



michèle didier

## PRESS RELEASE

mfc-michèle didier is proud to announce the opening of its future exhibition, entitled « Regard sur nos productions – Part I » that will take place on Saturday November 26, from 12 am to 7 pm. The exhibition will be held until Saturday December 24, 2011 included.

After *Inside a Triangle* by Claude Closky, *Ephemera* by Christian Marclay and Annette Messager's albums, the exhibition « Regard sur nos productions » will allow mfc-michèle didier to provide a retrospective look on a selection of its productions as a publisher.

Since 1987, mfc-michèle didier has grown, working closely and directly with the artists and sharing the common aim to produce multiples, artist's books, installations or films. « Regard sur nos productions - Part I » will give a particular attention to books and multiples.

Arrived recently on the Parisian art scene, mfc-michèle didier will take this opportunity to present its work and affirm its artistic choices. In the exhibition, one will be able to discover the editions by Carl Andre, Robert Barry, AA Bronson, Claude Closky, On Kawara, Christian Marclay, Annette Messager, Jonathan Monk, Allan McCollum, Muntadas, Philippe Parreno, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Allen Ruppersberg, and many more.

# REGARD SUR NOS PRODUCTIONS – Part I

— Multiples and artist's books

— Technical files

— The exhibition « Regard sur nos productions » will show a selection of the works presented below.

## **For more information, please contact:**

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Open from Tuesday to Saturday from 12 am to 7 pm

Subway: Reaumur-Sébastopol, Temple, Arts et Métiers



The book contains 10 silk-screened photographs by Dennis Adams which represent buildings where Harkis have been moved. In addition, each book includes one unique portrait from the series *Femmes Algériennes* by Marc Garanger. So the complete edition presents ten different portraits. This very portrait is re-mounted on the bottom of each book and is 20 cm higher than the block-book so that only the upper part of the face shows, with woman eyes watching the book's reader.

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Dennis Adams

*Recovered 10 on 10 – Adams on Garanger*

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**Specifications**

- The book measures 60 x 60 cm
  - Contains 24 pages
  - Sheet 1: Recto-Verso 300 gr virgin black paper Velin d'Arches
  - Sheet 2: Recto Poliprint-Mirror paper, verso Poliprint-Mirror paper is silk-screened in black
  - Sheet 3: Recto 300 gr virgin white paper Arches Velin Cuve, verso is silk-screened in black, text of the colophon is printed in black satin ink
  - From sheet 4 until 12: 10 images of the Harki's buildings from Dennis Adams  
Each image measures 40 cm x 120 cm -10 black & white silk-screens, screen #58, verso of the sheet 12 is silk-screened in black
  - Signatures are double-stitched with linen thread
  - Bound in black linen tissue on cardboard
  - Each book comes in a black slipcase
- 
- Silk-screened by Philippe Struelens, Brussels
  - Bound by Sylvie Campus, Brussels

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**Production**

- Limited to 6 numbered and signed copies + 3 Dennis Adams A.P. + 1 Marc Garanger A.P.

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Produced and published in 1993 by Les Maîtres de Forme Contemporains (mfc-michèle didier)

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Carl Andre  
*America Drill*

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©2003 Carl Andre, Les Maîtres de Forme Contemporains  
(mfc-michèle didier) and Paula Cooper Gallery

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A M E R I C A   D R I L L

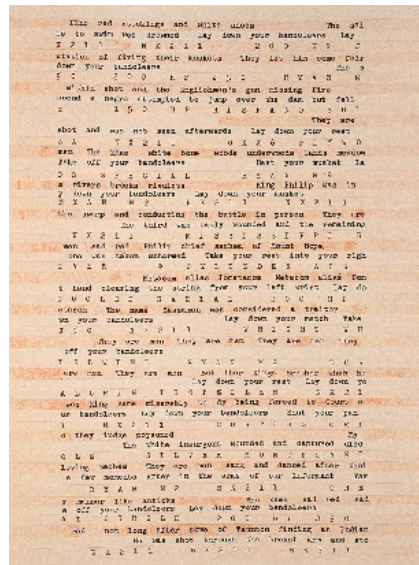
RED CUT   WHITE CUT   BLUE CUT

I N   M E M O R Y   O F   T H O M A S   M O R T O N   O F   M E R R Y   M O U N T   1 6 2 5

C A R L   A N D R E  
1 9 6 3

# Carl Andre

## America Drill



*America Drill* is based on three interwoven texts, respectively titled *Red Cut*, *White Cut* and *Blue Cut*. *Red Cut* consists of excerpts from Ebenezer W. Pierce's *Indian History and Genealogy* pertaining to the good sachem Massasoit of the Wampanoag Tribe (1878). *White Cut* includes excerpts from Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Indian History and Genealogy Journals* from 1820 to 1824 and 1838 to 1841. The text in *Blue Cut* is taken from Charles Lindbergh's *We* (1927) and from Kenneth S. Davis' *The Hero: Charles A. Lindbergh and the American Dream* (1959). The text concludes with a quotation from F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*.

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# Carl Andre

## *America Drill*

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\*Obligatory mention : © Vera Kotaji pp. Michèle Didier

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### **About *America Drill* by Carl Andre**

Taking a look at the poetic work of Carl Andre today reveals two keymost aspects. On the one hand, the sheer importance of this activity within his whole works, creates a new angle for its approach. Carl Andre started writing poems at the age of nine, long before contributing, in the unavoidable way that we know, to the evolution of the plastic language, and in particular to Minimalism, through his sculptures. By rigorously ordered alignments of identical modules, Carl Andre invites the spectator to cross them and this displacement through the work creates multiple prospects. The artist also proposes to walk on the work when for example, some squares are assembled on the ground.

The relationship with the book will be obviously different, maintaining the reader in a position, a «point of view», by nature frontal. The perception of the work will be done in the space limited by the format of the page (format standard generally used). Example is his collaboration on the Xerox Book, a famous book made of photocopies, published in 1000 copies and signed in 1968 by seven minimalists and conceptual artists. Carl Andre arranges on 25 pages a serie of squares whose number corresponds each time with the numbering of the page. The progression follows an arithmetic logic, but the forms take place at random. However constraining the system seems to be, the artist is encouraged to develop a freedom and a dynamic which take place according to a method completely different from his sculptural work, rigorously registered in space, always according to a modular system, in rigorous assemblings of one single piece.

In addition, it is the implication of the artist in the History. His book entitled *America Drill* is a high testimony of this very concern and shows to be the result of an infinitely rich and complex line of thought. At the beginning the work consisted of 48 flying pages.

Carl Andre entrusted the publication to Michèle Didier, editor of artists' books who designed a facsimile, operating choices which made the work possible to find its completion.

Carl Andre has been elaborating books from the end of the fifties by gathering mixes of typewritten texts, collages, calligrammes. But in the year 1957 the artist discovers the text «Indian History and Genealogy», written in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Ebenezer W Pierce, who was born like Carl Andre in the State of Massassuchet, where the genocide which eradicated the native Indian population took place one century earlier.

This document deals with the King Philip's War, which represents for the artist a typical example, the kind of battle that was fought many times before and has been fought many times since. It gives account of the suffering of a population, destroyed, and of the crime on which the history of the United States was built. The artist initially tries to collect the cry of despair of the victims in its brutal truth. He isolates some groups of words, transcribes them on his typewriter, inserts ampersands, so composing an uninterrupted poetic collage. The result hardly satisfies him and six years later he goes back to it, influenced by Michel Butor's *Mobile*, a semantic journey through America, a «torch-book» with historical and especially geographical dimension. He also finds in the theory of the prime numbers of Kurt Gödel (system in which a sequence of these numbers would never come back on another sequence) the scale of classification which allows him to reorganize the literary matter. Meanwhile the sources grew richer. From now on it includes three sections, resulting from excerpts of various texts. To each section corresponds a color of the American flag.

So we have, in order :

#### **Red cut**

All words phrases and sentences in this cut are taken from *Indian History and Genealogy pertaining to the good Sachem Massasoit of the Wampanoag Tribe and his Descendants* by Ebenezer W Pierce published by Zerviah Gould Mitchell at North Abington Massachusetts in 1878.

#### **White cut**

All words phrases and sentences in this cut are taken from *Indian History and Genealogy from Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson 1820 to 1824 and 1838 to 1841* edited by Edward Waldo Emerson and Waldo Emerson Forbes published by Houghton Mifflin Company at Bos-

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# Carl Andre

## *America Drill*

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\*Obligatory mention : © Vera Kotaji pp. Michèle Didier

ton, Massachusetts in 1909 and from *Incident at Harper's Ferry* edited by Edward Stone published by Prentice Hall inc at Englewood Cliffs New Jersey in 1956.

### **Blue cut**

All words and phrases in this cut are taken from *We* by Charles A Lindbergh published by G P Putnam's Sons at New York, New York in 1927 and from *The Hero Charles A Lindbergh and the American Dream* by Kenneth S. Davis published by Doubleday and Company INC at Garden City New York in 1959.

### **Conclusion**

*He had come along way to this blue lawn and his dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it he did not know that it was already behind him somewhere in that vast obscurity beyond the city where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night.*

The artist considers *America Drill* as «a long poem the subject of which is three racial tragedies – the tragedy of territory as property – the tragedy of person as property – the tragedy of everything as property.»

The significance of the term «drill» refers to the act of tracing a way in a station of sorting, of connecting two coaches of train between them. Basically it refers to the link between two elements.

These texts were typed by Carl Andre, who afterwards made them cut out in strips, and resticked on another sheet of the same paper. The artist inserted the strips according to the Gödel code. Therefore, at the beginning of the book, the reading of one of the paragraphs is carried out line after line. After that, every two lines, and then, every three lines.

*Red Cut, White Cut, Blue Cut.* The text doesn't present any punctuation. The typographical choice of certain excerpts varies from lower case to upper case. It must be considered that important intervals between the words give rhythm to the page and that the caesura of the words is subjected to the limit of the framework in which the text is made up. From a merely plastic point of view, the work of the adhesive shows through the strips, leaving today trails of color, as if time had still a word to add through the materiality of the work. As epilogue, we find an extract from *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald. Once more transcribed without punctuation, with the same space between each letter, and the same interval between each word. So the reading becomes a deciphering, by the effort to cut out each word correctly, from these sentences very moving indeed : «He had come a long way to this blue lawn, and his dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it. He did not know that it was already behind him somewhere in the vast obscurity beyond the city where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night.»

A disconcerting fact is that at the time when the book is published, *America Drill* perpetuates its own dialogue with the history. We are in March 2003, just before the attack of Baghdad by the American government, the day before the bombing of a civil population. This dark coincidence encouraged the artist to read again, to redefine his work, constantly moving. From the end of the fifties until now, the conscience of the past has been fading. According to the artist Carl Andre, a will to retain and to remember has been dissolved. And from his intention of building an «epic poem» on America, a true cry of despair emerges, engaged in the flow of history, engaged in the destruction.

*«I intended America Seed-planting drill to be your epic poem illuminating the history of America. It certainly fails at that. To my horror I feel America Drill may be becoming a prophecy of America's, and the world's future»*

Vera Kotaji pp. Michèle Didier



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# Carl Andre

## *America Drill*

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### Specifications

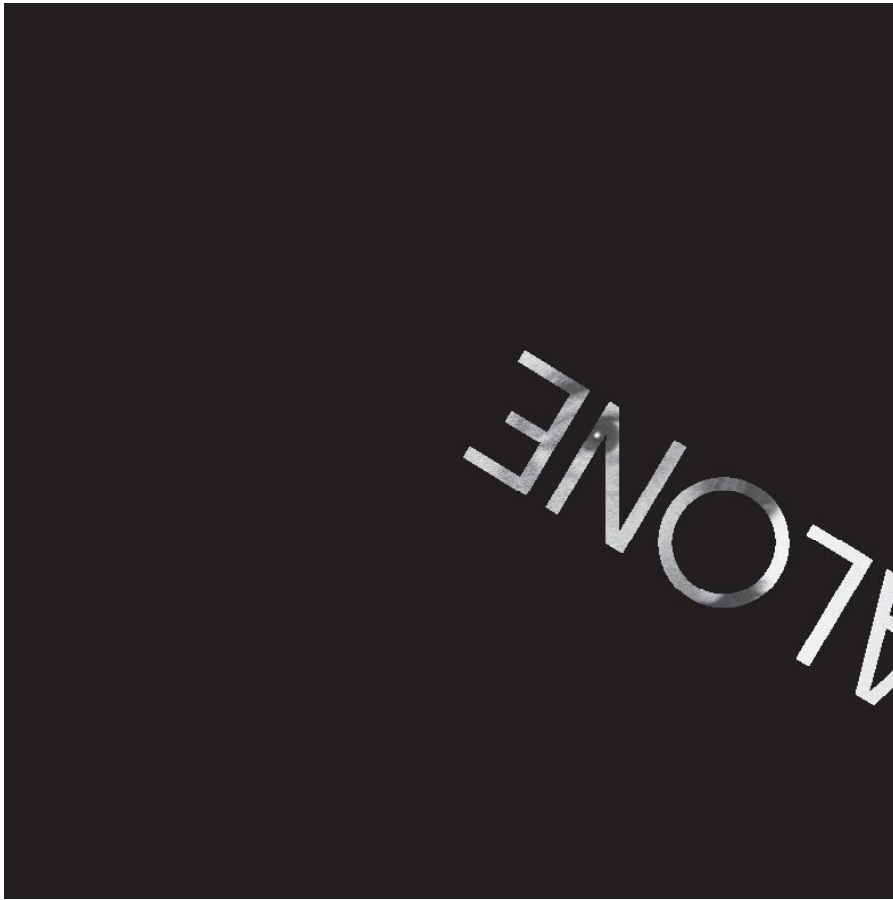
- Each book measures 39,4 cm x 29,4 cm
  - Contains 13 printed 8-page signatures, a total of 104 pages
  - Paper: 160 g Conqueror Connoisseur, ivory, cotton 100%
  - The signatures are double-stitched with linen thread
  - The end papers are 160 g Conqueror Connoisseur paper
  - The binding cloth is linen Brilliantia Calandré
  - Front cover, back cover and spine : embossed gilding and foil-blocking in gold (numbered, signed and stamped copies), in bronze (numbered copies)
  - Ivory headband
- 
- Printing by Arte-Print, Brussels
  - Binding by Delabie, Kortrijk
- 

### Production

- Limited edition of 600 numbered copies  
The copies with the numbers 001 - 100 are numbered, signed and stamped  
The copies with the numbers 101 - 500 are numbered  
The copies with the numbers 501 - 600 are A.P.
  - Price per unit (numbered): **275,00 €**  
Price per unit (numbered, signed and stamped): **1.500,00 €**
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(mfc-michèle didier) & Paula Cooper Gallery

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artist and the publisher.



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# Robert Barry

## Art Lovers

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Robert Barry was interviewed in Brussels, on the 22nd of March 2006 by Vera Kotaji, pp. Michèle Didier\*

\*Obligatory mention: © Vera Kotaji pp. Michèle Didier

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### About *Art Lovers* by Robert Barry

The book *Art Lovers* by Robert Barry is a continuation of the artist's work. Robert Barry has always used different kinds of media, including books, which have become highly significant both as artwork and as artists' books.

Robert Barry: *«I like books. I like the idea of holding them and turning pages. It creates a physical experience, a personal time. The artist book is about being a book. It is about turning pages, going back and forth and controlling time and space. It is like a wall, a gallery, a frame or a video. It is a possibility to do art. Of course, most of the books are used for reading text and my text is not a traditional text because these are not words which are meant to be information».*

*Art Lovers* is an unbound book of 72 plates. Each plate superimposes two layers: a photographic portrait and a word outline cut into a black surface. The portrait is covered by the black layer turning the opening made by the word into a keyhole. If we go back to «Belmont, 1967» published in 1977, one of Robert Barry's most «narrative» books and a tribute to Ad Reinhardt, we find the same sense of mystery, the same idea of a hole in a black surface acting as a window onto a face, without comments or explanation. In *Art Lovers*, the mystery is even greater. The viewer can barely see the portraits and has to infer their subjects from a few sparse and vague elements. The «*Art Lovers*» in question were photographed by Robert Barry himself and are friends of his. Artists, gallerists, critics, collectors and curators such as Sol Lewitt, Jonathan Monk, Leo Castelli, Yvon Lambert, Anne Rorimer and René Denizot are hidden «through» the words. They are there but it is impossible to identify them.

Robert Barry: *«I wanted to create a sort of mystery within a portrait book. I want people to know that there is something there, that there is someone there. And I want the people not to be really sure of what it is. Sometimes it is just textures, light and darkness. I want people to look very closely so that they can find some sense. But even if they don't find some, it is okay. I want a feeling that something is there that is not really showing. The word in a way exposes a part of the reality of that face, but without really knowing everything. If we see a classic portrait of a stranger or well-known person, we don't know anything about the person. You really don't know who that person is. The photograph portrait does not reveal what a person is. There is quite a mystery in the question of what people are».*

Each word corresponds to a single person but the connection between the two doesn't exist. Although words like *illusion*, *disturb*, *inevitable*, *alone*, *reason* cannot help but be evocative, they are not meant to indicate something about the image they are associated with, that is to say, with the person represented.

Robert Barry: *«I don't think that there is that kind of relationship that we could normally find. I don't like the idea of captions. I don't like the idea that somehow these words might define that person. I place words that I thought might expose a part of the face that I want to show. Any word can be associated with any picture. There is no specific relationship between the picture and the word. I don't want it to be read as a typical kind of «word-picture» relationship. They are separate things and I don't think of it in that traditional way as a comment on the person, on the personality. Word and image work together aesthetically, not as a poetical or personal comment on the person».*

The positional axes of the words vary from one plate to another. The word is carefully placed «at random» on the square plate. *Art Lovers* is a book of words and images in the purest sense. Words and images are indeed intermixed, both literally and mentally. In Robert Barry's first books, words were centered on the pages (It is...it isn't..., Paris, Yvon Lambert, 1972). Later, they began to «move», as they did in the wallpieces, vertically, horizontally or diagonally and sometimes upside down (*Come On*, Imschoot, 1987). Words are sometimes cut by the edge of the page, defining space just as a wall or a screen would. Within that range of ideas, we can also establish a connection between the *Art Lovers* black back-of-pages and the black slides projected between words in artists' slide shows in the 70's.

By definition, the book generates a continuous flow of meaning, derived from a set of distinct elements. *Art Lovers* brings together different issues characteristic of Robert Barry's whole work. According to the artist, «... there is a dimension in visual art which is not visible.» In fact, this «hidden aspect of art» is «luminously» incarnated here.

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Robert Barry  
*Art Lovers*

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**Specifications**

- 27,6 cm x 27,6 cm
  - 72 pages
  - Paper: Hello Silk 250 g
  - Box: laminated coated paper 115 g mounted on cardboard 1.7
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- Printing by Arte-Print, Brussels
  - Binding by Trehout, Estaimpuis

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**Production**

- Limited edition of 270 numbered copies and 30 A.P.
  
- Price per unit: **175,00 €**

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Produced and published in 2006 by mfc-michèle didier

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# Robert Barry

## *One Billion Colored Dots*

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©2008 Robert Barry and mfc-michèle didier



*One Billion Colored Dots* consists of twenty-five volumes and counts one billion dots at the rate of 40,000,000 dots per volume and 40,000 dots per page.

It is printed in as many colors as there are volumes :

- Vol 1.....Red
- Vol 2..... Blue
- Vol 3..... Orange
- Vol 4..... Violet
- Vol 5.....Green
- Vol 6.....Yellow
- Vol 7.....Maroon
- Vol 8.....Blue Green
- Vol 9..... Light Green
- Vol 10.....Ochre
- Vol 11..... Light Purple
- Vol 12..... Light Grey
- Vol 13.....Dark Blue
- Vol 14.....Pink
- Vol 15..... Yellow Green
- Vol 16.....Purple
- Vol 17.....Light Orange
- Vol 18.....Red Violet
- Vol 19..... Light Yellow
- Vol 20..... Silver
- Vol 21..... Light Blue
- Vol 22..... Grey
- Vol 23..... Gold
- Vol 24..... White
- Vol 25..... Black

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# Robert Barry

## *One Billion Colored Dots*

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\*Obligatory mention: © Frédéric Paul

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### About *One Billion Colored Dots* by Robert Barry

*I always do what I say I'm going to do*<sup>1</sup>  
Robert Barry, *point by point*

«He wandered amid stars gathered with the density of a treasure, in a world where nothing else, absolutely nothing else other than he, Fabien, and his comrade, was living. Like those thieves of legendary cities, walled up in the treasure chamber which they can no longer leave. Among icy gems, they wander, infinitely rich, but condemned.»

