

WHAT?



WHAT?

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WHAT?

MARKET?



MARKET!

What? Market? Market! is the second edition of a joint discussion between Unseen Book Market and Photobook Week Aarhus. While the first edition *Market? What Market?* (2017-2018) focused on the general role of the photobook market today, the current edition (2018-2019) explores solutions for the field's challenges. Artists, independent publishers, collectors and mediators reflect on new developments, the importance of reaching different audiences, and consider sustainable models of book production.

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FREDERIC LEZMI & MARKUS SCHADEN



World in Transition (Rostock, 2016)
© Eisenhardt Keimeyer

Your involvement in the photobook world started in 1995, when Schaden Verlag was founded. Can you share your perspective on the development of the market since the 1990s?

MS The photobook was not yet a collector's item. We witnessed the idea of collecting photobooks being born. In the 1990s, together with others – Diane Dufour, Dirk K. Bakker, Dewi Lewis, Gösta Fleming, Martin Parr, Rixon Reed etc. – I set up the market spaces in Arles, and decided that we should focus more on photobooks. There was a lot of excitement about discovering the medium and shap-

ing the community around it. The problem of how to find your audience was already apparent, but back then there was not much competition. In 2001, schaden.com bookstore could have easily sold 400 copies of Rinko Kawauchi's *Utatane* in Arles. Today, publishers are happy to sell five copies of a book at the various book fairs and festivals. The rapid development of photobook production in the early 2000s was not followed by a similar development in sales numbers. That's the whole challenge today: to find new people to experience a photobook... and in the end, maybe buy it.

That's precisely what you have been focusing on with the multiple initiatives of The PhotoBookMuseum. One of the recent ones was a mobile open-air photobook project *World in Transition* that engaged with issues of global change with an exhibition in five containers, accompanied by workshops, guided tours and sofa talks. Throughout 2016 and 2018, it travelled to Rostock, Duisburg and Kassel. Can you speak about the process of working with new audiences?

FL Selling photobooks became less and less important for us. The challenge, indeed, became how to bring more people into the experience of the photobook as a transmitter of ideas, an educational tool, and a vision. All of our projects relate to an ongoing research about how to exhibit photobooks in an adequate and media-specific way. *World in Transition* was an experiment where we worked with people living in social housing, in locations where Neo-Nazis were showing up. We were asking ourselves, how can we act in this setting? It was an interesting experience and very successful.

MS All sorts of mediations and dialogues were important. I gave 40 tours myself, some lasting two hours. For me this project touched at the core of what photography is – offering communication. The foundation with whom we developed the project, Montag Stiftung

Kunst und Gesellschaft, has worked on participatory projects for a long time, and they consulted with us on how to communicate the topics of the exhibitions. What we realised quickly was that a photobook is a combined medium, it's both a book and there are photographs. The project was too complex to present immediately as a book, we had to take a step back. We extracted an image from each book. These images served as starting points for a dialogue, within which it was becoming apparent that the individual images came from books that held much broader stories. People would then start to actually look. The next step was the workshops. The core grammar of a photobook does not differ depending on whether you're working with a famous photographer, or with an amateur photographer taking travel images from Iceland. Sequencing, as well as how covers or titles work, and what a photobook can do, can be explained. Photography is a very democratic tool, but people normally need a bit of help in structuring their images. In dialogue with the participants, we were unlocking the creative and narrative potential of their photos. We produced participants' dummies, and while their iPhone images will probably disappear with time, these dummies will stay in the family treasure boxes for generations. That's the power of the photobook.

Why was it important to develop the general audience's skills of, not only looking at photobooks, but also making them?

FL As Alec Soth once said: 'It is not about making good pictures anymore. Anybody can do that – it is about good stories in good edits.' Everybody needs skills for composing narratives, and photobooks are the future of visual expression, a visual Esperanto. It's also a part of cultural participation. We often do workshops outside of Europe, in places like Bangladesh, Turkey, Indonesia. People are not necessarily interested in photography, but in the subject matter.



World in Transition (Kassel/Rostock, 2018/2016) © Marvin Ibo Güngör / Thekla Ehling



Chargesheimer: *Unter Krahnensäumen: Bilder aus einer Straße* (Reprint by Schaden Verlag, 1998) © Schaden Verlag



The Chargesheimer Projekt – Preview (Cologne, 2018)
© Frederic Lezmi

‘Such a project will not work if it simply intrudes into the public space. We have to do it together – as a street and as a community.’

The photobook then is a form of empowerment and offers the opportunity to have your voice expressed, if you have the tools. I believe visual literacy should be taught at schools in the same way we learn to read and analyse literary texts, with photobooks being a strong advocate for this. We are still at a very early stage of the evolution of how photobooks are used.

Your next ambitious project bringing a general audience into the life of a photobook, and *visa versa*, is *The Chargesheimer Project*. It revolves around the *Unter Krahnensäumen: Bilder aus einer Straße*, a photobook published in 1958 by the German photographer Chargesheimer (Karl Heinz Hargesheimer). It tells the story of a single street, Unter Krahnensäumen in Cologne. The project will be fully realised in 2021, when oversized images from the photobook will be placed on the street’s buildings’ facades. What are the goals of the project?

MS Our goal is to ask how a photobook, in this case a famous one, can be used as a resource for making something new. We also want to ask how it could contribute to the discussion around using city streets as a public exhibition space, now and in the future. We want to inspire people, study the complexities of inspiration itself and the role of the photobook in relation to it. Also: how can we activate a photobook that has an established place in art history, and see what it can do today for my Turkish butcher rather than specialised collectors.

