁴⁶ Of particular interest to Stevenson was the relationship between the Abteiberg and the Milanese industrialist and art collector Count Giuseppe Panza di Biumo (1923–2010). Panza initially agreed to loan a portion of his collection of conceptual and Minimalist art to the museum as it was being developed, yet the partnership eventually disintegrated for reasons that are still unclear today. After the deal with the Abteiberg went sour, MoCA eventually purchased a large portion of Panza's collection and published *Art of the Sixties and Seventies* with Rizzoli, New York, showcasing its recent acquisitions in a hardcover coffee table book. With its bold title, the volume presented itself as a coherent and definitive survey of two decades in art history.

Stevenson's project included a 2005 installation at the Abteiberg itself, where he built an excavated scale model of the museum's administration tower using organic matter, rubble and other materials (fig. 1.8). A single copy of the MoCA book was carefully placed on one of the top steps of a rusted spiral staircase (fig. 1.9). It was not included in the exhibition to be read in the traditional, literary sense, but as an object that could only be viewed from afar. Lying on its side without a dust jacket, the book operated as a curious presence in the installation—like an emblem of past glory placed high on a pedestal and then left there for many years, exposed to the elements. Through this gesture, Stevenson foregrounded the book as a sculptural cornerstone of his project. He also foreshadowed its subsequent reincarnation in his own book *Art of the Eighties and Seventies* (2006) that replicates the cover, scale, typographical atmosphere and other design specifications of the 1980s original (fig. 1.10). All dimensions are exactly the same, albeit with a smaller spine and fewer pages. The weightiness, glossy dust jacket and bound ribbon bookmark of Stevenson's book creates an atmosphere of formality that is almost at odds with some of the entrenched assumptions about what artists' books look like (inexpensive-looking, thin, ephemeral, perhaps handmade or cheaply bound) (fig. 1.11). The publication does not simply promote a greater understanding of the project through photographic documentation or the texts inside. As the artist notes:

⁴⁶ An excerpt taken from the artist's own project description on his website, http://www.michaelstevenson.info/publications.html#art_of_the_eighties_and_seventies, accessed 19/11/15.

Publication is by now the only form in which my Abteiberg project continues to exist... if this book is handled in a more ‘archaeological’ manner—dust jacket removed—black linen cover and text down spine exposed—it is possible to understand its form in relation to the MoCA original... By excavating my book the reader restages some of the processes and methodology central to this project.⁴⁷

Through the parallel experiences of viewing the original book in the installation and handling the resulting object, viewers can begin to unpack relationships between the artist’s exhibition, research and materials.

Much like Stevenson, Buchanan’s decision to extend her work in print is not simply an afterthought; it is a calculated part of the way she makes work. This was evident in her exhibition *Put a Curve, An Arch Right Through It* (2012) at Chrome Gallery in Berlin. According to the reviewer Martin Herbert, the accompanying press material to this show threw ‘a curveball from its outset’ by describing Buchanan’s installation ‘as merely the “preface” to her artists’ book *The Weather, A Building* [2012] to be published at the show’s close.’⁴⁸ It included the work *An exterior, an interior, a surface*; a customised plexiglass table containing a pink hand-hooked rug, a papier mâché avocado, a text card and a small envelope (fig. 1. 12). The palette, dimensions and geometric pattern of the pink rug—a peach rectangle with a yellow triangle and several lines inside it—presented a slightly different iteration to the cover design of *The Weather, A Building* (fig. 1.13). Next to the rug was a card displaying a linguistic poem titled *Intractable*, presented in Buchanan’s first artist’s book *Lying Freely* (2010). This vitrine table exemplifies some of the complexities at play in the artist’s practice: it is at once a single artwork, a display system for individual parts and a maquette for future work.

Likewise, *The Weather, A Building* is not confined to a single role. Tracing three episodes in the history of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin (State Library of Berlin), it is not an entirely separate work or a straight document, but a collection of research materials and an extension of ideas that have been tested in the gallery space. Exploring the temporary evacuation of the library’s contents during Word War II, the use of a provisional storage facility while reassembling the collections in the 1970s and the commissioning of a sculpture for a new library building in the

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Martin Herbert, “Put a Curve, An Arch Right Through It,” *Art Review* 64, December 2012, 142.

1980s; it does not feature any installation photographs of Buchanan's gallery show. Indeed, it is decidedly text heavy, bringing together written material such as essays, timelines and Buchanan's own texts, which are interspersed with a few archival images (fig. 1.14). When flicking through the publication, the only immediate, tangible connection between the book and the exhibition is a glossy colour reproduction of the artist's abstract collage entitled *Furniture, Plan, Rival Brain* (2012). Although it was included in the initial installation, the print is not shown *in situ*, or even framed as it was in the installation, but tightly cropped to 'remove' it from the gallery (fig. 1.15). Stuck into the book with glue, it imitates an old-fashioned colour plate, highlighting its status as a reproduction.

In conversation with a group of artists and curators in the book *On Performance* (2013), Buchanan describes her own interest in questioning 'the characteristics of an audience, an event, or in this context, the retroactivity of producing a book.'⁴⁹ By its very nature, her practice employs and responds to the specificities of different presentation and documentation formats. As critic Robert C. Morgan notes, the meaning of the book is 'derived from a given set of parameters', which are based on predetermined constructs.⁵⁰ Buchanan's *Lying Freely* (fig. 1.16) exploits these conventions, employing the chaptered structure of the book to mark a series of milestones within a body of work. Developed accumulatively over an eighteen-month period in close collaboration with graphic designer David Bennewith, the publication is the fourth and final part of an itinerant project that unfolded during the artist's research residency at the Jan van Eyck Academy.⁵¹ Buchanan explored the texts and biographies of the authors Agatha Christie, Janet Frame and Virginia Woolf, which became impetus for three separate yet related projects bringing each author together with a particular format and location. *Nothing is Closed*, a guided tour through the Rietveld Schröder House in Utrecht, explored the texts and biography of Janet Frame; *Circular Facts*, a theatre piece at Frascati Theatre, Amsterdam speculated on the five-day disappearance of Agatha Christie; and *Several Attentions*, an exhibition at The Showroom,

⁴⁹ Eva Birkenstock and Joerg Franzbecker, eds. *On Performance* (Bregenz: Kunsthau Bregenz; Bilingual edition 2013), 32.

⁵⁰ Robert C. Morgan, "Systemic Books by Artists" in Joan Lyons, ed. *Artists' Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook* (New York: Peregrine Smith Books and Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1985), 207.

⁵¹ The Jan Van Eyck Academy describes itself as a 'multi-form research institute' for artists, curators, writers, designers and thinkers and provides space for research residencies but awards no formal qualifications.

London, took Virginia Woolf's feminist polemic *A Room of One's Own* (1929) as a point of departure.

Each stage of Buchanan's three-part project was translated into a printed format immediately following its initial presentation and, as Bennewith notes, 'the final goal was a bound book' from the outset.⁵² He describes that the way they designed each chapter of the publication 'could be described as a "journalistic" way of dealing with content; before it became too edited, or reduced by the usual amount of time that content and its graphic design are separated.'⁵³ By condensing the period of time between staging an exhibition or performance and translating it into a book chapter, Buchanan and Bennewith were able to capture the atmosphere of working within the overarching project as it unfolded, rather than an entirely retrospective viewpoint. Preston has described how *Lying Freely* 'occupies a position where all stages in the circuitry of production—research, construction, exhibition, documentation—can appear simultaneously.'⁵⁴ Moreover, it underlines the process of putting together the book as a generative practice, where the experience of translating, documenting and discussing one section provides a series of starting points or tangents for the next.

Translation and Displacement

In a short article published by the online journal *Three Letter Words* in 2015, writer Federica Bueti described her own experience of reading *Lying Freely*:

Upon reading the first four pages, I came across a line: 'objects are indexical of frustration'. I think that Buchanan is right; books too are indexical of frustration. How to convey an experience, the experience of listening to a speaking voice, of bodies moving together in space, the feeling of the heat in a crowded room, in written words? How to push the limits of what a book, a body, an object, can do? ... what is the frustration Ruth Buchanan speaks of? Is it the impossibility of fully articulating experiences? In Buchanan's work, frustration seems to be another name for potential, for what an object, a word, a thought could do but it doesn't. And when the object does not do what it could, then we write, exchange thoughts, and make works.⁵⁵

⁵² Email correspondence with the designer, 12/08/14.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Preston, "The Book as a Scripted Space," 120.

⁵⁵ Federica Bueti, "Ruth Buchanan: Lying Freely and The Weather, A Building," *Three Letter Words*, 2015, <http://threeletterwords.org/ruth-buchanan-lying-freely-and-the-weather-a-building/>, accessed 08/02/16.

Bueti argues that Buchanan's interest in the book form is also directly related to what it *cannot* do, or its *inability* to fully represent an exhibition or event in print. She suggests that attempting to 'translate' projects, performances, exhibitions and ideas into printed form is a frustrating yet productive exercise that involves testing the parameters and limitations of the book form. The first chapter of *Lying Freely*, a script of Buchanan's performance *Nothing is Closed* at the Rietveld Schröder House (fig. 1.17), highlights the gap between what is presented in the book and what may have occurred in the event itself as a productive one. By presenting a script of the performance—which is not accompanied by any images of the performance itself—the reader becomes hyper-aware of the spatial and sensory information that is missing. With only the verbalisation and stage directions of *Nothing is Closed*, the reader is forced to partake in an active reconstruction and re-imagining of the entire scenario.

Stark's publication *A Torment of Follies* exploits the temporal aspects of the book to 'perform' her exhibition of the same title at the Vienna Secession, posing new ways of experiencing a particular body of work. Taking Gombrowicz's *Ferdydurke* as a starting point, the artist presented a series of large-scale collages in one large gallery space at the Secession. While many of these works were self-portraits of the artist, others depicted chorus girls holding small extracts from the novel. Wearing collaged op art dresses with brightly coloured discs that appear to spin, the artist created the sense that the chorus girls are performing the text itself. These works were hung on white, freestanding screens (which resemble huge pieces of paper) at the Secession and Stark describes configuring the installation so that visitors would see a dance floor full of chorus girls looking into the gallery space (fig. 1.18).⁵⁶ In the book, these works are presented in three different ways: as colour reproductions that have been rescaled to fit the dimensions of a single page; as art objects hanging *in situ* in gallery installation photographs; and as plain transcriptions of text on otherwise blank pages. In his essay for *A Torment of Follies* entitled *Indecision as Criticism*, linguist and writer Martin Prinzhorn argues that the refusal to make a decision is a deliberate strategy Stark 'propagates in her art with appropriate levity.'⁵⁷ He extends this analysis to the way she presents individual works that 'initially exhibit a kind of indecision as to whether

⁵⁶ Gallois, "Performing Texts: Interview with Frances Stark," 153.

⁵⁷ Martin Prinzhorn, "Indecision as Criticism" in *A Torment of Follies* (Vienna: Secession, 2008), 88.

they want to be seen as works in their own right or as documentation or illustration of something.⁵⁸

Sequencing excerpts of plain text from Gombrowicz's novel in-between reproductions of her collages, Stark plays with the ideas of documentation, translation, narrative and reproduction. Excerpts of text and images are repeated or mirrored throughout the publication. Text physically incorporated into a collage on one side of a leaf of paper is often typeset as a paragraph of straight text on the opposite side. She emphasises different ways of performing a text—through figures that are depicted literally dancing while holding typed pieces of paper; by flicking back and forward between pages in the codex space and narrative sequence of the book; and the experience of walking through the gallery installation itself. In doing so, she emphasise a performative practice of rethinking and reformatting her artworks, their source material and documentation. Stark highlights the shifts and displacements between different modes of communication, presentation and construction across her artistic practice. Artist Falke Pisano writes of a similar strategy concerning her own book *Figures of Speech*, which is based on exploring

...a circulation and exchange of language, ideas, and forms; a transfer from one work to another often involving a change of status, a reflection within a different context, or a further elaboration on an idea. Several formulations come back in different works; formulations of ideas for works become works; descriptions of works are used in preceding or following works, and there is an exchange between descriptive or explanatory texts about the work and the work itself.⁵⁹

Making reference to Pisano's work in his essay *Words and Objects* (2008), curator Christophe Gallois invokes Jacques Rancière's description of the page as an 'exchange surface', or a space of shift between different mediums where 'signs become forms and forms become acts.'⁶⁰

Commenting on the new direction of language in art, Gallois notes that these practices are 'not about the conversion of image into language, resulting in sober textual works,' but a 'zone of tension' between signs, forms and acts where many contemporary artists choose to work or

⁵⁸ Ibid., 87.

⁵⁹ Statement from the artist retrieved from her website, <http://falkepisano.info/introduction-figures-of-speech>, accessed 25/08/15.

⁶⁰ Christophe Gallois, "Words and Objects," *Metropolis M*, no. 2, 2008 <http://metropolism.com/magazine/2008-no2/woorden-en-dingen/english>, accessed 01/02/16.

position their practices.⁶¹ The identification of a ‘zone’ or junction of exchange resembles the language and ideas used to discuss the peculiar appeal of the ‘artists book’ itself as a form that exists at the margins of art, literature and documentation.

In-Between Genres

In the past, those undertaking the notoriously difficult task of trying to define the artist’s book often pointed out what it is not: distinct from books *about* a given artist, a monograph, or an exhibition catalogue.⁶² While the in-between or intersectional nature of the artist’s book has long been recognised, perhaps one of the defining features of today’s art publishing culture is the eclecticism of its influences and its sampling of different genres. As Moritz Wullen, Deputy Director of Kunstbibliothek (The Berlin Art Library), points out in *KIOSK Modes of Multiplication: A Sourcebook on Independent Art Publishing 1999-2009* (2009), this field is not simply fuelled by the desire to make books, but by ‘hybrid connections between art and communication about art’:

Not only do the borders between art, art writing and an art that take up the pen become blurred, but also the lines that once separated artists, authors and publishers, as well as the artist’s book, the exhibition catalogue, the monograph and the magazine. This may be called a “transgenic” form of publication, one that never ceases to recombine the codes of various genres.⁶³

In this context, the format and material expectations of artist-driven publications are not easily identifiable, nor are they entirely distinct from the publishing activities of curators, writers, historians and other types of researchers and cultural producers.

A Torment of Follies does not only reflect more fluid boundaries between art, language, discourse and documentation, but also between certain publishing genres which previously

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² As one of the critics who dedicated a significant amount of time to this activity, Phillpot often produced lists and diagrams for this explicit purpose. One example, printed on the cover of the December 1982 issue of *Art Documentation*, makes distinctions between a ‘book’, ‘art book’, ‘artist’s book’, ‘book art’, ‘bookwork’ and ‘book object’ and is printed on the first page of his anthology *Booktrek* (2013).

⁶³ Moritz Wullen, “Preface” in Christoph Keller and Michael Lailach, eds. *KIOSK Modes of Multiplication: A Sourcebook on Independent Art Publishing 1999-2009* (Zurich: JRP Ringier and Kunstbibliothek Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 2009), 6.

fulfilled clearly delineated roles within the art system. Designed by Stark herself, the publication combines the conventions and material expectations of the artist's book and exhibition catalogue, exploring grey areas between these two genres. The first eighty-three pages of the book include nothing that suggests it is a catalogue. Neither does its cover, featuring one of Stark's chorus girls bending over and looking through her own legs, and the single word 'secession' in a typeface designed by the artist—which seems to refer to the idea of a sequence rather than the name of the gallery in the first instance (fig. 1.19). The last thirteen pages contain all the traditional elements of a catalogue: an essay, installation photographs, a note from the gallery director, a works list and the publishing details.

Artists like Stark are not only reimagining the function of formats such as the exhibition catalogue; the form itself has been undergoing reinvention in the past few decades. Rather than providing a more traditional didactic framework or documentation of an exhibition, a new genre of accompanying publication tends to bring together a range of different media such as archival documents, essays, reprinted email exchanges, screenshots of digital media or visibly photocopied or photographed extracts from other books. These tropes emphasise recent exhibition-making methodologies that blur the roles and responsibilities of the artist, writer and curator.⁶⁴ For instance, the monograph *Michael Stevenson: An Introduction/Una introducción* (2013) (fig. 1.20), edited by Preston, employs all of these strategies, showcasing the diverse media and collaborative processes that characterise the artist's work. Her writing does not feature in the publication; she takes on a curatorial role in bringing together its contents in dialogue with Stevenson. The book presents photographic documentation of past projects, new essays about his practice, a photo-essay and series of pageworks by the artist, an index of his own personal library, a short piece of science fiction by Mark von Schlegell and reprinted newspaper articles and archival materials. There is also a plastic sleeve in the back cover of the publication, designed to hold Stevenson's publication *Teoria del Vuelo* (2012). *A Torment of Follies* and *Michael Stevenson: An Introduction* debunk the idea of the art catalogue or monograph as

⁶⁴A growing field of discussion explores the recent phenomenons of the curator as artist and artist as curator. See, for instance, *Mousse* magazine's serial publication *The Artist as Curator* <http://www.theartistascurator.org/>, accessed 19/02/16, which examines these tendencies, and Anton Vidokle's essay "Art Without Artists?", *e-flux*, no. 16, May 2010, <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/art-without-artists/>, accessed 04/02/16.

something that is initiated and developed solely by a museum, gallery or art historian without direct input, cooperation or collaboration from the artist. Both books emphasise the active role practitioners are taking in print-based projects dedicated to exploring their own work.

Recycling, Self-Archiving and ‘Research’

The ideas of self-archiving and recycling are implicit to the act of producing artists’ books that expand on existing exhibitions, projects and documents; or appropriate the by-products of the production process into new work. Buchanan, Stevenson and Stark employ umbrella titles for their publications that also refer to specific artworks and greater clusters of research with uncertain parameters. Stevenson’s *Art of the Eighties and Seventies*, Stark’s *A Torment of Follies* and Buchanan’s *Lying Freely* also double as the title of installations, performances and specific bodies of work. For instance, *Lying Freely* refers to Buchanan’s book, a three-part project and a 2010 performance in Basel.⁶⁵ A similar effect is created by the titling of *Several Attentions*, the third chapter in the book, which is also the name of two films by the artist and her 2009 exhibition at The Showroom. While these titles may initially seem of little consequence, they begin to undermine the idea of a number of discrete works that can be identified in relation to each publication and begin to blur each output into greater archives or strands of research.

The tactic of recycling and reappropriating the products of past research resembles some of the ‘survival strategies’ of academics and art students. Critics and educators have described a fraught relationship between artistic practice, education and ‘research’ in recent years, while others have examined the increased expectation that artists should be able to articulate their thought processes and show evidence of continual reflection and self-evaluation.⁶⁶ Theorist Henk Borgdorff recently suggested that ‘the relationship between academia and art is uneasy, but challenging...which is one reason why the demarcation between the artistic and academic has

⁶⁵ In 2010, Buchanan worked with architect Andreas Müller to develop an installation titled *Fixations*, an off-site project for a larger exhibition that took place in Basel. As part of this project, she staged a performance titled *Lying Freely* using a mirrored shelf, a copy of Virginia Woolf’s book *To the Lighthouse*, a text card and two clay avocados. The performance is documented alongside Buchanan’s text “More on Renovating,” 28-32.

⁶⁶ This shift has not necessarily been driven by artistic practice itself but by external factors. See Wesseling, *See it Again, Say it Again: The Artist as Researcher* and Frances Stark, ed. *On the Future of Art School: A Primer* (New York City: Dexter Sinister, 2007).

been one of the most widely discussed topics' in this area.⁶⁷ Rather than operating in a privileged sphere outside of economic reality, the production of books by artists is influenced by this uneasy relationship. Although 'artistic research' may have flexible or undefined parameters, it is nevertheless required to be translated into tangible forms of currency within the art education system, where teaching staff must produce outputs—such as publications and exhibitions—in order to maintain their positions. Reflecting on this climate in 2009, Keller argues that when artists are aware that they must 'publish or perish', the book often becomes 'one of those mandatory, scientific means to communicate research results, methods, and to prove actual researching activity.'⁶⁸ Publishing, then, is a way for artists to generate currency within the knowledge economies created by institutions.

As showing components of the research process has become a recognised trope in contemporary art, critics and art historians have drawn parallels between recent artistic practice and established academic disciplines. This tendency has already been explored in well-known essays of the early 2000s, such as Mark Godfrey's *The Artist as Historian* (2007) and Hal Foster's *An Archival Impulse* (2004).⁶⁹ Some of these parallels are examined by Buchanan's sister, Rachel Buchanan, in an article entitled *Recycling Doctoral Waste* (2010). She considers what 'researchers might do with all the offcuts, outtakes, scraps, remnants and other waste products generated by a PhD or any other large research project,'⁷⁰ and how these fragments might be turned into new research. While the article acknowledges the 'latent potential of the material and immaterial archives produced by doing a PhD thesis in history,'⁷¹ *Lying Freely* embodies a similar sensibility by bringing together the leftover products of Buchanan's guided tour, performance and exhibition. In doing so, the artist appropriates disparate working materials and plans for other performances and installations into a new output. Yet, as Borgdorff argues, artistic research tends to invite

⁶⁷ Henk Borgdorff, "The Production of Knowledge in Artistic Research" in Michael Biggs and Henrik Karlsson, eds. *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 44.

⁶⁸ Christoph Keller, "A Perisher's Nostalgia: Books And Art - Some SMACKS on a Relational Crisis" in *KIOSK Modes of Multiplication: A Sourcebook on Independent Art Publishing 1999-2009* (Zurich: JRP Ringier and Kunstbibliothek Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 2009), 91.

⁶⁹ Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse," *October* 110, 2004, 3-22; Mark Godfrey, "The Artist as Historian," *October* 120, 2007, 140-172.

⁷⁰ Rachel Buchanan, "Recycling Doctoral Waste," *History Australia*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2010, 11.1-11.5.

⁷¹ The article briefly mentions the film *Several Attentions* (2009) as an example of the new phenomenon of 'artists hunting down stories hidden in the footnotes.' See *ibid*, 11.1

‘unfinished thinking’ and it ‘is not formal knowledge that is the subject matter of artistic research, but thinking in, throughout and with art.’⁷² In bringing together digital photographs, text, scanned 35mm slides, diagrams, drawings, performance scores and transcripts, *Lying Freely* creates space for these different outputs to come together in conversation with one another. While the subject or material might initially be considered as by-products of a string of exhibitions and events that have already taken place, Buchanan’s publication presents unfinished trajectories of thought.

Like Buchanan, Stark explores the process of compiling, reproducing and writing about her own work as a way to pose new questions. Her *Collected Works* (2007) is an exercise in coming to terms with over ten years of materials and thinking generated through her practice. Although Stark plays with the traditional conventions of a monograph, catalogue raisonné and a traditional literary collected works; her book does not sit comfortably within any of these categories. Conceived as a companion to her *Collected Writing: 1993-2003*, the artist describes the book as ‘an attempt to show a parallel production of works which are trickier to reproduce.’⁷³ It presents thumbnail-sized reproductions of previous works on paper, carbon-copied books, screenshots of videos, photographs, promotional flyers, song lyrics and powerpoint slides, which are accompanied by an informal and fragmented text by the artist which narrates her own work (fig. 1.21, 1.22). Stark describes that the works featured ‘have been exhibited, photographed, sold and atomised into collections, but never brought together all in one place,’⁷⁴ stepping into the role of a researcher or cataloguer of her own oeuvre. In the slides for her self-running powerpoint presentation *Structures that fit my opening and other parts considered in relation to a whole* (2006) presented in *Collected Works*, Stark writes about the idea of being ‘a bricoleur of one’s own body, my parts, or, rather my pieces.’⁷⁵ Rather than attempting to provide a coherent authority on her practice, she often quotes from other authors, reciting parts of poems, song lyrics or subtitles from films. *Collected Works* is a collage of Stark’s own practice and influences presenting a series of fragments, reflections and new digressions.

⁷² Borgdorff, “The Production of Knowledge in Artistic Research,” 44.

⁷³ Frances Stark, *Frances Stark: Collected Works* (Cologne: Walter König, 2007), 1.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 99.

Just as the physical form and materiality of the book cannot be separated from its cultural and historical value, publishing is deeply intertwined with contemporary artistic practice. Stark, Buchanan and Stevenson engage the book as space between making and thinking, research and practice, art and discourse. They use the book to reach out into broader histories, narratives and meanings and to ground their projects in the material world. These artists reconsider art-world publishing conventions and exploit the book as a structure, signifier, sculptural object and idea that is already embedded with broader meaning. Rather than simply documenting past projects, their publications present working and thinking processes, extending exhibitions, performances and bodies of research. Stark, Stevenson and Buchanan employ the parameters of the book as a starting point and a structure for further reflection, considering the shifts and displacements created by attempting to translate work into a printed, bound form. The publishing practices of these artists do not represent an isolated area of activity; rather, they have developed within the nexus of emerging art education, research and exhibition contexts. By using the book as both a production and presentation strategy, they point towards a new culture of publishing that is taking place within and through artistic practice.