**Antoine de Saint-Exupéry**<sup>2</sup>

«I always worked with quantity... the suggestion of extended space in my paintings, the inert gas pieces («from measured volume to indefinite expansion»), half lives with the radiation pieces, the radio wave pieces, etc. The idea of time, space, infinity, quantity beyond our ability to actually perceive or comprehend has always interested me. Even with *Art Lovers*, in maybe a more subtle way. I think it's always present in my work.»

**Robert Barry**<sup>3</sup>

Time and space are the prime gauges of reality. Even if they are not its more tangible ingredients, they are the abscissae and the ordinates whereby the real occurs... or doesn't. «A very long time ago, there lived, in a wild and lonely forest on the Fulda estate<sup>4</sup>»... Thus starts E.T.A. Hoffmann's tale titled *Ignaz Denner*. To mention just one. For, faced with the issue that will more precisely concern us here, the rest doesn't much matter. The décor is set up and, for starters, the fact of knowing that the story took place some time in the past is enough for the reader. What's more, he's not terribly bothered about the setting and the period, as long as they are indicated; it's the unlikelihood of the facts and the likelihood of their sequencing that will hold sway for the fan of fantastic narratives. Here he is, embarked upon a fantasy and confident in the vessel's seaworthiness. The minimum called for is guaranteed. Because it is actually first of all under the aegis of time and space that reality comes across, and make-believe is shored up by its example.

This is easy enough to go along with where space is concerned, because we can actually simultaneously experience two dots eight inches apart — even if we may have to very slightly squint or step back! Things are a bit more complicated where time is concerned, because two events twenty minutes apart can never be grasped concurrently, unless memory is brought into this operation — but memory does not help us to squint at these two events and put them together in order to contemplate them with the same comparative rigour; the liaison made by memory is artificial: memory doesn't squint [Fr. *louche*], memory is fishy [Fr. *louche*]!

Three years elapsed between the moment when Robert Barry came up with the idea of lending a material aspect to the quantity — something abstract because of its enormity — lurking behind the number 1,000,000,000, and the execution in 1971 of this project in the form of a book in twenty-five volumes published in a single copy with the title *One Billion Dots*. Gian Enzo Sperone, the young Italian gallery owner and publisher who took up the challenge, has had some experience in this field. A powerful complicity already binds him to the artist, and to the so-called conceptual art scene's most adventurous, demanding and — to say it like it is — least sellable phenomena. Barry has already had two solo shows at Sperone's Turin gallery, and his first artist's book was published way back in 1970, a Sperone brainchild<sup>5</sup>.

The first show, in 1969, was one of a series of three, two of which were held simultaneously in December in Amsterdam and Turin, and the last, three months later in Los Angeles. Throughout these shows, the galleries involved were closed and their public was duly informed. We can imagine an event taking place in two places at the very same time, whereas it is harder to picture an event not taking place, *but* simultaneously, in two places. Simultaneity implies that the event has occurred. If it has not occurred, it has not occurred

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# Robert Barry

## *One Billion Colored Dots*

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\*Obligatory mention: © Frédéric Paul

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anywhere. The place where the event occurs thus lends it an evident existence. And if it occurs in two places at once, evidence of its existence is merely the more indubitable.

The three exhibitions, which were the first of what would be called the *Closed Gallery Piece*, did indeed take place, complete with venue and schedule. The event was turned into a non-event (or vice versa), but it counted as an exhibition. A sense of achievement can be found even in frustration! Because what was at issue here had nothing to do with any annoyance at finding the gallery's doors shut, until you pushed them to discover what was going on, because you happened to be in the neighbourhood. (Between two exhibitions, while they are being put up, opportunity inevitably recurred.) This time, it was no longer a matter of a gap in the programming. What was involved was a *fully-fledged* show. A show which counted, even retrospectively, as a symbolic act, like the basis of the artist's biography.

Robert Barry's second solo show with Sperone in Turin, in 1970, focused on the *Marcuse Piece*. The eponymous work consisted in a quotation from the American Marxist sociologist of German extraction, taken from *An Essay on Liberation*, published a year earlier. The quotation was composed for the occasion with adhesive letters on one of the gallery walls, people this time being allowed to venture inside, and spend a moment wondering what precisely they were doing there. This new proposition thus took the opposite position to the previous one. There was no frustration in the programme. On the contrary, the proposition was proffered this time around as a space of pure freedom and fulfilment. The highlighted quotation was, in this respect, in tune with the times: «Some place to which we can come and for a while 'be free to think about what we are going to do'.» But what is left of the thinking of Herbert Marcuse, who was among the major ideologists of the revolutionary student movement of 1968<sup>6</sup>? What is more, what need did Robert Barry feel to make reference to him, if we compare his quotation with the first rejoinder of the *Interview Piece* that the artist published in the catalogue for the exhibition *Prospect 69*, held in September and October 1969 at the Dusseldorf Kunsthalle: «The piece consists of the ideas that people will have from reading this interview<sup>7</sup>»?

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In 1969, as in 1970, at the Sperone gallery, the two shows consisted in just one work, and in each instance one idea formed the work. For the exhibition to take place, the idea must exist not only in the idea state, but as an artwork, too. No work, no show. Now the work, here, is not intended as the term of an art desire; on the contrary it is the commencement thereof. What interests Barry, and what interests us about him, is the art potential contained in the works. The work is an art vector. In it, art does not assume any definitive form that is carefully delimited by a peerless craftsman's expert hand, itself guided by the higher intelligence of a master thinker, but this work — with its impossible-to-follow outline and over which the hand will never be able to close, and in whose proximity the mind will never be at rest — is indispensable.

*Closed Gallery Piece*, *Interview Piece*, *Marcuse Piece*, with Barry. *Duration Piece*, *Location Piece*, *Variable Piece*, with Douglas Huebler. In spite of their concern not to clutter the world with useless objects, conceptual artists do produce a large number of works. The cultivated bourgeois and the expressionist painter, who both reproach them, terrorized, for skipping over them and hatching a plot aimed at precipitating the death of art, are utterly wrong. Conceptual artists are impatient. It is not their calling to be painters and sculptors, whose praxis would underpin the presumption that they are artists, would up that probability, and who *might* actually be just that, through talent, or by insisting thereupon. They are right away, and above all else, producers of art and, by the way things are, they are also producers of works. They are quite simply less concerned with producing art which pushes back art's boundaries — according to the modernist *doxa* — than with producing an art that alters our perception of the world and of artworks. It is art that must decide about the artwork, and not the other way round. «Art for me is making art<sup>8</sup>», Barry states. Bochner is more nuanced: «I do not make art, I do art<sup>9</sup>», where the use of the auxiliary tends to describe an attitude rather than an action. And Carl Andre adds the following confirmation: «Art is what we do, culture is what is done to us<sup>10</sup>».

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# Robert Barry

## *One Billion Colored Dots*

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\*Obligatory mention: © Frédéric Paul

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Even if the gallery is closed, even if it is empty, the presumption of artwork is indispensable. With Huebler, the terminological shift is illuminating. Before long adopting the general idiom of *Location Piece*, he passingly used that of *Site Sculpture Project* in 1968. Even when immaterial, and reduced to the dimension of a project, the work must have the unimpeachable consistency of sculpture, as if it could more surely introduce itself as such, even merely by intent, into the world around us: as both an object and an act. But, instead, let us here consider the fact that the word «piece», a simple copula added after a noun or a proper name, has the power to contest the most stubborn of situations — the closed door — and that it has the power to transform a closed gallery, an interview, a quotation, and so on, into so many experiences of a different kind, and into so many projects capable of freeing up as many experiences producing art.

And this is why three years can elapse between the expression of the project, as with *One Billion Dots*, and its completion — which cannot be seen as its depletion. Three years was also the time needed by Gian Enzo Sperone to collect the money needed to be able to put together, print, and forwarding his original edition. For if Barry's two shows, which he had just put on in Turin, had incurred almost no production costs, twenty-five bound volumes of more than 2,000 pages each (each sheet printed on just one side) is some investment! Luckily, the Cologne-based dealer Paul Maenz was interested in the book, and lost no time in buying it, before handing it on to Dr. Friedrich E. Rentschler (F.E.R.), in whose hands it still is.

Meanwhile, Barry was anything but idle. In 1968, he took part, in particular, in a group show in a higher educational establishment for girls, which was the last place anyone would have thought of as becoming a hub of contemporary art, had Douglas Huebler not happened to have taught there: Bradford Junior College, in Bradford, Massachusetts. Then, with this latter and others, Barry became the almost permanent guest of the leading incubator of Conceptual Art, Seth Siegelaub<sup>11</sup>, who, in January 1969, and then in March of the same year, and between July and September, too, organized in New York a series of confidential but historically decisive exhibitions.

It was in association with Jack Wendler that, from 1968 on, Siegelaub helped Barry to produce an initial approach to *One Billion Dots*, which is of special interest to us here. In the book *Carl Andre / Robert Barry / Douglas Huebler / Joseph Kosuth / Sol LeWitt / Robert Morris / Lawrence Wiener* published in December in an edition of 1,000 in the form of photocopies (whence the title «Xerox Book» used for it), his *One Million Dots* does in fact already feature, with 40,000 dots per page, and taking up all the 25 pages made available to each artist by the publishers.

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Between March and July 1969, an extremely productive period, as we have just seen, the student Patricia Norvell conducted a series of interviews published more than 30 years later in a book that has become a must read, and from which we have already borrowed material on several occasions. The list of artists and leading figures questioned, drawn up on the advice of Robert Morris, Norvell's professor, is impressive: Barry, Huebler, Kaltenbach, LeWitt, Morris (needless to say), Oppenheim, Siegelaub, Smithson, and Weiner. The sum total is already so invigorating that it was hard to think it would be enriched by other appointments — sadly not kept! — with Carl Andre, Jack Burnham, Dan Graham, Eva Hesse, Lucy Lippard, Richard Serra, and one or two others... Siegelaub answered the student's questions on 17 April 1969. We know all about the many different projects he was involved in at that time and, as if that wasn't enough, he pointed out: «I have a gallery, for lack of a better word, called the Gallery in California now<sup>12</sup>». Siegelaub and Barry would not go to Los Angeles in April 1969, but the latter nevertheless had a solo show in the aforementioned gallery. If the truth be told, the exhibition only existed as an item of information. Barry had gone to California the month before. There he had come by several bottles of rare gas, to be emptied in six places. A poster was published later and sent out to a highly targeted mailing list announcing the April show, but nothing was ever shown. And all that exists of his Californian activities is some photos of landscapes, certificates and inert gas molecules



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# Robert Barry

## *One Billion Colored Dots*

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\*Obligatory mention: © Frédéric Paul

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which have roamed around in the atmosphere ever since, altogether harmlessly<sup>13</sup>. The gallery was useful for spreading information. The programme went ahead. The exhibition was proof thereof. Siegelau and Barry were indeed involved in it together, but they became tired of exhibitions promising lots of things to see where, in their eyes, nothing came to pass.

Accumulation, dissemination, you will hopefully please forgive me for this lengthy detour, but the parallel between the *inert gas series* and that of the million and billion dots seems natural. To be freed from the atmosphere, and to be 'returned' to it, to borrow Barry's term, rare gases must first have been artificially captured (like Duchamp's glass ampoule filled with Paris air, or like Piero Manzoni's can of artist's shit) and kept in tanks. And their dissemination is aimed at nothing other than a rarefaction of rare gases. We can see an ecological gesture in this return to the atmosphere, but we should above all consider in it the failure of our temptation to put everything in order by way of thought and acts. Releasing a rare gas into the atmosphere, where it is naturally present in infinitesimal amounts, it is tantamount to undoing the task of capturing and packaging it, as carried out earlier. Any aspiration to purity must thus slip between our fingers. With the rare gas that escapes, it is also the notion of given volume that vanishes. Now, purity is only quantitative: 100% of concentration equals 0% of foreign body<sup>14</sup>.

And so it is the reverse approach that Barry follows by focusing on *One Million Dots* in the 25 pages of the *Xerox Book* earmarked for him, then by multiplying by one thousand this operation in the 25 volumes of the *One Billion Dots*, and finally, all of 40 years later, in the other 25 volumes of the *One Billion Colored Dots*, this time around published by the French publisher Michèle Didier, based in Brussels. Each dot is insignificant, but it is the sheer quantity of dots that here gives a measure and a meaning to the undertaking. The accumulation of dots is oriented towards the edification of sense. And it is, conversely, dispersal that played this role in the *inert gas series*<sup>15</sup>. Inert gases and dots alike, the quantity thereof, overdetermined in both instances, all links up with the function of the word «piece», as referred to above. Quantity constitutes the work. The quantity of works, too, incidentally. So, eager to reduce to a strict minimum the documentation surrounding and illustrating his actions, Barry explains that a work may only be rendered more explicit in the context of a series than in an isolated way. Because there are six inert gases in the last column of Mendeleev's periodic table, the programme is all laid out. The works *Telepathic Piece* and *Inert Gas Series* are art vectors and the words «piece» and «series» are identifiers, markers and tracers. The art object may be becoming more and more discreet, and may even be vanishing altogether from people's concerns, but art is still the ultimate goal. Conceptual Art has been seen by some as a lethal threat, but have people asked themselves if there was ever a keener desire for art in history?

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All the artists in Siegelau's entourage were painters before going on to other things. Douglas Huebler and Robert Barry, too. So this is not why they had a closer relationship. The reason is that they both taught and because they both had families. Which reduced their mobility. Besides, Barry tried to land a job in New York for Huebler at Hunter College, where he himself taught after studying there, but he failed to lure his friend to the City University of New York, to which Hunter College belongs — and we know that Huebler no longer lived or worked in New York after 1953.

Douglas Huebler acknowledged the influence of oriental philosophies on his own change of course. And it was probably the graphic works he produced between 1968 and 1976 that were the most marked by them. All sorts of archival documents, handwritten and typed alike, are pigeonholed in the «graphic works» category. The ones I want to talk about consist in blank sheets of paper with captions at the bottom in a style that calls to mind Lichtenstein's aphorisms. Let us give an example: «The surface above reflects an indeterminate amount of light when this book is open to these pages but is absolutely non-reflective when the book is closed». In other such captioned «drawings», an isolated dot may be centred<sup>17</sup> or dots may be distributed evenly over the surface. To summon onlookers to a special per-

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\*Obligatory mention: © Frédéric Paul

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ceptive and existential experience, the artist invites them to stare closely at the flawless surface, or at the isolated dot, or at the series of dots.

Barry, for his part, fills whole books with dots, and their quantity is such that he lets us get away with not looking at them all. Together with the publication of the *One Billion Colored Dots*, in 2008, Michèle Didier published a digital, monochrome version of *One Billion Dots*, composed differently from the original printed version, and designed for video projection. In this form, the experiment took 4.153043981 days, that is, 99.6730555 hours, that is, 5,980.383333 minutes, which works out at 358,823 seconds<sup>18</sup>. Is it then possible to imagine how many works of literature would have to be compiled to reach the grand total of *one billion dots* that Robert Barry was after? Four days spent without taking breath at the end of every sentence — nobody could survive that! Let us leave *Remembrance of Things Past* aside, even if the title is a programmatic one, because, given the length of Proust's sentences, full stops are too rare in his writing...

What kind of readers are we when we peruse the 25 volumes of *One Billion Colored Dots*? Does experience result from reading? Certainly not. It assumes an appearance thereof because a book is involved, but this book does not contain any information, except on the title page and at the end of each book on the page containing the colophon. And no imagery is disguised in these expanses of dots, even if all you would have to do is link up some of them, in a certain order, to bring out thousands of images! So regarded as a set of books, *One Billion Colored Dots* is empty. And regarded as a reservoir, it is full. Full, but contentless. For, as Sartre said: «Colours and forms are not signs, they refer to nothing that is outside them<sup>19</sup>». And we are faced with this sum like a person suffering from memory problems, before which, in a disorderly manner, process the guests at a reception held in his honour, and who, having for each guest a fair-minded word of welcome, would be unable to tell whom among his guests have already been introduced to him, and whom he still has to greet. To keep up appearances, these seriously ill people wear an occasional smile in society, but they are lost and confined in a profound loneliness. In front of Robert Barry's billion dots, we are lost, alone in front of the host and we flit from one volume to another, without either order or method, like the pilot in Saint-Exupéry's *Vol de Nuit* [*Night Flight*]. For it would be silly to start on page 1 and hope to end up one day on the 50,200th page. Just as it would be absurd to slip in a bookmark, promising to resume one's reading later, where one had left off. Robert Barry's accumulations of dots are part of a very specific category of books which exist in their own right, without it being necessary to open every page... if one has leafed through very superficially at least once.

The best conditions for presenting the *One Billion Colored Dots* are when the 25 volumes can be opened simultaneously on one and the same desk or similar surface, at a height where you can consult them standing up. The reader-*cum*-peruser can thus move freely about from right to left and left to right, from one colour to another, renewing associations as the mood takes him, with colour being allocated an unusual function that could not be assumed by Sperone's monochrome edition. Apart from the title page (bearing no mention of the date or any explanation of the edition on the latest publication, where these data and many more are included in detail in the colophon, at the end of each volume), the 25 volumes printed in 1971 were all identical.

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The physical experience is complicated in the Michèle Didier edition by the very fact of colour, which prompts readers to leaf through the books, or at least jump from one to another. In 1971, the books could remain closed. In 2008, they must be used, i.e. handled. The colour must be revealed by light. For this is a different experience when you lean over a page peppered with blue and red dots. And further back in the process, the artist makes a specific experiment when he selects the colours and when he names them. Questioned about his choices, his answer was nevertheless laconic: «I wanted all the basic and secondary colors plus white, black, grey, gold, etc.<sup>20</sup>.» Asked about the principle of colour classification, he offered a painter's reply: «No system, just what I thought felt right<sup>21</sup>.» Which gives: n° of volume Pantone reference Subtitle given by the artist

1032red2293blue31505orange42685violet5334green6102yellow-  
7228maroon83262bluegreen9621lightgreen10110ochre112635lightpurple12541light-  
rey132955darkblue14230pink15375yellowgreen162592purple17162lightorange182405redviolet  
19100lightyellow20877\*silver21290lightblue 22427grey 23871gold 24white\*white25blackblack.

Why does Barry stick to such short answers? So as not to substitute his appreciation for that of the user, probably, who can note, all on his own:

- that the artist has refrained from using primary colours;
- that red and blue are the first colours of the series, but that yellow only appears in sixth position;
- that black has been kept to the end;
- that the white dots in the penultimate volume are invisible, printed on white paper, unless you bend down and look at the book askance in oblique light;
- that gold and silver are black, conversely, if they are not looked at head on, in direct light;
- that the dispersion of the printing in a host of dots creates a grid-like effect;
- that certain, usually light, colours, like «light green», «light yellow» and «light blue», lend the dot-filled pages a vibration that is hard to deal with a close quarters;
- that the colour of the surfaces thus gridded is very diminished in relation to the colour of the dots taken separately;
- that the grid more easily gives the illusion of a flat tint if you narrow your eyes;
- that the nuance between certain colours, like the «light blue», the «light green» and the «light grey» is never subtle enough to cause a muddle;
- that from the «maroon» tallying with the bordeaux in volume seven to the «pink», Barry seems to have a soft spot for shades of purple;
- that the «maroon» is not a brown and the «purple» is not a purple;
- that the «purple» does not exclude «violet»;
- that the artist has preferred a bordeaux and an ochre to a mid brown, which does not exist on his chart possibly because the mixture is too indecisive...

You can see enough things when you look closely at these books without having to wonder what you might be seeing in them. Yet the physical experience grapples with the semantic experience in the very moment when you observe them. And it can be noted, with some astonishment, that it is not possible to decide which is the most immediate, between the physical and the semantic. The word red probably has an intensity equivalent to that of the colour it is used to designate. Naming is tantamount to setting apart, it is tantamount to assisting facts in order to assimilate them. The fact is, visual experience is already mental before being verbalized.

For Sartre, «words are transparent and [...] the eye passes over them<sup>22</sup>». For Bochner, it is the opposite. Only «numbers are really transparent<sup>23</sup>». On the other hand: «Language is not transparent<sup>24</sup>». For Sartre, words are transparent because they refer to something: the attention must not be fixed upon them. For Bochner, they cannot be transparent, because they are ill-suited to being referred back to a single objective: they redirect the thought which they are supposed to serve, and an essential part of the work of this leading conceptual artist, which escaped Siegelau, is based on this opaqueness, where Barry readily links back up with him when he declares: «The use of language is very difficult. It's something which is not natural to me<sup>25</sup>». No words or so few in these 50,200 pages which, when bound, form books that are absolutely full or absolutely empty, as you will, but anything except *transparent*.