You opened up the project as a space of collaboration for anyone interested. How has this participatory approach been working out so far?

FL We are in an early stage of work. People come and say: ‘It’s a nice project. I also want to do something with my house’, and they start to dig into their family archives. For example, a woman called Linde came, whose husband had just died, and he had been documenting the street’s parties for 20 years. There were 6000 photographs which had never been seen before. We said: ‘Let’s take a look!’ There was a teacher from an elementary school who was very excited: ‘I have to do it with my kids, we’ll have a look at the street life and do our own photography.’ We are in contact with a sociology professor, architects, photography students and a lot of private people, and of course, with neighbours. We are open for all sorts of participation. Somebody will want to paste images, somebody else might do research, or somebody will help apply for funds or shape the concept. Such a project will not work if it simply intrudes into the public space. We have to do it together – as a street and as a community.

Have you found and studied other photobooks about particular streets for this project?

MS We indeed gather photobooks that depict and analyse one street or specific public spaces. There are quite a few examples of books that deal with this

subject, from Ed Ruscha's *Every Building on the Sunset Strip* to Bruce Davidson's *East 100th Street*. We're thinking of including these books in the project; it could be an exhibition at the Bunker k101 or one of the side streets' shops.

For you, is the book a starting point from which you take off, or do you also come back to it?

FL The book is more than a departure point. It will interweave with many levels of the project. As an easy example, although we have access to Chargesheimer's negatives, we decided to work with the scans from the book instead. This means that the images all have their printing matrix inscribed and blown up to the size of the buildings, which will make a direct reference to the book and therefore its origin.

MS The walls are like pages, and because the page's format has changed, we will have to find a new logic of sequencing. In order to do this, we go through a book with a looking glass: finding details, relations, the same people appearing in images from different times. We also want to finalise the project, perhaps with a book about the street and people who live there today. A book is a very good starting point and a very good end point. We will also invite graphic illustrator Dr. Alderete from Mexico City to a four week residency at The PhotoBookMuseum. Of course he has a creative carte blanche, but he might want to transform *Unter Krahnennbäumen* into a graphic novel. Let's see!

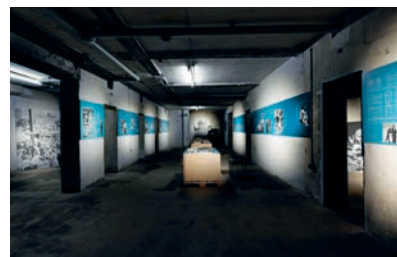
What is your opinion of how the photobook is entering the museum – from exhibition halls to archives?

MS If I go to a book exhibition, I'd like to learn more about the story of the book's production. How did the artist make a selection? How did they make their decisions? etc. When you're in a natural history museum you don't only want to see the dinosaur, you also want to know what its skeleton looks like, what its diet was, how it reproduced. We need the new

generation of curators to look into the book as an object. Prints are often just a selection that illustrate a larger project. The paradigm of what determines an actual work, print or publication, is shifting at the moment. Together with this shift, how the production of a publication is archived needs to become more valued.

FL Chargesheimer didn't organise his archives before committing suicide in 1971, so all of his materials were brought to Museum Ludwig. Vintage prints were placed in the collection, negatives were given to the local picture archive, while all of his letters, cutouts, writings, drawings and maquettes – the DNA of the work – were thrown away. This happened because nobody was interested in the genesis of the book.

MS That's when we thought: we need an institution that can take care of the background, the making of the story, dummies, scripts, files, designers' documentation, because that's what constitutes the lives of photographers who express themselves in books. That's our Mission!



The Chargesheimer Projekt – Preview (Cologne, 2018) © David Klammer

HANNAH DARABI



Enghelab Street, A Revolution through Books, Iran 1979-1983 (Fotomuseum Antwerp, 2019) © Benoit Grimbert

You curated the exhibition *Enghelab Street, A Revolution through Books, Iran 1979-1983* that debuted in early 2019 at LE BAL, Paris, and later was on show at FOMU, Antwerp. The starting point of the exhibition was your own collection of albums of photographs and political publications, published in Iran after the fall of the Shah regime and before the rise of the Islamic government. How did you collect these works?

The first photographic publication I found in 2015 was Shahrokh Hatami's *Allah Akbar*, published by the Iranian Culture Institute in 1980. I was inspired to see that it was conceived not as a luxurious object but as a communication tool, and it pointed me towards the culture of

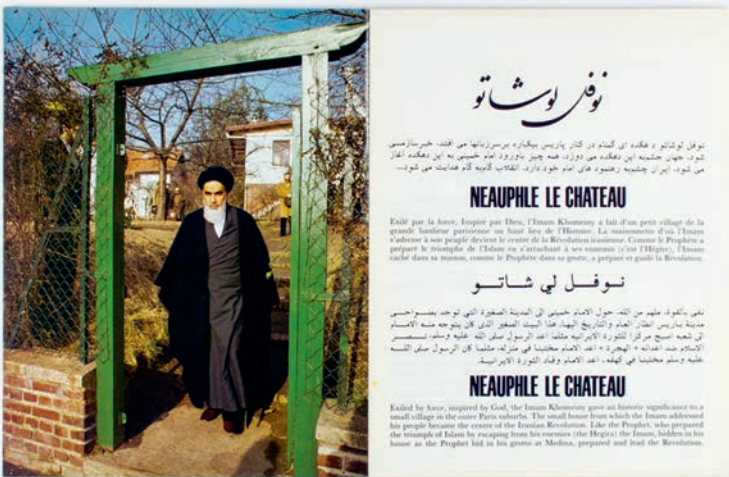
visual books we once had. At first, my only sources of information were the bookshops' owners as there was a lack of reliable documentation of these kinds of materials in public libraries. In the past few years, a new interest in the subject of war photography has risen among Iranian photographers and researchers. An Iranian art magazine *Tandis* published a list of photobooks on the subject of Iran-Iraq war that helped me to further expand the collection. As for political books, that's another story. They were extremely important in their time, and the culture of underground publishing of political and protest texts in a zine-like form known as "white covers" goes back to some years before the revolution. But there isn't



