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**FRIENDS
WITH
BOOKS**

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December 18, 2015

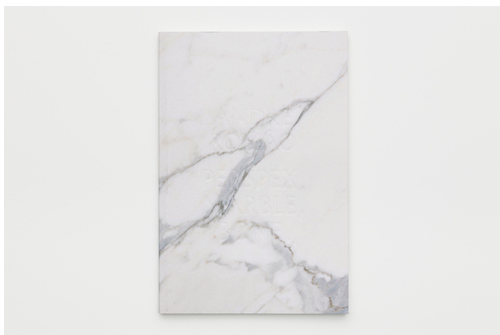
The much-anticipated second edition of the Berlin-based fair was held at the iconic Hamburger Bahnhof from 11 to 13 December. In the run-up to the festive season, over 130 international publishers and artists converged in a brightly lit hall to present a treasure trove of published work.

Reviewed by Rachael Vance

Organised by Vanessa Adler from **argobooks** and curator Savannah Gorton, the fair was established in 2014 as a non-profit venture aimed at promoting contemporary artists' books to a wider audience. Central to the fair this year was the presentation of recent published projects by emerging artists and a focus on underrepresented, independent publishing houses.

The event was complemented by an impressive ancillary programme of discussions, performances, readings and presentations conceived to investigate the boundaries of current art publishing. The rich series included talks featuring artist Willem de Rooij; Dominikus Müller, editor of *frieze d/e* magazine; Susanne von Falkenhausen from *e-flux* journal; Lisa Marei Schmidt, curator at the Hamburger Bahnhof, and a panel discussion concerning 'the artist and author as publisher' led by Dr Michael Lailach from the Kunstbibliothek Berlin.

The entrance to the fair was dedicated to a reading and exhibition area, expanding the fair format. Setting the scene for an event firmly anchored within the art world, the multimedia exhibition comprised work by Susanne Bürner, Natalie Czech, Anita Di Bianco, Dominique Hurth, Ines Lechleitner, Jonathan Monk, Slavs and Tatars, Joachim Schmid, Erik Steinbrecher and Elisabeth Tonnard.



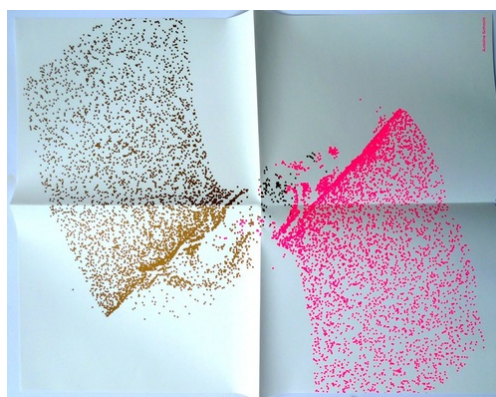
Perspex, Marble, Bone, André Romão, 2014

The intimate fair generated a strong sense of community amongst stallholders and fellow book-lovers. Booths were divided into two sectors: 'Artists/Artist-Run Publishing Initiatives' and 'Art Publishers'. Within the former, there were a number of highlights.

ATLAS Projectos presented its diverse art projects in printed visual and audio

formats. Based between Lisbon and Berlin and run by André Romão, Gonçalo Sena and Nuno da Luz, the group is dedicated to providing visibility to projects in which they believe, whether their own work or in collaboration with a writer, musician or artist. Their display included a vinyl recording produced in partnership with Palmario Recordings and the beautifully produced book *Perspex, Marble, Bone*, published on the occasion of the exhibition 'Europe, Europe' (2014) at the Astrup Fearnley Museum in Oslo, which includes writing by Romão.

HAND ART PUBLISHER founded by Jérôme Karsenti presented the newly published third issue of **Mots Slow** magazine, centred around the theme 'Up&Down'. The limited-edition publication was made up of folded coloured posters that could be viewed from differing perspectives and removed from the magazine to hang on the wall as individual artworks.



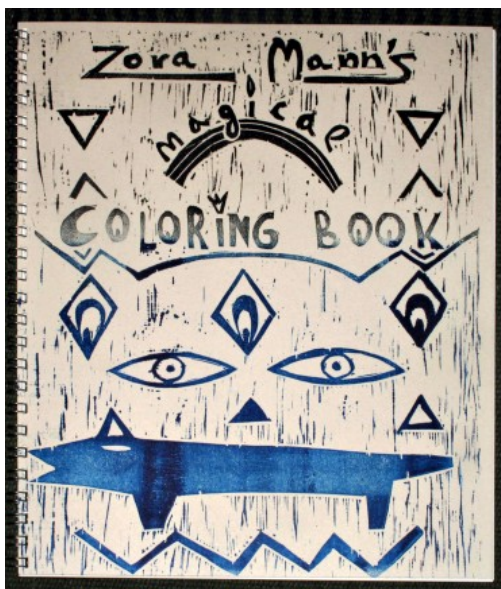
Mots Slow Magazine, up & down, 2015

RAUM Italic, solo ma non troppo and **Lubok Verlag** presented a stunning array of books, fanzines and linocuts with vibrantly coloured and playful illustrations and graphics. Poet and artist Morten Søndergaard's project **Wordpharmacy**, consisting of ten medicine boxes, each representing one of the ten 'word classes', was equally engaging. Every box contained a leaflet functioning as an instructional poem that conflated medical vocabulary with art in order to analyse the structure of language and its consumption.

The inclusion of acclaimed art collective **Slavs and Tatars** within both the booth section and the exhibition drew the art and publishing worlds closer together. The group's participation highlighted the multi-dimensional quality of its practice, which oscillates between art objects and published literature.

