

Books & Images – Art 441

Project 1: chapbook: text or no text

Choose an existing text, and make a chapbook that presents or reacts to that text. The final chapbook must use either all text, or no text—that is, typographic design, or pure imagery.

Below are some topics to think about while planning this project. Your chapbook should focus on one of these topics/strategies.

- The chapbook may be of any length, and of any size.
- You must make an edition: at least 4 copies.

Extended Statement

Frederick Goudy, on type: “In books I present to you a portion of the eternal mind caught in its progress through the world, stamped in an instant, and preserved for eternity. Through me, Socrates and Plato, Chaucer and the Bards, become your faithful friends whoever surround and minister to you.”

When Holleley talks about the extended statement, he is speaking of a single book as something that the reader experiences over time. But books also extend the life of ideas or stories, such as the quotations on this page, so that the same text can be re-used over and over by different artists and authors. How can texts from the past, or existing books, be used to make something new?

Sample problem: create a chapbook that uses only samples of existing work, scanned, physically collaged, or otherwise repurposed.

Words and Images

Here is the Futurist F.T. Marinetti, writing in 1912 (the boldface and italics are his): “**Let us boldly create the “ugly” in literature and kill solemnity wherever it may be.** And don’t put on those high-priest airs when you listen to me. We must spit every day on the *Altar of Art*. We are entering the limitless domains of free intuition. After free verse, here at last are **words in freedom**...Futurist poets! I taught you to hate libraries and museums. This was to prepare you to hate intelligence...”

Has Marinetti’s vision come to pass? Is it possible to use language in a purely visual, intuitive, non-intelligent way?

Sample problem: find a text and present it in such a way as to give it an immediate visual impact, rather than being strictly legible. Is its meaning still apparent?

Intimacy & Portability

Douglas Holleley on intimacy: “The experience of holding a book in one’s hands has the potential to suggest an almost direct link between the author and reader. The space created is intimate and implies trust and connection. The gentle, quiet act of turning the pages is a subtle yet powerful signifier of intimacy and participation. The book is the fundamental precursor of that most post-modern notion, interactivity.” On portability: “The book accommodates itself to the reader, not the reader to the book.”

Is this true of both handmade and mass-produced books? What sorts of reading or viewing experiences lend themselves to an intimate experience?

Sample problem: Take a text that is meant to be experienced in some other form; for instance, dialogue from a movie. How must its presentation change in chapbook form?

Archival Stability

Claes Oldenburg: “I am for an art...that does something other than sit on its ass in the museum. I am for an art that grows up not knowing it is art at all, an art given the chance of having a starting point of zero. I am for an art that embroils itself with everyday crap and still comes out on top.”

Although we think of books as having been designed for the ages, the vast majority of printed matter has been what is technically called “ephemera,” that is, disposable: everyday crap. In many cases, it is the fact that the work was not meant to be saved for posterity that gave the artist/designer/writer a kind of freedom to experiment. What kind of book/broadsheet might be meant to be experienced only once (posters, zines, etc.)?