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ABSTRACT

A consideration of the ways in which post-digital influence impacts visual culture, and specifically arts publishing. The post-digital moment creates a unique opportunity for analog/digital crossover, which manifests in publishing practices and publications. This thesis aims to dedicate a space for discourse concerning these contemporary practices. Focusing on self-reflexive sources about arts publishing, this study analyzes the hybridization of media, pointing to mediatization as a result of our contemporary moment and its integrated digital influences. I address design and object composition of publications and artistic publishing practices using visual analysis to evaluate the tangible (or non-tangible) aspects of the publication and assess the multidisciplinary reach of arts publishing. This type of analysis supports the ideas of arts publishing as artistic practice, and allows us to develop a literary and aesthetic commentary about contemporary arts publishing and the latest developments in this field. I look at these primary sources as artistic objects and critique them also as conceptual pieces.

While art objects are usually the focus of most art historians, the recent boom in arts publications and reflections on publishing practices in the arts warrants special attention and a thorough academic examination to consider how arts publishing functions alongside other, more-recognized media of the art world. Academic and communications design specialist Brad Haylock speaks to the lack of attention for this subject in *DISTRIBUTED*, an anthology published in 2018: “I enjoy curating exhibitions; editing a multi-authored volume gives me the same kind of buzz. Clearly, there are a great many

parallels between the two types of practice, but, while the discipline of curating has received much attention in recent years, the aesthetics of editing is too rarely discussed.”¹

Arts publishing is an important intersection of the visual and conceptual that provides a way for us to historicize the dissemination of some of the most important contemporary theory, texts, and interdisciplinary design that is foundational to our discipline. This thesis provides an expansion of the traditional art history subjects by considering the digital humanities and visual culture as fundamental to post-digital analyses of the arts.

¹ David Blamey and Brad Haylock, *DISTRIBUTED* (London: Open Editions, 2018), 16.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis analyzes the topic of post-digital practices in arts publishing by identifying the transformations publishing has undergone in the arts as a result of a growing digital culture. The influence of the “post-digital” in publishing dictates certain types of aesthetic and contextual changes across publishable mediums, including print and web-based content. Post-digital contemporaneity has established the cultural context for the technological changes in artistic practice, including arts publishing practices. It’s obvious we are living, creating, discussing in a time that is well after established internet capabilities and digital culture influence—according to Michael Connors, the “post-” prefix “evokes the complete embeddedness in a ubiquitous network of culture,”² one in which it is hard to separate the internet and/or the digital from our daily experiences. This network of culture, Connors continues, functions under the awareness that the arts (and all culture) have been transformed by the internet, and as a result, “the line between artist-made, user-generated, and commercial content is decidedly blurred.”³ Just as visual art has adjusted to post-digital consequences, so has arts publishing.

Among the scholars who analyzed a technological shift affecting publishing is Alessandro Ludovico, who explains that “digital technology is no longer a revolutionary phenomenon but a normal part of everyday life...for the world of book and magazine

² Michael Connor, “Post-Internet: What It Is and What It Was,” in *You Are Here: Art after the Internet* ed. Omar Kholeif (London: HOME, SPACE, and the authors, 2017), 57.

³ Connor, *Post-Internet Art*, 61.

publishing however, this transformation has only just begun.”⁴ Ludovico published this analysis in *Post-Digital Print: The Mutation of Publishing since 1894* seven years ago. And while this statement was true then, we can go even further to say that digital technology is no longer a revolution for publishing (or the arts) either. The normalcy of technological availability for publishing practices is exactly what constitutes the “post-digital.”⁵ Today we are seeing more crossover between analog (or print) and digital media than ever before, two mediums that inform one another in today’s contemporary post-digital landscape. This new, more fluid practice of arts publishing is what I am concerned with for the scope of my analysis, with a focus on sources that are self-reflective on describing books as objects, publishing as an artistic practice, and the methods used by artist publishers to redefine arts publishing possibilities, in both design and content. Though “publishing itself constitutes a large range of content, I am only concerned with arts publishing—publications/work created by artists or about the arts—interacting with post-digital as a concept and means of practice.

Ludovico devotes much explanation to the concept of the “post-digital,” and while it is a foundational term for this survey of arts publishing, there are other terms to describe these crossovers of media, art, and creative processes that provide useful context for this analysis. The terms mediatization (the increasing combination of the virtual and actual) and contemporaneity also give insight into the complexities of multimedia

⁴ Alessandro Ludovico, *Post-Digital Print: The Mutation of Publishing since 1894* (The Netherlands: Onomatopée 77, 2012), back cover copy.

⁵ Ludovico, *Post-Digital Print*, 109-111.

influence in the post-digital.⁶ Geoff Cox and Jacob Lund take the temperature on contemporaneity and what they call the “contemporary condition” in a 2016 publication series dedicated to the subjects of contemporaneity and contemporary art.⁷ Cox and Lund explain that contemporaneity is a key element of the globalization of our historical present, and provides insight into the ways various technologies continue to develop and create meaning for the art world.⁸

This global contemporaneity means that networked informational technologies and ever more socialized media forms play a decisive role both in shaping the field of art and culture and in the ways in which art and culture themselves function and create meaning...How does art relate to such a condition? It is, we claim, a main task for contemporary artistic practices to investigate this condition and additionally to negotiate the significant role of media information technologies in the interconnection of times and life worlds.⁹

By centering a dialogue on post-digital arts publishing, I aim to contribute to this idea laid out by Cox and Lund by providing another way of conceptualizing the influence of contemporaneity on the arts, by way of publishing practices.

In order to understand the current period in which arts publishing is at its most transformative, we must understand the meaning of the contemporary moment we are in, and how this affects publishing practices at all stages—from concept to consumption.

Cox and Lund’s argument for an “interdisciplinary inquiry” encourages art history

⁶ Nick Thurston, “The Mediatization of Contemporary Writing,” in *Publishing as Artistic Practice*, ed. Annette Gilbert (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016), 95.

⁷ Geoff Cox and Jacob Lund, *The Contemporary Condition: Introductory Thoughts on Contemporaneity & Contemporary Art* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016)

⁸ Cox and Lund, *The Contemporary Condition*, 16-17.

⁹ Cox and Lund, *The Contemporary Condition*, 16.

scholarship to draw broader connections to other aspects of visual culture that influence the art world.¹⁰ To their point, I argue that the rise of post-digital influence and the mediatization of arts publishing are direct consequences of contemporaneity, and framing these new methods as such allows us to use a multidisciplinary approach to understand changes in contemporary practice, specifically the variety of materials that are being produced as a response to broader conditions of visual consumption.

Mediatization, hybridization, and post-digital methods are all happening under the condition of contemporaneity, as Cox and Lund identify. Through my understanding of post-digital changes in arts publishing and the contemporary art world, I am drawing a direct connection to these subjects and their ability to help explain and provide context for one another. Without considering contemporaneity, current scholarship on art history continues to focus primarily on the traditional visual media that have long dominated the discourse. Using Cox and Lund's multidisciplinary approach as a framework, I intend to place the subject and practice of arts publishing into the same art historical moment as the visual arts, and establish publishing practices as well as publications with the same significance and importance to the art world as the art itself—not just as containers of information, but as complex and nuanced works. The crossover of analog and digital mediums affects both the object and the viewer. It is a recycling and reformatting of established mediums into a post-digital category in which the dissolving boundaries between mediums create a new data set for arts publishing. It is this fluidity that is

¹⁰ Cox and Lund, *The Contemporary Condition*, 22.

fundamental to the uniqueness and importance of contemporary arts publishing as it functions in the larger art world. Post-digital influence on arts publishing practices furthers art history discourse by facilitating publishing as an act and opening up new avenues for information sharing. To demonstrate the latest evidence of post-digital influence as it has manifested in arts publications and publishing practices, this thesis focuses primarily on publishing efforts produced in the last ten years, with specific interest in publications and publishers addressing the state of arts publishing, publications, and practices. By limiting my data set to those sources that are especially self-interested, I have chosen examples that best represent developing trends in post-digital arts publishing as a practice that has become increasingly meta.

Though the trajectory of arts publishing has been considered by recent scholarship from a chronological approach, I would like to point out that it is also multi-directional in both influence and result. To help in visualizing these changes I reference illustrations throughout this document “that explore and celebrate the power and potential,” of arts publishing, created by Kione Kochi for independent publisher Temporary Services.¹¹ These illustrations serve as creative, visual evidence that provide insight into the evolving practices of arts publishing and supports the scholarship of Clive Phillpot, Michalis Pichler, Arnaud Desjardin, and more, who also acknowledge these changes.

¹¹ “Artist Books Fruit Diagram Poster,” Drawn by Kione Kochi in collaboration with Temporary Services, 2015, <https://halfletterpress.com/artist-books-fruit-diagram-poster/>

Each chapter of this analysis surveys the contemporary arts publishing by evaluating its three core categories—publishing, publisher, and publication. This breakdown of arts publishing provides the most logical organization of many examples that resist categorization, which exist within arts publishing as fluid objects and subjects (as is the nature of the contemporary arts). To this point, these categories are not limited to the sources I have provided, and in the words of Desjardin, author of *The Book on Books on Artists Books* (The BOBOAB), “The work of compiling books of interest is ongoing and...should serve as a reminder that the subject is alive and kicking.”¹² However, this particular data set centers self-referential materials and practices.

Figure 1 serves as an important foundation for this entire thesis by illustrating the complexities of the arts publishing process and identifying the people involved.¹³ As I began my research, reference to Phillpot’s diagram of arts publishing repeatedly appeared in sources discussing this topic, and this signaled to me that these visualizations would be useful in recognizing this shift in post-internet publishing practices and its impact on the existing arts publishing community. *Fruit Salad*, a diagram of artists books, was created by Clive Phillpot in 1982. Phillpot began his research into artists’ books in 1970 during his time at the Chelsea College of Arts Library in London, served as director of the Library at MoMA in 1977, and continues to publish his thoughts on the subject.¹⁴ Phillpot

¹² Arnaud Desjardin, *The Book On Books On Artists Books (BOBOAB)* (London, UK: The Everyday Press, 2013), 9.

¹³ See APPENDIX for figures and captions, beginning on page 59 of this document.

¹⁴ Clive Phillpot, *Booktrek* (Switzerland: JRP Ringier, 2013), 11.

uses Ulises Carrion's¹⁵ concept of the “bookwork” to describe artists’ books that “consciously investigate the structure of the book as a space-time sequence.”¹⁶ Phillpot’s early essays continue to contribute to post-internet analysis of analog and digital publishing practices today because of their foundational qualities in recognizing arts publishing.

At the heart of the *Fruit Salad* diagram are artists books, the subject and primary materials of arts publishing. From here, Phillpot breaks these publications down into three sub-categories: book objects, book art, and literary books, each of which occupy different spaces in the intersection of “art” and “books.” Book objects, represented by a yellow lemon, are centered in the “art” category, which is represented by a red apple. Though the lemon representing “artists books” overlaps with both “art” and “books,” Phillpot has chosen to illustrate it as its own category, emphasizing the significance of this intersection while recognizing both its independent and integral qualities that place artists books, or arts publications, specifically in both art and book categories. Since Phillpot’s initial design, his vocabulary of the publications in question has changed, as he notes in a conversation with now-director of the MoMA

Library Christophe Cherix:

¹⁵ Ulises Carrión founded Other Books and So in 1975, an early independent publishing endeavor dedicated to distributing artists’ books, based in Amsterdam. As reported by Monoskop, Other Books and So’s self-described catalogue included “non books, anti books, pseudo books, concrete books, conceptual books,” and more, accessed October 2019.

https://monoskop.org/Other_Books_and_So#cite_note-2

¹⁶ “Clive Phillpot,” Monoskop, accessed October 2019

https://monoskop.org/Clive_Phillpot

My impression of the field is that the category of artists' books is less distinct than it was; there would seem to be a tendency to coalesce with mainstream art publishing, leading to a certain hybridisation...I almost flinch from trying to define an 'artist's book' today, because current usage of this term is so indiscriminate. I once had high hopes for the word 'bookwork,' but this too is used without any precision...readers will see that the meaning I myself give to terms slips and slides over the years. However, the 'fruit salad' diagram that I came up with is still, I think, useful, even if the terms that I have used to describe its many components may change.¹⁷

Kione Kochi of independent publisher Temporary Services (Chicago) illustrated an updated version (Fig. 2) of *Fruit Salad* to reflect “new complexities in the age of digital publishing.”¹⁸ While Kochi's re-boot of Phillpot's diagram does make use of Phillpot's terms artist books, book object, book art, and literary books, there are sixteen additional categories added to his original *Fruit Salad*, including art dealers, art collectors, commercial galleries, chain bookstores, expensive editions, ISBN numbers, gatekeepers, P.O.D. (print on demand), eBook (electronic book), PDFs (portable document format), artist publishers, book art organizations, museums, distributors, digital, and large print runs. This shows a significant complication in the world of arts publishing since Phillpot first chose to illustrate its structure during the rise of art book publishing.¹⁹

¹⁷ Phillpot, *Booktrek*, 6.

¹⁸ Kochi illustration (Fig. 2) text at bottom of image: “Clive Phillpot's diagram updated to illustrate new complexities in the age of digital publishing,” 2015.

¹⁹ Carrion's establishment of Other Books and So in 1975 marked an important moment for early arts publishing. As well, Phillpot continually notes the 70s as a formative time for the subject of artists books, Monoskop, accessed October 2019
https://monoskop.org/Other_Books_and_So#cite_note-2

The differences between these two diagrams show how arts publishing has changed by post-digital practices. Cutting through the diagram horizontally are lines to indicate different sizes of print runs from smallest to largest—unique, multiple, large print runs, and digital. The addition of digital is significant here because it creates a new dichotomy of materials to consider, between printed and electronic, and situates us in a post-internet, and now post-digital, context.

Underneath all of Kochi's added components to the ecosystem of arts publishing is a cracked plate, representing the growth and pressure of the expanding subject. Museums, book art organizations, and artist publishers make up the foundation of the arts and books, but are ultimately cracking from the pressure of this growth, leaving room for other modes of distribution and publishing to help. The ants on the bottom right of the illustration represent this breakdown, taking a more independent and digital approaches to distribution practices, like PDFs, eBooks, and P.O.D. It's important to notice that the eBook and PDF "crumbs" the ants are carrying are red, which places these formats in the art category (represented by the red apple), not the book category (represented by the green pear). This suggests that Kochi's view of the post-digital effect on arts publishing is specifically arts-related and relevant. It is also important to note that Kochi's illustration was first exhibited at the 2015 NY Art Book Fair, organized by Printed Matter. Later in this document I will discuss the significance of art book fairs and how this particular type of event has aided in the growth of arts publishing, encouraged the boom of independent arts publishing, and facilitated dynamic engagement within the arts publishing

community in similar ways arts fairs have done for the contemporary visual arts.

Even Walter Benjamin, still highly regarded in much art history theory, lovingly wrote about his personal connection to printed publications in a 1931 essay titled “Unpacking My Library: A talk about Book Collecting.” The published word is not newly important to the art world or to the art history discipline, however, its significance has evolved over time and print finds itself at a unique crossroads between media and artistic practices of the contemporary moment. Benjamin nods to these harder-to-categorize materials even in the early 30s, while the standard for publishing was still very much traditional. Benjamin states that “there is no living library that does not harbor a number of booklike creations from fringe areas.”²⁰

Michalis Pichler addresses the vocabulary used to discuss arts publishing in the 2019 international anthology *Publishing Manifestos*, explaining that “we are no longer talking about books anymore—more capacious than *book*, the term *publication* is better because it can encompass digital files, hybrid media, and forms we have yet to imagine.”²¹ According to Pichler, the term “artist’s book” is “problematic” and goes against the inherent “heterogeneity” of the field by encouraging a separation of such publications from the broader cultural context that we know art history and visual studies to encompass.²² Though I appreciate the ways in which this subject has evolved over time, I do agree with Pichler’s reasoning in favor of the term publication. In the pages to

²⁰ Hannah Ardent, ed. Harry Zohn, “Unpacking My Library: A Talk about Book Collecting,” in *Walter Benjamin: Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), 66.

