

récits / écrits

Curated by Didier Mathieu, general director of CDLA

Opening on February 23, 2017 from 6 pm to 9 pm

Exhibition from February 24 to April 22, 2017

This exhibition brings together about 40 publications by 10 female artists involved in writing processes while sharing a series of other practices such as performance, film, video, and installation.

The writings and stories in question – texts, works, publications, memories, novels or exhibitions – are all linked through the question of autobiography.

Please find below some information about the artists in question.

P.S. In French, "écrits" is the anagram of "récits".

Didier Mathieu



Carolee Schneemann

Parts of a Body House

In *Fantastic Architecture* published by Dick Higgins & Wolf Vostell, New York, 1969.

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Martine Aballéa

Martine Aballéa (Born in New York in 1950) attributes to writing a significant and singular position in her practice. The text – titles, slogans, short stories – obviously animate books and other printed matter but contaminate simultaneously objects and silver prints (colored or silkscreen printed). As it happens in the photographic series *Intrigues végétales* (2004) only few words extracted from the literary field (“episode”, “epilogue”) and associated to the images achieve to create an elliptic narration.

About *Triangle* (1977) a small book shaped like one Elisabeth Lebovici clearly sees “It is in a way texts/title to understand as texts squeezed into a title”. Concerning *Geographic Despair* (1977) Lebovici quotes Mallarme’s preface of *Un coup de dé jamais n’abolira le hasard*: “Everything happens by foreshortening as a hypothesis, narration is avoided”. Elisabeth Lebovici, *Autels de passe* quotes in: *Martine Aballéa. Roman partiel*, Paris, Sémiose éditions, 2009. Pages 22 and 25.

Triangle evokes paper hen (the folding game where you manipulate a paper triangle). This one opens alternatively in both sense where appears words or short sentences.

I love to invent stories. Being very naive, I can believe unlikely things. Everything is possible in a way. People are now constantly playing with words and images; it allows fiction to spread in the space of reality. For some of these things it’s possible to state they are pure fiction. But at the same time the notion of fiction appears blurry and tends to become itself a fiction. Extremes things happen so regularly that we’re not astonished anymore. Nobody reacts, everything turns into banality. The “over information” media practice kills the information credibility. As unlikely events surround us all the time it’s therefore possible to create unlikely stories. I sometimes believed that I was creating real/fake. In any case I built this universe in memory of those incredible events that occurred to ordinary people. As a reference to these crazy (sometimes wonderful sometimes terrifying) facts. Their values are linked for me in the abnormality rather than in their falsity. Martine Aballéa, interview with Jérôme Sans, in the catalogue *Martine Aballéa. Essai de rétrospective*, Limoges, Fonds régional d’art contemporain du Limousin, 1990. Page 41.

At the initiative of Martha Wilson, Martine Aballéa exhibits at Franklin Furnace Archive in New York (1976 – 1978) where she initiates a performance program by reading the diary where she transcribes her dreams. Published by Michel Nuridsany in 1987 *Prisonnière du sommeil*. Editions Flammarion, coll. «Textes».

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Eleanor Antin

100 Boots is surely the most famous visual novel edited by Eleanor Antin (born in New York in 1935).¹

In *Being Antinova* (1983) she uses the diary as another form of narration. During her trip in New York in the 80' Antin writes as Eleanora Antinova a young black dancer and choreograph for the Ballets Russes. This character appeared in Antin's works since a decade (between 1979 and 1989) first showed in an exhibition and performance titled *Before the revolution* and alternatively presented in Ronald Feldman's gallery and Kitchen center for video and music in NY.

Antinova was my family, my childhood, my Eastern European roots, my childish passion for ballet and high culture.

Eleanor Antin walks in the footsteps of Eleanora Antinova, as the title suggests she becomes Antinova. The narration of events and encounters during her stay in New York troubles the personalities and the characters. Exploring what she calls the slippery nature of the self, the artist hybridizes fiction and autobiography.

Eleanore Antin stages herself (she had a brief experience as an actress in the second half of the 50's). Part of the presentation of Antinova's diary coincides with *Antin - Antinova* exhibition at Ronald Feldman's gallery: *Recollection of my life with Diaghilev*.

A photography documenting a performance/ lecture (occurred in the same exhibition) is presented in the book². In 1987 the character of Eleanora Antinova is also present in a film (documentary - fiction) dedicated to the artist's mother Jeannette Barna.³

Being Antinova ends like this:

He whistled with admiration.

"You know a lot. Are you a historian?"

Yesterday I would have been insulted. "I am a ballerina," I would have said in a huffy voice.