Chapter 2: Alternative Economies of Production and Distribution

What would a scholarly discipline or creative praxis that regarded currency and books as two aspects of the same practice look and sound like? What kind of agency could it imagine/practice through its forms?⁷⁶

— Chris Lee (2014)

In Printed Matter's 1981 mail-order catalogue, Edit deAk enthusiastically described the 'many hands at work in the process of making and marketing the book.'⁷⁷ Turning the spotlight onto individuals and groups involved in the production, distribution and sales of books by artists, she likened independent art publishing to activities 'like filmmaking or rock 'n' roll music'.⁷⁸ While such comparisons with filmmaking have been relatively scarce over the past few decades, artists, publishers, designers and critics have continued to draw parallels between art publishing and independent music. In his introduction to *KIOSK*, Moritz Wullen described 'a "scene" aptly named "independent publishing"—following the model of the musical avant-garde—which, since New Wave and Punk, has distinguished between the major labels and eccentric labels with religious zeal.'⁷⁹ More recently, Paraguay Press, an imprint of Parisian bookshop castillo/corrales, began publishing a parallel series of essays exploring the ways books and records engage in the agency of social situations.⁸⁰ Entitled *The Social Life of the Record* and *The Social Life of the Book*, each issue includes contributions by artists, writers, designer and booksellers or musicians, fans, critics, collectors, dealers and record label owners respectively, tracing relationships between making and distributing independent books and records today.

⁷⁶ Corinn Gerber and Benjamin Thorel, eds. *A Book About - What's More to Life Than Books?* (Toronto: Paraguay Press and Art Metropole, 2014), 33.

⁷⁷ Printed Matter is a non-profit organisation dedicated to the dissemination, understanding and appreciation of artists' books. Printed Matter distributes over 20,000 publications annually through a store in Chelsea, an online catalogue and other distribution channels. DeAk's quote is from "According to the Book" in *Printed Matter Catalog 1981: Books by Artists* (New York: Printed Matter, 1981), 5.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁷⁹ Wullen, "Preface," 6.

⁸⁰ See <http://castillocorrales.fr/social-life-of-the-book-slob>, accessed 03/12/15.

As disparate as these examples are, each emphasises the spirit of collectivity, counterculture and resistance that continues to drive independent music and artists' publishing. Moreover, they point towards the almost idiosyncratic way that books and music spark collaboration and connectivity through their production and distribution—generating similar relationships between artists and producers, distributors, stores, fans or audiences. Like many art-world processes, books are collaborative endeavours by their very nature. Despite the way artists' practices are traditionally discussed, there are many people involved in the conceptual development, fabrication, installation and presentation of an artist's work. What is interesting and unique about contemporary artists' books—and independent art publishing more generally—is that the collaborative models employed tend to generate different forms of value and conversation. Most books require content to be edited or written by other people, to be put into a format that can be put on a press (usually by a designer), and the assistance of a printer, a publisher and network of distributors and audiences. Christoph Keller explored the egalitarian qualities of the book medium in an open letter to a colleague in 2008, proposing that 'books make friends,'⁸¹ a line that has since been quoted frequently within discussions around art publishing, and positions collaboration and connection as its own form of currency. Though this sentiment has been prevalent in the field of independent publications for quite some time, it is particularly relevant within the current digital and global context of contemporary art and exhibition culture. Recently, publishing communities have been mobilised by international distribution networks and partnerships between institutions, websites and online bookstores.

The books of Stevenson, Stark and Buchanan embody alternative economies developed through collaboration and exchange. They share complex relationships with the notions of independence, emancipation and collectivity, highlighting a series of shifts and parallels with the early ideas and precedents of the artist's book. Blurring sites of production and dissemination, these artists reach out into broader critiques of the art-system and question the dominant modes of spectatorship in contemporary art. Produced within a relatively small yet international network of practitioners, their works are developed through shared cultural and institutional contexts, artistic concerns and collaborative relationships. Rather than representing a single artist's work,

⁸¹ Christoph Keller, "Re: A Place Where Things Cannot Come to Their End," in *Books Make Friends* (Culturgeist: Roma Publications, 2006), 9.

they overlap with the practices of other artists, curators, writers, editors, graphic designers, and publishers. Their books highlight the socio-political models and forms of agency engendered by art publishing, posing a counter-narrative to the idea of the artist's book as a fetishized object or voice of a single author. Together, the publications of Stark, Buchanan and Stevenson foreground an emerging politics of production and distribution that reflects the recent values and currency of contemporary art publishing.

Independent Art Publishing and Egalitarianism

Like independent music, independent publishing is defined by an underlying desire to generate alternative economies that subvert established genres, traditions and institutions. The very labels 'independent publishing' or 'independent music' denote some form of emancipation from the compromises or value systems of their mainstream counterparts. This idea underpins the historical development of the artist's book. Much has been written about artists who attempted to circumvent the art market and gallery system by producing books and printed matter during the late 1960s and 1970s. Around this time, Lucy Lippard described their actions as 'a declaration of independence by artists who speak, publish and at least try to distribute themselves.'⁸² She suggests that self-publishing is an effective way of bypassing gatekeepers and art-world power structures. While they might have similar motives, these days the term 'independent publishing' tends to refer to a different praxis—one that is deeply entangled in the desire to create its own alternative economies and infrastructure, but is not devoid of its own hierarchies.

In the past, the egalitarian sentiments of artists' publishing have not always held true. Since the 1970s, artists have employed printed multiples for their affordability, accessibility and their ability to be distributed on a larger scale. Each of these qualities related back to an underlying hope that artists' publications could reach and enchant a broader public. In 1976 Lippard famously remarked that one day, she 'would like to see artists' books ensconced in supermarkets, drugstores, and airports, not incidentally, to see artists profit economically from broad

⁸² Lucy Lippard, "Conspicuous Consumption: New Artists' Books" in Joan Lyons, ed. *Artists' Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook* (New York: Peregrine Smith Books and Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1985), 49-50.

communication rather than a lack of it.’⁸³ Around this time, the term ‘democratic multiple’ emerged, encompassing inexpensive, multiple-edition booklets, postcards, artists’ books and pamphlets exploiting commercial production methods.⁸⁴ However, in her 1983 essay titled *Conspicuous Consumption*, Lippard noted that despite her own ‘sincere avowals of populist intent’ in the early 1970s, ‘the accessibility of the cheap, portable [book] form did not carry over to that of the contents.’⁸⁵ In 1997, Drucker argued that ‘the democratic multiple is one of the founding myths of artists’ books in their incarnation as mass produced works.’⁸⁶ While artists are continuing to make their publications cheap and readily accessible today, they often do so with awareness that the ability to engage with their work frequently requires institutional framing or inside knowledge of the art-world and art history.

Tensions between collectivity and emancipation continue to shape the discourse around the dissemination and reception of artists’ publishing. In many ways, the notion of independence seems to conflict with the underlying social and economic realities of producing and distributing printed matter. In today’s art publishing climate, individual projects tend to exist within complex networks of artists, writers, designers, publishers, booksellers, distributors, curators, museums, galleries and funding bodies. As each of these parties hold their own ideals and agendas, a certain amount of bargaining must take place to get publications off the ground. Moreover, while independent publishing projects may not be commercially driven—or even commercially viable—they may be deeply embedded within other economies, acting as forms of currency in areas such as education and public arts funding. As collectable, fetishized objects that generate cultural capital, artists’ books are certainly part of the mass market of commodities. Indeed, perhaps one of the unique characteristics of artists’ publications is the way they tread the line between elitism or exclusivity, and democratic or populist values.

⁸³ Lucy Lippard, “The Artist’s Book Goes Public” (1983) in Joan Lyons, ed. *Artists’ Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook*, (New York: Peregrine Smith Books and Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1985), 50.

⁸⁴ See Johanna Drucker, “The Myth of the Artist’s Book as a Democratic Multiple,” *Art Papers*, November-December 1997.

⁸⁵ Lippard, “Conspicuous Consumption,” 50.

⁸⁶ Drucker, “The Myth of the Artist’s Book as a Democratic Multiple,” 10.

Means of Diffusion

The difficulties and political possibilities of distributed media have long provided fertile ground for artistic enquiry. From the manifestos of the Modernist avant-garde, to mail art and artists' books, to new media works that engage with communication technologies; distribution and circulation are definitive paradigms of twentieth-century art history. As Walter Benjamin pointed out in 1936, these ideas are closely related to significant changes in the attitudes towards the art object, brought about through the advent of film, photography and reproduction technologies.⁸⁷ Several decades later, Marshall McLuhan famously proposed that 'the medium is the message', his idea that 'the personal and social consequences of any medium—that is, of any extension of ourselves—result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology.'⁸⁸ In his subsequent publication *The Medium is the Massage* (1976) McLuhan described the book itself as an 'extension of the eye' and printing as 'a ditto device.'⁸⁹

Today, artists are continuing to explore distribution strategies to meet or resist the common goals, demands and preoccupations of artistic production. Artist Seth Price explored some of these tactics in his well-known essay *Dispersion* (2002). Reflecting on the cultural climate of the new millennium, he considered how artists were engaging with 'the material and discursive technologies' of distributed media in order to interrogate 'the circuits of money and power that regulate the flow of culture.'⁹⁰ Price argues that in order to think about the dispersion and circulation of art in the post-internet era, we must rethink the idea of what is public. According to the artist, 'publicness today has as much to do with sites of production and reproduction as any supposed physical commons, so a popular album could be regarded as a more successful instance of public art than a monument tucked away in an urban plaza.'⁹¹ Price emphasises the

⁸⁷ See Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936) in Hannah Arendt, ed. *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books Inc, 1969), 217-251.

⁸⁸ Marshall McLuhan, "The Medium is the Message" (1964) in *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, rev. ed. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994), 1.

⁸⁹ Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, ed. *The Medium is the Massage* (1967), rev. ed. (California: Gingko Press, 2002) 38-48.

⁹⁰ Seth Price, *Dispersion*, 2002, <http://www.distributedhistory.com/Dispersion08.pdf>, accessed 02/10/15.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

significance of the new means and mediums of communication being used to circulate artists' work, and, perhaps more importantly, how these media influence the formation of publics.

As a medium that challenges conventional art-world boundaries between production and distribution, books can create opportunities for artists and publishers to shape their own rules of engagement with audiences. Artist and educator Maria Fusco discussed this idea in a 2008 lecture at the University of West England. She characterises her own print or hardcopy projects as employing similar methods of dissemination and distribution to 'folksonomic tagging—the little blue tags on Wikipedia pages where you can link to other sections,' allowing developers to create more intuitive pathways through the website.⁹² She argues:

There is something interesting...in how you interest people in your work, how you create an audience for your work and how you sustain an audience for your work. Here's a quote from Michel de Certeau from 'The Practice of Everyday Life': "The means of diffusion are now dominating the ideas they diffuse". That is a very interesting quote, certainly for the practice of artists' books, where you are looking at something that by its very nature is metacritical, or is reflecting, or looking, or pointing back at its own conventions of form.⁹³

While distribution can open up new areas of enquiry and new forms of agency for artists, it is often described as a major logistical problem within the field of independent publishing.

Practitioners have recently developed initiatives that specifically attempt to unpack some of these issues. One example is *X-Operative*; a 2013 residency by the London-based project space X Marks the Bökship at Wysing Arts Centre, Cambridge, UK. *X-Operative* explored alternative methods of production, exchange, and distribution of independent books. In an e-booklet produced during this residency, publisher Adam Burton points out that there is often little energy left over to self-distribute or self-promote publications after they have been produced. He asks:

How many artists, or activists, or whoever, do you know who are good at keeping track of a hundred books they are selling in thirty bookshops in twenty cities—and all the details? Of

⁹² Maria Fusco, "Alternative Methods of Distribution for Artist's Books and 1982, Doom Knots," transcript of a paper presented at the Centre for Book Arts, University of West England, 2010, <http://www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/pdf/canon/fusco.pdf>, accessed 02/10/15.

⁹³ Ibid.

course, it is possible to be organised about it, but it seems as though being organised about it would involve more work than is involved in making the book.⁹⁴

Furthermore, as critic and curator Benjamin Thorel notes, distribution can be a dead-end for some self-publishers because ‘if you have made a book, but are unable to organise its very “existence”, then you are stuck.’⁹⁵ Like contemporary art in general, books need to tap into social and professional networks in order to reach sympathetic audiences. Print publications can allow artists to set the terms for how audiences engage with their work, but they usually require compromise and support to get published, sold, discussed, exhibited and promoted.

By allowing artists to overcome some of these challenges, distributors, booksellers, and artist-run institutions have played a pivotal role in the independent publishing landscape. Since the 1970s, well-known organisations such as Printed Matter in New York (1976 -), Art Metropole in Toronto (1974 -) and Other Books and So in Amsterdam (1975-78), have addressed a need for artist-driven distribution networks. By developing appropriate distribution mechanisms, these bookstores mobilised art publishing and provided hubs for local alternative arts scenes. In 2011, art publishing pioneer Walther König described his own well-known bookstore founded in 1968 in Cologne as ‘a kind of meeting place’ more than a retail bookstore in its early days.⁹⁶ Printed Matter and Art Metropole continue to play a significant role in a much larger and more complex art book scene. Although Other Books and So (run by Ulises Carrión) closed its doors in 1978, much has been written about the bookshop and its contributions since. In a 2010 article on Other Books and So, art historian Gerrit Jan de Rook describes the bookstore ‘provided a model for a generation of young artists, curators and designers’ who have since opened their own bookstores and galleries.⁹⁷

Today, independent art bookstores and hybrid gallery spaces run by this new generation of practitioners continue to function as physical meeting places, yet the encounters they facilitate

⁹⁴ Adam Burton and X-Operative, *Some Problems of Distribution for Independent Publishers and Independent Booksellers* (Cambridge: Wysing Arts Centre, 2013), 2.

⁹⁵ Gerber and Thorel, *A Book About*, 35.

⁹⁶ Hans Ulrich Obrist, “Walther König, Cologne,” *032c*, no. 21, Summer 2011, <http://032c.com/2012/walther-koenig-cologne/>, accessed 13/01/15.

⁹⁷ Gerrit Jan de Rook, “Ulises Carrion and Other Books and So,” trans. Mari Shields, *Metropolis M*, no. 5, 2010. <http://metropolism.com/magazine/2010-no5/tatata-tatatata-ta/english>, accessed 02/10/15.

also take place in more discursive spaces. While organisations like Printed Matter used to sell their publications through mailed catalogues, online platforms have expanded networks for the distribution, promotion and sale of independent publications. Retailers such as Book Depository and Amazon have drastically altered the way books are purchased over the last decade. Although these websites cater to a mass market, they also sell selected specialist publications and artists' books, often with free shipping and cheaper price tickets.⁹⁸ In a competitive global climate, publishing has become an increasingly diverse and strategic exercise where hybrid models are a necessity for economic survival. It is out of necessity that new publishing practices and alternative economies of production and distribution have taken shape.

Kamikaze Business

Against this backdrop, the books of Buchanan, Stark and Stevenson have been developed within an art book scene shaped by different types of publishing initiatives: from art school presses, to specialist imprints, to larger publishing houses who produce theoretical texts and coffee table books as well as artists' books. In this increasingly diverse field, the publishers these artists work with provide a great deal of insight into how their practices operate. Over ten years, four of Stevenson's books including *This is the Trekk*a (2003),⁹⁹ *Art in the Eighties and Seventies* (2006) *Celebration at Persepolis* (2008) and *Animal Spirits* (2013) were designed, edited and published by Keller. In cooperation with other parties, these books were produced under Keller's own imprints Revolver (1999-2005) and Christoph Keller Editions, a loose series of artists' books that has been operating under the umbrella of Swiss publishing house JRP Ringier since 2005.

⁹⁸ For example, Stevenson and Verwoert's book *Animal Spirits* and Buchanan's *The Weather, A Building* are both currently available to purchase through large online retailers such as Amazon.com and Book Depository, as well as independent publishers Clouds and Sternberg Press. Both books are relatively affordable at under NZD \$40.00; however, the price of each book varies depending on where it is purchased from. *Animal Spirits* costs \$39.95 plus \$5.00 shipping from Clouds—who co-published the work—versus \$36.50 including shipping from Book Depository. This discrepancy does prompt some questions about how these specialist publishers can compete with larger retailers who can absorb shipping costs and other overheads.

⁹⁹ *This is the Trekk*a (Frankfurt am Main: Revolver; Wellington: Creative New Zealand and City Gallery Wellington, 2003) was presented alongside Stevenson's exhibition of the same title at the second ever New Zealand Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. While this publication is a significant part of Stevenson's oeuvre, there is not sufficient scope to give it the depth of discussion it warrants within this thesis.

Stevenson's more recent books have been produced by art museums or galleries.¹⁰⁰ A few of Stark's publications have been published by Walther König, including her *Collected Works* (2007) and *A Torment of Follies* (2008). Buchanan's *Lying Freely* (2010) was co-published by two Dutch research institutes: the Jan van Eyck Academy and Casco Office for Art, Design and Theory. Her most recent publication, *The Weather, A Building* (2012) was published by Berlin-based Sternberg Press, who are known for producing theoretical texts as well as artists' publications.

These publishers are conscious of their own roles as long standing advocates for certain artists, backing projects that stem from their own unique sensibilities and interests. In an interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist in 2011, Walther König described how his press has always tried to work with artists over long periods of time, sometimes even twenty or thirty years. He explained they intend 'to operate like a literary publishing house. If we represent an artist, we represent them completely. That is very important to us—to be an artists' publisher.'¹⁰¹ This is only partly true in Stark's case, as she has published books with a range of other imprints; but perhaps this simply refers to the kind of partially non-exclusive yet invested relationships artists have with dealers. (Indeed, Stark has described the 'promiscuity' of the art-world where a practice is sustained by many different invitations and propositions from different parties).¹⁰² Both König and Keller describe working with relatively obscure artists who have since become well known, due, in part, to their support. Keller notes, 'after the first year [of Revolver] ... we had six books out but no one wanted to buy them ... Now, those little books sell for some hundred Euros, but at the time, the artists were young and unknown.'¹⁰³ The activities and interests of these publishers therefore take on a certain curatorial dimension, as well as actively participating in the marketing and commodification of an artist's practice or 'brand'.

¹⁰⁰ *Michael Stevenson: An Introduction/Una introducción* was published by Portikus, Frankfurt; Museo Tamayo Arte Contemporáneo, Ciudad de México; and Walther König, Cologne. *Teoría del Vuelo: José de Jesús Martínez* has the same team of publishers with the exception of Walther König.

¹⁰¹ Obrist, "Walther König, Cologne."

¹⁰² When questioned about her use of digital media in 2015 by Tyler Green on the Modern Art Notes Podcast, Stark described promiscuity as 'the dominant metaphor' for how different mediums are incorporated into her work: 'It's not so much about the form but I felt that as a thinker, as an educator and someone who does a lot of exhibitions and publishing and things; I was thinking a lot about the role of the artist as an exhibitionist and as someone who is promiscuous.'

¹⁰³ Keller, "A Perisher's Nostalgia," 83.

Traditional publishing is a question of investment that is exclusively of capitalist origin. Keller describes the basic principle of how most books are produced involves an idealised, age-old scenario where ‘someone puts money on the table to multiply a text, an image, or whatever, for it to be sold in high quantities for serious cash back.’¹⁰⁴ While this idea still works for large editions of highly marketable books, independent art publishing is largely concerned with attempting to imagine the production and distribution of books and culture beyond capitalism, however futile this might seem. In 2009, Gwyneth Porter, who founded the Auckland-based independent publishing house Clouds (a co-publisher of Stevenson and Verwoert’s *Animal Spirits* and distributor for Buchanan’s *Lying Freely*), explained: ‘Clouds uses other people’s money to make books. We are not trying to make money off our books, instead making them so they can exist and be in the world as they are wished to be rather than being what the market requires of them.’¹⁰⁵ Caroline Schneider, the director of Sternberg Press notes: ‘the line between independent and institutional actors in the publishing world tends to be blurred’, and ‘art world autonomy is thus merely relative.’¹⁰⁶

As many observers have already pointed out, independent publishing projects are lucky if they are not *losing* lots of money. The same could be said of contemporary art more generally, an industry where there is never enough money and a lot of work gets done through unpaid labour.¹⁰⁷ Money and business ethics are often the elephants in the room in discussions of contemporary art publishing. Keller himself has described publishing as a ‘crazy’, ‘kamikaze-business,’ recalling the infamous example of artist Dick Higgins’ famous Something Else Press, which he started with money from his family’s fortune. After publishing many of the most well known artists’ books of 1960s and 1970s Higgins eventually went bankrupt.¹⁰⁸ Despite these

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 84.

¹⁰⁵ Gwyneth Porter, “Clouds Publishing” in Christoph Keller and Michael Lailach, eds. *KIOSK Modes of Multiplication: A Sourcebook on Independent Art Publishing 1999-2009* (Zurich: JRP Ringier and Kunstbibliothek Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 2009), 173.

¹⁰⁶ Caroline Schneider, “Lukas & Sternberg” in Christoph Keller and Michael Lailach, eds. *KIOSK Modes of Multiplication: A Sourcebook on Independent Art Publishing 1999-2009* (Zurich, JRP Ringier and Kunstbibliothek Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 2009), 172.

¹⁰⁷ As writers such as Steyerl have noted, this unpaid labour is gendered and most often done by young women. See Hito Steyerl, “Politics of Art: Contemporary Art and the Transition to Post-Democracy,” *e-flux*, no. 21, 2010 <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/politics-of-art-contemporary-art-and-the-transition-to-post-democracy/>, accessed 12/01/16.

¹⁰⁸ Keller, “A Perisher’s Nostalgia,” 84.

realities, and despite the financial pressures put on all publishers since the Global Recession in 2008, Schneider describes her own hope that independent publishers will ‘continue seek out new and critical voices and more innovative modes of production, be they e-books, print-on-demand or simply “recessionary” publications which are less glossy in form but more consistent in content.’¹⁰⁹ Rather than upholding their own projects as political utopias, or lamenting their lack of total independence, Keller, Porter, and Schneider position independent art publishing as a vital, hopeful and imaginative activity.

Design on a Tropical Island

While the very label ‘artist’s book’ tends to perpetuate a myth of sole authorship, Buchanan, Stark and Stevenson have worked closely with other practitioners, including graphic designers, to develop many of their publications. Despite the introduction of desktop publishing software in the 1990s, which enabled more people to design and produce their own books, graphic designers have only become more involved in this field since the early 2000s. Today, a small group of designers have established their own publishing imprints, often overseeing all stages in the production and distribution of the projects they support. Whether they are driving the publication of work by artists or simply involved in a one-off project, designers can have a significant amount of input in an artist’s book, in some cases acting as collaborators or co-authors. However, their agency is often ignored or erased in critical discussion of contemporary art publishing. This is likely due to a broader, underlying relationship between graphic design and print media that is historically quite different to print in contemporary art, and is tied to the role of graphic design as a service industry. (After all, the term ‘designer’s book’ would be completely redundant, as all books are designed by someone).

Collaborating with a designer is not unique to art publishing or bookmaking in general; however, independent art publishing seems to facilitate a certain kind of productive exchange between artist and designer that can blur the traditional roles and responsibilities of both practitioners. In an essay on Roma Publications, a publishing imprint founded by artist Mark Manders and graphic designer Roger Willems in 1998, Curator Miguel Wandschneider emphasised the

¹⁰⁹ Schneider, “Lukas & Sternberg,” 172.

creative possibilities of ‘non-hierarchical cooperation between artist and designer.’¹¹⁰ He described this form of collaboration where

...graphic design is not a subsidiary in the process of creating the publications and other editions, nor is it an “applied art” that simply follows the choices and decisions of other actors, namely artists and curators. Rather, it is an essential instance of thought that permeates ...[an] entire praxis and can run through every phase of a particular project.’¹¹¹

Wandschneider notes that this is not typical. Indeed, he compares Roma to a tropical island for ‘projects that would otherwise not exist.’¹¹² The publications of Buchanan, Stark and Stevenson are no utopias, yet they illustrate how this kind of working relationship can inform—and perhaps define—resulting publications. The designers they work with are engaged in self-initiated projects that explore the speculative (rather than commercial or teleological) possibilities of graphic design and print media, and exhibit similar investigative approaches to contemporary artists, merely drawing on a slightly different field of tools, formats and histories.