²¹ Michalis Pichler, *Publishing Manifestos* (Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 2019), 15.

²² Pichler, *Publishing Manifestos*, 15.

follow, this thesis is divided into three chapters accordingly, but the word “book” is still used as a more flexible term throughout.

As I worked to map this thesis and categorize a subject that is not only multidisciplinary but resists restrictive classification, I found myself returning to the five Ws (who, what, when, where, why, and how) to determine which sources may be most relevant to the publishing, publisher, publication breakdown. Interestingly enough I found that Phillpot addressed the subject of book art in this exact same way. For this reason I thought it significant to integrate each of Phillpot’s thoughts on the “Ws” of arts publishing in each chapter, as they provide insight into the different roles and materials that function within this “fruit salad” of publishing practices.²³ This thesis aims to provide a specific channel dedicated to the analysis of these materials and to continue an academic dialogue aimed at considering arts publishing as an important element of art history.

²³ Clive Phillpot, *Fruit Salad*, 1982, Fig. 2 in Appendix.

CHAPTER 1: POST-DIGITAL PUBLISHING

Aligning the post-digital with our contemporary present clarifies the implications of post-digital publishing practices, which affects not only the mediums and channels used to publish (opening up more possibilities for new publications, forms of sharing, and formats) but also the experience of the reader interacting with the final published work. In this chapter I focus on the act of publishing and how its meaning is different as a post-digital practice versus a traditional, analog one. The new aesthetic²⁴ resulting from post-digital influence comes at the cross-section of the digital and analog, where “technical, social, human, and nonhuman layers are folded together to produce new forms of subjectivation at multiple scales through such means,” Cox and Lund explain.²⁵ Publishing is both the process and the final step in actualizing a work, no matter the work’s medium or intention. Publishing in the post-digital environment becomes complicated by the numerous possibilities available, thanks to online and offline platforms, but has created a new data set for the analysis of contemporary arts publishing that gives artist publishers more agency over their work, the way it is produced, and the way it is shared. Here, I want to consider what happens when something is published, and what that means in a post-digital context.

²⁴ The “new aesthetic” is a term first used by artist James Bridle to address our perception and interpretation of analog and digital crossover. See: Paul Soulellis “Urgent Archives” in *Library of the Printed Web: Collected Works 2013-2017* (Providence: Paul Soulellis, 2017), 501-513; and <https://www.webdirections.org/resources/james-bridle-waving-at-the-machines/#transcript>

²⁵ Cox & Lund, *The Contemporary Condition*, 18.

Kochi’s illustration, “Self Publish Together” (Fig. 3) is significant in the context of post-digital publishing because it highlights the autonomy that self-publishing can offer for arts/independent publishers and the resulting community that happens when this is done with a larger collective goal in mind (This aspect of community that contemporary arts publishing cultivates will be discussed more in depth in the following chapter on POST-DIGITAL PUBLISHERS).²⁶ At the center of this image is a risograph printer, a tool designed to help those looking for an economically-friendly way to make multiples—it seems only natural that these printers have been adopted by designers, publishers, and artists alike as an instrument of choice for independent production.²⁷ An alternative version of this illustration may look more like a person behind a laptop, but both are important and active publication vehicles in post-digital publishing. Independent publisher Temporary Services notes in their ode to the post-digital, *Publishing in the Realm of Plant Fibers and Electrons*:

Publishing after the “paperless revolution” (the internet failed to kill off the printed page and therefore the revolution did not actually occur, but its impact on paper and printing is evident) requires a new set of skills, approaches and attitudes in being a book maker. It means a variegated approach to how you create, publish, distribute, and build a social ecosystem around your efforts.²⁸

²⁶ See Chapter 2: POST-DIGITAL PUBLISHERS, beginning on page 28.

²⁷ “What is Riso? Risograph printers were designed and released in Japan in the 1980s as a way to print efficiently and economically. Still used by small to mid-size organizations, artists and designers have adopted riso printing for its unique, vibrant and paint-like aesthetic. Speedy, efficient and eco-friendly, risograph printers employ a process similar to screen-printing with stencils and layers of ink.” via Secret Riso Club, accessed November 2019 <https://www.secretrisoclub.com/what-is-riso>

²⁸ Temporary Services, *Publishing in the Realm of Plant Fibers and Electrons* (Chicago: Temporary Services, 2014), 24.

Those practicing more diverse publishing approaches include a number of individuals, editorial teams, artists, nonprofits, and more that are not discussed in depth in this thesis, but also exist within the scope of post-digital arts publishing. I have included a few other examples throughout this document as anecdotes to show just how “variegated” this field has become—a promising look for the future of contemporary arts publishing and the possibilities of post-digital work—but I mainly focus on self-reflexive publications and publishers. In this chapter I will analyze the work of Kenneth Goldsmith and his online archive UbuWeb, Scherübel’s take on *The Book*, and Paul Soulellis’s *Library of the Printed Web* to demonstrate the diverse effects of post-digital publishing practices on contemporary work.

POST-DIGITAL & CONTEMPORANEITY

The topic of post-digital contemporary arts publishing deals with two periodizing categorizations that have come to operate in our present art world, as artists and their art operate in both post-digital and contemporary contexts.²⁹ While the contemporary directly identifies “our era,” as Cox and Lund explain, this term also refers to “a modal or experimental category in the sense that it is a particular relationship to time and history.”³⁰ They continue to argue that, because the contemporary is concerned with whatever our present is, the characteristics of the contemporary can shift aesthetically and

²⁹ Cox and Lund, *The Contemporary Condition*, 11-17.

³⁰ Cox and Lund, *The Contemporary Condition*, 9.

contextually. Considering that the post-digital moment (our contemporary moment) includes more media and aesthetic influence than ever before, the interdisciplinary nature of analog/digital crossover creates a “particular interest in the role of contemporary technologies,” which Cox and Lund say would be beneficial to investigate.³¹ These crossovers—mediatization, hybridization, mediality³²—are all happening as a consequence of the contemporary condition, which complicate these aspects of artistic practice, but hold weight in how we move forward with the development of contemporary concepts in the art world and with contemporary arts publishing practices.³³

ARTISTS, PUBLISHING

Now that we’ve determined the contemporary context that publishing exists in, we can further explore how it is considered an artistic practice, and inherently concerned with aesthetics. In discussing “artist publishers” and the distinctions that have occurred to clarify an artist as a publisher (and vice versa), Annette Gilbert argues for the collapse of artist/publisher separation: “there is a strong visual identity in all that comes out from each artist’s press, just as there is a strong visual identity in the other manifestations of

³¹ Cox and Lund, *The Contemporary Condition*, 33

³² Cox and Lund, *The Contemporary Condition*, 26: “As well as time can no longer be conceived as blank and homogenous, media and their mediality—the ways in which media functions as such—can no longer be conceived as neutral and transparent processes, subordinate to the informational content they convey. Rather, they possess a social and cultural agency.”

³³ Cox and Lund, *The Contemporary Condition*, 25-27.

each one's work...and it is this that is artistically relevant.”³⁴ To include post-digital publishing as an artistic practice within the art history discipline is an important step in garnering agency for these methods, since it is one that has largely gone without academic analysis until recently. Post-digital publishing “incorporates a striking critical diagnosis of the contemporary moment,” Gilbert explains, “this practice is by definition situated at the intersection of *two* established practices, namely, publishing and art.”³⁵ Kenneth Goldsmith's *Publishing the Unpublishable on UbuWeb* (2003), Scherübel's *The Book* (2004), and Paul Soulellis's *Library of the Printed Web* (2017) are three primary examples of artists employing post-digital publishing methods, simultaneously contributing to secondary discourse about arts publishing while creating conceptual works of art. These three examples demonstrate how mediatization can look as a published work when it embraces post-digital influence.

UBUWEB: THE UNPUBLISHABLE

Perhaps one of the most inherently post-digital examples of publishing is Kenneth Goldsmith's (an American poet and maker of book objects) UbuWeb. Created in 1996, UbuWeb's online presence continues more than twenty years later, functioning today as a digital archive for artistic media that Goldsmith describes as “often uncategorizable.”³⁶ Framed as a sort of dark corner of the art web, UbuWeb functions as a platform for the

³⁴ Gilbert, *Publishing as Artistic Practice*, 50-51.

³⁵ Gilbert, *Publishing as Artistic Practice*, 7-11.

³⁶ UbuWeb homepage, accessed August 2019, <http://www.ubu.com/resources/>

latest in avant-garde content, bypassing the normal limitations of traditional publishing,³⁷ stating: Ubu proposes a different sort of revisionist art history, one based on the peripheries of artistic production rather than on the perceived, or maker-based, center.³⁸

Visually, this site is a lot like an abstracted, minimalist version of Wikipedia, with artful images at the header of each page and a search bar for browsing, resource lists, and countless hyperlinks (Fig. 4). UbuWeb is divided into nineteen sections, including /ubu Editions, where Goldsmith has collected “unpublishable” matter. A project started in 2003, “Publishing the Unpublishable,” serves as an archive for alternative content deemed not suitable for publishing, in the printed sense. On track to collect one hundred manuscripts before the archive is complete, the works chosen for this project address the question: What constitutes an unpublishable work?³⁹

Since 2007 “Publishing the Unpublishable” has collected fifty-seven PDF files, ranging in size from eight to 1080-page documents (Fig. 5). As Goldsmith asks authors to think about the limits that print publishing has historically carried (costs, representation, equipment, etc.), the project effectively rejects these limitations, creating new possibilities for what can or can’t be published.⁴⁰ Using the endless supply of cyber space

³⁷ Ludovico, *Post-Digital Print*, 36, 111. Ludovico refers to “traditional publishing” as the print-centric practices directly derived from Gutenberg; “the act of applying ink to cellulose, massively and at some fixed location...”

³⁸ Kenneth Goldsmith, “UbuWeb Manifesto” on UbuWeb homepage, accessed October 2019 <http://www.ubu.com/resources/>

³⁹ Goldsmith refers to the entries as “manuscripts” on the Unpublishable project webpage, accessed November 2019, <http://www.ubu.com/ubu/unpub.html>

⁴⁰ Goldsmith, introduction to UbuWeb, ubu/ Editions, *Publishing the Unpublishable*, accessed November 2019, <http://www.ubu.com/ubu/unpub.html>

available, “Publishing the Unpublishable” is the ultimate anti-print production project, championing the possibilities and extremes of post-digital practices, and providing new ways of distribution through its easily shareable PDF files and the web page that they are all hosted on.

Rather than making space for this content as separate web pages internal to UbuWeb itself, each manuscript is available as a PDF file for download, viewing, or printing. In fact, the 1080-page manuscript can be published after all, granted you have enough paper and ink.⁴¹ In providing these options for content consumption and sharing, Goldsmith and the authors involved highlight the fluid nature of post-digital publishing, where a publication can be accessed online, shared, read, printed, deleted, saved, digitally trashed, or written on. In his introduction to the project, Goldsmith explains that “with no printing, design, or distribution costs, we are free to explore that which would never have been feasible, economically and aesthetically.”⁴² It is interesting that Goldsmith chooses to describe these works as “unpublishable” in the sense that printed production of these works holds too many restrictions for the work itself to be successful. Here, Goldsmith is equating publication with printing, and subsequently cancelling out this idea of restriction by performing the opposite—publishing digitally, via the web.

Goldsmith’s project is important to the effort of archiving multimedia works in one place, but is also significant because of the process by which “the unpublishable”

⁴¹ Stephen Dirlé’s manuscript, *Onan The Illiterate*, is 1080 pages in length, according to the page count listed next to the entry, accessed November 2019, <http://www.ubu.com/ubu/unpub.html>

⁴² Goldsmith, *Unpublishable* introduction, accessed November 2019, <http://www.ubu.com/ubu/unpub.html>

takes shape, and how the work itself is presented. Paul Soulellis describes three (or four) key methods by which artists publish: grabbing (and scraping), hunting, and performing.⁴³ By Soulellis's terms, "Publishing the Unpublishable" would fit within the "grabbing" category, a technique he explains is "done with intent, around a particular concept, but of primary importance is the taking of whole images that have been authored by someone else..."⁴⁴ In this case the "images" Soulellis refers to would be the numbered texts comprising the project, which are authored by more than fifty separate contributors all addressing some element of unpublishability through their work, and that constitutes a series that has been "grabbed" by its editor, Kenneth Goldsmith, on a singular but multifaceted topic.

Not only does the web provide gallery space for this digital installation, it also becomes part of the medium. Sure, the works gathered could be printed and bound, be it in one megalithic book or a series of multiple editions. But the unpublishable must stay unpublished for it to effectively perform its anti-analog declaration:

Looking at the art world, the problem appears to be a combination of an adherence to an old economy (one that is working very well with a booming market) and sense of trepidation, particularly in academic circles, where work on the internet is often not considered valid for academic credit. As long as the art world continues to prize economies of scarcity over those based on plentitude, the change will be a long time coming.⁴⁵

⁴³ Paul Soulellis, "Search, compile, publish," in *Publishing Manifestos*, 230-231.

⁴⁴ Soulellis, "Search compile, publish," *Publishing Manifestos*, 230.

⁴⁵ Goldsmith, UbuWeb Manifesto, accessed November 2019, <http://www.ubu.com/resources/>

Alongside its guerrilla publishing practices and its self-proclaimed “vociferous” anti-institution sentiment, UbuWeb addresses one of the most important developing discussions in the art world—the question of accessibility. Post-digital practices are actively working to undo these previously set boundaries of unaccess by facilitating distribution, especially in ways that are oppositional to traditional publishing and its rules. Temporary Services declares that they “welcome transgressions of copyright and control that exist only to protect monetary benefits,” and argue for the free flow of art, ideas, and an open democratic discourse.⁴⁶ Scholars like Connor,⁴⁷ Soulellis,⁴⁸ and Pichler⁴⁹ describe this idea of open access, distribution, and multimedia publishing as “fluid.” By embracing its fluidity and material potential, UbuWeb takes advantage of digital space to show the limitations of analog information and the endless possibilities of the web.

THE (FOAM) BOOK

If post-digital publishing is indeed re-defining print, Klaus Scherübel’s realization of 19th century poet Stéphane Mallarmé’s imagined text fits right in. In 2004, Scherübel⁵⁰ revisited the poet’s idea of a “cosmic text-architecture”⁵¹ by publishing *The Book*, an idea

⁴⁶ Temporary Services, *Plant Fibers and Electrons*, 15.

⁴⁷ Michael Connor, “Post-Internet,” *You Are Here: Art After the Internet*, 64.

⁴⁸ Paul Soulellis, *Library of the Printed Web*, Tumblr, accessed November 2019, <https://libraryoftheprintedweb.tumblr.com>

⁴⁹ Pichler, *Publishing Manifestos*, 16.

⁵⁰ Klaus Scherübel, accessed November 2019, <http://klausscheruebel.com/index.php?/biography/>

⁵¹ Klaus Scherübel, *The Book* (New York: Printed Matter Inc., 2004).

that Mallarmé described as being the essence of all literature, yet an ordinary book.⁵² Following Mallarmé’s century-old specifications, Scherübel published what only ever existed as a concept to Mallarmé. From afar, this object may just look like an ordinary book with a very unoriginal title, but upon further inspection, the viewer sees that *The Book* only actually consists of a blue book jacket printed with text written by Scherübel, and a block of styrofoam where pages would usually be (Fig. 6). A final industrial touch is the shrink wrap that encompasses *The Book*. In fact, this book is only a representation of one.