¹(We can find on gallery Feldman website the press release: http://www.feldmangallery.com/pages/home_frame.html).

² *100 Boots* is a series of 51 postal cards produced and mailed by the artist between 1971 and 1973. "I was a conceptual artist back then but I wasn't aware of the artistic scene in Los Angeles (...) there had to be a way to show art to people other than by plastering it between the bare white walls of New York galleries. Why not through the mail? At the time, all you needed was a six-cent stamp to send a postcard at the normal price. Hadn't the great novels of Dickens and Dostoyevsky first been presented to the public in serial form? This could be a story in episodes, a long story, a novel, a "road novel" in the manner of Kerouac, a picaresque novel, but in images – on postcards – and via the post. [...] All picaresque novels have a hero, a charming fool – D'Artagnan was a cretin, Tom Jones, a nutcase, as for Don Quixote, he was completely off the wall – mine wouldn't talk. It would be a marginalized character, a hero who would carry out a long and painstaking labour. I didn't want there to be any witticisms. I wanted an epic" (Eleanor Antin, «Remembering 100 boots» in *Eleanor Antin. 100 boots*, Philadelphia, Running Press Book, 1999).

³(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pHKNpdLEmU>). *Being Antinova* is dedicated to Marcia Goodman, the artist sister and to Ida Applebroog.

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But today I am only tired and sad. I ask him to wrap *Madame's* picture separately, instead of throwing it in with the books as he is doing.

I watch him wrap my present to myself.

"No, I'm a restorer," I say.

"Of paintings?"

"No. I restore histories. You could say I replace the lost.... the missing.... and those that should have been...."

"Sounds like fun. What do they call you?"

I took my present and my books and turned to leave.

"A fool," I grinned.

The young man laughed.

"Aren't we all?" he called out as I went out the door into the chilly sun.

Ida Applebroog

Ida Applebroog (born in New York in 1929) published by herself three series of notebook. The first one *Galileo works* in 1977, *Dyspepsia works* in 1979 and the last one *Blue books* in 1981 (this one is presented now in the exhibition). Each notebook (24 pages including the cover page) is titled in a laconic manner: *Its very simple, I can't stop crying*, or simply as *A performance*.

These thin publications are printed in a single color (blue in this case) and constructed in a similar pattern. In each of them a square drawing (sometimes two) occupies almost the entire page space and is repeated in the next ones.

On other pages, short sentences or dialog's sequence appear as inserts in cinema. Some works echo with the notebook title. The sketches represent characters (alone or in couple) seen from a window. Silent stories in what looks like a puppet theater. White pages lead us to think that we've entered during the action or that the scene may repeat. Witnessing those private scenes, the reader becomes a voyeur. Those stories are often disrupted and sometimes unspeakable.

The soap opera dimension of the publication was evident at the time of their publication. Ida Applebroog had chosen to released them one after the other, month after month, mailing it to people she appreciated even though she never met them (mainly artists, critics, gallery owners, museum directors). About these publications she says, "It was a way to decentralize the art system."

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Barbara Bloom

Barbara Bloom (Born in Los Angeles in 1951) refers to herself as a collector (this is how she conceptualizes her exhibition at Kunstverein Munich in 1990). Her books are meticulous, sort of settings or “collages”, I would say that she is a sophisticated bibliographer. These books represent a perfect echo of her practice in which she hybridizes found objects and created ones. And the book is therefore the perfect place for citation.

Published in 1992, *Never Odd or Even* was presented in the exhibition “signa te, signa temere me tangis et angis” at the Kunstverein of Munich and at Carnegie museum of art in Pittsburg.

Never Odd or Even is a sealed book, the pages needs to be cut – dismembered – in order to be read, it is attached and glued opposite to the fold part where the pages of ordinary books usually opens. The title is a palindrome and *Never Odd or Even* is linked in many ways with the idea of double, twin - and their imagery in the Rorschach test - mirror, symmetry and totalitarian architecture.

As in many of her precedent works (*Reading Lolita in the dark* of 1994, *Revised evidence: Vladimir Nabokov’s inscriptions, annotations, corrections, and butterfly descriptions* of 1999) the writer Vladimir Nabokov is present as a reference (in echo to his love for details and his interest for Lepidoptera) and as a photography (we can see a cliché of him in 1907 holding a book dealing with butterflies) .

Never Odd or Even is folded in a particular way. Only the inside pages are printed. And it can be opened as the wings of butterflies: it very structure is therefore linked to the content. In every Bloom’s book the iconography represents a major role, chosen and rarely released pictures she sometimes put in different of her books.