When the Walls Speak Out by Said (1979)
© Hannah Darabi & Spector Books



Riot by Kaveh Golestan & Mohammad Sayad (1979)
© Hannah Darabi & Spector Books



Allah Akbar by Shahrokh Hatami (1980)
© Hannah Darabi & Spector Books

official documentation of these books either. They were forbidden before the revolution. Their circulation became possible for a short while after the revolution, but they disappeared again once the Republic Islamic Party reinforced its power as the new political regime. In the end I compiled the collection of 40 photobooks and 100 “white covers”. The exhibitions shows a selection of those.

Alongside the show, there is a book published by Spector Books and LE BAL, available as two editions in English and in French. Can you describe how the book was developed, and why it was important to introduce the project as a publication?

The boom of these publications seems like a massive cultural phenomena. Was it understood as such in Iran back in the early 80s? Did these publications find a mass audience?

When Emilie Lauriola (who is in charge of LE BAL’s bookshop) pitched the exhibition as part of *Performing Books* programme to the director Diane Dufour, the idea of making a book came alongside it. I built the concept of *Enghelab Street* based on a very complex moment of Iranian history (1979-1983). Clarifying the context seemed indispensable from the beginning, so I proposed collaborating with the anthropologist Chowra Makaremi, who contributed largely with the research and texts. I brought the concept forward and had access to the contents of the books, which were written in Farsi. The subject of Iranian revolution remains obscure to the non-Iranian public. By providing additional texts, materials and books than those presented at the show, we felt we could provide a better understanding. There are also some interviews that I carried out with the people who were involved in the making or distributing of these books at the time.

Today the number of books published seems surreal. For example, *Days of Blood, Days of Fire* by Bahman Jalali and Rana Javadi (Zamineh, 1979) was published in two editions of 33,000 copies in total. They were considered tools of protest or propaganda, so they were made available to everyone. At the same time, during my research, I didn’t meet anyone who had these books in their library. Political books had a very temporary use at the time; people were not necessarily interested in keeping them. Photobooks were treated in the same way, even though they had artistic value. Many people threw away their books when the Republic Islamic government started arresting activists involved in the revolution.

‘Today the number of books published seems surreal...They were considered tools of protest or propaganda, so they were made available to everyone.’

The project presents photobooks, in a wide sense, as self-empowerment tools that allow for commentary on politics and society. What was their impact in the past and what impact can they have today?

They had an impact on forming the image of the revolution and the war afterwards. Looking at a book like *When the Walls Speak Out* (Saïd, self-published by the Freedom Movement, 1979) helps you to understand the diversity of the political viewpoints from this period, which manifested themselves as slogans written on walls, photos of which were represented in the book. Or a publication *Riot* (Kaveh Golestan & Mohammad Sayad, self-published, 1979) that portrayed the revolutionary excitement of those days through scenes of street battles with the police force. These books were important because they were reflecting people's experiences of a life-changing event. Later, the new government used the images of the revolution and the war to make books for its own propagandistic purposes. In both cases books were used to provoke strong emotions.

The Iranian revolution of 1979 is not just a story of the past if you think about recent events like the Arab Spring or the current political situation in Iran. I wanted to stress this continuity of events, while also keeping the question of the contemporaneity of these books in focus. In order to respond to this question, as part of *Enghelab Street*, I created the manifesto-work *Reconstructions*, which is an artistic response to the collection of books using objects, documents, post-cards, audio-visual materials, screenshots of Iranian cinema and TV, etc. Working on the collection, I discovered important images of the revolution and the war that sparked memories from schoolbooks, TV and public spaces, but which I had never seen in their "original" book form. For example, seeing the iconic portrait of the revolution's leader Ayatollah Khomeini on the cover of *Allah Akbar*, where he looks fully aware of the history being made in that moment, sheds light on the role of photography in

narrating the story of the revolution, and opened the door for the whole project. These strangely familiar photographs confronted me with the realisation that my generation's image of the revolution was incomplete. By putting pages of books in dialogue with contemporary images of Tehran, the town I also grew up in, alongside all the found footage and materials, I seek to fill in the gaps. *Reconstructions* goes through the history of this period in a chronological order across four chapters, and reveals the complexity of representing the history of this period in Iran, while asking about the efficiency a photographic archive has in delivering its historic context. The books open up the possibility of remapping the history, as well as addressing how the visual memory gets shaped today.



Enghelab Street, A Revolution through Books, Iran 1979-1983 (2019)
© Hannah Darabi & Spector Books

BOOK MARKET STATEMENTS



During Unseen Amsterdam 2018 (21st - 23rd of September), Moritz Neumüller, chief curator of Photobook Week Aarhus, conducted informal interviews with artists and publishers, inviting them to share their experiences of working with photobooks, of growing their audiences, and their reasons for buying photobooks. *What? Market? Market!* presents a selection of quotes from these impromptu dialogues alongside portraits of participants with their spotlighted books.