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For Barry, more so than with a certain number of his contemporaries, the documentation attached to the work should not be presented as anything other than a proof of the work's existence, but the existence of the documentation has the drawback of being imposed in a too flagrantly obvious way in relation to an artistic intervention which has so little material existence. It has, it just so happens, the major original flaw of having to be *attached* to it.

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# Robert Barry

## *One Billion Colored Dots*

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\*Obligatory mention: © Frédéric Paul

«There's no one who makes work quite like the way Barry does», emphasizes Siegelaub. «Because he doesn't even have a piece of paper in the end to tell you. He doesn't even have a statement about something. When he's finished, he just has, you know, just the fact of having done it. It's his word that he did it at all. [...] Barry is quite a bit different. There's absolutely nothing<sup>26</sup>.»

The will to stick with the work itself, excluding any documentary or semiotic apparatus, calls to mind the demand for the artwork's plastic autonomy as claimed by earlier generations. And let us acknowledge that, as part of a Marxist-inspired approach<sup>27</sup>, veering towards the liquidation of the object and (in passing) of a certain art market, the certificate which is part of the documentation is cumbersome as a title of ownership.

I came up against a wall when I asked Robert Barry to talk to me about his first two artist's books, that came before *One Billion Dots*. The first time I tried, mentioning their titles, the names of the editors and the publication dates, and only asking him what kind of books they were, he replied «artist[s] books, black text on white paper<sup>28</sup>». Too short, I thought. And I got back on the case by asking him to describe them for me. This is what he replied second time around: «No, not more than I have. How can you possibly know the work of art unless you have seen it? If they are important to your work you will have to find them. How do you know about them? When you see them you can ask questions. A description is incomplete and can be misleading<sup>29</sup>.»

Any comment can be to the advantage of the documentation, and thus to its disadvantage if the documentation is deemed problematic because it may shift the attention and cause a distraction in relation to the artist's intentions.

To point out a work — Barry and Siegelaub are not wrong here — just one reference to its existence in a list at the end of a catalogue suffices. In these conditions, needless to say, it is possible to sidestep it — the work — without noticing it, but because the essential thing is that it *exists*, is this not better than seeing and describing it while seriously misunderstanding what it is about? «Any thing that one names is already no longer quite the same, it has lost its innocence. If you name the behaviour of an individual, you reveal his behaviour to him: [...] his furtive gesture [...] starts to exist in a big way, starts to exist for one and all, [...] it takes on new dimensions, it is retrieved<sup>30</sup>.» From my own point of view, I prefer, firstly, to do without commentary to discover an exhibition. All commentary is by nature intrusive and additional. The most suspect of commentaries, albeit additional, is certainly the one which claims only to be filled with the substance of the work it is talking about. The critical space either opens up or disappears completely — it depends — with Conceptual Art. For Barry, it evaporates. To the very relevant question: «What about the question of judgment, whether a piece is good or bad?», raised by Patricia Norvell, he has a disarming and irrefutable response: «I don't even think that there'll be that judgment. I think that the whole definition of art will be changing. The thing just is. I mean, how can you criticize a carrier wave? How do you criticize inert gas?<sup>31</sup>» The work disappears as an object, but Robert Barry here amazingly reduces it to its material components. This is perhaps why he chooses components that are precisely almost immaterial: gas, numbers, and radio waves... But his contribution cannot be scaled down to a mere updating of the readymade.

Robert Barry is still steeped in the grid work which he undertook as a painter back in 1962 when he came up with *One Million Dots* and *One Billion Dots*. His first solo show, at the Westerly Gallery in New York, in 1964, was in a minimalist vein. In it he showed monochrome pictures whose square «motif» regularly repeated was presented in the negative like a blank in a coloured flat tint. The following year he took part in a group show in the same venue. In it, Lawrence Weiner noticed one of his drawings and then talked to Siegelaub about it. It so happened that Barry already knew this latter, whose gallery was in the neighbourhood.

The 1964 paintings and the *One Million Dots* possibly only have in common the organization of the repetitive motifs. The *Xerox Book* is a multiple, as its name suggests. The *One Billion Dots*

is a one-off work, but it results from the repetition of 40,000 dots per page over 25,000 pages. The differentness resides in automaticity and disproportion. All that remains written by hand, if we can so put it, in the books, is the consultation they invite. For even if what interests Barry in the book is the idea of the book, this idea is intended to be tangible: «I like books. I like the idea of holding them and turning pages. It creates a physical experience, a personal time. The artist book is about being a book. It is about turning pages, going back and forth and controlling time and space<sup>32</sup>.» The idea of the book is probably not altogether the book. But is there a choice? From a book, is it possible to have an experience other than that of the idea you make of it?

Now, in order to be necessary, this idea does not need to be faithful to the book suggesting it. What is more, the book to which Barry here makes reference is a forthcoming book, both ideal and generic. Similarly, the composer Robert Schumann, in the depths of depression, still laid claim to a certain idea of happiness. «Nothing shows better how sadness is the foundation of all music of innerness than Schumann's note: «Im frohlichen Ton» [In the tone of joy]. The word joy or happiness belies its reality, and the «im», which presupposes the existence of a «joyous tone», known and belonging to the past, announces at one and the same time that this tone is lost and that there is the intent to bring it back to life<sup>33</sup>.»

*One Billion Dots* has remained in the same private German collection since the 1970s. Few and far between, therefore, are those who have had a chance to consult it. The publisher Michèle Didier dreamt of publishing a new version of it ever since, in 1995, she started working on the *One Million Years of On Kawara*, precisely contemporary with Robert Barry's project<sup>34</sup>. She already had under her belt several monumental projects when she first met Barry and offered to make a multiple of his first billion dots. Barry turned down the offer and mentioned another book project, which would result in the 72-page *Art Lovers*, published by Michèle Didier in 2006. Then, when the publisher had quite given up, Barry reverted to his initial intention in 2007 and proposed the variant *One Billion Colored Dots*; «Same concept, different realization<sup>35</sup>.» As an edition of thirty-five, *One Billion Colored Dots* appeared 40 years after the *One Million Dots*, 40 years after he had the idea for *One Billion Dots*, and 37 years exactly after the realization of this latter. Barry is used to this kind of revival: «I have done it very often in many different ways [...] I like that use of time and space and time creating space. Something only an older artist can do<sup>36</sup>.» Each book in the new series of 25 has 2008 pages and it is in the year 2008 that the project has been completed. The first edition had grey binding and was printed in black inside. The new edition has white binding and is thus printed in 25 different colours, one for each volume, apart from the title and colophon pages. The meaning of a work is provided by the artist's motivation. «I always do what I say I'm going to do. [...] Ah, it's important to me to do it. You see, that's part of the making of the art<sup>37</sup>.» Instead of looking for meaning, look for motivation!

A shelf was made to measure for the one and only very valuable *One Billion Dots*, an idea pursued by its owner. In the excellent catalogue published for the exhibitions at the Nuremberg Kunsthalle, and the Aarau Kunsthaus in 2003<sup>38</sup>, the caption to the photo of this work mistakenly refers to the piece of furniture as part of the work. Ah, the delights of translation: in German the word for shelf is *Regal* — which by the way means delight in French! I have passed this on to Barry, who liked it, but not yet to Jonathan Monk, whose portrait features in the background of a page of *Art Lovers*, who will revel in it. Monk is actually nurturing a project to produce a series of pictures with a billion dots painted by hand in China at the rate of one dot per person<sup>39</sup>.

In French, one can choose between two etymologies for the word *régale*: the etymology of rejoicing or celebration, which gives *rigoler* [Eng. to laugh] and the etymology of *royal* which gives *régalien* [regalian or kingly.] One can find also happiness between the two.

Frédéric Paul, vii-viii. 2008

Translated by Simon Pleasance & Fronza Woods

# Robert Barry

## *One Billion Colored Dots*

\*Obligatory mention: © Frédéric Paul

### Notes

- 1 R. B. in Patricia Norvell & Alexander Alberro, *Recording Conceptual Art*, interviews by P. Norvell, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2001, p. 90
- 2 *Vol de Nuit*, Gallimard, Paris, 1931, ch. XVI, republ. Folio, p. 145
- 3 R. B., correspondence with the author, 13 August 2008
- 4 In French, E. T. A. Hoffmann, *Contes nocturnes*, tr. M. Laval and A. Espiau de la Maëstre, Phébus, Paris, 1979, p. 61
- 5 Conveniently relisted under the reference An Untitled Book in bibliographies, but actually incurring an error: the book did not in fact have this title.
- 6 *One-Dimensional Man* [*L'Homme unidimensionnel*] appeared in French in the same year.
- 7 R. B., p. 26 of the catalogue
- 8 R. B., P. Norvell, *op. cit.*, p. 87
- 9 M. B., *Artforum*, New York, May 1970
- 10 C. A., «Sensibility of the Sixties», *Art in America*, January-February 1967, p. 49
- 11 Sperone met Siegelau in Italy. He then went to New York to meet Barry
- 12 S. S., P. Norvell, *op. cit.*, p. 33
- 13 Two volumes of helium were released in the Mojave desert, on two different days (one for the Californian show, the other for the exhibition *March 69*, in New York), and a third volume, in Los Angeles, near the pool in a friend's garden. The krypton was released in Beverly Hills. The xenon, in the Tehachapi mountains. The argon, on a beach at Santa Monica. The neon, on a hill in Los Angeles, facing the Pacific Ocean. (And the documentation for this piece has to date never been presented.) Because the radon could not be delivered without a permit, given its radioactivity, Barry stuck with five inert gases out of the six listed.
- 14 Wholeness is something else again. Because the gases used are inert, and because, by definition, «they are not part of any known chemical combination», their dispersed molecules will always stay whole whatever their proportion in the atmosphere. Purity is a passive and residual characteristic. Wholeness is the active property of keeping this characteristic while protesting against corruption. It would be wrong to attach any moral value to a bottle of alcohol labelled 100° or 100% volume.
- 15 What is more, the contrast is not as candid and symmetrical as might be suggested by this bipolarization of accumulation/dispersion. For, by titling each piece in the inert gases series «from a measured volume to indefinite expansion», let us note that Barry prefers the word *expansion* to dispersion—expansion may be inadequate, scientifically speaking, but it is no less effective when it comes to describing our imagination's infinite capacity to invent, as attested to by the invention of the infinite sequence of numbers.
- 16 R. B., «with as little description as possible, with as little interpretation as possible», P. Norvell, *op. cit.*, p. 97
- 17 D. H. : « A point located in the exact center of this page. » «For the single instant that it is perceived the point represented above exists as a phenomenon in time and space that is equal in value to any other position of reality that its percipient has ever considered as a measurement of his, or her existence.»
- 18 Related to the hardly more sensible coefficient of 10 dots per second, this would mean 3.1709 years (i.e. 3 years, 62 days, 9 hours, 5 minutes and 2.4 seconds), or 1 157.4074 days (i.e. 1157 days, 9 hours, 46 minutes and 39.36 seconds), or 27,777.7777 hours (i.e. 27,777 hours, 46 minutes and 39.72 seconds), or 1,666,666.666 minutes (i.e. 1,666,666 minutes and 40.2 seconds), and thus 100,000,000 seconds to terminate this ordeal without any other activity, and without any sleep! At a rate of one dot per second, it will take you almost 32 years of insomnia and liquidfree dieting.

If the truth be told, according to Michèle Didier, the projection of the film follows the following progression: «The image changes every half-second, i.e. there is a black screen alternation containing one or several dots and a virgin black screen every half-second.

1 second.....	screen 1 - 1 dot	50 s.....	screen 7 - 37 dots
25 s.....	screen 2 - 3 dots	55 s.....	screen 8 - 68 dots (1 line)
30 s.....	screen 3 - 5 dots	60 s.....	screen 9 - 204 dots
35 s.....	screen 4 - 9 dots	65 s.....	screen 10 - 476 dots
40 s.....	screen 5 - 12 dots	70 s.....	screen 11 - 1020 dots
45 s.....	screen 6 - 17 dots	75 s.....	screen 12 - 2788 dots

When the black screen is saturated with dots, i.e. 2788..., it will flash up to the 358,753rd second, then in the opposite direction once again lose the same number of dots, in the same time, until it displays 1 dot on the screen and then it will take 1 second more to stop.

358,753 s.....	screen 11	358,791 s.....	screen 4
358,759 s.....	screen 10	358,797 s.....	screen 3
358,764 s.....	screen 9	358,802 s.....	screen 2
358,769 s.....	screen 8	358,807 s.....	screen 1
358,775 s.....	screen 7	358,834 s.....	final screen
358,780 s.....	screen 6	358,840 s.....	stop
358,786 s.....	screen 5		

But it may as well be admitted, Michèle Didier and I have never managed to agree over the exact length of the film! To those unfortunate people who were not aware of this, let us mention in this respect, to get on a beam with and on the right side of Robert Barry, that according to the first resolution of the 13<sup>e</sup> Conférence Générale des Poids et Mesures, 1967/68 : «The second is the duration of 9 192 631 770 periods of the radiation corresponding to the transition between the two hyperfine levels of the

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# Robert Barry

## *One Billion Colored Dots*

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\*Obligatory mention: © Frédéric Paul

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- ground state of the caesium 133 atom». And let us add, for greater accuracy, that: «This definition refers to a caesium atom at rest at a temperature of 0 K.»
- 19 Sartre, *Qu'est-ce que la littérature ?*, «1. Qu'est-ce qu'écrire?», Gallimard, Paris, 1948, republ. Folio, 1985, p. 14
- 20 R. B., correspondence with the author, 18 July 2008
- 21 *Ibid*
- 22 Sartre, *op. cit.*, p. 30
- 23 M. B., Anne-Françoise Penders, «Rencontre avec Mel Bochner / New York, mars 2000», *Pratiques*, n° 9, École des beaux-arts/Presses Universitaires de Rennes, Autumn 2000
- 24 M. B., «Speculations 1967-1970», *Art in the Mind*, Allen Art Museum / Oberlin College, Oberlin (Ohio), 1970, p. 33
- 25 R. B., P. Norvell, *op. cit.*, p. 91
- 26 S. S., *ibid*, p. 33
- 27 Let us think once again of Marcuse and note that Siegelau, who does not see himself as a theoretician and even less as a writer, published *Marxism and the Mass Media 4-5*, in 1976, and *Communication and Class Struggle: Capitalism, Imperialism*, en 1979.
- 28 R. B., correspondence with the author, 19 July 2008
- 29 R. B., *ibid.*, 20 July 2008
- 30 Sartre, *op. cit.*, pp. 27, 28
- 31 R. B., P. Norvell, *op. cit.*, p. 94
- 32 R. B., *Interview in Brussels on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March 2006 by Vera Kotaji for Michèle Didier* [www.micheledidier.com](http://www.micheledidier.com)
- 33 Theodor W. Adorno, *Quasi una fantasia*, Gallimard, Paris, 1982, p. 13
- 34 On Kawara's project was finalized in 1999 by Editions Micheline Szwajcer & Michèle Didier.
- 35 R. B., correspondence with the author, 20 July 2008
- 36 R. B., *ibid*
- 37 R. B., P. Norvell, p. 90
- 38 Karl Kerber Verlag, Bielefeld, 1986, p. 59
- 39 J. M., correspondence with the author, 21 July 2008 : «...wanted to make a series of paintings with one billion dots / hand painted in China / one dot per person»



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Robert Barry

*One Billion Colored Dots*

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**Specifications**

- Each volume is 27,6 cm x 18,6 cm and contains 2008 pages
  - Printed in offset on Novatech EasyMatt 80 g
  - Signatures are double-stitched with linen thread
  - Bound in laminated coated paper 150 g mounted on cardboard 3.0.
  - The spine is rounded
  - White linen headband
- 
- Printed by Arte-Print, Brussels
  - Bound by Rozier, Gent

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**Production**

- Limited to 30 numbered and signed copies + 5 A.P.
- Price per set: **on request**

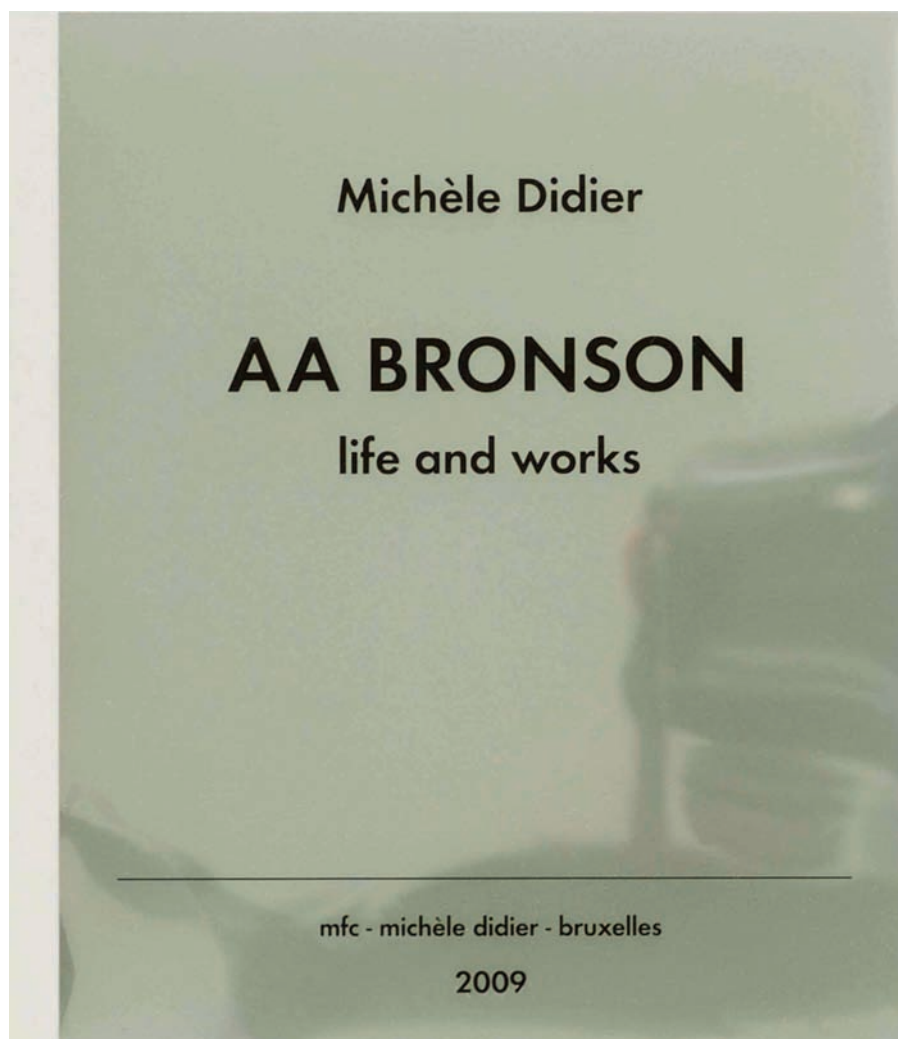
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Produced and published in 2008 by mfc-michèle didier

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# AA Bronson

## *life and works*

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### **About *life and works* by AA Bronson**

Born in Vancouver, in 1946, AA Bronson founded the General Idea group alongside Jorge Zontal and Felix Pratz, with whom he worked for 25 years. Following the death of his two companions from AIDS in 1994, AA Bronson has developed his own body of work.

We are publishing AA Bronson's *life and works*. The pages of the book are in transparent plastic and are free of any markings, with the exception of the cover, which includes a mention of the publisher, *Michèle Didier*, the name of the artist, *AA Bronson*, the title, *ife and works*, and the place and year of the edition, *Brussels, 2009*. This concept identically reproduces Piero Manzoni's *Life and Works*, published by Jes Petersen in 1963.

The "remake", conceived by AA Bronson, performs a discrete yet profound metamorphosis on Jes Petersen's version of Manzoni's *Life and Works*. With the *Life and Works* of the Italian artist, a certain doubt was permitted: did he want to eliminate the materiality of the bookobject and materialise the emptiness or the effacing itself? Besides, the promising title, *Life and Works* – chosen by Manzoni shortly before his death – is all the more troubling, knowing that both the content and the text are absent. But the position of this book, announcing itself as blank, evanescent, untouched, and empty is contradicted – in reality – by the hyper-materiality of the block of transparent, plastic pages, which are coloured gold throughout, and present some reflective properties; without the transparency being a mirror, or the emptiness a reflection.