Mirtha Dermisache

Since 1970, the work of Mirtha Dermisache (born in Buenos Aires in 1940 and died in 2012) has been published, released and exhibited in Latin America and Europe, principally in Centro de arte y Communication (CAyC), in the presentation of Guy Schraenen’s archive for small press and communication, in Ulises Carrion’s gallery Other Books and so (Amsterdam), or by Roberto Altmann at Malmo Konsthall. In 2009, some of her works has been presented in the exhibition “elles@centrepompidou”.

Mirtha Dermisache uses existing frames of expression (book, journal, information post, postal card, article, news report) that connects with Gutenberg’s techniques of reproduction and broadcast methods. (Florent Bajole in Mirtha Dermisache “libros”, le centre des livres d’artistes, 2008.)

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In a letter he addressed to the artist in 1971 Roland Barthes writes: *You have managed to produce a certain number of shapes, neither figurative nor abstract, that could be defined as illegible writing – leading to suggest its readers, nor exactly messages nor the contingent forms of expression, but the idea, the essence of writing. Nothing is more difficult to produce than an essence, i.e., a shape that refers to its own definition.*

Marianne Mispelaëre

Silent Slogan edited in 2016 by Marianne Mispelaëre (born in Bourgoin-Jallieu in 1988) is a suite of 21 postal cards. Upon each one's recto is reproduced a black and white photography showing gestures of harms and hands, the verso contextualizes the images collected on Internet.

These images interrogate memory and draw another way for historical narration, showing individuals in the use of their hands to address the public sphere a message (...) These gestures find their legitimacy in the collective, shared in the street, on internet or daily live, leading to the possibility of a dialog when it seems to has stopped. Contemporary word nourishes from this social invisibilities. Marianne Mispelaëre.

Martha Rosler

We've seen how *100 boots* (Antin) has been released by postal service in a soap opera dimension. *Service's* texts has been initially fragmented on postal cards then sent by mail to an amount of potential readers. Martha Rosler explains herself in the introduction of 1978's edition.

This book is divided in three novels and one translation. In their original form the novels were sent through mail as postcard series, one card every five or seven days. Mail both is and isn't a personal communication. But whether welcome or unwelcome, it thrusts itself upon you, so to speak, and must be dealt with in the context of your own life. Its immediacy may allow its message to penetrate the usual bounds of your attention. A serial communication can hook you, engaging your long-term interest (intermittently, at least). There was a lot of time – and mental space – around each installment of these novels, time in which the communication could unfold and reverberate. So, they are long novels, and slow ones.

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Carolee Schneemann

The writings – performance's score, diaries text, are a considerable part of Schneeman's works. Since the 60's her texts are disseminated far from institutional spheres, in the periphery of journals and several collective publications.

Before being published by *Beau geste presse* (1972), *Parts of a body House*, is released for the first time in *Caterpillar* a journal edited in New York by Clayton Eshleman (N°3/4 1968) then in *Fantastic architecture* edited by Dick Higgins and Wolf Vostell in 1969.

Both performance and publication *A-B-C We print anything - In the cards* is the largest and nourished narration constructed by Carolee Schneeman in 1976-1977. This double existence of the piece is emphasized in the comment Schneeman gives in *More Than Meat Joy - Performance Works and Selected Writings* (Kingston - NY, McPherson & Company, 1997, pages 246–249. The text has been recently republished by Sabine Breitweiser, Carolee Schneemann. Kinetic Paintings, Salzburg, Museum der Modern and Munich, Prestel Verlag, 2015. Page 254).

Few years before, Michael Gibbs cleverly sees in *A-B-C We Print Anything – In The cards*: "To make a book enter in the performance field – rather than producing a book about a performance seems a really new proposition for books creation. The book already exists in this piece: it is the piece". Michael Gibbs in *Everything in the art world exists in order to end up as a book*. Art Communication Edition 6, juillet 1977).

As a performance *A-B-C* occurred for the first time November 1976 in New York then the next year in May at the New York University and at last in June during the "Performance Art Festival" organized by Jan Brand in the Netherlands .

During her lecture-performance at De Appel, Carolee Schneeman reads the cards in front of a white screen upon which her black silhouette appears. Next to her, texts and photographic were projected on two other screens.⁴

A-B-C We Print Anything In The cards is a major work, central to her other artistic practices such as performance, films, and collage.

The title of the performance work and book offers numerous connotations. «ABC» not only represents the protagonists of the narrative, it references childhood learning and the education process of those involved.

A-B-C is at the same time rigorously constructed but opened to several lectures when the order of the cards happens to be changed in the process of storage (in the box as an open form). The reader can therefore create his own pattern.