Buchanan’s *Lying Freely* and *The Weather, A Building* were both developed with New Zealand-born graphic designer, educator and researcher David Bennewith, who is currently based in Amsterdam. Both share a similar graphic language, yet the former publication represents a certain kind of working dialogue between that defined the resulting document. Developed accumulatively over an eighteen-month period, *Lying Freely* reflects Bennewith’s preference for what he describes as ‘an open way of working’ where his interests, skills and knowledge ‘can inform the desires of the artist.’¹¹³ He writes: ‘somehow this blurs the idea of responsibility...[and] increases the investment in the production from both sides. It is also more complicated and I like this.’¹¹⁴ Divided by a single colour-coated sheet of glossy paper, each individual chapter of *Lying Freely* reflects both a particular stage of Buchanan’s three-part project and Bennewith’s interests in the narratives embedded in certain printing processes, materials and formats:

¹¹⁰ Miguel Wandschneider, “Roma Publications: A tropical plant in northern zones” in *Books Make Friends* (Culturgeist: Roma Publications, 2006), 7.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Email correspondence with the author, 12/08/14

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

At the time I was also busy working with the idea that different printing process have different narrative qualities—trying as a graphic designer to try find deeper meaning in subtleties and abstractions, production processes, humans and formats that our work always ends up confronting. [I was] motivated by a desire to find a critical/political depth in my work and its outcomes, through necessary production. Both this iterative way of working and this interest in contingent production narratives were combined to produce an equivalent of Ruth’s performances/sculptures/exhibitions in the book. Whether that is visible or not, the *intention* is there.¹¹⁵

While most graphic design employs—or is used to apply—utilitarian approaches to narration and navigation, Bennewith and Buchanan explored and questioned these functions. The section *Nothing is Closed*, documenting the artist’s guided tour through the Rietveld Schröder House, is printed on a glossy paper stock, recalling a tourist brochure (fig. 2.1); the section *Circular Facts*, documenting her theatre piece exploring Agatha Christie’s disappearance, makes subtle reference to a paperback thriller through a serif typeface and textured cream paper stock (fig. 2.2); and the section *Several Attentions*, documenting Buchanan’s exhibition at the Showroom, London, mimics an art catalogue with its bright white paper and bird’s-eye-view perspective (fig. 2.3). *Lying Freely* does not only represent Buchanan’s ideas, but also a dialogue around Bennewith’s own interests in certain formats and materials.

Stark’s *Collected Works* was compiled, edited and designed with her then-partner Stuart Bailey. From 2001-2011, Bailey co-edited the design journal *Dot Dot Dot* and has since been working with fellow designer David Reinfurt under the name Dexter Sinister; a project that has become known for collapsing traditional distinctions between design, production, editing and distribution. During an artist talk in 2011, Stark described how the structure and visual language of her *Collected Works* came out of discussion with Bailey. She characterised their working relationship as somewhat antagonistic due to her initial insistence that the book be ‘all visuals, no writing’, despite knowing that her work did not necessarily photograph or reproduce very well.¹¹⁶ After eventually compromising, Stark’s written accompaniment consequently defined the structure of her *Collected Works*, which presents thumbnail-sized reproductions of past artworks alongside a fragmented first person narrative. The resulting publication resembles a

¹¹⁵ Ibid., original emphasis.

¹¹⁶ Frances Stark, artist talk presented at Mills College 2011-2012 Lecture Series, California, December 7, 2011, <http://vimeo.com/54911080>, accessed 22/08/14.

comic book, a quality that is accentuated by the collaged or hand-drawn quality of many of Stark's artworks.

Collected Works provides a thought provoking departure from the conventions of the artist monograph and resonates with Stark's practice, yet it also bears a striking resemblance to the book *Appendix Appendix* (2003) (fig. 2.4), co-authored by Bailey and artist Ryan Gander. *Appendix Appendix* has been described as 'neither straight documentation, nor "artists' book"', pushing for a third way' of representing a practice through dialogue between an artist and designer.¹¹⁷ Both bring together materials from different fields and formats, creating a collage of thumbnail images, screenshots, and fragments of writing. Each publication has very similar dimensions and austere, utilitarian typography; and each subverts the conventions of the book in a similar way, omitting chapters, contents pages and gratuitous photographic images (fig. 2.5). The design of *Collected Works* and *Appendix Appendix* emphasises fragmentation, intertextuality and draws attention to the ways we typically encounter graphic design within a printed space. By comparing these two books, it is clear that both are strongly influenced by Bailey's concerns and sensibilities.

Stevenson has consistently involved designers in the production of his books since the early 2000s. Keller has been involved in the production of *Celebration at Persepolis* and *Animal Spirits*, which are both modelled on existing publications. For *Celebration at Persepolis* (fig 2.6), Keller replicated the design specifications of an existing commemorative publication for Stevenson—using the same typography, dust jacket and dimensions—but at a 50% scale. A short blurb on the sleeve of the book states that it has been 'prepared under the direction of Michael Stevenson,' yet it also features the Christoph Keller Editions imprint prominently. *Animal Spirits*, another book from Stevenson and Jan Verwoert that was designed and published by Keller, imitates a 1894 edition of *The Fables of Aesop* through its gold embossed cover design, scale and marbled inner cover (fig 2.7, 2.8, 2.9). Significantly, the publishing information at the front of the book states that it has been 'made into a book by Christoph Keller,' rather than

¹¹⁷ Extracts taken from the publisher JRP Ringier's description of the book, http://www.jrp-ringier.com/pages/index.php?id_r=4&id_t=1&id_p=15&id_b=776, accessed 06/2/15.

designed by him.¹¹⁸ At first, this might suggest that Keller has simply been relegated to a particular stage of a materially predetermined process, tasked with translating Stevenson's ideas into book form by modelling the design and typographic atmospheres of existing publications. Yet it also tends to suggest that there is a broader range of activities at play in his role as the joint publisher or maker of both of these books. Christoph Keller Editions are edited, compiled and selected to be a part of a series that explores contemporary art publishing and is a project in itself.

Stevenson's more recent book *Teoria del Vuelo: José de Jesús Martínez* (2012) and the monograph *Michael Stevenson: An Introduction/Una introducción* (2013) have been designed by artist and publisher Nuno de Luz. These two publications fit together—quite literally, as *Teoria del Vuelo* is a small leaflet that slots inside a plastic sleeve in the back of the larger volume *Michael Stevenson*—and also through a shared material language (fig 2.10). Both books employ similar typefaces and feature blue envelope security patterns printed inside their front covers. De Luz produces installations, sound events and printed matter through the imprint ATLAS Projectos and the record label Palmario Recordings. With an almost scientific relationship to research and an interest in replicating and reproducing existing publications, his work shares an affinity with Stevenson's. De Luz recently put together a re-edition of a series of children's encyclopaedias developed using the principles of Zetetics, the science of research. Titled *Zetetics: A Taxilogy of Pictorial Knowledge* (2011), the publication series is based around diagrammatic schemas that are very similar to the types of illustrations featured in *Michael Stevenson: An Introduction*, most notably on the book's blue dust jacket. On the front cover, a white diagram appears to depict particles moving through a gate from one side of a contained area marked 'B', to another, marked 'A'. On the back, is the inverse of the diagram with the particles moving back to 'B' (fig 2.11). Mimicking the pseudo-scientific representation of unknown and intangible phenomena or thought processes, the visual language resonates with the practices of both Stevenson and de Luz.

¹¹⁸ Michael Stevenson and Jan Verwoert, *Animal Spirits: Fables in the Parlance of our Times* (Zurich: Christoph Keller Editions and JRP Ringier, 2013).

Ancestors and Writing

While many voices often manifest in artists' publications today, the writer's is perhaps the most direct and obvious example. Like collaborations with graphic designers, partnerships with writers are a relatively recent development in the field of artists' books. In the 1960s and 70s, many artists produced work with the conviction that there should be no interpretative or explanatory framework provided. Lippard has described that when she first started *Printed Matter*, her definition of an artist's book included the criteria that these types of publications be 'all art and no commentary or preface or anything that wasn't part of the artwork by anyone—artist or critic.'¹¹⁹ In 1976, she stated:

The ancestors of artists' books as we know them now were the products of friendships between avant-garde painters and poets in Europe and later in New York. It was not until the early 1960s, however, that a few artists began to ignore literary sources, forego the collaborative aspect and make their own books—not illustrations or catalogues or portfolios of prints but books as visually and conceptually whole as paintings or sculpture.¹²⁰

Lawrence Weiner, who produced most of his books during this era, has also described his own preference for 'no preface or explanation.'¹²¹ This attitude reflects the underlying idea that artists' books could speak one-to-one with the reader without a mediating presence, resisting more didactic or traditional interpretations of the book form. Yet, as Drucker has argued, the origins of the artist's book were not limited to *livres d'artistes* made by painters and poets; they include a range of historic intersections between art and writing, including political broadsides, manifestos and magazines by groups such as the Futurists. She observes: 'throughout the 19th century in England, France and other parts of Europe, an explosion of periodicals had published exchanges between artists, writers and other creative thinkers.'¹²² Though Drucker acknowledges that these forms 'were part of a history that was temporarily forgotten at the time artists' books

¹¹⁹ Julie Ault, "Interview with Lucy R. Lippard on *Printed Matter*," December 2006, <https://printedmatter.org/tables/41>, accessed 04/12/15.

¹²⁰ Lippard, "The Artist's Book Goes Public," 45-46.

¹²¹ Hoffberg, "Lawrence Weiner in Conversation with Umbrella on Books," 4.

¹²² Drucker, *The Century of Artists' Books*, 63.

emerged in the 1960s,¹²³ her discussion reinstates dialogue between artists and writers as a significant precedent to the medium.

The publications of Stevenson, Stark and Buchanan represent a closer proximity between contemporary art and writing in the twenty-first century. Commissioned writing is not simply employed to provide contextualising frameworks about Stevenson, Stark or Buchanan's publications; it is also embedded *within* the work itself, unsettling the conventions such as 'authentic' artwork and 'explanatory' essay. Existing pieces of writing or source material are sometimes re-published in their books. These artists deliberately employ texts by other authors in order to provide alternative or even conflicting viewpoints, and to ground their projects in different historical contexts or disciplines. Their publishing projects frequently involve writers from different fields and disciplines. For instance, *Art of the Eighties and Seventies* includes a commissioned essay from David Craig, a researcher in the fields of international development, social policy and neoliberalism. Rather than providing direct discussion of Stevenson's work, Craig maps the historical and socio-economic backdrop to the artist's investigation. Stark's book *A Torment of Follies* includes a text by linguist Martin Prinzhorn, ruminating on language and literary references in her work. Both of Buchanan's books foreground the role of the critic in the construction of the artwork's meaning *post factum*: in *Lying Freely*, an essay by theoretician Marina Vishmidt comprises the last chapter of the book, and in *The Weather, A Building*, the final section is an essay by the late performance artist Ian White. Rather than presenting a decisive conclusion, this tactic introduces new perspectives that open up her projects. Each of these texts exemplify how relationships with historians, critics, and writers can provide new entry points for readers. Despite being commissioned or arranged by the artists themselves, they undermine the idea that artists' books represent hegemonic or 'pure' expressions of a single voice. Each of these responds to an artist's work, while quite literally acting as a part of the conceptual framework of the work itself.

A written exchange between artist and critic forms the basis for the book *Animal Spirits*, a collection of fables compiled by Stevenson and Verwoert. *Animal Spirits* was produced through a working method likened to 'a partial exquisite corpse' where the plot structure of each fable

¹²³ Ibid.

remained open as text fragments were passed back and forth between Stevenson and Verwoert via email.¹²⁴ This open-ended, dialogic process drove the development of the book. Some of the resulting fables include: ‘The Moon and the Temporary Museum’, ‘The Lion and the Hairdresser’, and ‘The Skunk and the Chinese Lantern.’ Rather than stating the collections of fables is *by* Stevenson and Verwoert, the title page of the book states they have been ‘composed, queried, clarified, distilled, and told anew’ by the artist and critic.¹²⁵ In this way, the methodology of *Animal Spirits* echoes the cultural and linguistic construction of fables, as narratives that evolve and mutate as they are passed between people and generations. It poses a different model of the relationship between critic and artwork, and presents an allegory for the cooperative construction and renegotiation of the meaning of artworks.

Accomplices and Economics

Involving designers and writers in the production of artists’ books can facilitate new opportunities for all those involved. This form of peer-to-peer patronage strengthens the cultural currency of a particular book as each practitioner brings their own skills, perspectives and audiences to a publishing project. From the artist’s point of view, commissioned texts build on existing bibliographies and encourage critical discourse around their work. A more interesting graphic identity can encourage a discriminating reader to choose a particular book from the shelf and can create a certain kind of experience as they engage with it. Publishing projects can generate new audiences by tapping into the pre-existing followers of a particular writer, critic or designer. In return, artist-led publications can offer a certain amount of freedom and scope to designers and writers, creating ‘work’ that provides intellectual sustenance, reaches new publics and occasionally provides small amounts of financial support. In his essay *Artbooks Now: Seven Theses (from the accomplices point of view)* (2006), Dieter Roelstraete describes himself as ‘a great friend, admirer and supporter’ of Roma Publications, yet also writes that he is ‘particularly appreciative of the many opportunities offered up by Roma ... to make money out of what I like to do.’¹²⁶ Bailey discussed this idea in a 2007 interview with Keller, where he proposed that

¹²⁴ Publisher’s information, Les Presses du Réel website, <http://www.lespressesdureel.com/EN/ouvrage.php?id=2813&menu=>, accessed 02/10/15.

¹²⁵ Stevenson and Verwoert, *Animal Spirits*, title page.

¹²⁶ Dieter Roelstraete, “Art Books Now,” 103.

independent publishing is about ‘creating jobs rather than products’ or ‘making your own work ... for yourself and your inner circle.’¹²⁷

These jobs or opportunities tend to pay mostly in cultural capital rather than direct financial compensation. As with many artists, some sort of ‘backup’ is required to finance these practices, such as an institutional job or another source of income, and, in the case of an academic position, this income is dependent upon the development of research outputs. (Stevenson and Stark have both undertaken professorships in their recent careers.)¹²⁸ This ethos is not necessarily confined to artists’ publishing; it is somewhat typical of art-project-making more generally, sharing some of the motives and casualised labour practices of artist-run institutions or grassroots spaces. These kinds of initiatives establish themselves with the hope of facilitating opportunities for a cohort of practitioners to set the terms for developing and presenting their own work. They also rely on alternative forms of currency, developing economical models that do not require much financial investment or bureaucracy. At its worst, this spirit of collectivity can result in an exclusive or self-satisfied club, while at its best, it can develop a space for an expanding group of like-minded and critical peers seeking out new voices. Independent publishing projects and artist-run institutions both have a certain amount of freedom to take risks and push boundaries. While they are by no means independent of obligations and responsibilities to other funders, practitioners, and institutions, they represent important attempts at working and thinking differently.

That is not to say that the books of artists like Buchanan, Stark and Stevenson do not explore and participate in more formal or established knowledge economies. Today, a great deal of publishing serves to validate the knowledge production taking place in art schools, research institutes and museums, and their own work is no exception. Teaching or studying while producing a body of work—or simply being a part of a certain community that revolves around certain institutions geographically or otherwise—provides existing professional networks,

¹²⁷ Stuart Bailey and Sarah Crowner, “Right to Burn: The Aesthetics of Distribution (3),” *Dot Dot Dot* 14, October 2007, 77.

¹²⁸ Stevenson has been teaching at the Academy of Visual Art in Nuremberg since 2011 and Stark was teaching at the University of Southern California Roski School of Art and Design until 2014. Before this she taught at the University of California, Los Angeles.

audiences and funding structures that support the publishing activities of these artists. Although many of the books examined in this thesis have been published by so-called ‘independent’ imprints, they are often realised through partnerships with art museums. Stevenson’s books have been co-published by institutions such as the Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach; Arnolfini, Bristol; Portikus, Frankfurt; and Museo Tamayo Arte Contemporáneo; Cologne. Despite this, his publications critique underlying relationships between the book and the museum. This is particularly apparent in *Art of the Eighties and Seventies*, which highlights the role of books and catalogues as long-established products, promotional vehicles and political bargaining tools of the museum or gallery. By imitating a catalogue of works once owned by a wealthy collector and acquired by MoCA, Stevenson plays between each of these roles, drawing out specific negotiations and power plays reflected in the original book.

While artists’ books do not always meet the criteria to operate within official review systems within public research universities, they are often tied to different forms of research currency in specialist postgraduate programmes and experimental research institutes.¹²⁹ The funding models, educational imperatives, fields and traditions of these institutions have a significant impact on contemporary art publishing. For instance, *Lying Freely* was developed accumulatively while Buchanan and Bennewith were both undertaking research residencies at the Jan van Eyck Academy: a multi-form research institute that cultivates critical discourse around experimental art publishing and furthers the idea of contemporary art as a research or project-based discipline.¹³⁰ Vishmidt was a researcher in the Department of Theory at a similar time. The production environment within the van Eyck actively encourages collaborations between artists, designers, curators and writers within a cultural backdrop influenced by Dutch design and publishing traditions.¹³¹ *Lying Freely* is as an outcome of a body of research produced within the

¹²⁹ For example, in New Zealand universities that employ Performance-Based Research Funding (PBRF), self-published, small press or independent publishing projects have little or no currency. Artists and researchers must publish in peer-reviewed journals and recognised publishing houses to make their articles or projects ‘count’.

¹³⁰ This information is derived from mission statements on the Jan van Eyck website, <http://www.janvaneyck.nl/en/over/van-eyck/>, accessed 14/01/16.

¹³¹ There are several important design schools, postgraduate programmes and interdisciplinary institutes that support designers working alongside artists in the Netherlands, such as the Werkplaats Typografie, the Gerrit Rietveld Academy and the Piet Zwart Institute. As Peter Bil’ak notes, ‘Dutch graphic design is affected by a number of factors—the relatively small scale of the country, its long arts tradition, and

van Eyck programme, and was sent to purchasers with a folded A4 letter from the director of the school introducing Buchanan's project. In this letter, the artist is identified as a researcher in the Fine Art Department and Bennewith a researcher in the Design Department. In this way, *Lying Freely* is both a product of the school and a selection of core values emphasised in the van Eyck's multidisciplinary structure and mission statement, emphasising values such as collaboration, connection and process. A book is perhaps the most obvious venue of such collaborative endeavours, as a research output that can circulate continuously for an extended period of time.

Stark consistently reflects upon the significance and economies of the educational context for her own practice.¹³² In her *Collected Works*, she describes the idea of producing a limited edition artist's book was born out of the idea that it could generate enough funds to pay off the large student loan she had acquired while studying at Art Centre College of Design in Pasadena. Acknowledging that her teaching salary at the University of California Los Angeles was not enough to cover the necessary loan repayments at the time, Stark described her intention to produce 'a kind of life's-work-so-far', or a story 'of mounting indebtedness' that could also speak to her 'nagging paradoxical opinions on art school.'¹³³ While there is no word from Stark on whether the *Collected Works* ended up generating any funds towards her loan, she highlights the relationship between the book itself, and a series of social and economic realities, firmly embedding her own artistic practice, employment and education within a political economy of cultural and monetary value.

prosperous economy—which have resulted in a uniquely creative atmosphere. In particular, the government's generous cultural funding system is often purported to be the main reason for the "advanced" nature of Dutch graphic design—the constant flow of money facilitating unconventional approaches. This central financial support is deeply rooted in the country's history: artists have enjoyed a relatively high social status since the Golden Age of the Dutch monarchy.' See "Contemporary Dutch Graphic Design: An insider/outsider's view," *Typosphere*, 29 November 2004, https://www.typosphere.com/articles/contemporary_dutch_graphic_design, accessed 04/02/16.

¹³² In 2014, Stark generated significant attention by resigning from her role as a tenured professor at the Roski School of Art and Design after disagreements with the university's administration, and following a \$70 million donation to the university by the rapper Dr Dre and his associate Jimmy Iovine to create a new Academy for Arts, Technology and the Business of Innovation. See Roger White, "A Few Good Reasons To Drop Out of Art School," *The New Yorker*, May 22, 2015, <http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/a-few-good-reasons-to-drop-out-of-art-school>, accessed 14/01/15.

¹³³ Stark, *Collected Works*, 52-53.

The Opposite of the Internet: Information and Audiences

In 1969, Seth Siegelau proudly exclaimed that his books-as-exhibitions were ‘printed in three languages to further global communication, rather than limited and limiting local distribution’:

It’s a question of power ... For me, power is the ability to get things done—for example, by means of swift global communication. Lag in information is unfortunate. An art has its time and should be seen in its time. My idea of power has to do with reaching a lot of people quickly, not just a circumspect small art audience ... Fortunately, the time is getting shorter between when an artist does something and when the community becomes aware of it.¹³⁴

Today, the idea of books being a swift way of getting things done seems ludicrous. Compared with the instantaneousness of digital technology and the viral spread of online material, the reception of print moves at a snail’s pace and only reaches a very small group of people. Such attributes, perceived as the downfalls of print by some, are its triumphs for others. Artists like Stark, Buchanan and Stevenson assume different forms of power and agency to the ones Siegelau describes. By presenting work that is not instantly available without any prolonged effort, and addressing small groups of people who must seek out their publications and engage with certain distribution systems, they foster a certain kind of investment from their audiences.

Curator Anthony Huberman recognises the potential of these types of strategies in his essay *I (not love) Information* (2007), where he positions sustained curiosity as ‘the currency of art.’¹³⁵ He acknowledges that this is not a new idea,¹³⁶ but rather one that has new potential and urgency in the digital era where ‘the efficiency, quantity and immediacy of information and information-systems has placed art and the artistic gesture at risk of being identified, categorised, digested, castrated and made into information before it has a chance to begin being art.’¹³⁷ Huberman argues that art’s value is generated by staying at the top of a bell curve, providing a certain amount of information—but not too much—in order to sustain debate and speculation. As he

¹³⁴ Seth Siegelau interviewed by Ursula Meyer, 126.

¹³⁵ Anthony Huberman, “I (not love) Information,” *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry*, no. 16, 2007, 19.

¹³⁶ This essay acknowledges famous essays such as Susan Sontag’s *Against Interpretation* (1964) and Jacques Rancière’s *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (1987). Both argue for a kind of ignorance or ‘not knowing’ embraced by certain works of art, teaching strategies and ways of writing about art.

¹³⁷ Huberman, “I (not love) Information,” 19.

points out, one way of achieving this is to ‘choose to limit its circulation, generate smaller quantities and involve more isolated audiences.’¹³⁸ The critic writes that this could create a situation where, in order to access information, ‘one needs to be interested and committed to it. In fact, it is precisely this need for active and persistent engagement that makes this strategy appealing to artists. It demands real action. It’s the opposite of the Internet.’¹³⁹ While these ideas might hold new relevance in the information age, they have always been a part of the independent publishing scene, where limited editions; smaller, more informal distribution circles; and specialised, receptive audiences generate their own currency.

Rather than imagining their books somehow finding their way into the hands of a general public (the goal of some artists in the 1960s and 1970s), Stevenson, Stark and Buchanan tend to address curious, like-minded readers who work, study or socialise within similar circles. Stark goes as far as describing herself as the ideal audience member for her own limited-edition publication *The Unspeakable Compromise of the Portable Work of Art: #16* (2002).¹⁴⁰ The artist also compares her publication to the act of writing a letter to her audience, noting that ‘letter writing is a lot about how well you know who you’re writing a letter to.’ She notes:

When putting together this book ... I guess I was really trying to think about the immediate, receptive audience for my work; dealers, curators, other artists that I interact with. Sometimes you don’t even know whether your closest friends are in your audience or not. That is what has always bugged me about this so-called art world. Unless you’re a Type-A omnivore and/or a high energy sycophant, the “art world” (probably a bad habit word to begin with) can easily be stripped of your most sympathetic patrons and morph into a hatable panel of semi-anonymous pseudo experts against whom you feel forced to rebel. I would much rather get to know, understand and communicate with the audience I have built as these are the meaningful relationships that shape my world.¹⁴¹

Stark uses her publication to draw our attention to the various social and professional networks that support her artistic practice. Furthermore, she suggests that the knowledge of such networks is necessary for a reflexive and critically engaged art practice as the audience becomes a focus of her writing.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 25.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Stark, “The Unspeakable Compromise of the Portable Work of Art: #16,” 130.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

The books of Buchanan, Stark and Stevenson present an underlying critique of the tensions, responsibilities and possibilities of artistic production and distribution. Moreover, they suggest this is one of the defining features of an emerging contemporary art publishing culture. Their books emphasise a series of legacies, shifts and developments within a global and digital independent art-publishing scene, and begin to show the new role publishing is playing within a contemporary art landscape. Developed through collaboration with designers, writers, publishers and institutions; their books establish their own economies of exchange that generate new audiences and forms of value. Although their work embodies a certain spirit of resistance, these artists are also aware of their own complicity within systems of cultural currency and knowledge production. Their publications draw attention to the knowledge economies and forms of infrastructure that characterise contemporary art. By merging sites of production and distribution, Buchanan, Stevenson and Stark are able to engage independent publishing in its most dynamic form: as a generative and collaborative activity that develops a public.

Chapter 3: Dear Future Reader

I don't see the book as a *fait accompli*. I see the book as a questioning structure.