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# AA Bronson

## *life and works*

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### **Specifications**

- 18 × 15.5 cm each book
  - 60 leaves
  - Polyfilm Folex 100 µ
  - Certificate signed and numbered by AA Bronson for each copy
- 
- Printed and bound by SP Production, Brussels

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### **Production**

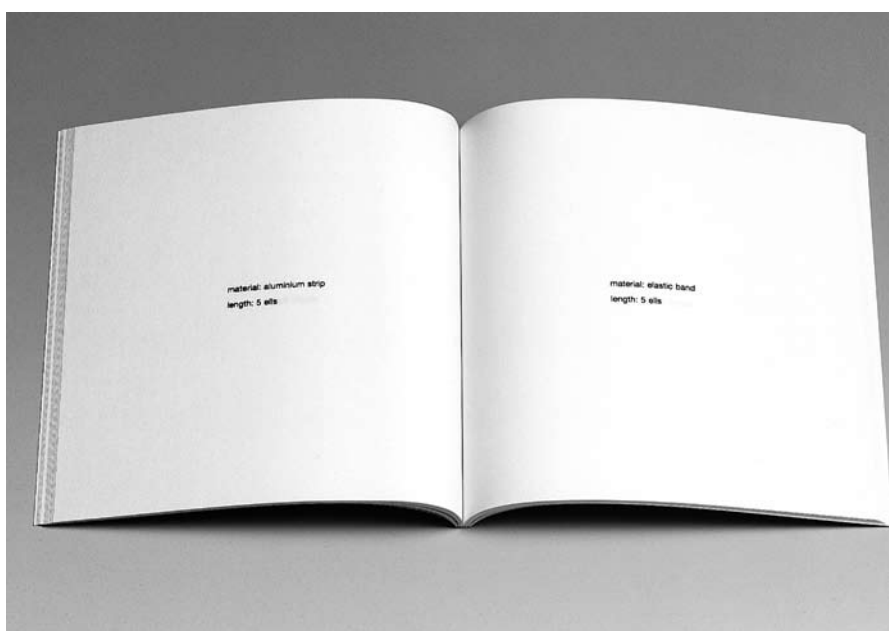
- Limited edition of 88 copies + 12 A.P.
- Price per unit: **575,00 €**

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Produced and published in 2009 by mfc-michèle didier

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Measurement of the space constitutes the heart of the work of Stanley Brouwn. In this book, the artist mentions ell and step measurements taken of different types of material such as iron pipe, plastic tube, wooden lath, aluminum strip, elastic band, cooper wire and nylon rope, delivering this way a kind of statement of a space.

Material: iron pipe  
length: 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 / 7 / 8 / 9 / 10 / ell / step

Material: plastic tube  
length: 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 / 7 / 8 / 9 / 10 / ell / step

Material: wooden lath  
length: 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 / 7 / 8 / 9 / 10 / ell / step

Material: aluminium strip  
length: 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 / 7 / 8 / 9 / 10 / ell / step

Material: elastic band  
length: 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 / 7 / 8 / 9 / 10 / ell / step

Material: cooper wire  
length: 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 / 7 / 8 / 9 / 10 / ell / step

Material: nylon rope  
length: 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 / 7 / 8 / 9 / 10 / ell / step

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# Stanley Brouwn

## *ell / ells – step / steps*

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### **Specifications**

- The edition is composed of 2 books
  - 2 vol. x 76p (each volume) ; 15,6 x 15,6 cm (each volume)
  - The typography is in Osaka lower case for the entire work
  - Book : Free Life white of 80 g
  - Cover : Free Life white of 215 g
- 
- Printed and bound by Lecturis, Eindhoven

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### **Production**

- Limited on 400 copies + 200 A.P.

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Produced and published in 1998 by Éditions Micheline Szwajcer & Michèle Didier

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Philippe Cazal  
*Factice*

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© 1995 Philippe Cazal and  
Les Maîtres de Forme Contemporains (mfc-michèle didier)

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*Factice* is a box designed for containing an assortment of «virgin» media : one virgin videoK7 ; one virgin CD ; one virgin audioK7 ; one virgin ektachrome ; one virgin floppy disk.

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Philippe Cazal

*Factice*

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**Specifications**

- Box containing objects: 25 cm x 34 cm x 9 cm
- Factice contains:
  - One virgin videocassette
  - One virgin CD
  - One virgin audiocassette
  - One virgin ectachrome
  - One virgin floppy
- Graphics by Cicero, Paris
- Bound by Clotilde Olyff, Brussels
- Silk-screened by Philippe Strulens, Brussels
- Printed by Auspert & Cie, Brussels

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**Production**

- Limited to 8 numbered and signed copies + 4 A.P.

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Produced and published in 1995 by Les Maîtres de Forme Contemporains (**mfc**-michèle didier)

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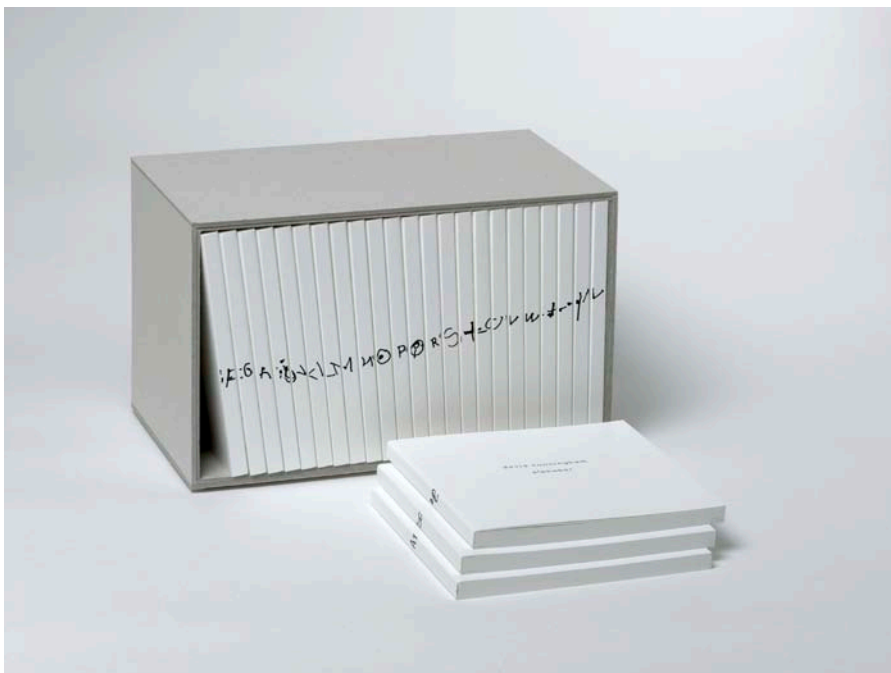
David Cunningham  
*Alphabet*

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©2010 David Cunningham and mfc-michèle didier

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# David Cunningham

## *Alphabet*

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### **About *Alphabet* by David Cunningham**

*Alphabet* by David Cunningham consists of 26 volumes, as many volumes as there are letters in the Roman alphabet. Each volume proposes 97 different combinations of the 26 letters of the alphabet. These letters succeed one another in small writing in a horizontal line that scores the middle of every page. Each of these sequences follows a strictly distinct order. *Alphabet* has in total 2522 of these alphabetical series.

The *Alphabet* set of 26 volumes is limited to 50 copies, signed and numbered by the artist, and 10 artist's proofs.

If we consider that the Roman alphabet is characterised by, amongst other things, the order in which its letters follow each other – we know and refer to only one, now standard, alphabetical order –, the series of 26 letters that the artist produces in *Alphabet*, a titanic project started in 2005, could be regarded as representing as many new alphabetical systems, text positioned outside 'literature' with any metaphorical dimension internally excluded.

On the spine of each volume, runs a string of letters, the only one in alphabetical order, hand-written by a young girl, Mina. The alphabet, laboriously and at the same time playfully reproduced by a person who has not yet reached the age of reading and writing, no longer delivers a group of signs that lead to language supported by grammar, but gives rise to a series of intriguing graphs and small drawings that appear to have emerged from the depths of the ages of primitive art or magical art. We imagine more or less abstract figures, depending on the imagination of the child who has drawn them on paper. After all, if we take the letter A of the Roman alphabet, derived from the Greek alphabet, which itself stems from the Phoenician alphabet, we find it in the latter under the name of Aleph, which signifies Taurus, or "bull". And the drawing of this letter effectively reproduces, in a simplified manner, the animal's head...

*Alphabet's* sequences defy all alphabetical understanding, and, now and again, by pure chance, a random fragment or other offers a recognisable word. In parallel with the integral relationship of the spectator in David Cunningham's installation work, this process of recognition is essentially the reader's contribution.

David Cunningham's alphabets, generated by an algorithmic method that organises them according to a systematic disorder, bear a greater resemblance to mathematical formulae. In mathematics, an alphabet is only ever a set, the letters of which are its elements. Let us not forget that the Greeks used their alphabet for numbering before the Arabic numerals took over the function. We could conclude that the system developed by David Cunningham in his *Alphabet* implies a return to primitive origins, along the path of methodical deconstruction.

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# David Cunningham

## *Alphabet*

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### **Specifications**

- The work consists of 26 volumes which total 2704 pages
  - Each volume is 15 x 15 cm and contains 104 pages
  - Printed on Phoenix Motion Xantur 150 g
  - Certificates numbered and signed by David Cunningham
  - Cover : bound in Phoenix Motion Xantur 250 g
  - The 26 volumes come in a slipcase
- 
- Algorithm design and implementation © 2007 Daniel Jackson
  - Hand-written spine alphabet © 2010 Mina Obata Robinson
- 
- Printed by Arte-Print, Brussels
  - Bound by Renaître, Brussels

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### **Production**

- Limited edition of 50 copies and 10 A.P.
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- Price per unit: **1.800,00 €**

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Produced and published in 2010 by mfc-michèle didier, Brussels

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One sexy pink and black panties has been trapped into an insect box and gets the name of *Nympha Nocturna* as if it was a specimen of natural species. This work expresses both artist's interest in nature and fascination for erotic patterns.

*Extrait du bulletin mensuel de la Société Linnéenne de Bruxelles & Paris. N°0 - 1<sup>ère</sup> Année - Mars 1995.*

*Capture de **Nympha Nocturna ssp. Rosea P.-A. G.** Ledidoptera Nymphalididae par Paul-Armand Gette.*

*« Cette espèce, sans être absolument nocturne comme son nom pourrait le laisser supposer, préfère généralement l'ombre. Peu d'observateurs ont eu l'occasion de la voir dans son biotope, bien que la beauté de ses couleurs ne manque pas d'attirer l'attention. Ses habitudes sont mal connues, toutefois pendant les heures du jour, elle semble s'écarter peu des endroits où elle trouve la chaleur humide qu'elle affectionne particulièrement. J'ai eu la chance de capturer une douzaine d'exemplaires de cette rarissime espèce en plein cœur de Bruxelles bien que son aire de répartition semble nettement plus étendue et ne pas se limiter à la Belgique. Je tiens à remercier ici Madame Michèle Didier pour ses conseils toujours judicieux et les soins attentifs qu'elle a apportés à la préparation des spécimens qui sont tous d'une fraîcheur remarquable malgré leur extrême fragilité. »*

*Présenté à la section Entomologique de Paris en sa séance du 30.03.1995*

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Paul-Armand Gette

*Nympha Nocturna ssp. Rosea P.-A. G.*

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**Specifications**

- Insect box : 26 x 39 x 5,5 cm Museum Model
- The panties has been made in Vénus de Paris' ateliers, Brussels
- Origin of silk : Bianchini Ferrier, Lyon
- Died by De Geest, Brussels

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**Production**

- Limited to 8 numbered and signed copies + 4 A.P.

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Produced and published in 1995 by Les Maîtres de Forme Contemporains (mfc-michèle didier)

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Liam Gillick

*Underground (Fragments of Future Histories)*

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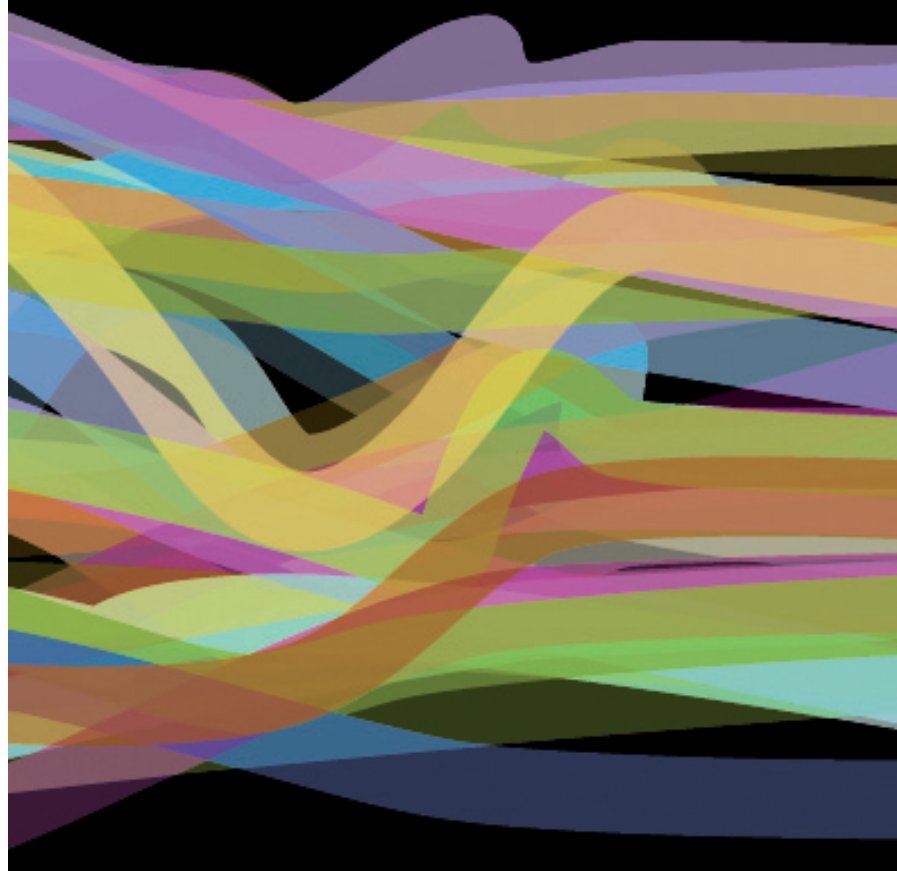
© 2004 Liam Gillick and  
Import (mfc-michèle didier & Les Presses du Réel)

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**Underground  
(Fragments of Future Histories)  
Gabriel Tarde**

**Updated by Liam Gillick**

**Introduction by  
Maurizio Lazzarato**



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# Liam Gillick

## *Underground (Fragments of Future Histories)*

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© 2004 Liam Gillick and  
Import (mfc-michèle didier & les presses du réel)

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### **About *Underground (Fragments of Future Histories)* by Liam Gillick**

The starting point of *Underground (Fragments of Future Histories)* by Liam Gillick is the first science fiction novel ever written, entitled *Fragments d'Histoire future* and written in 1884 by Gabriel Tarde. The French philosopher, sociologist and criminologist depicts in his novel the collective functioning of a society that has taken refuge in the heart of the Earth following a climatic disaster. Liam Gillick has made a contemporary adaptation of Tarde's text, by rewriting the English translation from 1904 that had a preface by H.G. Wells. Gillick added a preface on his own by the Italian sociologist Maurizio Lazzarato.

**«To produce is a passion, to consume is only a taste.»**

**«The mental space left by the reduction of our needs is taken up by those talents – artistic, poetic and scientific – which multiply and take deep root. they become the true needs of society. They spring from a necessity to produce and not from a necessity to consume.»**

**Gabriel Tarde**

### **Original French Edition :**

Gabriel Tarde, *Fragment d'Histoire Future* (1896)

### **First English Edition :**

Gabriel Tarde *Underground Man* (1896)

Translated by Cloudesley Brereton (1904)

With a preface by H.G. Wells (1905)

Published by Duckworth, London (1905)

### **This Edition :**

*Underground (Fragments of Future Histories)* (2004)

Updated from the 1904 version by Liam Gillick

With a preface by Maurizio Lazzarato (2004)

### **Table of content :**

Preface by Maurizio Lazzarato

Chapter 1.....Prosperity

Chapter 2.....Catastrophe

Chapter 3.....The Struggle

Chapter 4.....Saved!

Chapter 5.....Regeneration

Chapter 6.....Love

Chapter 7.....The Aesthetic Life

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Liam Gillick

*Underground (Fragments of Future Histories)*

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**Specifications**

- 104 pages
- 20 x 14 x 1 cm
- The signatures are double-stitched with linen thread
- Paper: Munken Print Extra 115 g
- Quadri and laminated cover: Carta Integra 230 g
  
- Printed and bound by Arte-Print, Brussels
  
- Second issue from the Import collection

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**Production**

- Limited edition of 500 copies
  
- Price per unit: **25,00 €**

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Produced and published in 2004 by Import (mfc-michèle didier & Les Presses du Réel)  
Distributed by Les Presses du Réel

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in any form or by any means without written permission of the  
artist and the publisher.

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# Joseph Grigely

## Blueberry Surprise

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© 2006 Joseph Grigely and mfc-michèle didier

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Mmmmmmmmm I look like crap Anyway-I'm pretty happy I got a lot of exercise this summer I shipped lots of leaves to LA yesterday I have 2 loaves of banana bread I want to give one to your parents-do you want some of the other one? Do you like my bathroom? You want fun? When you are a girl and you take a bath-Sometimes water gets in then when you relax it comes out it can happen hours later-walking along-whistling-then OOPS! down your leg Do you want to take a shower and rest while I get dinner ready? Do you ever go canoeing? What do you mean? I'm all wrong? Then what? Why? Inside the Tomato and Mushrooms? good as in 'good looking'? I love scented geraniums Winnie the Pooh's birthday too give me Green a very feminine place a good walk that goes through the Arboretum Its rhythm is beautiful I can't exactly grasp it My mom is like that When I call her-everytime-no failure-She will say a list of vegetables-it's so funny! Even when she called to tell me my grandfather died and she'll talk about dirt English wool But sheep stuff is really great-shearing, spinning, spinning wool in the bright spring sun-The sun warms up the lanolin and the wheel-it's so fast and tactile-olfactory-orgasmic It seems so 'Quaint' or 'dumb'-but it's really Sexy Do you mind if I put my lady legs over you? Do I seem nervous? The hotel that I go to perform kinky acts is around here Your ticket? What's inside? I knew her dog before I knew her I used to bite the hell out of my sister's arm I have such a fat ass I'm pretty happy but I'm tired I was up till 2:00 last night I can't believe I'm doing this to you You like the possibility? I like it that you can't hear me pee because I've always been embarrassed by that-I would hold it all day in school because I wouldn't want any other girl to hear me It's a long story One of the best meals I ever had was when I was 11 years old-Baked beans, hot dogs, cooked outside by a snowy lake at twilight with my friend-It was so cold. After school we went up there with the stuff-got a fire going-it was SO delicious-I remember the smell of the snow, and the sky, and the fire, and my mittens, and my cold feet and packing it all up afterwards-home in the dark-But very delicious-the food in my mouth was exquisite A moveable land artificial at first I was throbbing I can't drive a stick shift or I'd offer to take over for a while Berry's has good dirty martinis Fiancée is such a good word What is your second best idea? I'm too talkative aren't I? I feel bad about that You know, there is a lot said-I've taken so much for granted I really wish I could sign because I love quiet conversations Rachel said the exterminator's here & he was watching her get dressed It's comforting to have these gaps This is my favorite cupboard All silver & kind of empty Shall we go for dinner with my father tomorrow? What would you do if you had to do something completely opposite of what you do? your pants were hanging from a tree branch I can't believe it is there anything you want to know? About the sound of the world? Here in this apartment? I think you can hear the buzz can you? I thought I caught you finally that you're not deaf The music is really horny obsessed I mean citrusy I want to tell you something-This friend of mine. She had a baby. She didn't discover until he was about 6 months that he was totally blind. She noticed weird things though. One was that he imitated perfectly the sound of the refrigerator. The sound of the car on the gravel approaching the house. They say things come full circle-it's all relative-perhaps they are right Beauty is difficult Crunchy crispy with wispy fluffy inside Perfect watering always in cloud That's your excuse No one can communicate Not with words anyway Maybe smell or hair or something I said I'm oral not horrible Where were you raised? Do you want a beer? Fuzzy navel? Alabama slammer? I'm tempted to smoke cigarettes again Men are assholes Get me some wine Let's not hurt ourselves I look tired? Grey hair? My nerves have become so bad I think no more champagne for lunch for me Eric will join us a little later a pitcher is three glasses Roasted peppers balsamic vinegar foxy meow my mother's homemade applesauce I was thinking of a girly coffee drink I can't believe how talkative I am Have you ever lived in suburbs? Ramps? I don't know I get flustered in front of the broccoli Squid? Oh my When I was cycling home last night guess who I met? no-lying on the ground out cold-pissed-I got her up after repeatedly calling her name and walked her home if you start with a 1 carat diamond for example and in two years you want to purchase a two carat Diamond you can receive full value for the original purchase and just pay the difference loudness and laughing from other table They're talking about septic systems-Kirsten knows them He's got a great Irish accent Do any of your pockets work? Was it cold in the greenhouse last night? I had to set up cat litter Does it give away



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# Joseph Grigely

## *Blueberry Surprise*

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\*Obligatory mention : © Vera Kotaji pp. Michèle Didier

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### About *Blueberry Surprise* by Joseph Grigely

The art of Joseph Grigely (born in 1956 in East Longmeadow, Massachusetts, U.S.A.) is essentially focused on the art of conversation. Questions such as «What does a conversation look like?» or «How to figure a speech?» are present throughout his work. It is shown literally in his Conversation Pieces installations, referring to a specific genre of painting practiced by William Hogarth and Thomas Gainsborough or Canaletto which depict characters engaged in conversation. Grigely constantly explores issues of communication and language. Before becoming an artist, Joseph Grigely taught literature and critical theory, and continues to do so in the Visual and Critical Studies program at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He has published several critical theoretical texts (e.g., *Textualterity: Art, Theory and Textual Criticism* in 1995). As an artist, he explores multifaceted aspects of spoken and written phenomena. Moreover, conversation takes on particular significance for the artist, who lost his hearing at the age of ten. Grigely actually uses writing in order to communicate, when unable to read lips or in doubt. He asks people to write down what they want to say and thus exchanges scraps of paper, producing written conversations in this way. Grigely keeps this «daily life» material, building walls with them, creating installations and now, publishing a book.