⁴(<http://www.deappel.nl/exhibitions/e/76/m/>).

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I ordered the sequence very carefully in terms of elements of the time. I wanted one of the cards to say now you can shuffle. So I needed to establish an order and it has to do with certain kinds of rhythms and implications and dynamics within the statements and the fragments of the relationships. But then it's planned so that anyone can shuffle it, just like a deck of cards. You can start anywhere and end up anywhere. It's a broken novel.⁵

The idea of shuffling the cards is already claimed by B on the card N°43

B: B said, put it all on cards. Then you can shuffle.

A-B-C is a large novel ("discontinuous" says Carolee Schneeman) in which texts and images dialog follows the voices of the three protagonists A for Anthony - B for Bruce - C for Carolee.

Cards are printed in three colors distributed in relation to the text: Yellow is attributed to C novel extracts and dream narration. Blue is attributed to the comments made by A B and C and Pink to their friend's interventions. These images show an everyday life (some shoes, a sink, a clock), the protagonists, their friends and primitive representations of sexuality.

Every dilemma of our life is in there, every contradiction. It was a wonderful piece to be able to create, because it came out of such chaos. My partner was leaving me and strange enough it seemed like I was falling in love with someone else. It was so confusing. So when people would talk on the phone they would give me advice... I would write that down and drop it in the drawer... Finally I looked in this drawer and I had all these notes piled up and thought maybe I could do something with this.

Athena Tacha

Athena Tacha (born in Larissa, Greece in 1936) says that her work swings between two sides. One of them represents reality she relates to her sculptor practice. The other is rooted to the self and includes conscience and writings. She sees in her photographic and film practices the link between those two sides. As a student, she hesitated between visual art and literature.

Most of the printed works exhibited are all edited by the artist between 1972-1975 and both photographic and textual. The two brochures *Heredity study 1970-71 I* and *II* and planche *EXPRESSIONS 1 (A STUDY OF FACIAL MOTIONS)* and *GESTURES #1 A STUDY OF FINGERS POSITIONS (REDUCED VERSION)* belong to the photographic works where body is language.

My Childhood Garden (Visual memory excavation #1) et *My Childhood Home (Visual memory excavation #2)* belong to the series Athena Tacha calls "pocket books" 22 publications edited between 1972 and 2005.

⁵ All Schneemann's citation are extracted from an interview with Kathleen Wentrack (21 september 2001). *ABC we print anything - In the card* has been showed in Canada (1981-82) in the famous Books by artists exhibition.

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The pockets books are small scale brochures (12 x 7 cm mostly) printed in pale colors. These texts are intimate, human and humorous and reach for objectivity.

Close with the idea of autobiography "myself" being the more adequate subject for observation, I don't use language as a poet, but as a surgeon, language as a tool for conscience-knowledge she says. (Dissection of a Specimen or The Way My Mind Works) the under title of the text THE PROCESS OF AGING is explicit: Fragment of an on-going thorough self-analysis and description to be completed by the end of my life.⁶

Between 1961 and 1963 Athena Tacha studied art history (Sorbonne Paris 1 and Ecole du Louvre) writing her thesis on "The role of Light In modern sculpture". Then she worked in the 70's as a curator at Allen Memorial Art museum of Oberlin College. As a curator she organizes "Art In mind" one of the first conceptual exhibitions in the United states (1970). This exhibition only consists in a printed catalogue copied gathering about 50 artists (among Vito Acconci, Michael Asher, John Baldessari, Robert Barry, Mel Bochner, Jonathan Borofsky, George Brecht, Victor Burgin, James Lee Byars, Dan Graham, Bruce Nauman, N.E. Thing Co., Ltd., Claes Oldenburg, Adrian Piper, Mel Ramsden, Allen Ruppensberg, Marjorie Strider, William Wegman, Lawrence Weiner...)

Martha Wilson

We've seen how in Scheemann and Antin's work writing and performance share a common frame. The three texts published as brochures by Martha Wilson (born in Philadelphia in 1947) and titled *The annotated Alice* (1976) have been performed in Artists Space and at the Whitney Museum of Ny. Here the artist rewrites Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*.

In a recent mail Martha Wilson indicated to me: *As an ex-English Lit major, I considered the text to be of fundamental importance, and performed these texts when given the opportunity.*

Her first book is a thin brochure containing three texts: short novels published and edited by herself in 1975. Three trucks stories about trucker in which their titles leave little to imagine: 1. *TRUCK* / 2. *FUCK* / 3. *MUCK*.