SHAPE YOUR

JANA ROMANOVA,
ARTIST

“If you make a photobook, you have to create the audience for it, it does not exist naturally. How do you shape this audience and sustain it, is a very interesting question. You have to initiate events, lectures, and be in dialogue. I do not want to think of the photobook world as a closed community. I want to think of it as an open field, where you can invent new forms, new discourses and, most importantly, start publishing more female photographers. In order to bring photobooks out further than the photo community, I co-founded *The Expert Photobook Review* project, where we invite people who have nothing to do with photography to comment on photobooks at live events or as video reviews. These guests talk about books from their field of expertise. Often they see and understand things in the publications that we never even thought about.”

IRENE DE MENDOZA,
FOTO COLECTANIA FOUNDATION

“The image-text format is one of the most interesting in the photobook field. Relating these two media can be the first step for those who are not familiar with photography to enter the field. Also distributors should make sure that photobooks integrate into different sections in bookstores.”

MAFALDA RAKOS,
ARTIST

“I keep statistics about people who bought my book *I want to disappear – Approaching Eating Disorders*, and thus, I know that 45% are people from non-photographic backgrounds who are affected by an eating disorder or who treat people with an eating disorder. I presented the book at two conferences for eating disorders in Austria, as well as at a hospital. Furthermore, I give a

discount of 25% to people who are affected by eating disorders. I do not ask for proof, it is based on trust. The theme itself made it a lot easier to talk to a wider audience, and a lot of the people who bought the book are in a creative field, but not photobook lovers in the strict sense. I will definitely try to continue in this direction.”

ANAIS LÓPEZ,
ARTIST

“The initial idea with *The Migrant* was to make a book for children, but now it is for adults. Consulting specialists on the theme, publishing it in the local newspaper, performing in front of 2000 people - I believe my stories are not only for art lovers. This project took me six years to produce, it is not a fling, and I came to the idea of the book gradually. It was meant to be performed on a theatre’s stage, but then people started asking me: ‘Can I please take it home?’ The print run is 450 handmade copies, and I know that at the PhotoQ Bookshop at Unseen Book Market 20 copies were sold in two hours after the book had arrived at their stand.”

RONALD DE BOER,
VISITOR

“I have just bought *One Year in Yangon 1978* by Lukas Birk from The Asia-Pacific Photobook Archive. I love books that are created out of passion, as this book is. You can feel it and you can see it. I like the different layers it has, which is something I always look for when buying photobooks.”

CALIN KRUSE, DIENACHT
PUBLISHING

“I know an artist from Leipzig who published a book about flowers, and sent it as a review copy to some different magazines, including women’s magazines. As

a result, he received a lot of orders from new clients. This is a good example of how to break barriers. Sometimes I go to craft markets, even if the sales are not always great, sometimes no more than ten books, but in this way I can reach a new audience.”

ANDREA COPETTI,
THE TIPI BOOKSHOP

“How do I make my work sustainable? Two words: integrity and obsession! Integrity helps with the choice of books and how I can talk about them. Obsession drives me to search for new talents without forgetting established photographers who find new energy in re-launching old books. What else can we do to reach a bigger market? I think we should share our resources. Whenever you know something you should

published the book *Failed It!* in eight different languages and by now has sold almost 200,000 copies. It’s text based but has photography inside. It’s about how creative people fail in their processes. There are many accidental crossovers with other markets, take cookbooks for example, and there could be more deliberate ones in the future. At KesselsKramer Publishing, we invest the income we make from our books into new publications. The photobook became the new portfolio.”

OLIVER SIEBER,
ARTIST

“As for sustainability, well, it’s a matter of just doing it. We often run small editions of 75 in order to just get the work out there, and you invest just 2000 - 2500 Euro. If

AUDIENCE

share it. If you find a new artist, you should always carry her book in your backpack and show it around. I always have a book in my backpack, not only to show, but also to look at and understand better for myself. If you don’t understand a book, don’t put it on your shelf – at least as a bookshop owner. Whatever makes it on my shelf is what I will share with others, and I do not refer to social media here, I am talking about sharing the story with other people across real life experiences.”

ERIK KESSELS, KESSELS-
KRAMER PUBLISHING

“There are some photobooks, they might not be perceived as photobooks, but they made it beyond the ‘market’ and are printed in huge editions. For example, in 1975 a Dutch artist called Jos Houweling made a book with a lot of strange photographs called *700 Centen-boek* which was done for the 700th anniversary of Amsterdam and 60,000 copies were printed. Phaidon

40 people preorder, the costs are covered. Finding loyal customers takes time. Katja Stuke and I started 20 years ago by walking around with a bag full of magazines, selling them for 5 D-Mark. Now if we contact people via Facebook or e-mail, we send it to around 300 subscribers and 50 of them will buy a book without a preview. Sometimes we also put something extra with a book, for example, a C-print that comes along for 100 Euro, which in our experience was a successful strategy. I would think that we cover $\frac{3}{4}$ of production costs by talking to people and getting them to preorder a book.”