*Blueberry Surprise* consists of one continuous text of 45,000 words transcribed from the written conversations that Joseph Grigely has been collecting over the last ten years. The transcription has kept the features of the handmade inscriptions, including punctuation and casts, while skipping all of the drawings which might have been included on the papers. The reader switches from one «voice» to another according to the changing colors of the sentences: red, orange and black. Switching color means going over to the next person writing. The identity of the characters is not known, developing a pure narrative voice coming from we-don't-know-where. This endless series of notes builds little by little a polyphonic murmur, which resonates in a purely mental field. The arrangement of the text on the pages is based on both ideas of continuity and fragmentation. The lay-out in a single paragraph gives a feeling of continuity while the changing colors create a feeling of alternation. This represents the very flow of any conversation and, at the same time, testifies to the presence of multidirectional sources, characters, moods and moments. Although the whole text consists of an endless litany of messages (5,000) it is impossible to define who is the sender, who is the addressee. All we get here are messages. And anything which could have possibly made them recognizable, like handwriting, of course disappeared when they were type-transcribed. But other clues remain apparent, such as misspelled words, which suggest foreign origins. There is, anyway, a kind of «who's who» game playing out between the lines in *Blueberry Surprise*.

*Blueberry Surprise* is a text in one single go. Looking at the Latin etymology of the word «text» brings us back to the transitive verb meaning «to weave» or «to braid». Here we have indeed a powerful collection of intertwined fragments, subtly playing with (a)symmetrical patterns, rhythm and balance. But it is practically impossible to read the entire text out loud from one end to the other. The reader would not be able to take a break because of the lack of actual punctuation (apart from the one transcribed from each paper). He or she would be out of breath before even finishing one page. So, is *Blueberry Surprise* a kind of one-page book, devoted to silent reading? The special type of layout used places *Blueberry Surprise* somewhere in between the very archaic system of «scripta continua» and modern Western text setup. Although one should not forget that the lack of separation in manuscripts made the practice of silent reading impossible until around 7<sup>th</sup> century... So, should we consider this text the visual representation of what a conversation «looks like»? When we speak, there are no pauses between each word. Words are all linked through the delivery of talk, knowing that all these scraps used to be written in a rush, in a constant attempt at following the rhythm of any spoken conversation.

Whereas in ancient civilizations people did not have a word for «word», since in the oral form of language, there is no awareness of words as graphic units, here we have quite the opposite. What is supposed to be spoken ends up on paper. The work of Joseph Grigely approaches very contemporary issues in the field of written communication, knowing that the boundaries of written language have evolved a great deal with contemporary tools like

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# Joseph Grigely

## *Blueberry Surprise*

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\*Obligatory mention : © Vera Kotaji pp. Michèle Didier

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the Internet, emails, textos, which leads us directly to the heart of a whole set of theoretical questions.

With *Blueberry Surprise*, Joseph Grigely gives the reader the opportunity to plunge into ten years of conversations, and therefore to enter into the intimacy of exchanged notes, delivering quotes, remarks, questions, poetical breakaways, expression of feelings, flirt talks, mundane indications, etc. Besides, this one text conceals multitudes of meanings and levels as do the messages themselves. It could contain commentaries on the situation itself like «It's not something I would have told you if you could hear. I would still have written it down»; things that definitely do not need to be written down in order to be understood, like «Yes»; funny clarifications of misunderstandings such as «I said I'm oral not horrible». Grigely grants additional dimension to the conversation, considered as an art and captured in its theoretical, plastic, emotional and ontological extents.

Joseph Grigely drops the initial function of a daily communication tool and designs a complex construction, in an attempt to render the sound and color of unknown and invisible voices, revealing games that might be profound, absurd, hilarious or moving. Here we seize an exciting chance to read things said in everyday life but never written down. Fleeting marks end up crystallizing the very essence of a non-secret conversation.

Vera Kotaji pp. Michèle Didier

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Joseph Grigely  
*Blueberry Surprise*

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**Specifications**

- 28 cm x 21,4 cm
  - 96 pages
  - Paper : Opale Dialogue naturel 150 g
  - End papers : Black Colorit Paper 160 g
  - Signatures are double-stitched with linen thread
  - Cover : Orange Colorit Paper 120 g mounted on cardboard 2.5
  - Jacket : Red Colorit Coquelicot Paper 160 g
- 
- Printing by Arte-Print, Brussels
  - Binding by SVK, Sint Niklaas

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**Production**

- Limited edition of 250 numbered copies and 50 A.P.
  
- Price per unit: **75,00 €**

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Produced and published in 2006 by mfc-michèle didier

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# On Kawara *I Got Up*

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©2008 On Kawara and mfc-michèle didier

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# On Kawara

## *I Got Up*

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\*Obligatory mention : © Vera Kotaji pp. Michèle Didier

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### About *I Got Up* by On Kawara

*I Got Up*, following *I Met* and *I Went*, closes out the trilogy by On Kawara. *I Got Up* begins on 10 May 1968 and ends on 17 September 1979. On every day of this period, On Kawara sent two postcards showing where he was. On the back of each card, he stamped the words «I GOT UP AT» in capital letters, followed by the time at which he stood up that day. The name and the address of both recipient and artist are also stamped on the card. *I Got Up* brings together this corpus in twelve volumes. They total up 4160 pages.

The final and missing piece *I Got Up* intersects with the facts reported in *I Met* and *I Went*. That the artist was such day in such a place, as it is precisely documented by the geographical maps of *I Went*, is proven by the postcard, purchased in the same place, and postmarked the same day.

This work is a daily one – it is fundamentally «of the day» – but the resulting «diary» is not necessarily intimate. While the time at which the artist got up, reported on the back of the postcard, recovers in itself from a private matter, when an artist has faithfully reported the facts of his everyday life, this time becomes an important objective datum: the time at which the artist's day begins stands de facto for the starting point of his work. This time becomes a scientific descriptive element of the work. *I Got Up* gives us its starting time of departure.

We should note, however, that at least two aspects of *I Got Up* differentiate it from *I Met* and *I Went*. The first is the highly media oriented quality of *I Got Up*: the postcards not only contain a message to be read but they intend it to a given addressee. As a result, the work once created is disseminated. The postcards get independent, they live their own lives, they travel around... Because the aim of the postcard is to be sent, the work is also fated to be given (up). Creating the work leads to its own dispersion. Therefore, the consequent paradox is that in order to show the work, one must inevitably turn it away from its initial purpose.

Let's consider this message. Could it be an incipit, the incipit of an autobiographical novel in which the story is restricted to the incipit itself? How tempting then to refer to another famous incipit: Proust's «For a longtime, I Went to bed early...» from *In Search of Lost Time*. *I Got Up* would in that case be related to the other side of the same search: the forgetting, the draining away of memory which, in the artist's work, becomes crystallized within the boundaries of a strict archive.

The second peculiarity of *I Got Up* is its comic dimension. While the postcard constitutes the traditional medium of the anecdote, the anecdote is here so tenuous that it verges on the tautological. Moreover, the shallowness of the information «I GOT UP AT...» written on the back of the card contrasts strongly with the visual appeal of the picture on the front. The invariability of the message cuts through what looks like a whirlwind of exciting travels.

It should also be pointed out that the artist does not fill the postcard with the usual handwritten text but with a text applied with a stamp. Thus, he in some sense anticipates and doubles the stamp which is going to postmark the missive. The date has been stamped as well in *I Met* and *I Went* but in this instance, the artist's inscription turns the postcard into a selfreferential object.

The use of pre-existing images is a typical resource of conceptual art. The cliché printed on the postcard is supposed to represent for a communal, even universal, awareness, a commonplace. When On Kawara selects a postcard, he selects an object, an object available in thousands of copies, and makes an artwork of it. But this ready-made, if we may say so, is immediately returned to its common utilization, since it is immediately put to the traditional, conventional use required of it.

Besides, the postcard initiates its own temporal system as the time between mailing and receipt of the message must be taken in account. Sent the same day, the message implies the word «TODAY». The message consists of a «(Today) *I Got Up* at...» which will always be read too late, never on the stated day. It is, in fact, odd to realize that nowadays, a means of communication such as the Post is on the point of becoming as obsolete as the message it is

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## On Kawara

### *I Got Up*

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\*Obligatory mention : © Vera Kotaji pp. Michèle Didier

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intended to convey. (And what can be said about the telegram used for I AM STILL ALIVE?). However, the date, as an absolute value stamped by the artist on each card, breaks the hesitation generated by these spatial and temporal gaps. The proof is not provided by the postmark, but by the date stamp of On Kawara.

The series of postcard images, printed in chronological order - one page per day - deploy once in a while the equivalent of a historiated frieze or of a film montage, which is, after all, much the same. For example, the postcards the artist sent from Mexico between 11 and 17 September 1968 show a torero fighting a bull from different angles and at different moments. A struggle which, considering the last of the batch, concludes with the animal's victory... The secret intelligence caught in these images and the kinetics they sometimes generate as a group were obviously waiting to be ordered page by page, thanks to a brief «Return to sender».

Vera Kotaji pp. Michèle Didier\*

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# On Kawara

## *I Got Up*

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### Specifications

- 12 volumes
  - Each volume is 21cm x 14,85cm
  - 4160 pages in total
  - Printed on 150 g Phoenix Motion Xantur
  - Signatures are double-stitched with linen thread
  - Cover : bound in Brillianta Calandré Linen
  - Front cover and spine : embossed gilding and foil-blocking in black
  - Ivory headband
  - The twelve volumes come in a grey slipcase
- 
- Printed by Arte-Print, Brussels
  - Bound by Delabie, Kortrijk
- 

### Production

- Limited to 90 numbered and signed copies + 10 A.P.
  - Price per set: **on request**
- 

Produced and published in 2008 by mfc-michèle didier

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# On Kawara *I Went*

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### About *I Went* by On Kawara

*I Went* begins on June 1, 1968 and ends on September 17, 1979. Except for the years 1968 and 1979, each volume contains one year. Throughout this twelve-year period, On Kawara used a red line to trace each of his daily trips from their starting point on a black and white photocopy of a map. Each day is represented in the twelve volumes of *I Went*. The date of every trip is stamped on the map at the bottom of each page. As in *I Met*, the trips made by the artist are recorded in the book with grey pages bearing the names of the cities he roamed through. Each volume therefore contains a different number of pages, depending on the frequency of On Kawara's travels that year. The twelve volumes total 4740 pages. Publication of *I Went* enables people to view the entirety of the document, making them more sensitive to the temporal dimension of the work. Thumbing through the twelve volumes of *I Went*, readers unroll a timeline which would otherwise have remained compressed.

Publication of *I Went* follows that of *I Met* and it documents the daily life of the artist in a similar way. But contrary to *I Met*, in which lists of the names of people the artist has met follow one another, page after page, like so many typographical characters aligning signifiers on the naked surface of the paper, the purpose of *I Went* can not easily be reduced to certifying the presence of the artist in a given place at a given time. *I Went* is also a book of pictures.

In On Kawara's work, *I Went*, through its plastic materialization, is among those which retain the most connections to traditional representation. The red line which retraces his journeys on the map brings to mind the outlines of a rupestrian figure. In fact, the question posed by the Altamira site is found upstream of the artist's work. Just as prehistoric art works the cracks of cave walls into its drawings, following pre-existing fractures and fault lines, the red furrow of *I Went* plows a network of tangled patterns. These creative gesture demonstrates a striking resemblance to cave art, but *I Went* sends the reader to other sources as well.

At the very least, publishing *I Went* in twelve volumes confers the function of an atlas on this sequence of maps. If maps galvanize the imagination and invite to self-projection, then, in this case, we are reading an annotated atlas. And, if these lines are of interest to us, it is because they are the beginning of a story, the embryo of a fictional account.

Moreover, there is an amazing visual closeness between the photocopied maps and ancient engravings. It is helpful to remember that early maps were actually engravings. Like engraving, the cartographic image is an image intended for private use, an impulse to dreaming.

In *I Went*, it is without a doubt this very resemblance which leads us to look at these images as if they were representations of landscapes. A single volume of *I Went* may be viewed as a collection of bird's-eye views of landscapes crisscrossed by the artist. On Kawara's drawings recall the patterns of paths, of furrows, to which the landscape painters of the 16th and 17th centuries gave prominence in order to evoke the walker's experience.

Like a studio painter who paints landscapes from memory, On Kawara, as a traveling artist, reports his travels after the fact, in a state of mind in which he already sees himself walking, as if from above, from a distance, in a state of «disincarnating» consciousness. If we view the landscape as the trace left by the artist's walk, then On Kawara is giving us the essence of landscape and, more precisely, of «landscape with figures».

This is an appropriate time to revisit many of John Constable's remarkable landscapes, inhabited by such perfectly represented tiny human figures. This landscape painter painted commissioned portraits, but has he ever been fully recognized for his excellence as a painter of portraits «from a distance» ?

Closer examination of these far-off silhouettes, going about their daily business, relegated to the background of the landscapes, captured by the brush with a self-assured hand, a hand so aware of the relationship between man and the universe, one wonders if it isn't this same consciousness which, in *I Went*, guides the travels of the red line.

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# On Kawara

## *I Went*

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### Specifications

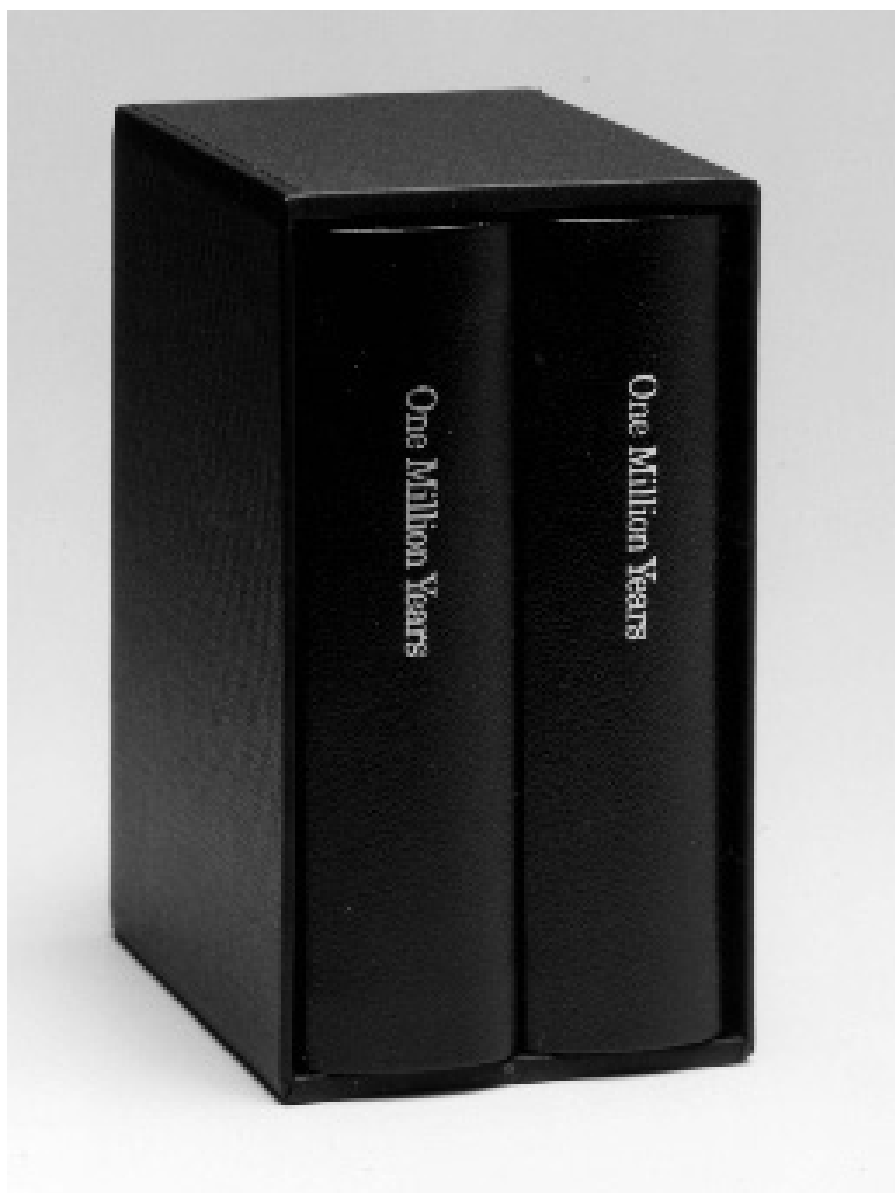
- 12 volumes
  - Each volume is 21 cm x 14,8 cm
  - 4740 pages in total
  - Printed on 150 g Phoenix Motion Xantur
  - Signatures are double-stitched with linen thread
  - Cover: bound in Brillianta Calandré Linen
  - Front cover and spine: embossed gilding and foil-blocking in black
  - Ivory headband
  - The twelve volumes come in a slipcase
- 
- Printed by Arte-Print, Brussels
  - Bound by Delabie, Kortrijk
- 

### Production

- Limited edition of 90 numbered and signed copies + 10 A.P.
  
  - Price per set: **on request**
- 

Produced and published in 2007 by mfc-michèle didier

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The first volume «For all those who have lived and died» starts in 998031 BC and ends in 1969 AD, namely *One Million Years* later. At this date starts the *One Million Years* in the oeuvre of On Kawara, transcribed here for the edition on 2000 pages. The second volume «For the last one» starts in 1993 AD and ends *One Million Years* later, in 1001992. This period is equally transcribed for the edition on 2000 pages. The text of each page is laid out in 10 columns, rigorously aligned and subdivided in 5 blocks of 100 years. Each block contains 10 lines and each line contains a decenium. The two volumes of the book correspond, their internal organization is identical.

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# On Kawara

## *One Million Years*

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### **About *One Million Years* by On Kawara**

*Past - For all those who have lived and died*

*Future - For the last one*

«In September 1997, I took on the production of *One Million Years*. Two volumes, 2012 pages each, 144 x 105 mm, printed on 32g Bible Veritable Ivory paper. The first volume, «For All Those Who Have Lived and Died», starts in 998031 BC and stops in 1969 AD, *One Million Years* later. The second volume, «For the Last One», starts in 1993 AD and finishes *One Million Years* later, in 1001992 AD. Each page holds 500 years. The text of each page is laid out in ten columns, aligned and subdivided in five blocks of 100 years. Each block contains ten lines, each line contains a decade. I start by inverting the usual process : I know what not to do. Because of the transparency of the paper, the columns of numbers have to be rigorously aligned both horizontally and vertically in order not to confuse the time that precedes or that follows with the time one reads : time shouldn't be shifted, it can only be superimposed on itself. It is therefore imperative that the time one reads hides earlier times, without indicating the time that is still to come. This is the improbable reality on which I had to base my working method in order to realize this work. In the case of the Today series, time is light, and space is magma, here, time will become a time-block that will detach itself from the white paper (time-block/spacewhite). It will materialize in the milky white of the paper, which is smooth and silky to the touch. Is this not being in touch with the real, with the materiality of a defined time ? On 3 June 1999, at 1 p.m., the production of *One Million Years* was completed and signed by On Kawara.»