— Lawrence Weiner in conversation with *Umbrella* (2003)

The 1969 work *J'ai perdu la fin!!!* (I lost the end!!!) by Polish conceptual artist Edward Krasinski comprises a series of twelve black-and-white photographs depicting the artist attempting to unravel—or perhaps further entangling himself—in unwieldy lengths of cable. The last photograph in the series provides no resolution. It does not depict the artist finally breaking free; some of the cable is still draped around his neck and the rest of it is in a tangle on the floor where it began (fig. 3.1). The final notes on *Lying Freely* (2010) by Frederique Bergholtz, Binna Choi and Emily Pethick make use of the metaphors at play in Krasinski's work, arguing that 'through this unravelling he enacts the absence of an end—a non-accomplishment—creating joy, a smile, openness and emancipation.'¹⁴² They write that, likewise, *Lying Freely* 'could be seen as a final point, however it is only a comma within a long conversation' that will 'become lost in a chain of readers.'¹⁴³ The more protracted or incomplete conversation described by Buchanan's colleagues specifically disrupts any sense of resolution to the book itself as a final outcome or finished object, anticipating open-ended processes of reception and reinterpretation.

While the publications of Buchanan, Stevenson and Stark consistently refer back to the social networks and economies of their own production and distribution, each of these artists also exhibit a reflexive preoccupation with what may happen after this initial process. Rather than a finished product or end point, they explore the book as a medium that invites further reconsideration and intervention, focusing on relationships between the reader, collection and institution. Beyond the determined spaces of the codex or page, their investigations extend to the library, archive and academy: the public institutions that contain, care for and shape the

¹⁴² Frederique Bergholtz, Binna Choi and Emily Pethick, "Postscript" in Ruth Buchanan, *Lying Freely* (Maastricht: Jan van Eyck Academie and Casco Office for Art, Design and Theory, 2010), unpaginated, section 5, para. 1.

¹⁴³ Ibid, unpaginated, section 5, para. 3.

discourse around books. Leveraging the durational, archival nature of print media, they consider how histories and canons are reinscribed and reimaged. Rather than directing their works towards a group of universal readers or users of a collection, they acknowledge a more abstract proposition of the ‘future reader,’ whose unique perspectives and embodied actions transform the experience of their work, and whose manner of ‘reading’ also includes looking and handling within the physical environment. Challenging the idea of publishing as the moment where something already complete is merely disseminated or made public, they explore how books continue to open themselves up to new readers and new discourses.

Lead Weights in Time: Book as Archive

Today, print is often dismissed as a static medium that does not facilitate real-time exchange in the same way as digital media. In a 2013 essay for *Un* magazine, Sophia Dacy-Cole discusses print publishing in these terms, attempting to pinpoint a ‘nostalgic politic’ at work in the artist’s books of the post-internet era. She asserts that digital platforms such as Tumblr emphasise ‘the impermanence and conjectural nature of published ideas’ and ‘move the emphasis away from the trueness of the text towards the importance of the dialogical,’ whereas:

...the same framing that seems to be the triumph of traditional print is its political undermining. Traditional print works do not only stretch time, they become lead weights in time. The moment they are finished, they are archival. They participate in a culture of top-down knowledge dissemination, as opposed to horizontal knowledge creation.¹⁴⁴

Implicit to Dacy-Cole’s essay is the idea of a moment—perhaps when the print file is finalised, or the ink dries, or the pages are bound together—when a book is complete. She acknowledges that print publications are often *developed* through dialogical processes such as editing and peer review, yet her argument focuses on the immediate, visible and public debate following the publication of content on digital platforms. For the writer, this type of online exchange means that digital publishing complicates the notions of singularity or truth, resisting a sense of finality that print inevitably upholds. According to Dacy-Cole, this means digital media is fundamentally

¹⁴⁴ Sophia Dacy-Cole, “The Artist Book Studio: The Pitfalls of a Nostalgic Politic”, *Un Magazine* 7.2, 2014, 35.

more egalitarian than print publishing—which is inherently politically corrupt due to its static, archival nature—and therefore creates the best outcomes for artists and audiences.

While online platforms create vital spaces for collective discussion today, the implication that all artists who are continuing to work with print media are merely nostalgic, or are uncritically participating in an oppressive culture that upholds their works as ‘final’ and their viewpoints as ‘truth’ is unconvincing. As established in the previous chapters, presenting work in progress or unfinished thinking is a familiar trope in contemporary artistic practice. Furthermore, artists’ publications are not simply disseminated through top-down methods that reproduce greater inequalities and power structures. While they rely on long established systems of distribution such as libraries, ISBN numbers and catalogues, they are also being purchased and promoted through websites, alternative spaces and peer-to-peer networks, operating within a much more complex ecosystem that is continually evolving. As artists like Weiner suggest, there is a long history of the book being conceptualised as a ‘questioning structure’ that continues to generate new meaning. In the 1980s, Deleuze and Guattari described the book as an ‘assemblage’ or a ‘little machine’ that can draw upon any number of disparate elements, a jumbling together of discrete parts or pieces that is capable of producing any number effects, rather than a coherent whole with one dominant reading.¹⁴⁵ Accordingly, Stark, Stevenson and Buchanan deliberately use print media to specifically undermine the idea of a singular viewpoint or timeless object that is isolated from politics, economics, discourse, people and the physical environment they inhabit.

The artist’s book has long had an uneasy relationship with the archive. In the past, critics have positioned a certain ephemerality as one of the defining features of the artist’s book, opposing the precious object status of *livres d’artistes* or luxury editions.¹⁴⁶ The assumption that artists’ publications only consider the short-term may be true in some cases; however, many practitioners have described their interest in the book form is specifically because of its slow-moving nature, long-term impact and life span that exceeds the temporal limitations of a gallery exhibition. While print might lack immediacy compared with the rapid circulation of digital

¹⁴⁵ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, tr. Brian Massumi, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 4.

¹⁴⁶ See, for instance, the essays of Clive Phillpot in *Booktrek* (Zurich: JRP Ringier, and JRP Ringier and Les Presses du Réel, 2013).

content, this quality is an important part of how the book functions and continues to generate meaning in the long-term. As Weiner notes, artists making cheap, mass-produced books in the 1960s and 1970s were not necessarily thinking about their work in an ephemeral way. He argues that this idea represents ‘a misunderstanding of books—it was the mantra of people who were “making ephemera”, but at the same time were collating it, archiving it and selling it.’¹⁴⁷ More recently, Ian White (who contributed an essay to Buchanan’s *The Weather, A Building* [2012]) has described some interesting parallels between publishing and performance as difficult, durational mediums. In *On Performance* (2013), White writes of similar challenges posed by ‘the work’s reception by an audience in time and space’ which ‘must be taken into account when considering what the work means.’¹⁴⁸

Over the last few decades, librarians and gallerists have examined some of the unique problems and tensions in collecting artists’ books. Like the strange, in-between nature of the medium itself, the artist’s book does not easily fit into galleries, archives or libraries. In 2012, librarian Annie Herlocker described that these objects ‘straddle the space between the world of museums or art galleries and that of library special collections.’¹⁴⁹ While Herlocker accurately describes the position of many artists’ books in collections, she also inadvertently highlights the inherent assumption that these works exist between institutional spheres, in a state where they are not only effectively withdrawn from circulation or private collections, but even from publicly accessible, browsable book collections. This can create an entirely different encounter to what an artist might have intended. Artists such as Weiner have lamented the development of specific artist’s book collections within libraries over the past few decades for this reason. In 2003, he stated:

I thought at the time and was quite verbal about it, it was a major, major mistake ... they should have just been incorporated. Then there would have been people who went to the library and stumbled over them. You always say – “you can’t judge a book by its cover”– and they take it

¹⁴⁷ Hoffberg, “Lawrence Weiner in Conversation with Umbrella on Books,” 6.

¹⁴⁸ Ian White et al. in conversation, *On Performance*, 80.

¹⁴⁹ Annie Herlocker, “Shelving Methods and Questions of Storage and Access in Artist’s Book Collections,” *Art Documentation: Journal of the Art Libraries Society of North America*, vol. 31, Spring 2012, 67.

down – get interested in it and it enters into that whole good mess. Somehow or other – everybody was too good for that mess.¹⁵⁰

Edit DeAk similarly positions the incorporation of artists' books into browsable public collections as a subversive act that can 'surprise a sluggish researcher.'¹⁵¹ In 1981, she claimed publications by artists radiate 'an innocent aura, a cultivated enigma' that can 'jolt the scholar out of the occasional misery of dusty shelves'. For deAk, 'artists' books are the library vaccine, a healing agent formed from the very disease they cure.'¹⁵²

While there is an implicit sense of romanticism or serendipity in Weiner and deAk's descriptions of unsuspecting readers stumbling upon their books in the library shelves, the way we access information in the age of the Internet—the great contemporary archive—has become significantly more precise and diverse. Artists, publishers and critics have recently turned their attention towards emerging relationships between archiving, cultural production and digital media. Practitioners such as Kenneth Goldsmith, founder of UbuWeb.com (an educational database of digitised avant-garde film, music, writing and images),¹⁵³ have noted that the digital era has seen 'us all become unwitting archivists' as we download, copy, rename and file digital content, and perhaps 'spend more time arranging material than actually engaging with material.'¹⁵⁴ Paul Chan, an artist and co-founder of Badlands Press similarly argues that 'historical distinctions between books, files, and artworks are dissolving rapidly.'¹⁵⁵ In 2011, Stuart Bailey and David Reinfurt of Dexter Sinister co-founded a platform called *The Serving Library* with artist Angie Keefer, responding to new, hybrid relationships between archives, libraries and publishing platforms. *The Serving Library* consists of a public website where users can download PDF essays or 'bulletins' free of charge; a small physical library space; and a publishing project which runs both through the website and physical premises. Writer Jen Hutton has described Dexter Sinister's tactics as conflating 'publishing and archiving in the same

¹⁵⁰ Hoffberg, "Lawrence Weiner in Conversation with Umbrella on Books," 8.

¹⁵¹ deAk, "According to the Book," 5.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ See <http://www.ubuweb.tv/>, accessed 1/10/15.

¹⁵⁴ Kenneth Goldsmith, lecture at the Amsterdam Art Book Fair, May 14, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sqNbdxfhbGY>, accessed 27/10/15.

¹⁵⁵ Badlands website, <http://badlandsunlimited.com/about/>, accessed 12/11/15.

gesture.’¹⁵⁶ For today’s artists, the activities of publishing, archiving, reproducing, organising and working with material are perhaps more tangibly and immediately connected than ever before.

Burn, Chew or Preserve

Rather than undermining the relevance of the book medium in the digital era, tensions between the material *and* archival nature of print continue to open up new fields of action and enquiry. Acknowledging a ‘curious kind of renaissance of artists’ publishing’ in the twenty-first century, Gwen Allen has suggested that the specific difficulties posed by the printed form define its contemporary relevance. She notes that ‘books are expensive, limited in quantity and very heavy to move. Of course, this may be precisely the point.’¹⁵⁷ While conflicts between artistic intent, access and long-term preservation have long dominated the relationship between the art object and institution in general, there are certain issues that specifically concern art publishing communities. Books by artists are particularly fraught as they are almost exclusively made with the intention that they will be touched and handled; however, this can threaten their longevity and accessibility to future readers. Stevenson has described a kind of intuitive contemplation that takes place through the common experience of handling almost any book—one that cannot necessarily take place within an archival context. He has noted that his own fascination with the book-as-object has been shaped by a lifelong difficulty with reading. In a letter to the artist Will Holder in 2012, Stevenson describes he can ‘still think of a book as an illiterate, a physical object filled with ink-laden secrets’:

A book is an object designed to be held in one’s hand, it opens into an expanded space, and, via cutting, folding stitching and gluing its pages are presented to the reader as continuous; beginning, middle, end. This form very much determines how the reader feels...this process is independent of words; it is a process embedded in the form of the book itself... and, in so doing suggests possible meanings autonomous to the printed word.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Jen Hutton, “Soft Protocols: Dexter Sinister’s Book and Library Making”, *C Magazine*, no.111, Spring 2011, 35.

¹⁵⁷ Allen, “The Artist as Bookmaker,” 21.

¹⁵⁸ Michael Stevenson, “Introduction/Einleitung” in *Holzweg: that sounds romantic*, 2012, 11. Presented at the Akademie Galerie Nürnberg. This text is an excerpt from a letter to Will Holder and was provided by the artist as a PDF.

The artist emphasises that the book is activated by a process of interpretation that does not necessarily require reading as such, but ‘using the form as a guide’, which can open up another field of enquiry.¹⁵⁹ With a close attention to details such as binding, dust jackets and bound book marks, his publications invite this kind of tactile engagement.

Buchanan’s books refer back to the practices, processes and rules of the archive and gallery as immanent mechanisms that will shape the reader’s experience of her own work, perhaps in unforeseen ways. In constantly referring back to archival and institutional settings within her publications, she acknowledges that this is likely where a portion of her own limited edition of printed objects will end up in the long term.¹⁶⁰ Excerpts of text from her books are frequently reproduced in different formats, such as exhibitions and performances, in order to explore how different modes of presentation can create new meanings and embodied experiences. This strategy was employed in her show *Several Attentions - Lying Freely Part III*, an exhibition at The Showroom where Buchanan presented a printed extract of text from *Lying Freely* in a glass vitrine with other objects (fig. 3.2). The text began with the sentence: ‘though the figure of communication might be about invention, it is equally about lighting conditions, proximity and timing...’¹⁶¹ In the book itself, the extract is printed on a single page, opposite a full bleed photograph of the side of the artist’s body. She is standing with her hands on her hips and the image is cropped so that the rest of her body appears to bleed into the spine of the book (fig. 3.3). Although there is the sense the image should come out at the opposite page later in the book, showing the other half of her body, it does not. The interplay between Buchanan’s vitrine work and her publication refers back to the ways institutions can construct or prohibit different processes of embodied interpretation, cutting off different types of information through actions such as placing a text or book under glass. It also exhibits a distinct desire to break down the cultural hierarchies between artistic intent, institutional processes, corporeal experiences and other variables that affect the experience and interpretation of artworks. Buchanan draws

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Buchanan’s book *The Weather, A Building* is still available to purchase, yet *Lying Freely* is out of print. Only 500 copies of the latter volume were produced and are now primarily available to the public through galleries and research libraries.

¹⁶¹ In *Lying Freely* this text appears between sections 2 and 3.

attention to certain practices and conditions that allow her own work (like the work of other cultural producers before her) to be experienced and preserved, but also compromised.

In *Lying Freely*, Buchanan alerts the viewer to the mediated conditions in which they may be experiencing the publication itself. This is immediately apparent on the very first page of the book, which features a very small image of piece of lined paper with hand-drawn diagrams and notes by the artist. It includes a linguistic chart titled *Intractable*. Positioned at the top right hand corner, the image bleeds off the edge of the paper right where readers would usually turn the page. *Intractable* repeats the instructions ‘no touching’—the quintessential rule of the museum or gallery—and ‘no finger licking!’, an instruction taken from a notice Buchanan came across during her research at the Hocken Library and Archive in Dunedin.¹⁶² These rules are re-written and reconfigured, eventually turning into double negatives. As the viewer lifts up the page to peer at the artist’s tiny handwriting, they are reminded that they are already breaking one of these written commands by touching the paper. The diagram acts as a playful, immediate cue encouraging readers to think more deeply about how they interact with the publication in their surroundings, versus how they might interact with a sculpture or installation in a gallery space. Rather than trying to overcome the tensions between access and preservation of books, *Intractable* emphasises these antagonisms. In doing so, Buchanan begins to reframe publishing as a conversation between artistic intent, the embodied experience of the viewer or reader, the institution and the social life of the object.

In making reference to the visceral act of finger-licking (most often associated with the consumption of food), Buchanan highlights politicised relationships between the book, the institution and the reader’s body. *Intractable* foregrounds a kind of suspicion with which the body is viewed in archival circumstances—particularly the tendency for its abject qualities to be put in opposition to the institutions of high culture. Several canonical works of art produced in the 1960s and 1970s explored these politics. For instance, in 1966, writer Jonathan Lethem staged a notorious event ‘STILL & CHEW’, where he invited artists, critics and students to literally chew up and spit out every page of Clement Greenberg’s book *Art and Culture* (1961). The particular copy in question belonged to the library at an art school where Lethem taught at

¹⁶² Buchanan, *Lying Freely*, title page.

the time. His teaching contract was not renewed.¹⁶³ The stakes and consequences of such an action emphasise the commodification of the book as a vehicle for knowledge within the institution. A similar concern is present in the writing of the Chilean novelist and poet Roberto Bolaño, who also uses the body to challenge the idea that the book is merely an embodiment of institutionalised art and culture. In his novel *Distant Star* (2009), Bolaño tells the story of Raoul Delorme and the sect known as the barbaric writers, who communed with master works, not by ‘reading’ them the literary sense, but ‘in a singularly odd fashion: by defecating on the pages of Stendhal, blowing one’s nose on the pages of Victor Hugo’ and other bodily actions that allowed the barbaric writer to acquire a ‘real familiarity with the classics... a physical familiarity that broke all the barriers imposed by culture, the academy, and technology.’¹⁶⁴ Just as Buchanan’s diagram reminds us it is impossible to read her book without touching it, Delorme, Lethem and Roth highlight that books cannot be read or consumed without the presence of a body, even in the sanitised and controlled conditions of the museum or archive.

The glossy, colour-coated sheets of paper that separate each chapter of *Lying Freely* deliberately heighten the reader’s attention to the action of reading. These reflective monochromatic surfaces throw the experience of viewing back at the reader. The colours—beige, blue, deep yellow and forest green—correspond with the palette of the Rietveld Schröder House, where the first act in Buchanan’s body of work took place. In these ‘monochromes’ readers can see reflections of their own hands grasping the edges of the book, the beam of any overhead light bouncing off the page and the presence of other movements or environmental variables which continually change depending on how the book is orientated, the situation in which it is being read and even the time of day. Buchanan has employed reflective surfaces in performances and installations such as *Several Attentions* and *Circular Facts*, where rectangles of coloured Perspex were used to reflect objects from different perspectives and distances, bouncing multiple views off one another. In *Lying Freely*, this strategy insures that the reader becomes aware of what is being reflected, what is partially cut off the page and what is outside of its surface area, as well as their ability

¹⁶³ Documentation of this event, including a photograph of a display case with papers and other miscellany, and descriptive text, is included in Lippard’s book *Six Years*, 16.

¹⁶⁴ Roberto Bolaño, *Distant Star*, trans. Chris Andrews (London: Vintage Books, 2009), 131-132. Reproduced in Laura Preston, ed. *Michael Stevenson: An Introduction* (Frankfurt am Main: Portikus, 2013), 89-96.

constantly to modulate each of these elements. In this way, the pictorial field highlights an embodied performance of interacting with the book in a particular environment.

Although the palette of these colour-coated pages is adopted from a museum of modernism, they explore what Michael Fried describes as the ‘literalness’ of surfaces. According to Fried, a literal artwork ‘aspires not to defeat or suspend its own objecthood’ through creating an ‘absorptive’ or immersive experience, ‘but on the contrary to discover and project objecthood as such.’¹⁶⁵

Curiously, in his well-known book *Art and Objecthood* (1998) Fried also quotes Modernist critic Clement Greenberg’s example of a blank sheet of paper as an example of a ‘condition of non art.’¹⁶⁶ Louis Lüthi, a graphic designer and writer, has also described how certain tropes or devices such as a page in a novel that is completely black with ink can work to emphasise a literary narrative’s own artifice, foregrounding the page ‘as a determined space.’¹⁶⁷ Presenting a series of surfaces that emphasise their own blankness and materiality—and appropriate the reader’s body and the space of reading into the narrative—Buchanan exploits the objecthood of the book rather than trying to overcome it. By highlighting the contrivances of the reading environment, her work further undermines the notion of the book as timeless receptacle of knowledge or artistic intent waiting to be discovered in a neutral space. It reminds the reader that the publication is a physical object that has been deemed important enough to be published and distributed, and, in the case of being encountered in a collection, to be allocated both physical space, and a space within a history or discourse.

Beyond Cemeteries: Book and Collection as Allegory

Museums, archives and libraries all implement systems and controlled conditions which prevent books from being able to circulate organically or hand-to-hand. This effect lead Ulises Carrión to liken institutions to graveyards for books. He is quoted as saying: ‘like any other living organism, books will grow, multiply, change colour, and eventually die...Libraries, museums, and archives are the perfect cemeteries for books.’¹⁶⁸ For Carrión, the institution inevitably

¹⁶⁵ Michael Fried, *Art and Objecthood* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 151.

¹⁶⁶ Quoted by Fried, *Ibid*, 152.

¹⁶⁷ Louis Lüthi, “On the Self-Reflexive Page,” *Dot Dot Dot* 18, Summer 2009, 95-96.

¹⁶⁸ Lippard, “Double Spread,” 87.

brings about the end of the book's life. This idea has a broader resonance within Western art history, harking back to Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's infamous attack on the museum, library, academy and archive in the 1909 Futurist manifesto:

Museums, cemeteries! Truly identical in their sinister juxtaposition of bodies that do not know each other. Public dormitories where you sleep side by side for ever with beings you hate or do not know...Indeed daily visits to museums, libraries and academies (those cemeteries of wasted effort, cavalries of crucified dreams, registers of false starts!) is for artists what prolonged supervision by the parents is for intelligent young men, drunk with their own talent and ambition.¹⁶⁹

But while there might appear to be a sense of historic antagonism or disdain towards these institutions, critics have noted that recent contemporary art practices tend to celebrate—rather than radically critique—the library, museum and archive. In his essay *After the Historiographic Turn: Current Findings* (2009), Dieter Roelstraete specifically notes ‘how genuinely out of sync [Marinetti's] pronouncements now sound.’¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, he locates a nostalgic preoccupation with the library and archive within a broader ‘historiographic turn’ in art. Just as contemporary artistic practice has become fixated on outmoded technologies, re-enactment and retrospection, the critic argues that there is a great longing amongst young and ambitious artists ‘for the lethargic, anaesthetizing comfort’ of these institutions.¹⁷¹

Roelstraete's critique is directed at certain artistic practices that seem to betray a certain kind of nostalgia in the digital era. Granted, a certain breed of contemporary art does seem to yearn for dusty stacks of volumes, analogue media and the atmosphere of the archive.¹⁷² Yet, as Douglas Crimp articulated in his book *On the Museum's Ruins* (1980), the museum and archive have been viewed as vital mechanisms within the production of contemporary art rather than static

¹⁶⁹ Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, “The Futurist Manifesto,” reprinted in Stanislaw G. Pugliese, ed. *Fascism, Anti-fascism, and the Resistance in Italy: 1919 to the Present* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 27.

¹⁷⁰ Dieter Roelstraete, “After the Historiographic Turn: Current Findings,” *e-flux*, no. 6, May 2009. <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/after-the-historiographic-turn-current-findings/>, accessed 10/12/15.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Art historians such as Claire Bishop have critiqued some of these practices and considered their relationship with the digital. See “Digital Divide: Claire Bishop on Contemporary Art and New Media,” *Artforum*, September 2012.

storehouses for quite some time.¹⁷³ Hito Steyerl has compared the contemporary function of the museum to a factory and battlefield within her recent writing and art practice.¹⁷⁴ She explores the museum as a metaphor: an important space of political struggle where culture is continually produced and contested. An emerging field of discussion specifically considers libraries and book collections in similar terms. In her book *intercalculations: Fantasies of the Library* (2015), curator, editor and publisher Anna-Sophie Springer argues that ‘if the book is traditionally seen as the preferred medium for private consumption and research, and the gallery is understood as the space for public exhibition and performance, the library—as the public place of reading—is thus a hybrid site for *performing the book*.’¹⁷⁵ According to Springer, ‘the very push and pull between axioms of organization and subjective propositions’ is what makes the library an appealing space for artistic and curatorial projects today.¹⁷⁶

Rather than positioning her book *The Weather, A Building* as a straightforward enquiry into the history of a particular library, Buchanan describes the Staatsbibliothek as a ‘character’ that appears in her book ‘in order to think about a process, and enter into some form of contact with it.’¹⁷⁷ Her investigation begins in August 1939, immediately preceding extensive damage to the library building and collections during World War II. *The Weather, A Building* traces three narratives in the history of the institution, charting the temporary evacuation of the library’s contents during the war; the use of an air dome as a provisional storage facility in the early 1970s; and the design of a new library building in the early 1980s. She explains that her interest in these specific historical episodes is to ‘highlight the many standards’ which apply to libraries more broadly, including ‘the way a library collects, what kinds of things are collected, how they are accessed and subsequently how they are shared.’¹⁷⁸ The Staatsbibliothek is not a subject per se, but a metaphor for the system, space and cultural construct of the library. In his essay *What is Material? Is Allegory Material?* (2012) in Buchanan’s *The Weather, A Building*, White writes

¹⁷³ See Douglas Crimp, *On the Museum’s Ruins* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993).

