



Allen Ruppersberg

Chapter VI

*Mention obligatoire : © Moritz Küng et Michèle Didier

Invité à établir la liste de sa bibliothèque idéale, Allen Ruppersberg déclinera cet inventaire en l'œuvre intitulée Chapter VI. Il s'agit d'un set en édition limitée, composé d'un livre et d'un poster unique dans chaque set. Le livre et le poster contiennent une série de noms, qui ont été référencés d'une manière ou d'une autre dans la bibliothèque d'Allen Ruppersberg. Le livre se clôt sur le texte de Franz Kafka *Le Terrier*.

How a talk turned into a book-poster project

Chapter VI is the result of a talk Allen Ruppersberg gave on 23 October 2007 at deSingel, in Antwerp. His talk was part of the monthly lecture series Curating the Library, which I initiated in March of 2003. Each month, two personalities with different backgrounds—architects, artists, choreographers, collectors, composers, curators, designers, philosophers, writers ... —are invited to add their favorite books to the Library and to talk about their choices. To date, over 100 people have contributed more than 1500 books. Allen Ruppersberg was one of the very first people I invited, as I thought the project and this groundbreaking conceptual artist who weaves books and literature into his work were a perfect fit. So I mailed out my first invitation letter on 31 October 2002; Allen's lecture took place almost exactly five years later. The wait, though, has borne some fruit, as my invitation and his talk became a new work: *Chapter VI*. The following is an extract from our email exchanges, and it should give the reader an insight into how it all evolved.

Wed 06/06/2007 0:17

Dear Moritz,

About the Curating the Library idea. It is very strange, but every time I try and think about it, I get stuck on the same thought: I don't have any idea how to do this! Not a clue. I don't even know how to think about it. The idea of suggesting books for someone else to use, be inspired by, etc., is something I've never done, personally or professionally, and feel kind of weird about it. I mean, I have never made a list of books for students in any class I've taught, nor have I ever told them to read something—even as a teacher I find that idea hard to swallow. I might tell them about a book, but never that they SHOULD read it. And then, the books I buy for myself are of such a personal nature and are so intimately related to whatever interest or project I may be involved in at the time that they would make no sense, or be of any interest, to anyone else. I'm sure of that. Besides, so much of what I like is of the antique variety, and the reasons I have for this I don't think I can ever explain, nor would I want to try. To say nothing about the fact that speaking to a public is not my favorite thing to do, anyway. So you can see, I hope, how hard it is for me to see a way into this idea of putting a stamp on a group of books that somehow has my name on it, and then to try and explain why! A work in an exhibition has a context that allows for a perspective that is not so personal. Anyway, I guess it makes me a little uneasy to make such overt suggestions as to what someone should take an interest in. It goes without saying, though, that I would be very happy to do this for you as I know it is important. If only I knew how ... So, for the time being, if you have any suggestions—maybe you've given some already, and I've forgotten?—after reading all of this, I will be glad to know them. Best, **Allen**

Wed 06/06/2007 13:56

Dear Allen,

Of course, you shouldn't feel obliged to participate, but maybe I can mention once again that Curating the Library is an intimate and informal project. It is not about recommending books, or about listing the ten books you'd take with you to that desert island ... It is a platform for you to share your personal fascination with and relationship to books and you could—since you ask for a suggestion—just talk about books you have used in your work. But people take very different approaches. Rem Koolhaas, for example, went to an antiquarian bookseller in Amsterdam on the day of his talk and picked up a set of random books, among them a medical sourcebook by Hippocrates from 1657. And in his talk he related the books themselves, and how he came by them, to his personal understanding of globalization. People do all kinds of things. The reason I'd be honored and happy to have you participate is that you are one of the very first artists to have given the book a central place in the work—and you still do that. Allan McCollum says it well: "Ruppersberg sometimes seems to imagine that we are our books—as if we all become books ...". This is why it has always been so important for me to invite you. Another idea, if you decide you to participate, is that you could talk about the Library as it is at the moment, just by picking out some books already in the collection: Rearranging the Library! And it's not as if you have to talk for hours, either. Thomas Hirschhorn took 20 minutes to present his "bibliothèque d'urgence." The average, anyway, is about 40 minutes. You can also present only one book; that's what the artists Elaine Sturtevant, Jos De Gruyter, Harald Thys did. In short, there would be no bad feelings if you decided against it, but I would, nevertheless, be, well, sad. I look forward to your answer. Best regards, **Moritz**

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Wed 25/07/2007 3:36

Dear Moritz,

I am in Ohio, surrounded by my collection of books etc., and thinking about your project, and I have some questions. There's a budget for buying the books, right? Who buys them? And where? What if I select things no one can find? or can't afford? What if all my choices are so obscure that they would mean nothing to anyone else—to say nothing about actually finding them? I am surrounded by books and reading materials: how to distinguish the two, let alone choose between them? This simple-sounding commitment is starting to get complex ... Best, **Allen**