DANIEL BOETKER-SMITH,
THE ASIA-PACIFIC
PHOTOBOOK ARCHIVE

“Many more European publishers showcase Asian work now. The downside is that European publishers only pick photographers from among those who succeed by themselves anyway, and are already well



SHARE YOUR



BOOK STORY



BEYOND THE

represented at festivals. At the same time I get more and more emails asking for tips, for example, about young photographers in Vietnam. These kinds of attempts to discover unknown talents in the region only started to happen within the last couple of years. *Zines of Production*, a publication by ten artists from the Philippines, was an interesting initiative that allowed artists to spread their work. It consists of ten zines collected together into an A4 book which can be used to go overseas to showcase what is going on in the country. Artists were not overly focused on paper or printing quality, but they succeeded in getting their work out there.”

JULIÁN BARÓN,
ARTIST

“A very interesting territory is that of children’s books, where photography can create new experiences. In today’s world we often lack the time to give a book the intimacy that it needs. In order to create an

give experiences and can tell stories with or without accompanying text. We should produce fewer books and take more care of the content. I do a maximum of four books a year. Our editorial direction is rather edgy. At the beginning we just had people who were interested in AKINA as a publisher that was invested in discovering new voices, but now the audience is actually interested in the books’ topics. We started out as a self-publishing venture, so we understand from our personal experience how much effort goes into making a book. As a publisher I need to stand behind these projects. It’s not a business, it is the responsibility we take and the strong relationships we build that continue once a book is published.”

CHENG YINHE,
JIAZAZHI PRESS

“We are based in Ningbo, a little city near Shanghai. We rent a library where we collect thousands of photobooks and give them out for free to the public to read,

MAKE IT

empathic relationship with books, educators could help to connect the youngest with visual culture, in the classroom or in a family context. Children and young people should get involved as soon as possible with the world of the image and the world of the book.”

VALENTINA ABENAVOLI,
AKINA

“I have been trying for a while to reach beyond the photobook community by running workshops where I question how we read photography, because most people want to make a photobook that can only be read by a trained eye. As a publisher, I try to produce books that are objects which

and we also run a little bookshop. The local community does not really visit, but artists and designers from different parts of China and other cities do. There are only two or three independent publishers in China, because they are prohibited by the government. In China, it is still mostly self-published books which exist. We still survive through selling our books and by distributing other publications. *Until Death Do Us Part* by Thomas Sauvin is one of our success stories. As it was cheaper to use real cigarette packs for the packaging of the books than to reprint them, we had a lot of spare cigarettes, which we used to pay for part of the printing costs. The 4th edition was published in 2018 in 2000 copies.”

YVAN GUERDON,
VISITOR

“I am an engineer, but also an artist and bookmaker and I started collecting photobooks about five years ago. I think it is important that not only photographers make photobooks, but anybody with a story, even scientists or engineers like myself. That way the audience will grow and people will start buying publications without noticing they are photobooks.”

LEA TYRALLOVÁ,
EDITORIAL RM

“If I had to make a typology of fair visitors who buy books from us, it would include collectors who go for novelty, then people who collect books by theme or for their formal aspects. There are buyers who look for something specific to complete their collections. And then there are people who are seduced by the story. If they like it, they’ll buy it – regardless of the price.”

GERRY BADGER,
WRITER AND ARTIST

“If I really wanted to make a book, break out of the niche market and make a lot of money I’d make it about football! Obviously books on youth culture have a wider reach. Besides, young people from different subcultures produce their own books as well, that happens organically. Perhaps these are part of the fashion market. I am all for that. The photobook and photography histories tend to reach wider audiences as they get to universities’ curriculums, libraries or students have to buy them. For example, in 2011, I made a book called *The Genius of Photography* for the BBC, which was an introduction to photography. It sold over 150,000 copies and was published in China, which was great because of a potential market of one and a half billion people.”

UFUK SAHIN,
MAS MATBAA

“I come from a family printing business that has been around for 40 years. We are very passionate about printing. We print big books for banks and multinational companies as well as coffee table books. That’s where we make our money. There is no way that a high-quality printer can live off printing photobooks alone, but we love doing it. I am also the sponsor of Istanbul Photobook Festival which I have been doing for two years, and will continue to do so.”

ANJA RUTTYN,
VISITOR

“I have just bought *Remembering the Future* by Anna Cabrera from the Editorial RM stand. As a fine artist I am always interested in special printing techniques. The printing materials used in this book really intrigued me, sometimes they use gold foil to print the pictures on.”

TODD HIDO,
ARTIST

“I have just bought *MEAT* by Olivier Pin-Fat from Void. It is one of the rawest books I’ve seen in a while...It’s the whole package – the images, the different layers and materials, a challenging subject matter. It’s not something you see every day, and I have over 6000 photobooks in my library!”

MAP DE MAAR,
SELF PUBLISHERS UNITED

“We are a collective of 25 artists based in the Netherlands who decided to work together in May 2018. The reason for us to ‘unite’ was to organise better access to the international photobook market, as well as to think together how we can reach different audiences with our independent

publications. Most of our books are somewhat personal and fragile either in content or in the form, and as self-publishers we have to very carefully consider how we can narrate the themes, and ideally also sell such works. We are naturally beginning with Unseen Book Market, and I think we already sold about 100 books, it went really well!”