Michèle Didier

*(Excerpt from On Kawara © Phaidon Press Limited, First published in 2002, p.23)*

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# On Kawara

## *One Million Years*

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### Specifications

- In two volumes
- Each volume is 2012 pages
- Each volume is 14,4 cm x 10,5cm
- Printed on Bible Veritable Ivory Paper 32 g
- Cover : Black leather over 400 gr cardboard
- Silver / Gold embossing on front and spine
- The two volumes come in a black slipcase

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### Production

- Limited to :
  - 500 numbered copies (from 061 to 560) +
  - 60 numbered and signed copies (from 01/60 to 60/60) +
  - 10 A.P. (from 561 to 570)
- Price per set (numbered copy): **1850,00 €**
- Price per set (numbered and signed copy): **sold out**

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Produced and published in 1999 by Éditions Micheline Szwajcer & Michèle Didier

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# On Kawara *I Met*

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Éditions Micheline Szwajcer & Michèle Didier



TAMAKO OKAZAKI  
KADUO OKAZAKI  
MUTUKI ANDO  
SEUNTEK ANDO  
KYOSHKE SHIMAZAKI  
EIJINO TAKAHASHI  
KAZUKO NISHIHARA  
NORIKO NISHIHARA  
WOSOKU TAKAHASHI  
KOJI ENOKUBA  
TAKAHIKO OKADA  
TOSIEAKE HINOHARA  
KIICHI INATAMA  
HIROSHI FUJII  
MAKOTO HASE  
HARUHISA NAITO  
TERUO FUJIEDA  
ATAKO KAMAGUCHI  
MAKOTO IIDA  
ATSUKO ONODERA  
BEIKO ISHIBASHI  
UTAKO KAWABARA  
YUKIO ISHIBASHI  
TOMIE ISHIBASHI

DEC 20 1970

TAMAKO OKAZAKI  
KADUO OKAZAKI  
MUTUKI ANDO  
SEUNTEK ANDO  
KYOSHKE SHIMAZAKI  
EIJINO TAKAHASHI  
KAZUKO NISHIHARA  
NORIKO NISHIHARA  
WOSOKU TAKAHASHI  
KOJI ENOKUBA  
TAKAHIKO OKADA  
TOSIEAKE HINOHARA  
KIICHI INATAMA  
HIROSHI FUJII  
MAKOTO HASE  
HARUHISA NAITO  
TERUO FUJIEDA  
ATAKO KAMAGUCHI  
MAKOTO IIDA  
ATSUKO ONODERA  
BEIKO ISHIBASHI  
UTAKO KAWABARA  
YUKIO ISHIBASHI  
TOMIE ISHIBASHI

DEC 20 1970

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# On Kawara

## *I Met*

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\*Obligatory mention : © Vera Kotaji pp. Michèle Didier

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### About *I Met* by On Kawara

*«What Bartlebooth would do would not be heroic, or spectacular; it would be something simple and discreet, difficult of course but not impossibly so, controlled from start to finish and conversely controlling every detail of the life of the man engaged upon it.»*

Excerpt from George Perec's *Life. A user's manual* translated by David Bellos

By the end of the sixties, a German curator asked On Kawara, then a Mexican resident, to write a poem that could be understood throughout the world. A name of hispanic origins, written on a business card, drew the artist's attention. These words appeared to him as a self-evident poetical fact. With this begins his work of collecting the names of people he meets, and of recording them day after day, wherever he is, whatever he does. All these documents are collected and sorted in chronological order in files, displayed on tables and made visible to the public during the artist's exhibitions. This work, titled *«I Met»*, is now available as a twelve volume edition.

*I Met* begins on May 10, 1968 and finishes on September 17, 1979. Each volume contains one year, except for 1968 and 1979. Every day, On Kawara noted chronologically the names of the people with whom he conversed. On each page, the list of names appears together with the day's stamp. Every day of the year is thus presented. During those 12 years, the trips made by On Kawara are indicated on pages bearing the names of the cities he roamed through. These pages interrupt the chronology by sometimes doubling on each side the day that precedes or follows the artist's trip. The twelve volumes total 4790 pages.

The date written as a footnote for each list, keeps the day count: the book isn't page numbered, but page dated. Geographical location changes are signalled by grey page dividers. Browsing through the book, one can imagine time in abscissa and space in ordinate. The «dots in the plane» could be people's names. From a strictly linguistical point of view, Names (proper names) carry no meaning. In the tradition that dates back to Saussure, the semantical field of the Name is void. The Name names, but does not describe. It merely isolates unique and specific entities. With it disappears the hyphen between the signifier and the signified. The family name is «unanalysable». Further more, what characterizes the name is its privileged relationship to the inscription, to the act of writing itself. In the Jewish tradition, the reading of a text circumvents the name, even more so that of God. The Name is not pronounced, it is pure writing. That a person's name cannot be translated indicates simultaneously its absence of meaning from a linguistical point of view but also its universal character.

Which are then the unique entities designated by each Name? Even if a Name belongs to many, it suits only one. The limits set by this arrangement raises the fundamental question of the encounter, as well as that of the bond: the bond that presides over the encounter, or that stems from it. Which conditions must be met for the artist to enlist the name of a person and to therefore consider that person as «encountered»? A conversation must have taken place. But a conversation is more than a mere exchange of words. Must it be to the point, interesting, or original? Indeed, does one even have daily conversations worthy of such a name with one's life companion? Quite possibly some of the protagonists of *I Met* were enlisted because of their mere presence, while others may have had to exhibit more energy to be considered for the list.

And are these really lists anyway? Perhaps not, as every element in the enumeration is loaded with a variable intensity and points back to a different type of bond each time. However well they are aligned in a column, they each claim their own territories with their own contours, depicting a complex intimate landscape.

The repetitive phenomenon can serve as a clue to see through the riddle. Since the columns of the Names are daily marked by the presence of Hiroko Hiraoka's name, the recurrence and the order of appearance give her a very special place, a unique one, as the artist's lifetime companion. It is very clear to figure out that an iconic artist like On Kawara, exercising such an activity over twelve years, will in the end compose a detailed report of the conceptual artistic scene, on an international scale. But let us not forget that the result of what seems to be a systematical, repetitive and rigorously determined enterprise, is in

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# On Kawara

## *I Met*

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\*Obligatory mention : © Vera Kotaji pp. Michèle Didier

fact a capture of moments on a more or less random way, that of the days that go by in a lifetime. Indeed, if some of the lists bring us to think that ALL known actors in the world of art consciously made appointments for this or that day, history can only «be told» in retrospect, after the scientifically necessary delay has gone by to allow individual objectivity to be replaced by a collective subjectivity. The same goes for an infant, conscious that he will grow up and transform himself considerably, and wondering about his appearance in adulthood. A lost cause as he will only know when the time comes, and then keep on wondering about his old age... etc.

*I Met* does not echo a system, but translates faithfully the flow of things, which is by nature uncertain and flickering. We can even go further and consider *I Met* as an anti-system. A work that ended just as it started, by chance, due to the unexpected disappearance of the notepads into which On Kawara had gathered the fruits of his collective work.

*I Met* creates a poetry of the moment by provoking the feeling, while browsing the book, that each day is like an empty page before it is transcribed, in the flesh, and in book-matter. These two operations blend here completely.

The written Name acts here as an appearance. But an appearance that is renewed every time you read it, just like when we see Cary Grant on the screen. We would never doubt the truthfulness of his appearance under the pretense that the film dates back from 1935 or that the actor is dead... On Kawara, in his own way, also operates what is sometimes called a «suspension of disbelief». The given should not only be believed in, but also believed in while knowing that something could have been taken its place. For example, we should not forget that the appearance of Cary Grant, not Clark Gable, in a film, is the result of a chain of circumstances completely chosen by chance and since a long time forgotten. The Names are these ones and not other ones, although «the other ones» could have been «these ones». Value stems from precisely this ontological fragility.

When the question of Time is raised, an irresistible reflex immediately brings forth our mortal condition. But with *I Met* On Kawara has found a magical way to elude the latter, by materialising strongly the idea that time is first and foremost a human construction. Death is a subject well known to the artist, for he was a witness to the catastrophe of nuclear impact. If the experience of total annihilation is the starting point, then the flow of time, which in principle leads from birth to death, will follow the track backwards. The pioneer of the atom was the first who elaborated the theory of relativity, that shook up an entire generation, and into which On Kawara belongs to. The question of usage of such discoveries quickly surfaced, and humanity has not been able to solve it since then. On Kawara, the artist, knows how to face these questions.

Vera Kotaji pp. Michèle Didier\*



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# On Kawara

## *I Met*

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### **Specifications**

- Each volume is 21 cm x 14,8 cm
  - 4790 pages in total
  - Printed on 150 g Phoenix Motion Xantur
  - Signatures are double-stitched with linen thread
  - Cover : Bound in Brillianta Calandré Linen
  - Front cover and spine : Embossed gilding and foil-blocking in black
  - Ivory headband
  - The twelve volumes come in a black slipcase
- 
- Printed by Arte-Print, Brussels
  - Bound by SVK, Sint Niklaas
- 

### **Production**

- Limited to 90 numbered and signed copies + 10 A.P.
- 
- **Sold out**
- 

Produced and published in 2004 by Éditions Micheline Szwajcer & Michèle Didier

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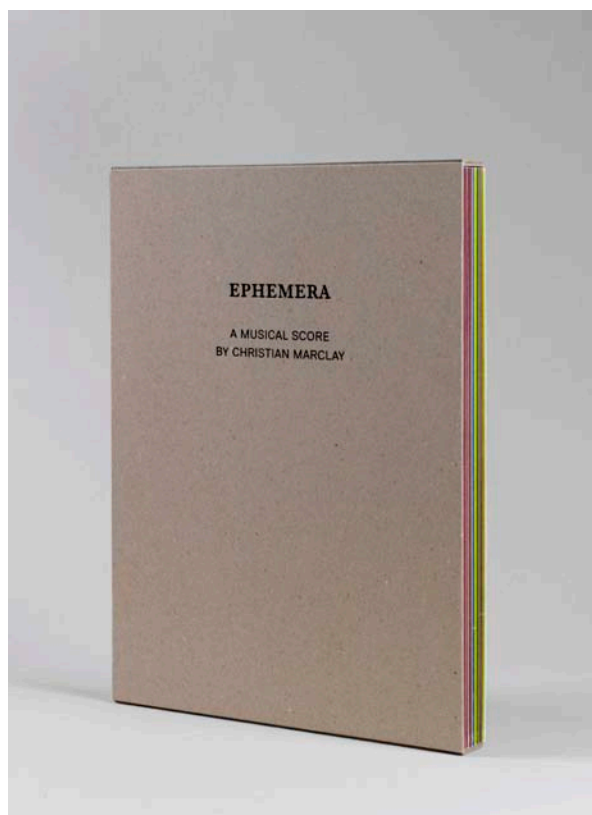
# Christian Marclay

## *Ephemera*

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©2009 Christian Marclay and mfc-michèle didier

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# Christian Marclay

## *Ephemera*

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### **About *Ephemera* by Christian Marclay**

Born in California, in 1955, Christian Marclay is a collage artist. He glues album covers into exquisite corpses. He glues art and music – but also, rock and conceptual art, plastic and performance art, Fluxus and punk rock, and the status of DJ and contemporary artist – together... He glues. His latest collage, which we have had the pleasure of producing, is entitled *Ephemera*.

For many years, Marclay has accumulated an eclectic collection of decorative musical notations, found in various advertisements, magazine illustrations, menus, candy wrapping, pieces of material, etc. These ephemera have been assembled, and then photographed and reproduced, in a series of 28 folios. From this ensemble of printed motifs, gleaned from here and there, Marclay has created, de facto, a musical score named *Ephemera*, which is intended to be played by professional musicians.

To represent sound, to give it a visual form, is an enterprise doomed to failure. A musical score evades this pitfall since it only constitutes the material support for reading, playing, or singing. It is a question of decoding a language, and even if not all are able to do it, everyone will nonetheless immediately recognize that they are dealing with written music. By extension, and in a deliberately ambiguous manner, a score can serve as a representation of music. These kitsch motifs thus present a disarming sight, insofar as nothing is really made to be played. We encounter unplayable elements, like keys of G lost in the emptiness, or staves whose lines wander and fray... Marclay gives meaning to these ephemera, even if they would have never claimed it for themselves, the poor little things being neither truly musical scores nor artistic representations.

With *Ephemera*, Marclay returns to the tradition of the collage in its true sense. If we refer to the Dadaist tradition of collage, he adopts here the principle of recuperation: he, in effect, has spent a great deal of time gathering, in order to elaborate his work. But, instead of deconstructing the world, or at the very least, noting its deconstruction, the revelation of its fissures and incoherencies, he unites it here, and reassembles it anew.

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Christian Marclay

*Ephemera*

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**Specifications**

- 28 folios
- 40 x 60 cm each
- Photography – Philippe De Gobert, Brussels
- Typography slipcase – Laurent Benner, London
- Photo-engraving – Patrick Laurensis, Brussels

- Folios are printed by Arte-Print, Brussels
- Slipcase in cardboard is bound by Rozier, Gent

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**Production**

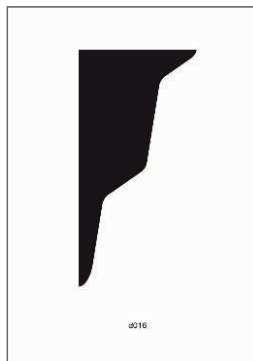
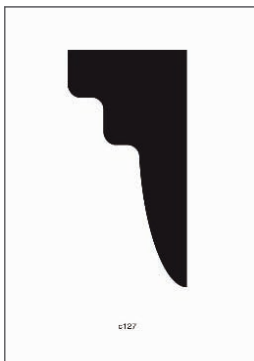
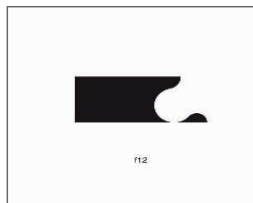
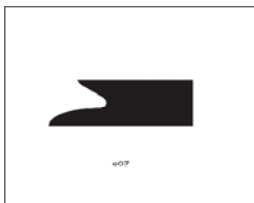
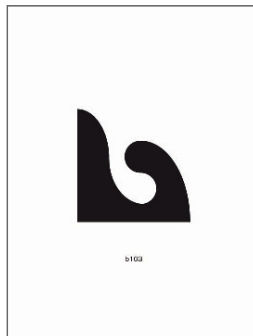
- Limited edition of 90 numbered and signed copies + 10 A.P.
- Price per set: **2.600,00 €**

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Produced and published in 2009 by mfc-michèle didier

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# Allan McCollum

## *The Book of Shapes*

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### **About *The Book of Shapes* by Allan McCollum**

Allan McCollum's *The Book of Shapes* is «The» book from the work *The Shapes Project*, initiated by the artist in 2005.

This art work provides a system for producing shapes, each different, and each destined to be assigned to a single individual. In order to do so, McCollum drew a base of 6 groups of elements. The combinations made possible by this system are able to produce over 31 billion different shapes. Since the UN established that in 2050 the world population would peak at over 9.1 billion people, this system offers an ample supply of shapes allowing everyone to have their own «form-shape», whose use could be left to each and every one's discretion.

*The Book of Shapes*, consisting of two volumes, makes *The Shapes Project* complete. Volume I contains the patterns, where we recognize the 6 groups of type-elements: the a and b elements are respectively the upper left and right part of the final shape, and the c and d elements are the lower left and right part, while a series of intermediate e and f elements multiply the number of possible variants. There are 144 a, b, c and d shapes and 12 different e and f shapes. As for Volume II, it includes the instructions and guides for creating all possible combinations of these components.

*The Shapes Project*, like any other of this artist's work, finds its method and inspiration in the analysis of mass production and proposes this paradox, characteristic of the artist: the wish to produce a work of art at a massive scale, thereby depriving its shape from its uniqueness, but ensuring at the same time that none of these objects, although created from the same mold, are similar and/or personalized due to their attribution.

*The Shapes Project*, has therefore an eminently utopian dimension: to offer everyone a unique art work of equal value, allowing the individual to own one of the over 31 billion shapes and, perhaps, to set aside the frightening question of his own irremediable loss. The information contained in *The Book of Shapes* lets thus grasp the magnitude of this plan and allows the work to survive the demise of the artist himself.

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Allan McCollum  
*The Book of Shapes*

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**Specifications**

- Each book measures 21,6 cm x 27,9 cm
  - Volume I: 632 pages - Volume II: 360 pages
  - Printed on 150 g Phoenix Motion Xantur
  - Signatures are double-stitched with white linen thread
  - Bound in brown calfskin leather "pleine fleur", gold embossing on front and spine
  - Ivory headband
- 
- Printed by Arte-Print, Brussels
  - Bound by L. Vander Heyden & Fils, redu

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**Production**

- Limited edition of 70 numbered and signed sets of 2 volumes and 10 A.P.
- Price per set: **3.600,00 €**

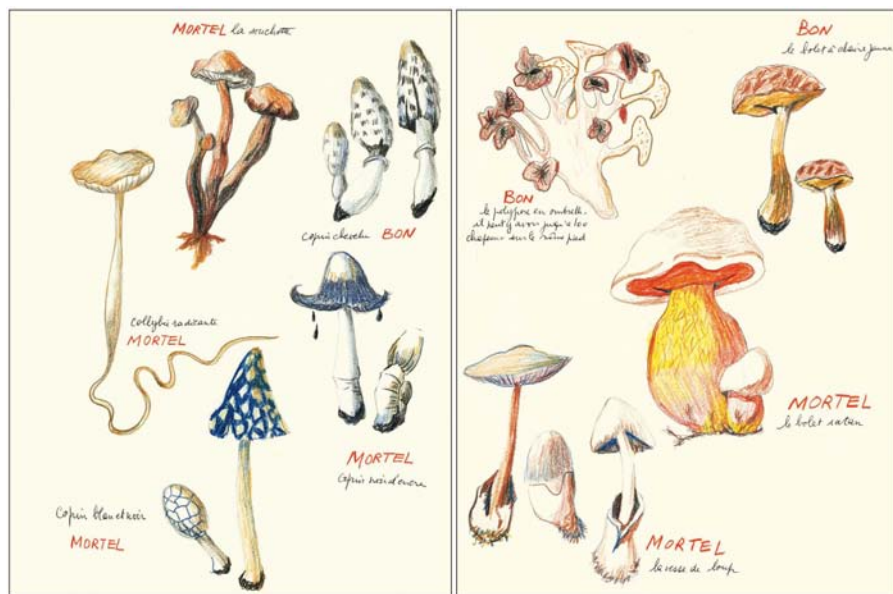
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Produced and published in 2010 by mfc-michèle didier, Brussels

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Ma collection de champignons bons et de champignons mortels





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## Annette Messenger

### *Ma collection de champignons bons et de champignons mortels*

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#### **About *Ma collection de champignons bons et de champignons mortels* by Annette Messenger**

Artist-collector and handywoman, Annette Messenger has made nearly sixty "collection albums" between 1972 and 1974. Inspired by words, writings and images, the artist has created her albums from an accumulation of texts, photographs, notes and miscellaneous items, cautiously collected and sorted. Sometimes carefully glued in notebooks, sometimes gathered in bulk folders, Annette Messenger's albums all have a title, handwritten by the artist.

The albums are organized according to various themes, such as love life, encounters or domestic life and resemble sometimes a diary, a photo album or a recipe book. *Les hommes que j'aime*, *Ma collection de proverbes*, *Ma vie illustrée* or *Mon livre de cuisine* are a few examples. Annette Messenger assembles common, everyday items to create a work that is subtly both poetic and feminist.

Although the use of the personal pronoun suggests that the albums are autobiographical, they are works of fiction. They reveal the ironic fantasy life of a young woman embodying the archetype of the 60's housewife. This woman is not Annette Messenger.

***Ma collection de champignons bons et de champignons mortels*** is one of these albums, where Annette Messenger has drawn a variety of colorful mushrooms, as if she was a botanist, precising for each if it is toxic or not. The good and the toxic mushrooms are presented on the same pages, only the words "bons" (good) and "mortels" (deadly) in red allow us to differentiate them.