Mon 30/07/2007 0:25

Dear Allen,

A pity I wasn't able to answer sooner, as now I don't know if you are still in Ohio, surrounded by books and not knowing what to do. But to answer your questions: Yes, there is a 400 Euro budget (about \$500). If you give me a list with the author, title, publisher, year of publication, and, if possible, the ISBN, I can order the books for you. If the books or editions you want are rare or hard to find, we can think of alternatives. You may choose just ONE book, or several books by ONE author; all the books Hans Ulrich Obrist chose are by Edouard Glissant. You can also choose books based on a topic. Or you can choose books that have been inspiring for you—personally, professionally, etc. Or you can choose to make the presentation itself a "work of art." That's what Jef Geys did. Incidentally, this reminds me of a poster for one of your shows, Where's AI? He: Where's AI? She: Maybe he stayed home to read. He: What's he reading? She: Lautréamont ... and then you start reading Lautréamont. I hope you are well, best regards, **Moritz**

Thu 07/08/2007 19:12

Dear Moritz,

You will be happy to know that I have an idea for the project that I like pretty well. Your last email helped a lot in clearing the air of too many possibilities when I was in Ohio. I am back in LA now, and have been sitting on an idea for a while and I think it is the best way to go. What I'll do is make a list of ALL the books—or in some cases just authors—which have been referenced in one way or another in the history of my work. I have no idea how long this list will be, but I hope that out of this you can find a good number of the books, or that someone here can. I am not an internet shopper so I can't do it, but maybe my assistant would have time. I am over my head also with Micheline's new show. It doesn't much matter which of the books on the list we manage to find. My idea for the presentation is to show images of the books, or of the works themselves, while I read a story by Kafka that I think says it all. If this sounds good to you, then the next thing to do is for me to work on the list so I can get it to you as soon as possible. Correct? Let me know what you think. **Allen**

Wed 08/08/2007 12:22

Dear Allen,

I am very happy with your idea. It looks a bit like a new work! Of course, you understand that for Curating the Library I need more than a list. I mean, the list itself is very interesting, don't get me wrong, but I need the books as well! But since it is apparently not possible for you to choose the most important books, which I can understand, I propose that we solve the selection issue with a dice game. Once your list is ready (50, 100, 200 titles?), either you or I can roll the dice in order to pick the titles for the Library. If the first throw is 2, then the second book in the list is selected; if the second throw gives us 4, that means the sixth book in the list is selected. And so on till we've maxed the budget. I found a Dutch website in which a computer rolls the dice: <http://online-dobbelsteen.nl>. So: you make the list; I gamble for the books to be selected; once the game has determined the titles, I'll order the books. If a title is not available, I'll order the title immediately after it on the list. I think it would be nice to have your complete list as an entry unto itself in the Library. Do you think we can make a simple A5 or A4 booklet with the list? I can have the book designed internally here at deSingel, and we could make a very simple artist book out of your list. I look forward to hearing from you again. Best regards, **Moritz**

Wed 08/08/2007 20:06

Dear Moritz,

Yes, I guess it does sound like a new work. You never know. All your ideas sound very good so I will get on the list as soon as possible. I don't see it being quite as long as you imagine but, again, you never know. Any more thoughts will be more than welcome. **Allen**

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Fri 24/08/2007 12:36

Dear Allen,

I was talking to Michèle Didier yesterday evening; she is presenting her books on the same night as you. Once I have your list—which, by the way, must be soon, by Monday at the latest, so I can start “gambling-selecting-ordering”—I can propose a design for the booklet with your list. Anyway, what I wanted to say is that Michèle mentioned that she would be interested in publishing a modest, official edition of the list. I think this is a great idea. What do you think of the title: All the Books I’ve Used (instead of: All the Books I’ve Read). Waiting for your list ... with best regards, **Moritz**

Sun 26/08/2007 19:03

Dear Moritz,

The list is almost finished. I can email it in a day or so but I have some other materials to go with it and also some design ideas which I will need to FedEx. The title I’d like to use is: Illustrated Books. It refers to the fact that this is a list of books that have been photographed and/or actually drawn or configured in some way for use in visual artworks—in that sense, they have all been illustrated in some manner. A selection of them will be projected for all to see during my talk, in which I’ll read from Kafka’s *The Burrow*. But I will not speak about the books, or the work that came out of them, directly. The story says it all in a more metaphorical way, and the images with the story make a great combo. I’ll be working on the design ideas today. I want to do something—if there is going to be a little booklet—that is more than just a list, which I frankly think is a little boring. There should be some visual component to make it more interesting. Anyway, I’ll see what I can do and then you can tell me if it works or not. Also, I will include some “extras,” mainly some images that came out of the research. All the best, **Allen**