At first, pulling this “book” off the shelf at Printed Matter, only to realize it was just the illusion of a book felt like a cruel prank to play on a master’s student searching for the perfect source material. But the longer I held this shrink-wrapped block of foam the more it made sense. It wasn’t about the lack of text, it was about the physical book despite there not being any actual text to fill it. Once I shifted my analysis, the object became more sculptural, and in this context the significance of negative space is not unfamiliar to an art historian. It seems that only in this post-digital era can we appreciate a book void of content and still find meaning in its permanence as a physical object. In the same way that there is authority in the printed word (including electronic information that has been printed,⁵³ Ludovico says), the art world recognizes and welcomes the significance of physicality—so it makes sense that we would now be discussing the

⁵² Scherübel, *The Book*.

⁵³ Ludovico, *Post-Digital*, 110.

relationships between art object and theoretical discourse in meaning making. On the back cover text, Scherübel notes Mallarmé's reasoning of an object that never was:

“It happens on its own,” [Mallarmé] explained of *The Book's* unique action in one of his final statements, “as long as the author has separated himself from it, the impersonalized book also ceases to lay claim to the approach of a reader.” From this point onward, *The Book* becomes the announcement for and expectation of the work that it is.

Surprisingly, a lack of content makes the object's importance more clear. The context was there, and all that was required was the simple explanation of why Mallarmé's book could be published after all, even though the book as a literary work ultimately continues not to exist. Soulellis identifies this characteristic as “unreadability,” a term coined by Goldsmith to communicate when the *idea* of a text is more important than reading the actual text.⁵⁴ In the case of Scherübel, there is no text to read, and so the physical space it takes up is to be thought about, touched, observed, shelved, and maybe even “ah-hah-ed” over once you “get it.” In the case of other unreadable texts (for instance, the 1080-page entry for *The Unpublishable*), quantity of content is hyperbolized, and results in nearly the same conceptual effect that a block of foam does. All the extra content, once it reaches an unreasonable amount (or an impossible amount, for example, zero), can be more easily digested as a whole for what it represents rather than what each page may actually contain (or not contain). Soulellis notes a tweet from Goldsmith on unreadability in which he states, “No need to read. A sample of the work suffices to authenticate its

⁵⁴ Soulellis, “Search, compile, publish,” *Publishing Manifestos*, 230.

existence.”⁵⁵ Because it is dysfunctional in terms of readability, the focus of the reader/viewer must zoom out and look instead at what the work is doing, or performing—Soulellis’s fourth category of post-digital practices concerning artist publishing is “performing,” and references “unreadable text” as performative work.⁵⁶

The Book is performing as a traditional book, perhaps a commentary on the emptiness or idleness that exists inside of a shelved book—even when it’s not taking up space in your brain as it’s being read, it is taking up space on your bookshelf. However, reader interaction is key to *The Book*’s performance, and ultimately the space between the book jacket is filled by whomever takes the time to contemplate the object and reason with its seemingly empty existence. Scherübel’s actualization of Mallarmé’s idea utilizes the post-digital theory of unreadability to physicalize a conceptual work that would not be able to exist as effectively in a digital space where the material experience does not exist.

PRINTING THE WEB

Opposite from *The Book*’s emptiness, Soulellis’s *Library of the Printed Web: Collected Works 2013-2017* is weighty and dense, containing more than 500 pages of content, an exhaustive list of the 244 works included in *Printed Web*, images and description text for each, as well as additional scholarship by Soulellis and others (Fig.

⁵⁵ Soulellis, “Search, compile, publish,” *Publishing Manifestos*, 230.

⁵⁶ Soulellis, “Search, compile, publish,” *Publishing Manifestos*, 231. Soulellis’s fourth category of post-digital practices concerning artist publishing is “performing.”

7a).⁵⁷ The layout of *Printed Web* functions similarly to that of *The BOBOAB*, with numbered entries containing title, author, dimensions, and page count, alongside images of the book covers and page spreads. The works included in Soulellis's library are those that have taken online content and presented it in printed form. For example, Cory Arcangel sourced tweets including the phrase "working on my novel" and compiled these posts into a soft-cover anthology titled *Working On My Novel* (2014) (Fig. 7b), and Hubert Kretschmer's found-image work, *Various Small Dicks* (2013), a collection of "women's hands making the universal 'small' sign with their fingers" placed next to sculptural nudes (Fig. 7c).⁵⁸

In addition to its own monolithic perfect bound book, *Printed Web* also exists in a polished format online at printedweb.org, where you can download the files included in each of the five archives via Google docs, or purchase the individual editions published between 2013 and 2017 (Fig. 7d).⁵⁹ After four years of grabbing, scraping, and hunting,⁶⁰ the publications included in the *Printed Web* were acquired by the Museum of Modern Art Library in 2017, where the archive's materials (including artists' books, zines, newsprint, loose sheets, folios, prints, and postcards) are both preserved and accessible to MoMA museumgoers.⁶¹ Created to "investigate web-to-print artistic practice and the increasingly fluid relationship between screen and printed page," *Printed Web* continues

⁵⁷ Soulellis, *Printed Web*, 53.

⁵⁸ Soulellis, *Printed Web*, 82-83; 224-225.

⁵⁹ "Printed Web 1-5" Google Doc, accessed November 2019, https://docs.google.com/document/d/10i-h2SsQnA17eeOWZ24nnuZdOJ9FtJ_1_OjpwgAwUus/edit

⁶⁰ Soulellis, *Printed Web*, 510.

⁶¹ Soulellis, *Library of the Printed Web*, Tumblr, <https://libraryoftheprintedweb.tumblr.com>

to collect and add publications to its physical archive that demonstrate the ongoing hybridization between mediums.⁶²

Soulellis describes authorship and publishing as “ambiguous concepts that shift when physical books are made from digital files. And that a kind of rewriting might occur each time we flip-flop back-and-forth from analog to digital to analog.”⁶³ By separating content from its original medium (be it analog or digital), a detachment does exist, one that Olafur Eliasson explores with the idea of the dematerialization of art.⁶⁴ This is a process he considers to be “about claiming importance of the role of the viewer, engaging the person looking at the art, and claiming that as a starting point for art itself.”⁶⁵ Eliasson goes on to explain that this is a method that can be used to shift our perspective on what we are viewing or experiencing in a way that might allow us to see something different, or something new.⁶⁶ Soulellis’s practice of assembling (and disassembling) media in a way that is continually crossing analog and digital boundaries can be viewed as a type of dematerialization of artistic works, playing with our perception of digital and analog materials. Because we technically have access to both in the example of the *Printed Web*, the viewer or reader has a choice between media and how to access them. In this way,

⁶² Soulellis, *Library of the Printed Web*, Tumblr, <https://libraryoftheprintedweb.tumblr.com>

⁶³ Soulellis, “Search, compile, publish,” *Publishing Manifestos*, 230.

⁶⁴ Olafur Eliasson, “But Doesn’t the Body Matter?” in *More than Real: Art in the Digital Age*, ed. Daniel Birnbaum and Michelle Kuo (London: the authors, Verbier Art Untold Association and Koenig Books London, 2018), 150. In reference to “The Dematerialization of Art,” by Lucy R. Lippard and John Chandler’s 1967 essay published in *Art International* 12:2.

<http://cast.b-ap.net/arc619f11/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2011/09/lippard-theDematerializationofArt.pdf>

⁶⁵ Eliasson, “But Doesn’t the Body Matter?”, *Art in the Digital Age*, 152.

⁶⁶ Eliasson, “But Doesn’t the Body Matter?”, *Art in the Digital Age*, 154.

Soulellis is demonstrating his claim that “the hierarchy between web page and printed page had become less fixed and *Printed Web* was a fitting venue to perform and celebrate this slippery condition.”⁶⁷ When you consider the experience of being on the web and how easy it is to fall down the preverbal digital rabbit hole (one moment you’re paying a bill online, and the next you’re watching cat videos on YouTube), Soulellis has translated this same chance encounter with content into print. By placing this content that is characteristically of (and sourced from) the internet in a book format, the transition from digital to print challenges the book as an authoritative object, and Soulellis’s collected anthology acts as a satirical commentary on the permanence of print and the decontextualization of internet content. As a project that exists in multiple spaces and forms, *Printed Web* addresses the ongoing dialogue that analog and digital mediums continue to have once they have been reformatted again and again.

Clearly, traditional print is increasingly being called into question—but is this really a direct consequence of the ongoing development of digital technologies? Or has the digital revolution merely exposed the printed medium’s own basic vulnerability?⁶⁸

To conclude my thoughts on post-digital publishing possibilities, I want to consider this question by Ludovico, which addresses the issue of publishing practices in a chicken and egg kind of way. By acknowledging arts publishing as an artistic practice, we create more room for the historicization of such texts and materials and establish a space

⁶⁷ Soulellis, “Urgent Archives,” *Printed Web*, 506.

⁶⁸ Ludovico, *Post-Digital*, 111.

for the multimedia products of post-digital publishing to be authoritative in their own right. The acknowledgement of digital and print cross-pollination has been the first step, taken by scholars and post-digital publishers themselves—Ludovico, Phillipot, Gilbert, Soulellis, Eliasson, and others—and invites art historians and other visual studies analysts to join the conversation surrounding post-digital influence on the many aspects of art history.

In his essay “Some Questions About Book Art,” it seems Phillipot could still sense the certain transformative qualities that multimedia publishing would have in the future.

In 1978 he wrote:

I have already said some things in passing about *How* book art presents itself...the combination of words and pictures leads to an entity that is greater than the sum of its parts, and the verbi-visual is likely to be a particularly rewarding area...inevitably a certain kind of content will dictate a certain kind of form; not everything can be packaged in the same way.⁶⁹

We now know that post-digital publishing is a more flexible way to publish work, no matter its intended format, but is constituted specifically by an appropriation of digital characteristics or digital practices to produce and publish its final format. Publishing, therefore, is a physical manifestation of conceptual work that has been facilitated by the digital. At the end of his essay titled “Urgent Archives,” Soulellis writes: “The question now is not whether but how to mobilize curatorial practice as a strategy of resistance.”⁷⁰ I

⁶⁹ Phillipot, *Booktrek*, 65-67.

⁷⁰ Soulellis, “Urgent Archives,” *Printed Web*, 517.

propose that this “how” is by publishing. Today, this includes not only the print materials we know so well, but clicking “post” to a blog, hosting a PDF on a web page, and/or realizing a concept in physical form so it can perform as a published work.

There are a variety of individuals and groups participating in the act of publishing, like editors, curators, literature-based publishing houses, and more. However, focusing specifically on the artist as publisher, like Goldsmith, Scherübel, and Soulellis, allows us to get a sense of the artistic extremes of contemporary arts publishing by sampling the work of those who can create on the periphery of visual culture.

CHAPTER 2: THE POST-DIGITAL PUBLISHER

Behind the act of publishing are the publishers, who “are not just producers of books but filters for content and constructors of amplificatory frames,” according to researcher and digital publisher Michael Bhaskar.⁷¹ As publishing moves through the post-digital moment, publishers are adapting to new digital practices and dealing with the changes in format, methods, and distribution for the alternative kinds of media they are producing. The “doers” behind the act of publishing, publishers make up the “who” of post-digital contemporary arts publishing, assuming responsibility for their resulting publications once they’ve brought them to life, and newly, assuming responsibility for a growing community of those interested and active in arts publishing. Post-digital publishers today act less as gate keepers of content and more as motivators of alternative practices and bypassing the mainstream, when you consider the flexibility of self-publishing. They act as community organizers and stewards of arts discourse, facilitators of collaboration and resistance. This chapter examines the role of the publisher in post-digital arts publishing by looking at the influence of Printed Matter, Temporary Services, and Sming Sming Books on the development of independent publisher efforts, to consider how these entities have enabled the growth of the post-digital publishing community, both in person and online.

⁷¹ Gilbert, *Publishing as Artistic Practice*, 9-11. Gilbert references Michael Bhaskar’s views on publishers in *Publishing as Artistic Practice*. This quotation is taken from Bhaskar’s *The Content Machine* (2013), used in the context of Gilbert’s discussion of publishing as a study.

THE INDEPENDENT AND THE INSTITUTIONAL

There are two main categories that come into play when considering contemporary arts publishers: those considered independent, and those who are tied to (or act as) an institution. Gilbert argues that this distinction between “alternative” and “mainstream” publishers is not necessarily based on their production practices since they often employ similar methods (ie: “even important artist publishers rely on proven models of the publishing world... a number of concepts originating in the independent scene are being readily incorporated into the ‘mainstream’...”), but is more specifically based on the “ambitions” of these “truly alternative” publishers and the “off-beat, non-mainstream” content they produce.⁷² While I agree with Gilbert that the motivations of publishers are the key distinction between independent and institutional characterizations, I would suggest that this binary is still important to examine, because the post-digital ultimately marks a progressive shift and wider dissemination of alternative content, even if the idea of the “mainstream” has become more flexible and inclusive than it had previously been.⁷³

Independent publishers often operate on limited (or no) budgets that include revenue generated on their own, working in small teams where artist, designer, publisher, and printer is often the same person—UbuWeb operates on “no money and an all-

⁷² Gilbert, *Publishing as Artistic Practice*, 16-17.

⁷³ Gilbert, *Publishing as Artistic Practice*, 16. “...just as there is no *one* mainstream (the field of publishing fragments into many diverse models and categories of publishing that operate on entirely divergent premises, business models, and forms of organization, as one can see the differences between trade and academic publishing as well as the POD industry), one cannot speak of *the* small press as *the* alternative.”

volunteer staff,”⁷⁴ and Temporary Services is essentially a two-man team.⁷⁵ Phillpot describes these as “alternative agencies.”⁷⁶ Because independent publishers are not dealing with mainstream pressures of content or production, they possess a unique autonomy that allows for more “artistic freedom” in the materials they create and how they create them.⁷⁷ Conceptual artist Ulises Carrión, who was concerned with book making and arts publishing, wrote in 1975 that “in the new art the writer assumes the responsibility for the whole process.”⁷⁸ Gilbert notes this quotation by Carrión as an example of the responsibility that independent publishers assume, not just in the role as the “writer,” but also as the voice or art that the publication embodies. Ultimately, independent publishers only have to answer to themselves, and while the consideration of the network of arts publishing is important, it’s not required as a measure for success. As Temporary Services explains:

The best way of testing our ideas has been to do them without waiting for permission or invitation. We invent infrastructure or borrow it when necessary. A variety of people should decide how art is seen and interpreted, rather than continuing to strictly rely on those in power. We move in and out of officially sanctioned spaces for art, keeping one foot in the underground, the other in the institution. Staying too long in one or the other isn’t healthy. We are interested in art that takes engaging and empowering forms. We collaborate amongst ourselves and with others, even though this may destabilize how people understand our work.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Goldsmith, UbuWeb Manifesto, accessed November 2019, <http://www.ubu.com/resources/>

⁷⁵ “Temporary Services is Brett Bloom and Marc Fischer,” Temporary Services ABOUT web page, accessed November 2019, <https://temporarieservices.org/served/about/>

⁷⁶ Phillpot, *Booktrek*, 18.

⁷⁷ Gilbert, *Publishing as Artistic Practice*, 17.

⁷⁸ Gilbert, *Publishing as Artistic Practice*, 19.

⁷⁹ Temporary Services “about” web page, accessed November 2019, <https://temporarieservices.org/served/about/>

Considering this and Gilbert's standards for determining an independent status, Temporary Services clearly fits into the "alternative" category, where institutional practices are kept in mind, but kept at a distance.