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# Annette Messenger

*Ma collection de champignons bons et de champignons mortels*

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## Specifications

- 12 pages
- 32 x 24 cm
  
- Printed SP Productions, Brussels

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## Production

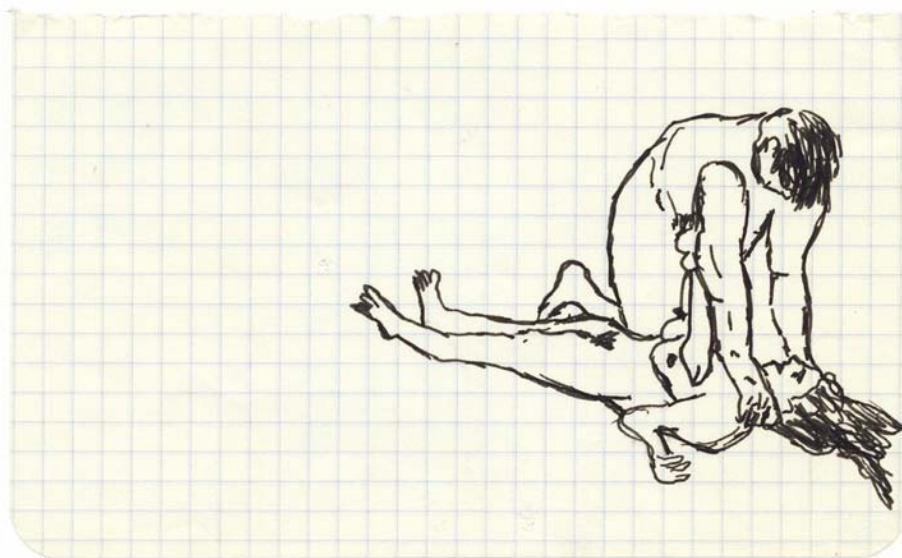
- Limited edition of 24 numbered and signed copies + 6 A.P.
  
- Price per unit: **1 200 €**

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Produced and published in 2011 by mfc-michèle didier  
1973 - 2011

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in any form or by any means without written permission of the  
artist and the publisher.



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# Annette Messenger

## *Mes dessins secrets*

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### **About *Mes dessins secrets* by Annette Messenger**

Artist-collector and handywoman, Annette Messenger has made nearly sixty “collection albums” between 1972 and 1974. Inspired by words, writings and images, the artist has created her albums from an accumulation of texts, photographs, notes and miscellaneous items, cautiously collected and sorted. Sometimes carefully glued in notebooks, sometimes gathered in bulk folders, Annette Messenger’s albums all have a title, handwritten by the artist.

The albums are organized according to various themes, such as love life, encounters or domestic life and resemble sometimes a diary, a photo album or a recipe book. *Les hommes que j’aime*, *Ma collection de proverbes*, *Ma vie illustrée* or *Mon livre de cuisine* are a few examples. Annette Messenger assembles common, everyday items to create a work that is subtly both poetic and feminist.

Although the use of the personal pronoun suggests that the albums are autobiographical, they are works of fiction. They reveal the ironic fantasy life of a young woman embodying the archetype of the 60’s housewife. This woman is not Annette Messenger.

***Mes dessins secrets*** is one of these albums, where the content is gathered in bulk. Consisting of 76 erotic drawings, drawn freehand by the artist on various papers from notebooks and booklets. These drawings are torn or detached from their original support and are collected in this bulk folder.

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Annette Messenger  
*Mes dessins secrets*

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**Specifications**

- 76 drawings in a cardboard album
- Dimension of the drawings: variable
- Dimension of the album: 32 x 24 cm
  
- Printed by Arte-Print, Brussels

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**Production**

- Limited edition of 24 numbered and signed copies + 6 A.P.
  
- Price per unit: **1 550 €**

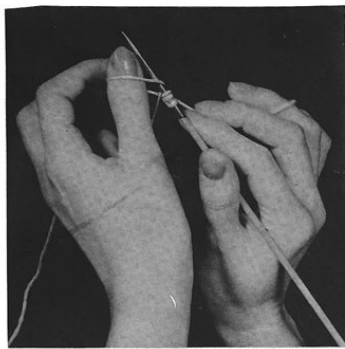
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1972 - 2011

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artist and the publisher.

1)



J'enroule la laine autour de l'index et du médium de la main gauche. Je forme une boucle - je passe le brin de laine qui croise dessus sous la boucle, j'attrape avec l'aiguille au travers de la boucle - je serre - c'est la 1<sup>re</sup> maille

Montage des points avec 1 aiguille  
2 méthodes

2)



Je maintiens avec le pouce de la main droite le fil que j'ai mis sur l'aiguille. Je le glisse sous la boucle qui contourne le pouce gauche. Je vais chercher la laine tendue sur l'index en passant par dessus le fil du milieu, je la pends par en dessous et je la ramène de la même façon. Je lâche la boucle du pouce, je la presse sous le brin qui va de l'aiguille au centre de la main gauche pour serrer - les 2 premières mailles sont montées - je recommence

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# Annette Messenger

## *Mon guide du tricot*

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### **About *Mon guide du tricot* by Annette Messenger**

Artist-collector and handywoman, Annette Messenger has made nearly sixty “collection albums” between 1972 and 1974. Inspired by words, writings and images, the artist has created her albums from an accumulation of texts, photographs, notes and miscellaneous items, cautiously collected and sorted. Sometimes carefully glued in notebooks, sometimes gathered in bulk folders, Annette Messenger’s albums all have a title, handwritten by the artist.

The albums are organized according to various themes, such as love life, encounters or domestic life and resemble sometimes a diary, a photo album or a recipe book. *Les hommes que j’aime*, *Ma collection de proverbes*, *Ma vie illustrée* or *Mon livre de cuisine* are a few examples. Annette Messenger assembles common, everyday items to create a work that is subtly both poetic and feminist.

Although the use of the personal pronoun suggests that the albums are autobiographical, they are works of fiction. They reveal the ironic fantasy life of a young woman embodying the archetype of the 60’s housewife. This woman is not Annette Messenger.

***Mon guide du tricot*** is one of these albums, in which Annette Messenger gathers a series of knitting techniques, through annotated photographs and schematic drawings. Two cardboards slid in the album show a woman wearing a mohair sweater and a man a suiza sweater. Each of these boards has its own thread sample.

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Annette Messenger  
*Mon guide du tricot*

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**Specifications**

- 10 pages and 2 sheets of mechanical cardboard
- 32 x 24 cm
- Printed by Arte-Print, Brussels

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**Production**

- Limited edition of 24 numbered and signed copies + 6 A.P.
- Price per unit: **1 200 €**

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Produced and published in 2011 by mfc-michèle didier  
1973 - 2011

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artist and the publisher.





Recto



Verso

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# Jonathan Monk

## *Diecimila*

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### **About *Diecimila* by Jonathan Monk**

Jonathan Monk often bases his work on the reinterpretation of pre-existing works, demonstrating a particular affinity for the sixties and seventies. Monk has raised the citation to the level of art to such an extent that one could liken his art to a history of art.

With *Diecimila*, the artist adopts a more radical stance by purely and simply appropriating Chris Burden's eponymous work of 1977. The work *Diecimila* consists of a double-sided facsimile of an Italian 10,000 lira banknote. It is, in a way, a fake banknote (and a real work of art), signed by the artist Chris Burden.

Monk replaces Burden here, and goes so far as to imperil the notion of the ownership of the work, duplicating also his predecessor's signature. The edition of 35 copies is similarly repeated. Even the multiplication is reproduced: pure tautology.

We can observe that the mimetic operation carried out by Jonathan Monk is split in two, for the work to which Monk refers is itself a facsimile of a pre-existing object. Jonathan Monk's identical reproduction of another artist's work is a conceptual act, with the added irony that the copied work is itself a work of conceptual art.

A banknote as an art object leads naturally, and literally, to the question of the value of art, a fluctuating notion if ever there was one. No longer in circulation, the Italian 10,000 lira note to which Burden referred in 1977 has since lost its exchange value to acquire that of a collector's item.

Furthermore, the choice of this banknote was not accidental, for engraved on it is the three-quarter portrait of Michelangelo. The aura of the artist competes with that of money. But in this case the battle was long won.

As for Monk, he asserts and consolidates here his position as an artist of succession and legacy. He develops his work according to the principle of kinship, which, no sooner dreamed of, comes true. Born in 1969, the artist never ceases to look back over the years of his birth. And it is not without insolence that the artist converts the art of those decades – an art of rupture – to inscribe it in a new genealogy of which, ultimately, he is the sole founding father.

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# Jonathan Monk

## *Diecimila*

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### Specifications

- Facsimile
- 7,9 x 16,2 cm (image), 26 x 35,6 cm (sheet), 27,2 x 36,4 cm (slipcase)
- Digital Print on Bioaset paper 115 gr
- Certificates signed and numbered by Jonathan Monk
  
- Photo-engraving by Patrick Laurensis and Luc Lorent, Brussels
- Printing by Arte-Print, Brussels
- Binding by Rozier, Ghent

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### Production

- Limited edition of 35 copies and 5 A.P.
  
- Price per unit: **2.500,00 €**

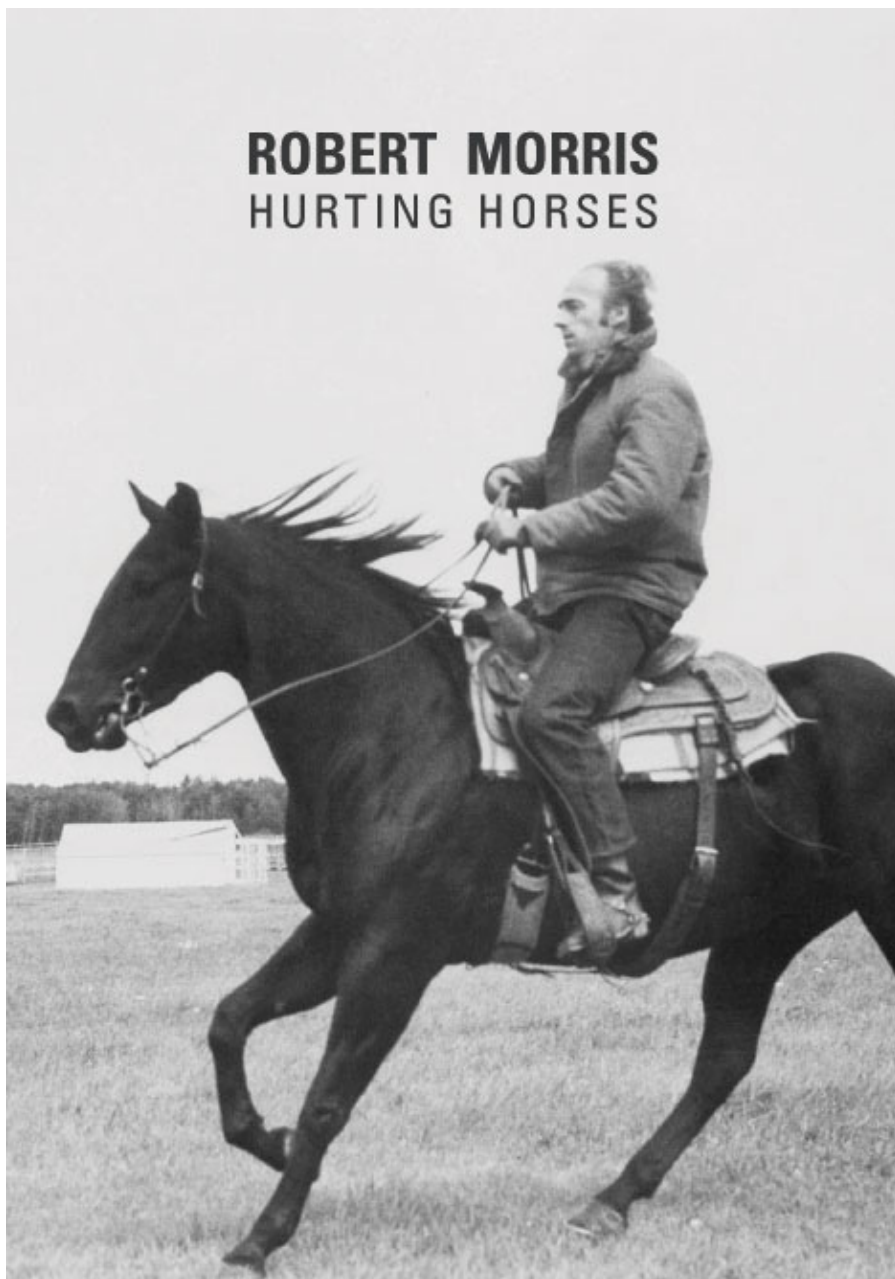
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Produced and published in 2010 by mfc-michèle didier, Brussels

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**ROBERT MORRIS**  
**HURTING HORSES**



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# Robert Morris

## *Hurting Horses*

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\*Obligatory mention : © Vera Kotaji pp. Michèle Didier

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### About *Hurting Horses* by Robert Morris

In *Hurting Horses*, Robert Morris uses the medium of writing to pay tribute to horses. His particular attraction to this animal was already obvious in 1969, with the performance *Pace and Process*, in which he rode one horse after another until he became exhausted, thus reversing the principle of the horse-race.

This book is divided into twelve chapters. In the first chapter entitled *Fathers and Sons*, Robert Morris goes back to his own genealogy. The paternal branch of the family, attached to the rural world, puts the young boy in contact with the world of animals and more specifically with the world of horses. The evocation of the family's past is reinforced by the presence of two photographs of his great-grandparents which frame the text in a sort of duality: the opposition between urban and country life, youth and old age, and between the middle-class and another more modest and rustic class. In the first chapters, horses are recalled as precious actors of the past. They are described as taciturn and humble characters – like the milkman's horse which does not escape a child's careful and well-intentioned attention. As the author says, «children notice such things».

A few pages further on, we find ourselves in a pure western film. It is not a well-known fact but when very young, Robert Morris has been working as a cow-boy in a ranch, tracking escaped horses across the big open spaces of Wyoming. Chapter III *Wrangling* is a short story, and its lines of dialogue and short scenes have a cinematographic character seen through the prism of Keatonian comedy. Although the story is full of violence, it is transfigured by a typically American approach: the burlesque style.

The history of the horse - because there is one - is closely related to the history of civilization. Domesticated 6000 years ago in Eurasia, the horse becomes, after the bow, the second most significant «tool» of progress, as initially used for warfare. This animal is then going to play a dominant part in the division of territory. More symbolically, the standard which the horse carries prefigures the flag, the representation by excellence of nationalist spirit. Moreover, the «driving force» of the horse partakes in the emergence of capitalism, but at the same time the animal is replaced by the machine. In Chapter VI, *History Lessons*, Robert Morris elaborates with great erudition a typology of the equine race through the ages and across the continents, but concluding in a surprising way: with a quiz!

*Hurting Horses* keeps on surprising us. On top of a display of scholarship about an unusual subject in the world of art, the book takes the reader by surprise with a number of hilarious passages, such as the exquisite Chapter IV entitled *The Large and the Small*, a subtly dialogued parodic variation of the novel *Animal Farm* by George Orwell, a political satire in itself. This special kind of humor hits home and allows us to guess who is hidden behind the nicknames *Porker Hush* and *El Laddie*...

On the other hand, the writing of Robert Morris expresses deep melancholy in Chapter V *The Jury*, a dreamlike fiction where the artist is confronted by a court composed of five carved stone horse heads. These figures are part of a building that really exists: the San Domenico Monastery, which dates back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century and was converted by Napoleon into a stable. The majestic heads call out to the artist one by one and take the opportunity to ask the human race for an explanation. «The only species your kind has mistreated more than us has been your own.» This very dark note takes us to an important character that exerted a major influence on the work of Robert Morris: Francesco Goya, whose etchings, *Los Disparates*, are mentioned in the introduction. Some of them again depict horses, but above all, they lead to a capital encounter with art, in all its darkness and its roughness. So here the horses put Man on trial and criticize him very bitterly for his secular taste for destruction, which is going sooner or later to throw him into the void.

There is also the question of emptiness in the admirable *Letter to a Childhood Pony*, in Chapter VIII, a letter meant for his daughter. The lines of this letter result in quivering praise for the past and for memory resurfacing. The chapter is illustrated by a photograph of the Temple of Segeste, in the center of which we can distinguish two tiny walking silhouettes, the father and the little girl, captured in a mimetic pose. In this letter, the artist explains both his relationship with the past and his new found lucidity related however to a loss of belief:

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# Robert Morris

## *Hurting Horses*

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\*Obligatory mention : © Vera Kotaji pp. Michèle Didier

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*«Perhaps that is why memory floods in : just to take up the empty space of the mind».*

In *Hurting Horses* the artist uses a distinct literary style from one chapter to another, from autobiography to historical essay, from satirical parody to the fantastic, from letter to fiction, from detailed report to visionary daydream. These masterly pieces of literature are haunted by the great American foundation myths and establish a series of crucial links between myth and history, history and art, and art and nature.

*Hurting Horses* enables us to understand with new acuteness the whole work of this artist and, in the end, reveals an important fact: more than ever, Robert Morris proves to be a writer.

Vera Kotaji pp. Michèle Didier

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**Robert Morris**  
*Hurting Horses*

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**Specifications**

- 23,5 cm x 16,5cm
  - 64 pages
  - The signatures are double-stitched with cotton thread
  - Paper: Silken White 16 g
  - Quadri and laminated cover: Carta Integra 300 g
  - Graphics by Delight and Michèle Didier, Brussels
- 
- Printed and bound by Arte-Print, Brussels

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**Production**

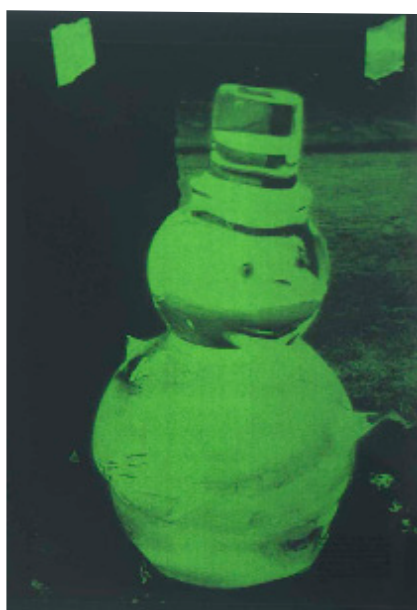
- Limited edition of 1500 copies
  
- Price per unit: **45,00 €**

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Produced and published in 2005 by mfc-michèle didier

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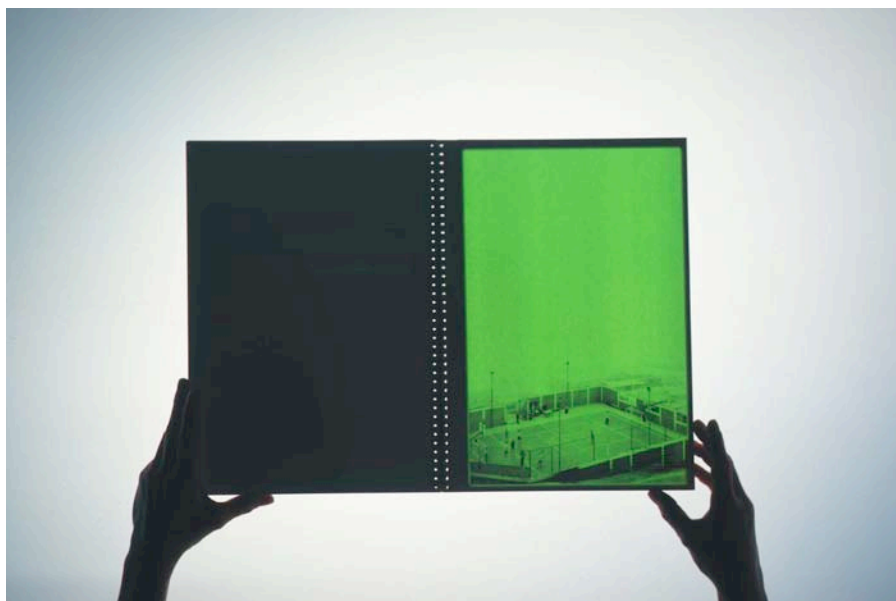




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Philippe Parreno  
*Fade to Black*

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# Philippe Parreno

## *Fade to Black*

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\*Obligatory mention : © Vera Kotaji pp. Michèle Didier

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### About *Fade to Black* by Philippe Parreno

*Fade to Black* is the generic title for a series of artistic projects that were triggered by Philippe Parreno since 1995. The artist is the initiator, but he pursues such projects sometimes alone, sometimes in collaboration with other artists such as Liam Gillick or Rirkrit Tiravanija. We could see *Fade to Black*'s images on display in poster format, at the Biennale of Lyon of 2003 and at Munich's Kunstverein, in early 2004, in the exhibition titled *Fade Away*. As time goes by, *Fade to Black* appears as a polymorphic sum, always apt at modifying itself.