¹⁷⁴ See, for instance, Steyerl’s video lecture *Is the Museum a Battlefield* (2013) and the essay “Is a Museum a Factory?” *e-flux*, no.7, 2009, <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/is-a-museum-a-factory/>, accessed 03/12/15.

¹⁷⁵ Anna-Sophie Springer, “Melancholies of the Paginated Mind: The Library as Curatorial Space” in *intercalculations: Fantasies of the Library* (Berlin: K Verlag, 2015), 7.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ Ruth Buchanan, *The Weather, A Building* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012), title page.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, section 1, para. 13.

that ‘the Staatsbibliothek, read, *reworked*, is the material of this book, inasmuch as reading it is an action.’¹⁷⁹ For White, it represents ‘any library and one library in particular, the emblem of an allegory...’¹⁸⁰

Through the Staatsbibliothek, Buchanan explores the human desire to try and implement order amidst chaos (man-made or otherwise) and to preserve, systematise and control artefacts that are deemed important. Buchanan notes that although ‘libraries are generally perceived as storehouses, spaces of stable accumulation and containment...the material contained within them is often far wilder.’¹⁸¹ She suggests that book collections are unruly and difficult by their very nature, an idea that Walter Benjamin explored in his well-known essay *Unpacking My Library*. Benjamin identifies ‘dialectical tension between the poles of order and disorder’ in all collections, and describes the catalogue as ‘a counterpart to the confusion of the library.’¹⁸² It is this underlying tension that enables Buchanan to perform the potential of the library and book:

the uncomfortable thing, the strange thing, is that in order for a library to work—the specific language of conditioning a space through organisation and therefore conditioning what is held within it,—it must work against itself. In order for a library to truly perform its possibilities, it must devour itself - producing missing parts, gaps and holes—defy its code and mode of inauguration. In order for the library to truly perform, it must exceed itself, move from fixed structure to wild terrain.

The ‘wildness’ and missing parts of the Staatsbibliothek are due to political and environmental factors. Parts of the collection were destroyed in fire bombings during WWII, and others were damaged by an extreme weather event in the early 1970s. Rather than suggesting that collections are simply preserved indefinitely by institutions, *The Weather, A Building* emphasises the way that they are physically vulnerable to political pressure and natural events.

¹⁷⁹ Ian White, “What is Material? Is Allegory Material?” in *The Weather, A Building* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012), unpaginated, section 5, para 12.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Quoted from the publisher’s press release, <http://www.sternberg-press.com/index.php?pageId=1407&bookId=302&l=en>, accessed 23/01/16.

¹⁸² Walter Benjamin, “Unpacking my Library: A Talk About Collecting” in Hannah Arendt, ed. *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books Inc., 1969), 60.

Climate Control

Like Buchanan, Stevenson engages with book collections as living reflections of social, political, and economic realities. This is apparent from the first few pages of *Michael Stevenson: An Introduction* (2013), where a short excerpt of writing by the artist reflects on a period of research undertaken at the Bolívar Biblioteca at the University of Panama in August 2011. During this time, Stevenson had become intrigued by the figure José de Jesús Martínez (or Chuchú). The purpose of the artist’s visit to the Bolívar Biblioteca was to see some of the twenty-five books written by Martínez in the flesh, all of which had been published locally by small presses in editions of less than 500. The artist describes sitting at the library during long and exhaustive sessions:

...in Special Collections with a translator, for several days, reading. Although the room was full of published rarities it lacked climate control. The smell of paper mâché overwhelmed. There was also confusion with the card system. Most of the books of interest had three or more entries, of the same title but on separate cards, each with a different signature. The librarian described these as phantoms – really there was just one book – and I could choose whichever call number ... Except for the librarian himself, we were the sole visitors to Special Collections. While we read, he would pass time playing cassettes...odd we thought in a room full of signs demanding you to “read and think in silence”. Soon we knew his entire—and rather limited—music collection (Foreigner, Toto and their ilk).¹⁸³

This humorous and surreal description immediately draws attention to certain ideals and images of the library within the Western cultural imaginary. The notion of a silent, timeless and perhaps grand repository is disrupted by chaos and the librarian’s choice of 1980s soft rock music. Stevenson’s informal, offhand reflection positions certain expectations of the systems, procedures and environments maintained by the library and archive within a cultural paradigm shaped by wealthy Western states.¹⁸⁴ In describing banal details such as a lack of air conditioning and confusion with the filing system, he draws attention to the significant resources and environmental conditions required to maintain an archival environment. Far from an orderly repository where artefacts are frozen in time (or ‘dead’), unaffected by the outside world, Stevenson’s description of the library speaks to a contemporary struggle with history.

¹⁸³ Passage of text by the artist in *Michael Stevenson*, 4.

¹⁸⁴ This is a particularly striking juxtaposition given Panama’s colonial history and the 1989 US invasion of the country which had a detrimental impact on its economy and citizens.

Buchanan's work invites us to consider the politics of representation in institutional collections. She specifically considers how libraries and archives participate in what she terms 'an economy of voice'¹⁸⁵ that has the ability to amplify the discourse surrounding certain cultural producers while silencing the discussion around others. This is perhaps most evident in her work *Several Attentions* (2010), which takes Virginia Woolf's essay *A Room of One's Own* (1929) as a point of departure. In Woolf's text, the central character compiles a selection of thoughts and quotations after making a catalogue search under "women" in the British Museum, only to encounter a list of literary works by men *about* women. In 2009, Buchanan worked in the British Library to re-read all the works cited in *A Room of One's Own*.¹⁸⁶ She then compiled excerpts from all of the books referenced by Woolf in a microfilm and produced a 16mm film shot at the British Library in London, where the same physical collection of books cited by Woolf were housed. In the second film, the artist is shown seated from behind at a wooden reading desk, working with her own compilation using a microfilm reader (fig. 3.4). Like Woolf's text, *Several Attentions* emphasises the historical and contemporary marginalisation of women's writing. By showing herself working in this setting, Buchanan does not simply focus on the content of the text in these books, but also the physical environment where they are housed. She highlights how the library's architecture, technologies and procedures continue to imbue particular texts with authority, shaping the way they are experienced and valued—an effect that is also related to the library as a cultural symbol of the British Empire.¹⁸⁷

The artist has chosen to make her microfilm available through the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington. It can only be viewed with a specific machine that is usually unavailable outside of libraries and archives, while viewers must engage with the film in a supervised reading area. They must leave their belongings in a locker outside the room, where only pencils and notebooks may be used, and sign in and out of the area, where photography is not permitted.¹⁸⁸ They are then required to sit at a microfilm reader, adopting the same position as the artist, in order to

¹⁸⁵ "Ruth Buchanan: Researcher Fine Art," retrieved from the Jan van Eyck Academy website: http://archived.janvaneyck.nl/4_4_cv/cv_f_buc.html, accessed 19/11/14.

¹⁸⁶ Buchanan, "Recycling Doctoral Waste," 2010, 11.1 -11.5.

¹⁸⁷ The current tagline for the British Library website is 'The world's knowledge', <http://www.bl.uk/>, accessed 04/02/16.

¹⁸⁸ These observations are based on my own personal experience of viewing this microfilm at the Alexander Turnbull Library in August 2014.

scroll through Woolf's citations. The restricted access to the film, the long-term storage of the work, and the atmosphere of the Turnbull Research Library become deliberate parts of the conceptual framework of Buchanan's work. Unlike a book or a text that can be carried around, put on the bookshelf at home and re-read, *Several Attentions* draws our awareness to the library as a specific spatio-temporal situation that instils objects with cultural and historical value through a variety of different performances.

As Buchanan relays various incidents that interrupted the spatial or infrastructural codes of the Staatsbibliothek in *The Weather, A Building*, she also encourages readers to think more broadly about the circumstances required to maintain national legacies. Tracing a timeline during WWII, beginning 1941, the artist outlines how its books were separated into smaller groups, transported and stored outside of Berlin after the library suffered damage from explosives and firebombs. On one page of the book, a grainy black-and-white photograph illustrates some of the distribution strategies undertaken to keep the collections safe. In this image, a man stands in front of a pin board map with pieces of string pinned outwards from Berlin, charting the radial dispersion of books across the German state (fig. 3.5). The image is a striking representation of the complex logistics and significant resources required to preserve the library's collections. As well as tracing some of the cultural shockwaves and after effects of WWII for decades after fighting ceased, the publication provides a striking example of how cultural institutions exist within cultural and political landscapes, particularly as it revisits an era of book burning and destruction of heritage sites, religious and cultural relics during the Nazi regime. Against this highly-charged backdrop, *The Weather, A Building* positions the maintenance of book collections as ongoing, politicised praxes that have significant consequences for national identity and collective memory.

Performing the Unresolved

Throughout art history, artists have consistently reinterpreted and appropriated existing works of literature in order to explore established canons and the institutions that uphold them. Altered, copied and vandalised books take this gesture further to create new work that challenges ingrained hierarchies and tropes in cultural production. Like artworks, books are always open to new discourses and interpretations. However, they are also objects of mass culture as well 'high

culture’; after all, the paperback romance novel is as much a book as a rare, antique leather-bound volume. Accordingly, many books are subject to interventions and alterations that fetishized art objects are typically protected from. Most readers will have ripped out illustrations from a dated second-hand monograph or annotated an old textbook at some point. Librarian Duncan Chappell has noted that altered books also constitute a particular strain of activity where ‘the artist, intent on subverting the book in hand, can impose drastic and sometimes savage alterations’ such as ‘removing or reordering pages [and] obscuring text...as such, the altered book often presents itself as a palimpsest, retaining evidence of both before and after states.’¹⁸⁹ Perhaps one of the most well known twentieth century examples of this is Marcel Broodthaers’ *Un Coup de dés jamais n’abolira le hasard* (1969), where the artist reproduced a book of poetry by Stéphane Mallarmé and erased each line of text with a band of black ink, drawing attention to the spatial elements of the poem (fig. 3.6). While the act of appropriation or alteration alone may no longer be radical today, artists are continuing to revise and reproduce existing books.

In the past, Stark has altered and copied entire books in order to explore the gendered dynamics of authorship, influence and canon-making in the library and academy. By their very nature, most books are copies or multiples and seem to encourage different types of reproduction, revision and fragmentation. Before the age of mechanical or digital reproduction, books were often hand copied, an idea that Stark revisits in a series of altered and carbon copied books produced in the early nineties. The works in question incorporate famous works of literature by North American male authors, including Henry Miller’s novels *Sexus* (1949) and *Tropic of Cancer* (1934), both of which can be found in most university libraries in the Western world (fig. 3.7). Stark’s work *Untitled (Sexus)* (1992) presents a second-hand copy of Miller’s novel accompanied by an handmade carbon tracing of the entire volume in a pile of loose sheets of paper. In *Untitled (Tropic of Cancer)* (1992), sheets of carbon and drawing paper have been inserted between every page of two 1961 Grove Press editions of Miller’s earlier book. The extra papers stuffed into each volume appear to have cracked the already decaying spines of both copies. They appear to be almost bursting with extra pages. In her narration to the documentation of these books in *Collected Works* (2007), Stark describes her intention that this gesture might

¹⁸⁹ Duncan Chappell, “Typologising the artist’s book,” *Art Libraries Journal*, vol. 28, no. 4, 2003, 12.

enable ‘a unique copy to be made by some future reader.’¹⁹⁰ Given that the laborious task of copying each page in these books would also mean further dismantling the originals and compromising their new role as collectible art objects, the idea of the future reader appears to be more of an abstract proposition; one that emphasises a shift in status from a normal, functioning book to one that exists in a strange, altered, in-between state.

Stark’s interventions also draw attention to the hierarchies upheld by public institutions and the kind of books that tend to hold the most value within the Western cultural imaginary. Appearing at the very beginning in her *Collected Works*, these carbon-copied pieces almost act as a foreword to the publication itself by establishing a foundation of influences. In a 2007 review of Stark’s mid-career retrospective at the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, Kirsty Bell describes *Untitled (Sexus)* as ‘a mind-boggling act of transcription, which raises the issue of quotation and influence in her work;’¹⁹¹ however the specific dynamic of a female artist altering and reproducing work by canonical male figures immediately recalls the legacy of a particular strand of feminist art practice. Since the 1980s, these kinds of appropriative gestures have become associated with artists such as Cindy Sherman and Sherrie Levine, who replicated and repurposed work by male artists in order to question patriarchal authority.¹⁹² The ideas of appropriation and assimilation have long been a preoccupation of theorists such as Michel de Certeau, who challenges the very ‘idea that cultural “producers” claim to *inform* the population, that is, to *give form* to social practices.’ In his essay *Reading as Poaching* (1984), de Certeau describes that this point of view is accompanied by the notion that ‘the public is moulded by the products imposed upon it.’¹⁹³ For de Certeau, this represents a misunderstanding which ‘assumes that “assimilating” necessarily means “becoming similar to” what one absorbs, and not making something similar to what one is, making it one’s own, appropriating or reappropriating it.’¹⁹⁴ By altering and reproducing specific books, Stark insists that they do not only have an imprint upon

¹⁹⁰ Stark, *Collected Works*, 3.

¹⁹¹ Kirsty Bell, “Frances Stark: Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, The Netherlands,” *Frieze Magazine*, no. 109 September 2007, http://www.frieze.com/issue/review/frances_stark2/, accessed 03/11/15.

¹⁹² Their tactics were examined by a particular group of scholars such as Craig Owens in the 1980s and 1990s. See “The Discourse of Others” in Hal Foster, ed. *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (New York: The New Press, 1998), 65-92.

¹⁹³ Michel de Certeau, “Reading as Poaching” in *The Practice of Everyday Life* trans. Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 166.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

her as a reader, but tests her own role as a collaborator who brings new inflections to each work by literally re-printing each individual word with her own hand. In doing so, she prompts us to consider how gender intersects with assumed dichotomies between reading and writing, producing and assimilating.

Stark not only encourages her audience to rethink canonical literary works through the lens of her own identity as an artist, woman and writer; she also scrutinises the institutional processes that construct and perpetuate these canons. Her 1993 carbon copy of T.S. Eliot's poem *The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock* (1915) includes handwritten marginalia and annotations by past readers, drawing attention to dialogical processes of constructing meaning (fig. 3.8). Yet the copied pages also emphasise the reproduction of socio-cultural relationships that can determine how we engage with a book or text. As Stark points out in her accompanying narration to this work, 'one past reader's handwritten notations appear to be hastily transcribed bits of a pedagogue's voice.'¹⁹⁵ By reproducing and highlighting the transcriptions of past readers, Stark foregrounds how the discourse and meaning around particular texts is mediated by educational institutions who do not only permit access to physical copies of books, but actively select works to write into history and then shape the discourse surrounding them.

Ecce Homo (2000) is a series of collages by Stark that repurpose material from existing books to playfully interrogate historical ideas of 'greatness' which privilege the public lives and legacies of heterosexual men over the private lives and differences of others. These works take a Penguin Classics edition of Nietzsche's autobiography *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is* (1908) as starting points. Tearing out a number of illustrations in the book, the artist stuck pressed pansy blossoms onto different portraits of the philosopher, obscuring his head (fig. 3.9). In *Collected Works*, Stark narrates each of her *Ecce Homo* collages using Nietzsche's own infamous chapter headings to his book that play between delusion and irony, including: 'why am I so clever?' and 'why do I write such good books?'¹⁹⁶ One particular work uses the torn-off cover, which portrays Nietzsche in an act of contemplation. While the initial illustration depicts

¹⁹⁵ Stark, *Collected Works*, 3.

¹⁹⁶ The significance of these chapter titles have been well-explored by Nietzschean scholars. See, for example Douglas Thomas, "Utilising Foucault's Nietzsche; Nietzsche, Genealogy, autobiography," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 6, 1993, 103–129.

the philosopher from behind, standing on the top of a mountain and looking down into a misty valley below, Stark has added a purple pansy, stuck face down over his head. Juxtaposed with the heroic and profound atmosphere of the cover, the flower introduces other connotations. It evokes delicate keepsakes which are often found inside personal copies of books or traditional women's craft activities, yet a 'pansy' is also, of course, a derogatory term for an effeminate or homosexual man.¹⁹⁷ The artist's alterations make use of this double entendre and the existing layers of meaning in Nietzsche's writing to explore how the idea of the author is culturally constructed.

Stark's altered and copied books exhibit a slightly different approach to the historical momentum of appropriation in contemporary practice. Looking back on the 1980s and 1990s in his essay titled *Apropos Appropriation* (2007), Verwoert examines the differences between practicing and discussing acts of appropriation decades ago, and what is at stake when we do so in the early twenty-first century. Whereas artistic appropriation once signified the certain death of modernism and the sense of historical continuity it implied for art historians such as Craig Owens, Fredric Jameson and Crimp, Verwoert identifies a 'decisive shift in the relation to the object of appropriation' stemming from the early 2000s:

...from the re-use of a dead commodity fetish to the invocation of something that lives through time – and, underlying this shift, a radical transformation of the experience of the historical situation, from a feeling of general loss of historicity to a current sense of an excessive presence of history, a shift from not enough to too much history, or rather too many histories.¹⁹⁸

For the critic, 'the horizon of our historical experience today is defined by the ambiguous influences and latent presence of unresolved histories, the ghosts, of modernity.'¹⁹⁹ Appropriation today is then 'about *performing the unresolved* by staging objects, images or allegories that

¹⁹⁷ Joachim Köhler's biography of Nietzsche, published the same year, argued for a radical reinterpretation of his life and works by questioning his sexuality and put forward the hypothesis Nietzsche was gay. See Joachim Köhler and Ronald Taylor, ed. *Zarathustra's Secret: The Interior Life of Friedrich Nietzsche* (Yale University Press, 2002).

¹⁹⁸ Jan Verwoert. "Apropos Appropriation: Why Stealing Images Today Feels Different," *Art & Research* vol. 1, no. 2, Summer 2007, <http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v1n2/verwoert.html>, accessed 04/02/16.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

invoke the ghosts of unclosed histories’ which means, ‘first, of all, not to suggest their resolution in the moment of their exhibition.’²⁰⁰

Verwoert’s conceptual framework for thinking about the art object—as something that is never fully ‘resolved’ but a palimpsest of historical fragments that are constantly being renegotiated—also resonates specifically with the nature of the book. Challenging the idea that books are the ruins of outmoded systems of knowledge production and dissemination, Stark’s treatments of existing publications emphasise the ways that books live through different kinds of modifications and interventions—physical or otherwise. She engages books, not simply as a ‘dead commodity fetish,’ but sites where cultural meaning is continuously being contested and reinscribed.

For Buchanan, Stark and Stevenson, the archival and material nature of the book is fertile ground for new fields of enquiry. These artists consider the ways the book continues to generate meaning beyond an initial moment of dissemination through avenues that are interconnected. Exploring the environments of the library, archive, museum and academy, they employ the book as a vehicle to interrogate structural relationships between agency, authorship and knowledge production. They challenge understandings of the book that typically privilege the literary over the material, or artistic intent over the embodied experiences and environment of the reader. Buchanan, Stark and Stevenson deliberately undermine the notion that published work represents a final outcome or truth. Rather than viewing the book with a nostalgic gloss, they position it as the locus of a contemporary struggle with inherited histories, canons and cultural legacies, implicating their own publications within systems of cultural currency that are in constant renegotiation. Their publishing practices exploit the book as a dynamic ‘questioning structure’ rather than an end point.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

Conclusion

There is no difference between what a book talks about and how it was made.²⁰¹

— Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987)

By closely studying the publications of Ruth Buchanan, Michael Stevenson and Frances Stark, this thesis has explored a space of practice around the idea and legacy of the artist's book. While critics have long described the difficult nature of the medium, there has been little discussion that considers how the artist's book manifests in the work of specific artists in the early twenty-first century, and, in turn, how it can be used to articulate recent modes of enquiry in art publishing culture. Rather than establishing a comprehensive survey, the books of these three artists begin to chart a certain area of shared interest. Their work highlights a zone of tension and activity between different fields, disciplines and ideas.²⁰² While the thesis has considered the emancipatory potential of publishing today, it has also examined the collaboration and opening up that takes place by extending artistic projects in book form. My discussion has shown how publishing involves more people and processes in the production of meaning by its very nature. In particular, the thesis has argued that the objects in question cannot be separated from the politics and momentum of their production and dissemination, and their encounters with future readers.

The publications of Stark, Buchanan and Stevenson reflect some of the complexities and ambiguities of contemporary practice itself. I have discussed how the in-between position of the artist's book resonates with each artist's individual interests, as well as certain tropes and shifts

²⁰¹ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 4.

²⁰² The language I am using here draws acknowledges the 'zone of tension' previously described by Christophe Gallois in his essay "Words and Objects" (2008) and Drucker's description of the artist's book as 'a zone of activity' in *The Century of Artists' Books*, 1.

in the field of contemporary art more generally. Embracing this intersectional theme, my discussion has also mapped a space between the distinct interests of each practitioner, tracing some overlapping concerns. As a widely recognised and accessible form that has multiple identities outside of the art-world, these artists employ the book form to reach out into broader histories and narratives, interrogating entrenched canons, genres and hierarchies that shape how artistic work is received. They explore historical reconstruction and reproduction by reworking archival materials and existing publications. Their work demonstrates how more ambiguous relationships between artistic production, presentation and discourse have invigorated and expanded the idea of the artist's book, giving way to new and hybrid forms of publishing.

For these practitioners, publishing is not simply a retroactive operation focused on documenting previous work, but a practice that feeds into and out of their projects. Buchanan, Stark and Stevenson often employ the book as a starting point, mode of presentation and a material guide for reflection within larger bodies of work. They use publishing to connect different types of research material, artworks and thinking processes. Their books elaborate on existing installations, exhibitions or performance-based work in different ways, emphasising how attempting to extend or 're-perform' projects in print can be a speculative and generative activity in itself. Rather than walking the reader through a linear thinking or working process, these artists invite their audiences to grapple with interconnected stories, figures and narratives that resurface throughout their practices. Buchanan, Stark and Stevenson publish in order to self-archive, reuse and re-think their own work, presenting new trajectories of thought rather than celebrating finished or 'complete' projects.

The practices examined are not merely concerned with producing objects, but actively generating their own audiences and economies. While the early development of the artist's book was driven by the desire to seek out new publics and expand artists' independence, Buchanan, Stark and Stevenson employ more complex models of development and dissemination. Operating within the specific publishing climate of the twenty-first century, their projects generate different forms of agency through smaller distribution circles that reach receptive audiences. They position the contemporary artist's book as a locus of exchange with other practitioners, actors and communities. Although they are deeply entangled within the knowledge economies created by

certain institutions, their publications embody an inherent critique of the values and dominant modes of spectatorship of contemporary practice. While artists' publishing does not hold much market value, these particular case studies show how this field of practice generates currency in other ways. The publications of Buchanan, Stark and Stevenson are not only artworks or creative projects, but promotional instruments and networking tools that actively participate in the commodification of each artist or collaborator's practice or brand.

The momentum of these practices is also closely connected to the unique ways that print-based projects address their audiences and generate meaning beyond an initial moment of dissemination. In the information age, books are no longer being employed in the hope of reaching mass publics or disseminating information in a quick and easy manner. For a long time, the book has found its currency in the art-world through the opportunities it creates for prolonged, primary engagement beyond the temporal limitations of a gallery exhibition. The durational and archival nature of print continues to be an inherent part of its appeal. Buchanan, Stark and Stevenson leverage and investigate this quality, referring back to systems of value and currency that dictate how their work will function long-term. They acknowledge that both the publication and the 'afterlife' of books—including their preservation, storage and dissemination—relies on a system of assumed value. By engaging the library, archive and museum as expanded spaces for exploring the potential and politics of the book, each artist interrogates the avenues through which published work is absorbed into new canons and discourses, and continues to reach new readers.

While the dominant narrative around the artist's book has developed around 'dematerialised' art practices, these artists are interested in this medium precisely because of its materiality. Their work does not simply employ the book as a vehicle for text; it actively explores its objecthood and sculptural qualities. The books of Buchanan and Stevenson, in particular, experiment with the physical parameters and possibilities of the medium in order to restage thinking processes behind particular projects and create new kinds of encounters. Stark's text-based collages interrogate dichotomies between looking and reading, or the literary and material; emphasising how books occupy a space in history through the allocation of physical space in institutions such as libraries and academies. Each of these artists highlights the politics of the relationship

between the book, the reader and the physical environment. They explore books and book collections as metaphors for the entanglement between people and objects in the material world, and the embodied and durational processes of handling their books is an important part of how these publications work or generate meaning.

Through the books of these artists I have begun to map a dynamic area of activity, demonstrating how publishing is playing a more complex—and more ambiguous—role within contemporary practice. Perhaps the notion of the ‘artist’s book’ has become even more difficult than it once was; however, it continues to operate as a blanket term for many interconnected ideas. It gestures towards a field of tension and potential that has only been partly excavated by looking at these particular artists. Buchanan, Stark and Stevenson expand the notion of the artists’ book to include its development, dissemination and reception—responding to the climate of contemporary practice and engaging the book as material, process and metaphor.