DELPHINE BEDEL,
META/BOOKS

“Meta/Books made a book called *Stubborn Cactus* which was about saving a collection of cacti from The Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam’s botanical garden. By circulating the images and the book, we created an activist group and eventually saved the garden from demolition, while preventing the selling of the largest collection of cacti in the Netherlands. I have also seen other photobook projects that, because of the nature of the content, changed a situation or opened a discourse that was otherwise undermined. In some places publishing is impossible for economic or political reasons, censorship, women lacking access to education. This field is complex and it is problematic: who has access to publish-

ing tools? Who has control? What are the funds? Despite this, I really believe in publishing as a self-empowerment tool. I see cases from African countries to Iran. That is why I am such a fan of publishing in its variety of forms: books as exhibitions, blogs, photocopies, pamphlets, etc. There are a lot of stories we need to hear that will maybe change, if only for a while, our perception of the world.”

COMMUNITY

IMAGES FROM TOP-LEFT TO RIGHT-BOTTOM: Myrto Steirou & Sylvia Sahini, Void, Olivier Pin-Fat, Todd Hido with *MEAT* (2018) by Olivier Pin-Fat. Anaïs López with *The Migrant* (2018). Cheng Yinhe, Jiazazhi Press, with *Until Death Do Us Part* (2018) by Thomas Sauvin. Valentina Abenavoli, AKINA, Ufuk Sahin, MAS Matbaa, Zeynep Kayan with *Zeynep Kayan* (2018). Tommaso Parrillo, Witty Kiwi, with *Radici* (2018) by Fabrizio Albertini. Sanne van den Elzen, Nienke Meijeringh with *Today, too, I experienced something I hope to understand in a few days* (2018) by Sanne van den Elzen. Ana Casas Broda, HYDRA, INFRAMUNDO, with *Huésped* (2018) by Diego Moreno and *Ventre* (2018) by Nadia del Pozo. Julián Barón with *Musas Muxe* (2018) by Nelson Morales. Ryota Soejima, Case Publishing, with *High Fashion* (2018) by Pawel Jaszczuk. Stephen Gill, Nobody Books, with *Night Procession* (2018). Mafalda Rakos with *I want to disappear – Approaching Eating Disorders* (2017). Taco Hidde Bakker with *The Photograph That Took the Place of a Mountain* (2018). Irene de Mendoza, Foto Colectania Foundation, with *Photobooks Spain 1905-1977* (2014) by Horacio Fernández. Jana Romanova, Delphine Bedel, Meta/Books, with *Malleus Maleficarum* (2018) by Virginie Rebetez.

LAURENCE AËGERTER



Photographic Treatment © multiple, with 100 photoblocks and the publication *Daily Photo Doses 1-5* (2018) © Naomi Jansen

How did you decide to address specifically elderly people with dementia through your project *Photographic Treatment* © ?

In 2015 Hans Looijen, the director of the Museum of the Mind, Haarlem proposed to create new work and he named dementia as one of the themes he wanted to address in the coming years. I was so deeply touched by the frightening destiny of a person with dementia and the people around them when I started researching the disease that I decided to develop an instrument based on photography which would help their physical and mental condition.

What was the role of the scientists you collaborated with?

I consulted neurologists, psychogeriatricians and dementia care experts mostly in the early stages of my research and kept in touch with some along the way, asking for their critical feedback. Prof. Dr Rose-Marie Droës helped me to design a scientific pilot research project, which I worked on together with a student in clinical psychology. Together we visited 40 people in an advanced stage of Alzheimer’s. I showed them a set of 20 images while the psychology student observed their reactions. Dr Droës supervised the overall research.

Photographic Treatment © is available in multiple formats: as downloadable photo packages, photos silkscreened with fragrances, a series of five books etc.

How did you decide on these formats?

The project became a bit tentacular. The basic principle is that image association has proven to be a strong medium with which to stimulate the brain. I started with photographic diptychs as photographic prints, which I silkscreened with soothing or stimulating fragrances such as eucalyptus, soap, caraway or garden rose. This experiment is based upon the principle of synaesthesia, a multi-sensory experience that is triggered by stimulating cognitive pathways. The brain is activated by the simultaneous use of sight, touch and smell.

Later, I was looking for a way to develop a group activity for people in day or residential care environments based on the same image pairing principle. After much trial and error, I discovered that it works well to allow individuals to create their own diptychs and share their creations with the group. So I developed multiple: a box which includes 100 loose photo blocks together with the five photobooks *Daily Photo Dose 1-5* published by Dewi Lewis Publishing which serve as inspiration for combining images. It was introduced in 2017 when 37 group and individual photo-interventions took place for a total of 388 elderly people with dementia at 13 care institutions across the Netherlands. It's currently in use by 12 Dutch care institutions.

To make visible the effect of photographs on a person in a late stage of dementia I created the video work *The*

Living Image. In this piece, a lady comments on a dozen photographs. It is very touching to hear her wander through the landscapes, talk to children, and in between address the frustration of her state.

On the website I developed people can get acquainted with the method and its tools. They can download about 1300 images for free from the database, which I created specifically for people with a visual impairment due to senile dementia. It is far from exhaustive or complete, but it is a good starting point.

For how long do you plan to implement and monitor the project?

It officially ended in December 2017, but the project was supported by a number of generous grants from art and care institutions. I spent a lot of 2018 addressing the responses of individuals and the press. My aim is to start a broader national implementation plan for which I am now looking for a team to work autonomously on. It is challenging as I am working on new art projects and monitoring such a phase takes up a lot of time. At the same time, I have also started to collect images that trigger the five senses, evoking familiar smells, tastes, sounds, etc. I am now analysing these images, placing them in different categories and testing how to connect them and create a visual and content interference between them, as in the publications of *Photographic Treatment* ©. And who knows, I might appeal to the photobook medium again.