*Fade to Black* gathers eleven titled images, which are detachable. Each of them documents an artistic proposal. Each image constitutes the footprint, the testimony to an action or ephemeral installation by Philippe Parreno. For instance we find the "Ice Man" image, a snowman man sculpted in an ice block, placed by the artist in a Tokyo garden, and replaced every day once the ice had melted. Or two dummies made in the image of Parreno and Tiravanija which, once animated by a ventriloquist, allow the two artists to exchange words and talk through the other. *Fade to Black* pictures them in a both farcical and disturbing fashion. Or this photograph of the entrance to an amusement park in South Africa, themed on "reality", where one can read "Welcome to Reality Park" written on a rock in giant letters.

*Fade to Black* is a "bedside book" that can only be browsed in the dark\*. The images inside are printed with phosphorescent ink and must be first "exposed" to light to become visible. This very light, stored within the matter itself, frees itself up in the obscurity and then reveals the image. It is however doomed to disappear as the quantity of reflected light is limited to its time of exposure. A specific time lapse is thus associated with the existence of the image. For Philippe Parreno, time constitutes an artistic material of choice, as also shown by this document testifying that in 1993, Rirkrit Tiravanija gave him one month of his life...

The printing process itself echoes Philippe Parreno's artistic approach, based on the mode of interactivity, and there is something playful in the way of reading and discovering the book's contents. On the other hand, Parreno's "poetic insight" creates a close intimacy between the reader and the object, forcing him to expose the work to light before deciphering it in a dark corner.

*Fade to Black* therefore exists without being visible at that – it is an evanescence that finally materializes it, and with a tongue in cheek...

Vera Kotaji pp. Michèle Didier\*

### Note

\*In order to read the book, open it and choose a page to suit you. Expose this page to natural or artificial light for a few minutes in a dark place, the image will shine and disappear again, gradually.

# The Specific Object Publication Award for 2005

Philippe Parreno, *Fade to Black*, 2005



## Announcing the *Specific Object 2005 Publication of the Year Award*

Given to **Philippe Parreno and mfc-Michèle Didier** for the publication **Fade to Black**

Specific Object is pleased to announce that it has named Fade to Black, by Philippe Parreno, the Specific Object 2005 Publication of the Year.

Published by mfc-Michèle Didier, Fade to Black is a compendium of eleven sly artists' proposals in the form of a uniquely crafted artists' book, that literally fades through the use of a photosensitive, phosphorescent, "glow-in-the-dark" ink.

Characterized by the publisher as a "'bedside book' that can only be browsed in the dark." Fade to Black parlays temporal projects by Parreno into the material space of a book, which in turn fade to black in the ephemeral space of a reader's mind. A clever full circle that is underlined by the collaborative nature of Parreno's own environments, situations and spaces.

Parreno, a French artist born in Algeria in 1964, works have been described by Giorgio Verzotti in Artforum, as "...having always called on the collective imagination and the behavioral modes to which it gives rise, and, as always, it is irony that lends his presentations a critical edge." Fade to Black, like a fine wine, a great film, or a stunning piece of music, accumulates, lingers than dissipates. In the tradition of the *Specific Object Publication of the Year Award* the book itself is a beautiful formal object too, but on some level that's irrelevant - it's a great book. Plain and simple.

Fade to Black's cover is printed by four-color offset, while its contents are screenprinted with a photosensitive, phosphorescent ink with subtle and succinct texts printed in black. A spiral binding allows the book to lie flat, freeing the pages to be viewed individually. Additionally the pages are perforated for easy removal from the book's spine allowing for display of the pages as a print portfolio. Fade to Black has been produced in an edition of 520 unsigned and unnumbered copies, and an additional 60 signed copies and 20 Artists' Proofs.

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# Philippe Parreno

## *Fade to Black*

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### Specifications

- 34cm x 24cm
- 32 pages
- Paper: Multi-Offset 170 g
- Cover: Carboard CKB 360 g
- Wire-O binding
  
- Coordination of printing and binding by Arte-Print, Brussels
- Silk screened by Screen Group, Brussels
  
- Photographs by Philippe Parreno

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### Production

- Limited to 520 copies, 60 signed copies and 20 A.P.
  
- Price per unit (copy): **120,00 €**
- Price per unit (signed copy): **300,00 €**

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Produced and published in 2005 by mfc-michèle didier

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# Michelangelo Pistoletto

## *Le Miroir comme Tableau*

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© 1993 Michelangelo Pistoletto, Les Maîtres de Forme Contemporains (mfc-michèle didier) and M. & L. Durand-Dessert

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The box conceived by Michelangelo Pistoletto is made of silkscreened mirror plexiglass. Within the box we find ten photo 4-page signatures comprising six images by Michelangelo Pistoletto and eight text 4-page signatures with an original text written by Jacques Meuris. It also includes an original work by the artist called *Rotazione dei corpi* and which consists of two photostats on rhodoïd. The images and the text deal with the theme of mirror.

- Images:
  - Il Designo dello Specchio
  - Tavolo Pozzo
  - Divisione e Moltiplicazione dello Specchio
  - Tavoli del Giudizio
  - Le Tavole delle Legge
  - Autoritratto di Stelle
- Text:
  - Le Miroir comme Tableau* by Jacques Meuris

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# Michelangelo Pistoletto

## *Le Miroir comme Tableau*

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### Specifications

- The box measures 23 cm x 23,5 cm x 1,5 cm
- The box, in silk screened plexiglass, is containing 18 unbound signatures
  - Ten photo 4-page signatures on paper Coated Job
  - Text *Le Miroir comme Tableau* by Jacques Meuris is printed on paper Rives Tradition on eight text 4-page signatures
- Original Michelangelo Pistoletto work:
  - Rotazione dei corpi*, Two photostats on rodoïd, 21,8 cm x 21,8 cm
- Book is printed by Imprimerie Clerebaut, Brussels
- Photostats on rodoïd and box in plexiglass are silk screened by Paul Bourquin, Besançon

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### Production

- Limited to 120 copies numbered and signed by the artist and the author +
  - 10 Michelangelo Pistoletto A.P. +
  - 5 Jacques Meuris A.P. +
  - 15 Not for Sale

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Produced and published in 1993 by Les Maîtres de Forme Contemporains (mfc-michèle didier) and M. & L. Durand-Dessert

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The bottom of the box contains a drawing made after landscape photographs reproduced in: Dowing, A.F., Scully V.J., *The architectural Heritage of Newport Rhode Island*, New York 1952 and also in Lutze, E. Ostfriesland, *Aufnahmen von Lothar Klimek*, Berlin 1973.

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# Hermann Pitz

## *Forme Entière*

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### **Specifications**

- The drawing is silkscreened on BFK Rives Velin Cuve 180 g
- The piece of glass laying over the image is a magnifying glass
- Box containing object: 30 cm x 36 cm x 8 cm
  
- The drawing is silkscreened by Philippe Struelens, Brussels
- The piece of glass is made by CIRVA, Marseille
- The box is made by Pierre Miconi, Brussels
- Bound by Sylvie Campus, Brussels
- Lined by ABAG Glenn Godeau, Brussels

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### **Production**

- Limited on 8 copies + 3 A.P. + 1 P.P. CIRVA

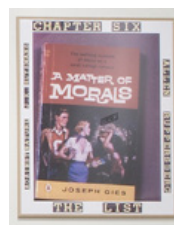
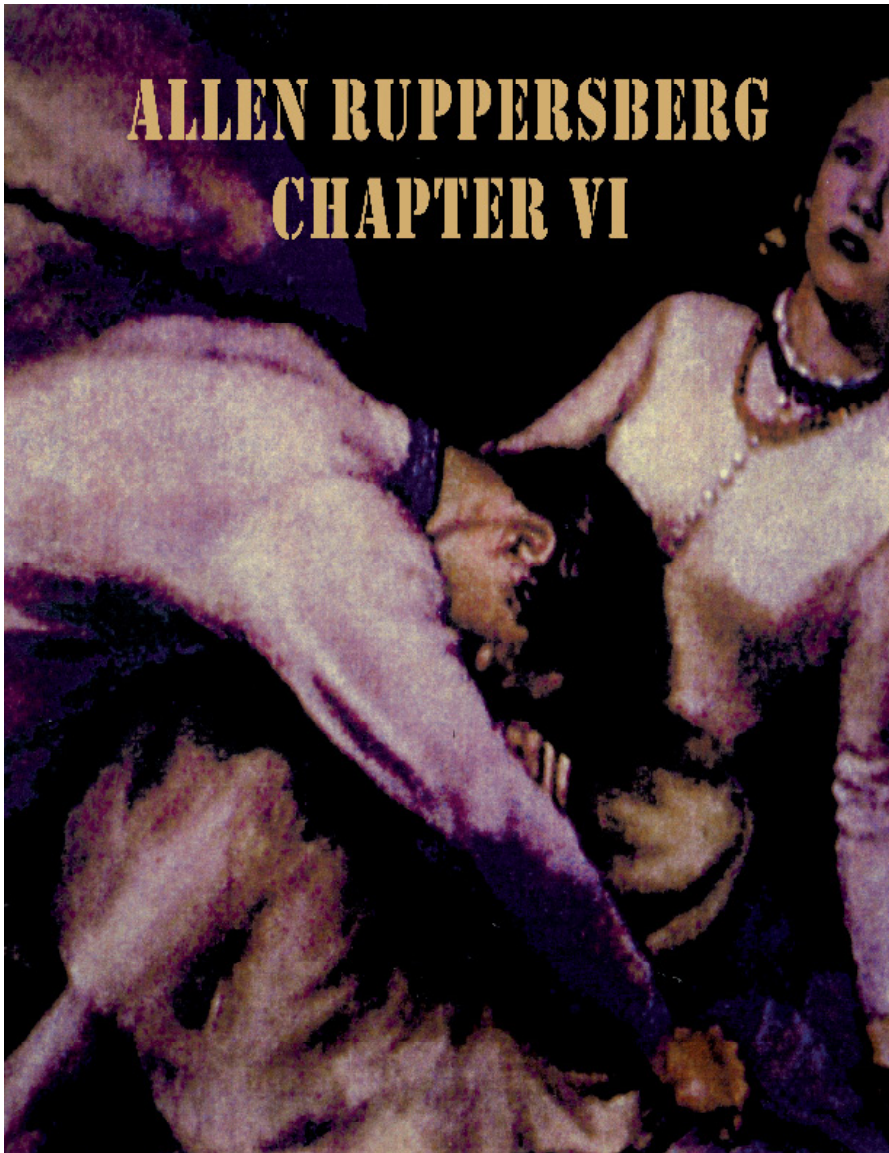
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Produced and published in 1994 by Les Maîtres de Forme Contemporains (mfc-michèle didier)

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# Allen Ruppersberg

## Chapter VI

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\*Obligatory mention : © Moritz Küng and Michèle Didier

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### 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 enjoyed, 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'émergence." 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**

**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**

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# Allen Ruppersberg

## Chapter VI

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\*Obligatory mention : © Moritz Küng and Michèle Didier

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**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 you questions: Yes, there is a 400 Euros 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**

**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**

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# Allen Ruppersberg

## Chapter VI

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\*Obligatory mention : © Moritz Küng and Michèle Didier

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**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 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.

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# Allen Ruppersberg

## Chapter VI

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\*Obligatory mention : © Moritz Küng and Michèle Didier

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**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**

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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](http://www.curatingthelibrary.be)

Moritz Küng  
Copy editing by Emiliano Battista



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# Allen Ruppersberg

## *Chapter VI*

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### **Specifications**

- **Book**

- Each volume is 27,9 x 21,6 cm
- Contains a total of 240 pages
- Paper: Blacklabel silk 200g
- Signatures are double-stitched with white linen thread
- Cover: Magno Satin 300g

- Printed by Arte-Print, Brussels
- Bound by Brochage FAC, Brussels

- **Poster**

- Each poster is 91,8 x 73,8 cm and unique
  - Paper: Optipremium coated Easy Lam 165g
- Printed by SP Production, Brussels

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### **Production**

- Limited edition of 128 sets and 12 A.P.
  - The set contains a book and a poster, the poster is different and unique in each set
- Price per set: **2.950,00 €**

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Produced and published in 2009 by mfc-michèle didier

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# Klaus Scherübel

## *Mallarmé, Het Boek*

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### **About *Mallarmé, Het Boek* by Klaus Scherübel**

“Everything in the world exists in order to end up in a book.”

Throughout the last thirty years of his life, French poet Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1889) was engaged with a “wonderful work”, that he simply called *The Book* (*Le Livre*). He envisioned *The Book* as a cosmic text-architecture: an extremely flexible structure that would reveal nothing short of “all existing relations between everything.” This “Grand Oeuvre”, wholly freed from the subjectivity of its author and containing the sum of all books was, for Mallarmé, the essence of all literature and at the same time a “very ordinary” book.

The realization of this “pure” work that he planned to publish in a bestseller edition never progressed beyond its conception and a detailed analysis of structural and material questions relating to publication and presentation. Yet to Mallarmé, *The Book*, which was to found the “true cult of the modern era”, was by no means a failure. “It happens on its own”, he 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.

For the exhibition *Mallarmé. Het Boek* held at S.M.AK. in 2009, Klaus Scherübel made a study of Mallarmé’s utopian dream to produce *The Book*. Presenting himself as the publisher of Mallarmé’s nonexistent literary masterpiece, he created here sham of it.



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Klaus Scherübel  
*Mallarmé, Het Boek*

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**Specifications**

- 24 × 15,8 × 3,6 cm
- Jacket printed by Arte Print
- Polystyrene and blister produced by Kramo

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**Production**

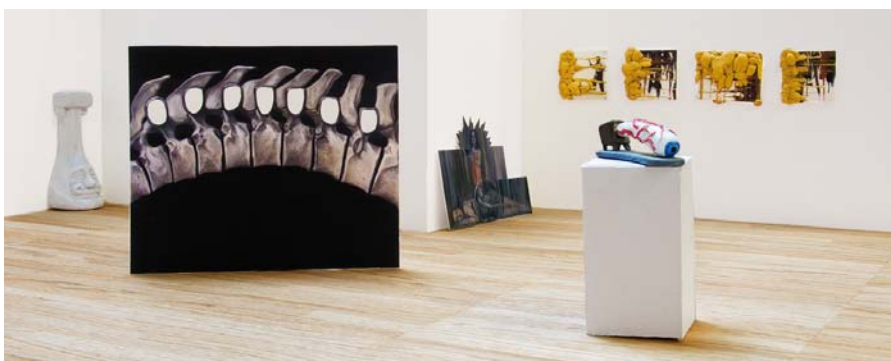
- Limited edition of 426 copies and 50 A.P.
- Price per unit: **50,00 €**

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Produced and published in 2009 by mfc-michèle didier

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Jim Shaw

*Dream Object Book*

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**About *Dream Object Book* by Jim Shaw**

Since the 1990s, I had been working on a project to record and render my dreams, striving to make many of the artworks I had encountered in those dreams. This set off an odd cycle of dreaming.

I started drawing dreams, working full time to make the art objects come true. Eventually I had a number of employees helping me to achieve this goal and I had a dream of an artwork that was a Plexiglass box wherein all the dreamt of artworks up to that point would be represented in miniature. On top of the pile of objects was a mini sculpture of the Whore of Babylon drinking a stride cup of filth and riding a beast with seven heads and ten horns. This idea was based on some 1890s painting that I had only ever seen in a Kelley and Mouse San Francisco psychedelic poster. I consider the Whore of Babylon atop a mass of filth to be a symbol of the worthlessness of the material world. Perhaps the mound of tiny artworks are symbolic of the folly of my quest.

My crew and I set out to sculpt the miniatures and print out small versions of the two-dimensional works in order to melt them together in the box. Since an immense amount of labor was going to be rendered invisible in a contained heap, the miser in me wanted to document the contents; so I asked Sachiyo Yoshimoto to curate a miniature exhibition in a scale model museum made of foam core and wood floor print, put together by Brigitte Coleman. The *Dream Object Book* is the book of that temporary show.

Jim Shaw

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Jim Shaw

*Dream Object Book*

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**Specifications**

- 11,2 x 13,4 cm
- 168 pages
- Paper: Blacklabel Silk Paper 170 g
- Signatures are double-stitched with white linen thread
- Cover: Mat laminated Blacklabel Silk on cardboard 2 mm / foam 2 mm

- Graphics: Raymond Aubry and Michèle Didier
- Printing: Arte-Print
- Binding: Delabie Boekbinderij
- Photo credits: Juliana Paciulli and LeeAnn Nickel

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**Production**

- Limited edition of 300 numbered copies and 60 A.P.
- Price per unit: **145,00 €**

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Produced and published in 2011 by mfc-michèle didier, Brussels

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# Josh Smith and Christopher Wool

## *can your monkey do the dog*

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\*Obligatory mention : © Vera Kotaji pp. Michèle Didier

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### About *can your monkey do the dog* by Josh Smith and Christopher Wool

*can your monkey do the dog* is the title chosen for this book conceived jointly by Christopher Wool and Josh Smith. *can your monkey do the dog* is not really a question, as confirmed by the lack of question mark. In this series of pieces created together, what may stand for a monkey for one of these artists can end up «doing the dog» for the other. Of course, there is in reality neither monkey nor dog, just shapes giving rise to other shapes.

Thanks to digital imaging and to graphics editors such as Photoshop, Christopher Wool and Josh Smith create here artworks «for four hands». To start, one of them proposes an image representing a work from his corpus. From this basic picture, the other generates another image by reworking it, by adding and/or removing elements. A third layer is then added by one of the two artists and a new «stratum» superimposed on the previous one... The absence of constraints and lack of mutual censorship regulates the alternating interventions. Only the choice to keep or not to keep the work at the end of the successive alterations is made «by common consent». Once the images have been fully reshaped, they are converted to black and white. Eventually, it becomes impossible for the artists themselves to distinguish precisely who has done what within this pictorial tangle.

Certain characteristic aspects of this special «operation» led by the Wool/Smith tandem could lead us to assume that they are taking us radically away from the art of painting. Neither of these two painters actually paints here, rather, they rework the digital image of an earlier painting or silkscreen with the help of a graphics tablet. In other words, the artwork's support is no longer canvas or a wood or aluminium panel, etc. It is now the representation of the artwork itself. This leads to the thought that, as we move further away from painting, we get closer to its very concept and that getting closer to the idea of a painting means getting closer to its (the idea of its) mode of reproduction.

Surprisingly, the surface relief created by painting becomes even more discernible once it has been captured in the shading system of the reproductive image. No matter that the brush stroke is now no more than a conceptualized vestige, it has never been more visible. It is a kind of landscape, where the motifs of each of the two artists have been replaced by the circumvolutions and the textures inherent in the pictorial matter itself.

Resorting to the use of a dematerialized computer tool and its cold, mechanical, random, dehumanized lines signifies a denial of painting. It nevertheless makes it possible for the viewer's eye to guess at the genesis of the work, carried out in several steps, and in this way rehabilitates the creative gesture. It is, in fact, a peculiar gesture which erases as much as it adds, destroys as much as it rebuilds, a gesture whose main driver is repentance.

Another paradox is seen in the extreme conceptual complexity which defines this work but which finds its modus operandi in the nimble spontaneity of unpremeditated interventions and in the chaotic accumulation of layers.

While painting is, once again, shaken to its very foundations, certain phenomena, such as filiation, school, and «atelier» remain surprisingly persistent in the world of art. This work belongs as much to Josh Smith as to Christopher Wool and it crowns and closes many years of collaboration between the two artists. With this difference: that this last cooperation has ended up a purely common work. Since the work was done jointly, the question of attribution is no longer relevant. It is as if Rubens and Van Dyck had found a moment in History to be «masters» at the same time, in the same atelier, and had created works signed with both their names.

*can your monkey do the dog* represents a significative step in the work of Wool and Smith. Thus, the final conversion of their work to black and white, in addition to providing a feeling of distancing from the pictorial matter, also seems to remind the viewer that this work is decisively linked to the past of the two artists.

Whether the result is the final liquidation of painting or its un hoped-for rephrasing, one is tempted to ask «Does it matter?» since the pragmatic approach taken does not re-appropriate art but rather reappropriates the *artwork*. And to such an extent that it becomes irrelevant whether it one's own or the other's that is re-appropriated.

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Josh Smith and Christopher Wool  
*can your monkey do the dog*

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**Specifications**

- 27,90 x 21,50 cm
- 168 pages
- Paper: Gardapat Kiara 135 g
- Cover: laminated coated paper 300 g, sewn in Otabind system
  
- Printing by Arte-Print, Brussels
- Binding by Hexspoor, Boxtel

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**Production**

- Limited edition of 1000 copies and 300 A.P.
  
- Price per unit: **55,00 €**

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Produced and published in 2007 by mfc-michèle didier

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