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Publishing Projects Listed on Each Artist's CV

Publications specifically discussed in the thesis are in bold

Publications described by the practitioners as an artist's book appear with an asterisk after the publishing details

Ruth Buchanan

2012

The weather, a Building* (Berlin: Sternberg Press)

2010

Lying Freely* (Maastricht: Jan van Eyck Academie; Utrecht: Casco Office for Art, Design and Theory)

Frances Stark

2014

Trapped in the VIP (New York: Gavin Brown's Enterprise)

2012

My Best Thing (Cologne: Buchhandlung Walther König)

2010

This could become a gimick [sic] or an honest articulation of the workings of the mind
(Cambridge: MIT List Visual Arts Centre)

2009

But what of Frances Stark, standing by itself, a naked name, bare as a ghost to whom one would like to lend a sheet? (Nottingham: Nottingham Contemporary)

2008

A Torment of Follies (Vienna: Secession)

2007

Frances Stark: Collected Works (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König)*

2003

Frances Stark: Collected Writing: 1993–2003 (London: Opus 3/Book Works)²⁰³

1999

The Architect & the Housewife (London: Book Works)

Michael Stevenson

2013

Laura Preston, ed. *Michael Stevenson: An Introduction/Una introducción* (Frankfurt am Main: Portikus; Ciudad de México: Museo Tamayo Arte Contemporáneo; Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König).

Animal Spirits: Fables in the Parlance of our Times, with Jan Verwoert (Zurich: Christoph Keller Editions & JRP Ringier; Auckland: Clouds)*

2012

Teoría del Vuelo: José de Jesús Martínez, reprint of the original Spanish document compiled with a new English translation (Frankfurt am Main: Portikus; Ciudad de México: Museo Tamayo Arte Contemporáneo)

2008

Celebration at Persepolis (Arnolfini: Bristol, Christoph Keller Editions; Zurich: JRP Ringier)*

2007

c/o The Central Bank of Guatemala (San Francisco: Capp St Project, CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts)

²⁰³ Includes a reproduction of *The Unspeakable Compromise of the Portable Work of Art* #16 in a series of 16, *THIS WHOLE THING, or, a Bird's Eye View* (handmade, self-published, 2002), which is discussed in the thesis and specifically described as an 'artist's book' by Stark.

2006

*Art of the Eighties and Seventies (Frankfurt am Main: Revolver)**

2003

This is the Trekka (Frankfurt am Main: Revolver; Wellington: Creative New Zealand and City Gallery Wellington)

2002

Immendorf in Auckland, 1988-2002 (Auckland: Auckland City Art Gallery)

2001

Slave Pianos: A Diagnosis, with Danius Kesminas, ed. Christoph Keller (Frankfurt am Main: Revolver)

2000

Genealogy, with Steven Brower (New Plymouth: Govett Brewster Art Gallery)

1997

PreMillennial: Signs of the Soon Coming Storm, with Ronnie van Hout (Sydney: Darren Knight Gallery)

1993

Badlands (Auckland: Gregory Flint Gallery).

Appendix: Figures

Figures: Chapter 1

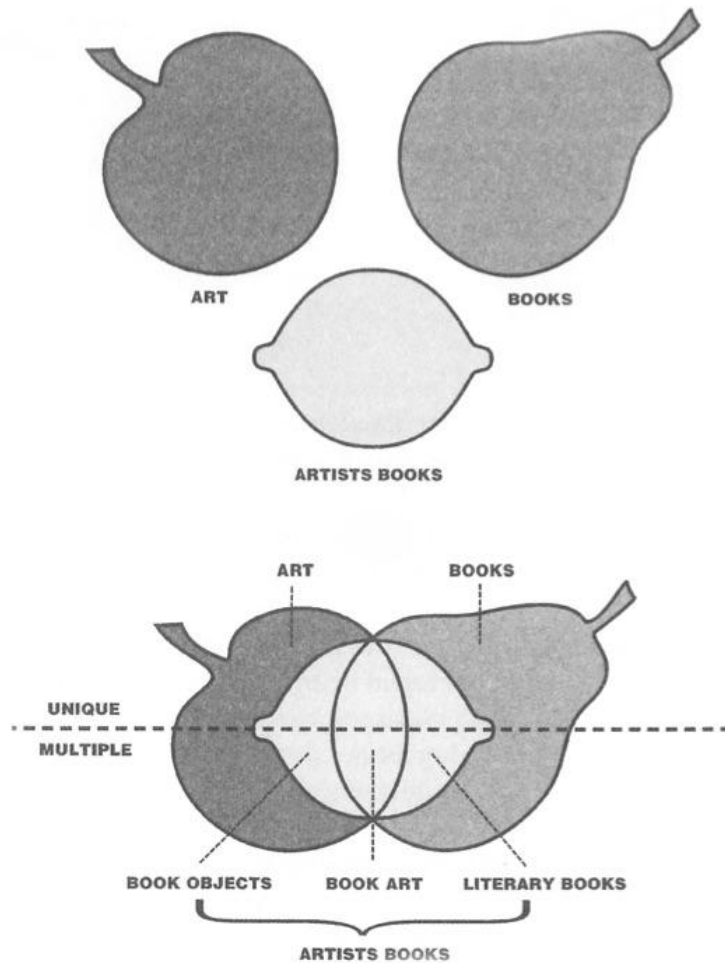


Fig. 1. Clive Phillpot, untitled diagram (1993), first published in the essay “Twenty-Six Gasoline Stations That Shook the World: The Rise and Fall of Cheap Booklets as Art,” reproduced in *Booktrek* (2013).



Fig. 1.1 Michael Stevenson, *Teoria del Vuelo* (Theory of Flight) (2012), staple bound black-and-white softcover leaflet with colour dust jacket, 20 x 13 x 0.1 cm, 44 pages.

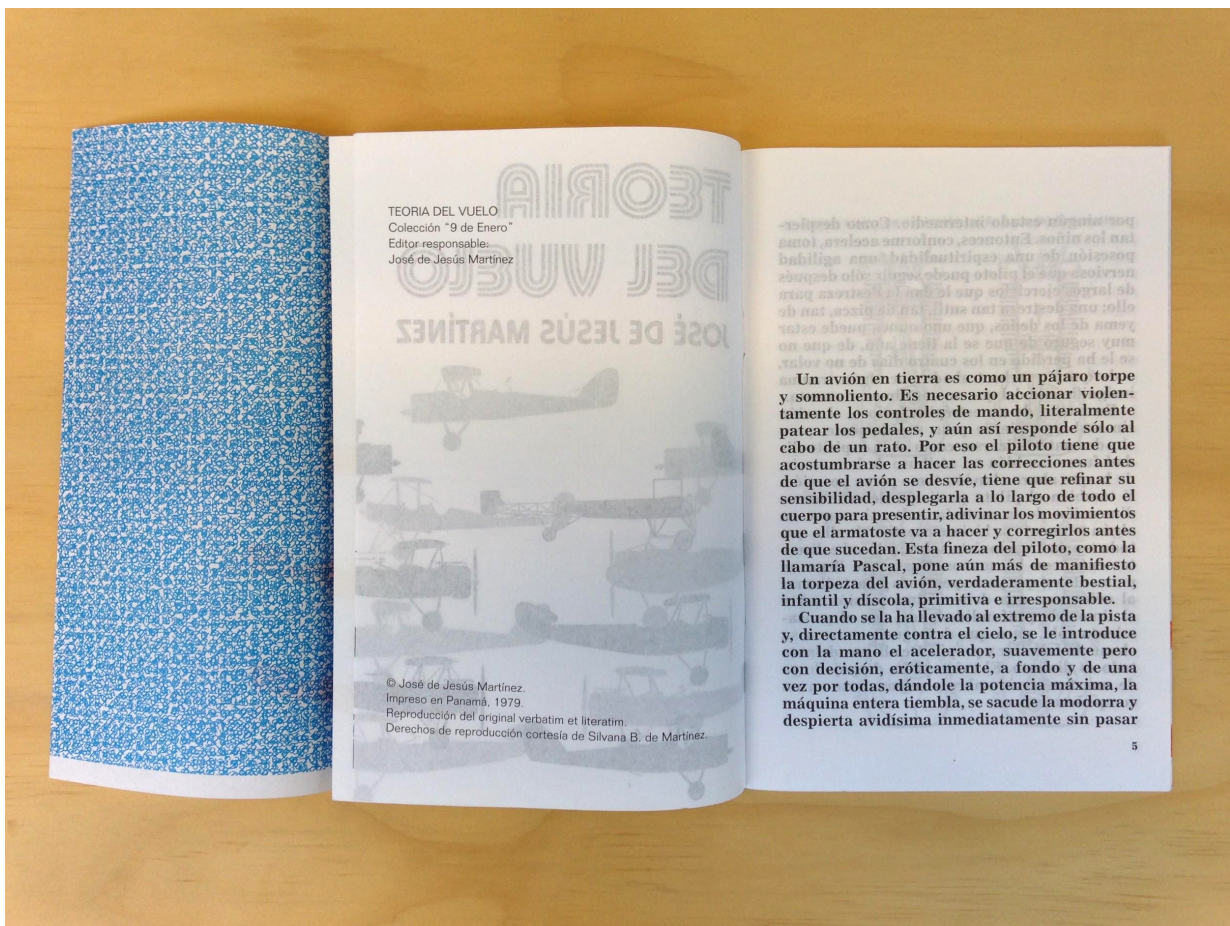


Fig. 1. 2 Michael Stevenson, *Teoria del Vuelo (Theory of Flight)* (2012), staple bound black-and-white softcover leaflet with colour dust jacket (detail), pages 4-5, 20 x 13 x 0.1 cm, 44 pages.



Fig. 1.3 Frances Stark, *I must explain, rationalize, classify etc.* (2007), vinyl paint and inlaid laser print on paper, 200 x 52.4 cm. Reproduced in *A Torment of Follies* (2008), softcover, perfect bound colour book, 20 x 30 x 1.1 cm, pages 6-7.



Fig. 1.4 Frances Stark, *By way of digression* (2007-2008), paper collage, graphite, felt tip pen, gouache on paper, 201 x 152 cm. Reproduced in *A Torment of Follies* (2008), softcover, perfect bound colour book, 20 x 30 x 1.1 cm, pages 2-3.



Fig. 1.5 Frances Stark, *The Unspeakable Compromise of the Portable Work of Art #16 in a series of 16, THIS WHOLE THING, or, a Bird's Eye View* (2002), staple bound unique limited edition handmade artist's book, typed text and drawing on carbon paper, approx. 20.3 x 13.9 cm, 9 pages. Reproduced in *Frances Stark: Collected Writing* (2003), pages 126-127.



Fig. 1.6 *Michael Stevenson* (2011), installation at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, annex space.



Fig. 1.7 Michael Stevenson (2011), installation at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, annex space (detail). Pictured is *Celebration at Persepolis* (2008), hardcover, case bound black-and-white book with colour dust jacket, 16 x 12.5 x 1.5 cm, 64 pages.



Fig. 1.8 Michael Stevenson, *Art of the Eighties and Seventies* (2005), installation at the Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach, clay, rubble, rice plants, steel, paper, mica (detail), 130 x 130 x 50 cm. Documented in *Art of the Eighties and Seventies* (2006), pages 52-53.



Fig. 1.9 Michael Stevenson, *Art of the Eighties and Seventies* (2005), installation at the Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach, (detail) interior view of the staircase tower.

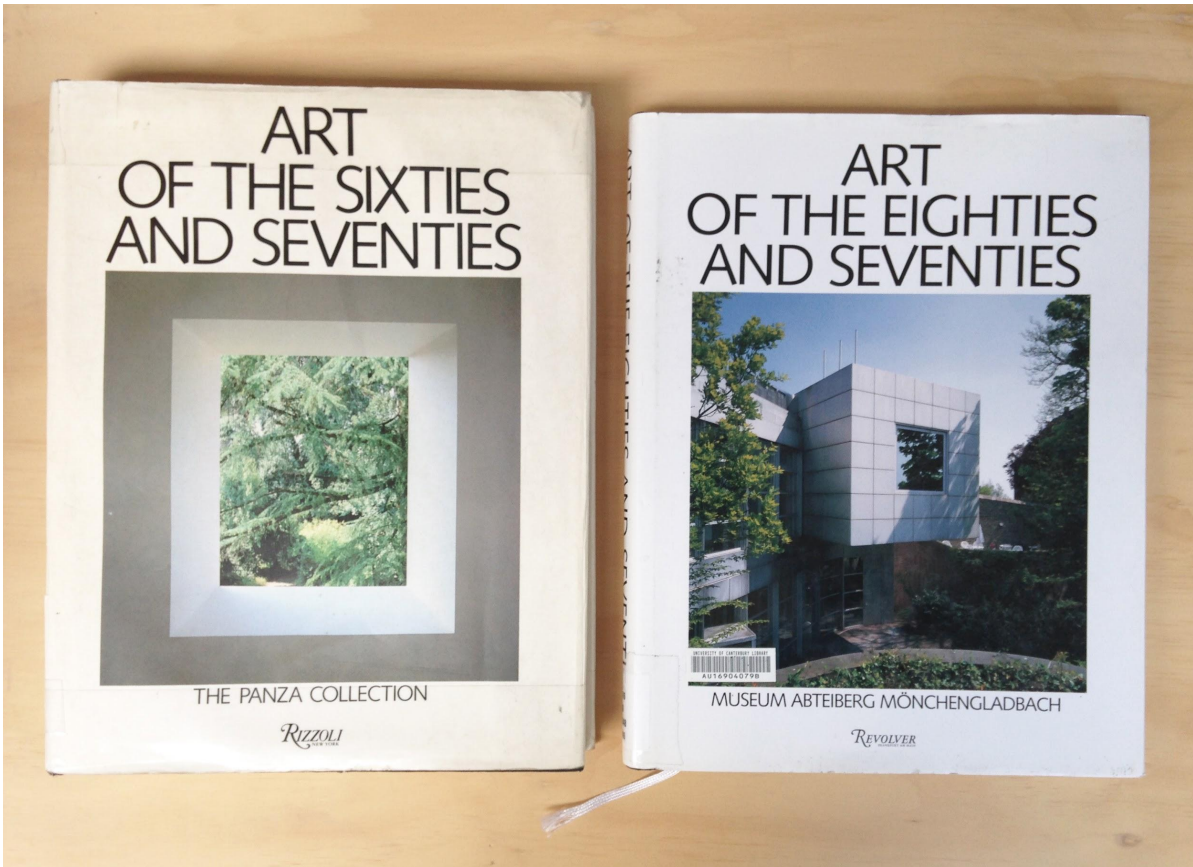


Fig. 1.10 Christopher Knight and Giuseppe Panza, eds. *Art of the Sixties and Seventies: The Panza Collection* (1987), casebound hardcover colour/black-and-white book with dust jacket, 32.5 x 24.5 x 3 cm, 271 pages. Pictured next to Michael Stevenson, *Art of the Eighties and Seventies* (2006), casebound, hardcover colour/black-and-white book with dust jacket, 32.5 x 24.5 x 2 cm, 127 pages.

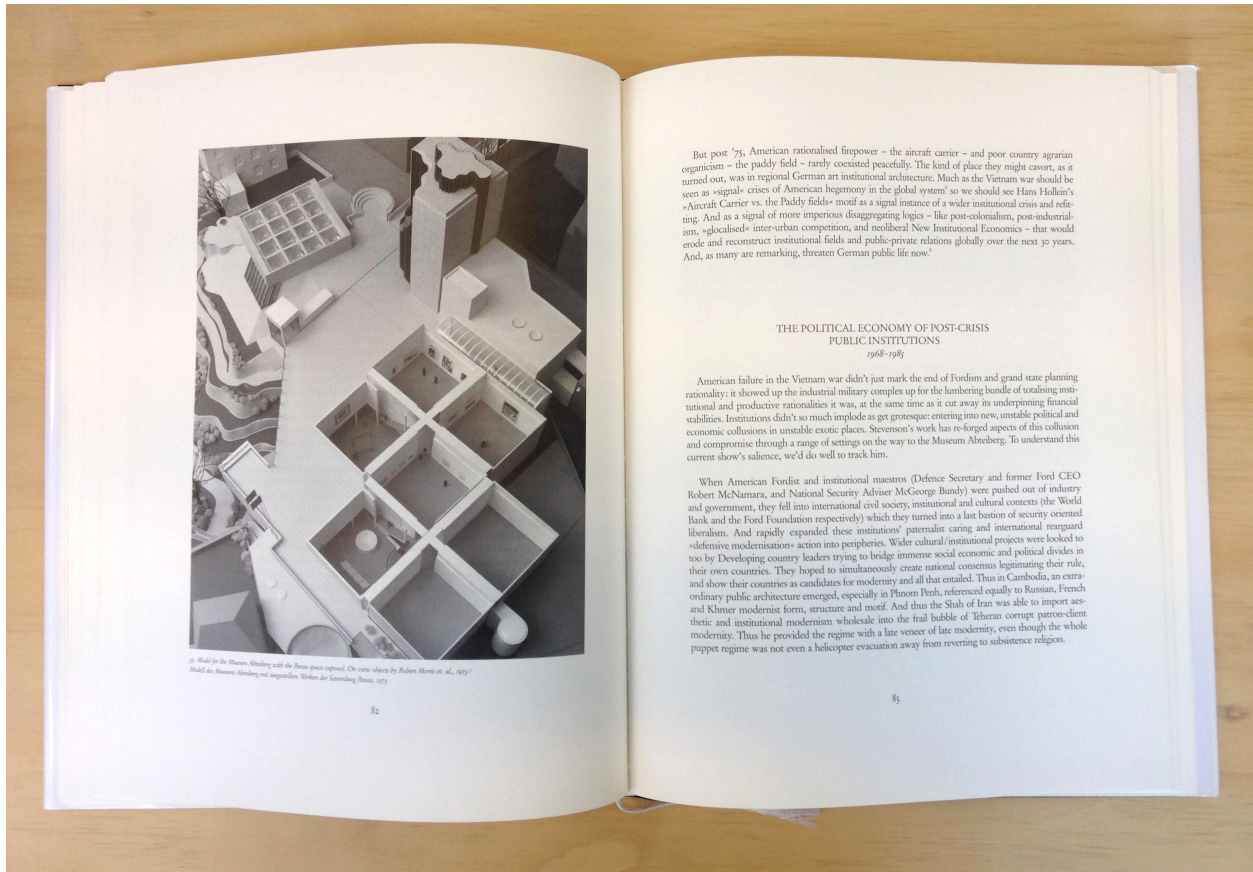


Fig. 1.11 Michael Stevenson, *Art of the Eighties and Seventies* (2006), casebound, hardcover colour/black-and-white book with dust jacket (detail), pages 83-83, 32.5 x 24.5 x 2 cm, 127 pages.



Fig 1.12 Ruth Buchanan, *An exterior, an interior, a surface* (2012), customised table with plexiglass vitrine, hand latch-hooked rug, papier mâché, text on card (detail), 175 x 750 x 85 cm.



Fig. 1.13 Ruth Buchanan, *The Weather, A Building* (2012), softcover, perfect bound black-and-white book with colour insert, 14.4 x 19.5 x 0.7 cm, unpaginated.



Fig. 1.14 Ruth Buchanan, *The Weather, A Building* (2012), softcover, perfect bound black-and-white book with colour insert (detail), section 2, 14.4 x 19.5 x 0.7 cm, unpaginated.

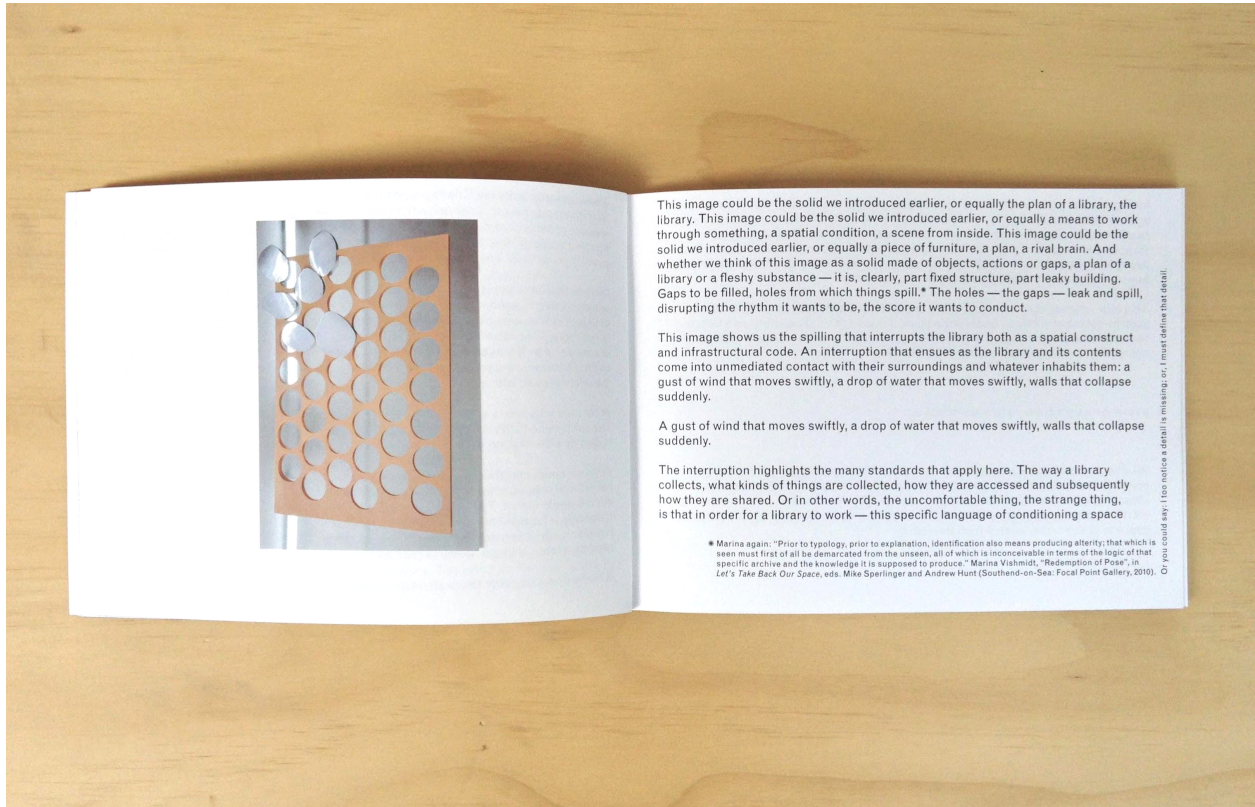


Fig. 1.15 Ruth Buchanan, *Furniture, Plan, Rival Brain* (2012), reproduced in *The Weather, A Building* (detail), section 1.



Fig. 1.16 Ruth Buchanan, *Lying Freely* (2008), softcover, perfect bound colour/black-and-white book, 23 x 15 x 0.3cm, unpaginated.



Fig. 1.17 Ruth Buchanan, *Lying Freely* (2008), softcover, perfect bound colour/black-and-white book, 23 x 15 x 0.3cm, unpaginated (detail), section 1.



Fig. 1.18 Frances Stark, *A Torment of Follies* (2008), installation at the Vienna Secession.