This is not to say that institutional efforts that operate in the post-digital and adopt alternative publishing practices are taking away from those smaller publishers, rather the pressures of an institutional structure put more pressure on monetary and social gain rather than the slow-burn efforts that independent publishers seem to value. This, in turn, limits the kinds of content arts institutions can publish and how they publish it, as they respond to market demands. Phillpot points to the positive effects that institutional interest in independent projects can have, like when the Museum of Modern Art took an interest in artists' books. Phillpot, as director of the museum's library and Artist Book Collection (ABC), sourced a majority of the collection from Printed Matter, to which he credits "invaluable assistance" in building the MoMA ABC and the "beginning of the institutionalization of alternative arts."⁸⁰ Ultimately this is a win for arts publishing, and shows that institutions have played a huge part in the legitimization and the historicization of alternative arts and arts practices, publishing being one. However, the role of institutions in the arts and in contemporary arts publishing has changed, and independent publishers no longer have to rely on the acceptance of institutions thanks to the agency that post-digital practices affords independent channels. If anything, our post-digital present has flipped these channels of reliance, where independent efforts are being

⁸⁰ Phillpot, *Booktrek*, 18-19.

monitored by institutions to survey cutting-edge discourse in the contemporary arts. This thesis places an emphasis on the efforts of independent arts publishers to communicate their autonomy despite the “alternative” label. I would also argue that the lack of limitations independent publishers face, as I have discussed so far, results in more interesting work that I predict will be the focus of where the contemporary is headed. For example, the *HOMOCATS* zine series, created by Brooklyn artist J. Morrison in 2010, performs as political commentary of our present administration (specifically anti-Trump) through post-digital practices. This zine takes the post-internet phenomenon and popularity of “cat content” and uses this cultural imagery as a vehicle for political protest, nodding to the historical legacy of zines as politicized publications while employing contemporary visual trends to create a layered work and perfect example of post-digital influence on contemporary arts publishing.⁸¹

In this chapter I focus on Printed Matter (New York, 1976), Temporary Services’ press, Half Letter Press (Chicago, 2008), and Sming Sming Books (California, 2017) as three independent publishers and distributors who have heavily impacted contemporary arts publishing practices and given extended effort to continuing the discourse surrounding post-digital publishing. These examples offer different temporal perspectives on independent publishing efforts within the contemporary arts and show the precedent being set even by independent entities for the future of post-digital practices. I further discuss the publisher’s role in community building and maintaining the advocacy of

⁸¹ J. Morrison, *HOMOCATS* zine series, <https://www.homocats.com/contact>

physical publications in the following chapter, but would also like to note here that the role of publishers as we have known them has expanded beyond just the production of printed materials. In the post-digital present, publishers and distributors of arts publications act as facilitators of community, which is in large part what sustains the independent arts publishing world. Printer Matter, Temporary Services, and Sming Sming Books all focus on this “social-spatial currency” that their publications and sociability as artist-run entities encourage.⁸²

PRINTED MATTER, INC.

Founded in 1976 by “a group of individuals working in the arts,” including art historian Lucy Lippard and conceptual artist Sol LeWitt, Printed Matter’s legacy as a non-profit champion of arts publishing continues to flourish as a go-to authority on independent arts publishing and artist books. In response to the growing interest and production occurring in arts publishing, the Printed Matter Art Book Fairs were born, with a New York (2004) and a Los Angeles (2013) edition happening every year. After hopping around a few locations in SoHo, PM⁸³ moved to a multi-level space in Chelsea in 2015, and subsequently opened a smaller space on the opposite side of Manhattan, known as Printed Matter St. Marks, inside of the Swiss Institute’s HQ:

⁸² Temporary Services, *Electrons and Plant Fibers*, 9.

⁸³ Throughout the rest of this chapter I refer to Printed Matter as “PM” in some instances as an abbreviation.

This smaller outpost of Printed Matter acts as a springboard, launching new community outreach initiatives including educational programs that will reach diverse audiences in the East Village, Chinatown, and the Lower East Side by presenting the history of artists' books and book-making workshops.⁸⁴

One of PM's main efforts focuses on distribution, self-proclaimed the "world's leading non-profit organization dedicated to the dissemination, understanding and appreciation of artists' books and related publications."⁸⁵ Admittedly, the majority of my sources for this thesis did come from Printed Matter, and my visit to their installation of the 2019 LA Art Book Fair served as an important event for research and source gathering (Fig. 8a). I visited the Chelsea location numerous times while writing and researching (and just for fun), so I don't disagree with what they describe as their "broad and all-inclusive understanding of the medium."⁸⁶

PM seems to function as an authority on independent arts publishing, as one of the leading distributors of arts publications internationally. While their long-standing operations in the art world and book culture certainly affords them this leverage, it is interesting to see how even the independent publishers are becoming hierarchical within their alternative spheres. In this sense, PM acts as one of the major independent publishers in its alternative environment. This is important to note because the splintering of independent publishers illustrates the effects of institutional hierarchy even within anti-institutional operations. Like the larger art world, art objects and their (usually monetary)

⁸⁴ Printed Matter, Inc. website homepage, accessed October 2019, <https://www.printedmatter.org/visit-the-store/st-marks>

⁸⁵ Printed Matter, Inc., website about page, <https://www.printedmatter.org/about>

⁸⁶ Printed Matter, Inc., website about page, <https://www.printedmatter.org/about>

value dictate the cultural importance of museums, galleries, and artists. Though the independent post-digital publisher can only move so far away from the cultural capital of the art world, they are actively re-writing how these efforts and materials can be valued by approaching art history discourse in printed and web-based forms. These multimedia materials are a protest to the privatization that has long been the norm of the art world because of their ability to create artistic and cultural value on their own.

Printed Matter is still making, distributing, and collecting arts publications, but on their own accord, with more than 40,000 titles in their archive.⁸⁷ In 2018, PM's executive director Max Schumann told *The New York Times Style Magazine* that "Independent publishing allows you to produce your own culture, instead of having it dictated to you by the media, entertainment and information empires."⁸⁸ Though PM is acting primarily as a distributor (a task that is now vital to the post-digital publisher's role), they do have a publishing program that has produced more than 70 books since the early 2000s.⁸⁹ Even their focus on creating publications is more concerned with "artists' publications that fall outside the interest of commercial publishing houses and that may not otherwise be produced."⁹⁰ PM and Goldsmith have this in common. PM is so pertinent to the

⁸⁷ "Printed Matter's online catalog is one of the largest and most comprehensive databases of artists' books and related publications. The catalog contains records for approximately 45,000 titles, which includes inventory currently in stock and available for sale, as well as an archive of titles previously stocked." <https://www.printedmatter.org/catalog>

⁸⁸ Chris Black, "The New York Neighborhood Where the Art Bookstore Is Alive and Well," *The New York Times Style Magazine*, June 15, 2018, *The New York Times*, accessed November 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/15/t-magazine/art-bookstores.html>

⁸⁹ "About Printed Matter Publishing" <https://www.printedmatter.org/programs/pm-publishing>

⁹⁰ "About Printed Matter Publishing" <https://www.printedmatter.org/programs/pm-publishing>

independent world because of their ability to source an impressive range of publishers and their role in the distribution efforts and control of these materials (Fig 8b).

In addition to being a rich bookstore experience, and one where you are almost certain to stumble across new material each time you visit, PM considers their online presence too, with a “Featured Tables” section (Fig. 8c), where site visitors can create their own selection of curated titles to share with others online (the “table” being a reference to the booth/table set up at art book fairs, where publications are typically on display arranged across a table top).⁹¹ PM invites readers to practice their own archiving while collapsing the show-and-tell charm of visiting a physical space with an online shopping experience that is just as interesting. Though there is much focus on the physical book object and shopping experience, PM’s thoughtfully designed website allows for a level of accessibility not confined to geographical location. The consideration of this helps demonstrate Printed Matter’s self-awareness as a key player in arts publishing and their value of accessibility. As they expand their outreach online, they are, in effect, able to reach more people via a post-digital extension of themselves and of their materials.

⁹¹ Printed Matter Tables, online catalogue, accessed November 2019
<https://www.printedmatter.org/catalog/tables>

TEMPORARY SERVICES

Brett Bloom and Marc Fischer have been collaborating under the name Temporary Services since 1998 and created their publishing imprint, Half Letter Press, in 2008.⁹² I've included their manifesto for publishing here because it represents the very distinction that Gilbert refers to as the difference between alternative and mainstream practices. Another illustration (Fig. 10) by Kochi, the list details the seven commandments, if you will, of Temporary Service's intentions through publishing, including "[making] the distinction between art and other forms of creativity irrelevant," and "making opportunities from large museums and institutions more inclusive by bringing lesser-known artists in through collaborations or advocacy."⁹³ Just as Printed Matter centers a focus on community, Temporary Service's motivations are driven by sociality and supporting information access.

A large part of their practice encourages pushing their work into the public sphere, and utilizing larger institutional frameworks to the advantage of the non-institutional. One way they are achieving this is by providing PDF versions of Half Letter Press publications via their online store, for free. Currently, seventy-five out of the 118 publications listed are available in PDF form for download.⁹⁴ They also provide a list of

⁹² Temporary Services website, <https://temporaryservices.org/served/>

⁹³ Text included in Kione Kochi's illustration of Temporary Services's publishing manifesto, "We Strive to Build an Art Practice That," 2015, (Fig. 9).

⁹⁴ Temporary Services archive online, <https://temporaryservices.org/served/publishing-2/>

physical locations where you can find their publications, ranging from the University of Chicago Library to Booklet, a library and publisher in Tokyo, Japan.⁹⁵

Extending themselves even further into the arts publisher community, Temporary Service’s online forum “Artist Publisher,” dedicates a space to the ongoing discussion of arts publishing, moderated by Bloom and Fischer themselves (Fig. 9). Users can register and contribute to ongoing discussion boards, like “Art book fairs, exhibitions, and events,” and “Stores, Distributors, & Mutual Distribution,” encouraging publishers to “figure out ways to help distribute one another’s work.”⁹⁶

SMING SMING BOOKS

One of the most recently established publishers that I researched is Sming Sming Books, started in 2017 by artist Vivian Sming who “experiment[s] with books as art, discourse, exhibition, and archive.”⁹⁷ While Sming seems to be dedicated more toward traditional publishing and printed materials, she seeks out projects that might be challenging to represent on paper, and instead employs post-digital practices to challenge the potential of print.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Temporary Services, “Publications in Collections,” accessed November 2019
<https://temporarieservices.org/served/publishing-2/publications-in-public-collections/>

⁹⁶ Temporary Services, “Artist Publisher: Forum for Artist Book Publishing,” accessed November 2019, <https://artistpublisher.temporarieservices.org/index.php>

⁹⁷ Sming Sming Books website, about page, accessed November 2019,
<https://www.smingsming.com/pages/about>

⁹⁸ Sming Sming Books website, about page, accessed November 2019, “Sming Sming Books is invested in creating books from practices that are challenging to represent on paper.”
<https://www.smingsming.com/pages/about>

Sming recently participated in an online panel hosted by DesignInquiry, a non-profit educational organization focused on a multidisciplinary approach to design issues.⁹⁹ In the video series titled Universal Lunch, DesignInquiry invites makers in the art world to discuss various topics, including Sming on books and publishing. In their live stream on October 31, 2019 (Fig. 11), Sming talks about the importance of publishers participating in art book fairs, and her views on the book: “With art books, for me, it’s really about making an artwork that you can live with, take it home...it has this immediacy to it. I don’t think we’re even at the peak of it yet.”¹⁰⁰ Like Temporary Services, Sming aims to collapse any boundaries between publisher/press and artist/art, explaining that “through publishing, the theory has become the practice...by creating an artwork it might not have faced these questions, but by publishing, it has activated the questions in the artwork, and I think that’s really interesting in terms of what publishing as an act can do.”¹⁰¹

To return to the complicated relationship that independent and institutional arts publishing efforts share, I want to point to the practice of sourcing or collecting that institutions practice not only with art, but with publications, too. For example, on the “about” page of Sming Sming Books’ website, they note that their publications have been collected by more than fifty libraries, museums, and universities globally, including the

⁹⁹ DesignInquiry website, about page, accessed October 2019, <https://designinquiry.net/about/>

¹⁰⁰ DesignInquiry, “Universal Lunch (Out of Office (Un)Common Hours) - Episode 4,” October 31, 2019, YouTube, 29:52 - 31:11, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YK-bmSdncgM>

¹⁰¹ DesignInquiry, “Universal Lunch (Out of Office (Un)Common Hours) - Episode 4,” October 31, 2019, YouTube, 49:15 - 49:53 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YK-bmSdncgM>

Getty, Whitney Museum of American Art, the MET, MoMA, and SFMoMA. And since this publisher has only been active for the past two years, we can clearly see a growing attention from the institutional to the independent in sourcing contemporary content, further stressing the importance of sociality in post-digital arts publishing.

PUBLISHER RESPONSIBILITY

Phillpot identifies the publisher as the *Who* of book art, and “publishers, as you are well aware, are often the artists themselves.”¹⁰² Like Gilbert, and Thurston, Phillpot points to the responsibility that publishers assume as they send content into the world:

One of the reasons for asking the question: ‘who is responsible for this work?’ Of a dictionary or an encyclopedia, or whatever, is to alert oneself to the record of the publisher, and thereby to be able to take on trust, because of this past record, that the imprint guarantees reliability and quality in new publications—though this cannot be foolproof. Book art publishing has yet to arrive at this position since there are no monopolistic publishers, and because few publishers have been at the game long enough. However, when one sees that a book’s imprint includes the name Hansjörg Mayer¹⁰³ or Printed Matter, to take just a couple of examples, then one pays extra attention to the publication.¹⁰⁴

There is still not one single publisher dominating the post-digital landscape, but Printed Matter does remain significant as an influence and lead distributor publisher in the contemporary arts publishing practice, and because of their social standing, they do begin to dictate standards that other publishers may consider in their own publishing practices.

¹⁰² Phillpot, *Booktrek*, 62.

¹⁰³ Hansjörg Mayer, a poet and publisher known for his concrete poetry, graphic design contributions and typesetting. <http://www.el-x.org/editionhansjorgmayer>

¹⁰⁴ Phillpot, *Booktrek*, 63-64.

Nick Thurston addresses this same question, asking: “who is taking responsibility for that text?” And subsequently, that we should “expect answers that are as liquid, multiplied, and impermanent as contemporary life.”¹⁰⁵ The responsibility lies in what the publisher does with their agency and authorship—do they focus on profit, or do they focus on community? I argue that independent efforts largely consider community before profitability. The post-digital has changed what we understand a publisher to be—not just someone who produces materials, but someone who is also tasked with considering the larger impact of the content they create, and asks more questions about the needs of the discourse. Artist publishers in particular are able to side-step the institutional agenda because their status as artist and maker affords them more flexibility on what they produce. In the following chapter focusing on publications, I take a look at the ways these analog and digital crossovers manifest in post-digital publications.

¹⁰⁵ Thurston, “The Mediatization of Contemporary Writing,” *Publishing as Artistic Practice*, 97.

CHAPTER 3: POST-DIGITAL PUBLICATIONS

Megan Liberty, the art books section editor for the *Brooklyn Rail*, describes the book in its ability to both create and occupy space: “within this, the art book is unique in its ability to circulate through a diverse range of spaces, functioning differently in each... [art books] demand a certain level of activation that includes deep reading as well as looking.”¹⁰⁶ Even in the traditional sense, the book operates in a way that challenges the fluidity and persistence of even digital channels. Ludovico also acknowledges the physicality of the book as one of its strengths, “a sensorial perception developed over... thousands of years.”¹⁰⁷ Temporary Services also have a special appreciation for the printed form:

As objects, books are pretty damn resilient. With a little care, they can easily last for over one hundred years. They don't expire, rot, or require charging, and they don't change operating systems. They contain no toxic chemicals and rare earth elements. They don't turn unfashionable because of their size, and they don't become throwaway items without extreme negligence. As a form, books are partially resistant to consumer culture's mandate to constantly upgrade to newer models.¹⁰⁸

Though the post-digital does emphasize the possibilities of tech-driven formats, it's not meant as a replacement of printed matter, rather a way to help it flourish and a supplement that encourages sharing (especially as free, downloadable PDFs via the web)

¹⁰⁶ Megan Liberty, “The Hybrid Space,” *Recto/Verso: Art Publishing in Practice, New York* (New York: ARTBOOK|D.A.P., 2018), 14-15.