Sat 01/09/2007 15:45

Dear Allen,

Thank you very much for the list. On Saturday afternoon, at exactly 14:42, I started internetting, and now, an hour later, I have 43 titles selected out of your list. Just 2 questions: 1) Is it important to order the FIRST editions? For example: the 1952 Scribner’s edition of Hemingway’s *The Old Man and the Sea* can be bought in Germany for 80 EURO, but also in the States, with prices ranging from 700 to 3000 Euro? 2) If I can find a title, but not the first edition of the book, do I order it anyway? I have found William Gresham’s *Houdini*, but not in the original put out by Holt, Rinehart & Winston. Do I get it anyway? Let me know your suggestions still this weekend, if you can. I look forward to hearing from you again. Best regards, **Moritz**

Sat 01/09/2007 22:37

Dear Moritz,

No, it is not important whether they are first editions for your collection. Any edition you can find is fine. It is only important to my list, as it is the list of a collector, and I have some rare copies that add color to the list. You should have the FedEx by now or Monday. Let me know. Thanks, **Allen**

Mon 03/09/2007 15:17

Dear Allen,

I just got your FedEx. Thank you. I’ve been gambling and ordering, and I’ll let you know the outcome of that soon. As always, best regards, **Moritz**

Curating the Library 23/10/2007 21:00

On Thursday evening, Allen Ruppersberg read Franz Kafka’s “The Burrow,” from the Selected Short Stories of Franz Kafka, trans. Willa and Edwin Muir (New York: The Modern Library, 1952). The unique dummy, Illustrated Books, as well as the books to be added to the Antwerp collection, were stacked in front of him. The following are the 21 titles randomly selected from his list of 148 titles: Barton, Byron. *Where’s Al?* London: Hamish Hamilton, 1972. / Butor, Michel. *Inventory: Essays*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968. / Camus, Albert. *Notebooks 1942-1951*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965. / Chandler, Raymond. *Farewell, My Lovely*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1973. / Faulkner, William. *Sanctuary* (1931). New York: Random House, 1958. / Frazer, James George. *The New Golden Bough* (1890). New York: Criterion Books, 1959. / Gresham, William Lindsay. *Houdini: The Man Who Walked Through Walls*. New York: Henry Holt, 1959. / Kelly, Walt. *Pogo*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1951. / Hemingway, Ernst, *The Old Man and the Sea*. New York: Scribner’s, 1952. / Lautréamont, comte de. *Lautréamont’s Maldoror* (*Les Chants de Maldoror*, 1868). London: Allison & Busby, 1970. / Matheson, Richard. *The Shrinking Man*. New York: Berkeley Publisher, 1979. / Meyer, Adolph. *Voltaire, Man of Justice*. London: Quality Press Publishers, 1943. / Olsen, D.B. *Dead Babes in the Wood*. New York: Dell Publishing

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Company, 1952. / Rosenthal, M.L., ed. *The New Poets: American and British Poetry Since World War II*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1967. / Stevens, Wallace. *Harmonium*. New York: Borzoi Books, 1953. / Swift, Jonathan, *Gulliver's Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World (1726)*. London: Collins, s.d. / Van Bruggen, Carry. *De Verlatene*. Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 1928. / Wallace, Lee. *Ben-Hur*. New York: Bantam Pathfinder Editions, 1965. / Werner, Jane, *Walt Disney's Living Desert, a True-Live Adventure*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954. / Wilde, Oscar. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. New York: Brentano's, 1910. / Zola, Emile. *Nana (1880)*. Amsterdam: Contact, 1973.

Thu 01/11/2007 20:38

Dear Moritz,

I am now back in NY. I had a good meeting with Michèle and she surely wants to do the book. We decided that it needed some more to it; the idea is to do the images from the talk done in the same way as the list text. I'll start working on this when I am back in LA. I may have a little time in Dec. I don't think a text will be necessary at this point. Michèle thinks just a little description of mine on the back of the book. So I think we have a good project ahead. I'm happy that we finally did the *LIST* and now a new book from it. It's good you kept after me. Thanks, **AI**

Moritz Küng (1961, Lucerne/CH) is an art and architecture curator living in Brussels. He curated the Belgium pavilions of the 25th art biennial in São Paulo (2002) and of the 11th architecture biennial in Venice (2008). In 2003, he became director of the exhibition department at deSingel, international arts campus, in Antwerp, where he initiated, that same year, the steadily-growing book and lecture project *Curating the Library*. www.curatingthelibrary.be

Moritz Küng
Copy editing by Emiliano Battista

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Spécifications

- **Livre**

- 27,9 x 21,6 cm
- Le livre contient un total de 240 pages
- Papier: Blacklabel silk 200g
- Couverture: Magno Satin 300g
- Imprimé par Arte-Print, Bruxelles
- Relié par Brochage FAC, Bruxelles

- **Poster**

- Chaque poster fait 91,8 x 73,8 cm et est unique
- Papier: Opti premium
- Imprimé par SP Production, Bruxelles

Production

- Édition limitée à 128 sets et 12 épreuves d'artistes
- Le set contient un livre et un poster, le poster est différent et unique pour chaque set

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