You worked on the project with Art in Societies Foundation and *Photographic Treatment* © became an example of a photobook that broke through the photographic bubble. What do you think of the capacity of the photobook form to reach out to new audiences and address society at large?

When I started this project I had it clearly in my mind that it would only be a success once its functional relevance was as valid as its artistic relevance. I kept both goals in my mind throughout the two-year process of developing the project. When it got to the final of the National Care Innovation Prize a year ago and when CNN Health devoted a long article

to it, I realised how important the project really was. Art has transversal powers as it is free of imposing rules. By that I mean it can address any condition from an outsider perspective. Images, and the photobooks that contain them, can play an important role in supporting the wellbeing of people. It is my belief that in some situations visual works could even replace chemical medicine – for instance in fighting anxiety or depression.

‘When I started this project I had it clearly in my mind that it would only be a success when its functional relevance was as valid as its artistic relevance.’

At the residential care for persons with dementia Huize Plantage (Amsterdam, 2017)
© Anne Bothmer



At the residential care for persons with dementia Groenelaan (Amsterdam, 2017)
© Anne Bothmer



SONIA LENZI



Last Portrait (2019) © Sonia Lenzi

Could you tell us about your recently published book *Last Portrait*?

Last Portrait is about relationships between women; how would we like to be represented by other women and how would we like to represent ourselves? What kinds of relationships could we potentially build? The book contains photographs of portraits of women that were placed at their gravesides in Italian cemeteries, alongside poetry that I wrote about each picture. The book is unbound and is supposed to be “performed”. In a group, readers are meant to choose certain images from the book, reflect on them, and develop fictional narratives around the women and their interpersonal relationships, drawing on their

own experiences and biographies in the process. It was published by Tosca Press in 2019 and, aside from the regular edition, has a limited edition of 20 copies with a case designed by Arabella Schwarzhopf, which allows the reader to remove the pages and return them in a different order.

What do you think about women’s representation in the photobook world?

I am not very good at promoting my work, and I think a lot of women probably feel the same way. Plus, we live in a patriarchal society, that’s just a fact. We should take action against this, work collectively and create a community of women photographers who support

each other. My own work is dedicated to strengthening bonds between women. I am part the Italian Women Photographers’ Association and I recently proposed a project about photobooks by women involving the Womens’ Center in Bologna. They have a very receptive audience towards art events and they already have some photobooks by women in their library. Plus, they’ll likely attract an audience that is engaged in gender politics. I am interested in the ways photobooks can connect different groups of people, and in encouraging the dialogue to move beyond the realms of photography. I’ve seen this work well in places like The Feminist Library in London, where *Last Portrait* was once presented.

I’m looking forward to facilitating more events like this.

Why do you choose for a photobook format to communicate your ideas?

The photobook is important for me as it either signals the starting point of a collaborative process or, once published, becomes accessible to the general public. While people often come into contact with it within domestic spaces, the photobook is also a powerful form of public art. It can be encountered in libraries and art galleries, even cafes, parks, buses, trains. The photobook makes art accessible to everyone.



Last Portrait (2019) © Sonia Lenzi



BRUNO CESCHEL



Photobook RESET (C/O Berlin, 2018)
© Stephanie von Becker

Self Publish, Be Happy was established in 2010. How has the photobook field been developing since then?

At the end of last decade, there was a surge of new technologies that enabled cheaper printing. The mobility of both people and goods around the world increased, and the Internet vastly improved communication. The cultural response to these technological changes and digitalisation sparked a need for something material, which stimulated an interest in photobooks. SPBH started at a time when the community was expanding into physical spaces, like book fairs, that were on one hand oriented towards a public audience and on the other, gathered likeminded people. More people

were gravitating towards this community – from students making zines to well known photographers beginning to self-publish. Photobooks grew in quantity. SPBH started its collection with 60 self-published books that were submitted to be included in a reading room at The Photographers' Gallery in London and later formed part of the travelling library. Now we have 3000 publications and are looking for an institution to host them more permanently. Not only has the quantity of the books changed radically, but also the quality. Under the longstanding influence of the artists' book tradition, the photobook form was challenged and people began to experiment more with form and content. Photobook culture grew on a glob-

al scale, and scholars and academies introduced photobook studies into the curricula. Five or six years after this peak, the community started to question how mainstream photobooks could go. And now we live in the aftermath: we got drunk, had fun, and have woken up and feel a bit raw. What's next? SPBH tries to answer this question by pushing the boundaries of a book, seeing it, for example, as a social practice, or a physical space, perhaps a sculpture, or a process akin to performance art. We are trying to find out how photobooks can become a tool for change.

What kind of change?

The photography field thinks of itself as progressive and liberal. This means we must begin by looking at ourselves – publishers, artists, curators, educators – and ensure that people of different genders, races and classes are included and represented. For example, if women photographers don't get published enough, then we need to think about what should change to prevent this from happening. Adam Broomberg recently posted on Facebook that a lot of photography competitions are aimed at people under the age of 35, which automatically excludes a lot of women who might have started their careers later but produce important work. If the age limit is what prevents women from entering competitions, we can easily put a stop to it. We should also not only look forward, but also back, and rewrite the history of photography in the light of a different understanding: one that doesn't exclude but includes.

Can photobooks stimulate changes outside of the photobook world?

I think there is a limit to what photobooks can achieve, and that's fine. Only a handful of photobooks break through the walls from which they circulate. To a general audience, photobooks are not easily accessible, they are mostly sold in museum shops or specialist bookstores. If you walk into these spaces you are probably already part of the community.