¹⁰⁷ Ludovico, *Post-Digital Print*, 66.

¹⁰⁸ Temporary Services, *Plant Fibers and Electrons*, 20.

over the privatization of information.¹⁰⁹ In this chapter I address the issues of accessibility, new possibilities for the format of publications, as well as the community that comes from sharing materials through art book fairs and other multidisciplinary spaces. Though a strong case is made for the perpetuation of traditional print, I also want to apply Bob Stein's use of the word "book" as a broad and even metaphorical term when describing these works.¹¹⁰ The contemporary arts publications to come out of our recent contemporary moment are especially self-referential to form of the book and the state of arts publishing practices. As publishers and scholars have taken notice of this meta phenomenon, the discourse continues to become more involved in reflective analysis of publishing within the arts world, and its impact on the discipline. In the previous chapters I discussed the "how" (publishing) and the "who" (publishers), and in this chapter I focus on the "what," or the publications that are resulting from these post-digital practices.

FORMAT

One of the most dramatic changes the post-digital has had on publications is visual, and this applies to format as much as it does to design. As print and digital practices have merged, the look and feel of published work has changed, both physically and conceptually. Thurston refers to this exchange of qualities as mediatization:

¹⁰⁹ Temporary Services, *Plant Fibers and Electrons*, 14-15.

¹¹⁰ Sarah Gottlieb, "A Conversation with Bob Stein," in *The Form of the Book Book* ed. Sara De Bondt and Fraser Muggeridge (London: Occasional Papers, 2015), 67.

The term *mediatization* turns the stem noun *mediate* into a verb, which is a form (turning nouns into verbs) that seems to irritate a lot of people. In this compound the suffix-ization literally means “to make x,” and it gets us a little closer to articulating the tidal movement (below the surface, out of sight) of our contemporary medial condition. The specific constellation of significant media at our “now” moment in history structures something more than a media-scape for culture—something more effective than a passive backdrop—something more like a mediated-and-mediating-scape...the tidal movement of these interacting media seems to mediate everything that has contact with it, to unlimited, accelerating, and ever-more pervasive extents...What forms of literature are being written at the extremes of our contemporary real that weren’t previously possible?¹¹¹

Thurston refers to this process as a “tidal” one because it is likely those on the publishing, designing, writing side of a publication that are keeping the closest eye on these transformations of print. Mediatization explains the process by which traditional media becomes something else, or something more, as a result of contemporary media influence or cannibalization. This theory helps contextualize Ludovico’s use of the word “mutate” to describe what has happened to print in the post-digital age, which he similarly describes as hybridization.¹¹² Through a manipulation of publishing practices and content, mediatization is a reinforcement of literary ideas that utilize artistic process and conceptualization to result in an often multimedia work, or publication. So, to answer Thurston’s question, post-digital publications *are* the new forms of literature being written at the extremes of our contemporary that weren’t previously possible. This is in part due to ever-developing technologies (as simple as new iPhones and interfaces, and as

¹¹¹ Thurston, “The Mediatization of Contemporary Writing,” *Publishing as Artistic Practice*, 94.

¹¹² Ludovico, *Post-Digital Print*, 53: “Clearly, print is mutating profoundly as a result of its (final?) hybridization with digital technology—as the last of all traditional media to undergo this process (after music, radio, and TV). And we can assume that this mutation will be neither easy nor straightforward.”

complicated as code) that continue to change the way we operate and complete tasks like writing, graphic design, and printing during the process of creating a publication. James Goggin explains that “when content and materials are interpreted and combined in a balanced way, the result can be greater than the sum of its parts,” describing this process as a “kind of elegant alchemy.”¹¹³ This recurring description of mediatization as a process requiring multiple elements (and in a scientific context) confirms its complexities and the vagueness that still exists in our interpretation of these practices. It’s not that digital influence is a mystery, but rather that the extent to which we can explore our contemporary extremes will only continue to grow. Bob Stein, founder and co-director of The Institute for the Future of the Book describes these methods as a “flattening of the traditional hierarchy of print,” and points out that though we are in “a process of inventing the future by re-inventing the past,” the future is “probably not going to look anything like that.”¹¹⁴ Understanding how these mediums interact and overlap provides context for their design and the ways that they move throughout the arts community.

DISTRIBUTION

In addition to spaces like the Printed Matter storefront and Temporary Service’s website, one of the most diverse collections of post-digital arts publishing comes together at art book fairs, where arts publishers have the opportunity to exhibit their publications

¹¹³ James Goggin, “The Matta-Clark Complex,” *The Form of the Book Book*, 31.

¹¹⁴ Sarah Gottlieb, “A Conversation with Bob Stein,” *The Form of the Book Book*, 63-64.

to the public. These events are comparable to art fairs, where designated sections hold the specific work of specific people, which is available for purchase or browsing or taking note of.

“As [Peter] Osborne has observed, contemporary art biennials in particular appear as cultural spaces where similarities and differences between geopolitically diverse forms of social experience are being represented and explored within the parameters of a common world.” As is the same with art book fairs. These spaces allow for the same kind of community building that happens at art fairs, specifically tailored to publishers and their audiences. When mixed with programming and the booths of storied independent publishers, this environment often acts as one of the most effective ways that the community can grow both internally (new names and titles being previewed to experienced art book fair goers and fellow bookies) and expand beyond its immediate audience (introducing new fairgoers and even those outside the publishing discipline to the world of arts publishing.) Sming of Sming Sming Books says that one of the running jokes of art book fairs is that it’s “the internet done right,” where people build an awareness of publishers and publications online, circulate content, and then meet in person to continue the dialogue instead of just stopping with the internet.¹¹⁵

There’s also the magic of discovery. A lot of things online now are curated through algorithms, and I think those fairs are a way to break out of that a little bit in terms of discovering something completely new. I think early internet there was that discovery, it’s become so refined and fine tuned that

¹¹⁵ DesignInquiry, “Universal Lunch (Out of Office (Un)Common Hours) - Episode 4,” October 31, 2019, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YK-bmSdncgM>

it's missing some of that, so this in-person thing is really bringing that part of it back.¹¹⁶

Art book fairs facilitate the hand-to-hand distribution of publications that is vital to the community building aspects of publishing. The physical distribution method is significant because it fosters a personal relationship through the exchange of objects that often feels more personal than say, emailing a friend the PDF of a book you really enjoyed. Both can be done, but they evoke different social responses. Kochi communicates this in her “Publications VS Website” illustration (Fig. 13). In the top left corner of the poster, two sets of hands are preparing for an exchange of a stack of books. The two blue outstretched hands prepare to grasp the books that the white pair of hands are holding firmly, a representation of “publications.” In the lower right corner, the same hands are performing another exchange, but this time under the representation of “website.” Only one blue hand is open, anticipating the fall of a single strand of a url, carefully pinched between the fingertips of the white hand above it. In reading this image, I interpret the blue hands to represent the readers or the audience of this content, while the white hands represent the publishers. While both images show a transaction of information happening, the “website” exchange is much less involved, a task only requiring one hand on either end. In the “publication” exchange, the books appear to have weight and a visible variety to them. In the “website” exchange, the receiving hand is a

¹¹⁶ DesignInquiry, “Universal Lunch (Out of Office (Un)Common Hours) - Episode 4,” October 31, 2019, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YK-bmSdncgM>

lighter shade of blue than those reaching for the publications, suggesting perhaps a farther distance between the recipient and the publisher of this content.

Ironically enough, I had an encounter at the LA Art Book fair that complicates Kochi's illustration in quintessential post-digital fashion. At the booth space for XXXI (Thirty-One), a "mixed-use community space for designers (and others) to exhibit, teach, and discuss self-initiated work; a shared studio space; a residency for designers; and an online (and sometimes physical) store," I was actually handed a website, printed on newsprint (Fig. 16).¹¹⁷ There was a hefty stack of websites stacked in front of their booth, on the floor and on the table. "Would you like a website?" I was prompted, with a printed work outstretched to me. I of course, accepted. XXXI operates as a studio and store, located in Manhattan's East Village. The news-printed website was a physical manifestation of their online shop, which they describe as "an experimental digital store" where they sell objects that "could take the form of books, posters, or miscellany (miscellany being an all-encompassing word for things that defy logical classification)."¹¹⁸ XXXI's printed website definitely fits into the "miscellany" category, along with other hybrid publications and content.

In her section on "Publishing as Creating a Public and/or Forming a Community," Gilbert raises important questions about what it means to produce publications, and what happens next: "Is the principle notion of the public sphere that is associated with

¹¹⁷ XXXI website, home page, <https://www.xxxi.nyc>

¹¹⁸ XXXI store web page, <https://store.xxxi.nyc>

publishing decisive or does it merely depend on the actual number of copies printed? Is it crucial that the publication is in principle accessible to everyone, or just that it, in some form, circulates?¹¹⁹ I would argue that the most crucial part of this is in fact the circulation, or distribution, of publications, and those independent publishers who prioritize the circulation of theirs and other arts publications are also furthering the practice and proliferation of contemporary arts publishing.

There are limitations to this, still, as Stein discusses: "...publishing has always been limited, a lot of people cannot afford to buy books. Access is generally uneven, especially under capitalism, and will probably remain so. But that's not a reason not to go forward. The inner quality of these platforms is not technological but social—a social structure that reflects the one we live in."¹²⁰ Therefore, distribution is also access.

PLANT FIBERS AND ELECTRONS

We know that books as objects are resilient, and that their inherent functionality makes them easy to prefer. One post-digital response to this is the use of visual vocabulary derived from our digital culture in print form. This is often employed through graphic design, but not always. For example, between *The Contemporary Condition's* title page and table of contents is the image of a "loading" circle centered on a blank page (Fig. 12). Cox and Lund refer to this as a "throbber," a symbol that signifies data is being

¹¹⁹ Gilbert, "Publishing as Creating a Public and/or Forming a Community," *Publishing as Artistic Practice*, 25.

¹²⁰ Gottlieb, "A Conversation with Bob Stein" *The Form of the Book Book*, 66.

prepared for viewing, but is not completely there.¹²¹ It's a sort of anticipatory purgatory that we don't actually have to deal with in print. (Similarly, digital publications function in ways that mimic physical books, from the visualization of turning a page to the basic page layout, like chapter titles, text arranged in paragraphs, page numbers—a testament to the book's user-friendliness.) Cox and Lund describe the design of their publication as “a way of accessing an imaginary that we believe is not simply delimited by the contemporary condition...in this way we hope it is apparent that information technologies contribute to uncertainties over space and time and may open up a more indeterminate, contingent, and ambiguous space for thinking and action,” i.e. post-digital publications.¹²² Post-digital publications create a unique balance between our reliance on and trust of traditional print practices and products, and the creative control that the digital allows. Primary examples of this exist in many of the sources I came across in my research, and I point out a few of them here as evidence to the way the post-digital is manifesting in print.

MEDIATIZATION, PIXELATION

The title page for Thurston's “The Mediatization of Contemporary Writing” makes use of a pixelated typeface to acknowledge the changes content undergoes when it is manipulated digitally (Fig. 14). In the same way that images lose resolution or clarity

¹²¹ Cox and Lund, *The Contemporary Condition*, 32-35.

¹²² Cox and Lund, *The Contemporary Condition*, 32-35.

when switched between print and digital or even between file types, the manipulated content may not look the same depending on its medium of origin. In this instance it is used as a reference to the medium that makes up digital images through a series of pixels.¹²³

LOADING...

The front and back covers of *Publishing in the Realm of Plant Fibers and Electrons* shows a hand holding the corner of a publication on each side—a printed book on the front, and an iPad or electronic reader on the back (Fig. 15). The hand, unchanged, but mirroring the placement of its flip-side image, shows that this content is held the same. By placing these objects in multiple frames within themselves, we get the feeling of a meta characteristic shared by these interacting technologies and the ways they build on their previous versions. Fitting to the scope of this booklet’s contents, the book on the front and the screen on the back show two sides of post-digital publishing. “The combination of words and pictures leads to an entity that is greater than the sum of its parts, and that the verbi-visual is likely to be a particularly rewarding area...in which words and pictures frequently become inter-dependent parts of a new entity.”¹²⁴

These publications are the “what,” in the series of “W” questions answered by Phillpot, he says, the “what” *is* the content.¹²⁵ The influence of the post-digital on

¹²³ Gilbert, *Publishing as Artistic Practice*, 90.

¹²⁴ Phillpot, *BookTrek*, 65.

¹²⁵ Phillpot, *BookTrek*, 64.

publication design, content, and distribution puts an emphasis on the work as much as it does the process. Armand Mevis in his contribution to *The Form of the Book Book* emphasizes hybridization as an important step, encouraging us (as designers, authors, readers, historians) to “rethink how information can be organized” and “propose alternative directions.”¹²⁶ The book has not only remained a constant, reliable format, but operates with more fluidity as PDFs, and as self-printed objects that don’t require much more than the publisher’s hand and voice. The book functions similarly in the post-digital as it has previously, but with a new edge adapted from digital characteristics. Ultimately, post-digital publications open up possibilities for new kinds of content. Mediatization creates space between information and interpretation, where, as viewers, we pick up on certain visual elements that cue us into the larger verbi-visual context.¹²⁷ In this way, publishers can use this manipulation of content to reinforce existing ideas or create ways to communicate new ones, making use of any and all mediums available.

¹²⁶ Armand Mevis, “Every Book Starts with an Idea: Notes for Designers,” *The Form of the Book Book*, 89.

¹²⁷ Phillipot, *Booktrek*, 65-67.

CONCLUSION

Arts publishing is at an important intersection of the visual and conceptual that provides a way for us to historicize the dissemination of texts that are carrying art history forward, as well as adding to the visual culture we have to analyze. We know that zines and independent publishing practices have provided ways for artists and publishers to create and distribute their work all the while bypassing mainstream channels. We also know that it is through these independent channels that radical ideas can be more easily realized and shared with total artist control of the visual and textual experience, in which post-digital practices play a significant role. This phenomenon of hybridization, mediatization, and the proliferation of miscellany is most prevalent in the arts publishing community through theory, design, and practice. The book, in its many forms, now operates across a multitude of mediums, and continues to thrive because of the ways post-digital visual culture and publishing practices have allowed for creativity to flourish.

Cox and Lund highlight the significance of this discourse:

It is our assumption that it is fruitful to investigate the accelerated role of media and information technologies at multiple scales in relation to our core concerns of subjectivity, mediation, and culture in this way, focusing on how contemporaneity and its consequences are represented and experienced through, and as, art.¹²⁸

Through an exploration of the many formats the post-digital has influenced in contemporary arts publishing, we can establish a data set to continue the study of arts publishing as a valuable look into visual culture and arts discourse.

¹²⁸ Cox and Lund, *The Contemporary Condition*, 32-35.