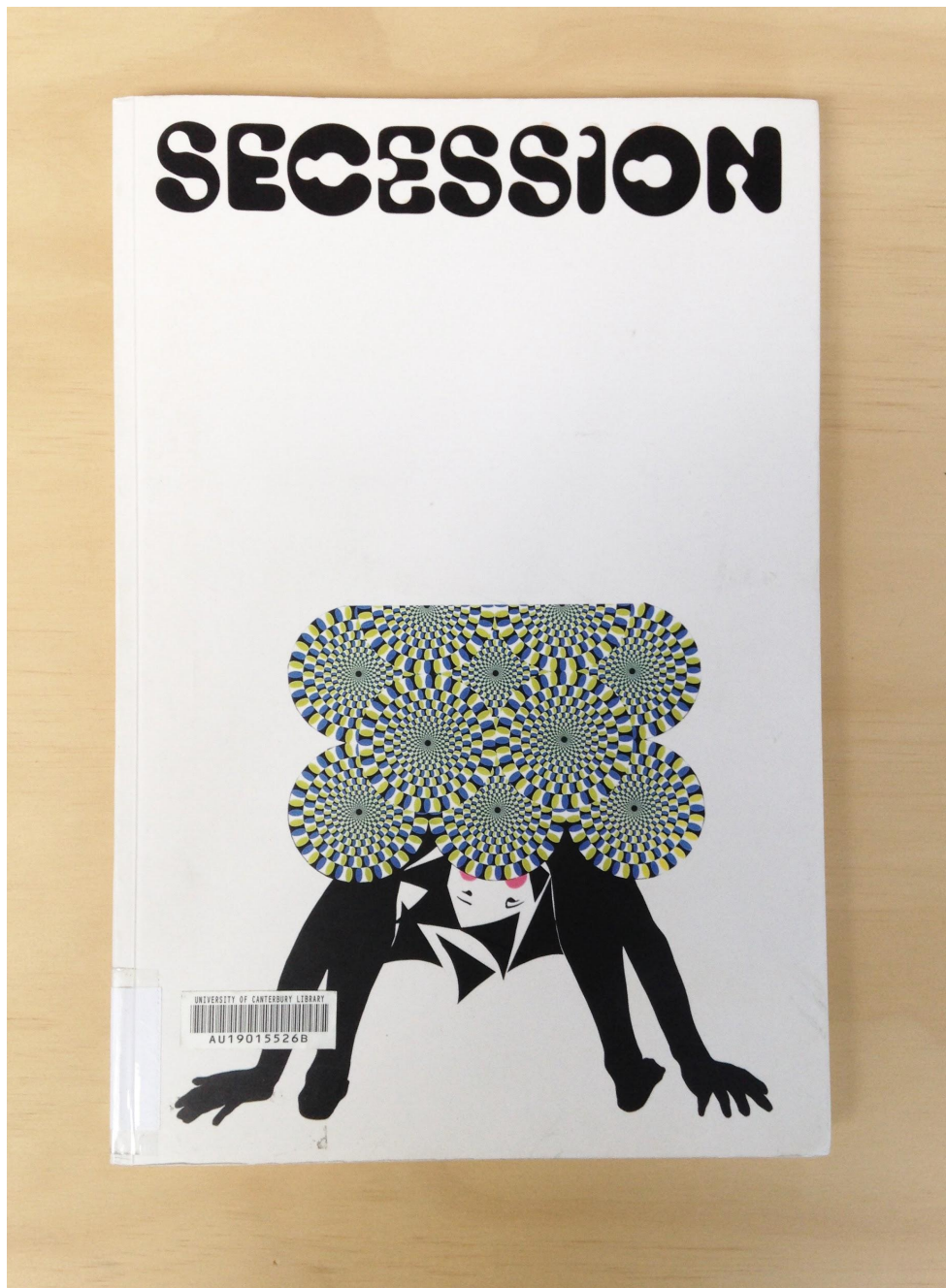


Fig. 1.19 Frances Stark, *A Torment of Follies* (2008), softcover, perfect bound colour book, 20 x 30 x 1.1 cm, 96 pages.

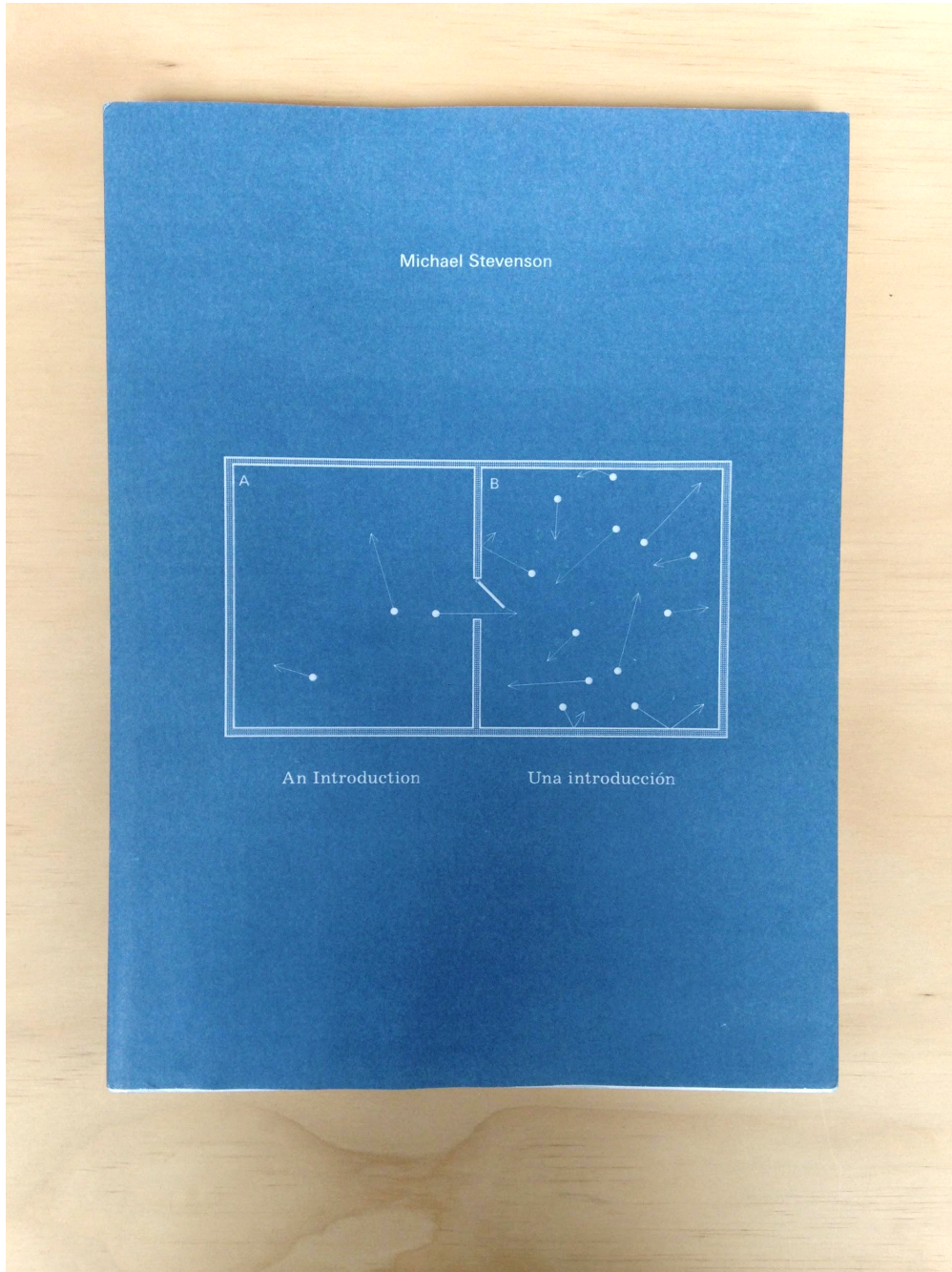
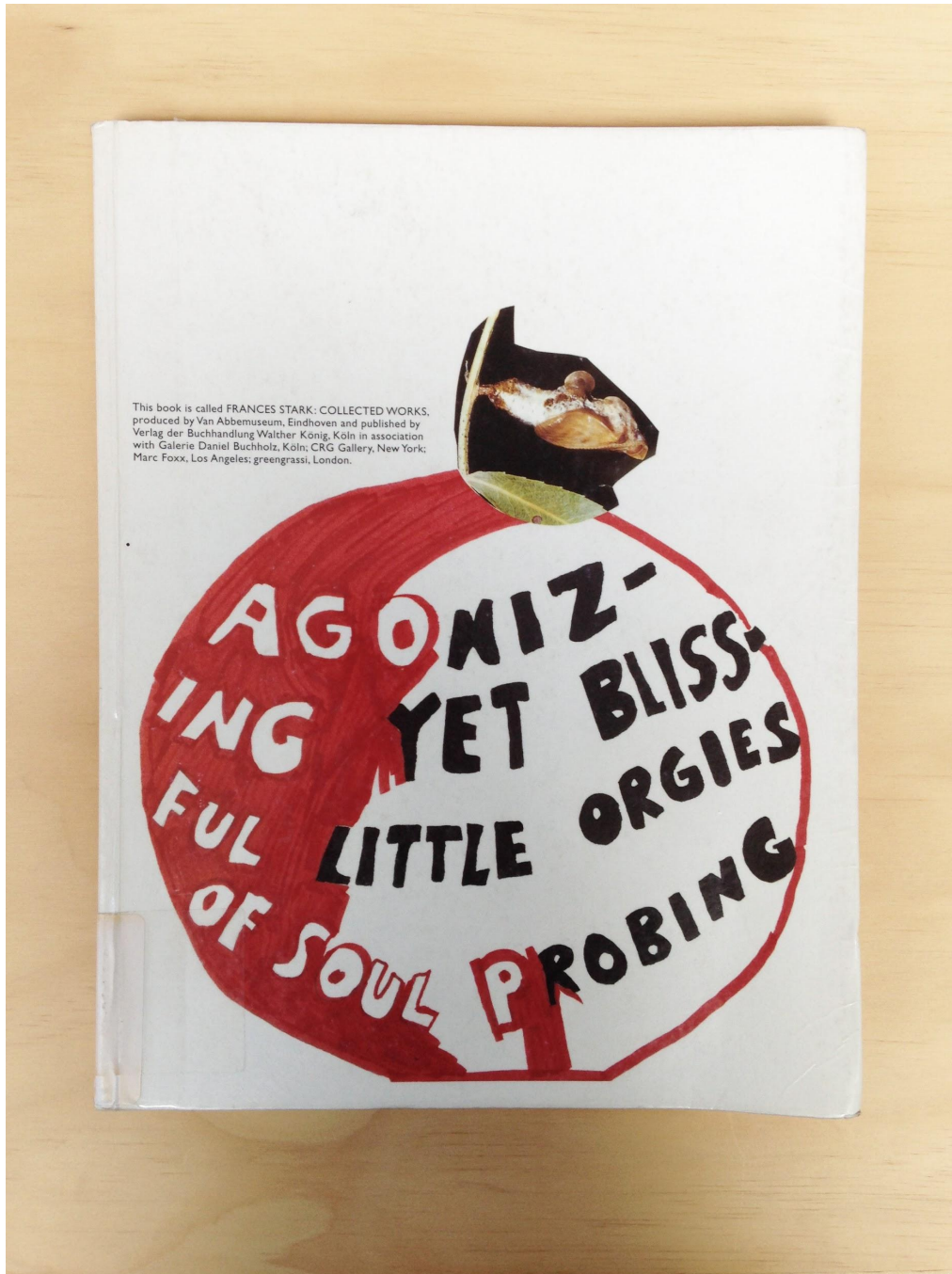


Fig. 1.20 Laura Preston, ed. *Michael Stevenson: An Introduction/Una introducción* (2013), softcover, perfect bound book with colour section, 28 x 20.9 x 2 cm, 260 pages.



This book is called FRANCES STARK: COLLECTED WORKS, produced by Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven and published by Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, Köln in association with Galerie Daniel Buchholz, Köln; CRG Gallery, New York; Marc Foxx, Los Angeles; greengrassi, London.

Fig. 1.21 Frances Stark, *Collected Works* (2007), softcover, perfect bound colour book, 28 x 21.5 x 1.4 cm, 160 pages.

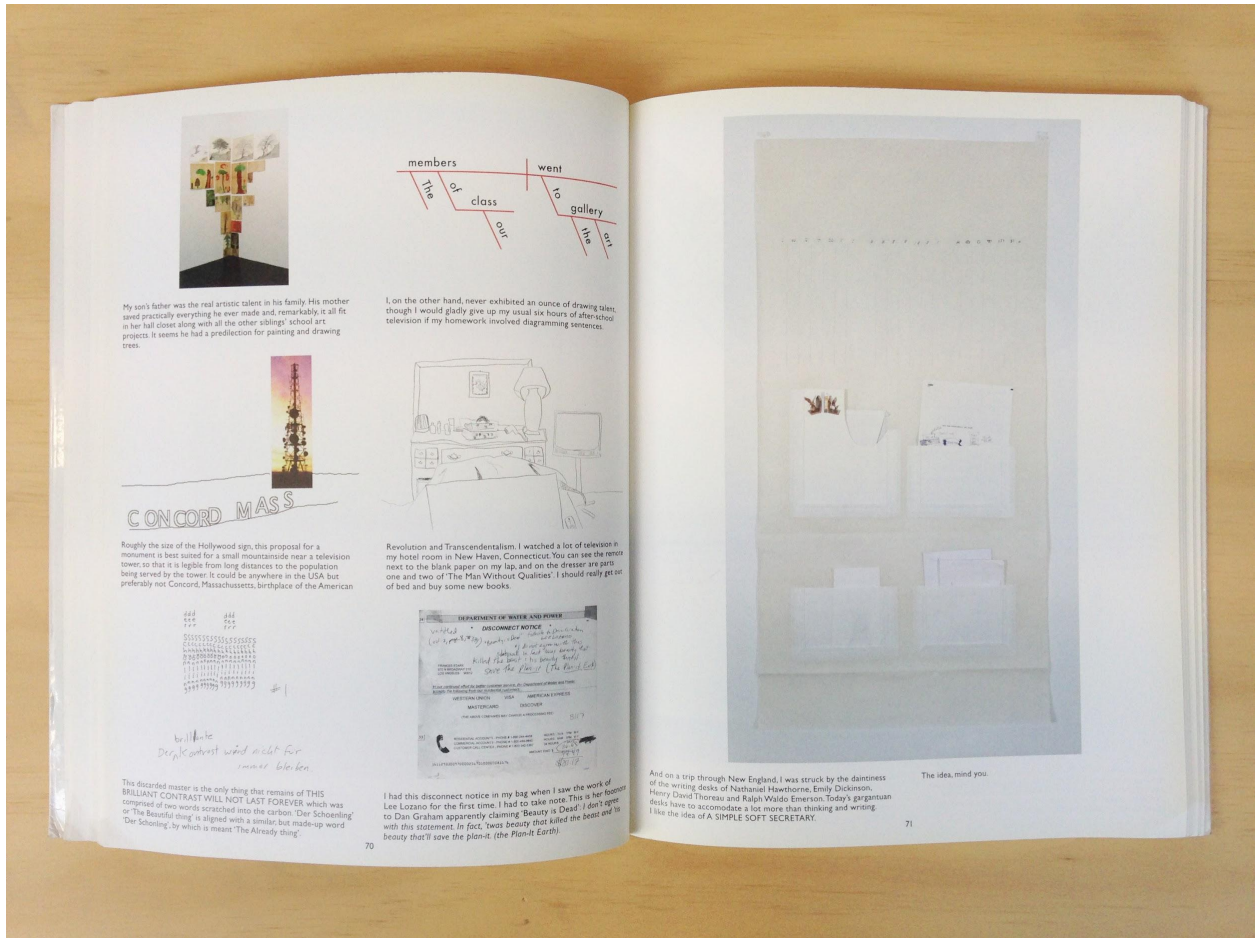


Fig. 1.22 Frances Stark, *Collected Works* (2007), softcover, perfect bound colour book (detail), pages 70-71, 28 x 21.5 x 1.4 cm, 160 pages.

Figures: Chapter 2



Fig. 2.1 Ruth Buchanan, *Lying Freely* (2008), softcover, perfect bound colour/black-and-white book, 23 x 15 x 0.3 cm, unpaginated (detail), section 1.



Fig. 2.2 Ruth Buchanan, *Lying Freely* (2008), softcover, perfect bound colour/black-and-white book, 23 x 15 x 0.3 cm, unpaginated (detail), section 2.



Fig. 2.3 Ruth Buchanan, *Lying Freely* (2008), softcover, perfect bound colour/black-and-white book, 23 x 15 x 0.3 cm, unpaginated (detail), section 3.



Fig. 2.4 Stuart Bailey and Ryan Gander, *Appendix Appendix* (2003), softcover, perfect bound colour/black-and-white book, 28 x 21.5 x 1.4 cm, 198 pages. Pictured next to *Collected Works* (2007), softcover, perfect bound colour book, 28 x 21.5 x 1.4 cm, 160 pages.

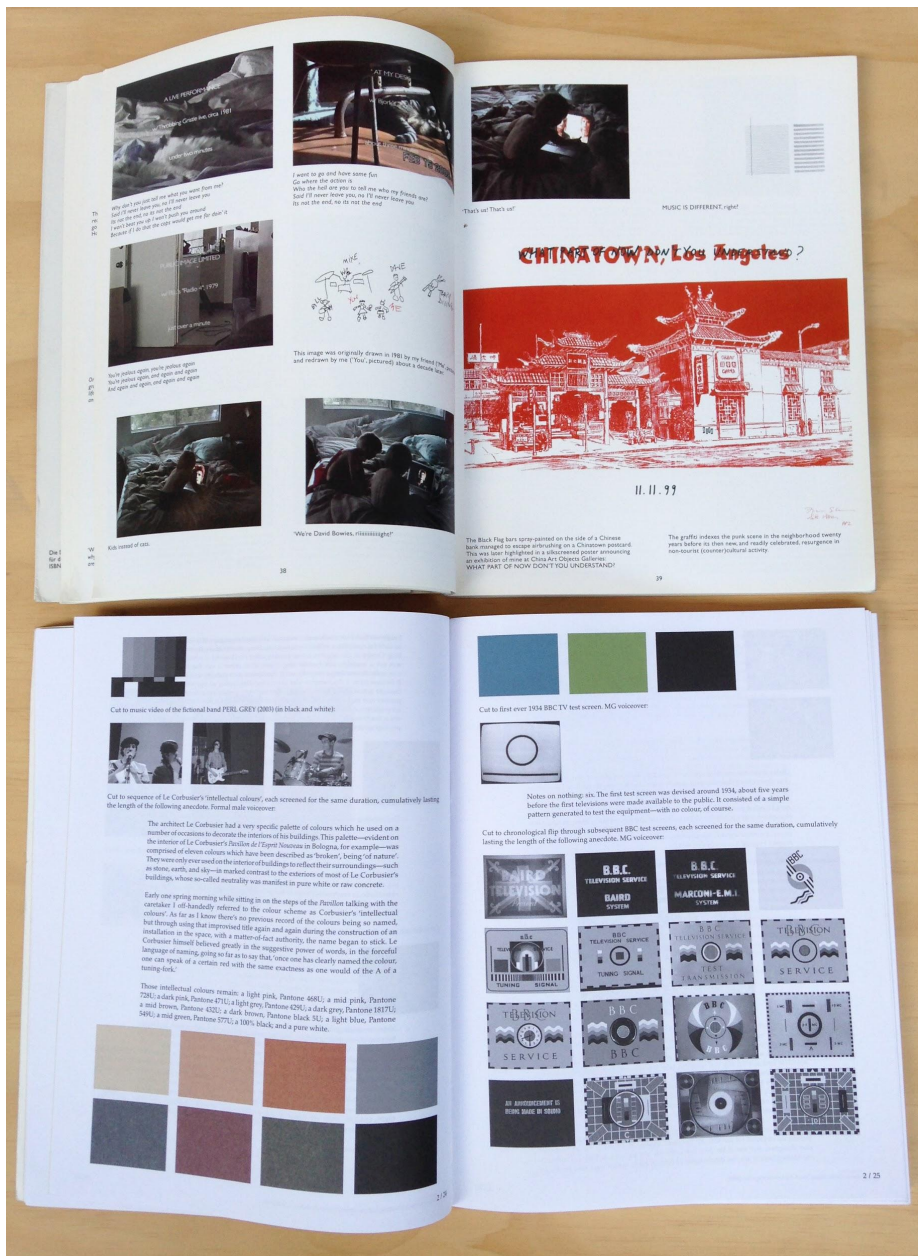


Fig. 2. 5 Stuart Bailey and Ryan Gander *Appendix Appendix* (2003), softcover, perfect bound colour/black-and-white book (detail), pages 24-25, 28 x 21.5 x 1.8 cm, 198 pages. Pictured next to Frances Stark *Collected Works* (2007), softcover, perfect bound colour book (detail), pages 38-39, 28 x 21.5 x 1.4 cm, 160 pages.

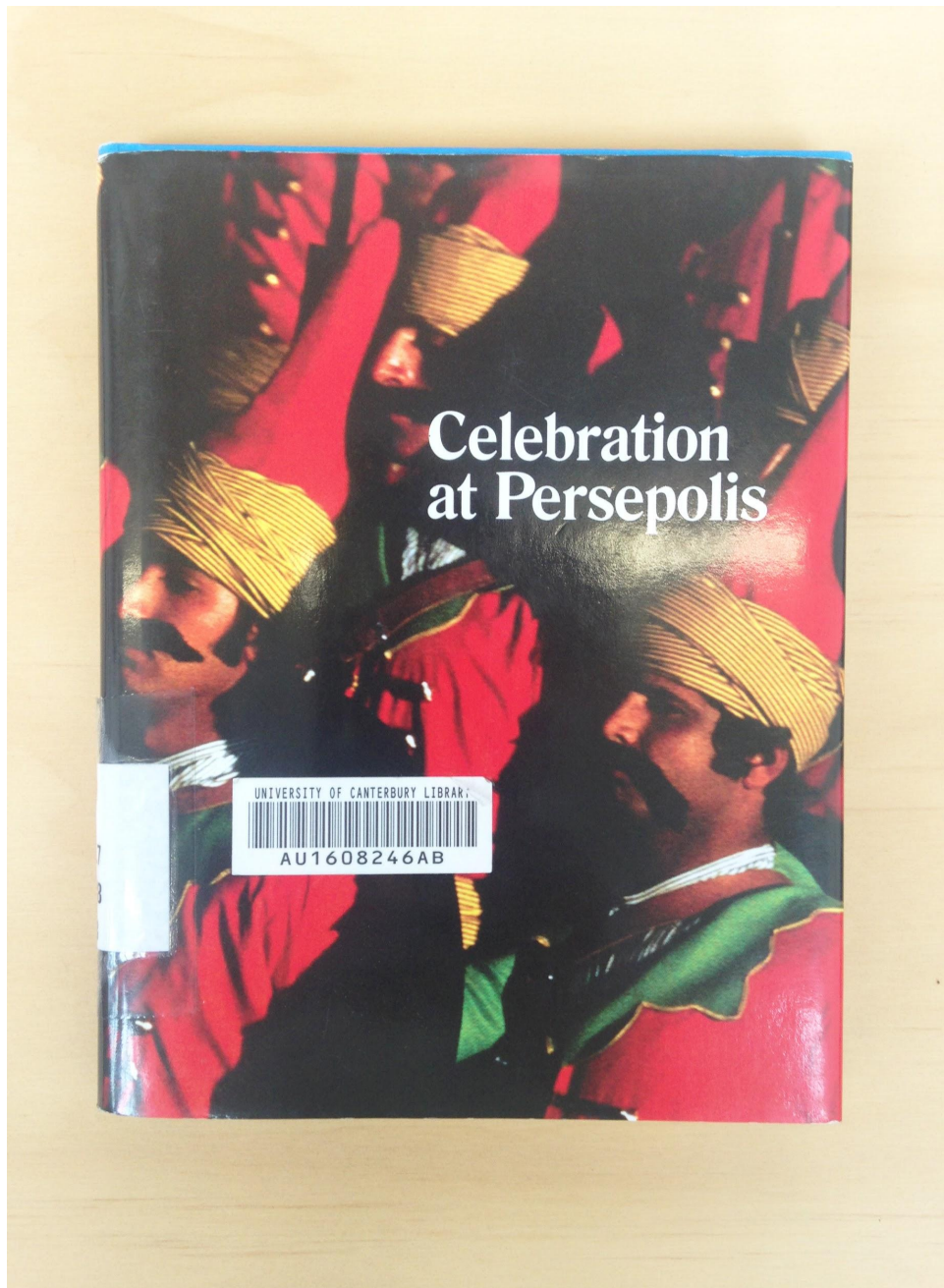


Fig. 2.6 *Celebration at Persepolis* (2008), hardcover, case bound black-and-white book with colour dust jacket, 16 x 12.5 x 1.5 cm, 64 pages.

