

What Problems Can Artist Publishers Solve?

We invited 17 artist publishers to respond to the question: Thinking locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally: What are some social, political, economic and ecological problems that artist publishers are equipped to address or solve using their knowledge, skills, and resources?

Temporary Services / PrintRoom

Thick Press

BECAUSE OUR PRESS IS BRAND-NEW,
WE CREATE AS WE REFLECT.

(*But really, who doesn't?*)

We, Erin and Julie, a social worker and a graphic designer, came together around a problem that Erin had been wrestling with for several years. It goes something like this: people in the West involved in caregiving and justice-seeking sometimes feel overwhelmed and alienated by narrow (*i.e. neoliberal*) framings wherein good work is about problem-solving,

"achievement gap"

"obesity prevention"¹

"early intervention"

The problem-solving impulse is worrisome because it replaces generosity with austerity and efficiency. It erases lived experience. It crowds out possibilities for unplanned outcomes that emerge from dialogue. It often privileges ideas of progress² that hurt people and planet.

(*We, on the other hand, long to privilege love and care!*)³

The good news is that there are now many opportunities to explore and expose the ways that racism, ableism, heteropatriarchy, capitalism, and colonialism turn people into problems and injustices into symptoms. In this vein, activists and academics and artists do marvelous work.

But that work can feel removed from the day-to-day actions⁴ people perform as they provide care, seek justice, and build community.

That's why we formed Thick Press, and that's where artist publishing comes in.

(*For the record, we do not really identify as artist publishers—just people who ground our book-making practice in art and design.*)

Grounding our work in art and design makes us feel less constrained by prevailing notions of what warrants publication, and what doesn't. We don't feel pressure to make lots of money, reach lots of people, or diagnose and treat problems

(*except for the problem of the problem obsession!*).).

The less we worry about marketability and productivity, the more space we have to take on meaningful projects for their own sake. We butt up against the world we live in⁵, but this becomes part of the practice—and the books we make become artifacts of a loving, process-driven ethos.

FULL STOP.

Receptive Suspicious Infer/or Grateful Excited Interested Cautious Confused Scornful Amused
Hostile Proud Distrustful Disillusioned Bitter Satisfied
Rejected Content Addicted Hostile Rejected

18

(Content matters, but not as much as we thought at the get-go.)

We have a hunch (*magical thinking?*) that great power lies in the materiality of books. Don't you agree that books are spaces of deep engagement, poised to inspire dialogue and introspection? That's why we feel hopeful that marvelous books can nourish folks who feel alienated or overwhelmed by the problem-solving ethos.

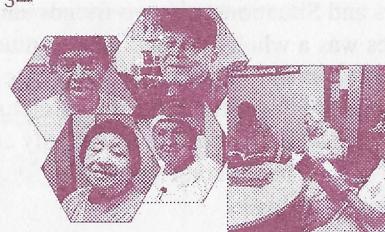
(Remember, we long to privilege love and care!)⁶

Footnotes:

1— J: My daughter asked me this morning why her tummy is fat and why her big sister is thin. She is five. Her sister is seven.

E: "Obesity prevention" stigmatizes fat people and perpetuates power structures that are helpful to a few, harmful to many. Are we really so sure it's a problem to be fat? Who says so?

3—



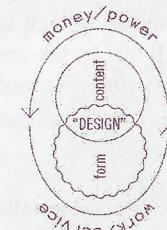
2— The march of civilization making its mark: can we engineer the perfect cityscape? the perfect crop? the optimally developing child?

4— November 6, 2017

This is how a Senior Wellness Center hallway looks this time of year.

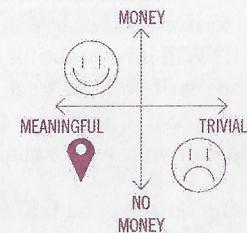


5— Our real world of graphic design services in 3 diagrams

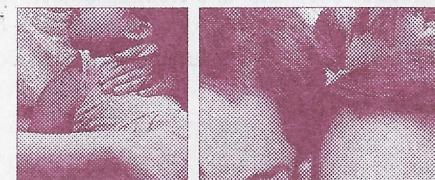


CHEAP + GOOD ≠ FAST
GOOD + FAST ≠ CHEAP
CHEAP + FAST ≠ GOOD

can't have all 3!



6—



PrintRoom

PrintRoom is a presentation space and shop dedicated to artists' publications based in Rotterdam. Since 2012 PrintRoom runs a risography stencil workspace where artists, designers and other interested individuals can take part in workshops or print their own projects.

PrintRoom started in 2003 as a travelling and growing collection of artists' publications. In 2010 the initiative acquired a fixed address in Rotterdam (Schietbaanstraat 17), where it has become a vibrant hub for promoting and selling publications by artists, designers and small publishers from all over the globe. The PrintRoom collection comprises various material: from lusciously designed, full colour publications to small flipbooks, and photocopied zines. The space hosts talks, presentations, book launches, and workshops that explore artistic strategies of independent publishing.

PrintRoom
Schietbaanstraat 17
3014ZV Rotterdam
The Netherlands

www.printroom.org

Temporary Services

Temporary Services is Brett Bloom and Marc Fischer. We are based in Auburn (IN) and Chicago (IL). We have existed, with several changes in membership and structure, since 1998. In 2008 we founded the publishing imprint and webstore Half Letter Press. We produce exhibitions, events, projects, and publications. The distinction between art practice and other creative human endeavors is irrelevant to us.

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