In the post-digital age, the act of publishing encompasses a number of digital, analog, and conceptual spaces that technology facilitates, but is not limited to. The development of these methods through publishing practices shows us what is possible in the post-digital with projects like UbuWeb and the *Library of the Printed Web*, where the internet's nearly limitless possibilities online inspire a restructuring and expansion of publishing in print. And with publishers like Temporary Services, Printed Matter, and Sming Sming Books operating as artists and distributors, the possibility for access and new types of publications continues to grow. Considering the post-digital has changed the act of publishing itself, it is easier to see how publishers and publications have also transformed because of contemporary digitality.¹²⁹

In looking to the future of post-digital arts publishing, I predict that the authoritative shift from institutional publishers to independent publishers and distributors on the subject of the contemporary will continue. As I discussed with Sming Sming Books and even Phillipot's ABC, the sourcing of these publications from independent publishers to museum and gallery settings is a practice we should take note of. It signals to us that independently-published literature in the arts is on the forefront of contemporaneity, and instead of waiting for these materials to be affirmed by the institutional arts, we should start looking more directly at those independent entities first. As champions of DIY or self-publishing, these artists, designers, scholars, and writers

¹²⁹ Glossary definition for "digitality: the condition of living in a digital culture," in *You Are Here: Art After the Internet*, 241.

will continue to take matters into their own hands, in a “Do or DIY” fashion.¹³⁰ As Thurston, Gilbert, and others explain for the future of post-digital publishing, “After seeing what some of the most renowned writers have done for themselves, show what you can do. Get online; cut and paste; search and destroy; share and share alike.

Remember the lessons of literary history. Don’t wait for others to validate your ideas. *Do it yourself.*”¹³¹ The trends present in the work of Soulellis, Desjardin, Pichler, and more, suggest that the act of appropriation, information gathering, editing, and re-formatting is the contextual future of post-digital publishing. In a time of an over saturation of information and content, artists seem to be increasingly concerned with the re-visitation and re-contextualization of existing work and literature in order to add to new conceptual works and ideas.

¹³⁰ Riccardo Boglione, Kate Briggs, Craig Dworkin, Annette Gilbert, Marianne Groulez, Simon Morris, Carlos Soto Roman, Nick Thurston, “Do or DIY” in *Publishing Manifestos*, 258-265.

¹³¹ Boglione, Briggs, Dworkin, Gilbert, Groulez, Morris, Soto Roman, Thurston, “Do or DIY” in *Publishing Manifestos*, 263.

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XXXI Space Store. "#1 graphic design store in the world" printed website, distributed at the LA Art Book Fair, April 2019.

APPENDIX

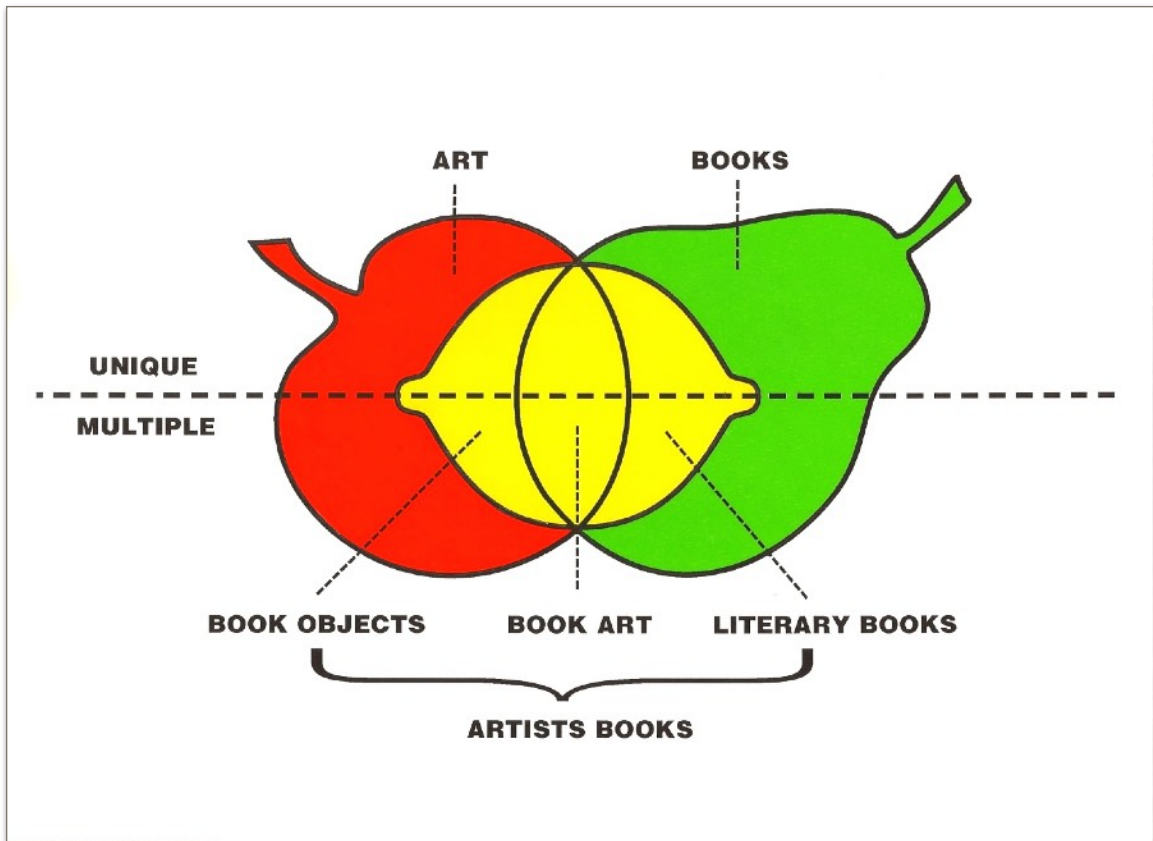


FIGURE 1: CLIVE PHILLPOT, FRUIT SALAD, 1982

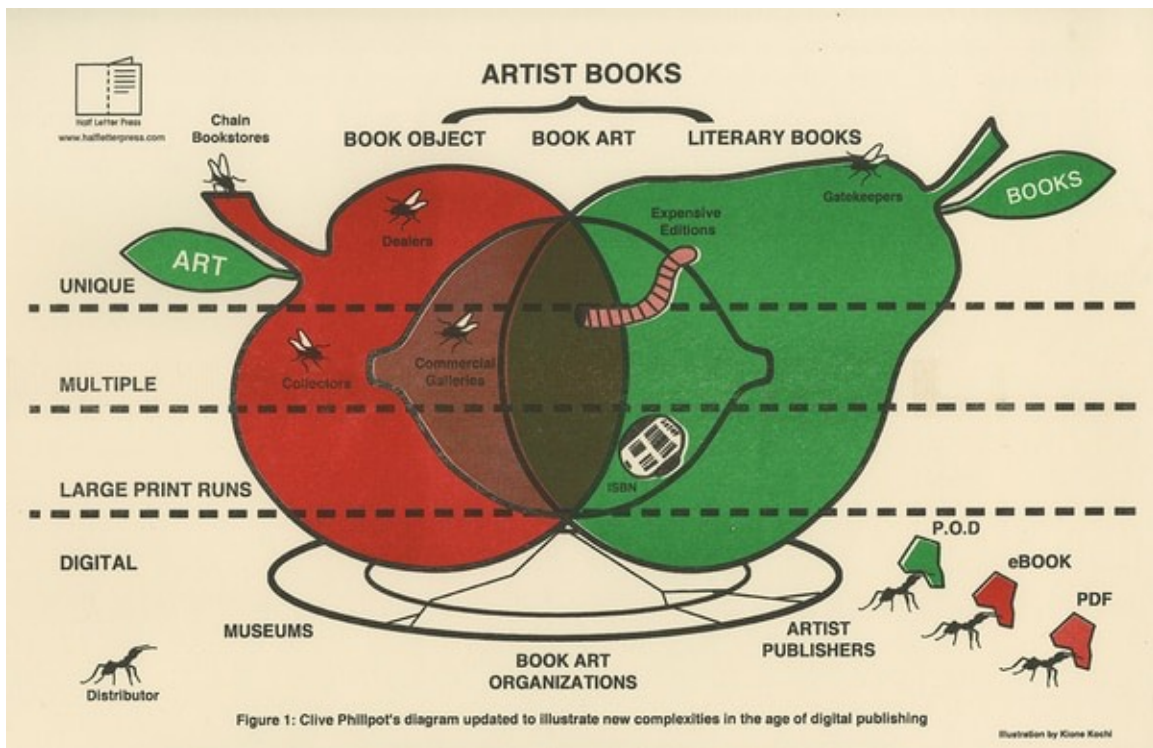


FIGURE 2: KIONE KOCHI, ARTIST BOOKS FRUIT DIAGRAM, 2015



FIGURE 3: KIONE KOCHI, SELF-PUBLISH TOGETHER, 2015

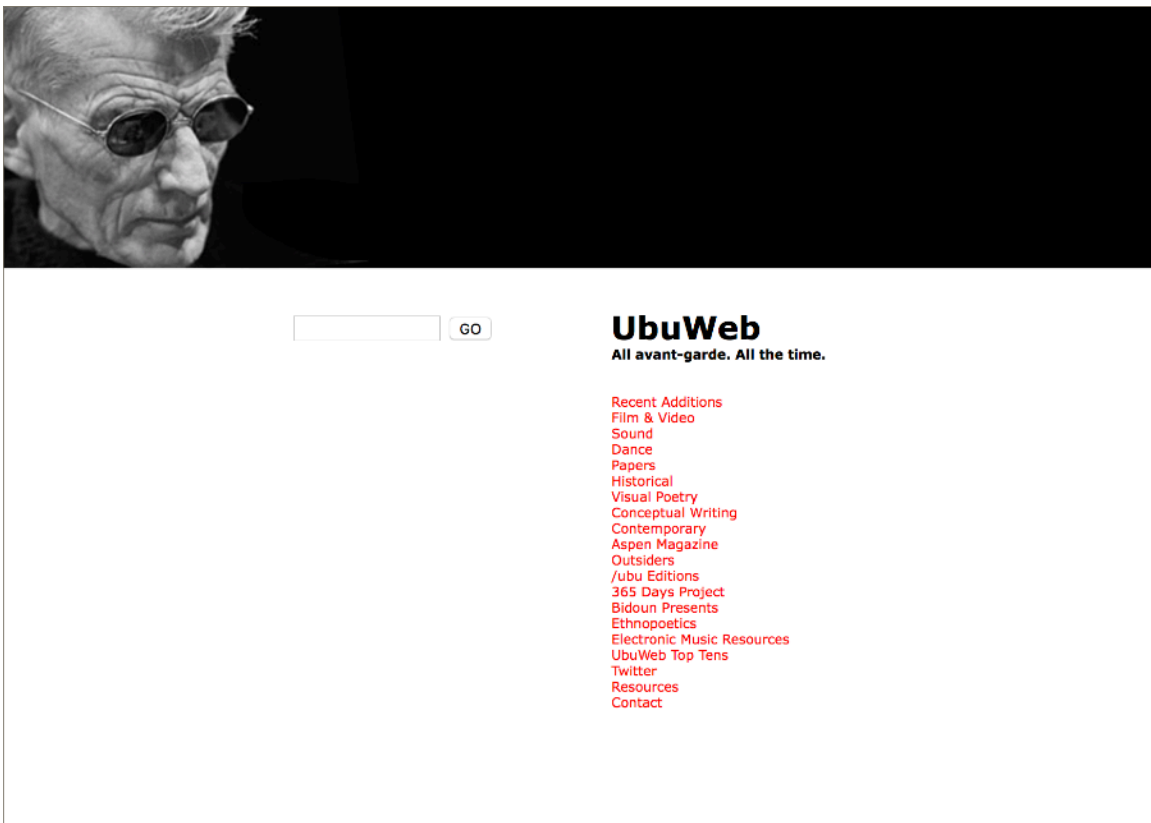
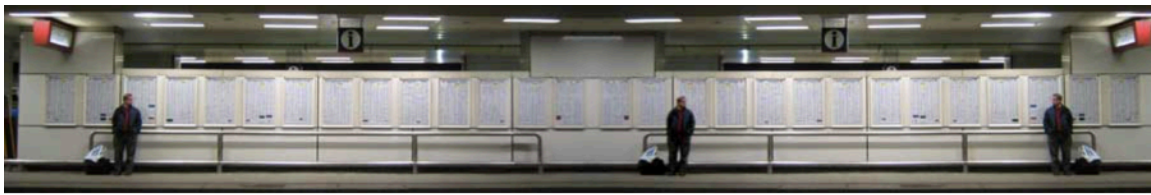


FIGURE 4: UBUWEB HOME PAGE



search

UbuWeb
 /ubu Editions
 UbuWeb

/UBU EDITIONS

Publishing The Unpublishable

Edited by Kenneth Goldsmith
 2007-present

What constitutes an unpublishable work? It could be many things: too long, too experimental, too dull; too exciting; it could be a work of juvenilia or a style you've long since discarded; it could be a work that falls far outside the range of what you're best known for; it could be a guilty pleasure or it could simply be that the world judges it to be awful, but you think is quite good. We've all got a folder full of things that would otherwise never see the light of day.

Invited authors were invited to ponder to that question. The works found here are their responses, ranging from an 1018-page manuscript (unpublishable due to its length) to a volume of romantic high school poems written by a now-respected innovative poet. You get the idea.

The web is a perfect place to test the limits of unpublishability. With no printing, design or distribution costs, we are free to explore that which would never have been feasible, economically and aesthetically. While this exercise began as an exploration and provocation, the resultant texts are unusually rich; what we once considered to be our trash may, after all, turn out to be our greatest treasure.

The series will be concluded when the 100th manuscript is published.

- » **001** Bruce Andrews *WhDiP, a sequence from White Dialect Poetry* 445pp (PDF, 825k)
- » **002** Bruce Andrews *Libretto from White Dialect Poetry* 166pp (PDF, 476k)
- » **003** Robert Fitterman *Hi My Name Is: A Libretto* 21pp (PDF, 120k)
- » **004** Doug Nufer *Rumor* 21pp (PDF, 244k)
- » **005** Claude Closky *Couché sur le ventre* 15pp (PDF, 24k)
- » **006** Stephen Dirlé *Onan The Illiterate* 1080pp (PDF, 3.8mb)
- » **007** Kimberly J. Rosenfield *The Unsurpassed Joy* 53pp (PDF, 272k)
- » **008** Simon Morris *An Intolerable Piece of Writing: Pedaaaov as Performed Absence*