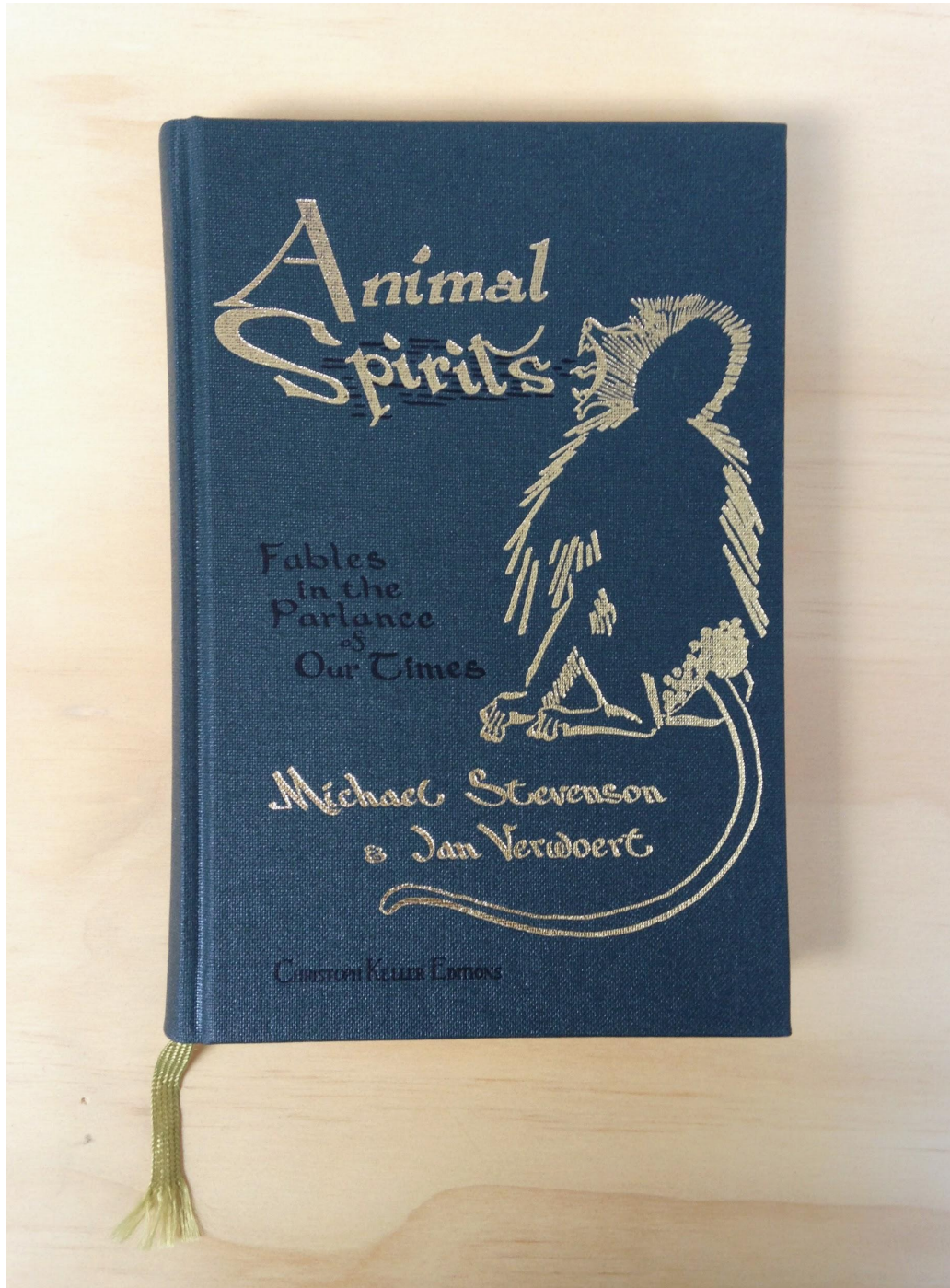


Fig. 2.7 Michael Stevenson and Jan Verwoert, *Animal Spirits* (2013), hardcover, case bound black-and-white book without dust jacket, 18.5 x 12.5 x 2 cm, 144 pages.

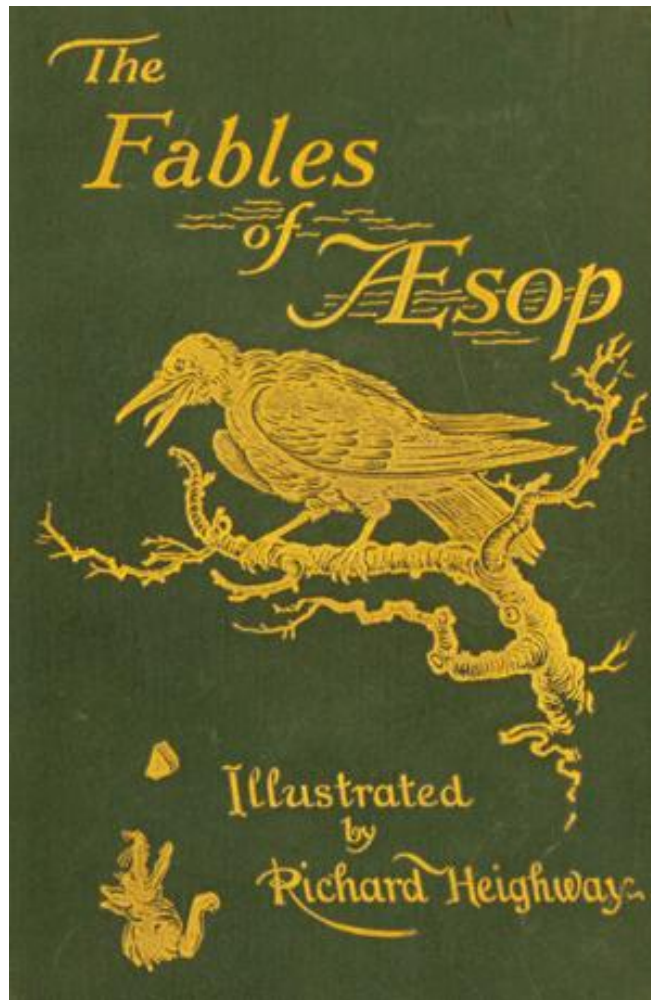


Fig. 2.8 Joseph Jacobs, *The Fables of Aesop: Selected, told a new and their history traced* (1984), 18.5 x 12.5 x 2.2 cm, 222 pages.



Fig. 2.9 Michael Stevenson and Jan Verwoert *Animal Spirits* (2013), hardcover, case bound black-and-white book without dust jacket (detail), pages 28-29, 18.5 x 12.5 x 2 cm, 144 pages.



Fig. 2.10 *Michael Stevenson: An Introduction/Una introducción* (2013), softcover, perfect bound book with colour section (detail), inside back cover with *Teoria del Vuelo (Theory of Flight)* (2012), 28 x 20.9 cm, 260 pages.

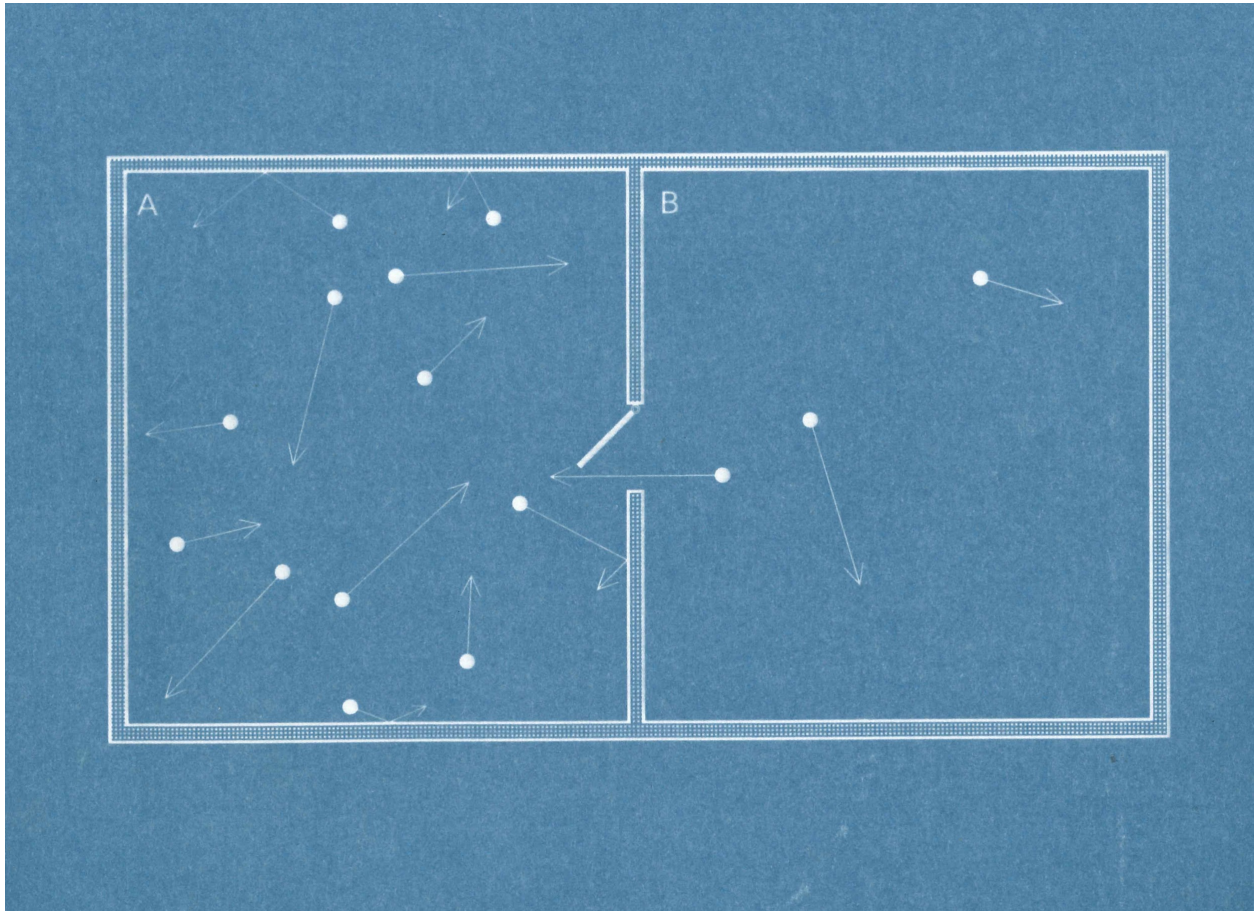


Fig. 2.11 *Michael Stevenson: An Introduction/Una introducción* (2013), softcover, perfect bound book with colour section (detail), back cover.

Figures: Chapter 3



Fig. 3.1 Edward Krasinski, *J'ai perdu la fin!!!* (I lost the end!!!) (1968), black-and-white negative by Eustachy Kossakowski, 12/12.



Fig. 3.2 Ruth Buchanan, *Conditions Drawing* (2009), table with custom vitrine cover, hand latch-hooked rug, painted ceramic, ink on paper, light drawing (detail), 175 x 75 x 90 cm.



Fig. 3.3 Ruth Buchanan, *Lying Freely* (2008), softcover, perfect bound colour/black-and-white book, 23 x 15 x 0.3cm, unpaginated (detail), section 3.



Fig. 3.4 Ruth Buchanan, *Several Attentions* (2009), film still, 16mm film, colour, no sound, 21:02 mins.

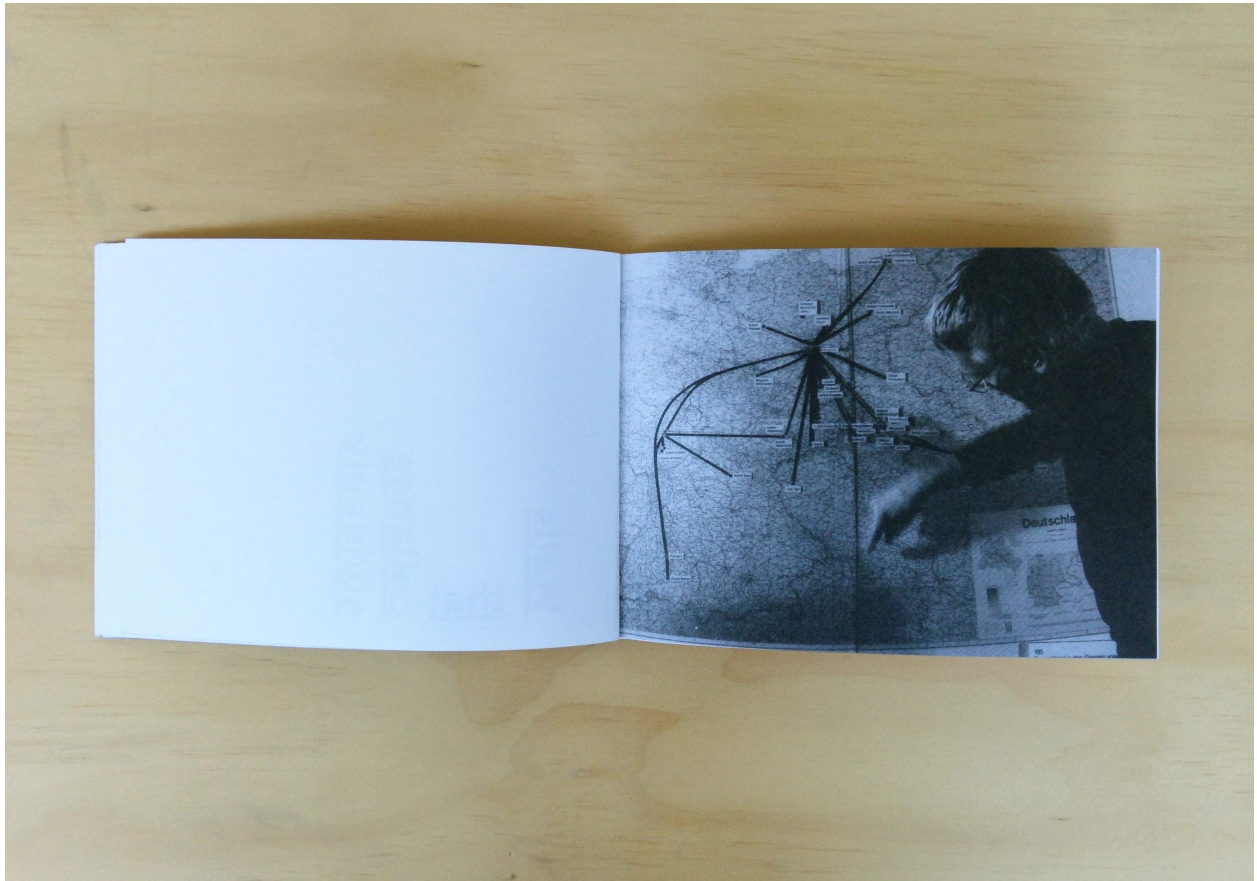


Fig. 3.5 Ruth Buchanan, *The Weather, A Building* (2012) (detail), chapter 1, Dr Werner Schochow stands in front on a map he produced in 1986 for an exhibition held at the Staatsbibliothek on Potsdamer Straße. The image originally appeared in *Bücherchicksale* (The fate of the books) (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter Verlag, 2003).

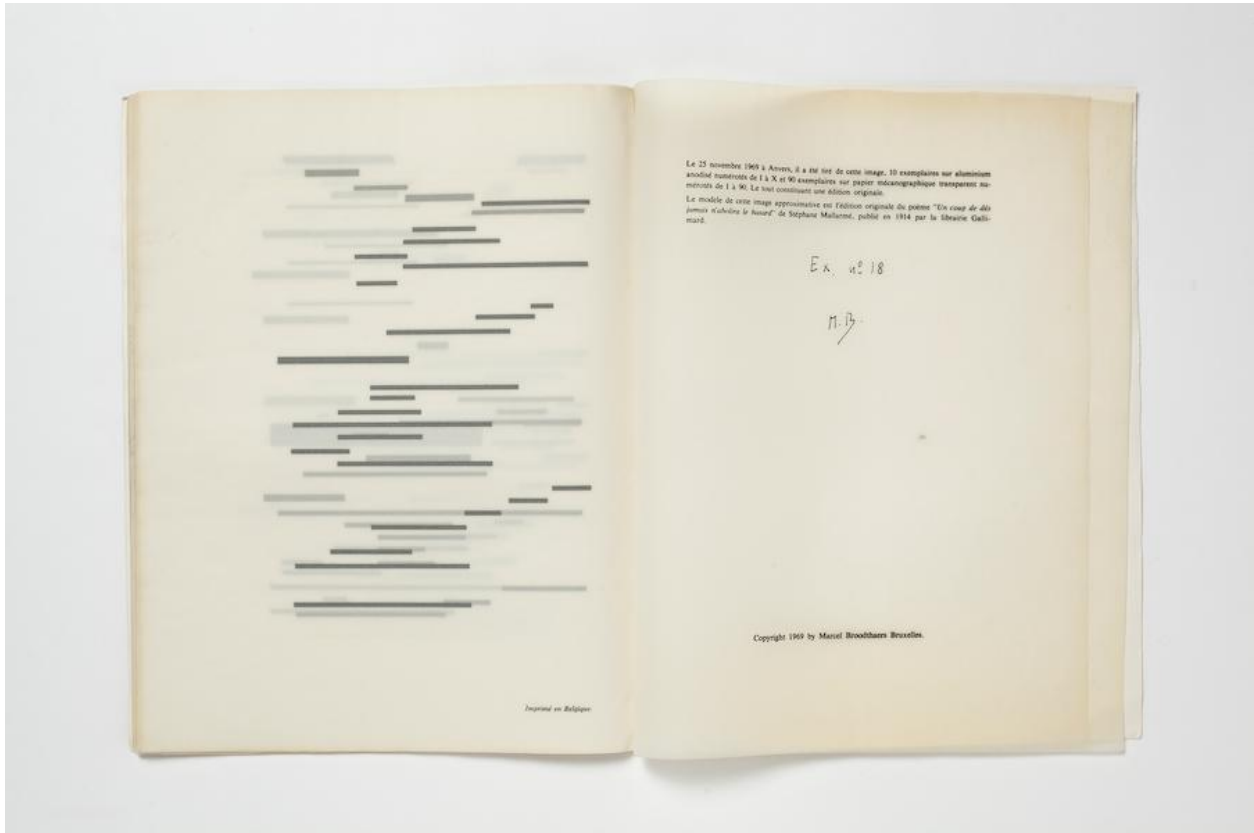


Fig. 3.6 Marcel Broodthaers *Un Coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* (1969), offset lithograph on paper 32.4 x 24.8 cm.



Fig. 3.7 Frances Stark *Untitled (Sexus)* (1992) and *Untitled (Tropic of Cancer)* (1992), second-hand books and carbon transfer. Reproduced in Frances Stark, *Collected Works* (2007), page 3 (detail).

a unique third copy to be made by some future reader. Here, one past reader's handwritten annotations in the margins of T.S. Eliot's poem, 'The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock', appear to be hastily transcribed bits of a pedagogue's voice, useful tools for opening up an otherwise difficult and carefully wrapped package.

Annotations are like arrows pointing where and how to look at what may otherwise go unnoticed. Don't worry; this is just an 'interior monologue' with a 'conversational tone': *Oh do not ask 'What is it?' Let us go and make our visit. Yes, let's ... For I have known them all already, known them all—Have known the evenings, mornings,*

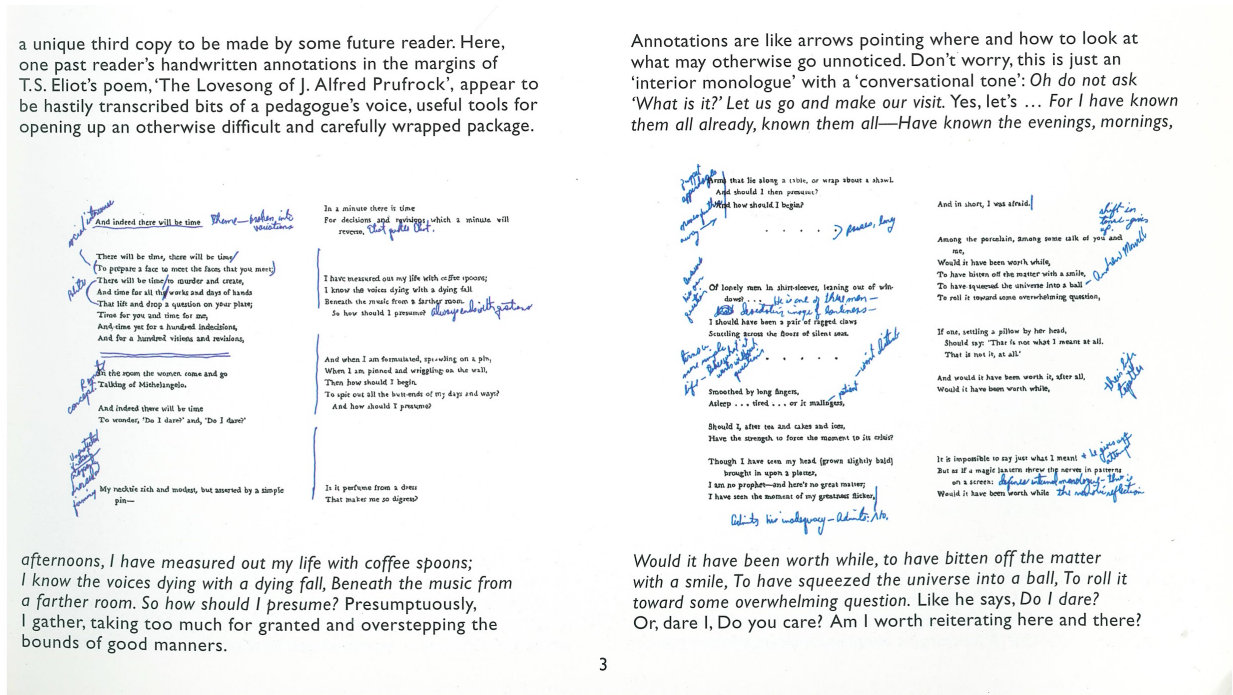


Fig. 3.8 Frances Stark, *The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock* (1993), carbon transfer on 5 pieces of paper, 58.4 x 88.3 cm. Reproduced in Frances Stark, *Collected Works* (2007), page 3 (detail).

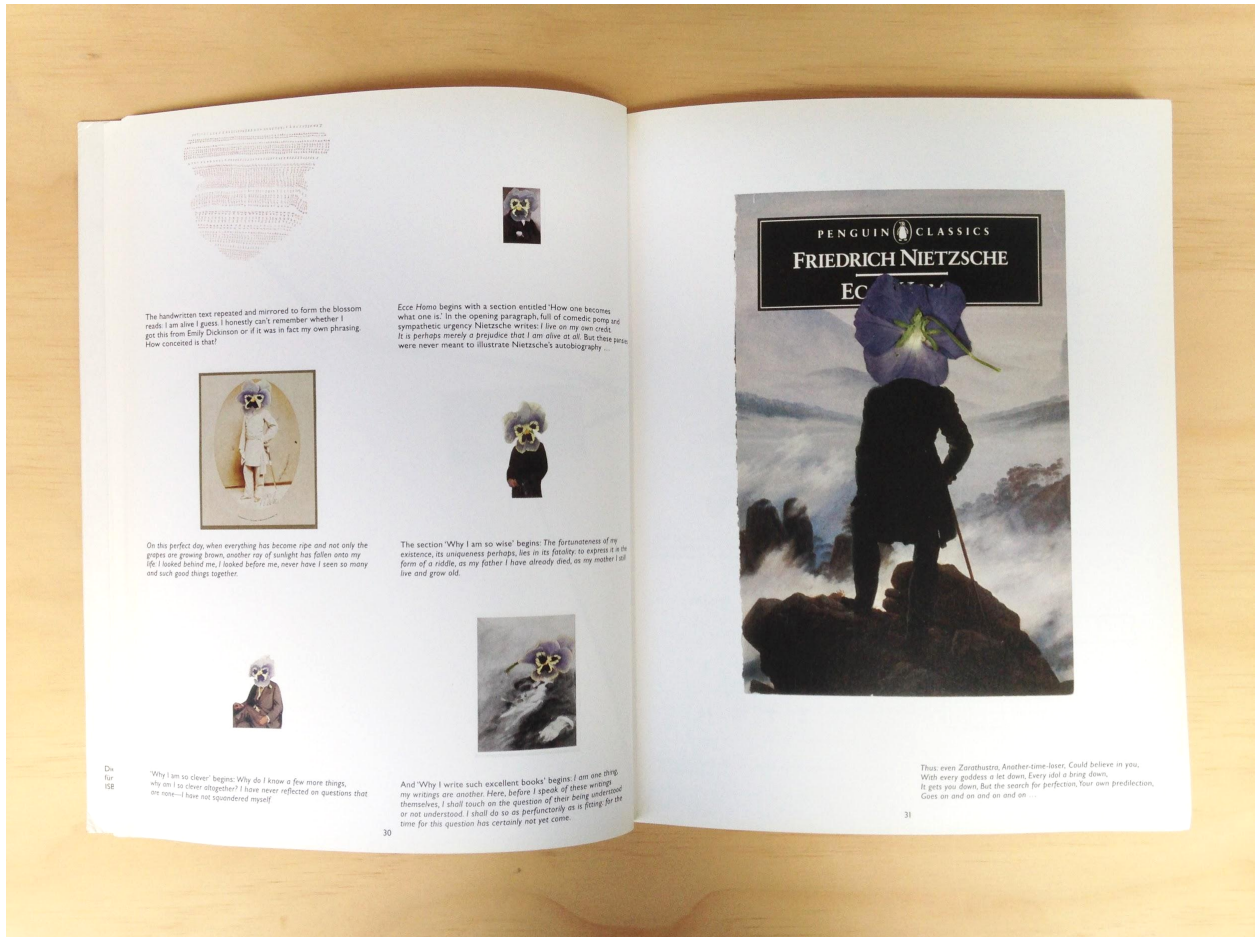


Fig. 3.9 Frances Stark, from the series *Ecce Homo* (2000), pansy on book cover. Reproduced in Frances Stark, *Collected Works* (2007), pages 30-31.