Martha Wilson has founded in New York (1976) Franklin Furnace Archive, unmissable place dedicated to artists' publications. With Barbara Ess, LLona Granet, Donna Henes, Daile Kaplan, Barbara Kruger, Ingrid Sischy et Diane Torr, she's been active part of the group Disband mixing performamnce art and music between 1978 et 1982.

⁶We'll appreciate Athena Tacha's reading of some of her « pockets books » at Franklin Furnace in 1976 <https://vimeo.com/21831265>.

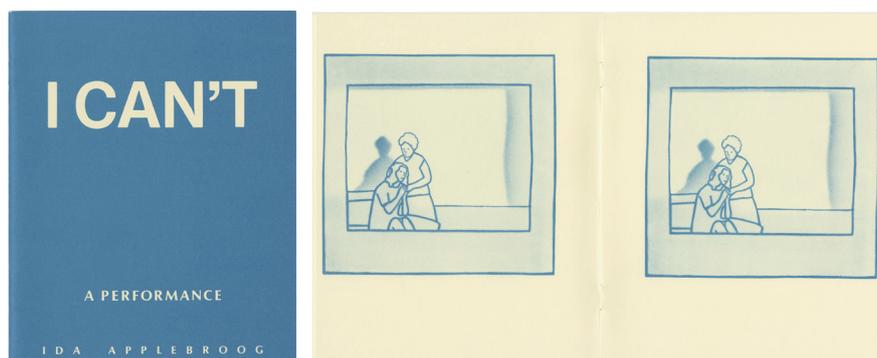
For **IMAGE REQUESTS** please contact us



Martha Rosler

Service: a trilogy on colonization

Printed Matter, New York 1978. 1000 ex.



Ida Applebroog

I can't – A Performance / Blue Books

Published by the artist, New York 1983

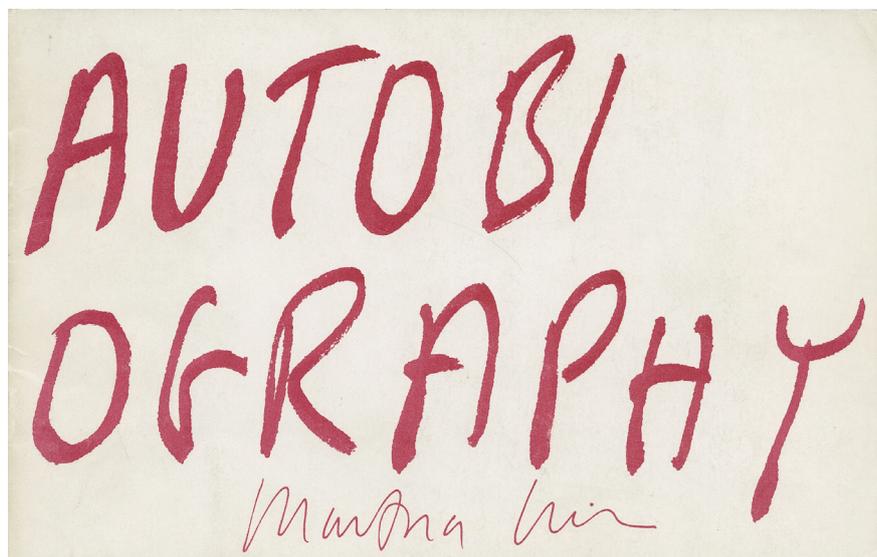
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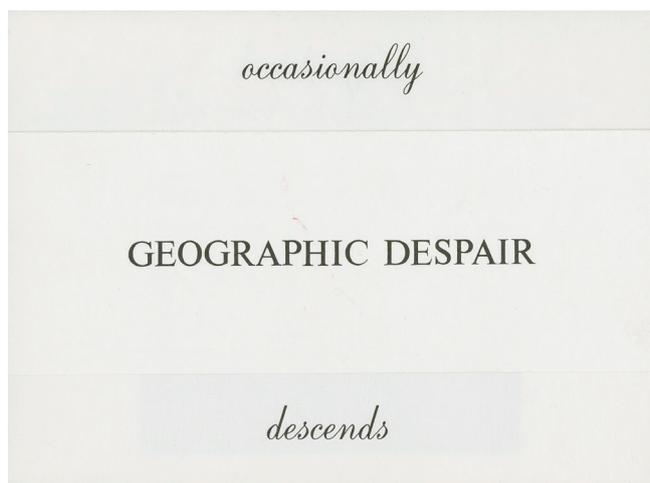
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Martha Wilson
Autobiography
Chicago Books, Chicago 1979.



Martine Aballéa
Geographic Despair
Published by the artist.