FIGURE 5: UBUWEB, /UBU EDITIONS, PUBLISHING THE UNPUBLISHABLE

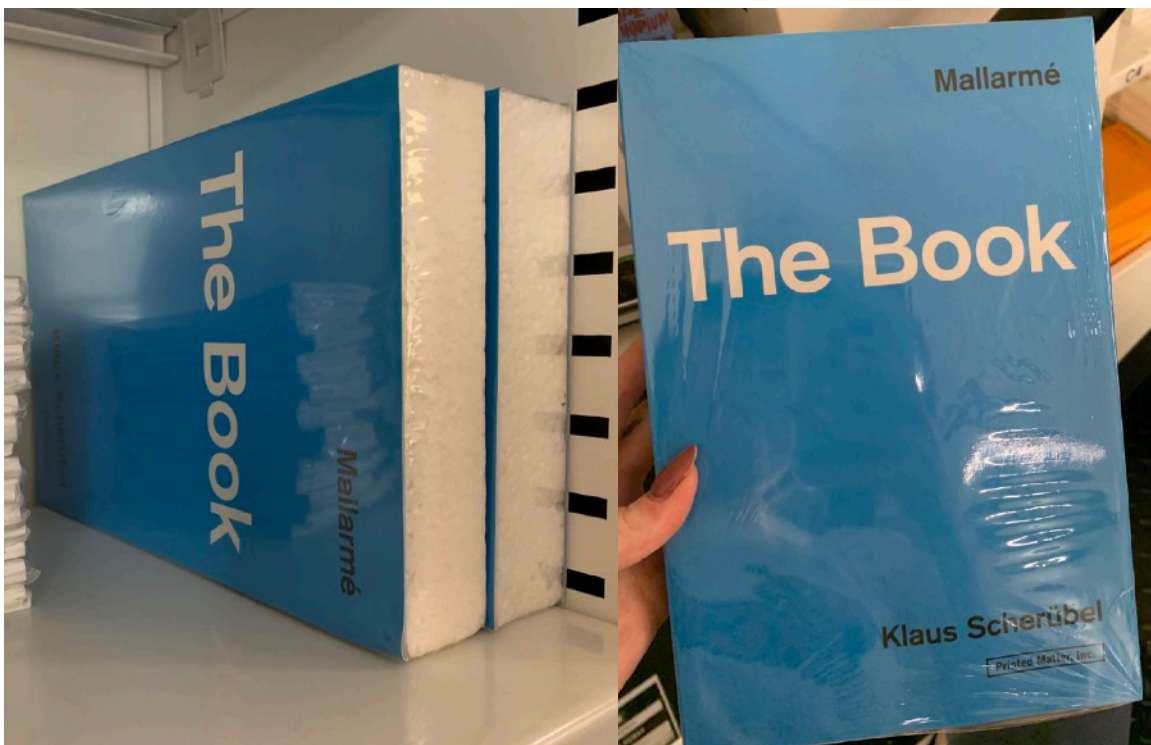


FIGURE 6: *THE BOOK*, ON THE SHELF AT PRINTED MATTER, INC., IN NEW YORK

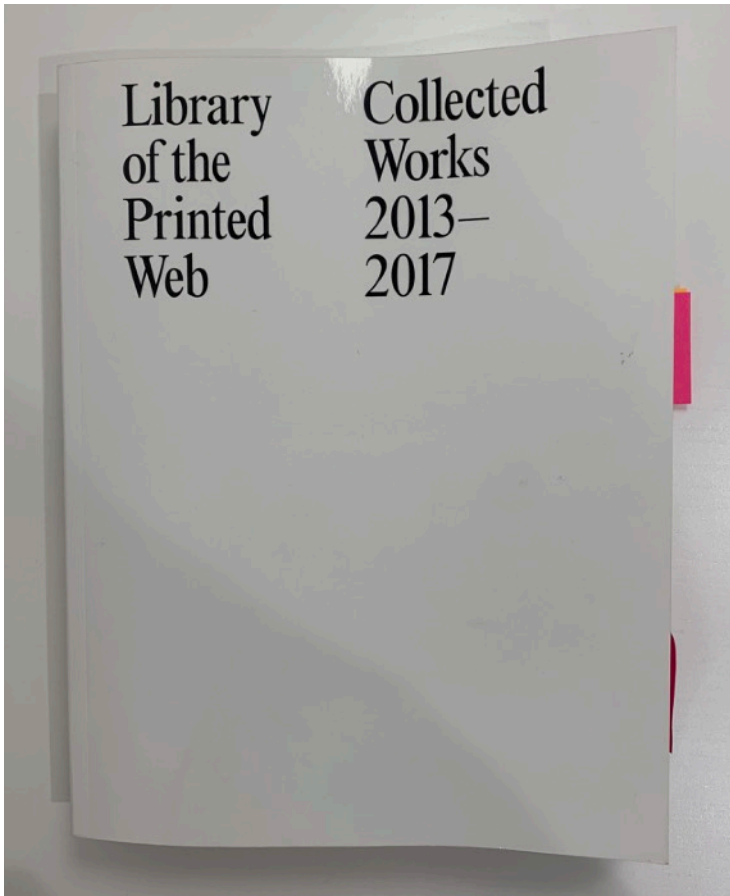


FIGURE 7a: PAUL SOULELLIS'S *LIBRARY OF THE PRINTED WEB* BOOK

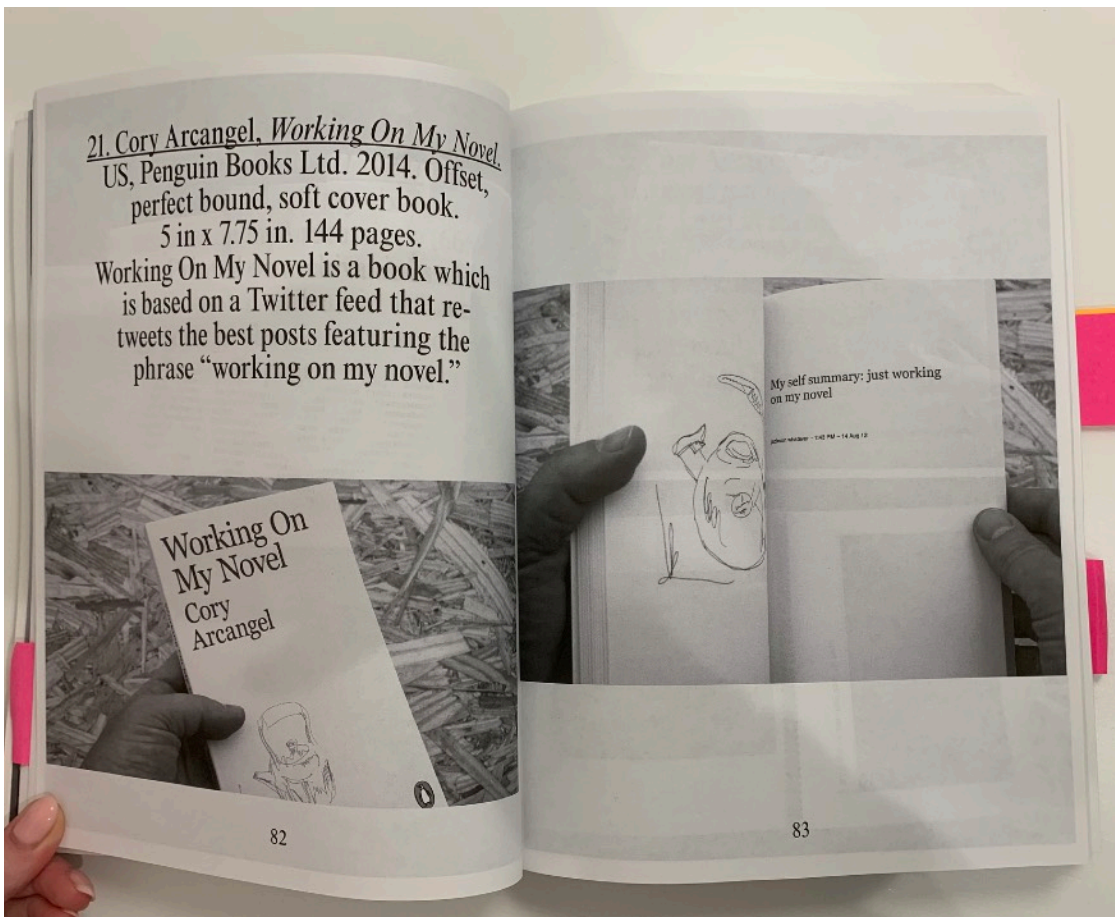


FIGURE 7b: *LIBRARY OF THE PRINTED WEB*, P. 82-83

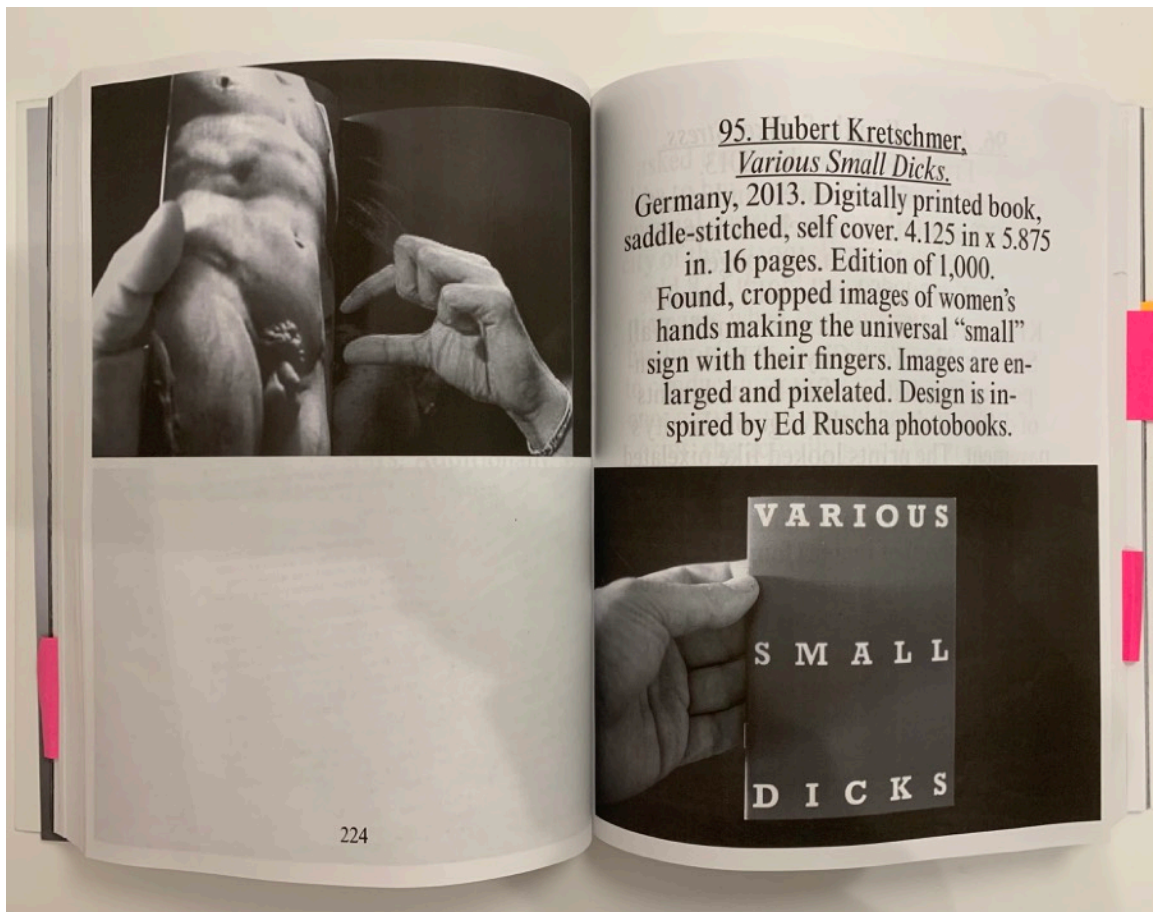


FIGURE 7c: LIBRARY OF THE PRINTED WEB, P. 224-225

Printed Web 1-5 ☆ 🗑️

File Edit View Tools Help

100% View only

Printed Web is an artists' publication devoted to web-to-print art and discourse, published by [Paul Soulellis](#). The project began in 2014 as a way to present new work by artists included in Soulellis' [Library of the Printed Web](#). Artists are invited to submit new or existing network-based work for the printed page. In the spirit of [Seth Siegelaub](#), each issue is curated as a group exhibition for the printed page. *Printed Web* circulates primarily as print-on-demand publications, but also includes PDFs, ZIPs, GIFs, and server directories. More than 220 artists and writers have contributed to the project through issue #5. Individual issues are widely held in special artists' publications collections and libraries, including Whitney Museum of American Art, Yale University, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Walker Center, and NY Public Library. The Library of the Printed Web was acquired earlier this year by The Museum of Modern Art Library.

Printed Web No. 1

Printed Web No. 2

Printed Web No. 3

Printed Web No. 4

Bot Anbolog

FIGURE 7d: LIBRARY OF THE PRINTED WEB GOOGLE DOC



FIGURE 8a: PRINTED MATTER ART BOOK FAIR, THE GEFFEN CONTEMPORARY AT MOCA, LOS ANGELES, APRIL 13, 2019



FIGURE 8b: PRINTED MATTER INC. BOOKSHELF, NEW YORK, OCTOBER 2018

Printed Matter, Inc.

231 11th Avenue
New York, NY 10001
Today until 6 pm

OPEN

[Log In](#)
[Join Email List](#)
[Submit a book](#)

PM The Late Edition: Twenty Years of Dissemination at Printed Matter
BY CLIVE PHILLPOT

PM Appropriation
BY MICHALIS PICHLER

PM Photo Books
BY ROBERT NICKAS

PM Interview with Lucy R. Lippard on Printed Matter
BY JULIE AULT

PM Neo-Natural: Scientific Issues In Artists' Books
BY ANNE KUGLER

PM Artists' Books from Latin America
BY MARTHA HELLION

FIGURE 8c: PRINTED MATTER TABLES ONLINE, INCLUDING ONE CREATED BY CLIVE PHILLPOT

Unanswered topics
Active topics

Artist Publisher

Forum for Artist Book Publishing

Figure 1: Clive Phillpot's diagram updated to illustrate new complexities in the age of digital publishing.

FAQ
Search
Every Art Book Fair & Zine Fest in 2019








Board index It is currently Sun Dec 01, 2019 11:57 pm

SUBFORUMS	STATISTICS	LAST POST
<div style="display: flex; align-items: flex-start;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px;"></div> <div> <p>General Discussion</p> <p>This forum is for general discussion. For more specific topics, see other forums or request that we create a new one. Moderators: brettbloom, marcfigscher</p> </div> </div>	<p>Topics: 13 Posts: 107</p>	<p>Re: Chicago zine history by marcfigscher </p> <p>Sat Nov 30, 2019 3:06 pm</p>
<div style="display: flex; align-items: flex-start;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px;"></div> <div> <p>Art book fairs, exhibitions, and events</p> <p>Discuss and share news about art book fairs, zine fests, lectures, and book-related exhibitions and events. Moderators: brettbloom, marcfigscher</p> </div> </div>	<p>Topics: 9 Posts: 82</p>	<p>Re: Every art book and zine f... by marcfigscher </p> <p>Tue Nov 26, 2019 2:35 am</p>

FIGURE 9: ARTIST PUBLISHER: FORUM FOR ARTIST PUBLISHING HOMEPAGE, TEMPORARY SERVICES

WE STRIVE TO BUILD AN ART PRACTICE THAT :



-  *Makes the distinction between art and other forms of creativity irrelevant*
-  *Builds and depends upon mutually supportive relationships*
-  *Tests ideas without waiting for permission or invitation*
-  *Champions the work of those who are frequently excluded, under-recognized, marginal, non-commercial, experimental, and/or socially and politically provocative*
-  *Puts money and cultural capital back into the work of other artists and self-publishers*
-  *Makes opportunities from large museums and institutions more inclusive by bringing lesser-known artists in through collaborations or advocacy*
-  *Insists that artists who achieve success devote more time and energy to creating supportive social and economic infrastructure for others*