Can you think of an example from your practice that did break through?

The recently published *My Birth* by Carmen Winant was incredibly well received. The visuals throw you from awe to shock, with page after page showing found photographs of women giving birth. There are 2000 copies including the reprint, which is not a high number. But the idea alone had a much greater reach than the publication itself. Mainstream publications like *Vogue*, *New Yorker* and *Huffington Post* picked it up as it served to prompt conversation and spark a debate about the lack of representation or language around giving birth.

In September 2018, SPBH curated an event at C/O Berlin called *Photobook: RESET*. Can you tell us more about what motivated this?

The curator Ann-Christin Bertrand asked me to come up with an alternative idea to a book fair. I proposed to create a series of workshops that would give selected people from the photography industry, as well as highly motivated applicants, the tools to think about issues of race, representation, technology and ethics, and to see how they would respond to such stimulations. There were no specific expectations, so it's hard to evaluate if it worked out successfully. My main hope was that the individuals would implement some of the ideas generated into their own practices.

What did you learn during the event yourself?

It was surprising to see how emotionally charged the event was. It seemed that there was something important at stake for many of the participants – that's a sign of a healthy community. I was also very impressed that so many people agreed to take part. They could have easily withdrawn, unwilling to be challenged on the question of their identity, which can be hard to confront as it touches on the core of who they are instead of addressing what they do. Some ideas definitely stayed with me. One of the

top priorities for participants was gender equality. I personally find the topic of race very urgent, and I started to work on a book about whiteness, looking at artists who think about what whiteness means. I learned that it was very naive on my part to think of the “photobook world” as a single entity. It is very diverse geographically, and it’s important to move away from the Western-centric way of thinking about what a “good” photobook is, and to move production forces to other places.

Do you plan to continue with a similar format?

Creating an environment where people can hold workshops to explore new ideas worked very well. Next time it could be useful to focus on economic support within the industry, and the network and distribution: how books are made and how they move in the world more efficiently. It could be interesting to introduce something akin to startup culture. There is no money in the field and it largely relies in philanthropic principles, but people from other fields might be able to bring new ideas in. They are very much needed!

DAVID SOLO



Photobook RESET (C/O Berlin, 2018)
© Stephanie von Becker

DEVELOPMENT

There are plenty of directions in which the photobook market could develop. One way could be by finding new audiences for books produced in Northern America and Europe. Another could be by making photobook publishing accessible to a broader audience. The Internet and digital technologies can play a big role in facilitating this. For example, outside of North America and Europe it’s very expensive to distribute physical books. But one could imagine a production and distribution network that exists digitally, so a book created in Latin America or Africa could be stored on a digital file and printed anywhere. Rather than shipping the books from Buenos Aires or Santiago to Amsterdam you could produce copies of the book with local printing or publishing facilities and the result would be indistinguishable from the original copy.

DISCOURSE

Discussions about photobook publishing and the market have been around forever, and I haven’t seen it change much. They mostly stem from a simple question: why don’t pho-

tobooks sell like graphic novels? Discussions about fairs and festivals are a hot topic because so many have sprung up in recent years. In Europe alone it seems that there are art fairs and book fairs most weekends of the year. Though I’m not a publisher myself, I go to many of these events and I look forward to the ones that have an interesting local flavour – these are important to support – and the ones that are evolving more towards a “festival” model. The challenge with the latter is that someone has to pay for it. So these concerns – changing formats and financial constraints – have caused greater urgency to have these discussions. But it’s not broken. The apocalyptic view has begun to subside. In order to bring in a wider array of voices and audiences, we should try to experiment more with performance, educational programming, artist showcases, and look back at history and antiquarian books.

ARTIST VERSUS PUBLISHER BOOK FAIRS

Ten years ago, I’d see many artists standing behind tables at book fairs. Nowadays these spots are mostly filled by publishers

‘In order to bring in a wider array of voices and audiences, we should try to experiment more with performance, educational programming, artist showcases, and look back at history and antiquarian books’

and booksellers. I always find it a much more enjoyable experience to buy directly from the artist. You’re more likely to have an interesting conversation as their relationship to the books are fundamentally different from that of the publisher.

PERFORMANCE

I am interested in questioning what it means to “perform” an image-based book. In the literary world, events usually consist of readings and performances, but I haven’t seen many good examples of how one might perform a photobook. Those that I have seen tend to centre on a traditional reading of the textual component with the visual elements projected alongside. I have seen some pretty humorous performances. For example, in *Dog Ear* (2011), New York-based artist Erica Baum photographed folded pages of a textbook, creating interesting text alignments where halfway through a sentence it abruptly turns a corner and finishes with a different piece of text. During the event itself she had some-

you see people actually queuing up to watch an author read their book. The performance alone generates book sales, sometimes in very large numbers. But we seem to have the opposite reaction in the artists’ book world, where we hope that the book alone will be cause for excitement.

DIGITAL

The digital photobook as a form is in an early stage of experimentation. I don’t see it as a replacement but rather as a supplement, commentary or an alternative to printed matter. It could be an extension of a physical book or a different thing all together. Digital archiving is a separate question. Let’s say someone does their PhD on book production and wants to recover the correspondence between the artists, designers and publishers. Where can they find it? And how does one collect, archive and share the aspects of a book’s production?

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WHAT?



WHAT?

WHAT?



WHAT?



MARKET?

MARKET!