Within the 'Art Publishers' sector the selection was extremely diverse and well supported locally, but also internationally. German-based publications included notable titles such as **TEXTE ZUR KUNST** and **frieze d/e**, while the specialised Berlin-based bookstore **pro qm** presented its range of critical publications spanning politics, art theory, design, economic critique and pop culture. Stalwart German art publisher **Verlag der Buchhandlung Walter König** – which has a branch of its bookstore within the Hamburger Bahnhof – was also present.

Berlin arts organisations like the **Künstlerhaus Bethanien** – known for its international residency programme – and the **Neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst (nGbK)**, presented their publications framing the various projects presented within their exhibition spaces.



The commitment of **Chert** gallery, led by Jennifer Chert, to the production of artists' books, catalogues and editions was visible in its stand, which exhibited a broad selection of publications. *Zora Mann's Magical Coloring Book*, with its distinctive coloured lino-print cover was a standout. Chert's publications are often the result of collaboration with Swiss-based publisher **Motto Books**, who had a booth next door.

From further afield, **Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art**, Rotterdam, presented its exhibition catalogues and artists' books. The institution's presence affirmed its longstanding understanding of the importance of producing hard copy material for dissemination to audiences that stands apart from performances or exhibitions.

Kolbrún Póra Löve and Helga Kjerúlf's **Neptún Magazine** has a distinct voice with an emphasis on the local Icelandic creative scene. Concentrating on visual art and design, the title's objective is to provide support and recognition to young Icelandic artists and designers. On display was the third issue of the magazine, with a strong focus on contemporary photography and featuring an interview with video-art pioneer Steina Vasulka.

A highlight of the show for visitors looking for a unique Christmas gift was the inclusion of a range of artists' multiples and editions featured by **Black Palm, Edition Helga Maria Klosterfelde, Little & Large Editions, Galerie Neu / M72** and **Motto Books**. Alongside the annual limited-edition FRIENDS WITH BOOKS POSTER EDITIONS by native Berliners Annette Kelm, Michaela Melian and Roman Schramm, was a special array of postcards, stickers, prints, bags, T-shirts and curated objects to discover. Prices ranged from a very accessible ten euros, to the thousands, offering possibilities for every budget.



A Sudden Drop, Sveinn Fannar Jóhannsson, Multinational Enterprises, 2015

Objektiv spoke with Savannah Gorton, Curator of Friends with Books, to discuss the book fair's unique position and focus within the market.

What do you think distinguishes Friends With Books from other book fairs?

Friends with Books is not only an art book fair, it is a non-profit organisation, in Germany known as a "verein" with a mission to offer greater visibility to contemporary artists' books and art publications, including an annual art book fair, public programming, and partnerships with art organisations and institutions, facilitating the engagement of diverse audiences with the book works of artists and publishers worldwide. In the future, we intend to organise events periodically year-round as well as initiate an annual juried artist book publishing programme.

Currently, we operate through a partnership between myself, a curator, and my colleague, Vanessa Adler, an editor and publisher under the imprint argobooks, along with a small staff, board of directors, and advisory committee. Between us, we have experience with Printed Matter's New York Art Book Fair (where as a co-organiser I served as Manager in 2006 and 2007) and Miss Read (Vanessa Adler as co-founder and co-organiser from 2009-2013). We are also privileged to be hosted by Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin, so that we may present the fair within the context of an established contemporary art institution.

At Friends with Books: Art Book Fair Berlin, our primary focus is first and foremost artists and artists' books, as well as art publishers and periodicals that

work closely with artists. This year, we welcomed 90 self-published artists and artist-run publishing initiatives to the fair, out of a total of over 145 international exhibiting participants. We presented an exhibition on the artist book as an expanded format, *I have always imagined that Paradise will be a kind of library*, featuring art works and performances by artists Susanne Bürner, Natalie Czech, Anita Di Bianco, Dominique Hurth, Ines Lechleitner, Jonathan Monk, Joachim Schmid, Erik Steinbrecher, Elisabeth Tonnard, along with a reading area and book archive by Slavs and Tatars.

Additionally, we hosted a two-day series of public programmes, including conversations, a panel discussion, mini-symposium, and performances by partnering publishers and organisations including Asia Art Archive (AAA), Black Palm, *e-flux journal*, *frieze d/e*, Hamburger Bahnhof - Museum für Gegenwart - Berlin, Kunstbibliothek Berlin, and Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, among others.

In this sense, the fair, organised by a non-profit entity, and with free entry to the public, is a hybrid of non-commercial activity, presenting contemporary art and public programming to audiences, combined with an event where artists and art publishers may offer their books for sale.

Can you discuss the diversity of stand holders and the types of exhibitors at the 2015 fair?

The exhibitors range from international self-published artists such as brumaria, Céline Duval of doc-cd éditions, Sarah MacKillop, Joachim Schmid, and Jasper Sebastian Stürup of Fluens Forlag, and artist-run publishing initiatives like The Paper Channel, Pork Salad Press, Space Poetry, Starship, and X Marks the Bökship, to well-known established art publishers such as Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König and Verlag für moderne Kunst and periodicals including *Afterall*, *frieze d/e*, and *White Fungus*.

This year we had participants from Berlin, of course, and from all over Western and Eastern Europe, or as far away as Beirut, Hong Kong, Los Angeles, New York, Reykjavík, Taipei, Tel Aviv, and Tokyo.

In: newbooks, Index, Review

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