DRAWN BY KIONE KOCHI

FIGURE 10: KIONE KOCHI, TEMPORARY SERVICES MANIFESTO, 2015

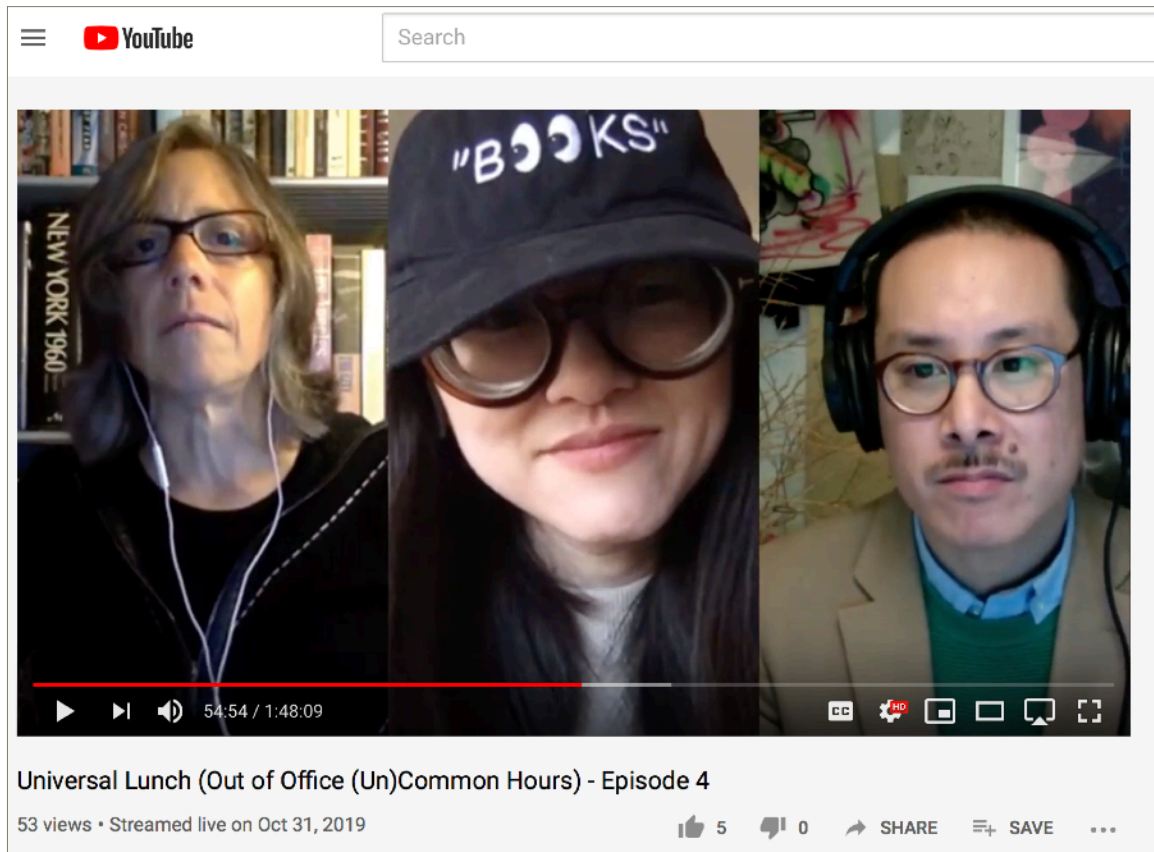


FIGURE 11: DESIGNINQUIRY LIVESTREAM, UNIVERSAL LUNCH, WITH VIVIAN SMING OF SMING SMING BOOKS (MIDDLE)

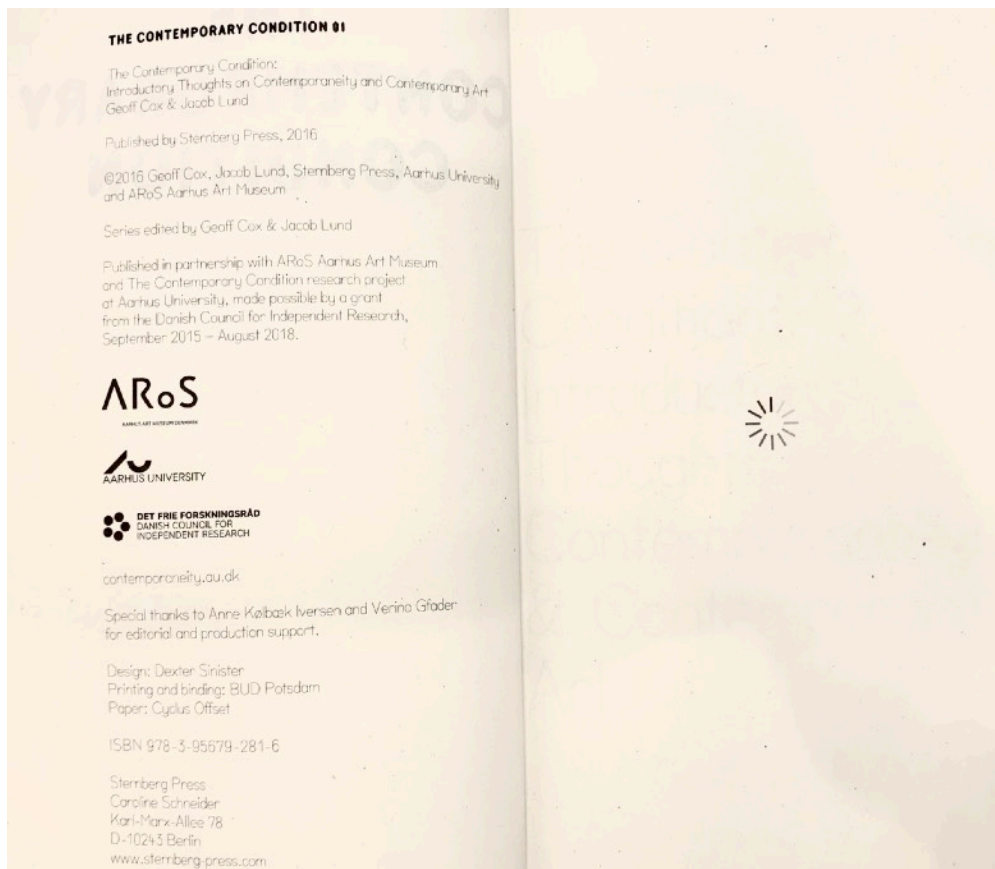


FIGURE 12: THE CONTEMPORARY CONDITION, INTRODUCTION PAGE WITH “THROBBER” ON OPPOSITE SIDE

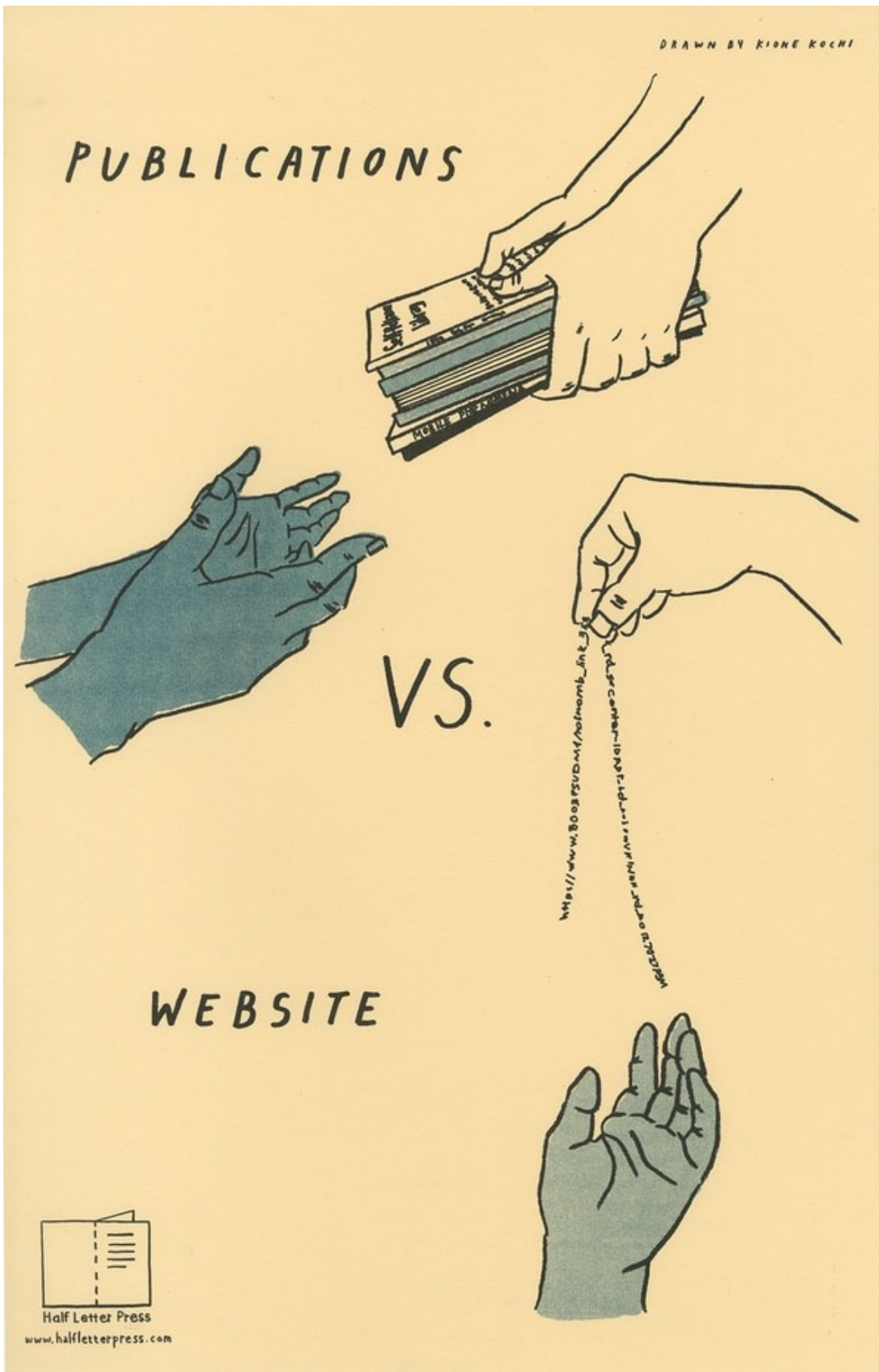


FIGURE 13: KIONE KOCHI, PUBLICATIONS VS. WEBSITE, 2015

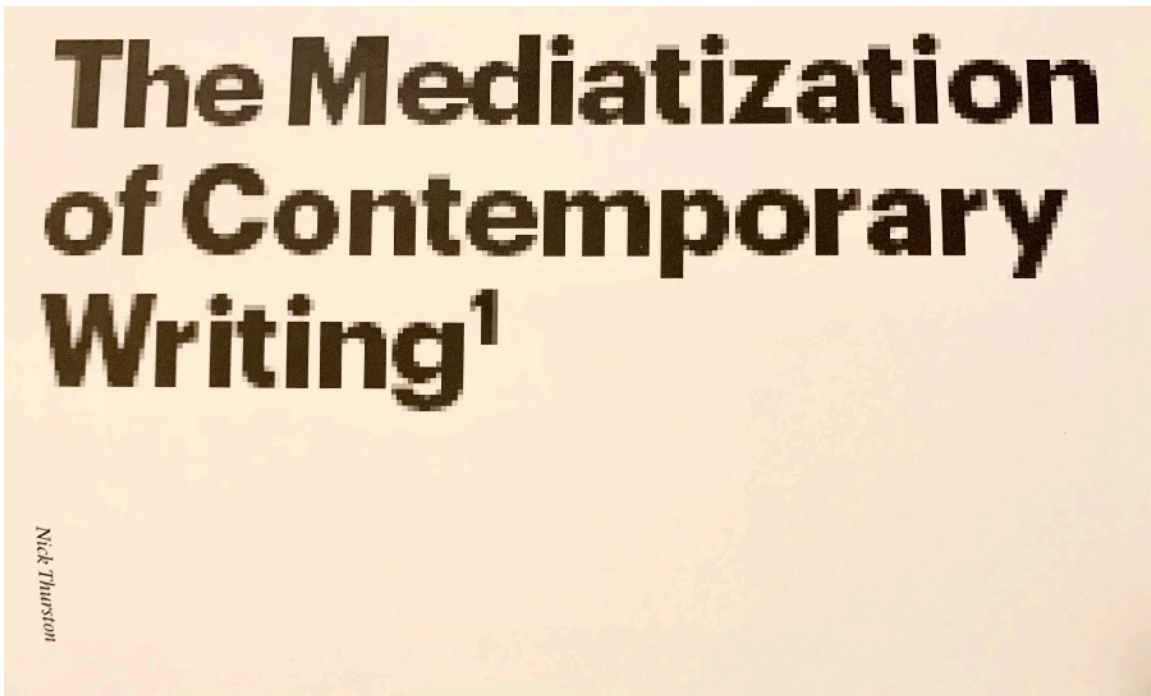


FIGURE 14: FRONT AND BACK COVERS OF *PUBLISHING IN THE REALM OF PLANT FIBERS AND ELECTRONS*

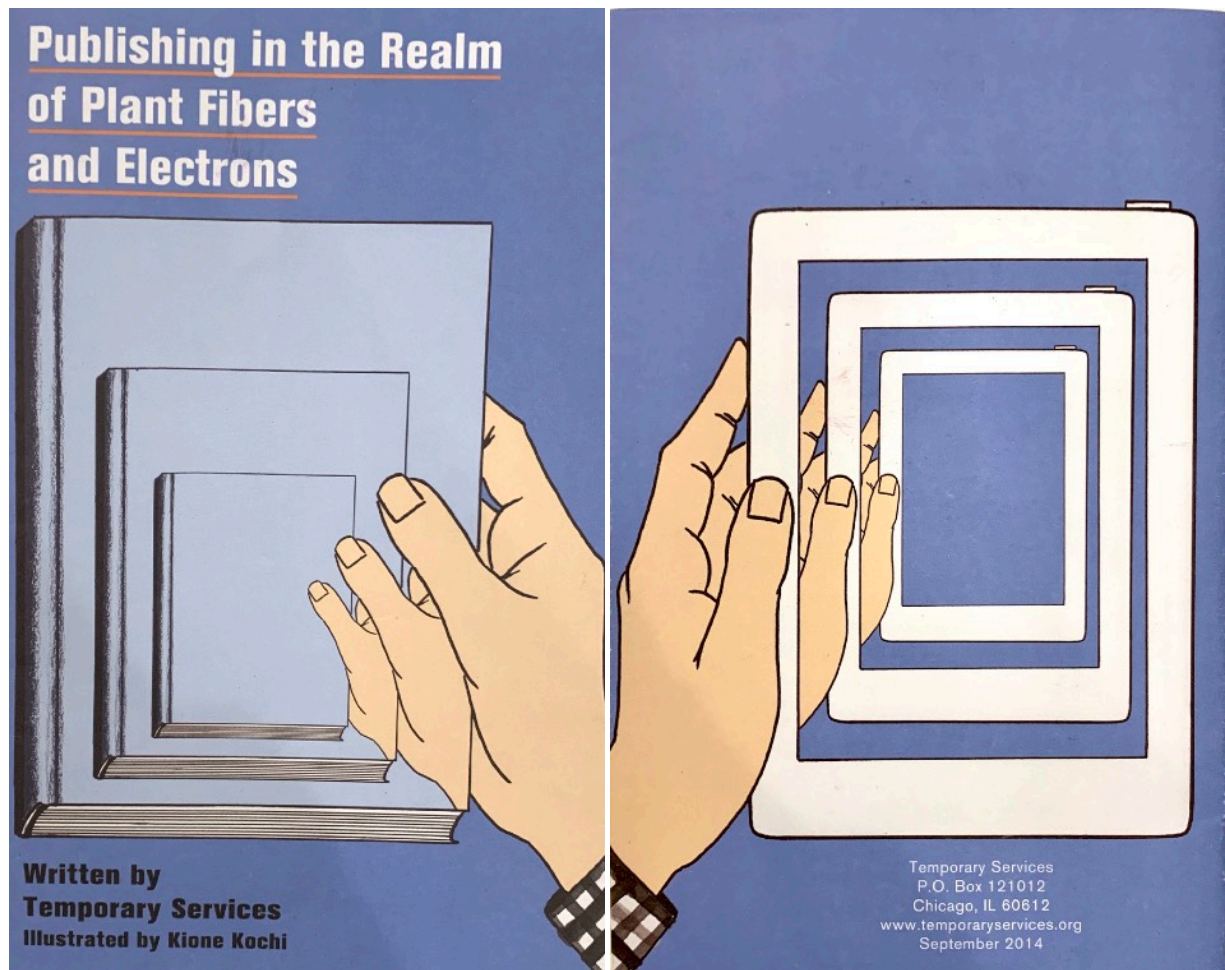


FIGURE 15: FRONT AND BACK COVERS OF *PUBLISHING IN THE REALM OF PLANT FIBERS AND ELECTRONS*

